

On our way to the interview at “Café Brückner” in Steyr we talked about the cold weather here and about the fact that Caty is used to the cold because it is even colder where she lives!

Interviewers: So let’s start with the first question: Where are you from?

Caty: I’m from Billings, Montana. I was originally born in Arcata, California – it’s in the North – and when I was six my family moved to Montana because my dad got a better job there.

Interviewers: What were your reasons to come to Austria?

Caty: I graduated in May. I studied International Relations or something similar to International Relations in German, and I’d already been to Germany, and I felt like doing something a little different; and the school offered the program to come to Austria as a foreign language assistant of English. I thought it would be a good opportunity to come to see Austria, because I’ve always wanted to see Vienna. I’ve a whole year to travel. I planned to learn how to ski. I always say that but I’m actually not sure if I’m really going to.

Interviewers: So you have never skied before?

Caty: No, which is a shame because Montana is very famous for skiing. Like, outside of my university there is a ski resort. I also came to practise my German, even though I speak more English than German.

Interviewers: Because nearly everyone can speak English here.

Caty: Yeah, that’s true, but in America you can rarely find anyone who can speak German.

Interviewers: So where is the idea from to learn how to speak German?

Caty: Ahm, I can’t pronounce French words. Once I took French and I was terrible at it. I’m very bad at pronouncing words. So French is out of the question and I took Spanish because its necessary in the United States to be able to speak Spanish to get a really good job. So German was the last one up, so I thought “why not?” and I like it.

Interviewers: And what about your future plans?

Caty: I hate that question. I have no idea

Interviewers: Or what do you want to be in the future?

Caty: My ultimate dream is to own my own bookstore, but that's never going to happen.

Interviewers: Why not?

Caty: Because nobody buys books anymore. Ebay and Amazon are selling books online. So by owning a bookstore you don't make very much money. Not that I want to make much money, but you can't really live on your wages and usually you have to live in a really big city and I don't want to live in a big city. So I was thinking of going to Germany getting a job and teaching English as a foreign language and starting in September they've got online courses, so you can take the course classes online. And the program I want to do is called Global and International Education and it's for a masters degree and with the degree you don't have to be a teacher but you can work for companies or organisations which promote international learning, exchange programs and things like that. It's kind of what I want to do.

Interviewers: So do you read a lot of books because you want your own bookstore?

Caty: I love to read books.

Interviewers: And what's your favourite one?

Caty: I could talk about this for hours but I love a lot of modern literature like Faulkner, but I have to admit that I read more classical literature than I do modern literature. I'm not really up to date with modern literature. I like American modern literature, British literature, like romantic, but not really love stories.

Interviewers: Have you ever read a German book?

Caty: We had to study Goethe at university so I read lots of him and of course like "Woyzeck" and books like that.

Interviewers: Oh, we had to read that too.

Caty: And I like to read mysteries too, like Wolf Haas "der Knochenmann." So I've read those books. Right now I'm reading Max Frisch. I did finish reading "Blaubart" and now I'm reading "Homo Faber," I don't know how you pronounce it.

Interviewers: And which is the English book you can recommend best?

Caty: I couldn't say if you could only read one English book. I like Truman Capote a lot, but I'd read a Shakespeare play.

Interviewers: So you liked the English theatre this year, Macbeth?

Caty: It was the most interesting Macbeth play I've ever seen. I never met a Shakespeare with Rammstein music mixed together.

Interviewers: But have you also read Macbeth?

Caty: Yeah, we had to study it in High school.

Interviewers: So you knew everything about the play.

Caty: I've seen it a couple of times.

Interviewers: Okay. So another question: Do you like it here in Steyr?

Caty: I do, I like Steyr a lot. I think it's very pretty. For me it is just weird waking up and seeing a building that has been there since 1300, because there is no building which is that old in where I live. But sometimes when I wake up and I forget that I'm in Austria and when I see the church I'm like: "Wow, I can't believe I'm actually here," because it is so different. And I like the fact that Steyr has two rivers. I think it adds more prettiness to Steyr. And I like Austria too.

Interviewers: What places have you visit so far?

Caty: I haven't visit that many places, but I've been to Vienna "Wien" and I've planned to go back to Vienna again. My first time there was with the school class when we were on a school trip and the second time I went there for a weekend and I'm planning to go back again because there is too much to do in one weekend. And of course, I've seen Linz and I went to Salzburg and I want to go to Hallstatt, but I'll wait for the spring when it's a little bit warmer.

