



二〇〇八年五月

Dear Friends and Family:

I'm writing once again to let you know what's been shakin' in my neck of the woods. Things are beginning to get back to normal here in the city. Classes have started up and are running at full capacity, my Chinese lessons are on the front burner again and days are definitely getting warmer...okay, they're getting HOT!

I've been here nine months now – Man! Times flies. It's been a good year of parties, training, teaching, and laughter. To be honest, I've had a few lonesome times, and every now and then, a hankering for an order of Chevy's Taquitos (with extra jalapeno pepper jelly). But for the most part, the work here has kept me very busy. So let me tell you what's been on my plate this month...there have been some greens—if you know me, you know what that means—but a lot of sweets too.

As you may guess, a huge chunk of this month was swallowed up in earthquake business. However, the good news is, the party business goes on and is going where it may have never gone before due to the state of affairs here. Here is one story to give you an example of what I mean.

The story goes like this... A group of friends from another city passed through here on their way to help those affected by the earthquake. As they did so, they took food, glucose, tent material, toilet paper, and other basic necessities with them to help those in need. They stumbled on a group from a small town and felt they should stop to help. They were so happy to be there that they decided to have a little party. They did special activities for children, in the dark, using flashlights as "spotlights". The kids had a blast! They taught them songs, gave them a fun time, and loved them openly. When it was time to return to the city to get fresh supplies to go out again to help others, the entire "tent village" asked them to come again and host another party for everyone. This wasn't the outcome they were expecting – their only expectation was simply to have the honor to serve...real love did the rest. I choked up watching the video, myself, wishing I could have been there in person. There are other stories as well, but this one was one of the first.

The focus here the past few weeks has shifted dramatically to children. There are songs about them being written and sung by popular artists. Children have been caught in the act of being kind and caring. No doubt the attention they are receiving will have an impact on their entire generation. One of the biggest impacts is how it is changing the perception of them in the eyes of their elders. The very focus of my idea for children here is being made for me, without my lifting a finger. Isn't that cool? Now is the time to train! The children are ready, and their leaders, after seeing them mobilized in this quake, have a new vision of their possibilities.



The following pages contain images and information about the month of May in my city. Thanks in advance for keeping us all in mind. We're doing well and opportunities to reach out to others are rolling in. Please keep me in your thoughts daily concerning a writing project I've accepted. It's an honor to have been asked, and I'm trusting it will be a good help to many people who share my interests!

Thanks one and all! I love you and appreciate all the emails wishing me well. We're all in this together!

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DAILY LIFE...



The day before the quake, after a morning party I went with three teacher friends to purchase a keyboard for home use. Then at their request, I brought them home and taught them the fine art of making chocolate chip cookies from a mix. We all had a great time!

Teacher names (below left) are:
Left – Ann, Music
Middle – Hebe, English (Heb-bee)
Right – Lucky, Art (pronounced Nah-key)



Above – Making cookies from a mix isn't nearly as complicated as they thought.
Below – Jenny and Jerry sport new "Monday Uniforms" – the day of the quake, "512".



EAQRTHQUAKE...



Left: Just before the quake, I noticed this "Chinglish" sign posted at the entrance of a building.
Right: Not much damage at my house, just some broken glass at the entrance.



The road behind my home became a maze of tents after the first false alarm about a huge aftershock. In my housing district the school courtyard was converted into a tent city...and all along this sidewalk sleeping tents were erected in just a few hours.



Roadside tents are finally coming down. In outlying areas we were not able to provide dome tents like the one I'm holding, but we did provide tent material (like the red/white/blue stripe in photo) to shelter approximately 500 people.



Above: Thanks to generous donations from volunteers and friends abroad, friends of mine were able to backpack supplies into remote areas. Packing was the fun part! Hosting parties was too! Many were touched by the fact that strangers were willing to leave the comforts of home to live them. **Below:** I didn't know what glucose was, but now I do. In this case, it's a powder that can be mixed with water to provide nutrition in the absence of food. The red plastic tube contains a kind of "meat" – similar to a hot dog – that does not need refrigeration and can be used to supplement nutrition from instant noodles provided by the government.

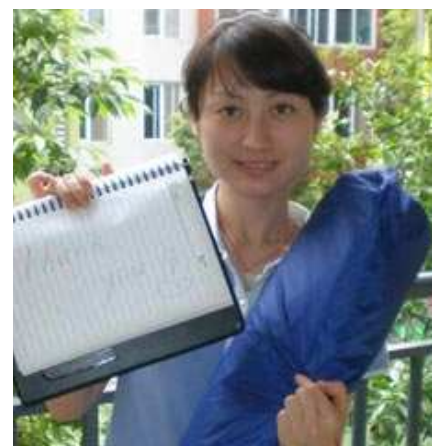


**** A SPECIAL THANKS to *Compassion Services International***
for their contribution which supplied tent materials, food, water and various supplies
for families as well as **transport** of aid workers.

There will be an ongoing need for funds in the area of earthquake relief, especially for the next three months. If you are interested in knowing more, I'd love to hear from you. The needs change from week to week, but I can find out where the gaps are...so you can stand in them. ☺



Every now and then when the opportunity arises, I get a chance to help a friend in need. Remember Hebe? The English teacher, who was so interested in my cookie making skills, was in need of a tent due to the condition of her living quarters after the quake and her frayed nerves. It was great to be able to give her a tent (blue bag)...she wrote a big THANK YOU note, sending her "good wishes" to those who helped someone like her.



SCHOOL...

A few shots from the National Children's Day celebrations (May 30th). Students were so PROUD of their new uniforms, but the excitement wore off pretty quickly...as it is now "too hot to bear anything but a t-shirt and shorts."



PARTING SHOT...



Drooling at the Duck Meat Store. All parts sold separately! (Beak, tongue, heart, neck, etc)
Hope this update leaves you wanting more...see you again next month!