

The Chinese Contact, Part 2

We are publishing the correspondence between Colebrook and Beijing that began November 2002 and is ongoing. I feel that by using this approach, the reader will be better able to follow the process by which the contact between the schools is made, and also the development of a very interesting relationship between Jing Cao and myself. Last week we ended with a letter dated Dec. 10 2002.

Beijing, Dec. 11, 2002, "Dear Bob, I called a friend in Zhu Hai today, talking about your suggestion of setting up some kind of communication of two schools in China and the US. I mentioned the school that was built by Rung Wing 130 years ago; it is a school for students ages from 7 to 12. My friend Yang Yi is doing the culture exchanging work. He likes this idea. But I am asking him to check the popularity of the computers (she means availability) and Internet in their school. (Remember it is in China, not the biggest city like Beijing and Shanghai, your students take everything for granted.) Also, I am wondering of their English ability. It is much easier to contact students in England. But maybe they can have some kind of other contacting first.

My friend Yang is helping contacting the school these days. I will update all the information. Best, Jingcao."

Beijing, Dec. 11, 2002, "Hi Bob, My friend Yang just called me, gave me the feedback of the Chinese school. They are very happy hearing that, and Zhu Hai government is planning to set up a stone at Hartford soon, memorizing those 120 Chinese students. They said they will choose another school doing this contacting (not the one I mentioned, because of the computer equipment.) Right now they want to know more information of the school in the US. Do you have some photos of it? Can I give your mail address to them directly?

See, that is the Chinese speed, maybe too fast for you! Zhu Hai is a very special place in China, we call it 'special economic zone', because it is near Macao, the government gave them some special economic policy, helping them develop their economy quickly.

Have you read two books about these Chinese boys? One is the biography of Rung Wing, 'My Life in China and the US', another is by an American professor 'China's First Hundred.' Best, Jingcao."

Colebrook, Dec. 29, 2002, Hello Jingcao! I hope your trip to the south of China turns out well and that the weather cooperates! (This means that I hope it does not rain on you!)

I have come across an interesting fact about the Chinese students. ("come across" is another way of saying "found" or "discovered"). This was printed in a Winsted Connecticut newspaper on September 12, 1879. It says: "Yew Fun Tan, the elder of the Chinese youths so long inmates (in this case, the word "inmate" means "frequent visitor") at the Carrington household and under the tuition of the Misses Carrington, entered Yale College, New Haven, from East Hampton Preparatory School on Tuesday of this week. Strange how these Chinese boys outstrip (means greatly excel, or surpass) American youth of the same age and advantages, but they do it every time, somehow."

The reason I am telling you this seemingly unimportant bit of information is that there is more to this story than first appears, and here is the reason: Today, there are many thousand Asian people living in the United States, and most of their children do far better in school than their American counterparts (equals). This has become a matter of some concern throughout the country, because it seems to indicate that there is something wrong with the way American students study their lessons. The most common explanation seems to be that we suppose the Asian families are more dedicated to their betterment and that the parents and older brothers and sisters help their younger siblings with their lessons. There is a feeling that the general American population does not have such a sense of unity, and this is why the Asian students excel. In light of what the 1879 newspaper article has to say, I would venture a guess that this theory is not valid. I don't know what to believe, but perhaps this information is something that you can work into your story. Bob

From Beijing, Jan. 5, 2003, "Dear Bob, I received an e-mail from a lady official, (her name is Shen Li) in the Propaganda Dept., Zhu Hai government. (Zhu Hai is the city many of the 120 Chinese boys came from, and I am trying to find a school there). Don't feel nervous when hearing about official; when I did the filming in Zhu Hai, her department was the place I needed to work with, and when I am helping working with the "school contacting" project in both China and the US, her department is also the place I need to contact first.

She told me they are working on your proposal these days. I forwarded all the content of your mail that concerns the school issues with her. They are very serious of this proposal, asked me of which school is the best to be selected. So I know they have not contacted you. Bob, maybe I should let you know that for many Chinese people, it is a very serious thing to write a letter to a foreigner, especially when they are talking something not private. That's why they have not written to you. Maybe they will have talked about it several times before they send you a kind of formal e-mail. So, just give them some time, but it will be very soon. As I know, they are also working on another proposal by me and Qian Gang; they would like to set up a memorial stone at Hartford very soon. So they plan to visit Hartford a few months later, and put the school contact issue as part of the contacting project between Hartford and Zhu Hai.

I must thank you for correcting my e-mail in detail, and wish that we can review them once in a while. Then in the near future, you may feel proud of me as your student.

Best, Jingcao"

The man named Qian (pronounced 'Chan') Gang, was the person who came to Colebrook prior to the entire film crew. He was been hired as a special consultant for China Central Television.

This series will conclude next week.

Historic Bytes
Bob Grigg