



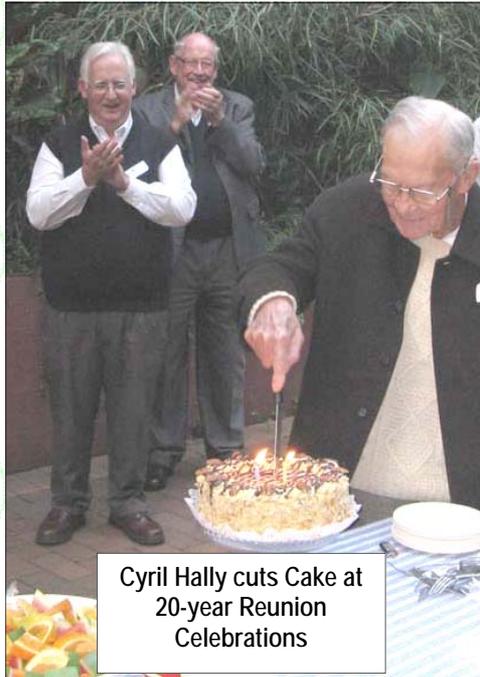
AITECE Ltd (Australia)

Association for International Teaching Educational
and Curriculum Exchange

NEWSLETTER Issue 15, September 2009

EDITORIAL

"I sing of Arms and the Man", wrote the poet as he began his epic. Likewise might our teachers in China write, "I sing of Language and the Student". But what a wealth of human endeavour is covered by these simple words!



Cyril Hally cuts Cake at
20-year Reunion
Celebrations

It is a commonplace that, by and large, soldiers are reluctant to go into detail about their experiences on the field of battle: only to those with similar tales to tell will the vivid reality of war have meaning. Memories, intimate and sacred, find utterance only when the atmosphere is congenial and receptive..

I have been led to these thoughts by reflecting on the 20-year Reunion of AITECE. In the hubbub of conversation that afternoon, one picked up the freshness of youth, the exuberance of adventure, the joy of achievement, the delight in friendships hardly imagined, the wisdom hard-won from experience - all these things and more that enrich the journey of life. And they were outcomes that followed from the initial decision to step out into the unknown. We celebrated, grateful that we were part of a common purpose - to live in China close to our students, thus to gain their trust and affection as they struggled to cope with an alien language. There were fun and games and song too, so vital to language-teaching. Influence and friendship, as we have found, transcend the limitations of time and space, and they assure us that we do well to enthruse others to follow. These can be confident of receiving our support as we, in our turn, have felt the

underlying strength of what we are proud to call AITECE.

Editor: Brian Jeffers e-mail: brianjeffers@hotmail.com

Teacher Coordinator's Report

Sam O'Neill returned to Queensland after 12 months in Nanchang. All other teachers seem to be returning to China for another semester, so with 2 more going this August '09 we have 10 AITECE teachers in China - 8 from Australia and 2 from New Zealand. Mel Couch continues English teaching in Fuzhou as well and connects with the AITECE group there.



Peter Downs &
Students

Peter Downs (new) and Michael Dredge (returning after 3 years home), having finished their Orientation in Hong Kong, are now in Changchun and Beijing respectively. Greg McCann also returned to Tongren after 8 months home in Sydney for surgery and recovery time. Greg McEnnally has returned to Tongren after 2 months at home.

Margaret Walsh

AI TECE NEWSLETTER

How AITECE began in Hong Kong - a litany of names

Audrey Donnithorne - lay / convert / academic

Father Ned Kelly - Irish Columban; China-watcher; scholar

Father John Wotherspoon CMI

Personal link with Audrey and Ned in 1987

AITECE established in Australia in June 1990

The "next generations" in HK - managers of AITECE

Father John MacGrath - Columban

Father Hugh MacMahon - Columban

Father Jim Muironey - Columban - supervisor in HK of the Columban effort in China, not AITECE specifically

A HISTORY OF AITECE One Australian's Memory

The first AITECE was founded in 1988 in Hong Kong at the suggestion of a Catholic layman in China as a means through which Christians outside China can assist the development of China in the spheres of education, welfare, health and of the economy.

