

Students studying overseas drink in more than just culture

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SWANSEA, Wales (CPX) - When American students head overseas for a semester, they often find that, among other things, rules for drinking and hanging out in bars change.

There's no need for a fake I.D. in most of Europe because the legal age to drink is 18. The freedom to imbibe and hang out in European bars is something many American students have to come to terms with. And while officials at the University of Wales at Swansea say Americans don't stand out as being lushes, it is clear that some handling the cultural shift better than others.

Clint Knox, a senior at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, can attest to that. Soon after arriving in Swansea, a coastal town of about 2.5 million in southeast Wales, he could see just how much some students struggle with the freedoms Europe provides.

"I woke my second night here about two in the morning to some girl screaming in French," he said. "It turns out my flat mate passed out in front of our building. He was so drunk

a couple of us had to carry him inside and put him in his bed." "But he wasn't done yet," Knox continued. "He proceeded to role out of his bed and puke all over the place. Then to top it off, he pissed on the floor. It was quite a night, and I'll never forget it."

Many of the 10,000 students at the university in Swansea come from around the world, places like England, France, Ireland, Scotland and the U.S. And many from outside America took their first drinks long before their 18th birthdays. It's not unusual for European parents to spot their kids small amounts of wine during dinner.

"I didn't drink a lot when I was young, but when I did, my parents made sure I knew alcohol wasn't something to play with," said Nana Agyeman, a first-year student of genetics at the University of Wales at Swansea, from England. The social scene in Europe is, in many ways, just as centered around alcohol as the scene in the U.S., if not more so. What makes Europe different, many U.S. students say, is the maturity with which Europeans drink.

"People go out here and drink more than I'm used to," said Kelly McCracken, a sophomore at Iowa State University. "For the amount they drink, most people don't get that

trashed and control themselves better compared to (the people) back home. "When people get drunk at home, they start fights and break things," she added. "Here they dance like mad."

McCracken said she'll be sad not to get to order her own drinks when she returns to the U.S. "But there isn't much I can do about it," she said. And that doesn't make sense to some European students. Henry Lewis, a 19-year old student at Swansea from England, said if visiting the States, he would go about getting a drink the same way many underage American students do.

"I'd break the law and get a fake I.D.," he said. "Here, drinking is socially acceptable and especially at university level. You're starting your independence." Many European students support arguments against the 21-and-older policies that have been made in the United States for years. They don't understand why the U.S. allows people under 21 to have children, use credit cards, buy real estate, act independently of their parents and defend the country during wartime, and yet not allow them to consume alcohol.

"It doesn't make any sense to me," said Arnaud Bertrand, a French student at Swansea. "I think (21) is

too old for people to start drinking." In Europe, going out for a single drink is common among friends. Americans are quick to point out that consuming any more than that is cost prohibitive. Drinks are much more expensive across Britain. A pint of beer can cost anywhere from what would be in America \$1.70 to \$4.25.

Danielle Soedt, a junior at Iowa State, said she had a tough time budgeting her money during her first month in Swansea. "I was going out practically everyday when I first got here," she said. "I wasn't going out and getting drunk, but I'd go out for a pint or two."

Even though going out for one drink at a time might be more common, heavy alcohol consumption is apparent throughout Europe's pubs and clubs. And just like in the U.S., Wales has watched students who have had too much to drink die.

Just last year, about the same time a Michigan State University student died after drinking 24 shots while celebrating his 21st birthday, a student at Swansea died on his 21st birthday after mixing hard liquor, "spirits" as its known in England and Wales, and drinking games.

After the incident, drinking policies around Swansea changed.

Bars no longer allow drinking games mixing spirits, and they no longer have promotions offering spirits drink specials. Bar owners in Michigan have made similar changes because of the death.

The drinking death in Swansea shocked Emma Ferguson, the university's administrative director for American studies.

"It was the first time anything like that had ever happened around here to my knowledge," she said. In the United States, 20 students died because of excessive alcohol consumption last year. U.S. figures also indicate that more students than ever recognize that excessive drinking is a problem on their campus.

