

## **000310 Good China Moments**

Today I want to write about some good China experiences that I have had in the past week. But first, I am feeling much better now. I am afraid that I may have fallen so ill by my own hand, which is terribly embarrassing. I love to cook and for the past year I have been trading recipes with people from all over the world via the internet. So, I was very excited that China offered so much new ground for cooking. So, last Sunday I made a little stir fry with potatoes and other vegetables. I am afraid that the potatoes is where I may have erred. I cooked them until they actually burned because I was so worried about making sure that they were hot enough. However, something slipped through, hence why I was so sick for three days. I have not been that sick in a long time and it was so easy to have visions of air lifts to Hong Kong on Monday. By Wednesday I decided that it was time to go to the hospital to see a doctor which brings me to my stories.

On last Sunday, I went to the street market by my school to find some vegetables and the fateful potatoes to cook. The street markets are the only place to buy vegetables and I really enjoy walking through them and seeing all of the different foods. There are big, steaming crates of steamed bread next to tanks of fish or clams. There are tomatoes, leeks, onions, lettuce, carrots, eggplant, and many other foods. I found what I wanted and decided to walk home by way of a small alley. As I walked, the bag which contained the potatoes burst, spilling the vile vegetables across the alley. I went about picking them up as I clutched the lot in the crook of my arm (I had about 20 smaller potatoes, like new potato size). I was ready to walk home with the potatoes clutched in my arms and so I abandoned one or two stray potatoes so that I would not lose more. But then a woman on a bike stopped and offered me another bag. I accepted graciously, but there was no way to transfer my armful of hateful potatoes to the new bag. I mother and daughter spied my plight and the daughter who was maybe 10 years old came over. She found my abandoned potatoes and brought them to me. She then helped the new bag so that I could deposit the lot into the new bag. It was really nice of them all to help.

In case you did not pick it up, I now hate potatoes. The sight of one makes me nauseous. If I don't see another for a long time I will be a happy man.

So thanks to the dinner, I went to the hospital. I found a doctor through IAMAT (International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers). They are a non-profit organization which is free to join. They offer their members a listing of doctors all over the world. To be in the listing, a doctor must be licensed in their own country, have received postgraduate education in a western country and be able to speak English. IAMAT has limits on the fees that doctors can charge which are a good deal in the west, but very expensive in Asia. However, I for one was willing to pay more for a recommended doctor than to go to an unknown one. The fee for a visit is set at \$50 US, so I gathered my money and called the doctor.

I set up my appointment and went to the Yantai Yuhuanding Hospital which is said to be the best in the city. Lisa (our director) accompanied me to the out patient clinic and met Dr. Zhang Ya-Xiong and her husband. She is a general practitioner and he is a radiologist. Both

could speak a lot of English with his being better, so between our Chinese and their English we could communicate well. She examined me and decided that I had an intestinal infection. After the diagnosis we spoke for a while. I would love to sit down with them some time to hear their stories in detail because they must be fascinating. They met in med school in the 50's and soon got married and became doctors. They must have been children of communist officials. That they were doctors through the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution is amazing. They were very neat people.

She was working on the paperwork for the visit when she asked if I had a Chinese name. She explained that if she put down my English name on the form, I would be charged a lot more than if I had a Chinese name. So, she and her husband debated about my name for a minute before arriving at one. However, I do not know what they chose because at the end they decided to forget the whole thing and to not charge their American friends for the visit. Lisa and I were floored by their generosity and thanked them profusely. The doctor then took us to the pharmacy to get some drugs because she would be charged less than I would be. In the end, the antibiotics wound up costing 3 Yuan (~\$.30) for a three day course. They were very nice and good people to know. They were so very excited about a new wing being built to replace the old, run down one they were currently working in. I don't blame them for wanting new accommodations.

I did not wind up taking the prescribed medicine because we just could not figure out what it was. I was a little gun-shy of taking something that I did not know and my roommate offered a good alternative. His father is fortunately a doctor in Dallas and so he loaded up his son with antibiotics before he left home. So, I just took a prescribed amount from his father.

Jason and I will often receive visits in the afternoon from four of his students. They are four junior two girls who are very good at English and come to our room to practice and to get new words to learn. They are really funny and a bundle of energy. The first time that they came in it was very awkward to have these four girls in our apartment. However, that has past and we now look forward to their visits. However, during the first few visits we were constantly grilled on their names. They would get this really sad look on their faces if we got their names wrong, so we learned them quickly. I mentioned the visits to Lisa who used to teach at our school. She said that she knew exactly who they were before we even told her because they used to visit her as well. The thing is that you have seen the schedule at my school. These girls have no time to visit us. They take time out of dinner to come up and we always seen them sprinting to the dining hall after they leave.

Well, that is it for now. Take care.

Jeff

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