One Night: Texas-Style

Gulsah Sanli & Mustafa Guzel
Turkey

It was the greatest day for EPI students and teachers who came to this party at which we learned line dances for fun. On Tuesday, February 15, EPI arranged a night for all of the EPI students in the Vista Central Station on the corner of Park and Senate Streets in the Vista section of downtown Columbia. A bus picked up the students in front of Byrnes, Cliff and Whaley's between 6:00 and 6:15 p.m.

When we arrived at the Station, a Texas-style buffet dinner was served. Then three women and a man, who wore cowboy boots, gave us dancing lessons about country line dancing. Hardly anybody knew how to do these dances, but everybody tried it. Almost all of us international students danced although we didn’t know exactly how. Many of us were seeing dancing for the first time. The music was wonderful and enjoyable to meet and talk to each other, and we used back home.

Each should have this. Let's country-style and actions fun. We had time that was the most portunity to with each dance! bus brought around 8:00 month, we a party like have fun!
Sunrise Staff

Manager
Manuel Layrisse

Editors
Dick Holmes
Robin Dean

Artists
Masako Yamamoto
Akane Miyazato
Manuel Layrisse

Technical Assistants
Timothy Stewart
Karla Petit
Marie Murrah
Maria Langston
Annaliese Dessart

* * *

Sunrise Cooking Contest Winners

The Sunrise staff conducted an international cuisine cooking contest on March 6 in the Presbyterian Student Center. All EPI students were invited to cook their favorite dishes from their countries. Gift certificates to the USC bookstore were given as prizes in two categories, Dinner Dish and Dessert Dish.

The first prize winners were Mehtap Emirdag for her delicious Turkish borek, a layered potato pastry dish, and Maryam Al-Asousi and Waheed Al-Shahnan, alias Kuwaiti Panther, for their elegant basboosa, a sweet cornmeal dessert.

The second prize winner in the Dinner Dish category was Yoshiji Takinami for his sukiyaki. Third place in the Dinner Dish competition went to Hussain AlBaloushi for his kapsa.

Those who sat on the judging panel were teachers Susan Pahle, Colyn Davey, and Timothy Stewart; students Maria Quintero and Ubah Ali; and guest Miriam Torres-Stewart. All the "tasters" smacked their lips and rolled their eyes as they sampled the various dishes, protesting that the decisions were too difficult! Judges, contestants, and guests all agreed that there are some excellent cooks among the EPI students.

At the end of the evening, Manuel Layrisse received a hearty round of applause for planning and organizing the contest. We all went home feeling the warm glow of having experienced a wonderful meal among great company.

The contest winners invite you to try cooking their special dishes. For their recipes, see pages 35-37.

—the editors
Political Action at EPI

Manuel Layrisse
Venezuela

Last week the EPI office received a letter from the United Nations in New York addressed to all the EPI students. This organization was inviting the students to create an international committee to represent their countries in an International Fair. Each student would be an ambassador of his/her country.

All the EPI students decided to enroll in this new project. The International Fair in New York became an increasingly favorite topic of conversation in classrooms, Cliff Apartments and Whaley’s Mill. There is not any word that could describe the excited feeling of the students.

According to the letter, students had to be in New York City by the following week to attend the first meeting in which the students would discuss all Fair matters. The letter also explained that the students must have EPI’s permission to miss one week of classes.

Some EPI teachers, seeing what was going on, convoked all the teachers and the EPI staff for an urgent meeting. There, they expressed their disagreement with the idea of the students missing one week of classes. They concluded that if the students wanted to go to New York, then they had to work extra hard this week before leaving. After the meeting, the teachers gave them all kinds of homework such as compositions, summaries, extensive readings, surveys, listening projects, interviews, etc.

Maria Quintero and Hiromi Yasuyoshi, representing all the students, went to the teachers’ offices to complain about the huge amount of homework. They argued that one week would not be enough time even for native English speakers to finish all the assignments. The teachers’ position didn’t change.

