

2009 National Consortium for Teaching about Asia Study Tour Journal

Monday, June 15/Nancy Bader

Our group is all checked in and we are now waiting for the flight to board and leave. After arriving last night it was great to greet “old/new” friends again. It seems the last weeks have brought similar experiences for many of us—hectic last days of school, rereading packing lists, making difficult packing choices, etc. Talking with people over breakfast, many share my anxiousness for the day’s events—once in Beijing the tour can begin in earnest. We’re actually going to be in China! What a trip of a lifetime! I feel very lucky to be part of such a warm (and fun!) and supportive group and I’m looking forward to creating many great memories and visiting amazing places I’ve only read about!

Bon voyage group—here we go! Nancy Bader

p.s. I believe it will be sad parting on July 4th because of everything we’ll share. We’ll make many lasting friends.

Tuesday, June 16/Jerry Bizjak

Hallelujah! We made it. After 14 hours on a very cold plane, we arrived in Beijing. The flight had its interesting moment for the three of us (Jerry, Melanie B., and Tom) when a teenager was in the airplane bathroom for an hour and a half (Is he dead? Does he have the dreaded swine flu? Is he a terrorist?). After threats in English and Chinese on the flight attendants’ part, it turned out that he was just hung-over. Otherwise, things went smoothly until they “detained” Melanie B. Fortunately it was done randomly and she had no fever (BTW, if you ever want to hear an interesting take on Hurricane Katrina and the levee system of Louisiana, talk with Melanie). We met our tour guide and the weary but excited group got to our extremely nice accommodations just down the road from Tiananmen Square. After a buffet of amazing choices, some crashed and others got a short stroll around the city. It’s nice to get acclimated to a foreign setting before the real action hits tomorrow. It was also nice for me to get the USA Today Life section which has my hometown of Albert Lea depicted for the “Blue Zones” initiative, which focuses on helping people live longer lives. It was weird being in Beijing and reading an article about people you know. It’s a really small world. Here’s to making the world even smaller! Have a great experience, the delirious ramblings of Jerry Bizjak.

Wednesday, June 17/Melanie Boulet

Took an early-morning walk to Tiananmen Square and down legation alley—John Frank leading the pack. We ran into Greg and Jerry on their way back from watching the 4:20 am flag-raising in the square. Go, guys!

Turned away from Mao's mausoleum –maybe the guards were worried about his sarcophagus catching swine flu!

Tiananmen Square—expansive, patriotic pride, mainly Chinese visitors, well-kept, well-guarded, a proud symbol of national power.

On to the Forbidden City with its incessant, elaborate palaces. We seemingly walked forever venturing deep into imperial life, wallowing in its ornateness, jade, bronze, gold, and ceramics—all inextricably tied to the imperial family's power and the lifestyle to which it gave rise.

An eclectic, delectable Chinese meal: sweet-n-sour fish, grilled eggplant, stir fried chestnuts amongst other delicious dishes.

Off to the Temple of Heaven where the emperor, on winter solstice, prayed to the heavens for a good harvest. We could picture him in ceremonial robes reading sacred scrolls and making the requisite sacrifice of perhaps a calf that had been scrupulously cleaned, then burned, its blood and hair poured into sacred vats. Following the ceremony, the emperor's many officials would congratulate him upon which time he would issue his royal edicts.

But not today! What would the Ming and the Qing emperors do today? Dance with the common folk like Heather, Rachel, Loren, Jona, and others did? Play hacky sack with the crowd as Greg did? Play cards? Sing? Play chess? Make etchings like Mary Ann did? We thoroughly enjoyed our walk through the park!

And then how was that for a succulent Peking duck dinner? What a ritual! Cold vegetable and meat hors d'oeuvres spun around to Chinese beer, all while a master chef slices thin pieces of duck off the glazed bird, which we then went on to wrap with cucumber and leek and sauce within rice paper. If it hadn't been for Noah attempting a counter-clockwise spin of the lazy Susan and toppling Rachel's un-drunk wine, all would have transpired as it has for millennia! Or course, Noah redeemed himself to us all with his fascinating stories into Korean culture.

Upon return to the hotel, inveterate travelers, unscathed by jet lag, headed off to the shopping district...what a great day! Melanie B.

Happy Birthday Tom!
Here's your present! The journal!

Thursday, June 18/Tom Brogan

I had a great birthday today. My two new best friends Qiong and Cathy took me and all my new best friends out to a Chinese acrobatic show. And then we had a sleep over! But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Thursday, the smog is thick and does not improve as we get out of town. But still we are excited to climb the Great Wall of China. Check that off your bucket list! We took the easy way to the top with the tram. Sadly, we could only see a few hundred feet—but our feet were on the stones of history.

Lunch/shopping at a cloisonné factory gave us a chance to buy things for our loved ones at home that we are thinking about.

The weather: still smogged-in while at the Ming Tomb. Steven gave us a detailed history lesson. We know how our students feel. We walked about a mile down the Spirit Way. For the first time in China it was just us. The fog, instead of blocking our view, insulated us from everything else. The stone animals and officials were just for our group. We had an easy stroll—with Heather mocking the giant *bixi* and John joking that there should be restrooms on both sides of the path. We had some drama with the restroom, but Melanie did get an appreciated birthday gift back on the bus.

We had an aggressive bus driver, while we from our elevated windows watched, like some kind of 52-inch flat-screen TV with the mute button on, the workers of Beijing going home. How different than the spirit way.

Let me be the first to wish Melanie.
Happy Birthday!

Happy Birthday to Melanie!
May this birthday bring you magic in the magic of China!

Saturday, June 20/JJ Bryant

Well, seems like Tom tried to find me yesterday, on my day to have the journal, but as it was our free study day, I had literally skipped town!! Friday, June 19th (all the days are beginning to lose their numbers) found our group of learned teachers dispersing throughout Beijing and surrounding villages in search of individual adventures.

Many had moving experiences that I will let them express if they like. Many went to Mao's Mausoleum to pay their respects. Many also went to the Lama Temple and the Confucian Temple. Everyone who went there came back awed and changed, I believe. So many adventures!

My personal adventure was in Lugou Qiao, a town outside of Beijing, home of a grand marble bridge called the Lugou Qiao Bridge by the locals but usually called the Marco Polo Bridge by Westerners. Built in 1189, Marco Polo wrote about this bridge in his travels. Walking the path of such a great traveler from so long ago was a draw for me, but I found so much more.

