

# 夏爱克在中国大山里的 16 年

Eckehard Scharfschwerdt's Years  
in China's Mountainous Region

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Heqing County is located south of the Hengduan Mountains in northwestern Yunnan Province, southwest China, and it is remote and unknown to most Chinese people. On a sunny day in August 2019, a tall, thin foreign man with gray hair arrived at the county hospital, wearing a green checkered shirt and carrying a blue backpack. He spoke Chinese fluently and happily shook hands with doctors who greeted him with a broad smile, saying, "It's so nice to see you again many years later." The foreign man is the German doctor named Eckehard Scharfschwerdt. He is called China's "modern Norman Bethune". (Norman Bethune, a Canadian surgeon who came to Yan'an in 1938 to help Chinese people during their war against Japanese aggression).

Eckehard was born in a small town in the southwestern German state of Baden-Württemberg in the 1960s. After graduating from the





Department of Medicine at Göttingen University, he participated in medical aid programs in Indonesia and Nepal. In 2000, Eckehard and his wife began volunteering medical aid at county hospitals in Heqing,

Jianshui and Honghe in Yunnan Province, and cemented ties with the people from the mountainous region. For 16 years, he has provided medical services and aid to the people living there and witnessed the development of China's impoverished region. In 2017, he was granted the "Friendship Award" by the Chinese government and delivered a speech as a representative of 50 award winners. The "Friendship Award" is the highest honor given by the Chinese government to foreign experts who make outstanding contributions to China's modernization. From 1991 to 2017, the award had been conferred on 1,549 foreign experts from 70 countries.

Speaking of his story of having lived for 16 years in China, Eckehard often uses the phrase "purpose of life" to describe the reason for his coming to China. In the late 1990s, he was a doctor in training. He and his wife joined a non-profit organization responsible for sending volunteers to East Asia. At that time, China needed doctors. They knew nothing about China and were worried about their work and life there, but something happened which dispelled their misgivings. While on duty in an ambulance one day, Eckehard saved a drowning girl. The girl woke up two days later and expressed her gratitude



to them. Eckehard discovered that she was Chinese. Her gratitude made him feel that he was not unfamiliar with China. That was how Eckehard decided to come to China to help more people.

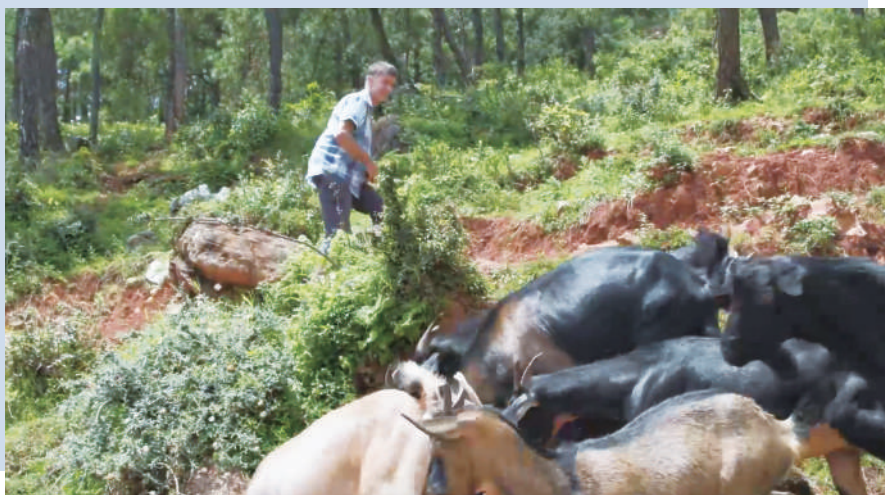
In August 2000, Eckehard came to Kunming City, Yunnan Province with some volunteers to study Chinese. In 2001, he began working in Heqing County People's Hospital as a consultant. He still remembers what the hospital looked like when he arrived there for the first time. It was quite small and simple, with only a little medical equipment. It had only an electrocardiograph and an ultrasonic diagnostic apparatus. He assisted in general anesthesia and operation. He helped purchase medical supplies for the hospital, and train medical staff. He would also travel long distances to provide medical treatment to people in the mountainous areas. In these remote areas, villagers were apprehensive and even afraid to meet a foreigner for the first time. Eckehard and the volunteers did a lot to win their trust and acceptance. Over the past 16 years, he has traveled from Heqing to Jianshui and Honghe, and has