Maria and Hiromi went to tell the bad news to the other students who were expecting them in Byrnes Lobby. They all decided to talk with Alexandra, the EPI Director, but she wouldn’t receive the students in her office.

How in the world could this happen?? The great opportunity to go to New York to represent your country in an International Fair and your teachers say you cannot go because you haven’t finished the homework. Please!!! Give us a break!!!

The EPI students wouldn’t give up. They wrote a letter to the United Nations complaining about student abuse at EPI. They demanded help. They wanted to go to
New York but they couldn’t. The letter was signed by all the students. Ubah Ali faxed the letter clandestinely at Kinko’s.

The United Nations answer arrived the following morning in person. Dr. Natalie Stewart, representing the human abuse department, came to the EPI office. She demanded to talk with the students first. The meeting took place on the Horseshoe. There, Doris Beutler explained to Dr. Stewart, in detail, about the abuse that she and her companions had suffered. Hussain Al-Balushi expressed the concerns of the students; all the EPI students wanted very badly to have the chance to attend the International Fair in New York because it was a once-in-a-lifetime deal. Dr. Stewart had now heard enough and was ready to take action immediately. She went directly to the office of the EPI Director.

Dr. Stewart met with Alexandra and insisted that she must apologize to all the students. The trip to New York would be a very good educational experience and if the students wanted to go, then Alexandra must allow them to go. If she didn’t let them go, the countries represented by each EPI student would impose sanctions on EPI immediately.

Alexandra feared this idea and quickly changed her mind. She met with all the EPI teachers and students and apologized to the students. Everyone was happy with the outcome; the teachers decreased the amount of homework. The students were able to go to New York now and it would be a great experience for everyone.
Travel through Venezuela

Maria A. Quintero G.
Venezuela

Where do all kinds of environments come together? In Venezuela, is the answer. Its geographical situation makes this country an open door to the entire world. “Little Venecia,” as it is sometimes called, offers all the different environments that you are looking for. You can find the most beautiful beaches and sandy mountains, which are going to keep you under the sun tanning your skin every day. High mountains covered with snow and flat areas surrounded by rivers will give you the perfect combination of landscapes. An exciting jungle and Venezuela’s modern cities provide the perfect contrast to complete what you are seeking.

In the northern part of South America, between Colombia and Guyana, is located a piece of Europe, as Venezuela was described during the colonization. Coming into the door of the Caribbean, 3,000 km of coast opens to you with multiple choices: beaches with calm water or high waves and with red, white or silver sands. The perfect place to practice your favorite water sports or just to lie down under palm trees to feel the wind toss their leaves and the sun shining. Proceeding into the interior of this environment, the water disappears and the sands change their colors to build the golden sandy mountains. The desert and the camels that you are going to find here will delude you into thinking an oasis is near.

As you travel by car from the north coast all the way down to the west, a marvelous landscape is going to accompany you throughout your trip. Flowers, lakes, highlands and little towns will introduce the highest mountains and the cold weather of the country. Here the color of the mountains changes, turning from green to brown. If you really want to touch and feel the snow, a trip by cable car to the top of the mountain is the best opportunity to do it. Changing your direction to the middle of the country, the mountains disappear to show you an enormous flat area covered by rivers. The folklore and traditional music of the country is found in this area. This combination of landscapes makes the perfect mix for different tastes.

Near these fantasies, in the southern part of the country the green color draws you in again to make you feel the wonder of nature. Here are mountains again and tepuis walled by vegetation. Amazing waterfalls make this jungle really exciting, the perfect place to forget your problems and to breathe pure air. If you enjoy contrast, after having this fascinating experience all over the country, the perfect end is the big cities, which are going to bring you back again to the daily life.

In Venezuela, the different environments that you are looking for are all together waiting for you in one marvelous place. The various feelings and experiences that you will have in this country are going to remain in your mind forever.
The New East Germany and its Problems

Gaby Haenisch
Germany

After 40 years of the separation of the two German states, East Germany (DDR) and West Germany (BRD), the border between them fell and now there is one state again. Germany’s reunification is a historical occurrence for the world and mainly for the German people. The fall of the border was a happy event for everybody in Germany. In particular, the East-German people had expected that there would come a time when dreams would come true, such dreams as traveling around the world, buying better things, etc. Only a minority of people thought about the fact that the sudden change of situation would create a lot of political and economic problems such as unemployment, hatred of foreigners and increase of traffic.

