

# Julius G. – USA – Wills Point Newsletter

Julius G. verbrachte in 2013 ein Schulhalbjahr in Wills Point, Texas. Von seinen Erlebnissen und dem Alltag in seiner neuen Heimat berichtete er regelmäßig in seinem Newsletter.

## Update #1

Hello everybody,

And welcome to my brand new USA Wills Point Newsletter! As many of you should know, I'm right now in Wills Point, Texas, where I will stay for the next six months. I arrived last Saturday and my host family picked me up in Dallas Fort Worth after a 24-hours-trip from Berlin with 7 hours staying in Newark.

My host family, Mark Pemberton and Johnny Robinson, lives five miles away from a little town called Wills Point, which has nearly 4.000 inhabitants. Wills Point is in Texas and an hour away from Dallas. My host parents have a son, Terrin, who goes to college in Dallas.

I will go to the Wills Point High School and I will be a sophomore (that means I will be in 10th grade). I joined the marching band and that is why I am already here (school starts at August 26). The Tiger Band is one of the best in Texas and they have something like a band camp in the last three weeks of the summer vacation. So every day during the week I have to wake up at 6 a.m., because the camp starts at 7 a.m. But I love it! It is so much fun! I play Baritone here, which is like a big trumpet, and it's kind of funny because I still try to figure out how to play the right music, but it is a whole lot of fun.

Last Sunday we went to Johnnys mother and I met besides her Jamie, the sister of Johnny, and her children and grand children. Everyone here is so friendly to me and they try to speak slowly so I understand them. Especially Mark and Johnny help me a lot.



We also were in the cinema and we saw "Percy Jackson - sea of monsters". I really love that movie and the funny thing is that you in Germany have to wait a few days to watch it. On Friday we went to the Hawaii Falls Water Park, where you can swim in a wave swimming pool and slide waterslides around. It was so much fun!!!

So I think I've written all you should know. If you have any questions, just write me an email or send me a message on facebook. :-D

Best regards, Julius

## Update #2 – Sunday, August 25, 2013

Hello everybody,

It's time for another Wills Point update!!! The last two weeks passed by really fast because so many things happened.

The band camp was even more fun in the second week. We practiced our show a lot, which we will perform at some competitions in October. The theme of our show is "paradise" and the music is from different famous themes like from "Fuer Elise" from Beethoven. It's really funny to march to such music! I already found some friends in band and that's really good, because when school starts I already have some friends. There will be five exchange students from Germany in Wills Point and I'm really glad that I have already found friends because probably all the exchange students will stick together. But I'm here to learn the American culture, not to learn something about Germans.



Last Monday we had an assembly for the teachers, where we played with the band and it was the first time we actually played in front of other people. It was a whole lot of fun. We also got our uniforms last week and they took pictures of the whole band. And last Thursday we had a parent meeting, where we played the first and the second parts of the paradise show in the gym.

With Mark and Johnny I can do many activities, we went to an Antiques store and we watch many movies. Because Mark is one of the area representatives of the student exchange organization and that's why I meet a lot of exchange students, because Mark has to see if everything is ok with them. I'm kind of his secretary now, so I work for my food. Last Friday Mark took me to his work in Dallas (he works for the sheriff's department) and I had the chance to see a little bit of downtown Dallas. I went to the 6th floor museum, a museum with an exhibition of John F. Kennedy's death in Dallas. It was really interesting and I also could see some scenes of Kennedy's speech in Berlin in 1963.

School starts tomorrow and I'm really excited! I met my counselor Ms. Boyd and I got my schedule. We have eight periods every day. My schedule is:

- 1st and 2nd period: Marching Band
- 3rd period: US History
- 4th period: Professional Communication (Training for my debating)
- 5th period: Spanish 1
- 6th period: Pre Calculator (math)
- 7th period: Forensic science (I don't know exactly what that is, but If I understood right you're doing kind of police stuff there, so I guess it will be really cool.)
- 8th period: English 3 (That's normally for juniors, but Ms. Boyd meant that would be fine for me...)

