

Hi everyone,

On the new year's eve I went to sleep at 3:00 in the morning and woke up after 2.5 hours. Why? Because I wanted to attend "the most colorful and photogenic event in the world" - The Tournament of Roses. This is a parade, like a big "Ad-lo-ya-da" as we used to have in Purim, which takes place every January the 1st in the streets of Pasadena, a city near LA. This is the 105th tournament "and the biggest ever". Well, I enjoyed it very much; it was colorful, photogenic and more American than an apple pie. But to praise it as "the most in the world" is a typical American statement that results from pure ignorance and arrogance of the people of this big country. When you are brought up from birth on the equation "America=The world", these are the results! I enjoyed to see the thousands of people who spent the night sleeping in sleeping bags in the streets, in order to catch a good spot. I stood less than 1 meter behind them and enjoyed the same view. I also enjoyed the festive feelings of the Americans (who, in some circumstances, can be adorable), the spontaneous singing and, mainly, the arguments and teasings of the football fans. This tournament is traditionally followed by The Rose Bowl Game: It's a football game between the champion of the PAC-10 league (the league of colleges in the west) and the Mid-West league. This year it was UCLA against Madison, Wisconsin. Everyone there (and I mean EVERYONE, except me) wore either a UCLA shirt and hat or a Wisconsin shirt and hat. Sentences like "You're dead meat", "Dream on", "Get real" or "You live in Fantasy land" were exchanged between fans of the two rivals. I hate to say it, but we lost. Well, they wouldn't let me play.

I just returned yesterday from another trip to the Bay area (the area of San Francisco, Berkeley, Stanford and Silicon valley). This time I spent there a whole week and explored San Francisco and Berkeley. I hereby declare that San Francisco is the most beautiful city in the US. On top of its striking beauty it's fun, crazy, liberal, romantic, enchanting, sophisticated and cosmopolitan. It's also clean. What else can you ask for in a city? I was lucky with the weather and got to see the city from 6 different locations with sunny and totally clear sky (SF is usually covered with fog, even in the summer, so those sunny days were quite unusual). Never in my life have I visited so many book stores and browsed for hours through so many books. The Italian quarter, "North Beach", is where the "beat" movement started and this area is still packed with book stores and coffee houses with some intellectual aroma in the air. If you want to travel in time to the sixties, just visit Haight street in SF or Telegraph street in Berkeley: The hippies are still alive, smoke grass, have long hair, play love songs on a guitar in the streets and sell buttons with "make love not war" written on them. If you want to see homosexual couples walking hand in hand - go to Castro St. If, on the other hand, you want to feel Chinese - go to the probably most Chinese Chinatown in the west. If you prefer Mexico - go to Mission St. and if it's the smell of the sea which gives you a kick - the Fishermen's wharf is the place for you.

In this trip I met again the big "Silicon Kibbutz". I went to a "harkada" where more than 100 people (Israelis, Jews and others) danced in a... church to the sound of Israeli music until 1:30am. I wasn't surprised to meet there even more people that I know from the army or the university. Those who got tired could drink coke and deep nachos in humus! I think I looked quite silly when I stood there and gazed that surrealistic event with eyes open wide. Yes, I also danced. But just one dance.

Today I saw how my students evaluated me on the last quarter course. The evaluations were quite good: I am 7.4 effective teacher and 7.3 helpful teacher (the grades are on a scale of 1-worse to 9-best). They also wrote comments on me. The best ones were: "Extremely good teacher. The most intellectual instructor I ever had. A+ teacher!!!" (The exclamation marks are not mine!!!) and "The lectures were both educational and humorous". Just to be fair, there were two assholes who wrote that I was "impatient" and "hard to reach not on my regular office hours". One of them even gave me a

score of 1 out of 9 on both questions. Fuck them. Today starts my graduate course class and I hope to enjoy it better.

Take care,  
Tamir