

I SHOT A GUN!

A lot has changed since the last time I wrote about my life here in Florence. Like I wrote in my previous blog, we welcomed two new STEP-pers, but this week we also had to say goodbye to one. Silvia from Argentina left us to go to back to Bible school in Texas and she will be dearly missed! Not only did we share a room for three weeks, she also taught me how to drink 'mate', she took me to Walmart on my first day and she would always help me with my Spanish simply by chatting my ears off. It has been a lot quieter in the apartment and at work without her endless singing and talking, her sarcastic jokes and her loud laugh. *Silvi, te extrañamos, mi vieja!*

I've also made great progress this week at my *adulthood-level*. I drove myself to the gym this week (all by myself!), took the other girls to the gym the next day and I filled up the gas tank for the first time by myself. Which is all actually a huge deal to me, since I have quite a fear of driving back at home. But here in the US... piece of cake. And I shot a gun, but later more on that. Man, I've been adulting super fast this week!

After all it has been a week of goodbyes and hello's, of feeling fire and shooting fire, of battling fears and battling books!

Monday, July 22

Since last week I have had a 'promotion' at the warehouse, or at least that's what everyone has been asking me. "*Did you get promoted?*" "*I guess so!*" Because since a few days I've been hanging out with the cool kids at the internet department. I no longer have to sort books according to their ISBN number or scrape hundreds of blue stickers off book covers. Yay! Although that has been a lot of fun too, I am happy I get to do different things here at the warehouse. Now that I 'work at Internet', I have more responsibilities and it is a more challenging job. I get to take books from the warehouse, instead of placing them there and I get to actually ship orders to paying customers, which is quite a responsibility! I have to make sure I get the right book, that is not too damaged, and I have to pack them, label them and stack them in a big container. This also means there is more pressure on me, since the orders have to go out that day. So no more slacking and chatting, there is work to be done!



The Internet Department

Friday, July 26

Welcome to the crazy South! We shot a gun today! After a long day of hard work, Peter decided it would be a good idea to take all the girls out to shoot some fire. So we drove to the shooting range, while Peter told us all about the gun laws in the US and why 90% of the people around us have a gun in their home. Little did we know there were actually three guns *in* the car with us. Since all of us non-Americans did not grow up with guns or anything related to that, it was kind of hard to understand why guns are such a normal thing here. It is even in the United States Constitution! The Second Amendment gives citizens the right to bear and keep arms, so almost everyone has one. There was kind of an internal conflict going on in my head. Even more so because we just had a prayer meeting that morning for the Pee Dee Crisis Response Team. This team was created after the tragic shooting in October 2018 in Florence, where five civilians and seven officers were shot; two of them did not survive. I

did not really know what to think about all this, but I guess I just had to accept that this is how it works here. In the meantime, I was getting a little nervous about holding a gun.

When we arrived at the shooting range, we all had to sign a waiver which gave us permission to use the guns. We all got our 'eyes and ears' (glasses and ear protection) and went inside the range. There were more people shootin' some bullets so the first few shots scared the crap out of me. So loud! But after a while we got used to it and Peter carefully explained how to handle the gun safely. Meanwhile I could not help but think: what if someone decides to turn and shoot the gun at us? Nobody can stop them, right? What if I drop the gun? What if the gun explodes? All irrational fears, but I couldn't help but wonder. And then it was time for me to shoot. Peter took his time to help me hold the gun the right way and believe it or not: I am actually a great shooter! The first few times I was a little nervous but after a while it turned into a sport to get all the shots in the circle. And I guess I can now understand why people shoot guns for fun. It's actually just a sport! The further the target, the more fun it got. After a few rounds with the easiest gun (a Ruger SR22, if you'd like to know), I got to shoot with a second one, a Bersa 22. Finally, I proved I was ready for a bigger challenge and Peter handed me the Canik 9mm, which is actually used by police officers here in the US. It was a lot heavier and the backfire was a lot stronger, but I managed to shoot 7 out of 8 bullets into the circle. Needless to say, I could not help but smile the entire evening!



Bibles and bullets, a strange combination...

Saturday, July 27

Finally a day of REST. The week had been so crazy that I claimed a nice, relaxing day for myself. Since I am now the unofficial driver of the clan, I decided I wanted to see some more of the shops here in Florence. All the girls went with me and together we spent a nice afternoon exploring Target and Hobby Lobby (amazing!). We also went to the OM Biblestore Outlet, where many damaged books are sold for only 5 dollars. It was cool to see where all the books went that we sorted that week. The store is doing really well and so far it has been a blessing to the people of Florence!

Sunday, July 28

It was Charleston Sunday again! Peter once again sacrificed his Sunday to take us on a tour through hot and sunny Charleston. It was my second time in this interesting and beautiful city and it probably won't be my last! This time Mei-Ling from New Zealand and Ya Ping joined us. Ya Ping is not a christian but she was very interested in the Chinese church service that was going on during our own service. We all love to share our faith with her and we pray that she will receive Jesus herself one day! After church we walked through the city, dipped our toes in the Pineapple Fountain, saw some street performers and we even got to see our little dolphin friends again at the harbour. Ohh, Charleston, you have my heart.



The things you find in Charleston...