

Idaho Falls Post Register, Friday, Aug. 8, 2008 – by Nick Draper

Retired I.F. doctor treating patients at Olympics

Daniel Smith is working for NBC clinic at Beijing's International Broadcast Center.

Idaho Falls will be represented at this year's Olympic Games, just not in the way you might expect. O. Daniel Smith isn't trying to break any world records, but instead is looking after the thousands of people who are working to bring you the events on television.

Smith, a doctor who practiced private family medicine in Idaho Falls from 1972 to 2007, is working in NBC's exclusive medical clinic at the International Broadcast Center in Beijing. He's been in China since October, passed the Chinese licensing exam in April and has been treating patients at the IBC clinic, which is not far from the other Olympic venues, since July 21.

Here's what Smith had to say about working in China, the difference in culture and what it's been like living in Beijing in the run-up to the Olympic Games.

Post Register: What do you do at the Olympics clinic? Smith: Our clinic is very much an Urgent Care Clinic. We have seen foot fractures, pneumonia, lacerations, scrapes and abrasions. But most of the stuff is just due to travel (insomnia, colds), or due to the change in food (diarrhea, reflux, etc.).

PR: What's been happening in preparation for the games? Smith: Living in Beijing during the Olympic preparations has been most interesting. We have seen streets torn up and repaved; brick walls have received new stucco and been painted, weeds and shrub overgrowth has been pruned back. Some of the "squatter" stands of vendors and noodle parlors have been closed and in some cases torn down where they have crept out onto the sidewalks.

PR: How bad is the pollution problem, really, and are clear days rare? Smith: Pollution has always been a problem in Beijing. The government has taken charge, including closing over 200 coal fired industries upwind from Beijing, and the result is that we have seen more blue skies this year than in any of the past 10 years according to the meteorologists. I have never experienced pollution here as bad as that in Los Angeles in the 1960s.

PR: Because you work inside the IBC, do you get any special privileges, like being able to attend events nearby for free? Smith: The only privileges I get by working in IBC is to eat at the cafeteria. My Olympic pass admits me to any area that NBC has access to, but it does not give me tickets to watch anything.

PR: Are you at all concerned about a terrorist attack and have you been taking extra precautions as the games near? Smith: I don't really worry too much about the possibility of terrorism. If it happens, it happens. If it does, you just hope you aren't standing next to it. I actually feel very safe in Beijing.

PR: Much has been made about Chinese censorship, especially with the foreign media. What's your take? Smith: Is Big Brother watching? Yes, definitely. In March, after the Riots in Lhasa, there was no CNN for two or three days according to reports. We mostly watch China Central Television and received reports on the events, but you got the feeling that they were singing the official song. It is not tough to get news here. I can get on MSN easily and know what is happening in the states. I do not feel limited or restricted except in the ways I have described.