

My Chinese Nightmare

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Monday, February 17, 2020

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Ten or 15 years ago I was toying around with the idea of becoming ESL (English as a Second Language) certified so I could teach the language in a foreign country. Perhaps a better word would be fantasizing. I never really pursued the fantasy for a few reasons. Number one, in a class room situation I am a dreadful teacher. I do fine one on one or maybe myself and 2 or 3 other souls sitting in a cube as I go over a technology I know really well. I have had people praise me mightily in those circumstances. The few times I was roped in presenting to a large group to teach something, I felt like it was a horrendous experience for me and my audience. Another reason is that an English teacher in a foreign country does not earn much. When I was having these fantasies it was pre 2008 and my 401k was looking very fruitful. I thought maybe I could work for experiential reasons versus pecuniary.

Now the real kicker for me is my accent. I have lived so many places my accent is really a mish-mash of several regions. It is, however, mostly an Okie accent with a good dose of Southern thrown in. To illustrate the point, I will tell you of a date that almost was not. I met my second wife via Yahoo Personals (they no longer exists). I was working a contract in St. Louis and thought it would fun to meet someone to go out with. We went back and forth over email for a week or so. I got her number and called her up to ask her out for a date. Reaching her voice mail and being a polite Southern gentleman, I left a message. She listened to it and promptly called up her girlfriend to say, "He seems like a really nice man, but I cannot understand anything he says. It will never work." Thankfully, Viki calmed her down and we went out on that first date.

Back to the real kicker, in my fantasy I was teaching in mainland China. I was surrounded by 10,000 of my young Chinese students speaking awful English with perfect Okie accents. I knew in my heart of hearts that the world was not ready for such a phenomenon.

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