



US-China Review

Spring 2022

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Ping-Pong Diplomacy's Lasting Impact
Yearning for Hamburgers in 1976 China
The Day I was Toasted by Zhou Enlai
USCPFA Member's Chinese Tea Company

Letter from the President



US-China Peoples Friendship Association

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Keep Chapter Activities Going

Dear friends of the Chinese people,

I hope that this letter finds you in good health.

Due to unknown and unforeseen circumstances relating to war in Ukraine, USCPFA will postpone the Washington Seminar on US-China Relations until the fall. Hopefully, by then we will have more information about this tragedy. Our hearts go out to the Ukrainian people who only want to live their lives in peace without foreign aggression.

The Eastern Region convention committee worked very hard to present the virtual November 2021 national convention. Thank you so much for your participation. The Southern Region will be hosting the next convention in 2023. No decision has been made yet on the location.

While we're waiting for travel to return to normal, this is a good time to reflect on the adventures we had in China in the decades when that country was just starting to open up. This issue of *USCR* has several stories that show what it was like to visit China in those days.

USCPFA member Mike Connelly and his family have a unique connection with China—they founded and run a company that imports Chinese tea. Read about that enterprise in this issue.

Also in this *USCR*, Jan Berris, who has been with the National Committee on United States-China Relations for more than 50 years, describes how ping-pong diplomacy changed U.S.-China relations, as well as her life.

And Zach Bomberger, a young man from a Kansas ranching community, tells how he decided to travel out of his comfort zone and live in Beijing.

Work toward peaceful solutions.

In friendship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Diana C. Greer'.

Diana C. Greer
President of USCPFA



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of China and the United States.*

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Former Diplomat Describes How Ping-Pong Diplomacy Changed U.S.-China Relations, as Well as Her Life

Jan Berris took a one-year leave of absence from the U.S. State Department in 1971 to help the National Committee on United States-China Relations (NCUSCR) organize the Chinese ping-pong team's 1972 visit to the U.S. Her work on what became known as ping-pong diplomacy changed her life and career. Instead of returning to the Foreign Service, she remained with the NCUSCR, where she is the vice president.

NCUSCR, founded in 1966, is a non-profit educational organization that encourages understanding of China and the United States between citizens of both countries.

During the USCPFA national convention last year, members were able to view an online excerpt of an interview with Berris, conducted in 2021 by the Shanghai *Duawai Youxie* (Shanghai Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries). In it, Berris looks back at how U.S.-China relations have evolved in the 50 years since the ping-pong breakthrough. Here is a transcript of that interview, published with the permission of the NCUSCR.

Where were you when the American table tennis delegation visited China in 1971?

I was in Hong Kong in April of 1971 when the Chinese table tennis team surprised the entire world by suddenly inviting the American team to stop off in China on its way home to the United States.

I remember very vividly that I was on my way to dinner with some friends and I saw this newspaper headline. I thought this can't be true. I was very suspicious because in those days many of the Hong Kong papers were not devoted necessarily to the news, but to sensational stories. So I just thought this was one more sensational story.

I told my friends at dinner what I'd heard, and they said they had heard rumors of that as well; and it may in fact be true. We spent most of the dinner talking about that and what it might mean and what an exciting change it would make.

Did you know at the time that the visit



During the Chinese ping-pong team's visit to New York in 1972, Jan Berris (second from left) and her parents meet Chinese Ambassador Huang Hua and table tennis captain Zhuang Zedong.

of the ping-pong team would also change the course of your own life?

No. I thought this was a historically interesting thing, as an event on its own, but I didn't realize the life-changing impact it would have on me.

I was leaving Hong Kong in late May, early June of '71 because I had finished my two-year tour of duty as the assistant cultural affairs officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong. I returned home to Michigan, where my family lived, for a month-long rest. When I was about two days away from leaving to go to Washington to train for my next position, which was going to be in Indonesia, I received a telephone call from two former professors, who asked me if I would consider taking a year's leave of absence from the Foreign Service, and go to New York and work for the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. Both of them were on the Committee's board, and since it was going to be co-hosting, along with the U.S. Table Tennis Association, the visit of the Chinese ping-pong team sometime in 1972, they wanted someone on the staff who had had some diplomatic experience. But I wasn't really sure if I wanted to do that.

That happened to be around the first

week of July of 1971. People who know the history of U.S.-China relations will remember that it was on July 15, 1971, that President Nixon announced that Dr. Kissinger had made a secret trip to Beijing. So that made my interest in going to New York much stronger. It was a potentially really exciting time and there was the possibility that things between the two countries might develop very quickly. In fact, all of my colleagues in Washington in the Foreign Service said I would be crazy not to go to New York and to the National Committee. So that's what I did—thinking that it would be for a year; yet 50 years later I am still here!

I should say that while ping-pong diplomacy was a major and really important development that marked the beginning of a whole new era in the history of the relationship between China and the U.S., it also marked a major turning point in my own life.

In 1972 the visiting Chinese team started off in your hometown Detroit. Why was that?

It was actually a coincidence. There were two host organizations for this visit, the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and the U.S. Table Tennis As-

sociation. The chairman of the National Committee at that time was Alex Eckstein, an economist at the University of Michigan and one of the professors who had called me. The University is in Ann Arbor, about 40 minutes drive from Detroit. The chairman of the U.S Table Tennis Association that year was Graham Steenhoven, an automotive worker at the Chrysler Motor Company based in Detroit. So the chairmen of the two co-host organizations happened to be living within a 30-mile distance from one another. That's why the first stop was in Detroit.

The first exhibition game in Detroit took place in a large arena, where professional basketball players and hockey teams used to play. When the Chinese national anthem began to play, there were some right-wing extremists who began making noise and not acting appropriately at all. So the security hustled them out very quickly, and the event went on, and was very successful.

You toured with the Chinese ping-pong team throughout their visit in 1972. What was it about that experience that left you with the most indelible impression?

I suppose the thing that stands out the most and what always struck me, both at the time, although not quite when I was living it, but shortly thereafter, was how easy it was to move from a period when people in two countries who had been conditioned by their governments and their media to think of the other as enemies, how quickly they were able to overcome that, and change the negative stereotypes that our two peoples had had of one another.

While we were not involved in the 1971 visit of the American team to China, just in the reciprocal visit to the United States, we were involved from then on in all of the exchanges that took place up until 1979 when we normalized relations. Mostly starting out with athletics and performing arts, but gradually adding in other professional exchanges. The next one we did was the visit of the Shenyang *zajituan* (acrobatic troupe).

We also hosted every athletic team that you could think of. We had soccer, basketball, volleyball, swimming, diving, tennis and track and field teams—among others. Through all those exchanges, we either hosted the first visits of those kinds



Jan Berris and a Chinese co-announcer during the Chinese martial arts team's visit to the United States in 1974. (Li Lianjie, now better known as Jet Li, is the young boy on the right.)

of athletic teams to the United States, or sent the first of an American team in that sport to China.

During that period, the main theme was friendship. It was pervasive. If I had to come up with one phrase that would describe that period, it would be 友谊第一, 比赛第二 (friendship first, competition second). The Chinese started off saying that all the time. Gradually even our security detail, who spoke no Chinese

icans the delegation would meet, would usually ask one of the Chinese: What has impressed you most about your trip to the United States? Invariably, whether it was asked of one of the ping-pong players, or a team official, or a Chinese journalist accompanying the delegation, the answer would be some variation of what impressed us most is the warmth, friendship, and kindness that's been shown to us by the American people.

The first few times I heard that response, I thought to myself, they really don't think that, it's something they were told to say, as it sounds good and it's very diplomatic. But as I traveled around the United States with the team, I found that that was the answer that I would have given too, because I was enormously impressed by how open the American people were, and how generous, how warm and how hospitable they were.

Did the American people also change their views of the Chinese people, after meeting them in person?

We had been taught that people from Communist China all dressed alike, said the same things, and acted alike. But of course, the Chinese delegation members all had their own personalities, their own likes and dislikes, etc. This was certainly true of the people on the ping-pong team, but also true of subsequent delegations that we hosted. I think they must have been handpicked not just for their great athletic ability or other talents, but also because they were very warm, outgoing

The Chinese were impressed by the warmth, friendship, and kindness of the American people.

whatsoever, or the American ping-pong players, everybody learned that phrase: 友谊第一, 比赛第二.

I remember that spirit of friendship was apparent not just on the ping-pong floor or in later years on the soccer field or the basketball court, but it was also true of the relationship between the people.

How did the American people respond to the visit of the Chinese delegation?

It was a very high-profile exchange. We wanted people to know about it. We purposefully made the ticket price inexpensive so that more Americans could come and see the events.

Lots of people, whether journalists, the American players, or ordinary Amer-

Continued on next page

Jan Berris (continued)

people with good personalities. They were extremely talented, and they had the ability of charming everybody that they met—including me!

After I came back from each delegation that I traveled with, I would call my mother to tell her about the trip, and she used to tease me by saying: well, tell me about all the new best friends you've made from this delegation.

Were there any interesting anecdotes or incidents during that 1972 visit?

Despite all of the warmth and friendship, there were problems. There were people in this country who were very upset that we were hosting people from a Communist country. Some of those people made their feelings known by demonstrating.

What sticks most in my mind is an event that happened when we were performing on a basketball court at the University of Maryland. Tricia Nixon, the oldest daughter of President Nixon, was attending the event, representing her father. She was sitting in the audience along one of the long ends of the court; and on the opposite side were about 200 supporters of Taiwan. Up in the balcony on one of the short ends of the court, were lots of anti-war activist students who were very angry at President Nixon because the day before he had ordered the re-bombing of the harbor in Haiphong—as we were then in the middle of the Vietnam War.

The Taiwanese were loudly yelling for all the Chinese players to defect from China. The American students were stomping on the wooden bleachers and shouting: “Tricia watches ping-pong, Nixon bombs Haiphong” over and over again. Meanwhile, Tricia Nixon sat quietly through this huge uproar. I was sitting at a small table on the floor with the announcer, as one of my several different jobs during the trip was to help announcers pronounce the Chinese players' names correctly. I was frantically telling him: just say something, talk, you've got to do something to overcome all this noise!

So that is one of the most vivid memories that I have of the whole ping-pong trip.

Did the events attract a lot of media attention at the time?

This was the first time any Chinese national had set foot in the United States since the founding of the PRC. So it was a very big story not just for the American media, but for foreign media as well. Thus, we had huge media coverage. All the major newspapers, television channels, wire services and magazines were represented. The Chinese side also brought a large media contingent, including Xinhua, *People's Daily*, and two documentary teams. In fact, there was so much attention that we had to hire two people just to take care of the journalists. And when we were traveling to other cities, we even had two planes: one for the American and the Chinese team members



On the streets of Beijing in 1973, during a visit by the NCUSCR Board.

I believe that engagement, despite what the detractors say, benefited the American people a lot.

and the accompanying staff members, and another just for the journalists.

Was it hard to bid farewell to the Chinese delegation?

In fact, the other day, to prepare for this interview, I took a look at the half-hour documentary that the Chinese documentary team made on the visit. The final scenes are all of us standing there waving goodbye to the Chinese who were by that point on the plane. We were very sad because we had been with the group for four weeks, and had gotten to know everyone well. I got very emotional and, along with some others, was crying.

During my first trip to China, which was in June of 1973, about a year after the ping-pong visit, I would meet people and they would look at me and say: Oh, I know you. You are that crying girl. So that was me. My nickname was “that crying girl.”

It's been 50 years since you started working at the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. What has kept you doing this job all over the years?

For my entire career, it's really the people-to-people aspects of my job that have been the most important to me, and interest me the most. While the work I'm doing sometimes can be the same, and sometimes can be tedious, it is the people that I've been able to meet throughout this wonderful job that interest me the most.

While I am in awe of China's long and rich culture and history, its amazing and beautiful art, its fabulous food and its fascinating political issues, what I really and truly care about are the people, and the relationships I've been able to make over the years with Chinese, as you like to say, from all walks of life.

And it is not just the connections that I've been able to make on my own, but the fact that the job I've had at the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations has enabled me to introduce thousands of Americans to China, and thousands of Chinese to the United States, and hopefully to help them understand one another a little better.

Some people are now having doubts about the engagement strategy. What's your view on that?