The biggest problem at this time is the unemployment of many people. Formerly that was never a problem. A lot of workers lost their jobs because factories which were not profitable or which were too old were closed. During the DDR time, almost every business was public; after the change many of them were sold and became private. The employers then fired the workers who were not necessary. To find a new job, especially for people in their 40s and 50s, is very difficult. The number of unemployed is still increasing and programs to solve this situation haven’t yet proven effective.

At the moment, it’s shameful that foreigners, especially from Africa, Southern Europe or other such people who don’t look like Germans, have a very difficult, dangerous and insecure life in East Germany. Some of them had lived here a long time before the reunification; others came here afterwards to get permission to live and work. These immigrants’ houses or apartments have been attacked and sometimes set on fire, the people have been threatened, and some of them have been killed. It’s scary that groups have been established which claim that foreigners should not find a place to stay in East Germany and which systematically attempt to spread the hate. I believe that the present situation (many inhabitants of East Germany are unemployed or will have an insecure future) is an ideal condition for these people to find followers of their ideas, the main idea being that foreigners steal the jobs. Many people, in particular the young, have the same thoughts and attitudes.

One other, totally different problem is the sudden increase of traffic and related problems. During the DDR time, a car was very expensive and the people had to wait many years to buy one. After the border fell, the people had the opportunity to get cars of different styles and brands, without a long wait. Many of them realized their wish: to buy a new car. The existence of many more cars than before created problems, such as lack of parking places, heavy traffic and traffic jams. Especially in towns, the heavy traffic makes big trouble. The governments of the states are trying to solve these problems. Public transportation should become more attractive in order to persuade people to change from car to train or bus. But at the moment, driving cars is still cheaper than using public transportation.

These are only a few of the problems; these and others have to be solved. I think the process of “real” reunification will still take a long time because 40 years of difference lies between the two German states.
A Problem in My Country

Bashar Kherbek
Kuwait

Kuwait is a small country in the Persian Gulf that is unique in its massive economy, with large amounts of funds and many international trade businesses. However, one of the problems that Kuwait suffers from is lack of population.

According to recent statistics, Kuwait’s population is about 1.2 million people, but the number of Kuwaiti citizens is only about a half million. The rest are all foreign Arabs and other foreigners. Most of the government departments in Kuwait and even non-government sectors are run by foreign employees rather than Kuwaitis.

This situation didn’t appear as a big problem until Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait happened. The Kuwaiti army consisted of seventeen thousand soldiers while there were more than five hundred thousand soldiers in the Iraqi army, an imbalance which led to the destruction of Kuwait and the death of many soldiers and civilians. After liberation, Kuwait faced the same problem. The economy, the government and the private sector had to be reconstructed. At that time there was a lack of experienced workers and engineers because they had all run away during the occupation and couldn’t come back immediately, leaving Kuwait with a problem that had to be solved fast to reconstruct the country as soon as possible. It took the strong will and patience of the Kuwaitis to overcome this problem and rebuild our country.

After Kuwait had been partly reconstructed and the economy had come back, the government decided to give Kuwaiti citizens all the main jobs and administrative places in government departments. The government also decided to train citizens to become experienced engineers and send them to study abroad to make use of their skills and knowledge inside the country. Currently, this plan is being carried out in all the departments of Kuwait, promising a prosperous future for Kuwait after the tragedy it went through.
I Believe in the Future

Victor Myakishev
Russia

Every country has its own periods of success and failure. My native country isn’t an exception. Political and economic changes which began about nine years ago made many problems for us Russians. A few of the problems which I consider the most important involve national, economic and ecological concerns.

