

Teaching

continued from page 4

Rust, who represented the South Eugene district, which includes the University, from 1976 to 1996, said teaching in China is a good career choice for someone who isn't ready to retire or has just graduated college.

"The economy is bad," he said. "Some students won't be able to get a job commensurate with their degree."

Teaching in most Chinese schools only requires an undergraduate degree, and those with higher or more pertinent degrees can demand higher pay.

Rust said he saw an article in The Register-Guard that inspired him to return to the country that he had enjoyed visiting before, even though he had no experience teaching.

In April and May, he taught at Yantai Normal School in the Shandong province with his son Henry Rust, who sometimes acted as his assistant teacher.

The administration gave him one textbook to work with, which he said was so archaic it had "constable" in place of the term "police officer."

"To tell you the truth, I put down those books," Rust said.

He recommends bringing books that show how to use conversational English, because that is what the Chinese are most interested in learning.

"They want to know the colloquial expressions (actors) would speak in Hollywood," he said.

He added students also enjoy learning the lyrics to popular American songs.

Although he knows Chinese fairly well after visiting the country frequently over the past two decades, he said people do not need to know Chinese in order to teach English.

However, he said the job is not easy.

"I spent one entire class on the word 'in,'" he said, adding the word confused his students because of its many uses such as "in debt" or "in love."

Rust said he enjoyed teaching and

loved the country. He compares the atmosphere of contemporary China to Paris in the 1930s.

"We actually walked down streets where people had never seen a Caucasian before."

Jack Bates
founder of Down to Earth

"I'd say China today is one of the most exciting places to be," he said.

Rust has visited China many times over the years and has seen the country change significantly.

In 1986, Rust went to the Fujian province with his friend Jack Bates, founder of the import store Down to Earth, which carries many Chinese goods and materials.

"We actually walked down streets where people had never seen a Caucasian before," Bates said. "We were quite a spectacle - particularly Jerry because he's a big guy."

For those interested in teaching, rather than simply traveling to China, the first thing Rust recommends is to check out available schools on the Internet to link up with a host directly.

The University's Office of International Programs in 330 Oregon Hall offers programs including interning, studying and teaching abroad.

"I think that what comes across to me from the students who've been there is that they've had an amazing experience," said Cari Vanderkar, overseas program coordinator for study abroad programs. "They can't wait to go back."

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