

Dunsmuir woman lives the language of China

By Richard DuPertuis

A woman of her modern times, Dunsmuir resident Cheryl Petty filled out the application for her current job online. In response to a test emailed by her prospective employer, she translated a language she could not fathom in English, and emailed it back. This scored her a job interview.

"It was easy," she said Sunday. She copied the 300-word message in Mandarin and pasted it into Google Translate, took that result and analyzed the possibilities. "Some of those characters can mean 20 different things," she said. It took about two hours for her to deduce a clear message.

Within a month, she flew halfway around the world to apply as HTML technician for the most prestigious university in China. The job was to translate Chinese text into English for websites.

"They had already interviewed everyone they thought they had for the job," she said while visiting her former town six months later. She said that those applicants were mostly younger people who had learned their English in China. Here they had a native English speaking, mature American woman who had shown up for the position.

Petty spoke not a word of Chinese. This was not a problem because much of the staff on campus spoke English. But not that well. And they knew it.

"They wanted me!" Petty exclaimed. "They wanted me in their department, working for them!" They hired her on the spot, and she moved into housing on campus.

Petty had been taken with the ancient country while on a cruise on the Yangtze River last November. She said that while on the small boat, "I saw China close up, and I loved it!" she cried. She got to know the crew. She saw villagers on the shore laying out their wares in riverside markets. Fellow onboard tourists told her she could get a job there teaching English.

"I would have taken a job anywhere in China," she said.

In January, she ended up at Tsinghua (pronounced Ching-WA) University in Beijing. She bicycled to her office, where she proofreads rough English pre-translated for her by staff. The website is off limits right now, while the authorities size up this American woman who suddenly popped up in their midst. "I'm not interested in the politics at all," she said. "I'm interested in the people."

Another thing that interests Petty is language between the people. "Language is where the action is," she declared. "The actual sentence structure is changing in Chinese. They have to keep adding words to their language."

They do this, according to Petty, because they have to keep up with the computerized world. For millennia, the Chinese people communicated with kanji, complex symbols that with subtle changes can convey entirely different meanings. Thirty years ago, she said, they developed a Mandarin phonetic called pinyin, employing a Romanized alphabet more suited for keyboards.

But they are still lagging behind because, as Petty says, "The source code is in English. You go to any website in the world and it's in English. HTML is the universal language. The U.S. got there first."



Photo by Richard DuPertuis

Bruce and Cheryl Petty joke about how much he has managed to get done around the house after she moved to China. She visited Dunsmuir during a summer break from her job as English proofreader for Tsinghua University in Beijing to convince him to visit her in her new world this winter.



Cheryl Petty

While waiting for authorization to work online, Petty began proofreading booklets printed on campus. People come to her to hone their spoken English as well. Sometimes the written and the spoken come together as an assignment.

Tsinghua University's 100th birthday approaching, Petty told her supervisor, "I want to help you with the Centennial." They began bringing her rough English texts of VIP speeches.

"This was my top achievement," she said. "I got an emergency text from my boss's boss saying, 'You have to come immediately. We have a

speech.' It was for the Vice Premier of Education." She said that address was delivered with great ceremony in the Great Hall of the People of Beijing.

"So I had earned their trust," she concluded. "They knew they could rely on me."

Petty had to make some changes to blend in. "I had this long, white hair. They were staring at me," she said. "The don't value sticking out. They value cohesiveness. I wanted to join their cohesive group. I wanted to learn about their culture."

So she went to a local hair salon and let the ladies take over. She emerged with hair died dark, cut straight above the shoulder. She wears simple, but colorful shirt and pants, the clothes of the everyday Beijing woman. And, bit by bit, she is learning the language of China.

"They call me Petty Tai Tai," she said. "It means, 'Mrs. Petty,' a token of respect."

When she flew to her job interview and into her new world, Petty left behind her spouse of 20 years, Bruce. "He's been a super supportive husband," she said. "A great guy to put up with this behavior of mine." They stay in touch using the internet phone service Skype, through which they can hear and see each other on computers a world apart.

"Well, she wanted to go to China. I said, 'If that's what you want, go for it,'" said Bruce Petty. "I'm doing my own thing, visiting family back east and stuff." An avid railroad hobbyist, he adds to his upstairs layout, and he writes articles for Model Railroader Magazine.

Petty Tai Tai says she wants him to see her in China. Bruce grins and says, "Yeah, I'm up to date on all my projects. I guess I'll have to go visit her in the wintertime."

Enforcing DUI laws is a law enforcement Fair priority

The Avoid the 8 - Siskiyou County Driving Under the Influence Task Force plans to be out in force in and around Yreka during this week's Golden Fair.

Enhanced enforcement is planned for Aug. 10 to 14, including checkpoints in the Yreka area and DUI saturation patrols throughout the north county.