It won't be any surprise to you that I believe firmly in engagement. I think it is absolutely essential that people, whether they agree with one another or not, continue to engage with each other, and sit down and talk with one another.

The argument that has recently been put forth by some that the past 40 or 50 years of engagement has been wasted and only benefited China is absurd. I was there in the '70s. The people who were involved in crafting our engagement policy were

not naïve. They knew China well and they knew what they were doing.

Those who are now detractors of the engagement policy have mischaracterized its objectives. The goal was never to transform China into a liberal democracy. Instead, the objectives were threefold. One was to enhance Americans' security by deterring the Soviet Union. Another was to deliberately, and I would add very effectively, facilitate China's rise, both for its citizens but also selfishly in order to make China a stronger partner with the United States against the Soviet Union. And third, I think it was to ensure that China became a more stable and prosperous country, so that eventually it would become enmeshed in a rules-based order. Those were our three reasons for the engagement policy, and I would argue that all three were important and effective.

Yet, the detractors of the policy are not giving any of that any credibility. Nor have they paid attention to the organic growth of the relationship. Finally, these detractors don't talk about what the alternatives would be. If we hadn't had this engagement, things could have been a whole lot worse than now.

What are the merits of the engagement strategy?

I believe that engagement, despite what the detractors say, benefited the American people a lot. It strengthened our deterrence capability; and therefore helped reduce

the danger of a nuclear threat and a Soviet attack on the United States and its allies.

While it's hard to quantify what would have happened if we had not had the relationship, what is clear is that there have been no major conflicts in the East Asian region in the past five decades. That is in great contrast to the years before that, when the United States was involved very heavily in military operations, whether it was World War II, or the Korean War, or the Vietnam War.

However, it has been peaceful for the last five decades. I attribute a lot of that to the relationship and to the engagement

I believe that both governments need to be careful... and not encourage citizens to be too nationalistic.

between China and the United States. I also think that that avoidance of war or conflict in East Asia is one of the things that has enabled the region to become the fastest growing and most dynamic in the world.

In the United States, some people hold negative views about China because they think China stole their jobs. Yet study after study has shown that those jobs were

lost because of automation, not because China was stealing them. Plus they don't mention the fact that the dynamism of the East Asia region created a lot of other good jobs here in the United States and has enabled Americans to pay less for goods than might otherwise have been the case.

What can we learn from the art of diplomacy in the 1970s?

In order to make people-to-people engagement successful, we really have to go back to the early '70s.

In the '70s, both governments actually stepped back, and allowed the people to take the relationship at their own pace. The U.S. government paved the way by relaxing or removing certain restrictions that we had had that prevented interactions between the two countries. Beijing gradually did the same. This enabled the primary drivers of the relationship to be the private sector.

While the two governments enabled it to happen, it was because of the people—the ping-pong players and other athletes, the performing artists, the educators, the business community and everybody who was involved in the myriad numbers of exchanges that began in the '70s and grew to such great lengths, that we have the enormous web of deep and broad relationships between Chinese and American people that is very hard to rip apart.

The society-to-society dimensions of the relationship grew very quickly. In fact, in some ways it became more significant than the government-to-government relationship that initially made this all possible.

I believe that the decision to allow extensive engagement by individuals and by private entities was part of, at least on the American side, a broader strategy to add resilience to this new relationship. And to forge a lot of ties, both at the official level and at the unofficial level.

The logic on the American side was simple but very important: the more people were involved, the broader the scope of the relationship and interests, the larger array of constituencies you would have who would want to keep a stake in the relationship and make it successful.

Do you think that people-to-people ties can still play a role in improving relations nowadays?

I definitely think so. We must continue



Chinese journalists talk to a Georgia farmer in 1973 with Jan Berris helping to interpret.

Continued on next page

Jan Berris *(continued)*

people-to-people relationships because they are very important. Sometimes I think that our two governments, in fact, don't necessarily do the right things and I trust more in the people of the two countries to do the right things than the two governments.

Unfortunately, on both sides, we've allowed that relationship to deteriorate. As we all know, we are now all facing great problems. We all have to work that much harder to make sure that we do not let the people in both countries who are opposed to the relationship gain the upper hand.

If the two governments want to engage in tit-for-tat actions, such as tariffs or sanctions, that is their prerogative. Personally, I don't think such actions are useful at all. In fact, much of what the two governments do and say to each other these days is counterproductive. I just want them to let the citizens alone, so that they can carry on whatever people-to-people relations they wish. For the past 50 years, the private citizens of both countries have done a really great job at building this strong web of relations.

The two governments will continue to do whatever they want to one another, or say whatever they want to say, but I believe that both governments need to be careful and make sure they keep those negative actions at that government-to-government level and not encourage citizens to be too nationalistic.

There has always been a lot of talk in the relationship about *youyi*, or being friends. It's important to be a *pengyou*, but it's more important to be a *zhengyou*, a friend who is willing to tell their friends on the other side what they really believe, to speak the truth, and to make sure that we are all

When you bring people together who are professionals, who are not told what to say or think by their own governments, they are able to find common ground.

as open and as honest with each other as we can be. If we are not, then that is going to add to the further decline of that wonderful relationship we had during the high period of engagement.

What are the areas that China and the U.S. can work on together more in the future?

There are many areas that our scientists, our artists, our athletes, etc., have all worked on that have been beneficial to both sides in multiple ways. Student exchanges between the two countries are just one of those areas. I hope to see the continuation of people-to-people relations at all levels.

But there are two areas where there is the most promise of mutual cooperation and benefit in the future. One is the crucially important area of climate and the environment. Our prior government did not necessarily believe in climate change, but the Biden administration does. So does the Chinese government. We must work together on a whole variety of environmental issues for the future safety of the world.

The other area is our public health relationship. We have to work together to share knowledge and information about public health issues, and to, hopefully, prevent the kind of pandemic that the world has just seen. Despite all the contention that is currently taking place, I believe it is imperative that the people in our public health systems find a way to get over the differences that have sprung up in an area where we used to have a great deal of mutually beneficial cooperation. We need to stop acting like children and must find ways to act like mature adults.

When you bring people together who are professionals, who are not told what to say or think by their own governments, they are able to find common ground and common interest in working with their fellow professionals in the same field.

That is why I say that we should get the two governments out of the process and let the professionals and the people come together, learn from one another, and share their knowledge. If we do so, the world will be a much better place. 友

— NCUSCR's Policy Statement —

The National Committee on United States-China Relations is a nonprofit educational organization that encourages understanding of China and the United States between citizens of both countries. The Committee's continuity of experience and depth of associations with senior officials and distinguished citizens of China and the United States make it a unique national resource. Established in 1966 by a broad coalition of scholars and civic, religious, and business leaders, the Committee was founded in the belief that vigorous debate of China policy among Americans was essential and that balanced public education could

clarify U.S. interests and strengthen our foreign policy. Similarly, the founders believed that, over time, dialogue with Chinese citizens would enhance mutual understanding, a basic requirement for stable and productive relations.

The Committee's basic purposes have not changed, although programs have been developed in response to shifting needs and opportunities. In the early years, the need was to stimulate informed public discussion about China and U.S.-China relations; thus the focus was on public education and outreach programs. With its sponsorship of the historic table tennis visit in 1972, the

National Committee became the principal organization conducting public policy exchanges between China and the United States. In the 1980s the Committee focused on the cultivation of sustained, thoughtful interchange between influential Chinese and Americans. The importance of maintaining these channels of communication is increasingly evident as global and local interests increasingly intersect.

Editor's note: The entire statement can be found at: <https://www.ncuscr.org/about/history>

— Special Section on Early Travel to China —

While we wait for travel to return to normal, the following articles help us recall what China was like for foreign tourists in the decades when the country was just starting to open up.

Climbing the Great Wall, Playing Frisbee and Yearning for Hamburgers

By Levin Allen

I have a wide variety of memories of my 1976 USCPFA-sponsored trip to China—being surprised at the steepness of the Great Wall, attracting a crowd while throwing a frisbee with my friends and having a deep craving for a hamburger after weeks of Chinese food.

I was one of 19 high school students from Philadelphia, mostly African Americans, who traveled to China in late May and early June of the Bicentennial Year with three of our teachers. My social studies teacher, who went on the trip, was the one who told me about this opportunity. I believe that one reason I was selected was that I had good grades in school.

We had an overnight stay in Japan, and a few days in Hong Kong on the way to China. My first cross-cultural experiences were in Japan, where I enjoyed watching an entertainment program on Japanese TV, even though I couldn't understand the language. I used gestures to explain to a

bass player who was performing in the hotel restaurant that I also played that instrument. He offered to let me play, but I declined.

At the next stop, in Hong Kong, we visited the Aberdeen fishing village, where people lived on small boats—four or five family members crammed into a space the size of a small studio apartment, with no plumbing. I also remember riding the Star Ferry across the harbor, seeing double-decker buses and noticing chickens, ducks and other meat hanging unrefrigerated in storefronts.

From Hong Kong, we took a train into China, where we visited five cities, including Beijing, Nanjing and Tianjin. In the Beijing area, we visited the tourist sites, such as Tiananmen Square, the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, as well as schools, department stores and a Minority Institute. At the

schools, we saw all the students exercising together outside, like one huge gym class. I also remember all the bikes—there were thousands of bikes everywhere—especially in Beijing.

Frisbee Attracts a Crowd

One of the most memorable events in China was when some of us went outside of the hotel to play frisbee. We started gliding it between us, about 20 yards



Levin Allen (third from left), two other students and a teacher, Douglas Weinik (right) on the Great Wall. Photos courtesy of Levin Allen.

apart, and drew a crowd of spectators that just kept growing. I recall the looks of amazement on their faces, and them pointing. Police or guards came to keep the crowd back; however, no one asked us to stop playing. This stood out to me. In Philly, the police would have told us to break it up and stop causing a public disturbance. By the time we eventually stopped playing, the crowd was huge.

Continued on next page



The author's Bicentennial passport, with Chinese stamps.

Climbing the Great Wall *(cont.)*

Another memory, which seemed odd to us at the time, was when one of the girls from our group cut the pant legs off her jeans, because it was hot, and threw the pant legs in the trash in her hotel room. Somehow, the pant legs found their way to us in the next city—they were apparently collected and forwarded by the hotel—because the hotel staff was not sure if they were intentionally discarded.

And of course, who could forget visiting the Great Wall of China? Although we visited on a fairly gray day, I could still see well off into the distance and was amazed at the length of the wall. I also thought that it was interesting that the wall was not all flat, as a traditional wall would be, but rather steep at some sections—I think mostly due to it following the terrain. I also recall briefly speaking with a gentleman who I believe said that he was the ambassador from Malta. I remember thinking to myself later that it's not every day that one gets to chat with a Maltese ambassador on the Great Wall of China—it remains one of my fondest memories.

We drew a crowd of spectators that just kept growing.

On many occasions, people would stop and stare at us and actually applaud as we passed by, especially in the smaller towns we visited. It gave me a mixed feeling of being a celebrity and being an oddity (similar to my seeing a group of green-skinned people with springs for hair and speaking a strange language touring my town). But their responses were always with a sense of respect and genuine delight.

Even though the weather was hot, our main beverage was hot tea, with the leaves still in it, and no sugar. At first, I found it a bit odd and hard to drink, but over time I became used to it. There was no Pepsi, McDonald's, Burger King or any other Western franchise in China at that time. In fact, the only bottled cold beverage that was available was orange soda, with lots of particulate matter floating in it. It was very sweet and refreshing, so I drank it whenever it was available.



A propaganda billboard in 1976 China.

Dying for a Hamburger

The food in China was delicious, but after two weeks of eating nothing but Chinese food I missed hamburgers, hot-dogs and fries. Actually, I didn't just miss them—I craved them, was dying for them. My first meal when we got back to Hong Kong was a milkshake, pancakes and hot-dogs. Also, for the most part, there was no flatware available to us in China, so we became very proficient with chopsticks.

We boated on Lake Taihu near Wuxi on a hot, tranquil day. This is where I

began to memorize a speech that I was to give, in Chinese, during the end of our time in China during a get-together with our hosts. One of the guides helped me memorize the script, with the correct pronunciations and inflections. I studied very hard over the next several days. I still remember the opening sentence to this day, although I am no longer recall what it means. Also, to this day, I don't know if I spoke correctly or made a complete ass of myself.