So I think that's all you have to know right now! If you have any questions or comments, just write me! (I would prefer if you write in English, but you don't have to.)

Best regards, Julius

## Update #3 – Saturday, September 7, 2013

Hello everybody!

The last two week passed by so fast, I can't believe that I'm already five weeks here!

School started on Monday the 26th of August. In the last Update I told you which classes I would take, but I switched a few of them. So that's my new schedule:

- 1st period: Marching Band
- 2nd period: Marching Band
- 3rd period: Spanish 2 (usually you take Spanish 1 first, but because of Latin and French it's not a problem for me)
- 4th period: Professional Communication
- 5th period: US History AP (AP means that it is an advanced class)
- 6th period: Precalculus PreAP
- 7th period: Government AP (I used to have Forensic Science in 7th period, but it was simply boring so I changed it.)
- 8th period: English 3



You have those eight periods every day, school is from 08:05 am until 03:57 pm. Every period is 47 minutes long and you have four minutes to run to your next class. Don't ask me why the times are so strange, but you can believe me you really have to run to your classes. My counsellor Ms. Boyd put me up as a junior and again don't ask me why. So I'm in 11th grade now, but I have sophomore (Spanish 2), junior (English 3) and senior classes (Precalculus PreAP, Government AP) and the other classes include more than one grade.



I have to be in school every morning at 07:00 am for band practice, so I have to get up at 05:30. I know it sounds bad, but it's worth it. Band is so much fun!!! We practice on the parking space or on the football field and I found many really good friends in band.

Spanish 2 is really funny, because all of the students already had Spanish last year, but all of them know as much as I know of Spanish - nothing.

In Professional Communication we learn some stuff about different types of communication and how they are used, and we already had a test.

After 4th period we have tutorials, which is just hanging out with your fourth period class.

US History AP is one of my favorite classes. Our teacher Mr. Chalk knows everything about History in general and has written three books and one will be published in October. We already had two tests in History.

After 24 minutes History we have lunch and I sit on a table with other band kids. Lunch is always fun and the food is good too. Since we have styrofoam plates, I would love to do a food fight, but I'm afraid to start because I would probably have to go back to Germany then. I think I'll start a food fight on my last school day in January... ;-)

After lunch we have 36 minutes of History left and then I have Precalculus PreAP, which is math. It's pretty easy because we do stuff I did last year in Germany. The teacher, Ms. Nottingham is really nice and a good friend of my host dads.

In 7th period I have Government AP and this class is a lot of fun. We learn a lot of the American politics and politics in general and the teacher Mrs. Lane is very enthusiastic, but in a good way.

In my last period I have English 3 with Mrs. Garvin. In the moment we read the book "Of Mice And Men".

After school I usually have band practice again, or I ride the school bus home. Then I'll do my homework, we have dinner and watch TV or I learn for the test.

As you can see, I'm really busy, but I don't have a chance to get bored. (and I don't like to get bored...)

On Fridays we have football games and even if our football team is not that good, the Wills Point Tiger Band is! (by the way, we totally messed up last friday with our show) Nothing is more fun than a football game where we play with the band in the stands. We have had two games yet and we won one and lost the other one. By the way, the girls here are very relaxed. Last night at the football game some guys from the band of the other high school came over to our side and one girl, who I've never met before, said to me: "You're hot. I wish we had hot guys in our band. Can I have your cell phone number?" And of course I gave it to her... :-)

On Labor Day weekend we had a free Monday. Mark, Johnny, Terrin and me drove to Houston. We met Jimmy, Johnny's twin brother, his two daughters Ashley and Jasmine, Ashley's husband Judd and



their three daughters Hadley, Harper (twins, 6) and Tenley (18 months). We went to the ocean one day and I love the water there. It's warm and it's a really good feeling to know that at home in Germany everyone has to work and you can have just another vacation day. ;-) The next day we went to the Johnson Space Center in Houston and we saw the original control center where the famous words "Houston, we have a problem." took place. It was very interesting and fun weekend and I'm really glad that I had the chance to meet more of the Robinson family.