Interviewers: How long will you stay in Austria?

Caty: Until the end of May and they'll kick me out. (Laughing)

Interviewers: (Laughing) What are the things you like best?

Caty: I love the landscape in Austria. It kinda reminds me of Montana with the mountains. When you go to Salzburg it's really pretty with the small lakes. I think the people are really nice. I think it's funny when you go to a grocery store and everybody says: "Grüß Gott!" The first couple of days I was like: "Are they talking to me?" This is different. I like the food, especially "Kaiserschmarren." It kind of reminds me of my home when we eat pancakes

Interviewers: So we in Austria have Schnitzel as our typical food every tourist should try. What is it in Montana?

Caty: We have the hamburgers. I guess when you are in Montana you should eat a buffalo burger. So the burgers are made of buffalo. It sounds disgusting but it is really good.

Interviewers: How do you spend your weekends in America?

Caty: Usually I always had a job at a veterinary clinic, it's an animal hospital, and I worked there in High school and so I worked there on Saturdays and Sundays. And then usually I didn't do much. Sometimes I had to do homework or I could borrow my mum's car, because I got my drivers licence when I was 15.

Interviewers: With 15?

Caty: Yeah, in Montana you can get your drivers licence at this age. I think it's an old rule, because people used to drive tractors and all the kids still worked on a farm. So I could borrow my mum's car and go to my friends' houses or go to the movies or go out for a coffee at a coffee shop with my friends. My friend worked at the movie theatre so we could always get into the movies for free. We also go hiking a lot. Sometimes when I didn't have to work in summer we went camping during the summer holidays. We do a lot of camping and fishing.

Interviewers: And to which places do you go camping?

Caty: Usually in a place called Rosebud. It's about an hour and a half drive away. There is a town called Red Lodge and then it's right outside the town. That is the place where we usually go. It's really pretty. It's right up in the mountains. You can go swimming in the river although it is freezing.

Interviewers: So you should try swimming in the Steyr.

Caty: My first day here - it was in October – I saw a guy swimming in the Steyr and he was naked.

Interviewers: That happens really often if you know the right places.

Caty: And actually, to be honest, at the swimming pool – I go very often to the swimming pool – people get naked right in front of you when they get dressed. This is very awkward because I'm not used to it. In the United States they usually use the dressing room and they get dressed and they come out.

Interviewers: My older brother has also been to the United States and he told me that everything is just bigger.

Caty: That's true! Everything is bigger. My brothers have trucks and my dad has a truck. When you order things at a restaurant you will get a huge plate of food. The streets are a lot wider. You can get your sodas at the gas station. There are literally two litres what you can get. They call them big gulps. It's really disgusting. The amount of sugar you are consuming with this two litres of soda. So they have pretty much everything bigger.

Interviewers: Steyr must seem even smaller for you!

Caty: I come from the biggest city of Montana with about 100.000 people, but it's really spread out, because everyone has a big house on the land and we build everything not so close together and so they are spread apart. There are usually farms in between. So when I go to the dentist to get my teeth cleaned I can look out of the window and I can see the cows in the fields. The nearest place to go grocery shopping is a 20 minutes drive from my house. So when we want to go grocery shopping we have to drive there. My university town was the same size as Steyr. It was 35.000 people, but it felt smaller than Steyr because Steyr has so many cities that are close together. You have Garsten and all the other little cities, but there is my city, the university and then there's nothing else. So Steyr feels kind of big.

Interviewers: So what do you enjoy the most, living in the countryside or living in a big town?

Caty: I think I would rather live a little bit in the countryside next to a big town so that I can go shopping in town or, like, to and see theatres in the theatre and so that I can also live outside. So I get the best of both worlds.

Interviewers: But the town should be big enough that you can have your own bookstore.

Caty: Yeah exactly. Maybe I'll have some sheep, but it's so much work.

Interviewers: I know many people who live in the countryside but they do not like animals. So do you like animals?

Caty: I love animals. We have a cat and a dog at my house. When I used to work for the animal

hospital my dad didn't want any animals at the house. So when I worked there I'd always bring home sick animals and be like "Dad, can we take care of it?" and they stayed at my house and I've got my cat and my dog. I used to have a bird, but I gave my bird to my brother. The woman I worked for at the animal clinic, the veterinarian, the doctor, had a horse farm. Whenever she left for vacation for a week or two I used to take care of the horses. That was fun, but I'm a little scared of horses.

Interviewers: So you don't ride them.

Caty: I have before, but I don't do it very often. I prefer just to be like "Okay horsie go there."