Before, the Soviet Union was a multinational country. We never thought about the nationality of our neighbors or people who worked together with us. Boundaries between our republics were just lines drawn on the map by unknown people after our Revolution. During our history the boundaries have changed many times. For many centuries we have had a mixture of nations in Russia and the surrounding area. For example, today about 20 million Russians live outside Russia in former Soviet Republics. Russians are a minority there and now our government must defend their rights. It is a very difficult problem among new countries. People are very much afraid of ethnic wars. The war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, for example, has continued many years and nobody knows how to stop this horror. Sometimes people don’t understand new politicians because freedom, like wine, makes such leaders drunk. Politicians are forgetting about our history, which has many centuries of joint living. I feel the disintegration of the Soviet Union was like the divorce of a big family.

Another problem is our economy. We had a planned economy for about 70 years. During “perestroika” we destroyed this type of economy but we could not change to another type. Now we have from 500 to 1000 percent inflation. Our society is divided into two parts. We have a small group of very rich people that often have become wealthy by illegal methods; other people are very poor. We practically don’t have a middle class that is a basis of society. I am sorry for old people who worked all their lives and are beggars now. I think the government must take care of old people and children.

Ecological problems are the same for all industrial countries. Pollution of land, water and air makes life a struggle for survival. My region has this problem because it is the most important region for oil and gas production in Russia. A few years ago we had many fish in our rivers and lakes but the development of the petroleum industry has decreased our fish and animal resources. The western part of Russia was exposed to radiation from the Chernobyl incident in 1986. This is still a problem for present and future generations. I am well aware of the long-term effects of such contamination because my father and his sister were exposed to Chelyabinsk’s radiation in the late 50s and they died of cancer 25 years later. The real tragedy of Chernobyl will occur in the 21st century.

We have had a long difficult history but I am an optimist and I believe in the great future of my country. We will outlive this period. Meanwhile, I will try to help our people in this difficult time.
Vietnam: a Country or a War?

Ha Huy Tuan

Vietnam

When I first came here, I was very surprised and impressed by the feelings of the people here, especially Americans, about the Vietnam War. Usually, when I met people, either Americans or internationals, and they found out I was from Vietnam, they wanted to ask me about the Vietnam War. However, it is quite different in Vietnam. It is rare to hear the Vietnamese still talking about the War. For us Vietnamese, the War is over. We left it in the past.

Nowadays, everywhere in Vietnam, what the Vietnamese are talking about is doing business, including private, cooperative and/or State, and Americans and American companies as well as all other foreigners and foreign companies are welcomed in Vietnam.

Vietnam is located in the Southeast Asian region. It has 3,800 km of land boundaries with China, Laos and Cambodia and 3,500 km of coastline. Its capital is Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, has become the biggest center of business, trade and commerce in the country. Vietnam’s population is about 70 million with 60 different nationalities and 30 groups of various cultures. There are many kinds of religions in Vietnam, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, Taoism, Protestantism and Islam, but Buddhism is more common and Confucianism is primarily a philosophy for the elite. Vietnamese people are hard-working, well-educated, forgiving and optimistic. The Vietnamese economy is basically agricultural. Rice is the staple crop. Also, Vietnam has abundant natural resources, such as oil, gas, coal, rubber and seafood.

Since 1986, after years of economic stagnation, Vietnam has moved from a centralized economy to a market-oriented one. “Renovation” has become a household term. The key program of the renovation is to reorganize the economic management system. Its main measures are to devalue the exchange rate, to liberalize direct foreign investment, to encourage the private sector, to reorganize agricultural production and to eliminate price controls on most products. Together with the economic reform, political reform has been implemented with the motto “democratization and openness in all fields.”

As a result, Vietnam has gained modest economic and political achievements, even under the conditions of the US trade embargo and not receiving foreign aid. By the end of 1993, more than 800 direct foreign investment contracts, worth $7 billion, had been signed. The trade deficit was reduced from $251 million in 1991 to $31 million in 1992. Once a short-of-rice country, Vietnam became the world’s third largest rice exporter in 1992 and 1993. The inflation rate has decreased from 700% in 1987 and 400% in 1988 to 70% in 1991, 25% in 1992 and about 5.2% in 1993. For the three past years, annual GDP growth rate has been 8%. The society has been stable. Democratization has been implemented in all fields of people’s lives.