Twenty minute taxi ride—an experience in itself here in China where the biggest vehicles rule the roads—and Amy, John, and I were dropped off outside some ancient city walls. Since Beijing's walls have been torn down, this was very cool and I'm excited to see Xian's walls. We entered the town not exactly knowing where to go. So...we just walked, finding a cool photo display along the way and finally reaching a huge museum, The Memorial Hall of the War of Resistance against Japan. Heartbreaking does not come close to describing what I felt going through this museum. You see, the fighting between China and Japan intensified in this area and led to a full-blown war in 1937. The Japanese crossed over the Marco Polo Bridge and occupied the area, later on the Nanjing where perhaps the greatest atrocities happened. The museum had displays and photos of this; I couldn't help but cry at what happened and totally understand now the Chinese reverence for Mao, who succeeded in getting the Japanese out of China.

After leaving the museum (oh, one guard in the museum told me it was ok to take pictures but another one yelled at me; luckily he didn't take my camera; I think they need to get on the same page), we wandered our way to the bridge, on the way finding a 1600's blacksmith shop where Amy and I bought Chinese knives.

The bridge was amazing. It's not that big, but it's the oldest in Beijing and, the best part for me, it has 485 carved lions in varied poses spaced evenly across the sides of the bridge. My favorite ones had babies with them—some nursing, some smiling forward just like the mom, some up on the mom's shoulder. The lion's smiles were fierce but almost laughing. Some had one baby, some had two, some had none (daddy lions?). They were about the size of small dogs and right at eye level. I loved them.

Last we walked through the Stone Garden, another memorial to the horrors of the Japanese invasion. Did you know they did medical experiments on the Chinese like the Nazis did on the Jews? Tearful but powerful memorial (reminding me of the Oklahoma Bombing Memorial). Look it up if you're not Amy or John reading this.

My afternoon (on the 19th) was filled with looking for literature for my project and eating squid noodles (picture-worthy to share with my 10-year-old). Last, I took in a 90 min. massage for about \$32 (American), 227 yuan. You can't beat that!

I have loved all of my experiences this far, and I'm so glad to be sharing them with such a fine group of people. I am truly blessed!

Love, JJ Bryant from Kentucky

Saturday, June 20/Gale Carter

It was the usual morning routine: dress, another delectable breakfast buffet. After dining here all week, I have my favorite selections: the delicious bacon, the tasty watermelon and the fresh orange juice. I really want it to last—it is so enjoyable!

8:00 AM—We had to be packed up and checked out. Luggage locked. For those of us without locks, they were provided (they think of EVERYthing). All went smoothly, as has been the case all along.

We are on the bus and proceeding on our way when Qiong approaches two of the female teachers. Apparently they had—out of curiosity—opened a small cardboard box in their bathroom and they had to pay for the item! It was all very innocent and funny!

First stop—the Summer Palace. This palace was the preferred alternative to the Forbidden City. Unlike the Forbidden City, it was in a lush, green setting. The marble boat and the Long Corridor are two sites here. The queen was blamed using money to build a marble boat instead of a navy, making China easy prey for Japan. We took a lovely boat ride across the lake.

We witnessed quite a commotion! A poor, old trash collector was hollering at a young family because the young tot (of about 2 years) urinated on his collection of recyclable plastic bottles. The parents, just as loudly, defended their young son. The tot seemed confused by the whole thing ☺

Next—a pedicab ride through a Hutong. We received a tour and a wonderful lunch in a private home. The meal was restaurant caliber! Silk pouches were big sellers at the *hutong*, right Jerry ☺

IT'S OFF TO THE OLYMPICS. We spent from 2 to 4:45 at the Bird's Nest and the Water Cube. We received scratch-offs with admission—a couple of teachers WON bottled water. ☺ The bird's nest was being adjusted for a music concert.

SHOPPING—We had an hour at an indoor market. Teachers returned with pearl necklaces and jade pendants and more (abacus).

LAST CALL FOR WANG-FU-JING. We had an hour there. Popular stops included Pizza Hut, The Outback, a Chinese terrace restaurant. Sleuths Jerry and Chasidy spent their hour retracing a supposed KIDNAPPING attempt (the day before). These super sleuths were a success—they came back with pictures of the alleged kidnappers (if you ask me, I think they should lay off the Chinese beer) ☺

TIME FOR OUR FIRST GOODBYE IN CHINA. Spice Girl Mel-B presented our Masterful bus driver with a parting gift as did Noah for our Beijing travel guide, Steve. Both speeches were touching and appropriate—Good job!

MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO XI'AN (well, 9:40, but close enough). Qiong and Cathy kept sleeping arrangements a top secret. I ended up in a room with Mel-B (again) and Ann and to our surprise the betrothed, but STILL SINGLE Noah Lawrence (bestill our hearts). But our COUGAR FANTASIES were short-lived when Qiong saved him from we three starving she-lions and safely took him to the male den (Alas, what could have been ☹). Nancy took Noah's bed.

Goodnight ☺ Gale Carter

Sunday, June 21/ Jona Hall

We woke early this morning in the train to Xi'an. We were all awake once the sun began to peer in our windows.

Bunking down for the evening though was quite humorous. The men were not grouped together but were placed throughout the train with the women. Qiong did some quick arranging, but explained that it was normal to have mixed genders in the sleeping areas. Greg and Jerry opted to be tough and remain with the women.

Back to the earlier thought...So, once the sun came up the landscape was much different than what we saw in Beijing. This morning we got to see farmland, animals, farmers at work, small village areas, and mountains. It was quite eye opening.

Morning breakfast was served at a local McDonalds. We ate cheeseburgers, French fries, and coffee. It was great "western" comfort food.

After checking into our beautiful hotel and showering, we were ready to explore the huge city wall, the museum, and the Big Wild Goose Pagoda. All three were wonderful and filled with great facts that will be great knowledge for our classroom students.

Finally, the evening was topped off with an Imperial Dumpling Banquet dinner and a Tang Dynasty show. The food and costumes were amazing.

Each day is filled with all sorts of amazing events. I still sometimes can't believe what an amazing experience I have been given. One of the best parts though is all the people with whom I get to share the experiences and memories. In one week we have become quite a family!

