

PITTSBURGH – PENNSYLVANIA – USA

At long last, the day came to go to Pittsburgh. Bruno had helped me to book a hotel and airplane tickets for the 4 of us, so all arrangements were complete. In mid-July 2005, we arrived in Pittsburgh, a beautiful city in southwestern Pennsylvania. We stayed at the Wyndham Hotel in a neighborhood called Oakland, which is the heart of the city's academic and medical complex. Children's Hospital was just a block away from our hotel and the downtown was just a short bus ride.

The streets in Oakland were surprisingly busy even though it was summer. We saw quite a few students, doctors and other medical workers in their white smocks or scrubs and others wearing black and yellow shirts and/or jerseys with a big penguin (later, I found that this big penguin was the mascot for the city's professional hockey team) on it. It seemed to me that Oakland was a lively neighborhood.

Learning about Pittsburgh was one of my English lessons, so I was somewhat familiar with the city. Pittsburgh is known as the steel city because it was the historical hub of the US iron and steel industry. Pittsburgh is now known for its world class medical facilities. The world's first liver transplantation was successfully performed there, as well as the first simultaneous heart, liver, and kidney transplant. Also, The Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, established to conduct basic and applied research in robotic technology for industrial and societal applications, was the first of its kind in the world.

The Big Mac, which would become the signature sandwich at McDonald's fast food restaurant chain, was 'invented' by Pittsburgh-area restaurant owner, Jim Delligatti, and was test marketed in three Pittsburgh-area McDonald's restaurants in 1967. By 1968, it had become a mainstay on McDonald's menus throughout the country. Dr. David Strickler, a pharmacist, made the first banana split in Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh holds honors in US sports history, having played the first baseball World Series game in 1903 and built the first retractable dome arena in the world in 1961. On November 2, 1920, Pittsburgh radio station KDKA became the first commercial radio to hit the airwaves and it is still broadcasting.

Pittsburgh's unique landscape amazed me. The city grew among rivers, hills, and valleys. Finding flat land anywhere is not an easy task. With 446 bridges, Pittsburgh is also known as the "city of bridges"; having the most bridges of any city in the world, even beating out Venice, Italy. The unique design of many of these steel bridges enhances the already fascinating city view. Inbound from the airport, it is unforgettable when exiting the darkness of Fort Pitt Tunnel, one of several major tunnels in the city, to be welcomed by a breath-taking view of the downtown and its three rivers.

These are just a few of the reasons why Pittsburgh holds an important status in the US. Even more significant to me, Pittsburgh changed my mind about the American people. I came to the US with the idea that all the Americans were cold, arrogant people. This is what most Brazilians thought. But even though I couldn't speak their language very well, most people seemed to be friendly. My first impression was very positive about this amazing city.

I soon came to know why the black and yellow colors were so dominant in this city, the weird hats, extravagant clothes, and even some of their cars! I had heard of American football, but didn't know anything about it except that it just seemed to be a brutal game. However, when I came to know this sport, I immediately became addicted to it. In 2006, the Pittsburgh Steelers won Super Bowl XL, arguably the most important victory in any US

professional sport. I take some personal credit for bringing luck to the Pittsburgh Steelers in the 2005/2006 season when I came here and immediately became part of **Steeler Nation**. American football is now the sport that I enjoy the most and Pittsburgh is a city that I love.