Interviewers: Do you want to have animals in the future?

Caty: Yeah I want a nice big dog and a cat. But I don't want farm work, because it's a lot of work. So I'd prefer not to have my own farm but house animals. That's enough work.

Interviewers: What's the typical sitcom in America?

Caty: Well, we have "The Office," which is really popular. It's like the British made "The Office" the British version and then we redid it. And there are six seasons of it and everyone watches "The Office." It is probably the most popular TV show. But it's interesting that the TV shows that are here popular aren't that popular in America, like "Two and a Half Men" or "Malcolm in the Middle" are not popular anymore.

Interviewers: But you do also have "The Simpsons?"

Caty: This is number one popular. They are popular everywhere. What I do miss though is kind of an American humour. Humour in Austria – maybe it is the language barrier – is different. Do you guys watch "Mensch, Markus?"

Interviewers: No, I think it's boring.

Caty: I think, whenever I watch it the only reason why I laugh is because it is so stupid. How can people find this funny? The sense of humour there is a little bit different. I didn't actually think that people in Austria like "Schlagermusik," but my roommate used to listen to it all the time. So I know that there are people in Austria who like "Schlagermusik." I always thought that this was kind of a joke, but people do.

Interviewers: And don't forget that we all can yodel!

Caty: Umm, yeah, definitely not.

Interviewers: Is there any word for the German "Ohrwurm" in English?

Caty: I love this word, but we don't have a word for it. We say it's a "song which is stuck in your head."

Interviewers: Ah okay. What do you do all the time when you are not at a school here in Steyr?

Caty: I go to the swimming pool, I hang out with some of the other assistants. Usually we make dinner together. Once a week we go out together and talk what we are doing in school. I talk to my roommates. They are all really nice but they never stay on the weekend, which is very different for me, because when I was at university and studied I never went home on the weekends. So usually I have the whole entire apartment for myself on the weekends and so I can play my music really loud. I don't have to do my dishes the whole entire weekend.

Interviewers and Caty: Talking off-topic about the Maturaball and what we would wear.

Caty: I guess there in Austria people always dress very nicely compared to people in Montana. In Montana we usually don't care what we look like. We dress more outdoorsy. We always wear tennis shoes, we never wear nice shoes. Even when we go out to bars people dress like they normally do. People here always dress up so nicely and I'm like "Oh I should dress up." They have really nice shoes or nice clothes and I'm always like "I have to dress myself better."

Interviewers: Does your family have any special traditions?

Caty: My great-grandparents came from Italy and my grandparents grew up in an Italian neighborhood and so they stayed very Italian. And my dad grew up in this neighborhood with other Italians and so we have a little bit of Italian tradition. Whenever we get together for holidays, food is very important. My dad prepares the meal and then we sit at the table for about seven hours and talk and eat. And it's always traditional, like on Christmas day my dad always makes Lasagna.

Interviewers: Is the kitchen room really the main room for a family in America?

Caty: Yeah, it's really true. When someone is up on cooking, then we all sit in the kitchen and talk. My family is a huge family. We have two tables and the other table is in the living room and we have the kids table and the adults table. And on a regular day we all eat dinner together in

the kitchen. The living room is more for watching tv together.

Interviewers: Which room do you spend most of the time?

Caty: Hmm, that would be probably in the kitchen. Because whenever I do my homework I do it on the kitchen table. And if I sit in the kitchen and my mom comes in, she makes me coffee. Yeah. It's true I spend most of the time in the kitchen.

Interviewers: Are you also good at cooking?

Caty: Well, I hated cooking when I was little. And whenever my dad tried to teach me how to cook, I felt like "I don't wanna cook, it's boring." But now I wish I would have learned. I am not bad at cooking, but I am not exactly good at cooking. Like I put something on the stove and then I go do something else and then I come back and it will be burned. Well, I should have paid more attention.

Interviewers: So you don't have the time for cooking only?

Caty: Now I cook a lot more than I did at the university. Yeah, when I studied I never had time to cook for myself. But now I have time, I can cook for myself.

Interviewers: Do you have any sisters or brothers?

Caty: I have four brothers and two sisters. I like my big family. I am third from the bottom, so I have a younger sister and a younger brother. And my younger brother is the baby in our family, he is 19 and he is very tall. And then I have two nephews, one is four years old and the other one is 8 or turning 8. The younger nephew has long blond hair, even though he is a boy, and is really cute. My oldest brother is a policeman and he works for the SWAT team. When Obama came to Montana, my brother was the one that guarded him.