Jona Hall

Tuesday, June 23/Amy Kennedy

Middle School Visit!!
A wonderfully inspirational morning.

However, in keeping with the concept of a daily journal, I will instead write about YESTERDAY, and let today's person complete the entry for today.

MONDAY, June 22, 2009

After a wonderfully refreshing night's sleep it's off to the
TERRA COTTA MUSEUM – YEAH!

A fairly uneventful bus ride to the museum with the exception of the very naked man walking on the right side of the Expressway—oh yeah, Heather saw him too.
Disembark-get ticket, ticket punched-not to lose ticket-can't get out of museum without Ticket!

Museum consists of 3 main buildings-Pits 1, 2, 3. Pit #1 THEE Pit. The one everyone is familiar with. The columns of soldiers-the general's vanguard. Pit #3, the Command Post-In the rear "directing the troops." Pit #2, A field battalion-a fighting unit to Defend and Protect.

We meet the farmer who discovered Qin's army. We buy the book that tells the world about the discovery. The farmer signs our book. JJ and I pay the farmer 10 yuan to have our picture taken with him. Poor lighting, not a great picture. The farmer not too pleased looking.

-Time for sustenance-Chow Time

Lunch with a new twist-The Buffet. Food available in ample servings-No surprise there.
Trip to Terra Cotta Factory

-Left side, en route-Little Egypt-A pyramid, sphinx and pharaoh-part of some type of amusement park. Pharaohs and Emperors = Monolithic Designs
Excellent Tour. Tour guide is former school teacher. Very Informative. 50 coats of lacquer on furniture-Every household needs this stuff. Artwork-Exquisite! Buy terra cotta replicas here – THE REAL DEAL.

-Bus over to Cave House. Very nice family. Cool House. Cute baby –Family pig. Small rooms. Zodiac signs and paper silhouettes - the grandmother - very creative.

-Muslim Mosque – VERY Chinese in style. Walk thru Bargain Alley to visit Muslim prayer house. Mosque once a storage site during Cultural Revolution. Mosque restored to house of worship. Qur'an/Koran – written in Chinese and Arabic along walls of Men's prayer house. Minaret is a Pagoda. Little Arabic is spoken.

-Back to Rooms/Hotel – Evening meal on our own. What to do What to do?!?

Amy Kennedy

Tuesday, June 23/Melanie Krob

Today we visit Xi'an Ai Xhi Zhong Xue (Xi'an Love of Knowledge Middle School), the highlight of the study tour for many of us, and the visit did not disappoint!

We were met at the school gates by four charming students and given a very warm welcome by the administrators and teachers of the school. We then visited four classes. The classes were very impressive. Roughly 60 students/class, but all of the students were extremely attentive. No problem of discipline that we could see. All of the rooms had smart boards and projectors and the teachers appeared authoritative, but not as rigid as many of us expected. There were also several group exercises, which came as a surprise. We expected a fully teacher-centered classroom experience.

This middle school is a private school that is experimenting with an English immersion approach. The level of English of these seventh graders was quite impressive! But what surprised many of us was how few students were taking notes in class. The students were very excited to try out their English on us.

After the classroom visits, we had a tour of some of the school's facilities, including a TV station, a museum of school awards, a museum of excellent student art, and a robotics classroom. Again, we were pleasantly surprised by the independent thinking that this particular school encouraged. But again this is an unusual middle school. It is private and highly competitive, 10000 yuan/year and a lot of parental involvement. Parents are required to meet with teachers once a month. Additionally, the competition for admission to this school is fierce: 300 slots for 3000 applications. Many of the students are boarders, but there are day students as well.

The highlight of our visit was the show that the students put on for us. The show began with a rendition of "Home on the Range" performed on traditional Chinese winds and strings. This was followed by a Kung Fu demonstration, a fife and drum performance with traditional Chinese flutes, a traditional Chinese lute performance, and as a finale, a ballet performance accompanied by two wonderful female singers. By the end of this performance, many of us were overcome with emotion and several were crying. We reflected later as to why so many of us found this experience so moving. As teachers, seeing a school, its staff and its students take so much time and trouble to prepare for our visit was extremely impressive. The interest the students displayed toward us and the effort they put into their performances for us were truly extraordinary. We will all carry that experience with us for many years.

After the school visit, we divided up for our free study time. One group went to a Neolithic village, another went to a folk art museum, another group went shopping. My group went to the Temple of the Eight Immortals, which is located just east of the inner city. Another amazing experience to add to many wonderful experiences in China. Thanks to Richard, our group had the opportunity to meet a Daoist monk who is also a Tai Chi master. His name is Chu Shi Wei. Master Chu graciously invited us into the temple and served us offerings from the temple altar! Mostly watermelon and other fruit.

What an honor. He then offered to teach us a tai chi class. We accepted this offer enthusiastically and relished this experience.

Another heart-stopping experience in a Xi'an taxi that brought many of us back to our religious roots, Jona, Greg, Nancy, and I had an early dinner at Pizza Hut then headed back to the hotel.

Wow! What a day! Melanie Krob

Wednesday, June 24/Noah Lawrence

We are now almost at the halfway point of our trip, and are currently 30,000 feet above the ground somewhere between Xi'an and Kunming, China. The past week has been a whirlwind of experiences and it has proved a challenge to begin processing and reflecting on them all. Nonetheless, I have begun to formulate a few conclusions about China—here are some revelations about the nation I have had:

1. Many Chinese revere Mao, even as hyper-capitalism has taken root in China. I was surprised by how many Chinese we have spoken to speak so highly of him, and how his picture holds a prominent place in many homes and businesses (for example, in the home of the family that lived in the cave house)
2. Public parks are truly spaces for everyone—and they are full of very active social people. It seems to be a communal gathering place—and I've been amazed at how many elderly are out every morning dancing, practicing tai chi, playing instruments, partaking in ping pong and badminton matches, or stretching. I could barely manage to run through the park as I was so busy weaving in and out of people.
3. Traffic is controlled chaos. I have yet to figure out traffic etiquette. The roads appear to resemble a Hobbesian state of nature where it is every bus, bike, car, or taxi for themselves.
4. Young Chinese seem to LOVE the NBA. Not only is Yao popular but so are Kobe, Le Bron, and Dwight Howard—as well as the other players on the Houston Rockets (Yao's team). The two boys from Xi'an middle school that I got to talk to had a complex discussion, in English, about whether or not Le Bron James was the best player in the NBA.
5. The outfits worn by babies and toddlers which render diapers irrelevant. I'm not sure whether these were created with environmental safety in mind (the diapers in landfills) but I'd certainly never seen anything like them before.
6. The vastness of the markets. The street markets are endless and sell an amazing array of products. The economics of this confounds me. How do you carve out a niche for yourself when so many others are selling the exact same stuff as you? How do you get by when goods are sold so inexpensively? How does one make a space for oneself in such a complex human ecosystem as the megalopolis of Beijing?