The Association hopes to assist educational, social welfare and health projects, whether run by government instrumentalities, philanthropic or Church-related groups or by individuals. It would also like to help the small economic enterprises which church groups in various places in China are now setting up for the purposes of providing an income for the Church as well as in response to the government's desire to generate more economic activities to provide employment and to increase prosperity. In addition, AITECE would be glad to arrange lecture tours and cultural visits abroad by Chinese scholars, artists and others, thus making the exchange two-way.

Affiliated Associations have been - or are being - established in Australia, Ireland, Canada and England. At present, the main activity is to identify and encourage suitable teachers in Australia to take positions in universities and other tertiary institutions in China as teachers of English. Hence, while AITECE Hong Kong acts as a liaison with the Chinese institutions, AITECE Australia recruits teachers from Australia, provides them with information, assesses their qualifications and gives them general orientation for the task ahead. Support for development in China in social and economic spheres is also being provided. For example, help has been offered in establishing a number of handiwork projects which are proving to be significant small industries for local groups.

Within Australia, the members of AITECE form a body of people united by a desire to promote between this country and China bonds of friendship and mutual understanding. The AITECE Committee will endeavour to provide for the members relevant information on developments in China. Through the annual subscription to AITECE Australia, members will enable it to promote projects in both Australia and China to achieve the above objective. In building up a strong membership in this country, AITECE will be in a position to attract government grants when they are offered under programs of assistance to voluntary, non-profit organisations.

AITECE Australia will provide occasional Newsletters to members to keep them informed of (a) what is being done by those Australians who have gone to China under its auspices; (b) trends in China relevant to the objects of AITECE; (c) further plans for AITECE Australia. They will also serve as a vehicle for the exchange of members' opinions and suggestions. After 12 December 2005 - in step with AITECE Hong Kong - AITECE Australia had its original title altered, with 'Teaching' replacing 'Technological' and 'Curriculum' replacing 'Cultural'.

Father John Wotherspoon OMI has recalled the genesis of AITECE, "Some friends from Melbourne, Geoff and Bernadette Randall, came to HK in September 1986. They gave me Audrey Donnithorne's name and I made contact with her and met her once or twice, then invited her to Notre Dame Academy in Kowloon for a meal sometime in the first half of 1987. After the meal, as we stood at the front of Notre Dame while Audrey prepared to leave, we talked about the work of the Amity Foundation and other Protestant/Evangelical groups in China....and how there was no formal Catholic group for sending teachers to China. "I think I said something like: Why don't we (Catholics) do something about a teachers' group for China?" And Audrey immediately replied: Indeed. Let's do it!"

"Not long after, Audrey contacted/conscripted Fr Ned Kelly and Leo Goodstat ... and at a meeting on August 20, 1987 (at the Hong Kong Club in Central) the four of us signed forms to launch the legal beginning of AITECE. Audrey made up the name AITECE to make the organization as acceptable as possible to the Chinese authorities]. She also put out the spin that the idea came from a "dedicated lay person in China" to avoid giving

the impression that it was from Westerners." [There was a significant OMI project in Guangdong Province, also an OMI parish commitment in Hong Kong.]

Audrey continues: "In 1987, I visited Guiyang 3 times and during these visits got to know a very dynamic layman, John Bosco Chi Guang. In the 1950s Chi Guang had been a seminarian until the seminaries were shut. Then, for two decades, he was in prison and labour camps where he got a reputation for incorrigibility, continuing to evangelise his fellow prisoners. When eventually he was released, he was advised by a priest that, as there was then no chance of his continuing his studies or being ordained, he should get married, which he did. CM Guang was full of ideas. In 1987, he expounded to me that while in Ricci's time, astronomy was the avenue to evangelisation in China, at the present time entrepreneurship would play the same role. He wanted Christians abroad to establish lots of economic enterprises in China and thus get an entry. Specifically, he urged that "An Association for International Technical, Economic and Cultural Exchange" should be established by foreign Catholics to penetrate Chinese society in these fields."