American students are also finding it a trip to have to dress for a night on the town in Wales. Clothing is a big part of the social scheme, and no one, not even if they're only heading to the local pub, would dream of going out without looking "smart." Once pubs close at 11 p.m., students go to clubs, where dress codes are strictly enforced.

Men typically wear sports coats and ties when they're club hopping, but for women, the dress code is a lot more racy than the one that guides

women in the U.S. Agyeman, from England, said the prevailing stereotype of American women and their mode of dress is this: "They dress like nuns," she said.

Given some of the outfits McCracken said she's seen on the European club scene, it's not hard to agree. She even said she doesn't think her mother would approve of the dressing habits she's adopted in England and might have to hide a few pictures when she gets home. "If I dressed in a short, tight, black skirt back home I would be called a slut, but here it's the norm," she said. "As soon as I get home, the clothes I wore here are going in the closet for life."

Knox said he's had a hard time getting used to wearing pants other than blue jeans when he goes out at night, but now that he's more accustomed to it, he said he may continue to be a "smart-looking guy" when he gets back to the states.

"I wasn't a slob back home, but I didn't look smart enough to get into a club (here) one night," he said. "After that, I started dressing a lot nicer, wearing dress slacks and a button shirt. "I'm starting to get used to dressing up, and I sort of like it."

Kansas law student Hidden-camera tapes track naked college wrestlers

gets down to cases for Judge Judy

By James A. Fussell
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

What does Overland Park, Kan., law student Pam Airy have in common with television's crabbier justice, the formidable Judge Judy? As the in-your-face jurist might put it in her own snappish vernacular, "I'm her boss, applesauce!"

It's true. For the last six months, Airy, a 38-year-old second-year student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, has worked part time for the moralizing magistrate, or more precisely for the company that produces her hit television show.

Officially Airy is a legal scout for the "Judge Judy" show, which features longtime New York domestic court judge Judy Sheindlin. Airy's duties? Beat the legal bushes for lawsuits and litigants that are, ahem!, distinctive enough for the show. Before litigants appear on the show, they must drop their lawsuits and enter into binding arbitration with Judge Judy, whose decisions cannot be appealed. Judgments are capped at \$5,000 and are paid by the show's production company.

In the name of good television, Airy combs court clerks' offices from Junction City, Kan., to Columbia, Mo., looking for lawsuits featuring feuding families, former spouses, unpaid loans or anything weird or controversial that might create interest or spark emotion. For her trouble, Airy, who is married with two teen-age children and studying family law, receives \$80 per day plus expenses for each day she visits a courthouse. On average she works about two days a week, sandwiching the work between her law school schedule.

When she finds a case she thinks the show's producers will like, she writes notes on preprinted forms and sends them overnight to the show's Los Angeles office, which, if interested, contacts the litigants. She's run across some interesting cases, including at least six that made the show's cut. One featured the owner of an Olathe bed and breakfast who was accused of ruining a wedding reception. The other showcased a Raytown man who sold a woman four counterfeit Beanie Babies.

But the most puzzling cases often involve families. "I can't believe what families will do to one another," Airy said. "They take out loans and then don't pay them back; they don't support their children after a divorce. And I was just out in Lawrence recently, and I found a case where the father had let his child drive his

car. Then the child let someone else drive the car, then that someone else wrecked the car. Now the parents are suing their own son to get their money back! That one's just been accepted for the show."

Airy enjoys seeing shows based on cases she has sent in. "I thought it was pretty interesting seeing something from Kansas City," she said of the Beanie Baby case. "I looked at it and said, 'That's something I did.'" Airy rejects most lawsuits because they are either too simple, too complex or too boring. She understands that in television courtrooms, entertainment is every bit as important as the law.

"Nobody's going to watch it if it's boring," she said. So how's she doing in her job? Wonderfully, said Rusty Thorpe, a production administrator for the "Judge Judy" show, who supervises about 45 legal scouts nationwide. "I have no problems with her, and I commend her for her excellent work. Even with the snow you had, she still managed to get out and send in excellent cases."

