

Student from Estonia learning U.S. -style business administration at CCC By David Simon,
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Name: Silver Hansen

Age: 23

Hometown: Paide, Estonia

Hobbies: Jogging, soccer

Estonian-born Silver Hansen is living in Westminster as part of the city's partnership program with Paide, Estonia. He will spend the next two years obtaining an associate's degree in business administration at Carroll Community College.

Q: How did you come to be here in Westminster?

A: There was a competition in Estonia - it was like a writing competition. We had to take an English test and talk to some people from here, like Thomas Beyard. [Beyard is Westminster's planning and public works director and has visited Paide several times on the city's behalf.]

Q: What kinds of things did you talk to him about?

A: Interests, life here, life in Paide, and culture and history. Just simple things.

Q: What interests you about American culture or culture in Westminster?

A: Especially I am interested in the Civil War and all the historical and political places. I want to see what it is.

Q: Was there anything similar to the Civil War in Estonia?

A: No, not a home war. We had a couple of wars with our neighbors, between Russia and Estonia.

Q: What were those wars fought over?

A: It was the Second and First World War. And back through history, there were many wars because we are a small country between big neighbors. All the Baltic states - if there's any war there, they just run over them and that's it.

Q: What language is spoken in Estonia?

A: Estonian. It's like Finnish or Hungarian. It's quite different from Russian, from Swedish, from Latvian.

Q: You couldn't travel to your neighbors and be able to speak their language?

A: No. Finnish and Estonian are similar, but if I never learned that language, I couldn't speak to

[the Finns].

Q: Did you learn English as a young boy or was that later in life?

A: I learned English in high school, but it wasn't very good. After that, I lived one year in Dublin, Ireland. That gave me a good opportunity to learn the language.

Q: How did you get to Dublin? Was that also a student exchange program?

A: No, one of my friends was there already and he called me to come there.

Q: What did you think of your experience in Dublin?

A: Dublin is quite dirty.

Q: What about the people, the culture?

A: The people speak very differently from here. The pronunciation is quite different. I don't know how to compare with U.S. people because I have only been here for two weeks.

Q: When did you come here?

A: January 26th.

Q: How long will you stay?

A: Until the summer. I have the summer term off, and then I will come back here.

Q: What are some of the places you'd like to see around the United States?

A: Of course California, Florida, Miami, the White House and New York City.

Q: What do you think of Westminster so far?

A: It's a nice place - very heavy traffic. It's different from Paide.

Q: What are some of the differences?

A: We don't have the highways. The other day I was out in Westminster's town and I walked around and at one point, I discovered I was alone in the city and everyone else was driving.

Q: How large is Paide?

A: The population is 10,000.

Q: What do people do there? Is it mostly agriculture?

A: There's one steel factory and several wood-processing companies. A lot of people go to work in Tallinn, the capital city, because it's only an hour's drive.

Q: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

A: A brother is one year younger and a sister, a couple of years older.

Q: Do you miss them?

A: Yeah, but it's very easy to keep contact with telephones and e-mails.

Q: What did they think of you coming here?

A: They were quite happy because my brother is going to be graduating the university and my sister graduated at the end of January.

Q: You had been attending a university in Paide?

A: No, in Tallinn. It was three years ago. I studied mechanical engineering - it's quite different from what I study here.

Q: What are you studying here?

A: Business administration.

Q: Why did you change?

A: I didn't like the science. I went there for six months.

Q: What goals do you have at this college?

A: I hope to graduate with an AA degree in business. I want to get a [bachelor's of arts] degree either here or in Estonia.

Q: Do you want to go back to Estonia eventually?

A: Not that I don't like this country, but, I don't want to be here for the end of my life. Of course, I want to go back. Now, it's a good time to spend here, get the experience and meet people.

Q: What about the food? Is it similar?

A: It's quite similar, but a little bit different. In Estonia, we eat more pork than beef.

Q: What about fast food? McDonald's? Burger King?

A: We have that in Estonia, but not in Paide.

Q: What about other students? How are the students in Tallinn's university different from students at Carroll Community College?

A: When I was in Tallinn, it was three years ago. I think young people are the same everywhere.

They have goals. Maybe they haven't seen so much in the world, maybe they don't care about the political situation. Of course, some care, some don't. When you get older, you get your own stereotypes.

Q: Are there any things you feel you might be able to learn here that you might not have been able to learn at home?

A: Only English. And in Estonia, if I study business, I will study a European style of business. Here I will study a U.S. business. It's different.

Q: How is European and American business different?

A: In Europe, you have a lot of small countries locally. In the U.S., you have one very large country.

Q: What's the thing you miss most about home?

A: My brother, Indrek.

Q: What about music?

A: Here, there is a lot more rap music. In Europe, we have European dance music. Of course, we listen to rap music as well there, but not so much like here.

Q: Have you made any new friends here?

A: A couple.

Q: Where did you meet them?

A: On campus and at the fitness center.

Q: When you eventually leave the United States, what do you hope to take with you?

A: I think I will take good memories about the time I have spent here. I think a lot of new friends. I think I am quite a different person at the moment because when you live in another culture, you can be able to understand the other people's culture.

Q: Do you think you'd ever bring your family to visit?

A: Who knows? I think my mother doesn't like the flying.

Reach staff writer David Simon at 410-751-5902 or simond@lcniofd.com.