Interviewers: So you live day by day and wait what will happen in the future?

Caty: Yeah, exactly. The future is too far away, to think about the future is too much. Yeah, I like my family. We are all really goofy. You would never notice that we are related because all of us kids are very different. But we all have the same sense of humor. So we always can joke with each other. And whenever we get together we always tell the exact same family stories and we still find them hilarious. It doesn't matter if we told the story last week and occasionally we add new family stories. Yeah, and my family is very loud.

Interviewers: Maybe the Italian influences?

Caty: Yeah, we often have five different conversations at the same time.

Interviewers: Do you like to talk about politics?

Caty: I do sometimes. I have to be in the mood to talk about politics. I always talk about politics with my dad. We don't agree a lot of things and so I like to talk with him.

Interviewers: What do you think of Barack Obama?

Caty: I like the new president. In a way I kind of feel bad for him because he came into office and he already had so many problems to deal with. And he is really trying and he just has so many things that he wants to do. And a lot of people feel disappointed in him. Because a lot of things he said he would do during his campaign hasn't happened yet. And people in America they like to see results very quickly, they don't like to wait. They want them now. And if the president says to do something and it takes a while to get it done, the Americans get very upset. And then they don't like him anymore.

Interviewers: Is it always like you described?

Caty: Ahh, yeah. And I think he tries to do so many things at the same time. He is only been president for one year and he tries to do so many things in a short period of time. And when he won the Nobel Peace Prize everyone was like "Why? He didn't do anything! He just talked about doing things." And most people don't like the health-care reform.

Interviewers: What did Obama change?

Caty: So far, only America's image. And it looks like there won't be any changes anytime soon, because Massachusetts just voted a Republican senator. And then Kennedy died and they had new elections. So what happened is that they can block the bill. The Republicans can block the bill from getting passed. So the health-care reform doesn't go through. But it would become nationalized. Everyone would have been required to have insurance. You can buy your private insurance. But the main thing is that everyone in America would be insured. Now there are a lot of people who aren't insured and they cost the government a lot of money. And it's really sad, because a lot of children don't get health care. It's ridiculous when you have children and they are not being taking care of.

Interviewers: Is the split between the rich and the poor bigger in the USA than it is in Austria?

Caty: I can't say for sure if I know if it's bigger, but I know that the middle class, so the class between the rich and the poor, every single year the middle class gets smaller and smaller and

they become poorer and poorer. So the rich are extremely rich, like ungodly rich.

Interviewers: Do you like to inform yourself about the economic crisis?

Caty: I would have said that economic is to me very confusing. Sometimes I don't understand the fact that it's imaginary money. Economy for me is a bit of a weakness. I don't understand it particularly well, but I like to keep up and read newspapers to have a basic knowledge.

Interviewers: What newspapers do you read?

Caty: I read "The Economist" online. That's my favorite newspaper. Sometimes I also read "The Times" online or "The Spiegel" online, just to get practice in German.

Interviewers: Was it hard for you to learn German?

Caty: It was. My German program at the university was a terrible program. I mean the professors were nice, but we were only twenty students to study German, so we weren't very big. And half of the time teachers would be speaking English in the class, Sometimes I was so annoyed, because there were people studying German for about two or three years and they still say, "Ich bin gehen" instead of "Ich gehe" and I had been like "Noooo." because some students couldn't understand. But I did study abroad in Germany. It was my only option to speak German, before that I had no idea. I could maybe just order things in a restaurant.

Interviewers: Oh, I can't remember my question.

Caty: Well, it's okay.

Interviewers: It's like when I am talking to someone and he says to meet there and there, I will always forget.

Caty: Yeah, I always have to write it down. It's kind of terrible. I always feel really bad because I never remember students names, because there are so many of them and I only remember the ones that I always speak to. Sometimes I feel bad when I have to say "You and you.."

Interviewers: Well, we are happy that we can speak English with you and learn. It's hard to start speak in English, because we speak German all the time, and then suddenly English.

Caty: I know how you feel. If I speak English and then I go to speak German, it takes a lot of to my brain to switch.

Caty Petriccione - Assistant Teacher 2009/10

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Interviewers: Well, we are at the end of our interview. I hope the question weren't too hard for you.

Caty: Oh, no. It's okay.

Interviewers: Okay, than let's go.

Caty: Sounds good!

Interviewers: Baran Funda, Lovrinovic Matea, Mitterramskogler Tina (8C); Steyr, February 2010

