

CHINA TRIP, 1989

Our leader - Bernie Harris + 13 of us

Joanna Wilkinson ("Blondie")

Vera van Sickle - nurse

{ Madeleine Weyenberg (aged 74) }

Pat Addy - from Kingston, Ont. }

{ Diane Bell - mother & daughter }

Mary & Joe Teixeira - (both Portuguese) }

Ray & Anita Anderson

Diane Williams (known as "The Caboose"; also as "Jingles")

John Ryder - } ornithologist

Jane Waddell

Maurleen Hewlett - } sells investment plans

Mon. March 20. Left Victoria after fog cleared at airport. Vancouver bright & sunny. Left about 2 pm - no one checks to see if seat belts are

done up etc. The hostesses look very young & wear frilly aprons. They give everyone little cotton slippers for the flight. There are lots of high school kids, but all seem very well behaved. We crossed the sea bar

north & could see large patches of ice. We have crossed the date line so

it is Tuesday late pm when we arrive ^{Shanghai} & there is some mix up about transport; & we are then taken ^{nearby} for supper at the Cypress Hotel. Then

about a half-hour drive to the Hua Xia hotel which is newly built,

* lavish in style, & is located in a factory district. I share with Joanne

& our room is on the 14th floor. Throughout the whole trip huge thermoses of

boiled hot / sometimes also cold water are in every bedroom, & one

must not even run a toothbrush under the tap. Chairman Mao ordered

the boiling of all drinking water, & this was one of his most correct

thoughts.

* we drove there in the dark along narrow, pot holed roads, passing lots of cyclists. They don't even have lights on bicycles.

2.

Wednesday, March 22 (Tuesday doesn't exist).

After an hour's walking out on the road with Joanne seeing the morning rush to work - all on bicycles, some carrying passengers (either quilt friend or small child) some pulling huge loads, we went in for a Chinese breakfast - all kinds of goodies & very nice steamed buns. Left at 9 am for the whole day. Visited Yu Yuan gardens right in the heart of Shanghai. The drive there was very slow as there is so much congestion downtown, giving us plenty of time to see the city life, most of it very rundown. A good chance for pictures of side walk scenes. The ^{Yu Yuan} gardens are very formal & elaborate with lots of walkways over water, & lots of limestone rock (always in Chinese gardens). The limestone is quarried at Guilin. The gardens are cramped with tourists. We had lunch at Shanghai mansions, then back along the Bund to board a large boat (3 decks) for a ride down the Huang Pu river to the open sea (the East China Ocean). We are on the top, "Special" deck, & have a cabin to ourselves if we wish to sit inside, with tea & candies supplied. Two of our most adventurous people, the young Teixeiras, spent the whole time on the bottom deck fraternizing with the Chinese in ^{& picking up words.} dumbshow. On the return trip we all went to the bottom deck ("steerage") & watched a very good conjuring show. For a time I sat immediately beside the band (four elderly men) & tried to make out their sheet music. In the evening we all went to the Shanghai Acrobatic Show, some of their feats make one feel quite ill.

Thursday, March 23

A very wet morning. I went out briefly, then wrote some postcards & got them stamped.* After breakfast we were taken to a township (these used to be called "communes") - the Hong Qiao township, near the airport. The whole landscape is very utility. We were given a general briefing in the Township HQ building, & then taken to the Middle School (equivalent to our High School). A cheerful girl spoke very good English. Then off to visit a family home - quite solid citizens, we thought. A 1200 sq. ft. home, 5 adults living there - wife & husband, grandpa, & son & daughter-in-law, all with money coming in. The wife was most obliging & answered all our questions (through an interpreter) & showed us round her house - a washing machine upstairs. Very Spartan. Toilets, 15 amp wiring, and a big cesspool (? settling pond) directly outside. The smell was pretty strong, but I expect they get used to that. Then lunch provided in the Township HQ building - the cooks had pulled out all the stops, into course after course all cooked on one wok. Then on to the jade factory, then the carpet factory, each with its own section for you to shop there. Then on to Shanghai Exhibition market with some very expensive stuff. A silk carpet of the Great Wall costs \$30,000 Cdn! I am not attracted to much Chinese stuff, but many of our group are like magpies. It is handy, Thursday, so Bernie, Madeleine & Diane Bell went to a Catholic service (at a church which was spared during the Cultural Revolution). We had a late supper at the hotel.

