

Dear Friends at LCC

Char and I are here in the NW area, of a Central Asian country (to stay unnamed). It is big, slightly larger than Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, Nevada and Utah



combined. Things are going pretty well. The heat has turned on but occasionally the weather cools down nicely. I am busily working on a language book and other stuff while Char is learning to create native designs using Photoshop. So, not much new there. We meet a number of new people but are working at building deeper friendships with those we know. School is officially over for the summer giving us more time to visit people we know. We had a beautiful mountain trip

one day, which we really needed and really enjoyed. We bused up to one area and then hiked an hour to a "native" village. It was beautiful. We had an exquisite dinner as well, made up mostly of things people back home eat, celebrating Char's birthday. Our lives otherwise are fairly mundane. We do walk a lot. Each day we walk a few miles at least. We also have a gym downtown, so along with dieting we keep our weight down. Life here though lived somewhat similarly as in the US is very different. The car, cell phones and computers are making huge cultural changes here. Along with the



new technology making everything change rapidly, people feel like they've entered the 21st century and are catching up with the "developed" nations. Everyday we are asked about such things. They see our movies and their first reaction is the sense that they must catch up. They don't see the larger picture yet of what exactly what having caught up will mean for them. Being one of the haves slows down the envy factor, which seems, at least for now to be a good thing. Everyone wants to learn

English, which also could make us popular. On Thursday Dick volunteers for a few hours of time at a local café to guide discussion at an "English Corner". There are several in town, each with several levels and ages of English learners. He says it is fun, and the restaurant gives him a free meal:) Prices have gone way up since we first came here. A typical meal then would have been of course the local cuisine, but it would cost \$1. Now restaurants attempting to create western food usually charge \$8-9 for a simple meal,



\$11 with a drink. We usually eat local fare. That would be Lagman (homemade noodles with spicy lamb sauce), or Polo (Pilav) made of fried rice with lamb and carrot, or naren cut noodles with boiled lamb or horsemeat.

These are all typically \$2.50-\$3.00 a piece. Shubat is about a dollar for a bowl. It is fermented camel's milk. My local friend, Moham, sells it at his shop, which is a good way to catch up on things a few nights a week over a bowl of it. Strangely Dick has found that it cuts through the dry heat and dirt of the city with great thirst quenching ability better than anything else. One of the places we walk to is about 3.5 miles away. It is a beautiful park that is well used by a variety of people. Of course it is crowded and people do sometimes stare at us but we just put on our sunglasses. It can be a good place to meet others in a superficial way. Several bodies of water have been created in the park, which cools things down, and some even catch fairly large carp in them for supper. People here are good at preparing carp. It is boney but delicious. We are enjoying our apartment, which is cooler than most, though lately at night we almost need to sleep on the floor to keep cool. Air conditioners have not appeared on the general market here yet, though we see some buildings have them. Tomorrow Ramadan starts. Our friends wake up a half hour before dawn (5:20) to wash, pray and eat something. They don't drink or eat all day until 8:30 when the sun sets and they've washed and prayed again. The first few days are especially hard. Well, we pray you are well and bid you God' speed.

Love Dick and Char