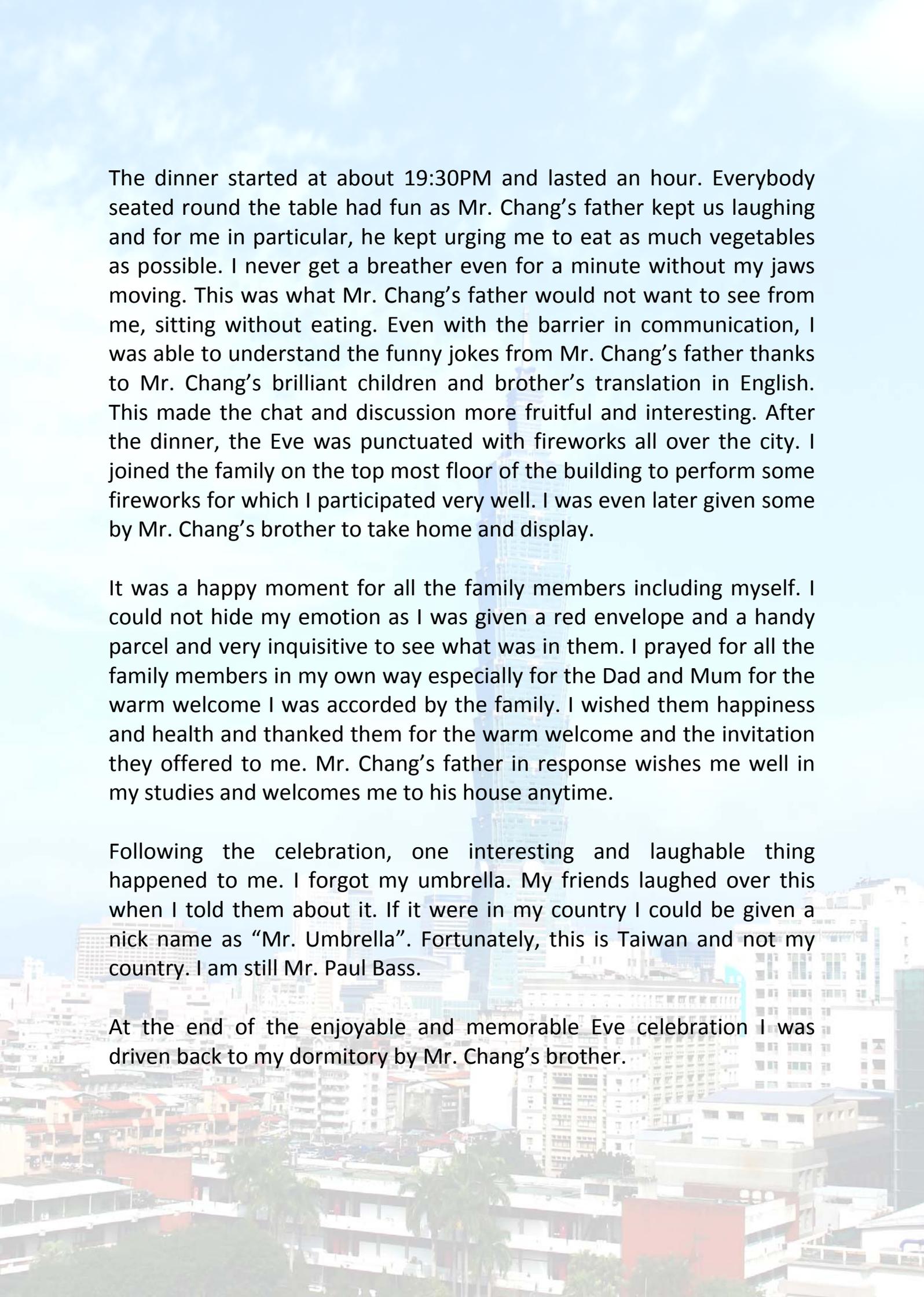


The Chinese New Year Celebration, 3RD February 2011

Like the universally celebrated New Year on the 1st of January every year around the world, Chinese New Year which is often called Chinese Lunar New Year is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. The Chinese New Year was celebrated from the 3rd and stretches to the 17th of February 2011, with the lantern festival marking the end of the celebrations. It is an annual feast celebrated by all Chinese people around the world. In the Chinese calendar, each year is dedicated to an animal and this year is called the Year of the Rabbit (兔). It is a unique year in the sense that, the rabbit is well known for its wisdom amongst other animals, therefore the Chinese people took turn to wish all family members and love ones a happy and a prosperous New Year by the common saying “xin nian kuai le”. In addition, old ones give out red envelopes (hong bao) with money to the younger ones as a sign of well wishes. The receiver will in turn pray and thank them.

Being a feast for sharing amongst Chinese and loved ones, I was fortunate to be invited by the Mr. Chang’s family. I joined them in celebration during the Eve of the feast on the 2nd of February 2011. The Eve is the biggest event of the Chinese New Year. It begins with a dinner hosted by the family and often shared with friends. Many foods are often served amongst them traditional Chinese dishes. This celebration is comparable to Christmas or “Tobaski” in The Gambia. It was quite a memorable day for me that I had ever experienced in Taiwan, in that I was accepted by the Chang family as a family member. It is a large family of thirteen members of whom the majorities are vegetarians. The dinner was well served with very palatable vegetables prepared by Mr. Chang’s mother. What a nice dinner I ever had in Taiwan.



The dinner started at about 19:30PM and lasted an hour. Everybody seated round the table had fun as Mr. Chang's father kept us laughing and for me in particular, he kept urging me to eat as much vegetables as possible. I never get a breather even for a minute without my jaws moving. This was what Mr. Chang's father would not want to see from me, sitting without eating. Even with the barrier in communication, I was able to understand the funny jokes from Mr. Chang's father thanks to Mr. Chang's brilliant children and brother's translation in English. This made the chat and discussion more fruitful and interesting. After the dinner, the Eve was punctuated with fireworks all over the city. I joined the family on the top most floor of the building to perform some fireworks for which I participated very well. I was even later given some by Mr. Chang's brother to take home and display.

It was a happy moment for all the family members including myself. I could not hide my emotion as I was given a red envelope and a handy parcel and very inquisitive to see what was in them. I prayed for all the family members in my own way especially for the Dad and Mum for the warm welcome I was accorded by the family. I wished them happiness and health and thanked them for the warm welcome and the invitation they offered to me. Mr. Chang's father in response wishes me well in my studies and welcomes me to his house anytime.

Following the celebration, one interesting and laughable thing happened to me. I forgot my umbrella. My friends laughed over this when I told them about it. If it were in my country I could be given a nick name as "Mr. Umbrella". Fortunately, this is Taiwan and not my country. I am still Mr. Paul Bass.

At the end of the enjoyable and memorable Eve celebration I was driven back to my dormitory by Mr. Chang's brother.

LONG LIVE THE CHINESE NEWYEAR, LONG LIVE THE CHANG FAMILY
AND LONG LIVE THE TAIWAN! (By Paul Bass, Graduate Institute of
Injury Prevention and Control Taipei Medical University)