Airy learned of the Judy job from a casual glance in the employment notebook in the law school's career services office. Some students thought it was a joke. Airy decided to send in her resume, then did a short interview over the phone later the same day.

A month later she got the job. It can't help but assist her in her legal career, she said. "I'm not getting any legal education out of this at all, but I am becoming good friends with the court clerks, and those contacts will be invaluable in my future," she said. For the moment the job is just a good ice breaker.

"People just think what I do is interesting," she said. "A lot of people thought the people on the show were actors. They're not. I've had people say, 'I always wondered where they got the material for the show.'" Now they know.

What they might not know is that Airy sort of fell into law school the way she fell into the "Judge Judy" show. For years she worked as a merchandiser for Sysco Food Services in Olathe, Kan. In 1995 she began taking paralegal classes at Johnson County Community College in Kansas. "I was just interested in testing the waters," she said. "And at the suggestion of one of my professors, I applied to law school and was accepted." Airy plans to work for the show until May of 2000, when she is scheduled to graduate.

By Michael Hirsley And Rick Hepp
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

CHICAGO - When Ken Kraft, senior associate athletic director at Northwestern University, got back to campus after the Wildcats' exciting but unsuccessful football odyssey to the Rose Bowl in January 1996, a disturbing package awaited him.

Someone had turned in a camera case to lost-and-found at the Midlands Wrestling Championships, a national tournament held at Northwestern's Welsh-Ryan Arena on Dec. 29-30, 1995. Inside the case was a camera and videotape. Kraft ran the tape and was shocked to see footage of naked wrestlers in the shower room at the tournament. His first instinct was to return the tape to lost-and-

found with instructions that "if anybody calls for this, direct them to me," he recalled. "I wanted to find out more."

No one ever came for the bag and tape, which were then stored. Kraft, who was Northwestern's wrestling coach from 1957 until 1979, minimized their discovery as a troubling but isolated incident until last spring. That's when he got a phone call from a former assistant coach. The man's son, a wrestler at the University of Pennsylvania, had received by mail two "hidden camera" tapes showing naked wrestlers that included him.

The tapes, shot in locker rooms, shower rooms and restricted weight areas, were sent to him by a track athlete at the University of Memphis.

He had found the tapes in a book bag left in a dorm. Upon viewing them, he was able to identify a Penn logo because he had competed at the Penn Relays. He decided to contact the first Penn wrestler he could find on a team roster.

Once Kraft learned there were multiple tapes in distribution, he gathered some tapes and flyers advertising them and met with members of the Midlands committee. They decided that the material should be turned over to the FBI. Jason Peterson, a former Michigan State wrestler, discovered the Midlands tape in the Northwestern locker room. He recalled noticing "a little bag on top of a cooler with a towel over it."

"I guess the glint of the lens caught

my eye," Peterson said. "It was a duffel bag with a camera inside, and it was pointing into the shower room." Peterson and a wrestler from Eastern Illinois University took the camera to a tournament desk. He recalls being watched by a slightly built man 35 to 40 years old, with short hair and glasses, dressed like an athletic trainer "with a water bottle and everything."

Peterson said he mentioned his suspicions about the man to tournament officials, and he was aware of his presence throughout the tournament because "he walked around the gym like he was affiliated with a team. But you could tell he wasn't."

Ball State student survives after being dragged by train

College Press Exchange

ANDERSON, Ind. (CPX) - As a freight train dragged her car along the tracks for miles, 20-year-old Amber Scott, a student at Ball State University, retained every single detail of her brush with death. Speaking with the Associated Press one day after the March 29 accident, Scott recounted her harrowing ride. Her car, stopped in a dense fog at a railroad crossing that had no gate, was pushed into the train's path by a truck that rear-ended it.

