

## Cleveland, Ohio November 2008



I left Missoula and work on the 12<sup>th</sup> (a Wednesday) for a visit to Cleveland. I came here to do research with two Professors at Case Western Reserve University, an Italian woman Daniela Calvetti and her partner, Finn Erkki Somersalo. The visit with them has gone well. We'll meet one more time today (Saturday) and I gave a talk yesterday that went well. I write from my hotel in downtown Cleveland.

To be honest, I didn't expect much from the city of Cleveland. This was in large part due to the fact that anyone I talked to about my trip here was so unenthusiastic. I should know better than to listen to such criticism. We Montanans (and Westerners in general) fall easily into prejudice toward unknown metropolitan areas, particularly those in the east. We like our space, and let's face it, we're snobs (and gosh darn it, rightly so) when it comes to where we live.

The truth is, though, Montana doesn't have everything. In particular, it has no cities, and cities have something to offer that is unique. What I like about Cleveland is that because it was once a booming industrial town, there are many turn of the (20<sup>th</sup>) century industrial buildings. It reminds me of a large Butte in that sense. But with new construction going up around the old, and a revitalization of the old, it's a vibrant place and makes me think about what could happen in Butte if a big influx of money and people ever comes.

Anyway, there's something about a now-vibrant has-been industrial town that I like, and I could see enjoying a life here: pro sports, good burgers and beer, music, culture, Lake Erie, hardwoods dropping their leaves in fall, etc. I'm a Montanan to the core, however, so with some regret I'll have to leave this life here to others, but not without the sense that what they have is good too.

And it is this feeling of identification with a people someplace far from your own that makes travel a beautiful thing. Sightseeing is one thing, but even better is leaving your own shoes for a moment to be in another's and liking the feel of them before you take them off and head for the next place, which in my case is home.