

## **Tracy Wang**

Waterford School, China

### *Chapel Talk*

For those of you who don't know me yet, I'm Wang Tianyang, AKA Tracy, from Shanghai, China.

I want to start with two frequently asked questions. First, why am I here, at Waterford, Sandy, UT, for one year? Second, do I like it here?

The answer to the first question is kind of a long story. I'm an ASSIST student. ASSIST is short for American Secondary Schools for International Students and Teachers.

According to their website, it's a forty-one-year-old "cultural exchange program that continues to bring deserving and talented boys and girls to study in the United States on one-year scholarships". Waterford is a brand new school to the program this year, that is to say, I'm the first ASSIST student at Waterford. This title scared me at first because it means I have the responsibility to be a good example. So I was really glad when I heard that Waterford turned in the application for next year's program. I hope the ASSIST program will stay at Waterford forever. In that way, you guys can be good friends with a handsome European boy, or a sweet Asian girl.

All the 121 ASSIST students were randomly matched to 77 private high schools all over America. I still remember how excited I was when I first got the letter from Waterford last year. I said to myself, "Hmm, Sandy, UT. Where is that?" I did a little research but apparently I should have done more homework about this place because I brought so much tea and so many wine bottle holders to give as presents. That was a mistake. Anyway it leads us to the second question, do I like it here?

Yes, I'm sure of the answer. Yes, I love my life here. Wanna know why? Just check this out. Here's a typical schedule of mine in China. Getting up at seven thirty, homework from 8 to 12, lunch, math class from 1:30 to 3:30, SAT class from 4 to 7, dinner, and then homework from 8:30 to whenever I fall asleep at my desk with a physics book in the arm. And unfortunately, it's my Saturday schedule. Monday to Friday is more like wake up—classes—homework—classes—homework—go to bed. Yep, that's pretty much my life. We do sports, have music or arts classes, and run a fun on-campus activity once a week. So many American friends say "Asians are smart." I would say no we're not smart. We're just hard working and have nothing to do other than solving math or science problems. And thanks to the 1.3 billion population of China, we don't have a choice. So the reason I love my life here is very simple. I have weekends here! I don't have homework during the breaks!

I've tried so many new things here that even I myself cannot believe it: skiing, rafting, horse-riding, snowmobiling, racquetball, going to dances, wearing make-up, wearing a skirt when it's snowing, being late for classes with a note, talking back to teachers in class, sleeping overnight at a friend's house, having one sister, two sisters and even four siblings at home, patting a dog, being in Vegas two days before my SAT test, eating cheese, using butter, going to seminary and church, going to bed when I don't want do homework, ... Seriously, Utah life is changing me. What if I'm going to be too NOT nerdy when I go back to China? That's going to be a problem.

When my friends ask me, do you miss your parents? How can you make it? I always think they're tricky questions. Of course I love my family, and I miss my friends and real Chinese food back in Shanghai. But I figure it doesn't help to miss them too much and to get distracted by the nostalgia emotions. This one-year program gives me the opportunity to experience a lot of things, but only once. If I missed going trick-or-treating on Halloween, I wouldn't have another chance; if I missed Tree Utah, I don't know when I can plant my first tree. When everything will only happen once, you will learn to cherish it, even if these events look so unimportant. That's why I love my life here. If I have a tip that I can share, it will be enjoying every moment in your life as if it would appear only once.

After talking about how Utah is changing me, I think it's time to show you guys around my hometown, Shanghai, a little bit.

This is my sweet, home, Shanghai, China. I know there're always arguments about Chinese politics, but what Chinese people really care about is the rapid growth of China and the improvement in people's lives. I have a cousin, who used to live under the poverty line two years ago, but thanks to the World Expo policy enacted last year, his family moved into a new apartment and he can afford to go to school without the heavy financial burden on the family. Trust me, I see the country growing up with my own eyes and I believe it's growing in the right way. This year, from May to October, the World Expo will be held in Shanghai. So I want to welcome all of you to Shanghai and I promise you, you will be amazed there!

I want to close my speech with some special thanks. Thank you, Mrs. Heuston, for admitting me with a full scholarship. Thank you, ASSIST, for accepting me. Without ASSIST and Waterford, I would never have this amazing chance. I also want to give my thanks to my three host families. Thank you for everything! And I want to give my thanks from the bottom of my heart, to everyone who smiles at me, says hi to me, and answers my stupid language questions with patience. This is a truly amazing year! There're only sixty days to go. I'll remember from 2009 to 2010, with you guys, I had a great year in the USA. I'll miss you all so much. Thank you again!