

Time Off

Written by James Randi
Wednesday, 04 February 2009 00:00

Hey, just for fun – for which we have to make room, from time to time – courtesy of reader Steve Ilett in Australia, we'll send you to www.whitepages.com.au, which gives you a search facility to find businesses in that country. Some wag – an eminently sensible person, as I see it – has been at work. Go there, and enter “magic shop” in the “Business Name” slot, and “Queensland” in the “State” box, then click on “Search.”

See....?

And Matthew Hu Xinyu, my good friend in Beijing who is with the Beijing Cultural Protection Center [CHP], has informed me that the current year-designation in China incorporates a subtle joke – which you may wish to spring on your Chinese-speaking friends. The word for “ox” – and this is the Year of the Ox, in China – is “niu,” pronounced “nee-oo,” which is very similar to our pronunciation of the English word “new.” Thus, when you say “Happy New New Year,” you see... But I'm sure that you can figure it out...



And you may wish to click in on <http://en.bjchp.org/english/indexen.asp> – In the photo, I believe that's Matthew just left of center – where the CHP gives current information on their important project, which is to do everything possible to preserve the remarkable architectural and artistic artifacts of Old Beijing. Just wandering the narrow streets of that city, encountering the smiles and nods – and even handshakes – of citizens who are often quite surprised to see a foreigner taking such an interest in their surroundings, is a remarkable and rewarding experience. CHP wants to keep that possibility alive, in a country which is tempted to erase a unique part of their history. That would be a cultural tragedy, in my view.

I've received a call from the Norwegian media, who are concerned about my last video posting

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in which I mentioned the possibility that a blasphemy law might be brought into force, and expressed my amazement at the apparent endorsement of a currently-popular faith healer, Joralf Gjerstad, by the former Minister of Health in Norway. As always, I'm willing to be shown wrong... I was alarmed at these possibilities, since I've always considered the Scandinavian countries to be paragons of rationality and reason... If this man – known as "Snåsamannen" – "the man from Snåsa" – who is said to have "warm hands" and is able to heal people, find missing items and look into the future, can do these things, he's got a million dollars. No, not just for "warm hands," which I also have...