

Germans muse over U.S. lifestyle

Editor's Note: Forty-eight German students are completing a one month visit to Eugene this week before returning to their country. They were asked to write a paper about their impressions of American life in order to give us an opportunity to see our way of life through their eyes. The following are excerpts from various papers.

Gudrun Seidel: "Maybe you'd be interested in the 'prejudices' I had before coming to the U.S.A. I must be frank, I had many. I thought of the American people as a consuming society. They try to get as much money as possible to buy all the things industry offers them, I thought.

"But I realized that we find this 'consumer society' mostly in centers like Disneyland or Universal studios which is like mass-amusement."

"An American, who stayed a year in Germany told me that he thinks if you've got a friend in Germany it'll be for your whole life,

but in America it'll only be for a short while. I can't prove what he told me, but I think Americans live more on the surface and let the life pass sooner without thinking, and I think all Europeans have got a more serious way of thinking. It's a pity that we can't use always the slogan 'take it easy.'"

Dieter Henne: "The people in Eugene do not have so many prejudices as the Germans about strange visitors; they like to talk with them. In Germany, the people do not like to associate with foreign visitors. They would like to sit at a table by themselves.

"If they do not know a person, they try to have a distance from them. The people here always keep smiling. Therefore it is very difficult to know where I am standing when I have to talk with Americans."

Reinhard Bernard: "What first astonished me were the many different races, the dimensions of the buildings and streets, the wide open country and the big dis-

tances from place to place. Everyone is able to have his own freedom in his house beside his neighbor, no one disturbs him.

"In America it is also normal to get invitations every day. People are always going to undertake something together like parties, barbecues, traveling...whatever. At first a German cannot imagine these facts. Later he enjoys it. Although people are very friendly and open-minded, a foreigner notes that there is something wrong with the education. I think it is too puritan and too conservative. Also young people are very cautious to show feelings (it has nothing to do with 'friendly feelings') corresponding to their education."

Hartmut Grieneisen: "I myself am studying at the University of Bonn, and therefore I can compare the universities. If you attend the university in Bonn you notice that all the buildings are spread over the city. They are not concentrated on a campus. If the univer-

sity needs more rooms for more students it rents some houses if there is enough money. Otherwise more students have to use the same number of rooms. Regarding the costs, I have to mention that studying in Germany is totally free. All you have to do is pass your "Abitur" to qualify. Each university offers a certain percentage of its maximum student number to foreign students even if German students have better test averages.

"Obviously it is impossible for a German student to study in America if he is not rich enough or doesn't have a scholarship. I was astonished when I heard that there are plenty of students at-

tending the American universities who are not able to write or read. This would be impossible at German universities."

Manfred Fischer: "We don't have to pay for going to school and so we can use our vacations for traveling or whatever we want to do, while over here the students mostly have to work so they can afford to live a student life. So it seems to me that to be a student in the United States is harder than to be a student in Germany, but I do not know the substance and difficulty of what they have to learn and if it is more or less difficult than what the German students have to learn."

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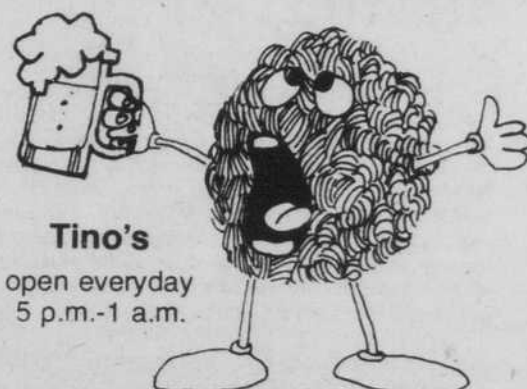
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