Even though Vietnam still has many difficulties in its renovation and everything has just started, it has gotten off the ground. Vietnam’s renovation, which has been very active and energetic in recent years, will now be even more promising in the near future after President Clinton’s positive and significant decision on February 4th, 1993, to lift the US trade embargo against Vietnam.

I write this article in hopes that my teachers and friends in EPI can understand the general picture in today’s Vietnam. I would like you all to appreciate a statement becoming more and more common around the world: Vietnam is a country, a people, not a war.
Islam in Turkey

Turker Teker

Turkey

Even though Turkey is an Islamic country, Islamic rules are not applied. However, Islamic traditions greatly influence the lives of Turkish people.

The Turkish people established several empires over the years, such as the Seljuk, Uygur and Ottoman Empires, all of which followed Islamic rules. When Islamic rules were followed correctly and the different sects of Islam tolerated each other, the empires were strong. The Ottoman Empire, extending from 1299 to 1922, was the most famous empire in Turkish history. It covered large areas including Africa, Asia and Europe, but never did the Ottoman Empire try to force people to change their religion to Islam.

After the Ottoman Empire ended, Turkey was established to replace it. Ataturk, the great leader of Turkey, wanted his people to have a modern life. The Grand National Assembly proclaimed Turkey to be a republic on October 29, 1923, and elected Ataturk as president.

During the 1920s and 1930s the government did away with such Islamic traditions as the use of the Arabic alphabet, Muslim schools, the Islamic legal system, women’s wearing of the veil and men’s wearing of the fez. It abolished the religious and civil office of the caliph. It also outlawed polygamy, the practice of having more than one wife at the same time.

Ataturk held enormous political power. Some Turks opposed his anti-Islamic policies, especially the Alevi. They revolted against them in 1925, but they were not successful.

In Turkey, Islam consists of the Alevi and the Sunnis. There are a lot of differences between these two sects. The biggest difference is that the Alevi say that, after Muhammed, Ali should have been halife (leader of Islam before 1924) instead of Ebubekir while the Sunnis do not believe that. The second biggest difference is that the Alevi fast three days before Ramadan while the Sunnis fast thirty days during Ramadan.

Even though some beliefs are different, people must tolerate each other. Nobody can blame others because of their beliefs. In Turkey, when someone wants to go to the mosque, nobody asks, “Why do you go to the mosque?” Everyone can have an opinion about religion, and others should tolerate his or her opinion.
Animism in Benin

Adjoke Kouton

Benin

In my country, there are different types of religions. Animism, the most ancient, consists of worshipping natural things or phenomena, which are believed to have souls. There are various communities in animism but all of them are well-organized and powerful. Despite modernism, animism is still practiced by many people.

Before French colonization, people in my country used to adore plants, animals or objects such as iron, wood, stone, etc., and natural phenomena like thunder and volcanoes. For them, all these things represent symbols of God and people devote all their lives to them. Depending on the thing adored, there are many communities, each community with its own rules, rites, temple, special language and way to dress and dance.

In animism, there is a very rigid hierarchy in which the elders have power or control and lead the group. The new members are submitted to a rite of initiation which consists of learning the group’s language, rules, duties and many other things about life in the community. At least twice per year each community organizes some ritual ceremonies with colorful dances, sacrifices and prayers. During these ceremonies, the new members take an oath. Consequently, anybody who breaks the rules is punished or killed.

Finally, animists have magic power which permits them to communicate with spirits in order to exorcize sickness from people and to fight against natural disasters such as drought. On the other hand, they can cast a spell on people to make them sick. During the ritual ceremony, most of them are in a trance and don’t feel pain even if they are injured.

In summary, animism, different from the other religions, contains a diversity of groups. Despite their differences, all of them have as a purpose educating people in terms of discipline, good behavior and respect.
An Icelandic Adventure

Manfred Dumm
Germany

It began as a joke, but then it became a reality. In January 1982 a friend asked me what place I would choose for my vacation. Spontaneously, I mentioned Iceland. Even as a teenager, I had dreamed about this land with its eternal glaciers and contemporary hot fountains and volcanoes. This extreme, uninhabited area fascinated me.