The huge dinner for our group near



Eating nothing but Chinese food for two weeks was a new experience for the group.

the end of the trip featured Peking duck, which was delicious and filling. I recall the chef coming out of the kitchen with four golden brown ducks on a platter, walking around the table with them, and returning to the kitchen. He came back with the ducks carved and ready to serve.

The trip to China, Hong Kong, and Japan was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been chosen to attend. I truly believe that witnessing the hospitality and friendliness of so many different people impacted me for life. The sights, sounds, smells, and tastes were so very different and captivating, and I think that knowing at such an early age that such differences exist contributed to my development.

My home décor has been Asian-themed for most of my adult life. Also, in my career as an information technology manager and director, I always remembered the diligent efforts that were made to accommodate our group. I have always included these traits, such as focusing on client satisfaction, in my management style. I even wrote a book on the subject: *The Art of IT Service Management*, which encompasses a good deal of Asian business best practices. I have also included the Japanese philosophy of hospitality, called *omotenashi*, in my staff training.

Decades after the trip, I still remember how to say a few phrases in Chinese, such as “What time is it? What is your name? My name is. How much does this cost?” But instead of studying Chinese, I started learning Japanese years ago and reached an intermediary level. I even had a trip to Japan planned for me and my daughter, but it was cancelled due to Covid. 友



Levin Allen is a retired IT professional who also enjoys writing poetry, playing music and doing photography. He lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. More details are available at <https://www.levinallen.net/>



Children dance and sing for the visitors.



The foreigners were an unusual attraction for children.



The American students, guides and interpreters.

The Day I was Toasted by Zhou Enlai

By Richard Pendleton

The phone on my desk at the Harvard Medical School library rang one afternoon in 1971. I answered it and heard Alex, a former colleague and old friend, blurt out, “Do you want to go to China?”

China? I mused. Earlier that year, the U.S. had ended its longtime ban on U.S. citizens traveling to the People’s Republic of China, but such trips were still extremely rare, and China itself had granted few visas. The proposed trip was organized by a local politically left New England family. Alex was instrumental in pulling together the delegation. I said yes, and Alex gave me the preliminary details.

The delegation met at the home of one of the organizers. We introduced ourselves to one another and shared a sumptuous buffet. Speculation by the American anti-war segment was that Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai wanted to bring together all parties involved in the Vietnam War. Besides inviting a sizeable U.S. government contingent, Zhou wanted a group of young American activists to attend the summit. Zhou’s plan led to the formation of what came to be known among our Chinese hosts as the “young American friends.” We were not all young, but all of us opposed U.S. policy in Vietnam.

The New England segment departed during the last week of September 1971. The entire entourage came together in the Pan American terminal of Kennedy airport. The Pan American World Airways route included stops in Rome, Athens, Tel Aviv, Tehran, Bangkok and Hong Kong.

Our delegation was met at the Hong Kong airport by a half dozen smiling people from the Chinese People’s Association

for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC). Our group was black, white, young and senior, thereby making us easy for them to spot.

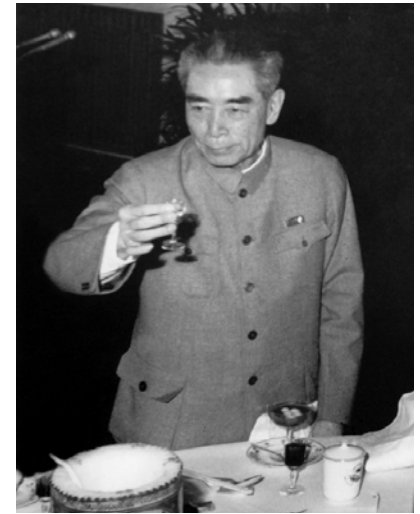
Our hosts took us into the city and checked us into a no-frills hostel. In the morning, after some sightseeing, they escorted us to the rail terminal to catch an afternoon train north to Guangzhou.

We boarded the train at Lo Wu, near the border. Foreign travelers were required to show passports to Chinese guards. We were surprised at the quality of their spoken English. On the train, when people learned that we were from the U.S., we were showered with smiles and greetings. The countryside on both sides of the Hong Kong-Guangzhou rail line was solid green with crops: cabbage, corn, collards and cucumbers.

A small delegation from the CPAFFC met us at the Guangzhou railway station. We were escorted to a plain hostel. As we ate a midday meal, someone from our group blurted out, “I think I just saw Huey Newton pass our table.” We asked our guide if it were possible that Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party, nemesis of the U.S. government, could be in China.

The aide checked his notebook, tapped a page with his pen and said to all of us in general, “Newton, yes.” We bounced out of our chairs, caught up to him and his companions and offered a collective greeting. It appeared that the Panthers’ invite came from the same source. I asked him how, in the face of being pursued by U.S. police, did he wind up in China. “Where there is a will, there is a way,” he replied.

We were flown up to Beijing on a Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) airliner. The main Beijing terminal was sparse and there were few passengers. The city was festooned with lights and banners in celebration of the forthcoming summit. Our hotel was more classy than previous accommodations. The guides advised us to stay close to our lodging because of the possibility of a last-minute invitation. There was indeed such an invitation, and we boarded a bus that took us to the Great



Zhou Enlai at a banquet in 1972.

At the Great Hall, our group was led down a long, subterranean walkway. There was a pedestrian jam and flashes from a group of photographers.

Someone was shaking my hand in the wash of flashes emanating from the cameras. Zhou Enlai!—it was Zhou Enlai, the premier of China, who was shaking my hand (along with the rest of our group).

The guides escorted us to a special, very large round table. Waitstaff delivered delicacies, which we were encouraged to sample. Political, academic and diplomatic groups were at tables around the hall. Coming toward us was a phalanx of Chinese officials. At the center of this body was, again, Zhou. He held up a shot-type glass in his left hand. One of our guides whispered: “Stand up and join the premier in a toast.” After knocking back the clear, volatile liquor, it was explained that we had consumed Maotai, a 90-proof mix made from sorghum.

Presentations were delivered on the importance of people-to-people meetings as well as international summits. The Chinese side was interested in the high level of anti-war sentiment among the American populace. Americans were taken by the sophistication demonstrated by China’s invitation to Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon.

I will never forget the time I was toasted by Premier Zhou Enlai. I returned to Boston and helped found the Boston chapter of the USCPFA. 友



Richard Pendleton at a USCPFA convention in 2013.

Richard Pendleton is a lifelong friend of China and past president of USCPFA’s New England chapter.

Chickens on a Plane: A 1983 Travel Adventure in China

By David Fraser

Chickens were running up and down the airplane aisle. They were perching on tray tables, failing to buckle their seat belts low across their, um, laps.

"They seem to be kind of out of control," said Mom, buckling in for the flight to Beijing.

"Welcome to China," I said.

Minutes later, with tray tables not in an upright position and cigarettes fogging up the entire cabin, we took off from Guangzhou, heading north. It was not entirely clear to me why the plane was full of clucking, non-paying passengers. There did seem to be plenty of farmers aboard, judging from the array of conical broadbrimmed hats.

Today, a visitor to China can easily make travel arrangements online, book flights on modern fowl-free airliners, land at impressive new airports and stay in luxury hotels. But this was 1983, when China's travel industry was just getting off the ground, so to speak.

I was in my late 20s, shortly to begin working as a copy editor at the Reuters Asia headquarters in Hong Kong. My mom, who had never been to China, is an orderly sort of person, but was also adaptable enough to enjoy a trip to a fascinating country that did not yet have a smooth-running travel system.

She had flown into Tokyo, with plans to

fly to Beijing from there, and I met her at Narita Airport. But the official Chinese international travel bureau in Japan told us flatly that we could not visit China unless we were with a tour group.

While that was generally true in those days, I argued in Mandarin, "I just spent the summer traveling around the country by myself," and waved my passport and visa. Mom added in English that her son was a good traveler, spoke Chinese, and could be relied upon to take care of his aged mother (she was under 60, an age that I no longer consider old, now that I have passed it.) Those arguments failed.

"We'll find another way," I said. We flew Cathay Pacific to Hong Kong and took a cab to the fabled Chungking Mansions, home to very-low-budget housing for backpackers, as well as home to many small businesses—legal and otherwise. At the counter we obtained Chinese visas, train tickets to Guangzhou, and plane tickets to Beijing. Within hours, we and the chickens were airborne.

In Beijing, we stayed at the utilitarian Temple of Heaven Sportsman's Inn, a block



David Fraser and his mother, Betty Fraser.

or so from the iconic cobalt-blue Temple of Heaven. At the hotel we shared breakfast tables with the Chinese national women's basketball team and its male coach. Even sitting, the players towered over Mom (5 foot 3) and me (5 foot 10). They ate twice what we did and were friendly, mostly wanting to know if the American mother was being well looked after by her son. She said yes, but noted that I walked too slowly for her.

Try to Act More Elderly

Mom is naturally friendly and vivacious, and had to be reminded frequently that Chinese culture values senior citizens. "Try to act more elderly," I told her before any and all encounters with hotel clerks and other gatekeepers. "If you want to get things done, you need to look much more decrepit."

When we ventured out in Beijing, we took cabs. But one day I decided that the urban experience abroad—my brother and sister and I were raised in New York City—demanded that we share the daily routine most Chinese endured of commuting by bus.

Continued on next page



The historic Ruijin Hotel in Shanghai.

1983 Travel (continued)

“No one is lining up,” Mom pointed out, as we waited for a bus. “It’s everyone for themselves,” I explained. A packed bus pulled in. Thirty seconds later we were left stranded on the street along with a handful of unfortunates who had also failed to board.

One of the great things about local transport in China during the 1980s was that another bus would come along shortly. This time, we pressed forward in the small crowd, only to once again find ourselves watching the bus speed away without us.



Foreign Exchange Certificates from the 1980s.

“There was an old lady,” Mom said. “She looked so frail I was afraid to push.”

I adopted a stern tone. “If you want to get on the bus, you need to use your elbows. That old lady was just fine, and she’s on the bus.” With round three, we finally made it. Mom promptly handed the conductor a hundred-yuan bill in the special *waihui* foreign exchange certificate currency that, in those days, was what you received when you exchanged foreign money for renminbi. Mom held up two fingers to indicate she was paying for both of us.

The conductor looked momentarily stunned at the large bill. Rather than try to make change for a four-*fen* (cent) fare, he smiled, handed Mom back her money, and waved us aboard.

Always an intrepid traveler, by the time we were settled in the baroque Mao Zedong suite (I kid you not) of the elegant Ruijin Hotel in Shanghai, Mom was ready to solo. Translating non-stop for a week had left me irritable and snappish, and she knew I needed a day off. I passed her a sheet of paper with the name of the hotel written in Chinese, which she could hand to someone in case she got lost.

I was a bit worried about abandoning the “aged parent,” but Mom had a rather

successful day window shopping along Nanjing Road, a major commercial avenue, although the range of items on display was minuscule compared with what’s sold in the upscale shops that today line that thoroughfare.

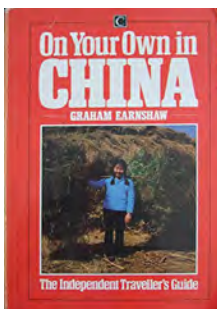
By dinnertime, she had returned to our suite, tired and dusty but triumphant, with her arms full of bags. My hope that her solo journey would go well had been fulfilled. Mom staggered to an armchair whose arms were draped with dainty antimacassars.

“Well,” she said, “it has been *quite* an afternoon. I stopped in a number of places, with about a hundred Chinese onlookers looking on.” She began pulling things from the shopping bags—little cloisonné trinkets, some pieces of exquisite silk, a couple of Mao caps for allegedly communist-leaning relatives.

“How much was all this?” I asked. “Are you sure you didn’t get taken for a ride?”

“Oh, no, absolutely not,” Mom said. “When I got to the checkout counter of the Friendship Store, the man went through everything twice. And he showed me the total by holding up his abacus for me to see, so there was no mistake.” 友

David Fraser recently retired after 20 years as managing editor of Asian Survey, an academic journal of Asian studies published by the University of California Press. He has a Ph.D. in East Asian History from the University of California at Berkeley, and an undergraduate degree in Asian Studies from Columbia University. He has worked as a journalist in Beijing, Hong Kong, Taipei, San Francisco and Hackensack, New Jersey.