"When I returned to Hong Kong, I recounted this to Fr. Ned Kelly, and said that I would like to establish something along these lines, even if not on the ambitious scale envisaged by Chi Guang. Immediately, Fr. Ned replied, "I'll come in with you on that" and from then on we resolved to get something going, although we thought that the sending of English teachers would be the most practical first step."

AITECE (Australia) deliberately mirrors the structure of AITECE (Hong Kong AITECE (Australia) is not "owned" by any individual or group. It's at "arms's length" for individuals and groups. The formula seems to have worked.

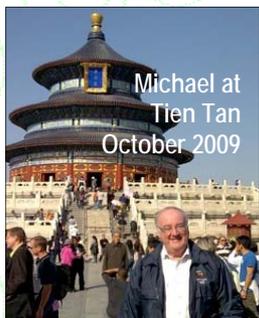
Laurie Needham

Pat Lynch writes (29 September 2009) to friends from China

Today I delivered 9100 yuan RMB to the people who needed money to repair their houses.

The money that you gave converted into this amount in the local currency at the present rate of exchange (which is up a little on last month's exchange rate). This email is to thank you for your compassion and generosity. The people who received the money were astounded and overcome by your generosity: they never dreamed that they would have so much money to repair their house. Now they will be able to repair the roof and make necessary other repairs and arrangements to make their life and the life of their 92-year-old mother and grandmother more comfortable and liveable.

I personally am very grateful to you for your thoughtfulness and help, and the people I gave the money to are also very grateful. The memory of your kindness will continue to do much good here in China. *Pat*



Michael Dredge writes about the medical testing experience in Beijing

Life here is getting even more pleasant - get this. Some of us new teachers were taken for medical tests today, and during the drive there and back across hazy Beijing we compared notes.

The medical testing place was a revelation, but typical of the organisation in this crowded place. Huge numbers of new staff members and students of various unis have to turn up and be cleared, and it is a well-oiled machine for the hundreds of punters in all the lines. You have to fill in a form declaring if you have or don't have a wonderful array of diseases, including leprosy, epilepsy, take up narcotics, and mental conditions (like you'd tick the yes box!) then present to room after room of bored medicos who test sight, ENT (I think she merely checked that I indeed had a throat, one nose and two ears - it took that long!), blood pressure (I passed), then x-rays and a cardiogram and blood samples taken. We were out of there in under two hours!

No sign of any work yet, but a staff meeting on next Friday, then classes start today week. Plenty of time to plan tours and things, even maybe a walk to the Birds Nest and Water Cube. I bought a subway seasons pass on the way home this morning - good to have it. Later today some of us are meeting again to buy new sim cards for our mobile phones. So each day gradually fills in a few gaps ...

Jottings from Greg McEnally in Tongren, Guizhou Province

Tongren is indeed a pretty city, especially when the sun shines and the air is clear though admittedly the conjunction of these two conditions is rather rare. The city nestles in a valley, built along both banks of the green Tin Jiang He, as it winds its way between many limestone hills. Thus the city is serpentine in shape, with some 22 bridges spanning the river and its tributaries. The buildings are quite attractive, many of them being of recent



construction. There is neatness and colour. Climbing these hills thus affords differing perspectives on the city. Today is Qing Ming festival when food is offered to ancestors. Many homes have a shrine at which good food is offered, before being consumed by the family. The family gathers at the graves of their relatives to tend to them: sweep away leaves and soil, pull out weeds, burn incense, offer paper money as well as food, festoon the grave with coloured streamers and generally tidy up. Vendors, for some days now, have been roving the streets selling these streamers.

One of the privileges afforded to us here is being invited to join the students on their outings. Recently, college grade 1 class 1 invited me to theirs. I was told to be at the front gate by 8.00 am. And I was. But nobody else was. Eventually some students turned up to tell me that we would leave in ten minutes but they would call me, so I returned to my room. They did call; we did leave, but it was 8.55 am. Western time and Oriental time do not always coincide. I was piled into the front of a taxi with four students in the back, plus our supplies in the boot. There is no regulation in this country as to how many people you can squeeze into a taxi; or into a

telephone booth either.