I was surprised that my friend believed my quick response. Just as mine, his was an impulsive one: “Let’s go!”

Six months later we arrived in Iceland and drove toward an active volcano in a leased car able to traverse rough wilderness. The captivating and awesome scenery amazed me. It seemed incredible, but it was true. We could see colored mountains. Here and there smoke came out and everywhere we could hear boiling water. We smelled sulphur. I was hypnotized by the midnight sun. Our enthusiasm gave us courage, but we were also careless because we were driving alone in this dangerous wilderness.

Sometimes we couldn’t see the road because our rough road looked like the surroundings. Our car moved clumsily and stiffly over the consolidated volcanic blocks, like a tortoise over stones. We felt as if we were on the moon. This region seemed unreal to us.

Suddenly, our car had to climb over a large rock, with approximately 70 percent of incline, all the wheels going in different directions. Only the all-driving-axle prevented us from overturning in this situation. Just a moment later, we saw that our road led through a river. We realized that we didn’t have practical knowledge of how to handle the car through a river. This matter made us frightened; on the other hand, we sought adventure. Our solution was simple. My friend walked in the river to look for an appropriate way. Nevertheless, my heart was pounding and I was perspiring. I was thrilled as I stepped on the gas and drove the car through the river without a problem.

After we passed this river we were able to drive a little faster because the road was plain. But we frequently had to ford more rivers. The more, the better; we were happy about these circumstances. We forgot the danger and we playfully drove through the rivers.

At 11 p.m. we reached a camp directly under a smoking volcano. We felt like heroes because all the other people had come as a team; only we had come alone. The temperature didn’t invite us to go swimming—it was 28 degrees Fahrenheit—but in spite of the cold air temperature, we could swim since the river there, flowing from the volcanic mountain, was hot.

The next morning we spoke with other people about different routes to drive back toward Reykjavik. They offered us two possibilities. We decided on the difficult route because our experience the day before had given us the illusion that we had had practice. This route promised us more adventure.

So we started out again with our Rover. Two hours later, the weather changed, and icy rain combined with snow kept us from proceeding with our joy. It was so cold that neither he nor I could go outside to check how deep the rivers were. And so the incident happened that we couldn’t easily drive through one of the rivers. Our car got stuck in the middle of the river. The tires turned around and just sank deeper into the riverbed. We could even hear water coming into our car. We panicked. It seemed im-
possible to use the special gear for this situation. The water completely covered the floor of the car. We quickly changed places and my friend jolted and shook the special gear lever. In this situation, I remembered the advice we had been given before we started this trip, but now it was too late. Would we have to give up the leased car? This was a horrible thought. It seemed we would be stumped in this event.

During this thinking, the car pushed forward and slowly moved through the river. Inside, we were so full of emotions that we couldn't speak about what was happening at this time. Only when we reached the bank did we scream for joy. Then we continued our journey.

Soon, we could see another Rover. When we reached this car, we met a couple from Belgium. They were also driving along this route, so then we proceeded to travel together and enjoyed the rest of the exciting adventure.

Joy Luck Club

Vicky Lo
Taiwan

Several months ago, I saw a movie review of Joy Luck Club on Headline News. It looked good and I really wanted to watch it. Then, my Taiwanese friend told me that this movie was terrible. He had left the cinema when the movie was only half over.

Last weekend, my friends asked me to go with them to watch this movie. I was hesitant, but I decided to go because I wanted to know how terrible it was. Now, after seeing it, I think that it's worse than I'd expected. This movie is about Chinese people, but about Chinese-Americans, not the real Chinese. The director tries to show the old Chinese lifestyle and the relationships between mothers and daughters. But all of the things that he shows are just the stereotypes, negative aspects and theatrical plots which make people want to buy a ticket and then feel deeply affected at the theatre.

