

A letter of sincere appreciation to my wonderful family in China

The Internet is amazing technology. Not only does it provide an endless ocean of information, good and bad, reasonable and unreasonable, real and fake, but it can also provoke every imaginable emotion: happiness and sadness, excitement and frustration, love and anger, agreement and outrage.

However, the Internet can also bring incredible joy to situations like ours when circumstances and distance do not allow people the opportunity to see each other as often as they would like. It is for this reason that I have chosen to write this letter to my family in China, who have little or no chance to visit us in Canada.

My name is Peter Beyer. I designed and maintain this web site and, while I am the main photographer, there are times when I rely on my wonderful wife, Jinmiao Xu, for her contributions, and for that I am truly thankful.

August 28, 2013 will represent 11 wonderful years since we first met. I'm not saying that we haven't had our differences. After all, mixing two vastly different cultures can be quite a challenge, but we've come through the experience with a much deeper understanding of each other, and our distinctive cultural identities.

Perhaps most important is that we now share two amazing children, Sierra Bofan and Eric Boyu, who have strengthened the already solid foundation of our loving, trusting and committed relationship, and who are the inspiration for this site. Because of them, our lives have become far more meaningful than we could ever have imagined.

My wife and children mean more to me than anyone or anything else in this world. I have no regrets, and would not change a thing.

Equally important; however, is my wife's family in China, who have always treated me with kindness, generosity, and respect, which is more than I can say about the members of my own family.

Some people may think that it's sad for me to say that I feel closer to the Xu Family than I do my own, and in some cases they may be right; however, many fortunate and unfortunate circumstances have led me to where I am today, and I do not regret my previous statement.

Mama and Baba (my mother- and father-in-law) always find a way to make me feel great joy and emotional peace. They are also the reason why I value my trips to China, and why I always long to see them. Although we still cannot communicate very well, their actions always speak louder than words.

Ever since I met them for the first time in 2004, and even though I was an "outsider" by any Chinese standard, they have always treated me better than anyone could ever expect. From the first day until now, they continually go out of their way to make me feel "at home." In fact, my mother-in-law is always teary-eyed when I have to return to Canada, while my father-in-law, in his own quiet and personal style, always finds a way to make me feel like a 3rd son. In a culture where being Chinese is important in virtually all aspects of life, whether personal, business or otherwise, being treated this way is simply astounding, and for that I am genuinely grateful. I truly feel like part of their family, which is something that words can never fully and truly explain.

I hereby extend my most sincere and deepest thanks to the entire Xu family, most especially to Mama and Baba. I am equally thankful to my wife's eldest brother, Xu Jinqian, with whom I had a most meaningful conversation many years ago in the city of Xian. As anyone in my situation can understand, his only concern was for his younger sister (he called her the "beautiful flower" of the family), and how much the entire family valued and loved her, and wanted only the best for her. It was an emotional conversation; one that I will never forget. I only hope that I've lived up to his expectations.

Thank you also to my wife's second brother, Xu Jinqiao, his wife, Wu Huiru, and their beautiful daughter, Xu Boya, who, in their own personal and quiet ways (much like Baba) have always treated me, my wife, and our children, with great kindness and enormous generosity.

Finally, I am perhaps most thankful to Xu Jinqian's two sons, Xu BoWen (Dabao) and Xu BoXue (Xiaobao), who greeted me as their friend from the first moment we met in 2004, and who have never since changed their feelings.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Beyer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

August 7, 2013