7. The size of the classroom-64 students in one class! Granted the students are reverential and well-behaved, but it still must be challenging to be a teacher in China.
8. The wide diversity in prices for products. So far I have learned that a strand of pearls costs less than a disposable camera, five big bottles of Haso beer from a concession stand near the Big Moose Pagoda cost the same as one half-pint bottle of Evian from the hotel minibar, and a silk tie can be purchased for 5 yuan or 100 yuan, depending on one's bargaining skills.
9. Xi'an and Beijing are such bustling cities it can be easy to forget how old and historically significant they are. Just as the government has quietly dispersed to the level of the family, so too do the historical sights meld into the city. I wonder how often citizens of Xi'an think about the fact that they walk the grounds of a city that was once at the center of the world.
10. Lastly, China is so COMPLEX. I am glad Rose, our tour guide, reminded us that we've been privileged to stay in the finest accommodations and to attend the best museums and cultural sights, but that there is still an incredibly large underclass in China that has not shared in China's new material prosperity.

I think it is appropriate and right for us to be impressed and awed by all we have seen, but we should be mindful of ALL of China—not just the glittering facades. That is the real lesson to take to our students.

On to Yunnan! Noah Lawrence

Wednesday, June 24/Heather Longstreth

*excuse my handwriting—I wrote this on the bus ☺

Goodbye Xi'an...Hello Kunming! Today was a day filled with great contrasts and revelations. We had our first domestic Chinese flight from Xi'an to Kunming. The Xi'an airport was very modern and clean and our flight was very smooth. Thanks to Rose no one had to pay over weight fees. ☺

After gathering our luggage we boarded a tour bus, complete with lace coverlets, and met our tour guide and new "Master" who have turned out to be quite the adventurous duo.

We left for the Western Hills. This lush, green setting with beautiful mountains and scenes overlooking the city and waterways were a stark contrast to the traffic and construction that dominates Kunming. Our group greatly enjoyed the 30 min. stroll along the pavement lined with vendors. It was refreshing to see some new nick naks tempting our spending urge to stimulate the Chinese economy. I greatly enjoyed the stone carved steps and colorful temples along our voyage up the mountainside. We all made sure to follow the Chinese superstition and touch, rub, and drop coins into anything that promised good luck, health, and fortune!

Next, we barreled down the mountainside and took a tight detour through a hardware market to get to the Grand View Pavilion. With its Jurassic size water lilies, majestic willow trees, and floral dragons and panda bears this park was a feast for the eyes. We were amazed by the artistry of the bonsai tree garden as well.

After a daring driving maneuver to avoid a traffic jam through a muddy construction zone, we arrived at our dinner location ready to enjoy a feast of “across the bridge noodle soup,” which was delicious. I think I will add chili pepper to my own chicken soup at home now!

After dinner we checked into our hotel which is another luxurious accommodation. The area surrounding the hotel is a very high-end shopping area that was very crowded and active at night. Filled with bright lights, music, and the smell of good food the streets were filled with people of all ages. Surrounded by luxury and capitalism at its height I was struck by great sadness at the number of disabled, homeless people who also lined the street begging for any trickle down generosity that passersby might offer. These people were severely disabled, many missing limbs and without any modern forms of mobilization. One man was lying on a dolly writing calligraphy with a brush in his mouth since he had no arms or legs. As I watched this scene of rags to riches and the people walking by without taking notice, but choosing rather to focus on their privilege my heart broke. A similar scene was experienced when we had difficulty entering the Lama Temple in Xi’an due to the disabled poor beggars who lined the street. I wonder what social systems China has for people with disabilities and how if ever can this gap be closed? ☹

On a happier note, I am very excited to get into the countryside of China and see more of the “real” life of the Chinese people. I have been amazed at China’s beauty, not only in the natural landscape but also history and its people. What a blessing to be able to experience this first hand. Even though we are only half way through the trip I know my life has been enriched in priceless ways!

Thank you! Heather Longstreth ☺

Thursday, June 25/MaryAnne

What a treat for me to be in Kunming, where nearly the first thing our guide Yves told us was concerning the Flying Tigers. The Flying Tigers were pilots who volunteered to serve with the Chinese Army under Chiang Kai Shek and fought the Japanese over the Hump of the Himalayas so the supplies could come through from India and Burma. “The Americans saved the Chinese people,” Yves said, “Without America Japan would have conquered all of China.”

While my father-in-law was not one of these brave pilots, he was with the American army division nicknamed the Flying Tigers who built and manned the Burma Road. He

was stationed in Kunming and he will be thrilled to hear the Flying Tigers are still remembered here—as seen in The Hump Bar, frequented by a number of our company!

Today we visited the Stone Forest, a region created by earthquakes and water erosion. Stone formations rise up like trees and tower along the path. Greg will have good fortune as he was able to take a running leap and touch the shark's tooth! Oh wait, that's good teeth, not good fortune. Nancy & Melanie B. will have true love forever for sitting in a certain place for 6 seconds. Butterflies and dragonflies flit among the flowers, creating peaceful harmony (How Chinese! Or do I mean hao?) The signs emphasize this:

Please preserve the ecological environment and travel the scenery with civilized manner.

(Don't pick the flowers and behave yourself?)

My favorite: Loving each leaf here is the loving of yourself life.

Another “superstition” (in quotes due to frequent discussions about what is belief, religion, and superstition) is that if you rub a certain rock that looks like a sail, you will have smooth sailing. It reminded Noah & me of the bust of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield whose nose everybody rubs in order to have good luck. This superstition must have worked, or else it was the Qiong Effect—as John did NOT lose his camera, and none of us lost life or limb from our driver's “shortcuts.”