Today I made a tour with Mark and Meme Dixon, my Area Representative and Regional Manager. She lives in Wills Point too and she is a very, very nice woman. Because Mark is also an Area Representative, they always drive together to the different exchange students and their host families. It's very cool to meet all those students and I help Mark and Meme a little bit, so I still work for my food. ;-) And Johnny makes cookies and cakes all the time and I'm the only one who can eat them because my host dads are on a diet.

I hope that all of you are fine, I miss you all really much. I love Texas and I have the best time of my life here!!!

Best regards to all of you, Julius

## Update #4

Hello everybody,

It's time for the news!

School is going well and most of the subjects are pretty easy, only for the AP-classes we have very much to read, sometimes 60 pages per week. Government, US History and Precalculus are still my favorite classes, we are not that many students in those classes and the teachers can concentrate on every student. Here in the United States you have a lot more tests than in Germany, in some classes every week! All in all school is a whole lot of fun and I learn many things that I would never learn in Germany.

Marching Band is simply the best! We still practice every morning at 07:00 am during the week and most of the time after school, and it is so much fun with the other band kids! I am really looking forward not only to every football game, but also to



the contest season in October. It's also very cool that I can play another instrument now besides the trombone, and the only thing that is not good about playing the baritone is that it is so heavy, but who cares. ;-)

I joined the Drama Club of the Wills Point High School and we will have a show of one act plays in December. I participate in one play as an actor and in another one as a director. The one in which I am one of the actors is called "If men would play cards like women do" and includes a story where four men are playing poker, but like women do. We haven't had a rehearsal yet, but I will tell you as soon as I can when we will start. The play in which I participate as a director is the well-known "Dinner for one". I direct it with a girl from band, who is also the vice president of the Drama Club. Of course I don't have much experience in being a director, but the girl said that the play will be wonderful and I am sure I will enjoy it.

I also will get into student counsel, but I have to do ten hours of community service first and I am working on that right now. I am really interested in how they organize student activities over here and I probably can use some things for our student counsel in Germany when I come back.



The Friday is my favorite day of the week because the only thing you think about the whole day is the football game in the evening. Every Friday we have a theme after which you dress to support the tigers. Last week we had the theme "Tack the panthers" and this week's theme was "Black out the bears". (The panthers and the bears are the teams which we played against on this day.) So for the first theme everyone dressed tacky and for the second theme everyone wore black clothes. It is really funny to see all the students looking different on the Friday and of course I was dressed tacky and black too.

After school on Fridays we always have the pep rally, where all the students come into the gym and the football team runs around, and the cheer leaders are cheering and the band plays and everybody is excited. Every time a guy runs a round with the "spirit flag" with the tiger on it and who of the freshmen, the sophomores, the juniors, the seniors or the band screams loudest gets the spirit flag. Last time we won! Also every week the "tigers of the week" are crowned, and those are the boy and the girl who had the best costume on the Friday.

And if you believe it or not, I was tiger of the week on the "Black out" day! All the lights were off and most of the students wore black clothes, and because I had nothing else, I wore my suit and a black shirt and then they called my name and the whole band was screaming! It was really cool and I had to go into the middle of the field so that everybody could see me.

After the pep rally most of the time the band kids drive to Sonic or other restaurant to get something to eat and then if it's a home game we go to our field, if it's an away game we take the yellow school



busses to the other high school. Last Friday it was raining almost during the entire day and we couldn't perform our show, but there is nothing more fun than playing in the stands when it's sprinkling.

As you have read, I feel awesome here in the United States of America and my high school year couldn't be better! I hope you all are alright and you have a great time too.

Best regards, Julius

## Update #5

Hello everybody,

I'm so sorry that this Newsletter arrives you later than usual, I was just really busy the last few weeks. But I didn't forget you!

The last three weeks were awesome and full of adventures, new experiences and fun!

