

## **000314 Why I am here**

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This past weekend was the first time that I was really just fed up with China. I had been out for a long walk to visit some of Yantai's parks on Saturday. By the time that I was done I was tired, disgusted by all of the pollution, tired of the calls of "hello" by people wanting to show off their English and tired of the constant noise and motion. That evening I headed out to dinner feeling just frustrated and annoyed at everything. I just wanted to escape it all. Not that I am about to leave, but the lure of green grass and trees or the comforts of home were all very desirable.

I felt this way as I walked down the street, still immersed in China, but in my own world. All of the sudden I heard a child shouting, "Mr Jeff, Mr Jeff!". I turned and saw John, one of my Junior one students. He was with his mother and was excited to see me and to introduce me to his mother. We walked for a short time until our paths diverged. They told me that they were heading off to dinner and said that I was doing likewise. As I parted company with them a sort of revelation swept over me. Oh ya, that is why I am here and why I will put up with it all. The rest of my walk and dinner were a lot more enjoyable. I spoke of this with Margaret, one of the other WT volunteers who has been here for six months already. She told me that she hates China quite often. She says that she either loves being here or hates being here with little middle ground. However, she finds her strength in moments like I had and that is how she can stay here this long and why she plans on staying for another year and a half. I never expected this to be easy and at the time that I am writing I am enjoying China again. I will just need to take the good with the bad because I know that in the end it will all be worth it.

### The foreigner's dinner

The dinner that I was walking to was one that was arranged by some Germans for all of the foreigners living in Yantai. I had no idea that there were so many foreigners here! There are around 50 people here from the US, Canada, Scotland, Britain, Germany, Austria, Indonesia and New Zealand. There are people here right out of university and some who have retired and were looking for a new experience. People are here to teach, predominantly at either Yantai University or a Canadian-Chinese joint university. All of the Germans and Austrians are here to work at joint venture companies. Most of them signed three year contracts in China. They get a great experience and higher pay and a promotion when it is all over for being willing to come to China. Some of the Germans do not plan to leave because their Marks allow them to live well here. The dinners will take place about once a month so that everyone can meet new people and have a chance to share experiences. I am glad that it is only once a month because I don't want to depend on the foreign community. They are great people but, I am much more eager to spend time with my new Chinese friends.

## New China Disco

After the foreigner's dinner, we all headed out to the New China Disco. The disco is a little difficult to explain. It is a big, dark room with two levels of balconies overlooking the dance floor. The DJ console is at the front and there is a stage in the back with the dance floor in between. In the back, a mock F-15 hangs on the wall beside two giant \$100 US bills. Behind the DJ console is a little stage where one woman will dance. The people on the dance floor all face the front so that they can watch what the woman on the stage does so that they can mimic her. It is almost like a big, improvised line dance that everyone does to techno music. In the back is a big fog machine, a light show and a laser array. Actually, it is a very good thing that everyone faces the front because the lasers are at eye level and so play off of people's backs and the back of their heads. Not the best things for people who turn around and get shot in the eyes. Our group danced in the back on the stage where we could watch everyone. We did our own thing as we danced and dodged the laser beams. To keep the night from getting boring, the disco varies the entertainment. The techno stopped and they put on a waltz which cleared the floor. Next, a woman got up on stage and sang a few songs. Then a strip tease came on followed by a game show and then back to techno. I think that the disco will have to be a must for all visitors to see.

## Chinese Basketball

Jason and I were given tickets to a basketball game at the Yantai arena by Communist Party Secretary Hou. We went to dinner and then headed to the arena. We found our seats and squeezed our legs into the narrow rows (the rows were too narrow for anyone but a child to be comfortable.) We knew that one team represented Shandong Province because we could recognize the character for Shandong. However, we had no clue what the other characters meant. The players were maybe high school age and were quite good. The crowd was very into noise makers and quite a few had horns that produced a shrill sound. I have heard similar horns during ping pong matches on television. Some had also brought with them cymbals and drums. There were about a dozen people who played these in unison. I was never certain just who they were routing for because they played on no matter who had the ball at the time. It was a pretty fun game to watch.

## Teaching

This week I have been teaching my students about ways to travel. I am hoping to use this theme for several classes. This class introduced words like car, bus, train, plane, etc. Next week I will work on things like grocery store followed by market. I will bring in props from each to introduce those words as well. The week after I will talk about Yantai and all of the different stores or shops that are here. Basically I hope to just keep building on the vocabulary and adding new words that are related. Some classes understand the lesson very well. Others do not. The non-boarding school students are just so far behind the boarding school students. Therefore, I must simplify lessons that I do for them.

It usually takes one or two times of teaching a lesson to tweak it until it works well.

Fortunately, I may teach the same lesson as many as 17 times, so I have lots of chances to improve it.

I am really enjoying my teaching. Some classes may go over badly and leave me making faces at the board as I write. Other classes will leave me smiling all day. But in all, teaching is going well. I just wish that I had more resources about how to be a better teacher. I will need to start hitting more ESL sites on the web.

### Care Package

Several people have asked what I would like in care packages. I am very excited about the prospect of getting letters and packages! I need paper because the paper here is so thin that I tear through it with my pen. I also need magazines like US News for the news and articles and magazines for the pictures for my class. Other items might include gum (the stuff here loses its flavor in 5 minutes and chocolate :))

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 [Previous](#) | [Next](#)  | [Return to Main Page](#)

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