Independent Traveller's Guide

In 1984, when this book was published, most foreigners traveled in groups. Graham Earnshaw, a journalist, wrote *On Your Own in China* on how to travel independently.

A Claustrophobic Bus Ride

I started traveling to China in 1987, first as a backpacker, later as the wife of a man from Fujian province.

My most memorable bus experience was in the early ‘90s. My husband and I took an overnight bus from Fujian to Guangzhou. It had bunk beds, stacked—I think—three high. Of course, the coveted spots were the bottom bunks. By the time we boarded, those spots were all taken.

I ended up on the tippy-top bunk, the ceiling and lights just inches from my nose. That was when I discovered what claustrophobia means.

—Jana McBurney-Lin,
South Bay Chapter

New U.S. Ambassador Arrives in Beijing

Nicholas Burns, the new U.S. ambassador to China, arrived in Beijing in March. The post had been vacant since Terry Branstad stepped down in October 2020, news agencies noted.

Burns is a career diplomat, former State Department spokesman, ambassador to NATO and leading academic, teaching most recently at the Harvard Kennedy School and serving as a foreign policy adviser to Joe Biden’s presidential campaign, according to the Associated Press.

The U.S. State Department website notes that Burns went to China in 1988 with Secretary of State George Shultz and in 1989 with President George H.W. Bush. He also visited China several times as State Department spokesman.

“As Under Secretary, he worked with the Chinese government on issues as diverse as Afghanistan, United Nations Sanctions against Iran, North Korea and U.S. policy in the Indo-Pacific,” the State Department said, adding, “At the Aspen Strategy Group, he organized a policy dialogue with the Chinese government’s Central Party School. He has taught, written and spoken frequently on current U.S.-China relations.” 友



Nicholas Burns

Travel in Scenic China Before the Starbucks Dynasty

By John Marienthal

In Chinese, one way to describe a scenic place is “*you shan, you shui*” 有山有水 (has mountains, has water). More than 20 years ago, I went on a group trip to popular scenic travel destinations—Hangzhou, known for West Lake; Guilin, known for the Li River and karst mountains, and parts of Yunnan province.

It was 1998, and while teaching seventh grade at a public school and renting a room on the campus of East China Normal University in Shanghai, I joined six foreign college students, who were studying Chinese, on a spring break trip.

Guilin is known for its mild winters and, because it is only a few hundred miles from Hong Kong, it was already accustomed to accommodating foreigners.

There was one American, Jack, two Canadians and their Korean girlfriends, and a French woman. By the time we returned to Shanghai, we had traveled by train, bus, mini-bus, sleeper bus, bicycles and boat. The 1998–1999 school year was the first in which there were many American and Canadian students studying in China. They were able to join the large number of European students and Hong Kong students traveling in China on their own—not with official tour groups.

Leaving Shanghai, we discovered that there was a real American restaurant—Tony Roma’s steakhouse, next to the train station. We were pleasantly surprised that it accepted American credit cards. At that time, there were no Chinese credit cards and few ATMs. To this day many restaurants and two- and three-star hotels in China don’t take foreign credit cards. So, when we traveled, we carried a lot of cash. Even at this time there were still only one-way tickets available, and you could not buy them more than three days in advance.

We were waiting to board the train to Guilin when a young Chinese woman came up to me and asked in perfect English, “Can you watch my bag for me, please, while I run to the bathroom?” She later saw us on the train and introduced herself as half of a two-woman travel company. By the time we left Guilin, my American friend Jack was smitten, and by



Dining at Mama Fu’s in Lijiang, Yunnan.

the time we returned to Shanghai they moved in together.

\$6-a-Night Hotel

We had heard from other travelers that Guilin was expensive, and Yangshuo, 40 miles away, was a better place for backpackers. We took a bus there from Guilin, found a hotel for six U.S. dollars per person, and went looking for food.

Yangshuo had a whole street of restaurants, run by Hong Kong people, that catered to Westerners. For our 20-year-olds, after seven months of eating Chinese food, English language menus with pancakes, waffles and granola looked good. There was even a French restaurant with real coffee. In those pre-Starbucks days, Shanghai only had instant coffee.

Yangshuo did not have a lot of Chinese tourists then. Those we saw had come from Guilin by boat and were returning to Guilin.

We took a river raft trip up the Li River, rented mountain bicycles for a dollar a day and rode past rice paddies to a nearby village. We climbed a karst mountain and climbed down ladders inside the mountain to see an underground waterfall. There was a rubber boat down there, and you could pay for a trip on an underground river underneath the mountains. But we were all too claustrophobic to ride

through a three-mile, dark tunnel 100 feet below ground.

The young couples in our group took romantic walks by the river and watched the fisherman fishing at night. After a few days we were off to Yunnan province to see Kunming, Dali and Lijiang, and hike through Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Ten years later, I returned to Yangshuo. It had turned into a giant tourist city with thousands of Chinese and foreign tourists. One street catered to foreigners and one, with cuisine from various regions in China, catered to Chinese tourists. The town had become known as an artist and writers’ colony for foreigners, and there was a language school there for foreigners to learn Chinese. 友

John Marienthal is a member of the USCPFA South Bay chapter.



My Travels, From Fourth-Class Boat Seats to Hard-Sleeper Train Bunks

By John Marienthal

Since my first trip to China in 1974, I have been lucky enough to visit every province, from Heilongjiang to Xinjiang, from Inner Mongolia to Hainan. I (in 1974, 1979 and 1984) went on trips arranged by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries' (You-xie), in which every detail was taken care of for me.

In those early years, China discouraged individual travel. Many areas were restricted, and some hotels did not allow foreign guests. For me, though, the primary obstacle to traveling on my own was my Chinese fluency—or lack of it.

In June 1989, however, I headed up from Hong Kong to Shihezi, Xinjiang on my own to teach a summer course at an agricultural college where I had taught a few years earlier. I worried that I wouldn't know how to find transportation, food or lodging on my own. But fortunately, starting in the early 1980s, books by Lonely Planet, Fodor's and USCPFA offered guidance. These guides created a kind of pathway for other travelers, like me, allowing us to interact with other English-speaking people, and at times even find some Western food.



Traveling on a small bus over a wooden bridge. Photos courtesy of John Marienthal.

Line Up for Return Tickets

Still, there were some aspects of life that the guidebooks couldn't help with. One was tickets. Travel agencies would try to sell you a high-priced tour. Your alternative? Wait in line at the airport or train station.

Until the late 1990s, you could only purchase one-way tickets. This could not be done by clicking on the internet or talking to a person on the phone—only by waiting in a long line. In fact, as soon as you arrived at your destination, the first thing you needed to do was stand in line again to buy your return ticket. If you got lucky, the station had a window with special staff for foreigners. Back then, there were discount prices for foreign teachers, students and Chinese government workers for tickets, hotels, restaurants and parks.

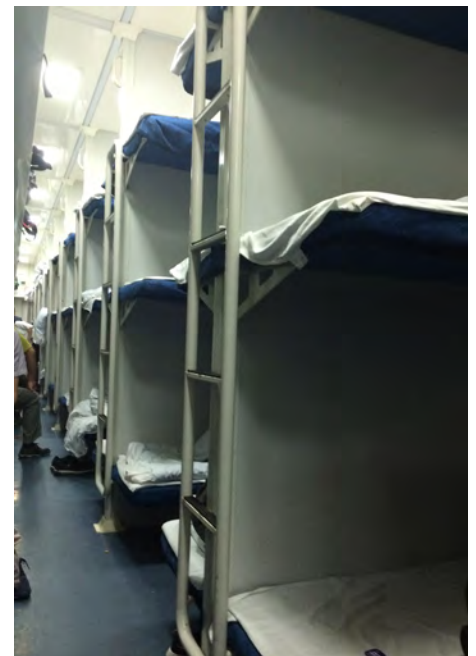
Of all my travels in China, I've most enjoyed riding on trains. Many foreigners have traveled in second-class sleepers, but my favorite was the six-bunk hard sleepers. They are in an open bay with a three-deck bunk bed on each side. During the day, all three passengers sit on the bottom bunk. Foreigners rarely travel in this section, but it's a great way to meet people. My least favorite were the really long-distance trips on hard

seats, with 24-hour blazing lights and squat-style toilets. But even this could be worse. China still sells "Standing Tickets," meaning you stand in the aisles or sit on your bags. 友

John Marienthal wrote this with editing help from Jana McBurney-Lin. They are members of USCPFA's South Bay chapter.



John Marienthal on a sleeper bus.



A hard-sleeper compartment on a train.

Punching a Monk in the Stomach, and Other Adventures in Early Travel in China

By Archie McKee

I have vivid memories of my first trip to China in the early to mid-1980s, at a time when the sight of “foreign devils” was unusual. We entered the PRC from Hong Kong by train. I remember riding along, maybe at 10 mph, seeing small shanties along the tracks, and people everywhere. So many people.

In Guangzhou we were put up in the magnificent White Swan Hotel. We went to Zhengzhou, in Henan province, the next day by overnight train in a comfortable “soft sleeper” compartment—with bunk beds on each side, a small table with a thermos of boiling hot water and a great view from the window.

There were small farms everywhere, rice patties, small towns and villages and, again, people at every stop—lots of them. Everything was lush green.

In Zhengzhou, we were greeted by a team of hosts and taken to a massive, older Soviet-style hotel.

Watching the City Come Alive

The next day, I was up before dawn and took a walk out on the streets. I love to watch as a city comes alive in the early morning. Nobody around at first, then a couple of bicycles, then more, then groups out doing their morning exercises, then more bicycles, lots of them. I stayed on back streets, so I failed to see the bus traffic build, although there were lots of people walking. No cars, none.

Arriving back at the hotel I found that our hostess was a bit upset. Apparently, foreigners were not supposed to walk around unaccompanied. But I repeated that routine each place we stayed on that 30-day trip and, since I am writing this, I apparently always found my way back.

We spent several days in the Zhengzhou area, visiting Dengfeng, home of Songshan Mountain and its famous Shaolin temple, monastery and monks. It is known as the birthplace of *kung fu* and Zen Buddhism.

We attended a martial arts demonstration and, being the only young male in the group (I was in my 30s) I was invited to participate. I was asked to strike a

monk in the stomach as hard as I could. Surprisingly, his stomach was as soft as a pillow—almost like a marshmallow. I am sure the expression on my face showed my surprise. I think that is one of the things I love about China: So many surprises, every day.

And then, on to Luoyang and its ancient tombs, the Yellow River; Longmen, with more than 2,000 caves and tens of

That is one of the things I love about China: So many surprises, every day.

thousands of statues ranging from one inch to 57 feet; and Kaifeng, an ancient capital of China.

Bald Airplane Tires

I remember walking up the steps to board the plane at the Zhengzhou airport for the flight to Beijing. I, and others, looked down in horror to see that the tires were bald. I looked toward a retired TWA pilot ahead, noted that he saw them too, and continued following him up the stairs.

The flight was uneventful, in an older Soviet-style plane with the interior ribs showing and rough seats. The retired pilot, I and a few others had a good laugh that night over dinner.

The hotel in Beijing was right on a main drag, and my morning walk showed that Beijing was modernizing faster than the rest of the country.

Everyone still asleep at first, then a few buses, then bicycles, then pedestrian traffic, and the number of each and the pace of things picked up too. Cars, very few, and all I saw were the large black official ones, no private cars that I could

tell. Official taxis of course, and the bicycle traffic, which was like a tide coming in.

I could go on, but suffice it to say I have lived in China (one year each in Qingdao and Shanghai) and have traveled there with USCPFA, private tours and at the government’s invitation 10 additional times. Every trip is different.

Many trains are now ultra high-speed, airlines are some of the most modern on the planet, roads have been vastly improved, luxury hotels are everywhere, and the building boom boggles the mind.

China has truly come into the modern world, and it has been a pleasure to have been lucky enough to spend all that time there. The government guesthouses many of us stayed at are gone, as are most of the old hotels, train stations and so much more. Some lament the changes, but China and its citizens are tired of being considered a Third World country. The progress they have made is hard to comprehend. 友

Archie McKee lives in Roswell, Georgia, with his wife of 55 years, Grace. He recently resigned from USCPFA membership due to health reasons. He and Grace have been members since the early 1980s. He was a member of the National Board, Southern Region president, a Southern Region board member, and held various offices in the Sarasota, Florida, chapter. He can be contacted at archie.mckee@hotmail.com.