* I never saw a Chinese Stamp. The hotel staff take your FEC money, then buy the stamps for you in Renminbi (see p. 14 - General Notes). Upon marriage daughter-in-law moves into the family home.

4. Good Friday, March 24

Baggage ready at 8 am. Left 9 am. Saw a silk factory (the dyeing of silk) + its shop. Then to the Jade Temple with all its Buddhas. Had lunch at Lucky's Restaurant, an excellent feast.

Our guide, Chong, took me by special request to the big Chinese bookstore on Nanjing Road by trolley bus. This was quite an experience which tourists don't normally get. Very crowded, + an elderly bus. V. crowded streets, like London. I got 20 copies of the world map in Chinese, + Chong brought me straight back to the Shanghai library - our rendezvous. There I met Bernie + we bought a nice crocheted table cloth for Judy's wedding. Then we all set off for the railway station to catch the 3:37 pm train ("soft seat") to Hangzhou. "Soft seat" means reserved, but though somewhat padded, they are not very bouncy. The loose covers seem to get shaken out now + then. We all had a box lunch to tide us over, as this is a 4 hr. trip + there will be no supper. "Jingles" + I sat with a guide from another group. After university he was just told by the Govt. he was to be a tour guide + has done it for two years. On ^{our} arrival at Hangzhou, the baggage didn't come for yet another hour. The Zhejiang Guest House is older, + service not quite so five-star. I am now sharing with Bernie + our local guide here is a very pretty girl, Becky Sun.

Saturday - March 25

5

Went to West Lake + had a boat trip around this beautiful man-made lake (a bay dredged out). Saw a man on the boat doing his Tai Chi in white gloves (the only Tai Chi we have seen). Landed on a little island, "Three Pools Mirroring the Moon", + walked across its zigzag walkway, very slippery under foot. There are crowds of tourists, - Chinese, Japanese + folks like us. The Chinese look like factory outings, - it gives one quite a strange feeling to be so stared at! I say "Ni hao" + we all grin + giggle. West Lake is beautiful, with springtime blossom + trees just coming into leaf. We wander through the park by Lesser South Lake + take in a few Souvenir Stands. Our local guide, Becky, is most solicitous about me, taking my arm up or down any awkward places. After lunch we visited a tea farm (Dragon Well tea) + watched a man drying the top quality by hand in an electrically heated copper. The lesser quality teas are dried in the sun. Then a traipse round the shop. As we didn't want to visit another silk dyeing factory, Becky took us up ~~near the University~~ to the Yellow Dragon Cave. Here there were musicians in traditional costume playing old Chinese instruments - very lively folk music, with a large gathering. We scrambled up the rocky trails, looked into the caves + got up to a good view-point of Hangzhou. The group reassembled at the bus + most of the wanted to see the downtown area of Hangzhou. So Anne + I fought our way through crowded street shops, + the relaxed

6. over a cup of tea + a cookie (at vast expense) at the Friendship Hotel. The others of our group went in a better direction & Shopped & shopped.

This was a lovely day; there are hills all around Hangzhou & it is a beautiful place. We have all loved it.

East Sunday, March 26

Up at 5.30 a.m. (for me), breakfast 6.15, + off by bus to catch the 7.45 train to Suzhou* - a five-hour journey, backtracking through Shanghai. Of course shopping continues on the train, with a trolley displaying scarves, table cloths etc!

We are welcomed by Mr. Wong^{in slabby business suit} (our local guide for Suzhou) for a late midday meal + taken to a tatty looking restaurant which he assures us is the "best in town". Here we are on the Grand Canal, watching the strings of boats going up + down. Traditional

bridges have ramps to wheel ^{items such as} bicycles up (or down). Mr Wong shows us the Panmen Gate + Tower. Then another silk factory, preceded by a jazzy fashion show. High fashion, but bell down rather or hem lines + slips showing. Bought shawl here for Barbara, + another crocheted table cloth. Baggage arrived very late + John's suitcase has gone astray (it will turn up later at Nanjing).

