



❖ 文學院 外國語文學系 蔡宜臻 ❖

今年的暑假七月，一趟美國中部文化學習之旅，讓我感受到外面世界的美好，更拓展了我的視野，在這一個月的美國生活中，我們學習融入當地的生活，體驗美國多元的文化與飲食，種種的體驗與學習，都讓第一次來到美國的我，感到那樣地新奇且雀躍不已，當走在街道上或是參觀地點時，總是捨不得錯過周遭讓我新奇的事物與行人們，渴望能夠將所有的景象深刻地留在我的記憶裡，這個月裡充斥著無數美好回憶，讓我時時感受到那種收穫的感動，課堂上與教授們的互動、每次的參觀行程活動，豐富了這段在美國的學習生活，還記得第一次到 WALMARK 採購日常生活用品，對於美國超大份量的食物包裝，感到十分的新奇，一切的一切總是很能夠吸引住我滿滿的目光。在美國的這段時間裡，每天的生活總是充滿著無數的體驗與嘗試，時間也總是在無形中消逝地快速，我樂於享受不同文化背景下的生活方式與未曾有過的新體驗與嘗試，讓我更加開闊心胸、培養國際觀的視野，更重要的是，人與人之間互動關係是那樣的微妙，可以突破地域文化言語的限制差異，在美國這樣陌生的新環境中，我能夠感受到無比的溫暖與友善，心裡更是洋溢著無限的感激之情，這也是讓我懷著依依不捨的心離開美國，結束這趟滿載而歸的旅程。

很多的感謝與感動，充斥在每天每趟的行程之中，與教授在課堂間的互動，讓我們有機會能夠體驗美國學校的上課方式，接觸到不同領域上的知識探索，有助於我們可以透過學習進一步了解每美國中部的文化與淵遠的美國歷史背景；實地的參觀行程，讓我們的教學更增添豐富性，提供了許多讓我們親自體驗當地生活文化的機會，使我們能夠學習融入在美國的生活環境之中，享受悠閒娛樂活動，欣賞音樂劇與電影，美國食物與逛街等等，透過這些新奇的嘗試與體驗，總是能使我更加適應且享受美國當地的生活，感受到多元文化上的奇妙與特色；人與人之間的互動與相處，在無形中縮短了因文化背景語言不同所造成的差異，感謝在這一個月裡，能有 Danny, David and Jamie 這些接待我們的 Millikin 當地學生，辛苦地扮演導遊且司機的角色，讓我們大家能夠盡興地享受在美國的生活，這些美好的回憶，總是使我想再次到美國體驗更多更廣的旅程；在 Chinese Bible Church 的畢業學長姐，感謝他們親切和慷慨的招待，讓我們感受到無比的友善與關愛，這種令人感動的氛圍久久圍繞在我們之間；此外，我的 Home Stay family, Mrs. Morrison's family, 和王伯伯一家人的熱情款待，謝

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謝你們的友善與親切，讓處在異鄉的我們，深深地受到感動與溫情，希望在不久的將來，能夠有機會再次拜訪這些友善可愛的美國接待主人們，和那令我深深著迷不已的美國文化。

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As people say, time flies fast when you have a happy time and I experienced the truth of this saying during almost four weeks of studying at Millikin University. By this study immersion in America, I really broadened my horizon and tried to explore more about American culture; most importantly, I feel the difference and personal-growth after I come back to Taiwan. There is no denying that for all of us this overseas studies program was an important experience during our school life at Tunghai. During these weeks I experienced the cultural difference and made myself become open-minded to understand life in America. To be honest, it is my first time to have such a long flight from Taiwan to America and also to be able to study abroad. Therefore, I want to thank my school, Tunghai University, TEFA and Millikin University, for providing an opportunity for all participants to study in foreign country and enjoy this well-arranged trip and unforgettable learning experience. Moreover, I think we are lucky to experience people's kindness and friendliness even though we are not familiar with each other before. I think it is wonderful when people from different countries can get together to share their own experiences and become close.

What's more, our three local hosts Danny, David and Jamie really did a good job arranging our schedule for us in advance and always took good care of us when we went anywhere. So did our group leader, Christine. Because of them, we could have more chances to experience American local life and cultural diversity. So during this month, we experienced a lot and adjusted to the life here well; most importantly, we had a great time with each other. We usually went to WALMART to get daily groceries and food we needed and went shopping at malls where we could have more interaction with people. I still remember the first time we were in WALMART, we even took photos while shopping because everything there always caught our attention easily; indeed, taking pictures also became one of our important daily routines in America. Besides, we went to see movies for entertainment, but movies without subtitle challenged me. The musical we went to see, *Crazy for You*, impressed me as well because of the actors and actresses' great performance. Besides, before we were going to leave, we were lucky enough to take a picture with one of the actors and get his autograph. Especially on Independence Day, we enjoyed a fireworks display at Champaign-Urbana where people celebrated this festival with a fireworks show and we all enjoyed the time as thousands of fireworks were shot off in the sky. All I can say that was



amazing and fantastic.

