

Student from Taiwan masters at UW-Stout

By Renee Currington
Campus Editor

Imagine living all your life in a city on a humid island near the equator where it rains 200 days per year. Your home is a tall structure like a skyscraper, crowded with people.

Then one day you arrive in a place where there is a foot of snow. With no tall buildings around, you can see acres of open land.

This experience was quite a shock for Chin-ko “Gary” Wang upon his arrival to Menomonie from his home in Keelung in the city of Taipei, Taiwan. It was the first time he had ever seen snow.

Wang came to the University of Wisconsin-Stout in January 2005 to enroll in the hospitality and tourism graduate program. He earned his bachelor’s degree in

mass communications at the University of Tamkang in Taiwan.

Shortly after earning his degree, Wang served as a military police officer. He recalled the rigorous training.

“We did a lot of running and pushups, learned Tae Kwon Do and learned how to shoot at targets,” said Wang. “When we missed we did more running and pushups.”

“Sometimes I had muscle aches because I’m not very good at aiming,” said Wang.

He was responsible for patrolling during weapons transport and acted as security for politicians. Military service is mandatory for all men in Taiwan.

“In some ways, it’s good for your health because it makes your body stronger,” said Wang, “But you’re isolated for 20 months.”



Courtesy: Chin-ko “Gary” Wang

Chin-ko “Gary” Wang, a hospitality and tourism grad student, grew up in the crowded city of Taipei, Taiwan. This photo of Wang was taken in the Chih-shan Garden in Taipei, next to the National Palace Museum.

Wang said most Taiwanese men break up with their girlfriends when they go into the service, which is what he did. It’s very difficult for them to contact their family and friends.

However, those who go to college can delay their service requirements. After serving in the military, Wang could have just as easily attended a college in Taiwan with a hospitality and tourism program. But he decided to study abroad instead.

“I came here to improve my English,” said Wang. “English is

a big language around the world, so if I can learn to speak English, it could really help my career.”

In Taiwan, the official spoken language is Mandarin, which is also spoken in Beijing, northern China, and Singapore.

“[I like the United States] because everyone speaks the same language,” said Wang, who says it can be difficult to communicate in Taiwan because of the variety of dialects, and many senior citizens do not speak Mandarin.

Wang also enjoys living in a small town because he likes to live at a slower pace and spend time getting to know people. His hometown of Keelung is an area roughly the size of Menomonie but has a population of 35,000.

One thing Wang does miss, though, is the food.

“I miss Chinese food a lot, especially seafood and the food that my mother cooked,” said Wang. “My mother is the best cook ever.”

“Here [in America] you can grab food very quickly,” said Wang. “Sometimes my mom took two hours just to prepare one meal.”

His favorite Taiwanese food is crab, which his mother would marinate in a special sauce overnight and then steam. In Taiwan, Wang used to have rice with every lunch and dinner, and now, much to his family’s dismay, he has burgers for lunch and dinner.

After college, Wang hopes to find work at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and begin a hospitality and tourism career in Taiwan or Beijing.