Mr Wong is very interested to know my age, the same as his mother!

Thinks I am very strong, + is amazed that we all have cars + that I can drive one. I certainly wouldn't like to drive in China, or ride a bicycle here.

* Suzhou is the twin city of Victoria, both being garden cities.

Monday - March 27

7.

The cocoon silk factory was very interesting, the girls are so dexterous. The jade factory is closed due to lack of power.

Saw the embroidery factory (doing designs on both sides), then just before lunch to the Garden of Nets.

pm. The fan factory + on to the Humble Administrator's Garden.

We went up the West Pagoda in the "Beisi Temple". We have had to stay late in Suzhou, as our train times got mixed up.

Mr. Wong arranges supper for us at a dreadful hotel ("the best in town") + the train leaves at 8 pm for Changzhou (a

2-hr. trip) where we are met by a delightful girl, the local guide ("Oonun", I think) also by Ishi, Bernie's teacher friend who has brought her little boy along to show him off. We

go to the Changzhou Guest House, our baggage arrives with us, + we are given excellent service.

Tuesday, 28 March

Changzhou is famous throughout China, having made combs for centuries. Comb Street runs parallel to the Grand Canal + it was at a spot here on the embankment that Bao-yu met his father after he had become a Taoist monk. The Canal has been widened, + the old Ming houses had to be pulled down but were rebuilt. From the bridge, super views of the boats on the Canal (five great rivers flow into the Grand Canal). We visited the vegetable market, then went to the Comb factory. Combs are all made of natural materials - bamboo, mahogany, +

8. boxwood. Boxwood is particularly good for cleaned hair. It ^(the comb) should be washed in water, but no soap, using a toothbrush.

We now go to the Middle School where Ishi teaches English, + first off have a briefing (with interpreter, our guide Oonum) from the Principal. This is a school which gets the pick of students + many go on to University. There are 1200 students (who stay here 3 years) + 150 staff. Emphasis is given to morality + physical education. (Stricter laws are to be brought in to control population growth. In the Museum area at this school we see 4 fetuses in bottles, all at different stages of growth, plus a bottled new-born ~~and~~ baby. They are quite pragmatical about abortions).

In an English class we all talked to the students, or rather encouraged them to talk to us. Mine said that in her free time she likes to watch TV + play Pingpong. I got the address + mean to find some student in Victoria who will write to her.

Then on to the linguistics computer labs. First, reading comprehension. Ishi (who was the exchange teacher who came to Victoria last year ^{to teach at} Central Junior High) has now got 26 computers, + with 3 boys to a computer everyone is busy. Then visited the audio linguistic lab., ~~not~~ ^{also} well equipped. For visit to Hospital see p. 15. Went briefly to a book store and the Temple. After supper, ^{at the temple} comes the highlight - the whole reason for including Changzhou on this trip - a concert at the Children's Palace. Bernie hopes to make their young musicians known in Vancouver, + hopes they might be brought over somehow to play in a Music Festival. Owing to the mess-up of the train time for leaving Suzhou, a lot of re-scheduling has been

going on + we are treated to a special performance just for us.

John Ryder + Maurice video-tape it + Bernie tape records it.

Children are aged 9 - 15. The senior girl is very confident on a Chinese dulcimer. They are all playing the traditional instruments.*

For light relief they give us "Red River Valley" + "Jingju Bells."

The performance is over about 8 pm + we have talked to the young players. Now we are piled into the bus + we drive to Nanjing a 3 1/2 hr. drive (this has been arranged because it would only have been possible to get standing room on a train at this hour). So goodbye to Ishi + her little boy + her husband. The Changzhou-Nanjing road is to be widened. Just now it has no surface, is potholed + rather narrow, + it felt like a rough logging road.

We finally arrive at the Xuanwu Hotel, in the city. Fruit is there in the bedroom. Very comfortable. Had a bath, washed my hair + got to bed about 1 ^{am} ~~pm~~.

* One boy plays a sort of cluster of wind pipes, which I have learned is called a "Sheng".

