

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you all this afternoon.

I would like to thank everyone in the government agencies here in Dongying that aid and support us foreigners on a day-to-day basis. It is a big job. A huge responsibility! In this world of divisive cultures and uncertainty from the pandemic, your support has the power to build bridges across cultures and reassure us of our futures in Dongying ... to help our migration into society in positive ways. Giving us, these opportunities to tell our stories ... Will help build empathy and understanding of our sometimes-huge cultural differences. Thank you for organizing events such as this to open the doors to better relationships and understanding of our cultures and needs.

I have the urge to pinch myself sometimes, as it seems unbelievable. It's now been over 16 years that I have enjoyed the opportunity of working and living in China. 12 of these 16 years here in Dongying. I have pictured myself many times retiring and spending the rest of my life here. The place that I now call home. However, today, I am almost at a loss of words, because at this moment it seems that I truly know how happy I am living here.

Being a small town American boy with goals and unachievable dreams of being the man who achieves them, the journey has been a mixture of feelings. A mixed bag of hopes and disappointments, victories and failures, doubts and confidence, criticism, and validation. I would not say my path was an easy one to tread and I would never say I am extraordinary. I firmly believe that anyone who sets out to achieve something still does better than those who never try.

If we could sell our experiences for what they cost us, we would all be millionaires.

I would like to tell you all a little about our company here in Dongying, Sinopro developed and has grown to be the leading supplier in China of Balsa wood for the Wind Turbine energy industry right here in Dongying.

Li Pan my Chinese partner and I with the help of just one very close friend, Mrs.Geng that believed in us started Sinopro.

We decided to stay in Dongying to work because of our families being here and the opportunities a smaller city would bring us. In a smaller city, we have the ability to form and develop closer relationships with the officials and organizations that will help us move forward. Getting important things done is more convenient and less time consuming than it would be in major cities. Local banking is supportive and interested in being involved in what our goals are. The people we need to employ are more likely to want to stay with our company for much longer. These were just a few of the factors that decided we base ourselves in Dongying.



Our future in Dongying is positive. We have some issues that hold us back in the speed we could move forward. Traveling is probably one of the main issues. Getting around China to visit clients and keep relationships strong is definitely not convenient.

When and if the high-speed train comes to Dongying, will it benefit us all or will it continue to decrease even more rapidly our small number of talented young people leaving Dongying.

Which brings us to our other challenge of being located in Dongying. Talented people that want to stay here. The pool of talent here is small. English speaking personal are difficult to find. Strong intellectual people that have the ability to think internationally and focus on new and innovative technology, financial structure and environment challenges are rare in Dongying. Such people are as rare as unicorns in Dongying. We have great difficulty recruiting such people here. We will not give up on Dongying. We are here to stay. We will overcome these challenges and build a successful future for our company and its supportive personal.

When I often hear someone say, Life and work is hard in China, I am always tempted to ask, Compared to where?

As foreigners here, we all face different types of challenges. We see the many issues and culture differences through different eyes. What delights or upsets one of us will be interpreted very differently by another.

各花入各眼 (gè huā rù gè yǎn ) — Different flowers match different eyes.

China is the most diverse country in the world that I have lived and worked in. It is so culturally different from any other country on this planet. That is what makes it so special and possess that special something that brings us here. For me China has always been a challenge I have risen to meet head on.

Nevertheless, even with advanced degrees and decades of global work experience, it can still be enormously challenging to get a Dongying taxi home.

I will end my little talk on this old Chinese saying that I find shows my thinking about my life in China.

有缘千里来相会 (yǒu yuán qiān lǐ lái xiāng huì) — Fate/destiny has us meet from a thousand miles away.

