

000617 Barney

The End

No, not of the emails, but of the school term. I have less than two weeks of classes left before the semester is over and I leave Yantai to spend two months exploring China. My classes resume on September First, so the only thing limiting where I can go is money. There is a lot of China to see, but more on my travel plans later.

At this point in my stay, I am very glad that I am here and I could not imagine being anywhere else. Oh, there are still days when I hate China or when my students are little monsters. But, I could not imagine going back to the US in a few weeks as most of the other WT volunteers will be. Maybe my mind set is due to my never letting myself entertain the option of leaving after the first term was over. However, I feel that I am just beginning to scratch the surface of what is going on in China. And I am just beginning some neat friendships here. If I were to leave now, I would leave feeling that so much had remained undone or unexplored. Plus this semester I have had students bitten by monkeys, I have been on provincial TV, watched a cock fight with my students and even shot rifles with them (I don't think that I ever mentioned that one.) Who can guess what next semester will bring? I am just so thankful that I have the opportunity to stay. I am sure that once classes begin again, the next semester will fly by quicker than the first.

As for the others: Jason will be starting a MD/PhD program at Yale in August, Alex will begin his MD at Missouri State, Jess will be going to Chile with the UN and Shelly is unsure what she will do once she gets back. Brian is also extending his stay in Leijo (about 3 hours from Yantai). Of those who extended last term, Amy is returning to the US, but with the intention of finding a job in China, Margaret will be attending language classes in Beijing next fall and Lisa will continue to be our field director.

Travel

I will be leaving shortly so there will probably be only one or two more emails this term. I don't plan to continue emailing stories while I travel due to how much time each installment takes me to write. Plus internet connections may be hard to find and expensive if I do. However, I will try to continue to check this account if I can, so keep the emails coming!

Jennie will be arriving in China in less than a week and needless to say, I am pretty excited for her arrival. She will stay for a little less than 3 weeks before departing to start her new career at GE. In July, my friend Carol who I know from Washington University will be coming for about a month. Finally, in late August, I am hoping that my parents can make the trip to Yantai.

I have been busy planning our itineraries and in the next email I will elaborate on our plans.

English Parties

For the past two days, our school has been having English Parties in honor of our impending departure. Each day we have had two parties, one for the boarding school students and one for the non boarding school students from each grade. The students have put on all sorts performances ranging from singing to dancing to short skits. Skits such as the tortoise and the hare and songs such as "Doe Ray Me" have been very popular. The programs have been very good and it has been a lot of fun to watch the students. Some students have gone all out for their skits or dance routines by buying matching outfits or by making costumes and props.

Jason and I were asked to put on several programs and we have wound up singing with several classes and the teachers. We also had our own little program that we like to call an epic. We begin by choosing one woman from the crowd, usually a teacher or the Party Secretary. We choose a different teacher each time. Jason sees her and says to the crowd, "very beautiful" which brings a round of applause. He then sings "You are my sunshine" to her. I then come in a push him aside and try to woo the teacher by also singing "You are my sunshine." We then sing together a version of the song where we compete for her affections and wind up having a little Kung Fu match. The students love this part and we have the Beastie Boys playing in the background as we clown around for a minute. But then we realize that we should be friends. So, with our arms around each other we sing "I love you" from Barney. I know that something terrible will happen to me some day for teaching thousands of Chinese kids the Barney song.

Even though I have now been through four of the English Parties, they are still a lot of fun and the kids are awesome. It is amazing to see my quietest students go up and belt out "My Heart Will Go On". It has also been educational for me because seeing some of the students in their school uniforms of a blue skirt or pants and a blue shirt has helped me to finally determine which of my students are male or female. Two in particular really through me for a loop. I could have sworn that they were boys.

Have a great weekend!

Jeff



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