

## **000624 Sign of the times**

### Sign of the Times

Twice in the last week I have been approached by Chinese asking me if I am familiar with Amway and if I would like to buy some of their products. I asked one of the sales people if she had been selling Amway for long. She responded that she had just started, so it appears that Amway moved into town just recently. It all started with an Amway billboard appearing down the street from my school a few weeks ago. Another recent arrival is Avon. I have seen the teacher passing around the Avon catalogues. What is next? Tupperware parties?

### English Mass

I had my last English class at the Catholic church this past weekend. I have enjoyed teaching the class and the students offer a different sort of challenge than my other classes. At first I did not know what to do with only a few students who were all eager to learn. For the past two weeks, in addition to my regular 3 or 4 middle school students I have also had two priests in my class. There is also a nun at the church who has been teaching the priests to say mass in English. Last Saturday night the priest decided to try out their new words and they held mass for the five foreigners and a few English speaking Chinese who all attend the church regularly. I did not realize until mass started just how much I missed praying with others in my native tongue. It was a really great experience and the priests have offered to have an English mass once a month.

### Bug you?

With the onset of the heat, black flies have appeared all over the place. The flies don't bite so they are not at all difficult to deal with. Fortunately, the school gave Jason and I screens for our bed rooms since the local mosquitoes think we taste great. Tamen rengway women hao chi. So, we probably have as few flies in our apartment as the big restaurants which have bug zappers installed inside to deal with the problem.

### Special Delivery

On Monday night, Jason and I went out to dinner with the headmaster, the Communist Party Secretary and the two principals from our school. Dinner was awesome and we all had a great time. The headmaster noticed that Jason and I liked the local brew, so he promised us that two boxes of beer would be delivered to us the next morning. True to his word, two boxes of beer appeared at the teachers office. Rather than to let us carry them up to our room on the fifth floor, the teachers asked two girls to carry it. So Jason and I snapped pictures of these two cute girls in their school uniforms carrying beer to our apartment.

On Tuesday, I was on my way out to run some errands when I met one of the principals in

the hall, giving a student a stern talking-to. When he saw me, he motioned me to come to his office. There he produced another two boxes of beer. He then had the student bring it back up stairs to our apartment. Now we have four boxes and we are just waiting for the other principal to see us.

### Tea Pot

On Thursday night, Jason and I were taken out to dinner by all of the English teachers, the principals and the headmaster. It was really a lot of fun to hang out and speak with them all. After dinner, the karaoke began, intermixed with the occasional disco song complete with a light show. Jason and I got up and sang "I'm a little tea pot" and "head, shoulders, knees and toes" as all of the English teachers did the motions. I can not wait to see how those photographs turned out! Between my classes, the English Parties and the awards ceremonies, I have now sang in front of so many people that I am no longer nervous about singing in public. I guess that I am becoming Chinese in this respect!

### Classes

Next semester I would like to teach lessons to my students about things that they want to know. In that way, they will hopefully be more interested in my lessons and I can have more of a cultural exchange if they want to know more about the US. So, for my last class, I have been asking the students to write me a letter detailing what they would like to learn next semester. I also ask what they like so that I can cater my lessons to that as well. Here is one of the more interesting letters that I have received. It is from a girl in one of my Junior 1 Non-Boarding school classes.

"I like listening to the radio. I like computer and play basketball, football and sports. so on. And I want to learn English lesson. I like you in our class very much. After twenty one year I go to the USA. I like eat KFC and I like swimming in the summer. The last class. I want to say: "I like you very much!" Thank you for being there in my time of need. You are a great teacher."

I am not sure what time of need she was talking about, but letters like this were fun to get and a nice pat on the back.

### Travel Plans

Jennie arrived safely in Yantai on Friday. Jennie and I will be departing from Yantai either next Wednesday or Thursday. Our travel plans include going to: Xian, Xiahe, Beijing and other places in between. My friend Gerard from Muhlenberg College will arrive in July for a week. I plan to stay in Beijing with him and maybe travel around a bit. Then, Carol arrives in late July. We plan to go to Chengdu, Chongqing to Wuhan via the boat to see the Three Gorges and the Dam, Shanghai and Beijing. We are currently debating whether to also

include Xiamen, Honk Kong and Yangoshou or to go to Lhasa. It will be hot in the south, so I may wait to go in the fall or winter. We shall see what unfolds. Hopefully my parents will arrive in China just as Carol is leaving.

Well, that is it until the fall. These emails take so long for me to write that I will not have time to write another before I return. Take care and I am sure that I will have a ton of stories to tell in September!

Jeff

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