

33nov, 2010

Greetings from SanMing China,

Wow, I know it has been well over a month, and I'm sorry I have not written sooner. Anyway, I'm finally just taking the time, even if I don't really have it. :)

Let's see... to back up a long while, my travel here was pretty much uneventful. All my flights were on time, and my friend Stephen met me in Xiamen on Monday the 22nd of Nov. We spent the night in a motel, catching the early bus to SanMing the next morning! We finished the approx. 4 ½ hour bus ride, arriving in the early afternoon. All the staff and children were very kind, welcoming me right from the start.... though many of the children were a little shy for the first week or so. We were in SanMing for about one week before Stephen and I traveled over to Sichuan province to the newest Children's Village, or CV. We were able to help with a few last odds and ends to make things more convenient. We spent one day doing that, and the day following we went and saw some of the devastating damage of the 7.5 earthquake in 2008. In just 3 minutes, 85,000 people lost their lives, and nearly a whole city was destroyed. It was very sobering to walk around and see the many buildings that had crumbled, or leaned over onto another building, or gotten covered up with the landslides and boulders coming down the mountain. We have so much to be thankful for.... We take so much for granted... and living in wooden or steel structures like we do, we don't really face this kind of devastation in quite the same way.

We had lots of fun traveling together too, and it was great to learn to know Stephen better. We had lots of great experiences: I think it was eyeopening for both of us... including staying off the fourth floor of certain motels!! :) :) You can ask me in person for more specific details sometime... as I about have to demonstrate how we felt and what we saw. ha... :) Enough on 4th floors.

Our travel back to SanMing was a little eventful in that our plane was a couple hours late, causing us to miss our bus... along with a hair-raising ride from the airport to the bus station. It normally takes an hour, and somehow we made it in 30 min!! Needless to say, we were both talking to Father. We arrived back in SanMing safe and sound, and things have been great ever since... I think... but I can't think too deep. :)

Wow, life throws all sorts of things at us, and at times when we least expect them. If you would have told me at the beginning of this year that I would be in China before the end of 2010, I'm sure I wouldn't have believed you. But, here I am... believe it or not, and this big building to the right is where I and my extra large family live. All the boys live on the first floor, and all the girls live on the second floor. The third floor is staff lodging, laundry, etc. Each 'house' has a dozen or less children... having one staff member who is the 'parent figure' for that house.

I Have 10 boys, ages 13-16, pictured below. Their English names from left to right starting at the back row are:

Karl, Sam, (Me), and the guy on my back is Ken, Jonathan, Danial, Peter, Kenny, Thomas, Michael, and Mark. They are lots of fun, and lots of work too... ha ha... but we really get along great. This picture is taken in our 'house,' and the door frame that you can just see over my head, is my little room. It's actually very cozy, and handy to be right there to solve any problems: (which of course, never happens in a house of ten boys!)

We have lots of fun together playing games of untying (mostly my) shoes, wrestling on the floor, or trying to pull me out of the chair just to name a few.

They also love to play different games on the weekend, such as: a form of Monopoly, Uno, some Chinese Checker/Chess game that I don't know, and others. Sometimes I play with them, but usually there are other demands of my schedule. Each one is unique and special in their own way... an individual who needs love and care.

I'm having fun, and also being challenged, to figure out all the best ways to accomplish that. I often ask my dear friend for wisdom and direction to face the daily challenges of life....especially when I don't speak their language..... :(

But, to show you around a little further, this building below is our dining room/homework area/meeting room, and music room; (having a piano, and also being where the choir practices.) It often comes in handy for a place to play out of the rain too.... in fact, it's kind of just the all purpose building here. Below is the kitchen where the cooks spend most of their day.... slaving away to feed about 100 people three meals a day, and always right on time. I've been amazed at how all the staff here work together so well to make this place run smoothly.

Monday-Friday, breakfast is at 6:45am so the children can get to school on time: and chores are before that. The junior high students go to school by themselves, but the other 60 or so children, we nwalk to and from school.

The children come home just in time for lunch at 11:45am, and then back to school around 1:30 pm. Supper is at 5:45pm, and then cleanup, showers, and homework till 8:30, and to bed by 9:00. All that makes for a pretty full day!

As staff, we get a little break while the children are at school, and that's when we can try to catch up on a little emailing,paperwork, or run to town. For me, as I walk around, I see lots of maintenance things too. I try to keep up the important ones, though there is always a list in mymind. Most of all, (I) try to study Chinese!! Right now the language is kind of my main focus....when the children aren't here. It's difficult not understanding even the basic everyday conversation around you, to you, and about you! :) I'm tired of hearing the sigh: "he doesn't understand." I'm even more tired of not understanding, and I often talk earnestly to my friend about it... that somehow he would prosper my way, and help me to remember not only the right words, but the correct tonal pronunciation, etc-- so that I can understand and be understood. I rely much on his strength... he is definitely faithful.

For our Thanksgiving celebration, Stephen and I were asked to make some pies and some kind of bread. We made 10 apple pies, using 2 boxes of apples, and about 150 croissants to feed 120 people!

The apple pies were credit to Stephens Mom's great recipe. They actually turned out really good... all things considering... the primary one being the kitchen novice writing this letter. Mother, thanks for all times you let me watch and 'help' you make pie crusts as a little boy... it was actually kind of fun... though I don't think I will ask to be the full time cook or anything. :) We didn't have quite the same success with the croissants, but they turned out edible, and the children liked them.

Christmas!! Wow, we had a lot of fun, but as one of the staff, I'm glad it's over. :) We had all kinds of interesting games set up for the children to test their throwing, blowing, aim, and chopstick skills. They then used the points that they earned to buy food for lunch from the food station. They also used these points to buy a simple Christmas gift from the 'gift tables.' (A yo-yo, a doll, a water toy, etc.) They asked me to make bread rolls for the food table too. I don't count myself as an accomplished cook by any stretch of the imagination... much less a bread baker. Thank you Mother for the good recipe, and the help you gave me over the phone. I got a few of the children to help me cut them out and put them in pans, but I think all in all, (including the small trial batch,) we made about 200.

Over all, we had lots of fun times together, making fun memories and fun pictures to look back on. The cooks made a delicious feast for us all... it was truly delicious-- even if it wasn't mashed potatoes, and turkey or Ham, with all the other good things that go with it! It was an experience I wouldn't trade for the best meal in the world...By the end of the day the staff were about beat... at least I was.

Wow, can you believe that 2010 is over and gone....?? The past year has gone by so fast.... a whole year that we will never have back again...

we will never be able to re-live, or go back and do it over again. A sobering thought, and yet, if the world lasts, we have a whole new year ahead of us. We can learn from the past, and its good to reflect... but

always looking back doesn't give us much headway. Here in China when you cross the street, you're always looking... and cross lane by lane; but always watching the path in front of you to make the best of the moment at hand. You don't worry about what's behind, and whatever you do, Don't back up! Our life is a lot the same way. Looking ahead, we can make the most of the opportunities that come our way... making the most of the moment... the time that we have now!! I wouldn't trade being here for anything... 'cause I know that this is where my father wants me. He is worthy of everything that we can give him: even

our life. I'm starting to find out the truth of the old saying...

“he that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.” My friend is so kind and loving in all he does... as I observe him, I find I have so much to learn. My one desire is to be like him!

This has gotten long enough for now, so, till next time...

Blessings, Edwin... (施得華 ..my Chinese name)