

How the East Met the West

Leah Braas[†]

Recently, in August to be exact, I moved away from everything that I knew and loved and came to Iowa. At first I didn't really understand the transition that would take place in the two-day, 1100 mile trek across the United States. After all, I wasn't leaving the country, just moving to Iowa. Just moving to Iowa. What a statement, I left the land of concrete highways and moved to the land of large, silver belt buckles, and "just moving to Iowa" began to have a whole new meaning.

Language is a barrier even in these United States. First of all, I must tell you this, and I hope that you understand: all people from New Jersey do not have accents. As soon as I tell someone from Iowa that I am from New Jersey it seems that they are obligated to say "Oh, New Joysee!" and laugh like they had made some sort of new and hilarious joke. I must say that it is getting quite old considering that ninety-five percent of us do not pronounce it that way. On the other hand, it seems that all people from Iowa do have a speech impediment. For example, the word "root" should not be pronounced as "rut," but with a double 'o' sound as it is written. The same goes for the word "roof." I know that we are all veterinary students, but please, don't pronounce it as if your last patient had taught you how to speak.

I must say, I was quite impressed with the Midwestern way of accessorizing. Never before have I seen such obligate and profuse use of the metal silver. If ever there was a shortage of this precious metal, and some scientific need for it arose, all the government would need to do would be to con-

fiscated the belt buckles that you people wear. I have to admit that the thought of wearing my high school trophies around my waist never occurred to me. For some reason I assumed that you place plaques on the wall where they occasionally get dusted, but now I know that the belt is a whole new and unexplored place to show off the ego. Silly me.

Dance. Music. Clubs. These three words conjure up images of a Saturday night on the town, the heavy beat of the bass pounding away in my chest and a sore throat the next morning from screaming conversations with my friends. Upon arrival in Iowa, the first "club" that I was introduced to made me wonder if I was on the same planet let alone in the same country. The club's name is *Hunky Dory's*. I believe that the name says it all. There is nothing more stimulating than seeing fifty people in a line, with their fingers hooked in their silver belt buckles, jamming to the ripping chords of a steel guitar. If I hadn't paid my hard-earned five bucks at the door I would have run scared.

Big belt buckles, big hats, big farms, big families, big line dances, and big pigs: all the essentials of Iowa. Although I have started to adjust to the largeness of it all, it will always seem a little strange, but I have to admit that the Midwest is growing on me rather quickly. Besides the speech differences and the lack of hills; besides the slow traffic and too much corn, Iowa is also the place of polite shoppers, fun-loving friends, friendly faces, and big hearts. Yes, I think I will like it out here in Iowa, even though I will always miss home. ♦

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