The Yi people are the largest minority in Yunnan province and wear very colorful traditional clothes for the tourists. Lunch was a potpourri of dishes, including traditional Yi goat cheese & jerky made of ox, as well as a Yi dessert—a kind of pancake with icing.

Later we travelled to a crystal factory where we disappointed them, I'm sure, by not buying anything.

Yves is a fascinating young man. He is so thirsty for knowledge. He was not able to go to university but he continues to learn. He learned French from the owner of a café in Kunming and has learned many things (books, writers, customs, history) from touring Europe with Chinese groups. He amazes me with the things he knows and how he connects those things together.

We returned early to the hotel and went our various ways, as we have an early morning tomorrow. I wrote this journal, and hard work it was, too! May the next person have success in their loving of recording activities.

MaryAnne

Friday, June 26/Ann Mattson

5:04 AM Kunming → Dali

Before today's adventure begins, I wanted to put down some "deep thoughts"... (Jack Handy)

We Americans have come to understand the differences in our cultures in both big and small ways. Not having readily available drinking water and Western-style toilets have profoundly affected some of us. You take for granted that toilet paper will be provided in free U.S. public toilets, and that minimal sanitation is regulated by the U.S. state or government.

We marvel at the haphazard traffic flow and seemingly life-threatening aspects of crossing a street.

We have become complacent about our mandated, smoke-free environment at home. We wonder how such petite people can eat so heartily and healthfully. We admire the Chinese zest for life through public exercise, dancing, game playing, and socializing.

We (collective "we") have been impressed by the beauty and diversity of the land and its people. They love their precious children and they really seem to like us, too! They are friendly, curious, tolerant, and warm.

Now, about the day...

Up and at'em early: 5:30AM departure to the airport. About an hour-long flight. Arrived to a somewhat overcast, but blessedly cooler climate. Dali is 2000 m above sea level, with an average temp of 15°C. Dali means "Great Management." Erhai Lake enters into the Mekong.

Events:

*Cruise on Erhai Lake—Erhai means "ear" for the lake's shape. Despite the damp weather, our spirits weren't dampened. We anticipated the 3 hour cruise and the tea ceremony. The tea ceremony consisted of three types of teas: the first was smoky, bitter, and smelled like marijuana (so I'm told!). It represents the bitterness in life. The 2nd was a local tea made with walnut shavings and a local cow cheese. Delicious! The 3rd was another delight: Chinese cinnamon and ginger. Yummy! The "sweetness" in life! Throughout the ceremony, we were entertained by a troupe of attractive young singers and dancers in colorful costumes. They really enjoyed themselves! We went ashore to a temple on a teeny island where food vendors sold snail-on-a-stick, and a large variety of fish. Hmmmm....

Our next stop on the cruise was a large island with impressive statuary. Back on the boat and eventually to shore.

*Next stop: Butterfly Spring. A lovely walk in a verdant garden. We washed our hands for long life in a fountain and giggled as butterflies landed on some of us in the Butterfly House. Richard, lovely, friendly Richard was still making friends everywhere we go. He charms us all!

(sidenote) Our tour has been seamlessly arranged, and there have been no miscommunications, missed busses, etc. Bravo to all responsible!

*Exquisite lunch spot with Japanese-style architecture with a central court. Excellent local cheese dish!

*Three Elegant Pagodas—stunning views from the monastery of the three pagodas. Our transportation (golf cart) died near the top and we had to disembark and continue in another up to the top! The small pagodas had 10 levels, while the large had 16. The large was rebuilt after an earthquake damaged it. Beautiful grounds! Serene atmosphere! Wish we could have seen the snow-capped peaks.

*Dinner at the marvelous 5 star hotel. Sumptuous and plentiful—as always!

Some of us partook of foot or body massages. Much to our amusement, we got WONDERFUL massages that were much more than just our feet. They included tea, tomatoes and massaging our full torsos! Gotta love the price, too: 100 min. for 68 yuan!

I love this group, the Chinese people, and their amazing, outstanding country!

We are all so lucky to have this opportunity and this gift of study and travel!

We will all take back memories, souvenirs, photos, but most importantly a new source of knowledge for our students. They are the true beneficiaries.

Thank you EASC and IU, and especially the Freemans!

Ann Mattson of Minnesota

Does it get any better than this?? I think not!!

Saturday, June 27/Wendy McWhorter

The Gates of Chinese homes represent the face of the family that occupies the space behind the door.

This saying as told to us by our Dali guide made me think about the five different SENSES I have been experiencing on the tour through this ancient land. These are the five senses I have thought about:

Seeing artists paint the essence of a bird, flower and a carp, with energy called chi.

Smelling red clay, jasmine tea and damp earth.

Hearing workers talking to each other in the morning, ancient songs sung by ancient souls and the cooing of doves.

Touching wood worn by thousands of hands, and now my hands.

Tasting hot tea, sticky rice, red pepper and textures that are unknown but pleasing.

(drawing of a fish here!)

Wendy McWhorter
NCTA Summer 09
Golden Spring Hotel, Room 310
Lijiang, Yunnan Province

Sunday, June 28/Chasidy Miroff

I am so fortunate to have the opportunity to travel with such an incredible group of educators.

Today we visited the Jade Dragon Mountain. Many of us bought jackets to make sure we stayed warm during our hike. Melanie B. and Jerry debated about yaks and cows. Gale dressed up like a beautiful princess and rode a yak into the middle of the water.

We visited a Baisha village, and it was interesting to see how some of the ethnic minorities spend their lives in the village.

This afternoon we had a curriculum meeting to discuss our projects. One of our incredible leaders, John, asked if we needed any help with our projects, and it was nice to hear how members of our group are working on various research endeavors.

I continue to be amazed at the excellent organizational skills of Qiong and Cathy. They have done a tremendous job planning this wonderful journey.

The person I admire most on this trip is Richard. James Dean once said that only the gentle are ever really strong. Well, if that is true, then Richard must be the strongest, coolest, and smartest person I've ever met.

In addition to learning about the history and culture of China, I am sure I am making lifelong friends with whom I will be able to collaborate on teaching strategies about Asia for years to come.

I have started to call a Coca-cola pop. My favorite new quote is "balls forward" by Nancy. I hope Noah finds pearls for his future daughter. I hope Melanie K. travels the world and gives her daughter an excellent international education.

