

## **The Chinese Contact**

A while back, I wrote about the Chinese film crew that came here last October to film segments of a major documentary film they are doing on the Chinese students who came to America in the 1870s to gain knowledge in western ways and technology. Ever since that time, there has been a steady stream of information going back and forth between Colebrook and Beijing. At first, it never entered my mind that the texts would be of any great interest to anyone other than myself, but after all these months, they emerge in a different light, and I believe that now might be the time to share these letters with the public. Hu Jingcao is the director of the documentary.

Nov. 14, 2002 from Hu Jingcao: "Our dear Bob, how very nice receiving your mail! What an efficient person you are!" (I had sent some requested texts from the Carrington files to Beijing.)

"We finished our 25 days filming in the US and arrived Beijing last weekend. The whole filming in the US is very successful. As I told you that how wonderful you are when accepting the interview. You may seriously consider of finding another job! All our camera crew had a wonderful day with your company, and let me tell you that day's lunch was among the top 3 meals we had in the US.

Right now I am watching the footage and also starting doing the research for our later filming in China. The whole project supposes to be finished in the middle of next year. I will keep in touch and update what is going on with our project.

Thank you for the diary translation! That is a great help for our telling Tan's story. Our best, Jingcao"

Nov. 17, 2002 from Colebrook: "Greetings, Jingcao, I just received your message. Our county has just had a severe ice storm that caused us to lose our electrical power for two days. Thank you for the kind words. We did have a successful day in Colebrook, and you are correct in saying that the meal in Norfolk was most enjoyable! Do you recognize the woman in this photo?" [I had e-mailed her a picture of herself taken at Benedict Pond.] "Best regards, Bob Grigg"

Nov. 19, 2002 from Beijing: "Who is she in photo???"

Hi, Bob, I just finished translating your mail about the diary into Chinese. It is great! Thank you again for your wonderful and detail working. It helps us correcting several historical misunderstandings.

My warmest regards for you in the ice storm. Jingcao"

Dec. 9, 2002 from Colebrook: "Hello Jingcao, I am old enough to really appreciate computers and e-mail. Most of the young people grew up with it, and so 'take it for granted' (a phrase that means 'don't think about it'), but when I see that you sent me a letter from one side of the world and I received it less than one day later, I can't help but be amazed!

One of your sentences said: 'You know the more I do the research for the story, the ??? I love it. (I have some problems with my English.)' The word you want here is 'more'. I hope you are not offended by my correcting what you wrote; I only mean to help you. I think that your command of English is wonderful."

Jingcao, I have a question for you: Do you think it would be possible for us (meaning you and me) to place our grade school in Colebrook in contact with a school in China? Our term 'grade school' means from kindergarten, when the children first enter school at about age 5 until the sixth grade (or year), when they are about 12 years old. This is about the age of some of the Chinese students who came here in the 1870s. I have found out that the students at our school no longer know of the Chinese students, nor of Tan's grave. When I was growing up here, we had only one small school in Colebrook Center, with two teachers, and because one of the teachers knew of, and was interested in Tan and the Chinese educational program, all of her students also became interested in these things. We need to have a book written about Tan and the other Chinese students to broaden their knowledge of China and the Chinese people. I have spoken to the director of our school, and he thinks it is a good idea. There are computers in all the classrooms, and they are very good at communicating over the Internet. They are in contact with a school in England, and last year published a booklet with many photos of Colebrook houses and places that they sent to their friends in England. Do you think such a plan would be possible?

I am sending along a picture for Wang Xiao Peng to see (Xiao Peng was their cameraman, and took a great deal of footage of Benedict Pond; the 'x' is pronounced 'sh' like in the word 'shoe', so it would be pronounced 'schow'. It is a picture of the first lake we stopped at, where I took the pictures of your group. This photo was taken last June, when the entire shoreline was lined with laurel bushes in bloom. Each state in the US has a flower that they call their state flower. This mountain laurel is Connecticut's state flower. (It is a member of the rhododendron family.)"

Dec. 10, 2002 from Beijing: "Dear Bob! I just finished my 15 days business travel, came back Beijing this evening. Now it is more convenient for me to go to my mailbox. Thank you for your correcting of my letter. In fact that's what I want. I wish I can speak and write better English, then it will give much more help with my work now. So I wish you do more of this kind of correction of my mail.

My business travel is for our later filming of those boy's stories in China. (We do the US part first, since it is more difficult than here in China.) I am sure you would like to know what happened of those boys when they came back China.

It is a very good idea to set up some kind of contacting of the schools in both China and the US, you know when I read your mail, a school emerged into my mind. I just visited a school in south of China, (the city called Zhu Hai, just near Macao) it was set up by Rung Wing 130 years ago, (the first student graduated from Yale, who helped those 120 Chinese boys to America.) The school is still being used. Let me send you a picture soon, and I will help arrange the contacting. Please forgive my delay doing something sometime these period. I am just being occupied all the time for this project, for this and that. I would like to have more leisure time to write to you, and then I can write more beautiful than this one. My very best, Jingcao."