Monks at Shaolin.

In China, the Price Was Right, but Not for All

Editor's note: This article by Mike Revzin appeared in the Los Angeles Times in 1988. It describes pricing policies that were in effect at the time, which required foreign travelers to pay more than Chinese. These policies are no longer in use.

“I think they charged me more because I’m a foreigner,” I said to a Chinese friend in Shanghai after I paid an unusually high price for a simple meal at a tiny, privately run restaurant.

My friend looked perplexed. “Of course they did,” he said.

The owner of the restaurant was merely following the example set by the Chinese government. In China, government-controlled prices of airplane and train tickets and hotel rooms are determined by race.

Foreigners who sign up for group tours are seldom aware of this pricing system because everyone in the group is paying the same price.

Foreigners who are not of Chinese ancestry pay the most. Overseas Chinese, such as Americans of Chinese descent, get cheaper prices in order to promote cultural ties. Chinese citizens and Chinese visitors from Hong Kong and Macao pay the least.

Better Service

In some cases, higher prices are warranted by better service. For example, foreigners joining a government-owned China Travel Service group in Hong Kong pay \$892 for a six-day tour of Beijing and Xian (the city known for the terra cotta warriors).

Hong Kong Chinese can take a similar eight-day tour for only \$479. But foreign tour groups usually stay at better hotels and include an English-speaking guide and some Western meals. And when airplanes or hotels are overbooked, those paying the top prices get priority.

In other cases, different prices are charged for the same service. On domestic flights in China a foreigner pays full fare, an overseas Chinese pays 80% and a Hong Kong Chinese pays 60%.

A foreigner would pay 438 yuan (\$118 U.S.) for a one-way ticket between Beijing and Guangzhou, a Chinese American would pay 350 yuan (\$94) and a Hong

Kong Chinese would pay 270 yuan (\$72).

On the express train from Hong Kong to Guangzhou a foreigner is charged the equivalent of \$23.71, a Chinese American sitting next to him would pay \$19.23 and a Hong Kong Chinese would ride for \$12.82.

Even if foreigners were willing to sign up for a Hong Kong Chinese tour conducted in Cantonese, they would be charged extra.

For example, a seven-day trip from Hong Kong to Guangzhou, Beijing, Xian and Shanghai would cost Hong Kong Chinese the equivalent of \$256.

A foreigner would be charged an extra \$89. Part of that is to cover the cost of a visa, which is not required of Hong Kong Chinese, and part covers the higher price of the foreigner’s airline ticket.

Hotels, Restaurants Too

Some hotels charge foreigners more than Hong Kong Chinese for identical rooms. And some restaurants charge foreigners more than Chinese for identical meals.

On one occasion, I wanted to treat some Chinese friends to dinner in Beijing. “We’ll pay, and you can pay us back tomorrow,” one of them said. “If you pay the bill, they’ll charge you twice as much for the same meal.”

China justifies the different prices by the fact that most foreigners earn salaries that are tremendously higher than Chinese wages. For example, the average urban worker in China earns a mere \$27 a month and lives in government-subsidized housing. But some foreigners object to this reasoning. They argue that no other countries base prices on a person’s race or income, and they say that foreigners are not responsible for the low wages in China.

An American woman living in Hong Kong said that she once had to stand during a six-hour ride on an overcrowded train, yet she still had to pay substantially more than the Chinese. She also said that many Hong Kong Chinese, who are charged less, earn salaries much higher than hers.

On the other hand, just because Chinese citizens can afford airplane tickets doesn’t mean that they can buy one. Because there is a shortage of tickets, the Chinese

citizen must either be on official business or have connections with someone who can buy a ticket.

Another Inequality

While foreigners are upset about paying higher prices, Chinese complain about another type of inequality. In most Chinese cities a Chinese citizen cannot even enter a major hotel except on official business.

The ambiguous price system creates an atmosphere ripe for cheating. One American college student was told by the driver of a hotel van in Beijing that a ride to the Summer Palace would cost 40 yuan (about \$10 at that time). When the student complained, the driver lowered the price to two yuan.

The same student was told by a clerk at China’s state-owned CAAC airline that only first-class tickets were available for his flight. The student insisted on an economy ticket and, after everyone boarded, there were many empty seats in that section.

Other solo travelers say that checking into Chinese hotels involves tedious bargaining. At first the front desk clerk will say that no rooms are available. Later he will admit that there are some rooms, but at an outrageously high price. After negotiations, a room will be offered at a fair price.

Ability to Pay

Chinese officials insist that ability to pay—not race—is the factor in determining prices. But China Travel Service seems to indicate otherwise.

An American in Hong Kong went to China Travel Service to buy tickets for a group tour of China for a British friend, the friend’s Hong Kong Chinese wife and their child.

The clerk said that because the wife was Hong Kong Chinese her ticket would be cheaper than her husband’s.

“What about their child?” the American asked.

“A child’s ticket is 60 percent of an adult’s,” the clerk replied.

“Sixty percent of which adult’s ticket, the father’s or the mother’s?” the American asked.

The reply: “Who does the child look like?” 友

Travel Out of Your Comfort Zone for a World of New Experiences

By Zach Bomberger

In 2000, China's President Jiang Zemin told the CBS program *60 Minutes*, "I want to promote the mutual understanding between two peoples," underscoring why he agreed to be interviewed. I, in my own way, also wish to foster mutual understanding between people of different backgrounds. As citizens of the world, don't we have a responsibility to do that?

I'm now 27 years old and am working in new media and education for a Chinese tech company in Beijing, where I'm immersed in a different culture and meet people from all over the world. That's quite a change from the small, conservative ranch community where I grew up in Kansas. It wasn't until I attended Kansas State University that I was exposed to a wider variety of people. That exposure, and my willingness to try things that were out of my comfort zone, led to many new experiences.

In college, I became friends with a student from Beijing in my first semester. That led me to study Chinese, which led me, in 2018, to move to Beijing. Due to the pandemic, I have not traveled back to the U.S. since then.

In China, I moved four times, changed my profession three times, took a sleeper train from Beijing to Shanghai, got tattoos and pierced ears, participated in Chinese weddings, traveled to several parts of China, fell in and out of love and became friends with people from everywhere from Texas to Guangdong province. All of this happened because I was willing to step into a world that was 180 degrees different from what I knew growing up. If I hadn't done that, I would have missed out on so much.

Along the way I have met some amazing people. One is Old Liu, the affectionate name for a 60-year-old woman who worked at the school where I taught English in 2018. She was one of the first at my workplace to know that I am gay. She was atypical because of how supportive she was about it. Older Chinese are usually quite conservative, and many LGBT folks in China avoid discussing their sexualities with them. However, Old Liu has been one of my strongest supporters and, in her words, became my Chinese mom.

Have you ever had surgery in another country? I have, and without Alex Li, a

Beijinger who had studied in the U.S., I wouldn't have had gotten through the process as smoothly as I did. I met him by chance, but immediately knew he and I would become best friends.

I have also gotten to know a young woman from Texas. Never would I have guessed that we would do everything from attending each other's tattoo sessions to discussing U.S.-China cultural differences. I even attended the virtual wedding of her twin brother.

These are examples of why I urge you to not avoid situations where you can connect with another human being. You just might become friends for a lifetime. One of the wonders of the world is sharing your views, even if you disagree. In the past year, when I would start a conversation with friends or strangers, I would admit up front that we may each have biases about the subject. When you do this, you open yourself up to new opinions, ideas and perspectives. This is when you start to grow.

I never cease to be surprised at the number of opportunities I have to connect with foreigners and Chinese alike. I believe most of us say we're willing to meet different people, but, more often than not, we chicken out.

Once I became willing to embarrass myself and speak Chinese, I realized that it's less nerve-racking than it seems. Once I started conversing with the locals, that's when I started to get the real China experience I was searching for. I find it quite ironic that many foreigners travel thousands of miles to China, but aren't keen to opening themselves up to what the country has to offer in terms of the people, food and culture.

Isn't that the point of going abroad—to expand your horizons and step outside of your comfort zone?

I may not be perfect, but I more often than not take chances to meet and talk with local Chinese because there is so much that we can learn from one another.



Zach Bomberger (front row, right) with internet celebrities at a Chinese cuisine event.

In January 2019, one of my close friends from Hebei province invited me to join his family in celebrating Chinese New Year. That's like being asked by an American family to celebrate Thanksgiving or Christmas with them, so it's a chance I wasn't going to pass up.

I took a train to his hometown, met his parents and friends, and we enjoyed the holiday together. We watched the Spring Festival gala on TV, had several meals and lots of drinks, and shot off fireworks. I am forever grateful to him, his friends and family for giving me the opportunity to celebrate such a special holiday with them, as a guest in their country.

My advice: When you find yourself in a different country, take advantage of the opportunities to grow and experience new things. Make yourself uncomfortable.

I don't regret my decision to move to China. It was one of the most difficult, but also one of the easiest, decisions I ever made. It wasn't easy to leave my family, but I would have missed out on a whole new world of experiences and people who have made my life more fruitful.

I hope that, when an opportunity comes that you've been waiting for, you open yourself up to all the possibilities and are willing to be uncomfortable—because you never know what is awaiting you. 友

This article is from a presentation that Zach Bomberger was scheduled to deliver at the USCPFA National Convention. Due to technical difficulties in joining the virtual convention from China, it was instead rewritten for this USCR article.

USCPFA Member Wouldn't Trade His Experience for All the Tea in China

How Mike Connelly Started a Tea Import Company With His Family

By Mike Connelly

How did my family and I come to start the Little Red Cup Tea Company, a business in Brunswick, Maine, that imports tea from China? How did we get such a deep interest in China?

Where does anything start? In the 1960s when my grandparents would take me to have Chinese food near their home in Fort Worth, Texas, at the Blue Star Inn? They served classic, I realized many years later, Americanized Cantonese cuisine that I adored.

Or a dozen years later, when I took my date to a neighborhood Chinese restaurant in Chicago where the waiters got into a fight—at our table—over the correct way to fold mu shu pancakes?

Maybe in the following decade, when a middle-aged graduate school classmate from a Chinese television station became a fast friend, and opened a completely different and far more personal window to China.

But my wife, Rachel, thinks the whole thing started with my taking up (Mandarin) Chinese in 1986, the year our first son, Martin, was born. I was going to be the primary care provider for our son, and wanted one intellectually engaging diversion a day. I settled on a Chinese class at Bowdoin College. I took first-year college Chinese one year, then again. I took second-year Chinese for a year, then another. Then, in my fifth year of study, I took third-year Chinese.

At that point, while considering options for my wife's first sabbatical, she got the notion that we should go to China so my spoken Chinese could improve. A year-long process in the pre-internet age found us, in late summer of 1992, heading to Beijing with Martin and his one-year-old younger brother, Louis, where we each had jobs waiting—Rachel's at People's University, and I at the same television station where my friend and graduate school classmate was now a middle manager.

China, in the early 1990s, still had one foot firmly in the past, and one somewhat



Mike Connelly in a tea field with a tea picker and factory general manager. Photos courtesy of Mike Connelly.

tentatively in the future. I remember taking a photo, behind the Number One Building at the complex where we lived, of an old man wearing *bu xie* (traditional, flat-soled, cotton shoes) and what amounted to rags, pushing a wheelbarrow of cement north, and passing him walking south, a younger man in polished leather shoes, wearing an Armani suit and talking on a cell phone.

You know what? We need to start a tea company.

We came for a year, but stayed for a year and a half. When we returned to America in December of 1993 with newborn Number Three Son, Patrick, two-and-a-half-year-old Louis spoke more Chinese than English, and seven-year-old Martin was fluent in Chinese, on par with his second grade Chinese classmates. My Chinese had improved as well, but was not then, nor would ever be, fluent.