"I was just sitting there, waiting for the train," Scott told the A.P. "I looked in my rearview mirror and I saw it

(the truck) coming. I just gripped the steering wheel and closed my eyes." When she opened them, Scott could see the driver's side door of her 1989 Pontiac Grand Am pinned into the side of the Conrail train and the car's front stuck under it. The train's engineer, unaware of what had happened, continued onward, dragging the car and its frightened passenger.

Scott's first instinct was to grab her cellular phone and call for help. She called her mother first. "Mom! Mom! I need help," Patricia Scott heard her daughter scream. "Mom! I've been hit!" Because of the roar of the train, Amber Scott heard only a faint voice,

maybe the answering machine, she thought.

"I was scared," she said. "But I just knew I couldn't sit there and be scared. I knew I had to help myself." Scott called 911 twice, thinking that police would be able to trace the call and find her. He pleas were barely audible over the engine's noise.

"I'm being dragged by a train! Oh, please help!" she cried. Scott briefly considered rolling out of her car's passenger side door but decided against it. Authorities later determined the train was traveling at about 30 mph. "I scooted down in my seat some, and I just waited," said Scott, who was wearing a seat belt.

"I prayed the whole time."

She said she doesn't remember what happened after her car hit a railroad signpost at another crossing, finally breaking it free from the train. Scott was shaken up, bruised and sore, and her car was a wreck. The driver of the truck that slammed into her, 25-year-old Ross Schroeder, was cited for not having insurance.

Scott's family is happy to have her home and safe. "It hasn't really all sunk in that I've made it through a real life and death experience," she said. "I feel like it was a miracle."

Emory researchers unlock secrets of Peeps

College Press Exchange

ATLANTA (CPX) - Haven't worked your way through that Easter candy yet? You may want to reconsider that post-holiday indulgence. Before eating another Peep, those marshmallow birds and bunnies that appear in stores around Easter, you might want to consider the findings of two researchers at Emory University.

On a sugar buzz after downing one too many of the colorful, spongy creatures, Gary Falcon and Jim Zimring set out to explain them. They dropped Peeps into boiling water and were astounded that they didn't dissolve. In fact, the only liquid researchers tried that the candy couldn't withstand was phenol, a chemical used to dissolve proteins. That led Falcon, a computer administrator, and Zimring, a medical student, to conclude that Peeps aren't mostly sugar after all. They are made of gelatin, sugar and corn syrup.

After that initial discovery, the pair decided that Peeps needed to be

tested more rigorously. They submerged them in liquid nitrogen, and yes, the Peeps froze. They tested the candy's reaction to low-pressure environments by stuffing them into a vacuum and watched them shrivel. They also decided that Peeps, often found at springtime parties, should be tested for their reaction to cigarettes and alcohol. When a Peep was floated in rubbing alcohol with a lit cigarette in its mouth, it wound up a ball of charred goo.

Falcon and Zimring, inspired by John Glenn's recent mission, said they want to eventually study the effects of space travel on the aging Peeps population. They're not sure how they'll get the birds into outer space. The researchers, both 29, didn't receive any grant money for their tests but said they were careful to use scientific methods. They used an Emory lab with approval from school officials' who said they were watching the ongoing studies with amusement.

May the force be with him: George Lucas donates \$1.5 Million to USC

College Press Exchange

LOS ANGELES (CPX) - "Star Wars" director George Lucas passed along the force in the form of a \$1.5 million donation to the University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television that will be used to build a new digital studio.

Construction of the 20,000-square-foot building, which will house the latest and greatest technology in digital filmmaking, will get underway in June. The new studio will be named after Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa and will be an addition to the Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts, which is set for completion in 2001. The studio will be funded in part by the \$5 million gift Zemeckis donated to the cinema school in October.

Lucas, who is responsible for the "Star Wars" trilogy and "American

Graffiti," graduated from USC in 1966. He donated money in the 1980s to build the George Lucas Instructional Building for the School of Cinema-Television. He said he decided to name the new studio after Kurosawa because he thought the director would inspire future filmmakers. "His ability to transform a vision into a powerful work of art is unparalleled," Lucas said. "So it seemed appropriate to name the new digital stage after him."

