

011125 Are those cornflakes crispy enough?

The Thanksgiving dinner that we held last Friday turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to share the holiday with our friends. In total, there were 18 people at the dinner and it was a lot of fun. I know that I was looking forward to it all week. What was neat was that the others were as well. For example, my friend Florence from France was really cute and was very excited to have the chance to experience Thanksgiving. But, she wondered, could we possibly find a turkey and pumpkin pie? (Most people know what is traditionally served at Thanksgiving dinner, but not the reason for the holiday.)

Micah, Leslie and I planned to meet on Friday in the afternoon to go and purchase the chickens and other ingredients that we would need for the main courses of the meal. But, on Friday morning, I was sitting in the classroom talking with one of my Danish friends about turkeys. He told me that the Danes do eat turkey, especially around Christmas, so surely we should be able to find a bird somewhere. I quickly called Micah and we agreed to scour the town to find a bird. Here is pretty much how it went down:

13:00 I left school to look for a turkey

14:00 After checking the more expensive stores and department stores, still no luck.

14:05 I find a 15kg turkey (more than 30 lbs)

14:10 I am still staring at the size of this thing. Can you believe it, a 30 lb turkey? In Denmark?

14:15 I reserve a 6 kg bird (any bigger and we would have no hope to cook it in time) and call Micah to let him know that I am coming early so that we have enough time to cook. (The mobile proved to be very handy, but I don't want to see the bill from this month).

15:00 I arrive at the kollegium and after prepping the bird, it goes in the oven.

The dinner was delicious. In addition to the turkey, we bought a chicken, made stuffing from scratch as well as potatoes. Our guests brought tons of desserts, wine, beans, appetizers and lots of other great dishes. We had used Yahoo Invites to invite everyone, so they could see what food items we needed when they accepted which worked out well. We explained the meaning of Thanksgiving and then settled down to a long dinner that lasted until the last bus, around midnight.

We had so much fun that Micah and I think that we will start making up US holidays so that we can have excuse to hold more dinners next semester.

Tourist

For the past few weekends, I have been playing the tourist in Copenhagen by visiting the museums and sites. Two weekends ago, Leslie, Santiago and I went to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek which is a museum that is free on Sundays. The museum has a ton of Greek, Egyptian and Roman sculptures. Sculpture is not my favorite medium, but there were several extraordinary pieces including a large collection by Rodin (The Kiss, The Thinker). We also went over to the Rundetårn (round tower) which offers the best vantage point from which to admire the city's red-tiled rooftops and abundant church spires. What makes the tower unique and what gives the tower its round shape is that instead of a flight of stairs to get to the top, there is a ramp that spirals up the center of

the tower. The ramp was built so that the king at the time of the construction could ride his horse up to the top rather than to have to walk.

Last weekend, we set out for Roskilde which was Denmark's first capital. It is home to the Roskilde Domkirke which is a beautiful cathedral dating back to 1170. Inside are the crypts of 37 Danish kings and queens, some of which are spectacularly embellished. The city is also home to the Vikingskibshallen, Viking museum. The centerpieces of the museum are five reconstructed Viking ships which were excavated from the bottom of the harbor. It took the dedicated archeologists 20 years to recover the wooden ships and to treat the wood so that the ships could be reconstructed. And in June of each year, is the Roskilde Festival, which is Northern Europe's largest music festival. Tickets are limited to the first 80,000 people, so plan ahead. All proceeds go to charity.

Sounds good

Last week, my Sound and Vibration class took a field trip to visit the headquarters of a company called Bruel & Kjaer. B&K is located about 10 minutes from DTU and they are one of the world's dominant manufacturers of measurement devices and analyzers for sound and vibration and acoustic applications. For example, they make microphones and accelerometers for measurements. Their products are very good, but very expensive. Simple microphones can cost upwards from \$750 each.

B&K has their own "university" where people from all over the world come for seminars about sound and vibration or how to use the B&K equipment. The list of clients includes companies that you would expect such as all of the automotive companies and Harley Davidson. Harley Davidson has registered the sound of their motorcycles because they believe that it gives them a distinctive edge in the market. Likewise, the automotive companies such as Ford or Opel spend a lot of time analyzing automotive sounds such as the sound of a closing door to make sure that it creates the sound that customers expect. The sound of a closing door is actually a big issue because a Mercedes or a Volvo should sound like an expensive car and not like the cheap construction of a Yugo.

Another customer is Kellogg's, which I found to be very interesting. Kellogg's spends a lot of energy making sure that their cornflakes have a distinctive crunch when you eat them. So they conduct experiments where they roll a roller over cornflakes and measure the sound. Soda companies, too are concerned about the sound of their products. They measure the sound produced by pouring the soda into a glass to make sure that Coke or Pepsi have a distinct sound. It boggles the mind to think of how much effort goes into sounds that most people wouldn't even think twice about.

It is drawing near

It is hard to believe, but I have less than two weeks of classes left. This semester has flown by. It seems like I have been here for quite a while, but at the same time, it has only been three months.

My grades for the semester will be determined by the exams which are coming up in December. I have three exams because the wind turbine class grade is based solely projects. Basically, I will have four hours for each class to determine my grade because this is the only test that I have in each class. Needless to say, this is a bit stressful. I really prefer the US system of having tests throughout the semester so that you can get a feel for how the professor tests, but we will see what happens.

Like my exams at Washington University, the exams are open book, open notes. Unlike the exams at Washington University, your grades are posted in the main student building along with your name. There is one really, really long wall where all of the grades from all of the classes will be posted. There isn't a secret code used so that others can not figure out who you are. There is your name and grade for all to see, which is a bit unnerving.

The grade that you receive is a number between 0 and 13 where 13 is given for an exceptionally original and excellent performance. Some of my Danish friends have only received one 13 in their life. Most people get 9's which is given for a good performance which is slightly above average and is equivalent to a B in the US. A 6 is equivalent to an E in the US.

For now, I am in the midst of finishing my projects for Sound and Vibration. These also factor into my grade somehow. I will be very excited once these beasts are done and we hand them in tomorrow.

Have a great week,

Jeff

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