Wed. 29 March Our local guide here is Mrs. Lee, an older woman, v. good at her job. We have a late start this morning + are off to

see Xian Wu Lake Park. Visited the Zoo - appalling conditions - + loud blaring music from circuses within the grounds. Then to Sun Yat Sen's Memorial + to the Beamless Hall (near where we had lunch).

Then to the Yangtze River Bridge, of which they are immensely proud - an enormous feat of civil engineering. Then to the Pagoda, + Drum Temple.

Also to the Nanjing Ming Tombs (the approach only).
10. Then on to Suning Hotel (by far the smartest in Nanjing) to the 36th Floor → a view out over the city from the revolving deck. Super washroom & towels! Supper at 5.30 pm at (genuinely) the best restaurant in town, & evening free at ^{our own} hotel to relax. Mrs. Lee has been a mine of good information, speaks English well, & keeps everything together. During the Cultural Revolution she had been sent to the country by the Red Guards.

Thurs. 30 March

Left Nanjing early by air & should have arrived Beijing at noon. Owing to wind & weather conditions were diverted to Tianjin airport & spent over 4 hrs. there in an increasingly full waiting room. Arrangements were made for us to have lunch there about 3 pm. Talked to an actor who has been in a movie "The Horse Drawn Carriage" (as Grandpa). Arrived Beijing about 5 pm, & greeted by our new local guide, a rather brash young fellow, Dzechu. Big discussion what we want to do here as 1/2 day has been lost. He insists on taking us for another meal at 6 pm. The airport is an hour from city. High block like buildings, v. wide streets, much more reconstruction has been done here. More cars & some motor scooters. After meal went to Xi Yuan Hotel, very fancy. John & Marleen find the bed has a broken leg, but the management fix this with an inverted tea cup! Bernie & I are sharing a luxury suite with large marble bathroom. Went up to 25th Floor to revolving deck. Left to bed early

Friday, 31 March

11

Brief walk outside before breakfast. Had western breakfast for a change - eggs, toast, oranges, coffee - all in plenty. Long drive out to the Ming Tombs, with lots of donkey-drawn vehicles on the roads. Our guide cautions us about the gigantic free market vendors at the parking lot for the Ming Tombs. "Hello, hello, tourist, change your money". I bought a cloisonné trinket. A v. hot day. Approach to tombs similar to the one at Nanjing - this time we go inside.

Then on to the Great Wall + we have lunch before setting forth. Very hot. I went to the left with Ray + Anita + my stick was a huge help as the steps are very steep in some places. Went as far as the tower where the wall is crumbling. Ray went on quite a bit further using donkey trails. By now several of the others in our group joined us. The wall at this Da Ba Ling section is at the 800m level. v. dry, arid mountain ranges, with the wall snaking away in the distance. We all bought T-shirts (mine, a dragon design). On the drive back Dzehu, our guide, tried to encourage us to shop at a very expensive store, + we wondered if he would get commission! We all changed into our newly bought T-shirts for supper - the famous Beijing Duck meal. Then back to our hotel + Bernie + I lay on our beds gossiping for about an hour. Bernie has now discovered our plane time for departure is 12:30pm, not 14:30 so we lose even more time in Beijing.

12. Saturday, April 1

This is the day for the Forbidden City & the Summer Palace. Unfortunately, our guide Dzehn has ~~all~~ ^{most of} the time had along with him another guide, temporarily out of work, & today we are left to his mercies as Dzehn is still sorting out the air line ticket problem. The stand-in guide is not a great success, & at the Forbidden City he misses out the Treasures (says CYTS has not given him vouchers for that) & he seems to have got lost somewhere. We never see the Wall of Dragons, aren't routed back through some gardens. Instead we have a long walk back via the alley ways where probably the lowliest servants in the days of the Dynasties did their lowliest work. Some of the decor in the Imperial Palace recalls to me Prinnie's Brighton Pavilion interior decor.

After lunch, to the Summer ~~Palace~~ ^{Palace} that's quite a drive out of Beijing. Our guide's leadership qualities are no better. The Long Walk is lovely beside the lake. Somewhere here Jungles lost her passport & her money. Bernie thinks this was the work of a pick pocket.