We piled out of the taxi (yes, we have arrived!) and carried piles of food across a small bridge. My first thought was to explore the site, but in this some students were ahead of me, having gravitated to a far corner of the park, where - most surprisingly - there is an enclosure containing five ostriches. Ostriches! In Tongren! Who ever would have thought? We spent a while admiring them and talking about them. Time for photos. A group of girls gathered in front of the enclosure as I proceeded to take their photo, with an ostrich background. OW! As quick as a flash, a bird decided to take a bite out of the ear of one of the girls. It really hurt. End of photo.

Hong Kong Orientation

Dear Aitece Teacher,

Welcome back to a new semester! Many institutes seem to be starting teaching from the beginning of the month though others are waiting a week or two. Last week we had our orientation here in Hong Kong for the new, and some returning, teachers. There were seven participants in all and on Friday they proceeded on to their institutes on the mainland. One of the new teachers, Peter Downs from Australia, had an unpleasant experience when his flight from Hong Kong was delayed for two hours causing him to miss his connecting flight to Changchun. As a result he arrived in Changchun late at night with no one to meet him. Fortunately he is over the experience now and settling down to teaching.

For the final celebration on the 27th, we had eighteen at the gathering at the office and the meal in Wan Chai.

With seven teachers leaving and six new teachers, plus four returning, we have a total of forty-one teachers this semester, an increase of two. The new teachers have gone to Chongqing (4), Xian (1) and Fuzhou (1).

Shortly we will be drawing up our new address list so if there have been any changes in your address, phone numbers, etc please let us know.

During the summer William Byrne retired to Ireland due to health considerations. He found it hard to leave and I know he will be missed by many of our teachers. His services were invaluable at orientations, visiting the teachers and giving valued advice on a regular basis. He is now at the La Salle house in Dundalk, Ireland and his email is the same as before.

I hope to start visiting from mid-September and the first place I will go are Changchun, Chongqing and Nanchang. During the visits I will do some research into the policy regarding age limits. As soon as I can fix dates for the visits I will let the teachers there know.

With every best wish for the new semester from us in Hong Kong,



Hugh and Rita

Participants at Orientation, August 2009



Standing L to R: Eddy Sullivan (Ireland), Guy Rivard (Canada), Eimer Harding (Ireland), Jane Lavery (UK)
Seated L to R: Peter Downs (Australia), Mary Hanrahan (Ireland), Michael Dredge (Australia)

A Tribute to my Students

A New Zealand teacher, Francis Cammiade, reflects on the four years he spent teaching in China

"How does Nanchang sound?" said Hugh.

"Nanchang? That'll do fine."

"Do you know Nanchang?" I asked my Chinese friend.

"Nanjing?" he replied. "No, Nanchang."

"Never heard of it."

Nanchang is a city set in a wide valley on low-lying ground which can be swampy in wet weather, and in winter has a dampness about it that chills to the bone. In summer the temperature may reach 38 degrees at times and the humidity enough to make you burst into a human fountain after three paces. The air quality is affected by local industry, by the constant demolishing of older buildings to make way for the new and by the use of cheap coal for domestic heating in winter. I saw one really evil-looking yellow smog one day in that city. But autumn is a beautiful time; the weather can be perfect. You could not wish for better. Rain can be frequent, and heavy at times, and there is a fairly regular wind. I would return tomorrow if I could.

While the attitude of some foreign teachers to their contribution to China was dismissive, a good education is still one of the best ways for most poor people to improve their circumstances. High school is cram school: students are swamped with studies which are chosen for them and they culminate in one all-important exam which decides their entire academic and even personal future. Failure in this exam, even by a few marks, relegates the student to what are seen as lower quality universities which are not highly regarded by employers as they do not offer high level degrees. Yet, strangely, the unfortunate students are expected to pay more for this privilege. The school at which I taught was one of this lower-level kind, the students paying a double fee, yet it would be quite wrong to say that they did not have the potential to excel. In fact, one has recently won a province-wide competition and another achieved an exceptional score in IELTS tests. Given a fair chance, they can do it.