Sons Fluent in Chinese

We loved our time in China, and made many friends, and regarded the return

home to a certain degree as exile. We were unable to return to China for four and a half years, and when we went back to stay for another year, we ended up staying for two. By that point, we had even more friends there, and all four sons were fluent in Chinese, the youngest two so much so that when they talked to one another in Chinese in the back of a cab, the driver would do a double take. We decided at that point that we would be returning to China every year, at least twice, to ensure both connections and the language proficiency of the boys were maintained.

It, thus, was not a surprise that a few years later, Martin chose as his college major Asian studies and that, following his graduation, he would head to China looking for a job. But the year Martin graduated from Colby College was 2008, and those in charge in China were not keen on a whole bunch of new people from away coming in, at least not ahead of the Olympics. He had a great time in China for a couple of months, and then back he came to Maine.

But one day before the end of the year, with his head still overseas, he said, "You know what? We need to start a tea compa-

ny.” “We do?” his mother and I asked. We still had three of his brothers at home, my wife still had her job at the college, and we were, we thought, sufficiently busy.

No, no, this wasn't so complicated, he assured us. His idea was that, since we went to China all the time (well at least regularly), we could bring tea back in our luggage and then “sell it on the internet.” Uh huh.

Looking for Tea in China

Well, we didn't dismiss the idea outright. We thought about it and thought some more and modified the original notion, and the next summer we went to China to look for tea to sell.

During the intervening half a year we had decided that a tea company would have to be a little more formal. The company would need to be incorporated and insured and registered. We would be selling only Chinese whole leaf tea, and all the tea we sold would be organic and Fair Trade (environmentally responsible and ensuring a fair price and good working conditions for those who produce it.) We had, even before we started, boxed ourselves in pretty well. But we had a line on a company that had some tea that fit the bill. We just weren't sure exactly where it was.

We landed in Shanghai, Martin and his youngest brother, William, and I. We got a bus that took us from the airport directly to Hangzhou—where we hoped to be able to find people at the China National Tea Museum to give us some guidance. This did not work out so well. We found no one, and of guidance we had none. No matter, Martin had an address in Wuyuan, a city tucked away in the northeast corner of Jiangxi province, and so we found a train, bus and plane, and headed that way.

One might imagine that if one had an address, it is a simple matter to just go there. Ah, well, perhaps in some places, but not so much on a busy thoroughfare where the street names have recently been changed and the numeration on the buildings have been complicated by the addition of new, different numbers, so that each doorway had two numbers and the concept of sequence had been completely abandoned. Over more than an hour of traipsing back and forth where we thought we should be we found nothing but conflicting guidance. Ultimately,



Martin, Mike and William Connelly in a tea field in 2009.



Wuyuan County, Jiangxi province.

we came upon an entrance to a courtyard where we calculated the address we wanted must be and looked inside.

Across a courtyard, we were spotted by an elderly groundskeeper who hailed us, saying in Chinese, “Hello! I know where you want to go!” This seemed to be highly odd, mysterious, and unlikely, but we were agreeable, and said, “Sure, thanks,” and trailed after him, as

Continued on next page



Little Red Cup products.

Tea Company *(continued)*

he led us deeper into the complex, past several enormous apartment buildings—ultimately stopping at one where he rang a doorbell buzzer and then stepped away from the building.

High above, an old woman's head popped out a window, and she hollered down, "Hey, what's up?" Our guide yelled back, "I've got some foreigners here for your daughter!" She said that was fine, and buzzed us in and we thanked the fellow and began the trek up the stairs to the sixth floor (of course, it was the sixth floor.)

We arrived at her door, and she hustled us in, sat us down in the living room, turned on the television, and then rushed off to get snacks and tea, saying her daughter would be home soon.

Mystified and confused, we asked about her daughter and learned that she was a translator. We said that was all well and good and perhaps she'd be able to help us, but what we were actually trying to find was a fellow who was a manager at a company selling organic, Fair Trade tea. "Oh," the old woman said, "that's her husband," Mr. Cheng.

Our First Sales

You really can't make this stuff up, and I assure you, I have not. This is how we located the first co-op that supplied us with the tea. In 2012, two and a half years later, our Little Red Cup Tea Company sold its first tea, at the annual Chinese New Year's Fair put on by the Chinese Friendship Association of Maine, whose board members are also members of USCPFA.

Today we sell tins and pounds of tea online at littleredcuptea.com and in select retail outlets. During the early years, when we were having shipping issues and I was traveling back and forth between China and the U.S. frequently, I brought two large cartons of tea home on two trips in succession.

But we now sell more than a ton and a half of tea each year. Now and then we must have some tea flown here, (at great expense) but almost all the tea is sent by cargo ship. The at-sea part is about three weeks. The whole process takes up to several months from the time we order until we receive the tea in Maine.

Little Red Cup Tea is served at cafes from Portland, Maine, to Los Angeles, and we supply other food processors with base teas used as an input, for instance to make beer or fermented kombucha tea, or as part of a blend.

That first day we met Mr. Cheng, when he came home to find us in his living room. The next day, we met the others who

Operating the tea company the way we do has been a learning experience.

ran the tea company, and the firm's tea master, and several of the factory workers. We also went into the fields and talked to the women picking the tea leaves by hand, and the fellows hoeing between the rows of plants to keep the weeds at bay.

Talk to the Workers

They were initially somewhat reluctant to talk to us, but 12-year-old William managed to break the ice by saying in his perfect Beijing accent, "Granny, you can talk to my father—he's very nice, he won't bite." They laughed and they did talk to me. We wanted to make sure that the workers thought this was a good company—and they did.

That was more than 10 years ago. In the intervening years we have made dozens of tea-buying trips to visit the fields and farms and firms of the co-ops from which we source our tea. We always talk to the workers, not just the office staff, to get a sense of how the firms operate. That, too, is policy.

Starting with just five varieties of tea from one co-op, we now usually have around three times that number for sale at any one time from five different co-ops, and though limiting, we have kept to our own, self-imposed, original guidelines—the tea is all whole leaf tea from China, it is all organic and all Fair Trade. While China supplies 40 percent of the world's tea, the subset of organic Fair Trade whole leaf tea is very small, and those who work in this corner of the industry all know one another. Indeed, two of the co-ops we deal with are in the same town and were once, many years ago, part of the same larger firm.

Operating the tea company the way we do has been a learning experience, and that continues to this day. It's a work in progress, and it brings with it an unending supply of new challenges and opportunities.

I am the company president, but I'm also the guy who answers the phone calls and emails, packs the tea, fills the orders and does the demonstrations. Despite all these duties, it is a part-time job.

The two other part-timers are Rachel, who is a full-time college professor, and Martin, who has a full-time job in IT. We are like the three legs of those old bronze Han dynasty Chinese pots—very stable. We bring different skills and strengths to the company—and all are equally important.

There is a lot of work, to be sure, but one of the chief rewards has been the chance to get to know and become friends with so many wonderful and interesting people, both producers and customers. And of course, there's the tea. There is tremendous satisfaction in finding truly amazing teas and bringing them to people who enjoy them so much. And that most certainly includes us.

I wouldn't trade the experience we've had for all the tea in China. 友

Mike Connelly is a long-time member of the Maine chapter of USCPFA, as well as the Chinese Friendship Association of Maine. Martin Connelly is president of the Maine chapter of USCPFA.



The company sells hats that say "tea, tea, tea" in Chinese, which is pronounced "cha, cha, cha."

30 Objects Illustrate 50 Years of Life in China

By Mike Revzin

Jaime (“Jimi”) FlorCruz, born in the Philippines, has lived in China for most of the past 50 years, first as a student and then as a journalist and a journalism professor.

In the fall 2021 *US-China Review*, he talked about his life in China—working on a farm and a fishing boat, attending Peking University after the Cultural Revolution, and working for *Newsweek*, *Time* and CNN.

He has created a presentation called “My 50-Year China Journey in 30 Objects.” A link to that speech was sent to everyone who registered for the USCPFA convention.

FlorCruz uses mementoes and photos to illustrate his life in China, as well as China’s dramatic transformation.

Among the items: ration coupons, photos from his work and school, an invitation to a Zhou Enlai banquet, a book introducing Chinese people to disco and a souvenir watch from the opening of the first McDonald’s in China.

He gave this presentation to the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies in August 2021.

You can view the presentation by searching for “My 50-Year China Journey in 30 Objects” on YouTube. The host introduces him at about 3 minutes and 35 seconds into the recording. 友



In 1987, for the first time, foreign journalists were allowed to cover a Chinese Communist Party Congress. In a surprise move, newly elected General Secretary Zhao Ziyang mingled with the press and answered unfiltered questions. In 1989, after the Tiananmen Square crackdown, Zhao was ousted for having favored a conciliatory approach to the students. He was placed under house arrest until his death in 2005.



In 2002, after the Houston Rockets drafted Yao Ming, he and his parents came to the CNN Beijing bureau to be interviewed. After this photo appeared, team officials worried that Yao was sending a message by standing in front of a poster that denounced U.S. imperialism. FlorCruz assured them that those posters were part of a vintage collection that had been on the wall for years, and Yao had nothing to do with it.



During FlorCruz’s first 10 years in China, ration coupons were needed, along with cash, to buy food and other essential goods.

China Goes Green: Coercive Environmentalism for a Troubled Planet

By Yifei Li and Judith Shapiro
Polity, 2020
240 pages
Paperback \$21.35, Kindle \$18

Reviewed by Peter Gordon

It probably goes without saying that there will be no solution to what has come to be called “climate change” without China’s active participation. (The same holds for the United States, but that’s another matter.)

In their new book *China Goes Green*, Judith Shapiro and Li Yifei view China’s environmental policies and practices, both domestically and internationally, as—goes the subtitle—“*Coercive Environmentalism for a Troubled Planet*.”

It may come as something of a surprise to those who haven’t followed this issue very closely that China is considered in some quarters “as the last best hope for efforts to save the planet.” Yet, say the authors, “the Chinese state appears indeed to be offering the world a green vision... the central leadership has issued hard-nosed policy changes intended to resolve China’s environmental crisis. Green China boasts solid achievements...”

China Goes Green sets out the question, albeit somewhat rhetorically, whether “the urgency and gravity of the planetary situation justify decisive state interventions.”

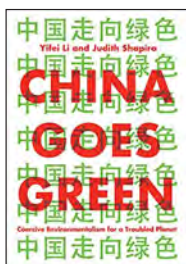
“At a time when liberal democratic states repeatedly fail to address environmental problems, it is tempting to feel that draconian measures are needed, or at least worthy of serious consideration.”

Rather than answering the question, the book is instead a granular, very granular, look at China’s policies and programs over (for the most part) the past two decades or so. In this, it is (at least for someone who isn’t as immersed in the subject matter as the authors) hard to see how the book

could be equaled. It manages to be broad and deep, well documented and clear.

Their conclusions (spoiler alert) are that China is showing clear intent and acting on it, but that the record is mixed: some programs have had positive results, others less so. They note that a top-down centrally planned approach can result in unintended consequences, that increased control may be a corollary objective and that coercion itself has consequences. While these may not come as a great surprise, Shapiro and Li provide chapter and verse, and do so with nuance, teasing out case by case the pros, cons and unknowns.

That being said, those looking to gird themselves for a discussion about global efforts regarding climate change should perhaps read the book with some care. The



China is considered in some quarters as the last best hope for efforts to save the planet.

book runs the gamut of environmental issues, from local pollution to recycling, environmental destruction, over-fishing, carbon emissions and even extraterrestrial mining. Whatever one may feel about sharks, they are a different sort of problem than rising global temperatures. The environmental issues are also conflated with such broader concerns as digital surveillance, coronavirus restrictions, the “weaponizing” of rare earth export restrictions, etc., which, it might be argued, and the authors implicitly do, are all of a piece, but aren’t environmental issues per se.

When looking at the way China integrates with the rest of the world on environmental questions, the various strands should probably be teased out. China could show global leadership in controlling global carbon emissions—undoubtedly with the expectation that it will be involved in writing the rules—while still playing hardball in bilateral negotiations over dams, or conversely work to reduce local air pollutants while engaging in en-

vironmentally dubious projects overseas. Nor does the global community have equal interest in all aspects of China’s environmental policies.

The question remains whether environmentally satisfactory results can be achieved without coercion of some kind. Some of the examples of coercion cited by the authors—such as narrow and inconvenient times for trash collection—seem annoying rather than serious threats to principle. Conversely, a considerable amount of coercion is now (generally) accepted to be necessary to control the coronavirus. The subtle question is what kind of coercion for what purposes, and who decides.