School continues to be great! The classes are very interesting, especially US History and Government, although there is a lot to study for both classes. Usually we have to read one chapter every week, which is around 30 pages. You see that school can be hard here in the advanced classes, but they are also small classes and it's always fun.

On Friday the 27th of September we had another Football-Friday and the pep rally theme in this week was "Double up the Eagles". That means it was "Twin Day" and everyone had a twin who dressed the same. Taylor, a Colorguard from band, and me decided to be twins because her hairstyle is pretty much the same as mine. We wore red pants and Taylor made us shirts with our names on it. It was a really funny day.



The next week was Homecoming week, so we had a dress code every day. Monday was College day, so everyone wore shirts and hoodies of their favorite college. I wore a shirt of the Lee University that I got from the host sister of my sister Johanna. On Tuesday we had "too fancy Tuesday" and I wore my suit and my tie. It was really funny to see everyone so fancy the whole day. The next day was "Western Wednesday" and I borrowed a cowboy hat from my host dads. On Thursday we had "superhero day" and I was dressed as Supergerman! It was pretty funny because it was October 3 - the day of the German unity and I was all dressed up in black, red and yellow. On Friday it was "pink out day" and because I didn't have anything in pink I just took a white shirt and wrote the word "pink" on it. (I know, very creative.)

On the same day we had Homecoming at the Wills Point High School. Many people came to the football game to support the tigers and between second and third quarter the homecoming queen was announced. Of course it was a girl from band, she had more than a hundred votes behind her. Another

big thing that you only have in Texas is that when two people have a date on the homecoming day, the guy buys a mum for the girl and the girl buys a garter for the guy. It was so much fun!!!

Also last week the contest season started for our band. The first contest was canceled a few performances after our show because we had a thunder storm. So there was no way that the other bands could perform. For the second contest on last Saturday we had to be at our high school at 6:00 am. We drove to the Allen stadium, one of the biggest high school stadiums in America. The Allen High School also has the biggest marching band in America, it has more than 800 members! Our performance was really good and we got first place in our class (it depends on how big your school is in which class you are). We also got the prizes for best musical performance, for best visual performance and for the best general effect in our class. It was a wonderful day and I will never forget it!



As you can see, my life here is wonderful! I have the best host family you can have, I'm in the best school and in the best marching band! I love America and I don't regret a moment I am here!

Best regards, Julius

## Update #6

Hello everyone,

It is time that you get new news from abroad! Life over here in Texas is never boring and I have so many amazing experiences and I get to meet so many great people!

The first half of my time in the United States is already over and although of course I am happy to come back to my family and friends in Germany, I am already sad that I have to leave my family and friends here, they are simply the best and we are having so much fun together!!! But now you will get more specific news...

A few weeks ago we had a Pizza-Party with the entire marching band because our band director Mr. Young had promised us a Pizza-Party if every band member would pass his classes. That is very important for the band, when one does not pass his classes he would not be allowed to perform at contests or football games and the whole band performance would have holes in its lines. For 17 years there was always at least one band member who failed classes, but this year for the first time since Mr. Young teaches at the Wills Point High School everybody passed. I bet it is the good German influence... So Mr. Young had to pay pizza for the entire band, we watched a movie and we had a lot of fun!



It is getting colder here and we do not have shorts-weather anymore. The marching band season is almost over, but we had two more contests in October which we successfully absolved. It was a lot of fun to perform in front of a huge audience and we had the great chance to see some big bands which have an awesome sound and also more possibilities in their performance than we do. We don't have early band practice anymore, only on Thursdays to practice for the football games. I know it sounds awkward, but I already miss it. I know marching practice at 7:15 a.m. every morning does not sound like fun, but once you got used to it, you really enjoy it!

We had the last official football game at the beginning of November, but the football team made it to the play-offs, so we will probably have another game. We had two very exciting and nerve-cracking games which I will tell you about. The first game was 8th grade night, which means that all the 8th graders of the Junior High School band member are going to the stands with the marching band and play with them during the game. The band directors want to show them how much fun we have, so that they will join the marching band next year when they are coming to the high school. Because we had a lot more people than usual we were able to play very loud and of course we used our chance...

