

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

From Judy Perry

December 23, 2010

## AFTER 22 YEARS OVERSEAS ....WHAT NEXT?

**This has been a good year—lots of people impacted by our work.**

**January:** I attended a conference on Metabolic Syndrome where our study poster drew some interest. Our first paper was published in September.

**February:** The pastors who received my training the previous two years taught 220 people on visitation team skills in Taiyuan. They are now able to teach 10 lessons on topics from Communication Skills, Stages of Grief, etc.. In September we had training with four new topics.

**July:** Our community health work was instructed to lay aside all plans and start doing health checks on 40% of the population of the community for which we were responsible i.e. about 8000 people in all. That would mean doing health checks on about 100 people a day for four months to meet the goal. I know understand the pressures of working for this system and can say now that I understand why people claim to not believe the statistics that come out of campaigns like this.

**Fall:** My main work this year has been to support the local leaders of the projects, and to develop an internship plan for the physical therapist and recreational therapist who just finished language study. It was my job to mentor them into productive professional work this next year (from November on). I am not sure who will do this now that I have been let go by my sending group. Rehabilitation is a huge area of need in this aging society.

On October 15 I learned that this year is the end of 'Part 5' of my life in Asia. I think back to 'Part 1' which began in 1982 when I went to the Taiwan on a visit and to the Philippines to work with Cambodian refugees in a processing center for those lucky enough to have received permission to resettle in a third country. 'Part 2' got underway in 1988, when, after finishing up my MPH at Hopkins, I began work at a nursing school in Taiwan. I enjoyed my four years there, making many friends with whom I still correspond and regularly visit. 'Part 3' started in 1992 when I moved to mainland China to teach at Sun Yat Sen medical school in Guangzhou. Life was really different then--1993 was the last graduating class of students who were assigned

jobs—later graduates had to find their own employment. While there I volunteered at the orphanage. (Interlude: I had one year in the USA as a visiting nurse 1994-95). 'Part 4; saw me training caregivers at a baby center run by a British group. Although I enjoyed the work, I was happy to move on when the time came. 'Part 5' finally saw me doing what I had always wanted to do, public and community health in Shanxi province with Evergreen, where I have been for 10 years now. This is the longest I have stayed at any one location in my work history, although I did move four times and lived in three cities during this time. I have seen huge changes in this decade in Shanxi. I see less openness for expatriates to work here, so this timing may

be a sign of things to come, with shades of the book "Who moved my cheese?".

I am leaving because my sending agency (which pays my salary and health insurance and sends me to work with Evergreen) has a budget crisis and so has let me and four other long-term workers go. Of the three who have been in Asia, one has been in China longer than me. We both work for NGOs, but the main priority of my sending group is partnership with local churches. Since this is not possible in China due to visa and work permit issues, they chose us as the ones to let go.

I have six months re-entry benefits. I plan to stay in China from my last day of service, Nov. 15, to early January, finishing up some projects, then will take an already planned trip to Australia and New Zealand followed by a conference in Thailand. I will return to New Hampshire in late March 2011.

Right now, I am not sure exactly what 'Part 6' will be! I am now applying to another sending group, but will need to be accepted and raise support in order to return to China to continue working with Evergreen. But maybe I'll stay in NH with my parents (now 87 and 86 years old) and find a nursing job? I am not anxious as I know God is faithful.



Photo taken on my birthday at the Great Wall.

## FUTURE PLANS

Go on vacation down under!

Oversee my last social worker training with a visiting counselor who is fluent in Chinese.

Get the therapists settled with another mentor.

Ship my belonging and return to the USA in late March.

Find a new sending organization? Take a road trip to visit old friends? Take a nurse refresher course? Get a nursing job? Find a job in a book store? Read all the books in the West Swanzey Public Library? I may spend a fortune living in the USA, but I will save money on books!

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