"We ask that all motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists use extreme caution throughout the fair period, but particularly at night," said Sheriff Jon Lopey. "Avoid the 8 officers from our partner state and local agencies and deputies from the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office have been specially trained to detect the impaired driver and we'll be working hard to take drunk or drugged drivers off area roadways before they can hurt anyone."

The Task Force, made up of Siskiyou County law enforcement agencies, announced last week that its officers will be out in full force during the weekend of the fair.

"The rate of alcohol or drug impairment among drivers involved in fatal traffic collisions is typically four times higher at night than during the day. In fact, 66 percent of all fatalities occurring from midnight to 3 a.m. involve impaired drivers," said Lopey.

County law enforcement chiefs say that impaired drivers not only take the risk of hurting or killing themselves or someone else, the trauma and financial costs of an alcohol or drug impaired driving crashes, or an arrest are potentially astronomical.

Violators often face jail time, the loss of their driving privilege, higher insurance rates and dozens of other unanticipated expenses, such as legal fees, court costs, DUI school or treatment costs, alcohol interlock system device costs, medical costs, DUI cost recovery for governmental costs accrued for DUI related traffic collisions, and civil liability related to the damages.

Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest problems. In 2009 alone, 10,839 people were killed in alcohol impaired driving crashes, accounting for nearly 32 percent of all traffic related fatalities in the United States. That's an average of one impaired driving fatality every 48 minutes during 2009.

Nine hundred and fifty men, women and children died in California because someone drove impaired over the legal limit.

"The summer holidays are some of the deadliest time periods on our roadways so everyone must remember to be responsible and plan ahead; use a designated sober driver," said Chris Murphy, director of the California Office of Traffic Safety. "Just know everyone traveling down the road near you has a cell phone and will call 9-1-1 to report a suspected drunk driver."

Funding for the Avoid Campaign is by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

For more information on regional/statewide Avoid DUI Task Force campaigns, enforcement schedules and daily DUI arrest/fatality statistics, visit www.californiaavoid.org and www.stopimpaireddriving.org.

The Avoid Campaign will deploy sobriety checkpoints and DUI patrols again during the August Labor DUI Mobilization beginning Aug. 19.

MEALS PROGRAM GETS NEW WHEELS



Meals on Wheels Auxiliary founder Dawn Fazende and Mt. Shasta Senior Nutrition backup driver Jim Atchison stand by the organization's new Jeep Patriot, purchased with a Building the Future Impact Grant from Walmart through the Meals on Wheels Association of America. Purchased locally at SJ Denham, the new vehicle will make delivery of meals more reliable, especially in snowy winter conditions. Fazende said she's now raising funds for a second vehicle to replace an aging, 2-wheel drive van that needs to be replaced soon. If you'd like to help, call her at 926-1762.

Aging series: By using it, you can delay losing it

Siskiyou County's Subcommittee on Aging consists of agencies and individuals within the county who work closely with the senior population. The group is committed to providing information to the elder community that will empower them as they move forward through their golden years. The article below is one in a series that was co-authored by the group on age related issues.

By Cathy Hoopaugh

As our loved ones age, we as family tend to want to assist them more with activities of daily living. What we don't real-

ize is that we could be causing more harm than good "out of love." The more independence and autonomy we can afford them the better and the happier they will be.

Our bodies tend to atrophy if we become sedentary. Spending time alone, sitting and watching television not only can result in depression, but also in mental and physical declines.

A case in point is my neighbor. Daily, I watch her in amazement. She is in her late 90s and could truly "run circles" around me. She walks her beloved cat on a leash with her cane four to six times a day, taking their pre-

ferred tour of the backyard, front yard and back again.

Not only is she enjoying her special time with him, but she is also getting daily fresh air and physical exercise. The past two winters I have competed with her in shoveling snow on the sidewalks. I am not going to let her show me up.

Daily she will go out in the yard with her cane and weed a small section of her flower beds. She knows her limits and only does a bucket of weeds at a time. Fresh air and physical exercise keeps the mind clear and the bones strong.

Likewise, taking breaks and

resting are equally important along with nutrition. Once she has a bucket full of weeds she will go into the house for a rest and a snack.

She also is an excellent cook and bakes the best sticky buns ever. She often shares her goodies and I am one lucky neighbor. She cleans her house and still does her own laundry as well.

Additionally, she is very active in our local service organizations, even participating in the annual Easter Egg Hunt. She enjoys garage sales weekly where she purchases slightly used stuffed animals which she carefully mends and donates.

At any given time during the summer there is a cadre of clean stuffed animals hanging on her clothesline, just waiting to be adopted by lucky young children. She also makes pillows and donates those to the hospital.

Not only does she engage in physical activity, but also tedious activities to keep her fingers nimble. Being productive and giving back to the community is a healthy and positive win-win situation for her and the community.

We should all follow her lead and maybe we will enjoy a full productive happy life.