

## 000910 Teaching This Semester

Hello,

Last Friday (9/9) marked my 7 month anniversary of being in China. Seven months seems like a long time, but it went by pretty quickly.

I returned back to Yantai last week to find that the new volunteers had already arrived. Their orientation had been in Shanghai, so although they had been in China for a few weeks, they were new to Yantai. There are only four new volunteers this year, all older than the volunteers last semester. There are three people from the US. Andrew (26) is from Dallas and comes to WT after a few years at the Discovery Channel. He will be teaching at the Experimental School. Also at the experimental school is Robin, cousin to Andrew and a Canadian. She is 29. Brett from Florida who comes to WT from working at Georgia Tech is 26 and will be teaching at the #2 High School. Finally, Virginia who is 66 is teaching at a new school on the outskirts of Yantai. I actually have yet to meet Virginia as our paths never cross since she does not live in Yantai. The new volunteers are pretty nice and fun to hang out with. The best part is that they can not get enough of the Sichuan restaurant that I love and I believe that we are destined to wind up there a few times a week.

I have pretty much recovered from my travels and by last Friday (9/1), I was eager to become part of Wuzhong again as a teacher, rather than just as the foreigner living on the fifth floor of the school. I went to see Party Secretary Hou about my schedule and was told that it was not ready. However, I was to start classes on 9/3 and sometime during the day they would get my schedule to me. I inquired as to how I was to know where to go if I did not have a schedule. They thought about it for a moment and then told me that I would start my classes on Wednesday.

So, I spent Monday and Tuesday planning out my lessons. The Melloys' had given me a great ESL book as well as a book of children's songs that provided me with all sorts of great ideas for lessons. From these and from my student's suggestions from last semester, I had a dozen lessons outlined in a few hours for my Junior One classes. However, on Tuesday when I finally got my schedule, I found that I would have all of the Junior 2 and Junior 3 classes, not the Junior 1 as I had been previously told. In total, I will have around 3030 students this semester who I will only see once every other week. That means that I only have 8 new classes to plan for each grade. That makes it easier, but it is really disappointing because I do not feel that I can get anything done in only 8 classes. Plus assemblies and random other things will reduce the number of classes even more.

So, I will need to come up with 8 very good classes. In the works already are classes about computers, the NBA and food in the US. New suggestions that I have gotten from my J3's include the World Cup, students in the US, TV and life in the US. I had wanted to combine the lessons with games and English songs which my kids last year loved. My J2's (the same students I had last semester) have been enthusiastic about these classes so far and I have high hopes for better classes with them this semester. However, I have discovered that my J3's are now too cool to learn songs. I had a much better attitude about my J3's this semester because I know many of the students from when Jason was their teacher. So, I did not expect such attitudes yet. I will

need to adjust my lessons for them as I did with my J3's last semester. I will use the same subject matter, but I will cut the songs and replace it with more challenging material.

I have no plans yet for the teacher's classes as those are a bit more challenging. Jason and I hated these classes last semester as some of the teachers can be more apathetic than the students. However, last semester, the apathetic ones stopped coming towards the end, making the classes much better and smaller. I hope that the same happens quickly this semester.

I also begin teaching at the church yesterday. I will teach the intermediate students along with Sharon who works in the orphanage in town. There is also a new teacher, Kiquis who teaches at a university in Yantai. Oddly enough, all of us volunteered in Calcutta with the Missionaries of Charity within a few months of each other. Small world. So, it is nice to have this bond with the others and an outlet to talk about India and to find out what has happened there since I left.

Tomorrow is the Mid-Autumn, or Moon Festival. It has been described to me by my Chinese friends as a holiday that is "similar to Thanksgiving." The similarity lies in that families will spend the evening together, eating delicious foods and moon cakes. Moon cakes are round cakes about 2 inches in diameter and about 1 inch high. The moon cakes in Yantai are filled with various, dense fillings. I am not a big fan of the green and red sugary, fruity ones, but I do like some others. I have heard them described as being similar to pies in the US, but this is really stretching it. However, they are pretty good. After dinner, the family will go outside to view the full moon. The holiday is on the lunar calendar and therefore always occurs on the day that the moon is full.

That's it for now,

Take care,

Jeff

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