I have enjoyed hearing about Wendy and Ann's fun and educational college experiences. I can't wait to visit the library with Jona.

I've liked hearing about Cherie's beautiful house on the Atlantic coast. Hopefully someday Melanie B. will let us sample some of her famous jambalaya in New Orleans, or maybe we'll all go to Ireland to rock out with MaryAnne and her band.

I could go on forever about the things I've learned about China and our group. But there is one thing I can say for sure—this is my 9th study tour and this is absolutely the best trip with the best group of teachers and tour leaders ever!

Thanks NCTA, IU, EASC, and the Freeman Foundation.

Roll tide! Chasidy Mirroff
Brookwood Middle School, Alabama

Monday, June 29/ Cherie Neima

Lijiang to Shangri-la (Zhongdian)

I can't help but think of the Chinese saying "A journey of 1000 li begins with a single step." Thanks to the Freeman foundation, Qiong and Cathy's logistics coordination (incredible), John and Richard's wisdom, and Tony's quiet support and shepherding, we are the fortunate ones taking baby steps across China. Today we left the city for the country. We saw people bent over working in their fields—first Naxi people in the blue and black dress; next the Yi people identifiable by the married women's large, black hats that almost look like umbrella tops; and finally, we reached a county where Tibetan people live in their white, broad-based houses with mystical-looking symbols where the eaves come together. (that was too long of a sentence.) We drive through the countryside seeing men delivering the stuff of country life on their exposed-engine tractor-trucks. Always there are people walking or working around their houses. Some of the houses have TV antennas or satellite dishes. Do the people watch the soap operas with actors in period costumes? Do they listen to the Chinese opera channel? I wonder if television helps to serve as a unifying force. There seem to be so many historic documentaries and travel features that could help to promote national pride.

We're in Stupa country now where Tibetans physically express their religious beliefs. A large shrine stood at the doorway of a gift-shop/toilet. Prayer flags decorate gates at courtyards. I'm amazed at the level of freedom of religion in China. We've seen hundreds of people offering prayers with incense. Tomorrow we'll visit a lamasery.

I think you need faith to ride the roads in China! Our bus driver has a lot of skill in navigating mountain curves and passing slow-moving traffic. But I think I've cheated death at least a couple times today.

Out of the bus we had to watch our footing as we descended Tiger Leaping Gorge's 400 steps for a view of the furious Yangtze. I've never seen rapids on such a dramatic scale! Forced through a narrow channel deep, deep down at the base of the mountains, the water looked like it was fighting with itself to continue onto Shanghai.

By plane, train, pedi-cab, and divan chair, I'm sure we've travelled over 1000 li –using beginner's baby steps. It couldn't have happened with a finer bunch of folks. But we all know the journey has just begun. All the best to you who are the best as we continue to share this opportunity.

Cherie Neima

Tuesday, June 30/Loren Roumell

Shangri-La

- Songzanlin Monastery
- Tibetan Family
- Bita Lake
- Curriculum meeting

As usual today was full of information & new experiences. It is overwhelming to think about all we've done and I feel lucky to be with people who can help me process everything. Today we started at the monastery, drank butter yak tea w/a Tibetan family, discussed our curriculum plans, and ended the day discussing China w/a Chinese-American guy at the "Travellers Pub" (some of us). It was culturally & intellectually stimulating as well as beautiful. I'm still awed by the natural scenery here. These meetings are incredible and the sights and sounds never cease to amaze me.

I also am still amazed by the amount of development & construction that is everywhere, even way up here in the mountains. The monastery also had much construction & it was a strange picture: monks teaching, people praying, tourists visiting, and drills and saws going. It contrasted greatly to the chanting and incense burning. New China at its best. The new & the old growing together.

Our guide Anna is very knowledgeable and has been very helpful in explaining Tibetan culture & the yellow sect of Buddhism—she is Tibetan and has great insight into the culture & has made some great comparisons between people here as well as with the US. I am amazed that there is so much religion here & that people so openly worship. That image is not portrayed in the US ever and it contrasts to what I've learned about China.

The monastery is in the process of renovation funded by the government, local tourist fees, and donations. It's also home to 800 monks & we had the opportunity to see some of the young boys. I cannot imagine starting your life as a 5-6 year old boy living and learning in the monastery. So many of us from the US change careers and/or don't even think about the decisions we made as children and here these young boys are destined to

the spiritual path and hold their family's respect and honor. It seems like a huge responsibility. However, we did see some very "boy" behavior which was almost encouraging. "Boys will be boys" as the saying goes and I saw a few "rough housing" up the stairs & chasing each other around.

Our morning was complete after our Tibetan family visit. We shared yak cheese & butter tea as well as buckwheat bread. Overall, the experience was much better than expected. The yak butter smelled more like cheese, really strong goat cheese. The tea was also not as bitter or bad smelling as I thought. It actually tasted more like warm milk. The cheese tasted like plain yogurt in my opinion. The family was very welcoming! As Jerry mentioned, we learned that grandmother behavior must be cross-cultural. The grandmother kept refilling tea & bringing out more bread. Grandmas are always trying to feed you! ☺

The whole experience was surreal in some ways. We were sitting in this home that was beautifully constructed with wood floors and carvings on the wall. There were traditional handicrafts, a chapel/altar to Mao, a huge wood stove system, and a TV. (Apparently, the government supports rural farmers and cultural groups with electricity/solar panels/healthcare, all for a small fee in some cases). As Ann commented, it was like we were in an edition of National Geographic. I was amazed at the modernity in terms of technology (even a mixer was used to make the tea). However, it felt very cozy, almost "winter log cabinish." It reminded me of being in northern MI, though people spend millions to get that authentic look.

Once again we're in a beautiful place in terms of natural beauty and its raining. The Wall, Snow Mountain, and now in Shangri-La we are immersed in clouds. It does add to the mystery of these places, but it also tends to make for long days. I've been surprised by the weather and didn't really think about how much elevation we'd gain and how that would affect temperature. As a group we've definitely come together and are offering much support to one another socially and professionally. I've appreciated our curriculum meetings and feel the one this evening provided some good ideas for classroom instruction. It's also inspiring to be with other educators who want to learn and be successful in the classroom. It's encouraging to be with people who like the same things, almost, and who can provide so many resources. For some of us, myself included, I'm not part of a team quite like this and have enjoyed this opportunity. I've been a part of many discussions that have challenged my own thinking and made me more confident in my teaching.