While the authors never quite return to the question they set, whether a Chinese-type “coercive environmentalism” provides a model for “liberal democratic states [who] repeatedly fail to address environmental problems,” they leave little doubt that their answer is “probably not.”

Yet it remains the case that China is still committed to the Paris targets, while the United States pulled out in 2017. (It rejoined in 2021, after this review was first published.) And Shapiro and Li document both considerable grassroots interest in China on environmental issues and considerable ingenuity in attempting to deal with problems large and small.

They end with an invocation to China to “truly ‘go green.’” But the readers of this book may be left with a question some might find uncomfortable: Chinese success “at home and overseas” is likely to come with wider acceptance of the Chinese modus operandi: is that a trade-off they are willing to consider? 友

Peter Gordon is editor of the Asian Review of Books, where this review appeared. It is published here with permission.



Peter Hessler's Former Students Adapt to Middle Class Life

By Peter Hessler

Published in the *New Yorker* as "Letter from Fuling," online December 27, 2021, and in the January 3 and 10, 2022 print edition.

Reviewed by Fran Adams

Many of you will remember Peter Hessler's engaging book *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. In that book, he recounted his 1996–1997 stint in the Peace Corps as an English teacher at a teachers college in the small city of Fuling. Since then, he has written other books on China, and also one on Egypt, where he was based from 2011 to 2017, covering the events of the Egyptian Arab Spring. In 2019, he returned to China to teach at Sichuan University-Pittsburgh Institute in Chengdu. He had intended to stay for five years, but after only two years his teaching contract was not renewed. At the moment, it appears that his status as a reporter based in China is somewhat in limbo.

However, we are lucky to have a recent article in the *New Yorker* in which Hessler brings the stories of his former *River Town* students to the present. He has continued to keep in touch with many in the 25 years since they were in his classroom.

He labels his students' generation the "Reform Generation," a cohort that faced enormous changes in their society, notably including mass migration from the countryside to the cities. "For them," he says "so many, many fundamental experiences—leaving the countryside, being limited to one child, entering a wide-open business climate—occupied relatively brief historical windows that have now closed." And, he says, "For a Chinese person born



Peter Hessler. Photo: Darryl Kennedy

in the 1970s, success sometimes felt like an accident."

Hessler estimates that, despite other career opportunities, 90 percent of his former students remain as teachers. Although they are critical of the state-mandated educational materials and syllabi, and although Hessler writes that most of their pupils are being educated only for the purpose of working in factories, his former students find satisfaction in their work, and in their country. Most do not feel that China should have more than one party, and are proud of the strides made in building infrastructure.

As satisfied as Hessler's former students are with their teaching jobs, being a teacher is now an opportunity whose time has mostly passed. Because of an aging population, huge numbers of primary schools have been closed, and any open teaching positions are swamped with applicants.

Some of Hessler's students have gone on to success in business. Youngsea, only the second person from his village to go to college, is now a successful entrepreneur driving a \$150,000 Mercedes. Hessler's student with the self-chosen English name of North, who had been class monitor, was one who refused his teaching assignment, at some cost. He starts out working in a factory processing Fuling's specialty, pickled mustard tuber, working his way up to management and amassing some wealth. But he decides he should have his own business and, although it is late in the window of opportunity for entrepreneurship, he starts a company to retrofit elevators into apartment buildings. He must work hard to make his business profitable.

Elevator Music

Although Hessler makes no judgments, readers may be surprised that residential buildings as high as 12 stories were built without elevators. And North's elevator business seems to be pushing the concept of private ownership surprisingly far, as only residents who have contributed toward constructing the elevators receive keys to operate them. An unauthorized person using a borrowed key will be found

out through video cameras. "Going Home" by Kenny G plays on a loop in all the elevators. North compares his elevators to cars. "It was like owning a car, if your car always went to the same destination while playing the same song," Hessler comments.

And yet, there is some sadness in all of the achievement. His students, whose families were peasants, still think of themselves in that way, and do not feel secure in their comfortable positions in life. And they remember the family members who struggled and died as they became successful. Anry (short for Angry) walked away from his teaching assignment because it did not pay enough to support his brother's family after the brother lost his hands and eyesight to an accident with TNT.

Anry went to Shanghai with less than three dollars in his pocket. In a demonstration of the seemingly remarkable opportunities offered his generation, Anry, now calling himself Allen, becomes a wealthy business consultant. But another brother dies in a factory accident and a third of illness. As successful as he is, he does not forget that he is the only brother to be alive and thriving, and that his brothers worked and died to help pay his tuition for college. Recently, he shut down his business in order to care for his remaining family. Success is accompanied by loss.

In a poignant scene, Hessler accompanies his student Grant to his ancestral village. His family keeps up their house there, but it is used only once a year, for the Spring Festival holiday. The fields lie fallow, the houses of the town empty. A developer has offered \$100 for a white fig tree growing on Grant's family's land. We learn that developers often transplant trees from the old villages to the new suburbs. In Hessler's words, "In China, the scale of movement was almost Biblical, and perhaps this was the final stage of the exodus: in the beginning, the people migrated to the cities, and then the trees followed."

Hessler and some of his students visit their old college in Fuling, mostly in ruins now. The building where he lived, at the

Continued on next page

A One-Person Neighborhood Committee for Chinese...in New Jersey

By Judy Manton

Forty-three years ago my family and I moved from Manhattan to a white, middle class suburb in New Jersey. Little did I know that one day I would make use of my China background as I welcomed Chinese people into my neighborhood.

Eight years ago, a Chinese family from Malaysia moved across the street and opened a restaurant downtown. In pre-Covid years I invited them for Thanksgiving dinner and taught their daughter to make Christmas cookies. At the beginning of the Mid-Autumn Festival, I always receive a tin of my favorite mooncakes from them.

In the middle of 2020, a house across the street was purchased by a Chinese woman and her American husband. She had left Shanghai 15 years ago. Because they had moved to that house from an apartment, I passed on to them gently used tools useful to homeowners. I also gave them a Chinese doll that my granddaughters had outgrown, a delicate papercut for their wall and numerous other Chinese travel souvenirs, of which I had more than enough. As a gesture of appreciation, I received mooncakes.

Then my immediate neighbor of 43 years put her house on the market. One day an Asian man with a darling four-year-old daughter appeared on the front lawn. At about the same time, my coalition of Chinese "20-somethings" (who had lived in my home at various times since I became an empty-nester) arrived to take me to the beach.

When I walked out, I found them speaking Chinese to my new neighbor who, I learned, was Zi Chen, an assistant professor at Brigham and Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School. His wife, Jing Fan, is a professor of mechanical engineering at City College of New York.

When I spoke Chinese to him, he nearly fainted. My eyes fell on the cross around his neck. When I asked him his *lao jia* (home region), I was not surprised to hear "Fujian." That was where my husband's grandmother worked as a Methodist missionary for 47 years, starting in 1864. I



Neighbors Zi Chen (left), Jing Fan and their daughter, Grace, in front of a Guizhou batik that Judy Manton gave them.

told the new neighbor that I knew the origins of Christianity in Fujian. He was astounded and I felt that here was another of those "small world" stories. Then I summoned my mother-and-daughter housemates from Beijing to come meet that new neighbor from Fujian and his wife from Shandong.

The professor and his family, who had fled the Covid-19 outbreak in New York City at a time of anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States, probably wondered how they would be received in this upper middle class suburb. But here they were being greeted by not only five Chinese who seemed to appear out of nowhere, but also

Peter Hessler (continued)

time considered luxurious, now looks shabby and unprepossessing. So much has changed so quickly.

Hessler has given us a vivid picture of the current lives of his former students, lives of opportunity, but opportunities somewhat uneasily taken, and not to be repeated. We are given a sense of a remarkable time in Chinese history through their lives, which

by a crazy American women who, in 1984, had taught English teachers in her mother-in-law's birthplace in Fujian and had even climbed Taishan in Shandong!

Using WeChat, I sent both of these families the garbage and leaf pickup schedules, the address of the closest hardware store, details on the local Chinese restaurants and supermarket and the yummy Taiwanese bakery, and the phone number of my reliable contractor for their home repairs. I even regifted an expansive Guizhou batik.

And then, a few days before Christmas, I spotted a college-aged neighbor with an Asian young man about to get into her car. I greeted her and she introduced me to her boyfriend, who had an English name. I asked if he spoke another language (as a lot of Koreans live in this area) and he replied, "Yes, Chinese." Of course, I welcomed him

in my limited Chinese as astonishment spread across their faces.

That evening, after having read about the role of the neighborhood committees in China in helping to control the spread of Covid-19, I reflected on the sinicization of my neighborhood and grinned as I realized that, bored with retirement and Covid confinement, I had created for myself a reason to be useful once again. I had become a one-person neighborhood committee for Chinese...in New Jersey. 友

Judy Manton is a member of USCPFA's Northern New Jersey chapter.

are not extraordinary for the times and yet, vivid and moving. 友

Fran Adams is a retired cataloger of art and architecture books at a university library. She became interested in China through her mother, Rezsins Adams, who was an active and enthusiastic member of the USCPFA.

My First American Friend Was a Devoted Member of USCPFA

By Frank Zhao

When I think of how an individual can contribute to people-to-people friendship, I think of Alfred (Al) Abati, the first American friend I made in the United States.

I came to New York as a reporter in November 1990, covering U.N. news for China.

At that time, U.S.-China relations were at very low point, following what happened in Tiananmen Square in 1989. In fact, I learned that my visa had been delayed because China was doing the same with the visa for a *New York Times* reporter.

Al and I met the following spring at a Chinese New Year party held by the Chinese mission to the U.N. Al, who had been to China many times, later introduced me to USCPFA. At that time, he was vice president of the New York City chapter. He also invited me to visit his home and to local events, such as a party held by the Italian Club of Staten Island. By meeting the local folks, I came to see that the people in the United States were friendly toward the Chinese people, even when government bureaucrats were not.

This year's Winter Olympics reminded me that, in an interview before the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Al said, "Although I will not be there physically, I will be there with the Chinese people in spirit and cheer on all the athletes."

Al told me that one of his most memorable visits to China was in 2004 when he was a delegate to the celebrations marking the 55th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. He was received by the USCPFA's counterpart in China, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC).

Al's belief in people-to-people friendship as the basis for improving bilateral made a deep impression on me. I remember, for example, that he met a Chinese student on a river cruise in China and, after hearing of his dream to study in the U.S., sponsored him. With his help, the student came to the States and got his master's degree.

While traveling in northern China, Al visited some churches. In addition to making on-the-spot contributions,

he continued to support one of the churches after he came back home. Al loved travel, especially after he retired. I cherish the postcards that he sent me from trips overseas.

I'm thankful to Al for connecting me with USCPFA, an organization I love. Al often said that the friendship between the two peoples would help improve relations between the two countries.

Al invited me to USCPFA events, and I invited him to local Chinese activities. One USCPFA event that I recall was in 2000 when the Chinese Consul General in New York, Zhang Hongxi, gave a lecture at the chapter's Manhattan office. It was chaired by the then chapter President Irving Zuckerman and drew some noted people such as *New York Times* book reviewer Timothy Tung, who was also a frequent contributor to the *USCR*. At the lecture, Zhang, received a gift from our chapter, which was a beautifully framed picture of our logo 友 (friendship).

Meanwhile, Al also attended Chinese American activities. For example, the Chinese painter Wu Yaming's exhibition of Zhongnanhai, the Chinese leaders' compound. The exhibition drew an audience that included Li Daoyu, then Chinese ambassador to the U.N. and later ambassador to the United States. Al also attended an exhibition at Cooper Union, where some of my daughter's works were exhibited.

As a Staten Island resident devoted to U.S.-China friendship, Al was very proud of his borough's New York Chinese Scholar's Garden (寄兴园). The garden, the largest Chinese-style garden of its kind outside mainland China, opened in 1999. It was built by 40 Chinese artists from Suzhou.

Whenever I had difficulty in writing reports, either at Xinhua, or later when I worked for *World Journal* (the largest Chinese language newspaper in North America), he would give me a helping hand. When he needed a USCPFA business



Al Abati contributed to people-to-people friendship.

card, I helped him translate the card into Chinese, with his Chinese name as 艾德福, 艾 as his family name pronounced 爱 Ai (love) in Chinese similar to Al and 德福, which literally means virtue and happiness.