Maybe because of the big energy of the band the football team was energetic too, they played better than usual (and we usually lose really bad). Of course most of the people try to think positive about the games, but it is sometimes very difficult. Not at this game though, we had more points than the other team at half time. In the third quarter the other team was better and in the last minute we had 42 points, the other team had 49. Although it was not my first football game, I still do not get all the rules and tactics of the game. However, in the last minute we got a touchdown, which gave us six points, and we also got the extra points so at the very end we won the game with 50 points to 49 points for the other team!!!

The other game was the last official football game and it was senior night, which means that all the seniors, who are in athletic teams, the band, the cheerleaders or the drill team of the school, walk over the field before the game and they call their name and they get honored for what they did during



their time in the teams they joined. Because I, as a foreign exchange student, can't graduate here, I was considered a senior and got honored too. Many seniors started crying because it was the last football game and I was pretty sad too, the football games had always been so much fun!

The first two quarters of the game were pretty good for our team – at half time we had the same number of points like the other team. The band in the stands had fun the entire time, we were playing and cheering and singing... In the half time we had the performance of our Paradise show as usual and because we didn't know if we would go to the play-offs (the football team had to win this game) many of us thought it was the last performance this year. Many seniors started crying before the show, and the Baritone-Section, under the lead of a senior named William, who had become one of my best friends here, prayed together. It was a very beautiful moment, although kind of melancholic.

The performance was one of the best we ever had and it was a lot of fun!!! After it we had the 3rd quarter for free time as always and in the last quarter the band returned to the stands. We played almost the entire time all the songs we have ever played. The other team had a few more points than we had, but in the last minutes both our team and the other team had 34 points. And in this very last minute our team did another touchdown and we won with 41:34. That is why we are going to the play-offs and it wasn't the last game...

The whole month of October was about Halloween. Every house was decorated, the school too and everybody was all excited about it. I went to several parties around this time. At one party at a friend's we watched very scary movies the entire time and I was really worried about having night mares this night. Another party was at our house with all the exchange students and some of their friends.



My host dad as Area Representative and my Regional Manager Mimi are both responsible for a lot of exchange students and a lot of them came. We played several games, had dinner together and also took a hay ride together. A hay ride is a traditional Texan Halloween activity where people take a ride on a tractor with a trailer which has hay on it and others try to scare them during the ride. Of course it was dark and so you could also scare people who were on the trailer... ;-)

The weekend after Halloween I had a Harry Potter Marathon at our house with some of my friends. It took us the entire weekend to watch all eight of them, but it was totally worth it! My friends are awesome and we had a lot of fun together! Another Halloween tradition of Wills Point is the Thriller Dance with the Drill Team and all students who want to join at the Pep Rally in the Halloween week. I joined it with some other band kids and we already had a lot of fun together when we practiced it, but the performance at the Pep Rally was the best. We all looked (or were supposed to look) like zombies in black clothes and we even had a Michael Jackson, who was played by a freshman band member. It was really funny and embarrassing! ;-)

For Student Council I worked two times in the concession stands during a Junior High Football game and a Volleyball game. We sell snacks and drinks there and the money goes to our charity project. It is a lot of fun, although it really is hard work. Another school event I enjoyed was the play of the Drama Club which is called "Arsenic and Old Lace" and is about two old women who kill lonely men by

poisoning the wine of the victims. It was really funny and played by very talented actors. You would never think that they are only normal students!

My host dads, my host brother and I also went to a family reunion of Mark's family. It was a lot of good food there and it was very interesting and nice to meet more of the Pembertons who also have descendants who came over from Germany a long time ago. Mark is in Italy right now because he won a trip to there because he works for the Exchange Organization. Johnny and I went to a "Fight Diabetes"-Run in Dallas where the Company Cash America which Johnny works for gave out frisbees, bags and other stuff with the Company's name on it. It was a lot of fun!!!



