

Foreign Exchange Student from Bad Camberg Simone Martin Visits Texas

My wife and I (Michael and Diane Friske) were in Europe in late summer in 2008. During our travels we had the opportunity to visit Franz Peter Martin and his family in Bad Camberg, Germany. At a garden party at his home one evening, we met Franz Peter's brother, Andreas, and his niece (Andreas' daughter), Simone. Simone was interested in becoming a foreign exchange student either in France or in the United States. We talked with her about the United States, and I guess we made a favorable impression because she decided to come to the United States. We agreed to help her find a family to stay with, but in the end she chose to stay with us.



So, on August 17, 2009, Simone arrived at the Dallas / Fort Worth airport after a long flight from Germany. The next day we enrolled her in Red Oak High School, help her purchases uniforms for school, and introduced her to the Red Oak High School band director. The next day she started marching practice with the band. The band had already been practicing for over 2 weeks, so she had quite a bit to learn in a very short time. On top of that, Simone was not familiar with high school marching bands or American football. Despite that, she worked hard and was marching with the band by the middle of September.

School started the following Monday, August 24. Simone's class in Bad Camberg only has 23 students, and the students stay in the same classroom through the school day. Each teacher comes into the classroom to teach their subject. Imagine how it must have felt to suddenly be in a school with around 1,700 students and about 400 of those in the junior class. Well, it did not take Simone long to find her way around and get familiar with her classes. She enrolled in Sociology, English 3, Pre-calculus, U.S. History, AP Biology, Band, and Theater 2.

Band kept Simone pretty busy through most of November. The band marched at all 9 of the regular season games (Red Oak finished first in their district with an 8-1 record) and at the first playoff game (Red Oak lost to Waco Midway with a score of 9 to 14). The Red Oak High School band also marched in the Red Oak Founder's Day Parade, the Ovilla Heritage Day Parade, three marching contests, and the UIL marching contest. The Red Oak band made the finals at both the Midlothian and Hurst-Euless-Bedford marching contests, was unanimously selected for the first division at the UIL competition, and finished 8th in the area competition. Simone really enjoyed band.



In late September, we were able to get away for a long weekend in Galveston. We went deep sea fishing and spent some time on the beach. Simone caught several angel fish, some red snapper, and a shark. She turned out to be quite a fisherwoman.



In early November, Simone visited Rockne for the first time. We stayed with my parents, Eugene and Jenease Friske. Simone visited the Rockne Museum and toured Hilbig Park. The following day we visited the Texas State Capitol and the Bob Bullock Museum in Austin.

The week before Thanksgiving, we took Simone with us to visit Diane's mother in Woodland Park, Colorado. There was not a lot of snow in that part of Colorado yet, but we did find a good place in Mueller State Park to do a little sledding and snow boarding (yes, Simone tried snow boarding for the first time). I think Simone was impressed with the mountains. She would like to go back and spend some more time there.

The following week Simone celebrated her first Thanksgiving. We had a traditional Thanksgiving dinner with turkey, dressing, candied yams, and all the fixings. For dessert, Simone tasted pecan pie and pumpkin pie for the first time in her life.

December was a very busy month for Simone. Her band class performed a Christmas concert, and her theater class performed "The Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. We took Simone to see a performance of "The Best Little Christmas Pageant Ever" and a recreation of the town of Bethlehem at the annual Bethlehem Revisited event in Waxahachie. We spent first Saturday in December touring around the stockyards in Fort Worth. We went to the annual Dallas Symphony Christmas Celebration concert at the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas and the annual production of the "Nutcracker" at the Bass Hall in Fort Worth.

We made another short trip to Rockne right before Christmas, and then we spent Christmas at home. After all of our visitors left after Christmas, we took Simone with to Macon, Georgia. We attended a wedding in Macon and visited with some of our friends.



It took a few months, but I think we have converted Simone to a real Texan. What do you think?

Simone will be finished with the semester on January 15. He father is coming to the United States on January 14, and together they plan to tour around Texas some more before returned in Germany at the end of January. They plan to visit Rockne on the weekend of January 16 - 17, so if you see them be sure to greet them with a big Texas "Howdy".