

000218 Friday Evening

Hello all,

Today is Friday and I just finished my second practice teaching today. We taught in front of kids who "volunteered" to come in despite being on vacation this week. Because the school wanted to put its best foot forward, mostly the best students "volunteered" for our classes.

Yesterday I taught a class where they learned new vocabulary words regarding travel. I knew I was in trouble from the start when they knew all of the words that I wrote on the board. Therefore, I was done with my lesson in the first 15 minutes of the 50 that I had. My room mate Jason was in the back and I gave him a questioning look as to how much time was left and when he told me 30 I almost died. However, I figured out new things to do including having the students take turns drawing places of a map of Yantai on the board. We later used the map to describe how to get from one place to the other and they loved doing it which was a bonus. Fortunately, I can use this lesson again, with modifications in the future when I get my real kids. Their levels will be all over, so a lesson that did not go well in the practice due to them knowing the material may do well in the real class.

Today I taught comparisons such as good, better, best. There was one girl in the class who has had private tutors and so was a whiz. She carried the rest of the class by translating where necessary and helping out. The class went really well.

I am enjoying teaching. I am not nearly as nervous as I pictured yesterday as I walked up to the school. Of course, that may change when I am faced with 60 kids when I get my real class. We have had many hours of training so far in addition to a lot of reading that I am doing are helping a lot. However, I just hope that lesson plans become easier to come up with in the future!

Yesterday as I walked down the street on the way to meet some friends at one of the hotels, I realized that I really like being here. Granted, there is a lot that I don't like, but I am enjoying being here. I am looking forward to having more free time so that I can explore more of the city. I have been wandering around on my own whenever I can, rather than with a gaggle of volunteers. I am looking forward to Sunday when I will go to a English Corner where people who can speak English speak with those who are trying to learn it. It is held at DiDi Burger and they give you free food if you do it. That is not my motivation. What is my motivation is to meet people from Yantai and to find someone who can tutor me in Chinese through a language exchange. We shall see. I have also found a Catholic church here so hopefully I will meet people there.

Walking down the street in Yantai, you can catch people looking at you every now and then, but they quickly look away. It is not at all like the multiple guide books that I read described the staring or like India where people were not at all shy about just standing and gawking. However, I am willing to bet that I just need to go a little into the interior and the staring will increase. However, Lisa has promised us all that we will appear in the local newspapers and on television. We will see.

One place that I walk past a lot is the really good noodle place that I went to the other day. Last night I was told that they put opium into the dough to get people addicted. This is undoubtedly just a rumor, but I am having flash backs to my last bowl of noodles...

I have been having trouble some times reconciling that this in my international service work. Not that I don't like teaching, by any means. It is just that we have a lot more than we expected. I took my last shower in the states almost two weeks ago, expecting that it would be my last in a while. I never would have imagined not only hot water, but also a TV. Nor did I expect all of the food and banquets. Not that I did not eat well in India. Food was so inexpensive, more so than it is here so a dollar went a long way. However, I do remember my friend Doug talking about his time in Ghana with the Peace Corps. He said that he had to watch what he said because if he would say something like, "I wonder if we could do such and such a thing", meaning that he was just contemplating an idea, the next thing that he knew people would be falling all over themselves to find ways to do it. The people at No 5 school are so happy to have us here that they have been falling all over themselves to make us happy. Lisa told us that on the first day that they even wanted to get us our own personal cook for the next few weeks until the school dining room opened. The food at the school is not very good so we were not going to eat there anyway. We declined the cook so that we could explore the local restaurants. Nor did I expect a western toilet, although I planned on rigging something up. Not that I mind having hot water, a western toilet or a big apartment. It is just that if I am volunteering to be here I did not expect for them to lavish so much on us.

One more thought. The back street boys and titanic are really big here. I was in KFC today (yes, I broke down and went in. It was crowded and good. To complete the transgression, I went to Carvel for ice cream afterwards) and the back street boys played non-stop. In Sync has not made it nearly as big. Some might think that this combination was awesome (Bridget), but I would rather have left them in the states!

The other night, Party Secretary Ho of the no 5 school took Jason, Lisa, Jess and myself to a banquet because we will all be in Yantai. The dinner was so nice and such a nice departure from the toastfests of the others. She invited several friends from the school and their children. It was really nice to meet them all and the kids were just pros at English. It was like a nice big family meal, but with sea cucumbers. (I did find out that a dish that I really liked was jelly fish. My new motto is "try everything"!)

take care and there will be more to come...

Jeff

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