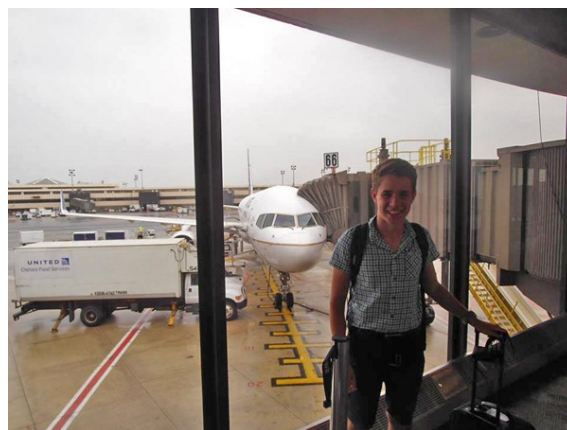
As you can see again, life is really not getting boring at all and I have so much fun here. The Americans are awesome and I will keep on enjoying my time as long as I can!!! The Thanksgiving and Christmas time is coming now and I am really excited about that! (You can already see the first Christmas trees in the shops...)

Best regards, Julius

## Update #7

And here comes the news:

As I told you in the last Newsletter, the Wills Point High School football team would go to the play-offs. The play-offs are football games that follow the ten mandatory games and you only can go to play-offs if you beat a certain number of teams within your district. Our football team won enough games, so we had another football game, which I was very excited about. Marching band is now a passion for me, every Football-Friday was just so much fun!



The football team played against the team that we played against in the first game of this season, we had lost 54:14. So nobody expected our team to win, but after they made two touchdowns in the first five minutes everyone was really excited and we even saw a chance to win and to go on to the next play-off game. During the halftime we didn't perform our general show, but we performed only a part of it together with two other songs and during the last song we were allowed to dance and clap and cheer, which is normally a total no-go for marching bands, discipline is the first rule.

It was a great experience, although totally different from our normal procedure. And the best came at the end of our performance: We ran off the field! And while doing so something fun happened. Well, not exactly fun, but... A Tuba fell on the ground, and a Bass-Drum (a really big drum) fell over the



Tuba. They were lucky that they didn't get hurt! After the halftime the band returned to the stands and we had a lot of fun and played a lot of cheer songs. Unfortunately, we lost the game with the end score 54:49. It was so close! Well, now the football season is really over and I will miss it!

But of course there are a lot of other things that keep me busy! The band is now divided in the Symphonic Band (the better band) and in the Concert Band and we play our concert horns again, which means that I finally play trombone again and not the baritone anymore. For the Band division we had auditions and I did pretty well, but because I leave in January, the band directors decided not to put me into the Symphonic Band, so now I am the first chair (which means the best player) in Concert Band. Every morning we have two hours of practice and it is a lot of fun, although I think I prefer marching band. ;-)

And of course a big holiday was coming up... No, not Christmas, but Thanksgiving! This holiday, which is celebrated to thank the Indians for helping the pioneers to learn getting food, is the best invention ever!!! Not only you have an entire week before the Christmas time starts to buy presents, decorate and prepare everything for Christmas, but you also get to eat the best food of the year. And a lot of it!

The mother of my host dad Johnny came a week before the actual Thanksgiving-Day, which is always the last Thursday of November, to help us preparing the food because the whole family would come to our house. It was the best day of my entire time here! We had of course the famous Thanksgiving-Turkey, ham, Mashed Potatoes, Cornbread Dressing, Broccoli-Rice-Cheese-Casserole, Roasted Root Vegetables, Macaroni and Cheese, Asparagus, and A TON OF PIES: Pecan-Pie, Buttermilk-Pie, Lemon-Pie, Pumpkin-Pie, Cranberry-Bread, Banana-Bread, Cranberry-Jalapenos-Bread, and so on... I have never eaten that much in my life!!! It was AWESOME!!! If you really like food, immediately send an application to be an exchange student in the United States!!!