On a personal note, our group is becoming very comfortable with the discussion of toilets. The "squatty potty" as Chasidy called it, is the one thing we've debated, analyzed, and compared in addition to history! Basic needs can bring about great cultural comparisons as well. Privacy and even paper towels will be much appreciated when we return. However, I am getting used to the whole concept.

Our evening ended with another 15 dish dinner that was very good. The food has become normal and yet still exciting to see what will come out next! There's always something

more. We've taken to the mushrooms of Yunnan (who knew there were so many types of black fungus), buckwheat bread, and the hot pot. In addition, I think most of us have eaten more watermelon here than we have our entire adult life.

Lastly, some of us had the opportunity to meet with a Chinese-American guy. He approached us since he recognized our accents. He had lived in China until he was 14 & then moved to the states and now was back. He was an American Citizen though. He offered much insight into the changes China's undergone and his own hopes for China. Similar to most of us, he cannot believe all the development and money being put into tourism. He even caught the bug and was opening a guest house in every rural village. We asked so many questions and finally I told him we were teachers and apologized for our eagerness. He LOVED to talk though and we probably could've been there for hours. Our one concern was that he did not know there was an airport in Shangri-La. Hopefully all goes as planned!!

I think we are all looking forward to getting to Shanghai. It will be nice to be in a city again. I'm amazed that we are still in China and cannot believe we were in Beijing only 2 weeks ago. We will be thrown back into the crowds, traffic, pollution, and technology. It will be a shock to our system I think! Thanks to Richard we also have some context with which to embrace the city and I appreciated his discussion. Sometimes we visit places with no background info and are scrambling to take it all in. Richard made connections & presented questions that will better frame Shanghai.

As we leave the meetings, I'm reminded by Anna's mention of no greed, no jealousy, and no ignorance (or stupid) as the goal of Buddhism. I think these 3 goals are our responsibility as educators and this trip is the 1st step to bringing that awareness to ourselves and our students about China. I'm excited to get back to share these experiences, but will be sad to leave China and new friends and colleagues.

Next stop Shanghai. Big city here we come. Loren Roumell

Wednesday, July 1/Susan Smith

Big news for some of us today was that Minnesota finally officially has a junior senator after 8 months: Senator Franken by a 5-0 court decision! (Coleman conceded the race) There was also an airbus accident in eastern Africa—many casualties but since I couldn't find a newspaper at the Kunming airport in Mandarin or English, that's all I know right now.

Left Shangri-La—quick stop in Kunming, then on to Shanghai, where it is hot and raining. Looks like another long day for us, as we fly for 2 ¾ hours and then have 4 activities scheduled. (86° on landing—no rain right now)

We've gone from idyllic, clean air, cooler, scenic mountainous scenery to the crowded, hotter, busy, polluted, hectic urban scene of Shanghai. My brain feels overloaded as we race through downtown to get to the Yuyuan Garden.

Tony tells us that Shanghai in Mandarin means "going up to the Sea." The city is a financial and commercial center, with billboards and signs for the 2101 Expo scattered about. There are numerous high-rises—apartments and financial buildings, business buildings and hotels. While Beijing covers more area and has 13 million people, Shanghai has 18 million residents or more packed into 6332 sq. km. It is the most densely populated city in China—and rush hour shows us it is also the most densely populated roadways as well!

Two car factories are here: VW and GM (hope they do better here than in the US!) and the city's nickname is "Paradise for Shoppers." If you compare the "shape of China to a rooster, Beijing is the throat or neck, Xi'an is the heart and Shanghai is the rich belly," says Tony on our bus travelogue.

The old downtown of Shanghai contrasts with the new downtown of new China's Shanghai. Few remnants of the British, American, and French influence remain superficially, but we saw evidence of Shanghai's 5 industrial pillars as we flew into the airport even: heavy industry, high tech industry (like Panasonic), light industry, the financial center and the service industry.

We couldn't walk along the Bund because it is all closed down for restoration for the Expo, so we started at the picturesque Yuyuan Garden, originally built in 1559, during the Ming dynasty. The floorplan seemed more maze-like than some of the courtyards, gardens and imperial homes we've visited before in China. A theatre stage was moved here and Queen Elizabeth II is the only modern audience for a performance.

The garden included many trees (one ginkgo tree is reportedly 400 years old and its roots have heaved up some of the bricks in the walkway for many feet around it), bamboo plants, pine trees and grasses. There were flowering trees, an open-sided bridge (for the full Daoist effect of being in harmony with nature, rather than separated from it), koi fish, but few flowers. The large meeting halls had the traditional Chinese lanterns, dark wood paneling and door screens and large Chinese style chairs. What I found fascinating was the 3 toed dragon with the frog under his chin—supposedly a symbiotic relationship with the frog drinking (?) the dragon's saliva as it dripped out of his mouth and cleaning the dragon's whiskers in return. There were also unusual roof decorations, like a concrete Chinese man, who held a fishing pole, and a window decoration with a crane and landscape scenery that was very peaceful.

The women's quarters were tucked far in the back of the complex—to shield them from the outside world. Even at performances, Chinese women would attend from behind screens on the second floor the shield them from the view of other audience members.

There were many unusually shaped doorways. One looked like a keyhole and we walked through a constructed rock formation “hallway” as we left the women’s quarters on our way to the restaurant.

Shanghai’s food has a different focus—the first thing our table noticed was no rice and no watermelon. Tomatoes were served as the last of 16 dishes, if I counted accurately, Noah. We had shrimp with a tasty sauce, glutinous rice wrapped in a reed leaf and tied with white thread, different dumplings and bamboo shoots instead of lotus roots.

Then off to the 7 pm boat cruise on the river. By 7:15, as we pulled away from the dock, the buildings were lighting up. Some sparkled and glittered—some had advertisements flashing. The Pearl was tastefully lit up, as the other river boats etched in neon lights and barges passed us on the river (I’ve never seen our group take so many pictures for such an extended amount of time.)

Back in the bus just past 8 pm—headed to the downtown Holiday Inn, with a few historical notes to finish off the night: today, July 1, is the anniversary of the 1921 founding of the communist party here in Shanghai; in 1997 on July 1, Hong Kong was returned to China and in three short days, it is Independence Day for the Americans. (Today is also Canada day for our northern neighbors).