The director is a Chinese-American. Maybe we can forgive him because he isn't a real Chinese. However, I still feel angry because the whole movie is just pressure, rebellion, tears and male domination. It's alright that he shows these negative aspects of Chinese culture, but he shouldn't use stereotypes and theatrical plots to attract audiences, especially American ones, who go away from the theater with a mistaken notion of what Chinese culture is all about. In my opinion, Joy Luck Club is a kind of Hollywood movie incapable of really talking about Chinese life.
My Expectations about the USA

Ismail Kul
Turkey

We all have different ideas about countries other than our own. We learn a lot of these ideas through reading, watching TV and listening to the radio. I think communication devices are a good way to get these ideas, but there is no substitute for firsthand experience. Before coming to the USA, I had some ideas and expectations about it like everybody else. Now that I've lived here for a while, I have an even clearer understanding of the country.

To come to the USA in order to get a degree was a goal for me because the USA is known in my country as a country of opportunities which include very big cities, crowded population in the streets, employed people, good transportation, etc., so that before coming here, I had thought that I would meet very big cities, very good transportation and very cold people but I don't know for sure where I got these images. I think I was influenced by such things as TV, radio and books. I had expected that I would be lost in a crowded population with taller people than me. My most important and worrisome expectation was people's coldness because I always like talking with people. I had thought American people would be very cold like English people.

Despite these expectations, I've changed my mind about the USA because now I've lived here and seen its culture. Which person can know more than the other, the reading person or the living-and-experiencing person? In my opinion, the latter can understand and know more perfectly than the former. I've changed my mind about America because before coming here I had learned about it only through reading and watching the media, not actually living in the country.

Here in the USA, I haven't seen very big cities and crowded population in the streets. Unlike shopping centers in Turkey, which are situated inside the cities and attract a lot of people to the downtown streets, American shopping centers are situated outside the cities. Anyway, I can easily find the same things I want. Besides these observations, I have seen that American people are not cold like the English but very friendly and lovely like Turkish people. However, I have met some Americans and talked with them in a very friendly way as with old friends of mine but after that when I met them again, they couldn't remember me. This trend was very interesting to me at first because we can't forget people whom we've met in Turkey. As for American women, I've found them extremely beautiful.

The main difficulty for me here is the language. At first I was afraid of speaking and understanding people in America, but my teachers said that I shouldn't be scared to speak with American people because after five or six weeks I'd be able to speak with them very clearly. However, despite my eleven weeks here, I can't do it yet because American English is very different from British English. American people speak quickly and unclearly. I still have difficulty in understanding and being understood by them.

I've lived here in Columbia since October. It's a smaller city than I had thought it would be but I'm accustomed to living here because now I have some American friends. I think, my life is getting better day by day in the USA.
A Rainmaker

Alima Boukary
Benin

Last December, I came across a little boy who was able to make rain fall even in the dry season. It was one of the most uncommon events I had ever attended.

During the holiday, I decided to visit my best friend who was teaching biology in the northern part of Benin. I arrived there after a four-hour trip by train. It was very hot and I couldn’t stay inside my room. At that time, it was the dry season, and the rain hadn’t fallen since June. It was sunny, the ground was fissured, the trees were bare, and the animals couldn’t graze as the grass was sparse. I was sitting on my friend’s porch daydreaming. I couldn’t understand how it could be so hot and complained to my friend, who was speaking with a little boy named Bako. Bako looked at me, laughed and asked me if I would like him to help me cool off. I was amazed and replied, “If you could.” Then he grabbed hold of a switchblade hanging from his belt. He raised the knife and sliced the air pronouncing some incantations.

Suddenly, a flash of lightning came into sight, the sky became cloudy, a rainbow appeared, and a gale was blowing. Everybody sought shelter, the birds were hovering, the limbs of trees were swaying back and forth. It was like a tornado. Rain fell for two hours.

After that, the trees were hunching, the birds stopped singing, and the sky became clear. It was cold and nobody could stay outside without wearing a jacket at that moment.