Also a big event connected to Thanksgiving is Black Friday: A Day on which all stores have huge sales and you lose the weight that you gained at Thanksgiving by running through Walmart like any other crazy American just to get your favorite DVD for two Dollars less. We had a lot of fun, but after we had found our DVD's the lines at the check-outs were just too long!

The day after Thanksgiving we also went to the grandmother of my other host dad Mark, where we had another Thanksgiving-Party with a lot of food: Barbecue-Brisket, Sausage, Potatoes, Beans, Potato-Salad, Vegetables... and again: PIES and CAKES and CANDY: Buttermilk-Pie, Pecan-Pie, Coconut-Cake, German Chocolate Cake (No, not from Germany, but the inventor's name was German :-D ), Chocolate-Peanut-Clusters, Peanut Brittle... Well, I hope you are hungry and jealous now, because you have all reason to be!!! Thanksgiving was an absolutely amazing experience and is my favorite holiday from now on!

Of course now the Christmas time begins and although we for sure will not have snow here, everybody is decorating their houses and the stores are full of Christmas stuff. We already put up the Christmas tree in our house and decorated it. My host dads used to have a real tree, but their son is allergic to real Christmas trees, so they have a plastic tree now. Some people here actually have the

Christmas tree out the entire year! A unique thing here in Texas is of course the Christmas-Cowboy-Stuff like Cowboy Santa Claus or a Cowboy Snowman. Absolutely cool!!!

We already had the first Christmas-Party too! It was the Christmas-Party for the employees of the company my host dad works for and their families. My host dad is a store manager of a pawn store, where they basically sell and buy second-hand ware. For the Christmas-Party they had Casino tables everywhere and because you didn't play with real money, I was allowed to play too.

We won a lot and for every 5,000 fake dollars that we won we got one ticket for a lottery where you could win things like TVs, PlayStations and Laptops. And we won a Laptop! I love that kind of Christmas-Parties! ;-)

As you can see again, I have a wonderful and amazing time here full of fun and experiences and I'm really sad that I have to leave in January! I enjoy my time here and hope that y'all have a wonderful Christmas time!

Best regards, Julius

P.S.: You will get new pictures later!

## Update #8

Hello everybody,

It's time for my very last newsletter from Texas! More weeks full of amazing experiences and activities passed and there is a lot I have to tell you about.

I will start with my Drama Club activities: we had the 10-Minute-Play-Festival, where I directed the in Germany very popular "Dinner for one" with my friend Katlyn, who is also in Band. For the Festival four different groups prepared four different plays, which were not longer than 15 minutes. "Dinner for one" did not only seem to fit perfectly for the amount of time we had, but it gave me also the chance to show the Americans a part of the German culture. We only had two weeks of rehearsals because we started pretty late, but we had a lot of fun.



My best friend William played the butler and after the original Miss Sophie had dropped out, we had to get another Miss Sophie, who we luckily found quickly. The only problem was, that we didn't have time for a rehearsal with both actors before the actual performance! Luckily, as most of you might know, the butler gets drunk during the play and therefore we could let the actors improvise a lot, since the Americans don't know the original version of the play. The performance was hilarious, although not even close to the original or the script, but the audience enjoyed it a lot!!!

We also had several activities with Student Council during the Christmas time. First we had the White Gift Service in school, which was a service where we collected canned food for less wealthy people and we also collected money for our Angel Tree Project. They had a play of Nativity scene (the birth of

Jesus Christ) and it was really nice to get into the Christmas Spirit in this way. We also sang several songs, and one they asked me to play on the piano. It was really cool because it was actually the German Christmas song "Ihr Kinderlein kommet", but only my band director knew it was German.

In the last week of school before Christmas break Student Council skipped one day of school to go shopping for the Angel Tree Project. This project makes it possible that children who come from low income families get Christmas presents. Student Council had collected money the whole school year long by working in concession stands, selling popcorn and pickles and doing so many other activities, so that we were able to buy presents for more than fifty kids!!! It was an amazing feeling to see that all the work paid off and that we could make so many kids happy.