During this period, we learned different subjects, such as history, religion, literature, agribusiness and architecture and had a good interaction with every professor. In history and religion class, Dr. Keagle required us to develop critical thinking to consider events further with a questioning attitude to find out the real truth and consequence from our own thinking. I enjoyed it when Dr. Keagle shared his own experiences and stories with us and I always felt that people could get close to each other by sharing. We also visited the Lincoln Museum, Lincoln Home, and his tomb and that could help us understand more about the great president Abraham Lincoln and how he played such an important role in American history. We also realized his greatness. Historical understanding is an efficient way for us to get more ideas about America's past. Moreover, the Lincoln Museum is a new and great museum with highly advanced technological equipment and we were all very impressed. We also liked the vivid sculptures of Lincoln's family in the lobby, they looked very real at first sight.

During the course with Dr. Stapleton, we visited quite a lot agribusiness companies and spots to broaden our understanding of this field. In Decatur we saw plenty of corn fields and soybean fields located on both sides of the road and even around the houses. I was impressed with many agricultural spots that we visited including the experimental corn field, family farm, Top Flight Grain Facilities and the Chicago Board of Trade and so on. At the corn experimental field I had a chance to realize how researchers use biological technology to cultivate and better new straws. What's more, we visited a family farm and experienced family agribusiness. The host told us that by marriage with a neighbor during his grandparents' time, their own farm land had extended rapidly and running their own family agribusiness had become their way of life. Most important of all, they used advanced technology and machines such as the tractor and the combine which could help the farm manager save plenty of time and work without too much physical fatigue. I was quite impressed by the University of Illinois Soy Research Facility and I learned from their report that they make good use of soybeans and produce variety of processed foods such as soybean milk and cookies with different flavors and better nutrition. What' more, in Chicago we visited the central Chicago Board of Trade and had a good chance to know more about the world agribusiness trading system. To be honest, I was very impressed by the way they communicate with each other with their own standardized gesture and signs which are too complicated for us to understand and figure out.

During two-day trip to Chicago, we saw that it is a charming and prosperous capital city. Indeed, the whole city presents quite a different impression from Decatur as we saw tall buildings everywhere. In Navy Pier we all ascended the ferris wheel and we could overlook Lake Michigan



as well as Navy Pier with a great and wide view and we were lucky enough to take a picture with a handsome sailor. In my opinion, Millennium Park is a great public park for people to relax and entertain themselves and I enjoy the atmosphere there very much. There are a lot of artistic buildings with distinguishing features which all made me exclaim in surprise. The Bean also called *Cloud Gate* is like a huge steel mirror which could reflect the wide view of the buildings surrounding it. What's more, *Crown Fountain* impressed me a lot as well with changed facial expressions by reflecting of LED screens and the interesting part is that two figures could do spritzing by their mouth. This was incomprehensible, I appreciate these kind of artistic buildings; they enrich people's spirit and relieve their stress from daily work at the same time. Visiting the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center (TECO) in Chicago was also a great experience for us because through their brief introduction, we could know more about their policy for Taiwan students who apply for overseas studies. After two days short trip here, I am eager that one day I will be able to visit Chicago again and to explore more about the beauty of Chicago because I was deeply attracted by this windy city.

In literature class, we were impressed by Dr. Matthews's vivid teaching ways and we enjoyed discussing the materials with her. She always tried to inspire us to think more and share our ideas and feelings in class. The in-class discussion provided us with a good way to train our thinking and to organize the ideas that we shared with others. We also had a chance to hear different points of view from other classmates and Dr. Matthews as well. The Amish community we visited is totally different from modern people because Amish people don't rely on advanced technology and maintain a conservative and simple life style. Maybe it is hard for people today to imagine that the transportation they depend on is horse-drawn carriages rather than the great work of high quality cars. What's more, at Dana Thomas Home, we could appreciate the famous architect and designer Frank Lloyd Wright. As we entered into this house, we were attracted by the butterfly patterns carved on some of the appliances and there is no denying that the inner decoration was also great and well-designed.

During these weeks, we were lucky enough to meet lots of people who treated us well. The Home Stay experience gives us a new experience that I never had before to spend the night with American family. Thanks to Mrs. Morrison's family, we had a great time to chat with each other and we showed our appreciation with the presents we had prepared in Taiwan, but to my surprise, my home stay family also prepared gifts for us. Their kindness made me feel comfortable in their house and break through the language barrier I worried about before. What's more, at Chinese Bible Church at Springfield we met some of the school brothers and sisters who graduated from Tunghai University. Thanks to all of them we have so many wonderful memories of the church and of the dinner time we had at International Buffet. I felt their kindness and friendliness very



much when we were invited to go to the church and also had a happy dinner time together. To be honest, although it is my first time to go to church, I was glad to immerse myself into that kind of wonderful moment with others and the songs we sang together made me feel so touched and impressed. When we shared our experience with others that day, it was a wonderful time for us to know more about each other and become close.

Finally, I thank TEFA so much for sponsoring quite a lot grants for every participant in this program. In this month, we not only learned a lot from different subjects but also learned more about American local life and we could interact with people here by ourselves. As far as I am concerned, I think this is the great achievement we get during this overseas learning experience. Those wonderful memories are still vivid experience in my mind and I know the deep meaning which this studying immersion brings to me. I have different points of view and ideas after I broadened my knowledge in a foreign land and I am glad that I deeply experience cultural difference. Especially for me, as an English major student, I am so glad that before graduating from Tunghai University, I can have the opportunity to study abroad and apply what I have learned in my department during the school years. For me, other participants and our leader Christine, the most important thing is that we build up good friendship with others and share our growth and experience during this month. We are like a big family and all the happy time we had together will never be forgotten