Then another Friendship Store, and supper at "The Young Swan". Bernie did not like this, as it was the same place as last year with equally bad service.

all through the trip Joanne has been handing out balloons to small kids & taking pictures of them. She still has some balloons, and as it is a beautiful evening & we have time to go & see the Tian An Men Square, she ~~has~~ blows up her balloons & the young Teixeiras &

she go dashing about the Square giving balloons to kids. This has been "Ancestor Worship" week when the people go visit the graves of their ancestors & heroes, so there are plenty of families in the Square. There are wreaths around the central monument.

Now we are taken to a theatre to see performance of "Prosperity Returns to the Qing Dynasty", a v. colourful spectacle - a new venture instead of Peking Opera (which is pretty well incomprehensible to Westerners). This has no plot, but is lovely dancing & singing in traditional style. Very like the "Mikado" (but surely "Mikado" was Japanese?).

Had a bath this night & slept well, but am developing a Chinese cold (everyone does).

Sunday, 2 April. Departure day.

Packed, then went along to the Zoo passing little booths that sell breakfast foods. (Before leaving the hotel we had looked out of our 5-star hotel 8th Floor window to the very poor hovels just below us & watched the folks having a wash out in the yard, taking a bowl of rice in for breakfast, & hurling slops from their upper floor out into the yard) Bernie joined me on the way to the Zoo & there was a crowd around the Gate fighting for admission. - Admission fee = 10 fen. We saw 3 Giant Pandas, one of them is quite an extrovert. Saw cranes ducks & pelicans by the lake. Willows coming into leaf.

Chinese breakfast, baggage ready 9 am. Leave in bus for airport at 9.30. There is no sight seeing possible today, & some of the

14 group are disappointed that they have never managed to see one a cloisonné factory. Changed money at airport back into U.S. \$. We fly to Shanghai (1½ hr trip) from where we exit from China. Jungles has to pay a fine for having no passport, but fortunately we have a group VISA. It is raining in Shanghai. Flight leaves for Vancouver 16:50. On the flight we are once more issued with blue booties & are all given a little leather change purse & a tie clip as parting gifts. We cross the date line again so when we arrive in Vancouver & the clocks have gone forward onto Summer Time it is still Sunday, April 2, & we arrive one hour earlier than we left!

* 1989 value - \$100 CDN = 311
 * FEC = Foreign exchange currency

General Notes

Chong was our National Guide, to accompany us to Shanghai & Beijing & supposedly to liaise with the local guides, but she has been very ineffective. Bernice has had to take total control & has got very fed up with her. Joanna thinks she is homesick, (but she is not a kid). I think she has looked very disconsolate, & might be having boy friend troubles. She has just been spaced out. Guides (both local & national) do very well on tips. They also like to make purchases for us. We give them our FEC money, * but they pay the vendor in Renminbi (the People's money). They thus make about 80% profit. Dzechu will probably be v. successful in the travel business.

Our group has been very harmonious & pleasant, but Bernie says it is quite different from last year's, when she had the Pages & the Spearings. Our group's dominant feature has been the mania for shopping. However, China wants lots of hard currency.

Traffic - Only saw one accident, on the last day, during our whole visit. A bike & side car had been swiped & the traffic cops were there.

Smoking. They all smoke here, no one seems to have heard about lung cancer. But there is no drug problem.

None of us got sick, except for colds. The tourist authorities are very particular about the restaurants tourists are taken to.

Traditional Medicine Hospital. I omitted to mention on Page 8 that at Changzhou we were taken to see the Chinese Hospital & visited 3 departments, - acupuncture, massage & herbal medicines. Acupuncture is similar to that done in Victoria (but not always with electric current) massage is entirely by hand.

P.T.O.

16. Earnings

Now that free enterprise is being encouraged, the factory workers are coming very badly out of it. They earn 80¥ a month (3¥ = \$1.00). The vendors in the free markets can make 2000¥ in a month (so our Beijing guide told us). The farmers also can sell ~~40%~~ 40% of their produce on the free market. It is true that the factory pays part of the factory worker's rent, but the gap in earnings is widening.