Of course we still had school and as it is in Germany, we had a lot of tests before Christmas break! So we all had a lot to study, but of course we also had a lot of fun in the classes. Government is still my favorite subject, it is a small class, interesting and really funny. In Band we are now divided in Concert Band and Symphonic Band and I really enjoy playing the trombone again in Concert Band. But we also had another (and unfortunately my last) marching experience because we marched in the Wills Point Christmas Parade.

We played a marching version of Jingle Bells through the whole parade and we had a lot of fun! It was so great to be able to march one more time, although my marching horn was heavier than usual because we had a decoration contest in band. Who was the most creative with decorating their marching horn would win a restaurant gift card and the day before the parade my host dad Mark and me went to the dollar store and bought a bunch of Christmas decoration stuff. That evening somehow we were very creative so when we were done with the decorations I had a small Christmas tree on my Baritone. On the next day I won the contest, but the marching was tiring because those decorations were heavy!!!

Christmas time all in all was just an amazing experience here and I really enjoyed being here during that time. Every house was decorated - outside and inside - and between classes you could listen to Christmas music in school. The school was of course decorated too and on TV you could watch one Christmas movie after the other.





My host dad Johnny baked a lot of cookies during that time and I tried to make some German Christmas cookies by myself, but I failed pretty often. What I did bake was the gingerbread house - a family tradition from Germany - and I decorated it a lot (according to the It's-Texas-Think-BIG-Principle). ;-) We also had a Christmas party with all the exchange students in the region and it was fun to meet more people from other countries!

Of course Christmas itself is celebrated differently here too: On Christmas Eve we were having a party at our house and some family and some friends came and we had a lot of fun eating, talking and playing games. On December the 25th when I woke up in the morning, we had breakfast together and then it was present time!!! Here it works like this: Everybody gets his present from underneath the Christmas tree and when everybody has his presents, all start unwrapping them at the same time. It is a huge chaos, but so much fun!!! I love Christmas here and really enjoyed the Christmas time with my host dads Mark and Johnny.



On New Year's Eve Mark and I (Johnny was sick) went to a New Year's Eve party at a friend's house, who also hosted a student from Germany, and another exchange student, also from Germany, came to the party too. We had a lot of food, including some German dishes, and we watched "Dinner for one" of course. Around midnight the two German girls and I were going outside to celebrate the New Year. At midnight we didn't see firework, but we were able to see a beautiful sky full of stars. A little bit different than New Year's Eve in Berlin! Later we tried to blow up the gingerbread house with firecrackers - also a family tradition from Germany -, but we only got a hole into the roof of it. All in all a wonderful way to start the New Year!

After the Christmas break I had two more weeks of school - my last ones! In the last week of the semester we had final exams, but you don't have to take them if you are making a good great in the class and if you weren't absent for a certain amount of time. So luckily I didn't have to take the exams, but we still had some class tests to take... On my last school day we had a party in my Government class that I had no idea about because somehow they were able to plan it secretly. I was really happy about the idea and we had a lot of fun!

My mom came over from Germany to pick me up and to see everything I experienced. We have a lot of fun together with my host dads and it is great that I can show my mom all the places that I have been to here. We had a little concert for her and Mark with the Concert Band in school on my last day and went to several other places. To give my mom the real feeling of Texan life style we went to a Rodeo with her and since I've never been to one before it was very exciting and fun! My mom and I



are going to go to New York for a week before we finally go back to Germany.

All in all I can just say what an amazing time I had here in Texas!!! From the hottest days in August through the coldest days in December through the warm weather we have now it has been an awesome experience. I cannot thank the people enough who made these five months incredible. Most of all I was blessed to have my wonderful and caring host dads Johnny and Mark without whom I wouldn't have had a chance to experience that much and to have such an awesome time!!! I will never forget the best adventure in my life that I could not even imagine being better!!!

Love y'all!!!

Julius