Most foreign teachers agree that Chinese students are less sophisticated than Western counterpart, but I have a suspicion of that word, "sophisticated". I suspect it often means knowing too much too soon, and having

AITECE NEWSLETTER

wide experiences and choices that are denied to half the world. Certainly the Chinese students do not have the assets of so many Western students. Facing a class of fifty or so university students, it is common to find that not one owns a car, or even a licence to drive. China may now be the one of the world's major sources of pollution, but ordinary citizens do not contribute to it yet. Coming from little villages or small farming communities, the students do not have the same opportunities to discover or learn for themselves, nor are they encouraged to do so. They are also more inclined to pay outward respect to teachers even if they feel the teaching is bad. Obedience to 'leaders' is all-important. One foreign teacher even described China as a teachers' paradise, he loved the control so much. Another way of seeing it, is that they are a delight to teach; they are seldom shy outside of class and they love to sing. It is only their lack of English skills and their ingrained self effacement make them appear so, to overcome that they must be given confidence. The way Asians downplay their skills is a delightful change from the brash Westerner who loudly proclaims him or her self to be a 'high-flyer'.

Despite all the hardships the optimism of the students is amazing. Maybe it a product of the Eastern idea of Karma, but they accept their situation and seldom think of complaint. They know they have no power. Their Student Union is just another front of Authority. Tradition also dictates that appearances must be good: to be 'happy every day' is a common wish. They are delighted to meet foreigners but may feel they need courage to speak to them. They reward good treatment with great kindness and simple sincerity.

They are intensely loyal to their families, and most see it as their duty to repay their parents for payment for their studies, and in true family tradition, look after them when they are old. This is true too for girls under the 'One Child' policy, which is not always so strictly enforced, though a teacher at my school was forced to resign for becoming pregnant with her second child. They, the girls, can become the family breadwinner. They are also beautifully loyal to their country. Every morning and evening there is a flag raising and lowering ceremony conducted by a small group of chosen, very smartly dressed, soldier-students. Nationalism? Well, have you ever seen any American schoolroom without the Stars and Stripes? It is good to be loyal to one's people.

The students have their own way of showing appreciation to the foreign teachers. Just before I left, two classes joined in presenting me with a Tang Dynasty suit as a 'Thank you' for my efforts, and on the morning of my departure fifty or more of them forced their gatekeepers to open the 'doors of their dormitories before 6 a.m. so that they could say goodbye. Earlier one had stood up in class and despite her deep shyness, sung me a song beautifully as her personal 'Thank you' to me.

One evening I was told to wait outside a darkened room and then, when ready, invited to enter. A heart formed out of candles had been set on the floor and a ring of chairs around the heart. They sat me down at the point of the heart and then they, one by one, each came up to me, offered me a flower, thanked me for my teaching, and sang to me. Even today I am lost for words. For awards like that I would now, if I could, swim all the way back to China and find my heart again. For those of you who are interested in teaching in China, I would like to recommend the Old Campus at Nanchang Hangkong University. Good luck, you will enjoy it.



Information for Prospective Teachers

- ☐ Contracts with the Universities in China are available for six to twelve months (renewable)
- ☐ Teachers are placed in groups for company and support
- ☐ Visits from the office in Hong Kong are offered each semester
- ☐ Intakes are in February and late August/September each year
- ☐ Teaching in other subjects besides English language is also in demand eg Law, Business, Science
- ☐ TESOL Certificate is an advantage
- ☐ Adequate salaries, airfare allowance, medical bonus and free accommodation are usually provided by the Universities
- ☐ Personal expenses include insurance, visa, and medicals
- ☐ Initial interviews, preparation and orientation offered by the National Office in Australia
- ☐ An orientation program for new teachers is held in Hong Kong before teachers leave for China
- ☐ AITECE has a commitment to the poorer areas of China.

For Information

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“There is no doubt that I see the world differently as a result of my experience in China. Just the ordinary things we do as human beings, because we care for one another, meant so much to the teachers and students.” (A former teacher)