contributed significantly to the improvement of local medical services. He says that it has been very difficult and he has even encountered some cultural misunderstandings. However, he says that he is still inspired. “At that time, the medical apparatus and medicine in the hospitals were limited, and medical conditions were not good. But the doctors are willing to learn, and this is very important.” As the medical staff are willing to learn and exchange their medical experience, this further strengthens his willingness to provide medical aid.

During his trips to the villages, Eckehard also taught English in local schools and even helped with some poverty alleviation work. Because of their frequent contacts, Eckehard and the local villagers became more familiar with one another. Villagers knew that the non-profit organization in which he worked raised sheep in Sichuan Province, so they asked if he could help them raise goats where they lived. Eckehard then came up with the idea of lending five goats to each family who would give back five goats after three years. He rode bikes from village to village, asking who raised goats and who wanted to sell their goats. He also took some red paint along. If he found a goat he wanted to buy and its price was agreed upon, he painted its head red. Eckehard was also able to give some medical consultation to the villagers who needed help with their goats. He says that he felt the true meaning of the phrase, “helping others help themselves”, and has got friendship and respect there, and has even been invited to local wedding ceremonies or temple sacrificial rituals. Eckehard and other volunteers are treated as family members. In his poverty alleviation work, he has known the wisdom of the villagers. He stayed in the home of his friend Nongfa while helping the villagers build a water pool. In the process of building it, Nongfa, who received only two- to



three-year primary school education, came up with a better idea. With his eyes glistening, Eckehard says excitedly, “Nongfa loves to build something creatively and he has good ideas about how we could do it better.”

Eckehard has witnessed the great changes that have taken place in China over the past 16 years. On his trip back to Heqing County in 2019, he saw that the county hospital has become larger, and the muddy paths in mountainous areas have been wide, smooth cement roads. What he is most excited about and admires, however, is the introduction of a new rural cooperative health system for the farmers. It is a new healthcare insurance program for China’s huge rural population, launched by the Chinese government in 2002. Farmers are encouraged to join the program which is funded by individuals, the collective, and the government. As the program provides basic medical insurance for poor villagers, Eckehard is very excited about it. “I remember that the local government implemented the program in 2006. The local government increases the subsidy every year, and



more and more farmers are joining the program. So they pay 10 RMB yuan each, and the local government 40 RMB yuan, and they have basic health insurance the next year.” It is the medical care insurance program that enables farmers’ access to better medical services. Eckehard admires the Chinese government’s continued financial support in the rural medical and health care.

Eckehard has countless stories of his 16-year life in China. It is here that he knows about China for the first time and that he has spent his youth in the mountainous region providing medical aid to the people of Yunnan who have accepted and welcomed him. Seeing them become independent and innovative, Eckehard has acquired a deeper understanding of life. “I think that without faith I wouldn’t have come here, because it meant giving up a lot in the beginning. At that time, we thought that maybe we could stay for ten years as long as we put in effort and made this worthwhile. But after getting used to living there, I loved the villagers all the more so that I didn’t want to leave. I feel that I am half Chinese.” Pursuing a goal in his life is the reason for his coming to China, and he has found the meaning of life in the mountainous region.

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这里是中国西南地区云南省的鹤庆县。鹤庆县位于云南省的西北部，滇西横断山脉的南端，是一个对大部分中国人而言都较为陌生、偏远的县城。2019年8月，阳光正好，在这个偏远县城的县医院里，一个穿着绿色格子衬衫，背着蓝色双肩包，身材瘦瘦高高，头发花白、鼻梁高挺的外国人说着一口流利的中国话，开心地和医生们握手。随着不断地握手和“你好，你好”的响起，医生们笑容满面地说着：“很高兴，这么多年，又一次见到你。”一个“又一次”道尽了久别重逢的欢喜和对这个外国人的欢迎。这个来到