Later serving as a USCPFA chapter president and national board member, Al made enormous contributions. When we closed the chapter's Manhattan office, he helped find new homes for our many documents, books and magazines.

The last time my wife, also a USCPFA member, and I saw Al was at his home in January 2017, after he recovered from a serious illness. He was so pleased to see us and was very talkative. Our last messages to each other were at Thanksgiving of that year.

In February 2018, when we got the news from his daughter that Al had passed away at age 88, we simply couldn't believe it. I immediately shared the news with Valerie Stern, then president of the New York chapter. I would like to quote excerpts from the obituary written by Valerie. "As a longtime member and leader of the US-China Peoples Friendship Association, he was invaluable to our organization. Al loved and understood China. He had an affinity for the language and the culture." To me, Al was an example of the many ways in which each one of us can help improve ties between the people of the U.S. and China. 友

Frank Zhao, a member of USCPFA's New York City chapter, is a writer and poet.

South Bay Chapter Celebrates Chinese New Year, 50th Anniversary

USCPFA's South Bay chapter held a Zoom meeting on February 8 to celebrate Chinese New Year and the chapter's 50th anniversary. The gathering was organized by John Marienthal, the chapter president.

In honor of the Year of the Tiger, chapter member Shirley Lin Kinoshita shared her drawings of tigers.

People then told what chapter programs and activities they liked over the years. Elaine Dvorak talked about her fond memory of a chapter birding trip to China with the Audubon Society in 1993.

George Chadwick recalled a presentation by Dr. Yanshuo Zhang, who was a member, about China's ethnic groups. Chadwick said he never knew that, in addition to the Han majority, China had 55 ethnic minority groups.

Kinoshita said she liked the cultural aspects of our Moon Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Chinese New Year celebrations, including storytelling, customs and food.

Marienthal said the South Bay chapter was established in 1971 by eight friends, the year before President Nixon visited China. Through the years, the chapter has had more than 250 public programs, and is still going strong. Henry Bender joined the chapter very early and is still a wonderful supportive member.

For the 2022 Chinese New Year and the Beijing Winter Olympics, (which were taking place at the time of the meeting) Winny Lin challenged everyone to answer 10 questions. Billy Lee's team won. Here are the questions and answers.

1. What do people in China call Chinese New Year?
2. What are the five elements in the universe?
3. What is the zodiac animal for 2022, including the element?
4. What are the 12 zodiac animals, in order?
5. If 2022 is the Year of the Tiger, when will it be the Year of the Tiger again?
6. Where is the Olympics being held?

7. What was Nathan Chen's score in his short program that broke the world's record?
8. Where was Eileen Gu, who competed for China, born? She won a gold medal in big air skiing.
9. Name one custom/tradition during Chinese New Year.
10. Name another custom/tradition that Chinese do in New Year celebrations.

Answers:

1. Spring Festival (春节)
2. Water, wood, earth, metal, fire
3. Water tiger
4. Rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, pig
5. 2034
6. Beijing
7. 113.97
8. San Francisco
9. Families gathering for feasts
10. Give children red envelopes with lucky money

—Winnie Lin

Thankful for Act of Kindness 74 Years Ago, and for a Recent Award

By Billy Lee

How deeply grateful I am to the 2021 USCPFA awards committee for presenting me with the Friendship Leadership Award, thus offering powerful encouragement to further pursue my Friendshipology initiative.

Talking about encouragement, I would like to share with you an unforgettable experience—74 years ago—when I first arrived at Phillips Academy Andover in Massachusetts from Shanghai. Anne Gates, of the Class of 1951, told this story in the recent *Andover-Abbot Alumni Magazine*:

Billy Lee (Class of 1951), offered the nicest compliment for Abbie Emmons Penfield at our Zoomed 70th reunion. In 1948, Abbot hosted a tea dance to welcome new AA and PA students (Andover Academy and Phillips Academy, which later merged). Billy, newly arrived from Shanghai and socially immature, was encouraged by his housemaster to attend. Neatly dressed wearing a coat and tie, and freshly shined shoes, Billy joined

the boys clustered at one side of the room. When the music began, he found himself challenged by a smiling brown-haired girl: "Would you like to dance with me? I am Abbie."

Never having danced before, he stuttered his consent. Abbie showed him how to stand, to stretch out one hand and place the other behind her waist, then suggested they just do side-steps—one two, one two—until he felt the rhythm.

"She was so kind, so encouraging, so joyful, so civil, and so truly friendly," he remembers. "This was one of my most memorable experiences as an adolescent in a foreign country. Abbie's kind gestures forever influenced me, and I learned from her how important it is to reach out to others, be kind, and be helpful." How amazing it is, that the smallest gesture of kindness may be remembered for a lifetime!

Billy Lee is a member of the USCPFA South Bay chapter.

Transitions

Arthur Kraft

Arthur Kraft, a 20-year member of the Long Beach chapter of the USCPFA, died in July at age 93.

He and Elizabeth Kraft, former long-time chapter president and current publicity chairman, had been married almost 60 years. Arthur Kraft was supportive of all the chapter activities through the years.

He received a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University and was a school psychologist in New Jersey before moving to Long Beach, where he served as senior psychologist for 20 years in the Long Beach Unified School District.

Always an innovator, Arthur Kraft provided workshops on communication skills for about 400 staff members and 1,500 parents in the district. He wrote three psychology books, including *Are You Listening to Your Child?*

—Elizabeth Kraft

Chinese Official Tells Long Beach Chapter About Olympics, Praises USCPFA



Shi Yuanqiang at the Zoom meeting with the Long Beach chapter.

A Chinese official spoke to the Long Beach chapter of USCPFA about the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics on January 18. Shi Yuanqiang, who is deputy consul general at China's consulate in Los Angeles, described the Olympic Village and layout of the venues.

Speaking two weeks before the Olympics started, Shi said, "We are all looking forward to seeing this moment and cheering for athletes from all the participating countries, including China and the United States. Let's wish Beijing Winter Olympics great success! The Chinese government and Chinese people have made great efforts for the success of the Winter Olympics, and all the preparations are going well. The motto for the 2022 Beijing Olympics is 'Together for a Shared Future,' the spirit of which I think also applies to the future of China-U.S. relations."

The presentation, which was part of the chapter's Chinese New Year gathering, took place virtually, due to Covid.

Before the program started, a short history of USCPFA was read. Among those attending virtually were National President Diana Greer, National Board Member Frances Goo, Dr. Elizabeth Kraft, former president of the Long Beach chapter and Dr. Richard Yu, vice president of the Long Beach chapter.

"On behalf of Consul General Zhang Ping and my colleagues in the Consulate

General, I'd like to express our deepest gratitude to all the friends of USCPFA for your relentless efforts to develop and strengthen the China-U.S. friendship," Shi said.

Shi was critical of the way the Trump and Biden administrations have handled some of the disagreements between the Chinese and U.S. governments, but added, "As history has proven repeatedly, despite twists and turns in our relations, some fundamental positive elements remain unchanged and there has been no absence of forces supporting China-U.S. friendship and cooperation."

"Since I started my post in Los Angeles three years ago, I have kept hearing touching stories of the friendship between our two peoples and witnessed the tangible benefits our sub-national exchanges and cooperation have brought about, in the areas of trade, investment, culture, education and people-to-people exchanges. The foundation of China-U.S. relations and the bonds between our two peoples stand the test of time and remain strong."

Shi added that, "China is California's largest trading partner. One-third of the cargo volume of China-U.S. trade in goods goes through the Los Angeles-Long Beach ports. Prior to the pandemic, California was the U.S. state that attracted the largest amount of Chinese investment, and the largest number of Chinese students and tourists."

He also noted the importance that sister city relations have played. "In 2020, the city of Long Beach and the Chinese city of Qingdao in Shandong province celebrated the 35th anniversary of their sister city relationship, which has yielded fruitful results for both cities," he said.

From Mimi Lau, secretary of the Long Beach chapter, along with information from the website of the Chinese Consulate-General in Los Angeles

Guest Speaker Has Eaten in 7,000 Chinese Restaurants

In October, the Long Beach chapter of USCPFA held a "Chop Stix in the Park" outdoor lunch meeting in Cerritos. Lunch boxes were prepared by a nearby Chinese restaurant for a talk by David Chan, a man who has eaten in more than 7,000 Chinese restaurants.

Chan told the group that Southern California has the best Chinese restaurants in the United States. He attributed this to the locale from which the Chinese emigrated, and the fact that they moved to the Monterey Park and San Gabriel areas and established their Chinese cuisine there. The park setting for the luncheon was arranged by Richard Yu, vice president of the Long Beach chapter.

—Elizabeth Kraft

History of USCPFA Available Now

The History of the US-China Peoples Friendship Association
Paul B. Trescott

If you wish to purchase a paperback copy of From Frenzy to Friendship by Paul Trescott, please send a \$20 check, which includes tax (if any) and shipping, to Robert Sanborn, 402 East 43rd St., Indianapolis IN 46205.

My Enigmatic Little One 遐戀

By Frank Zhao

We met that evening at the lake
You, tiny but cute
had not been expected
However with me you came
all the way to your new home

Here you stayed and played
Merrily and happily for a while
Then suddenly you
disappeared somewhere
But I don't know where

For the time you were absent
I looked for you with eyes widely opened
Still I could not find you anywhere
At the place you are supposed to be around
Nobody knows where you are to be found

Two days ago you appeared alone
Surprisingly from no where to our world
So mysterious your going and coming
That we all wonder where you had been
And where are your other relatives now resting?

作者：趙仁方

那天傍晚我們在湖濱相遇
嬌小靚麗的妳
並不在預期當中
但我和妳
卻走到了一起

新天地裡我們和睦相處
妳每天快樂幸福地嬉戲
可是突然間
妳石沉大海
杳無音訊

失蹤期間
我睜大眼睛尋覓
找遍任何妳可藏身之地
依然迷霧一團不知妳在哪裡
沒人知道我們是否還會相見

兩天前妳悄然給我驚喜
穿越時空之門
去無影來無蹤令人著迷
妳去了何方，還有妳的同伴
他們此時何處安寢？

Note: The English poem came to mind first and the Chinese second. In Chinese pronunciation and writing, shrimp (蝦) and *distant, long-last* (遐) are nearly the same. They are both pronounced as *xia*, with first tone for 蝦 and third tone for 遐. So 遐戀 (*xia lian*) in its pronunciation not only mean reverie for somebody far away, but also love for the shrimp, thus leaving the imagination to the readers.

Frank Zhao, a member of USCPFA's New York City chapter, is a writer and poet.

How You Can Contribute to the US-China Review

- Submit your chapter's information or newsletters.
- Suggest stories from, or about, China-related websites or organizations.
- Write about your experiences in China—even from years ago.
- Summarize China webinars, or alert us to upcoming ones. (Please check in advance to avoid duplicate submissions).
- Want to write a story, but don't have a specific idea? Let me know your expertise or interests and I'll try to find a topic for you.

Deadlines

From now on, I will be editing all four issues of *USCR*. You can submit articles and photos at any time, but here are the deadlines for the next issues:

April 15: Summer (July) issue

July 15: Fall (October) issue

Oct. 15: Winter (Jan. 2023) issue

Send stories or ideas to: Mike.Revzin@gmail.com

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The US-China Peoples Friendship Association is a nonprofit educational organization. Our goal is to build active and lasting friendship based on mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of China. **We recognize** that friendship between our two peoples must be based on the knowledge of and respect for the sovereignty of each country; therefore, we respect the declaration of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China that the resolution of the status of Taiwan is the internal affair of the Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. **We also recognize** that friendship between our two peoples and good relations between our two governments plays a critical role in maintaining peace in the Pacific Basin and in the world. **As an educational organization**, our activities include sponsoring speakers and programs which inform the American people about China, organizing tours and special study groups to China, publishing newsletters and other literature, promoting friendship with Chinese students and scholars while in the United States, and promoting cultural, commercial, technical, and educational exchanges. **Everyone is invited** to participate in our activities, and anyone who agrees with this Statement of Principles is welcome to join. Subscription to *US-China Review* is included in membership.

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