As I write this entry on the 12th floor of the air conditioned hotel room, all I can hear is the flow of the air and incessant horn honking outside! Several of us mentioned today that time has been altered, compressed or expanded somehow during our almost 2 ½ weeks here in China. We’ve lost track of what day of the week it even is and Beijing seems like much more than 2 weeks ago, as we have experienced so many things in so many places. We’ve all been altered by this experience—returning home in a few days, never to be the same as we were when we arrived. Great things do come of small things—the nuances of my experiences will alter how I teach and think about China and her glorious people—it truly is a “world without strangers,” as I saw on a t-shirt in a hotel elevator a few days ago!

Susan Smith

Thursday, July 2/Rachel Stien

Tony, Tony, tony, you have been holding out on us, haven’t you? We knew you were funny, but we didn’t know you could be a stand-up comedian! ☺ I think Greg is right—if you were to come live in the U.S., you would have a girlfriend pretty quickly and then maybe your mom will stop asking what’s wrong with you. Doubtful though.

I continue to be amazed by the people here in China. Their ability to just keep going and working hard is an ethic I think we are losing in America especially with our students.

I am fascinated by everyday, ordinary people. I find myself thinking and wondering what their personal stories are. I worry that our calligraphy friend in the hutong in Beijing is all right.

Today as we were driving through the city, I found myself wondering about the laundry that people were hanging out their windows. Here's what I wonder:

1. When it falls to the ground from the top floor, who goes to get it? I'm not sure I would want my neighbors touching my undies, and I don't care if they're clean either. Don't touch my undies.
2. Do neighbors compare sizes? Somehow I think the answer is no, but this is what I wonder in the back of the bus while I'm staring out the window. Well, I also wonder why that man has his shirt pulled up exposing his stomach.

I don't know what's funnier—Tony laughing at his own jokes or J.J. teaching Cathy to talk Southern. Cathy is actually getting quite good at it. I think it's a toss-up as to which is funnier.

We told Tony tonight at dinner that we were going to put his profile on match.com back in the states and then each one of us would pick out a match for him. His comment? "It will take me a long time to go through 24 girls!" We need to get that boy to Texas, that's all there is to it.

So tonight we are at the karaoke bar watching Tony run back and forth brokering a deal for us, and we're all taking pictures. So there's Melanie "Bullet" in her Nazi outfit. "Who's that Nazi sitting in the middle?" she busts out about the picture. Only Melanie "Bullet" could make a comment like that. How sweet of her to give us gifts on her birthday!

So I guess I need to take J.J.'s advice about the last day tomorrow, "Don't cry—just think about the happy memories that you will take back with you." And I will need to take Nancy Bader's advice when we get back home, "We need to make our own adventure each day."

But I will still miss China and all of you, my new friends. Rachel Stein, Ohio

p.s. I just want to hear Cathy say one more time, "Whatcha doin', y'all?" Southern style.

p.p.s. Today, Cathy learned about "eye candy." We are bad in the back of the bus!

p.p.p.s Goodbye, Massillon, Ohio. Hello, Shanghai! 85% of the men here are good chefs, housekeepers, and babysitters??? Are you serious? And here I thought I'd have to go to Alaska and take a chance on getting gored by a moose to find a husband. I can just come here to Shanghai with Heather, and we can just try to survive the driving. No problem.

p.p.p.ps. I will miss the squat toilets! And now I am really done. Rachel ☺

Friday, July 3/ Greg Swynenburg

Quoting the epic words by Frank Sinatra, “It’s the last dance, we’ve come to the last dance...”

After a simply fantastic journey, we have finally reached its conclusion with the final free study day in Shanghai. Most people are at breakfast around 8 am as they prepare to embark on their final China adventure.

I set out at 9 am with my faithful travelling buddy Jona and we hopped on the subway headed for the C.C.P. founding museum. As we enter, the guards order us to take a drink of our water to ensure we are not bringing any high-grade plastic explosives into the museum. Before I take a drink, I give the guards a rousing GANBEI!, which luckily elicits laughter from the guards...The museum gave Jona and I a great deal of insight into the founding of the communist party & traced its roots to an anti-imperial movement.

After the museum, we headed to the home of Sun Yat-sen. We attempted to take a shortcut through a park, but got a bit turned around in the process. It made for an enjoyable walk, however, as we got to see people dancing, doing tai-chi, and a Michael Jackson memorial.

Sun Yat-sen’s residence was extremely interesting. It demonstrated his intelligence, insight, & leadership while painting him as the true founder of Modern China. Jona and I discussed how the history of China would have been different if he had not died so young.

We then headed for the propaganda poster museum, a place hidden in the basement of an apartment complex. We soon discovered that our search was well worth it! The museum was filled with original posters & paintings that traced the evolution of China & the cult of Mao from 1949 until his death. The museum director was thrilled that we were so enamored with his collection. He asked us if we had some extra time and he walked us down a hallway that would fit extremely well in Jerry’s movie. He pulled out keys & unlocked a hidden door in the wall, then a second. As he turned on the light, a plethora of rare paintings & posters was revealed. The highlight was a rare collection of original Da-zi-Bao posters, written by Chinese citizens criticizing “counter revolutionaries.” When asked about Mao, he simply said that “the art speaks for itself.”

Following the museum, Jona & I grabbed a well-needed bite of lunch (at 4:30) and caught a cab for the Yuyuan Bazaar for some last-minute shopping and exotic dairy queen ice cream.

We attempted to walk the Bund in the evening. However, the massive amount of construction made me feel a great deal of sympathy for the frog in “Frogger” as we dodged construction traffic, busses, and cabs. We did, however, find a bar that might rival “the Hump” (although I’m certain Jerry will disagree.) The bar is a converted lighthouse on the Bund. We had our drinks at the top of the lighthouse and got some final pictures of the spectacular views.

We ended the day with a stroll down East Nanjing Rd. and a dinner of Pizza Hut with John Frank.

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone who has been a part of this truly unforgettable experience. You are all amazing people and I feel truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know all of you over the past 20 days. Best of luck on our return to the States and, please, let's make it a point to keep in touch. See you in September!

Greg Swynenburg