I was dumbfounded. I couldn’t understand how a human being, especially a teenager about thirteen, could change the weather. But for a villager in Africa, that was not to be wondered at.

Old Man and Young Boy Planting a Tree

Musallam Al-Kethairi

Everything is going to grow up in our lives.
Life has been changing and it will change in the future, too.
The Old Man and the Young Boy plant a little tree,
so it is going to be a big tree and have children, too.
The air will play with the child’s yellow hair as it plays with the leaves of the tree.
Green things are important in our lives because without them, the air will not change anymore, and we need the air.

As you sow, so shall you reap.
In the Park of the East

Manuel Layrisse
Venezuela

When I walk or drive close to "The Park of the East" in my hometown, Caracas, Venezuela, I can remember the wonderful days that I spent there with my friends in my childhood. This particular place was the scene of some of my dreams, adventures and mischievous behavior. There my imagination took off.

The Park of the East is divided into three principal areas: the lakes, the zoo area, and the sports areas.

On the artificial lake is a huge ship simulating one of the caravels on which Christopher Columbus came to America five centuries ago. In this magic place I could find a lot of treasures in the sea, kill pirates and find beautiful lands as Columbus did. Nobody could find the places where I hid the treasures.

At the zoo area, I enjoyed a lot talking with all kinds of friends. I had interesting conversations with Mr. Gorilla and Mrs. Giraffe about topics such as animal abuse and the death of monkeys in the jungle of Africa. We created an asociation to help our friends in that area.

The best games of soccer took place in the sports areas at that time. I played on the national team to represent my country in the Olympic Games. In the final match, in the last minute of the game I made the goal which allowed me to win the game and the gold medal.

A few months ago I went with my little seven-year old cousin to The Park of the East. I found that my treasures were not in the place where I had hidden them; somebody had found them. In addition Mr. Gorilla didn't understand what I tried to say and the children didn't allow me to play soccer because I was too old according to them. I felt really bad and disappointed until I saw my little cousin talking with an elephant just as I had talked with one fifteen years before.
Astonishment in the Elevator

Jung-Mei Chiang
Taiwan

It was a very busy day for Linda. She delivered some documents to her clients and discussed some details until lunch time. After having a quick lunch with her boyfriend, she had to go to the 62nd floor of the Empire State Building to meet another client.

The weather was very hot that day in New York City. She sweated a lot running around everywhere. It was 1:15 pm. The time for her next appointment was 1:30 pm, so she had to hurry.

She ran into the elevator and there were two businessmen and one cleaning person standing next to her. The two businessmen stepped out of the elevator on the 25th floor. The cleaning person stopped at the 45th floor. She was alone. She glanced at the floor indicator and saw that she was at the 55th floor. Soon she would arrive at the 62nd floor. The time was 1:25 pm. She was delighted because she hadn’t expected to arrive at the office on time. She’d been thinking of excuses for being late since finishing lunch.

She glanced at the floor sign again, “Oh, my goodness! I’m past the 62nd floor and the elevator’s still going up!” she murmured. “65, 70, 80, 90, 110, 120...........135!” What was happening here? She was startled and getting scared. “Is this some kind of emergency?!”

The elevator was still going up and was now over 300 floors up. “How many floors in this building, 135 or 150?” she asked herself. She pushed the emergency button again and again, harder and harder, but it didn’t work.

An hour later, she glanced at the floor indicator, which said that she was now at the 1500th floor, and the elevator was still going up. She felt like she was freezing and heard some noise coming from the air conditioner. It sounded like a man and a woman were arguing but she couldn’t understand what they were talking about. It was French they were speaking, perhaps.

The elevator was still going up, the time was 3:30 p.m. and the man and the woman were still arguing. The feeling was so spooky. Shrunk into the corner like a frightened rabbit, she couldn’t move. The sound of the argument became louder and louder. She couldn’t keep her mind clear.

Suddenly, the man said, “Let’s get out of here. Tomorrow, I’ll be back.” Then the elevator stopped and the door opened. She crept out. Outside the elevator were many people standing there looking at her. No one knew what had happened to her in the elevator.