

"Impressions of China"

Well, if I had to sum up my experiences here in Beijing thus far, I'd describe them in one familiar word of mine . . . AWESOME! This has definitely been an intense growing period for everybody over here. Actually, anyone who has the opportunity to travel overseas should definitely try to do it.

As much as I love life and admire its beauty during hard times, I can't stress more the importance of placing yourself in new environments so you can witness growth in action. The more we open our minds and stretch our souls, the more we reveal our individuality in society and thus function as a productive whole.

You don't have to be in China to realize this, but what you witness here sure helps focus your mind on those

things which are most important. Personally, what I cherish in my heart (faith, love, family, and friends) is what holds my ground when things start shaking. Take time to appreciate those people or experiences which have made your life what it is today because you may not be here tomorrow.

Man, this place is incredible! End the semester with a smile. It's almost over!

Take care,
Love you all
Becky Loffert

*To graduating Seniors, JUST GET OFF ON LIFE, O.K.?

*To the rest of us, see ya fall term!

*One by One, I climb the steps
of my desire to comprehend
The wrinkled knowledge
of the grannies that pass me
on this road to longevity.
(And Tommy and Kevin are so far
away -)*

*A miniature Tiger
named for her motherland
Possesses that beautiful quality
that lures me in and drives me
away*

*from mystical enlightenment
(As they bicycle through seas of
qiche's)*

*As I saddle by broken-down steed
for it's ridden down luggie lane
Past the Uyger vendors
with their mutton-head ornaments
(And I whiff the aroma of a nearby
cesou)*

*I indulge in this escape to reality
So stark in the gloom of the faces
of these meili zhongguo ren
whose self-respect is higher
than Ganza spirits
(As sardine can #121 sputters close
to my left)*

*My only dreams of Meiguo
involve crispy-fresh garden growns
to dip in creamy dressing
and a trip to the train station
without hearing "Mei you"
(And I stumble ove potholes as I
lead by bike through the shad
owed streets)
- Carie Guppy*



Although some who have lived here a month say they know what the Chinese are thinking when they interact with us foreigners, I don't, in truth, know how the Chinese mind works. I know that they are very curious as to what we are, and that they think we are funny - thank God. In the showers they are curious about our bodies; the latest term for some Westerners is "the whites" which I suppose is plain color, and they want to find out if our genital anatomy is really like theirs.

If a Western wallet is opened in a crowded department store, a curious crowd usually forms. I think they want to know how much is in there, and of course, a Westerner fumbling with a wad of different currencies is always good for a smile. They do take care of us, much like one would help an ignorant child. They will count out your money with no idea of taking some for themselves.

If you're hungry, they insist on feeding you, or if you are not hungry, they will insist on feeding you. In greeting a person on the street, you can ask them if they've eaten - much like saying hello. Never say that you haven't eaten, and to tell the truth I've never met an unfilled person in Beijing.

To the Western mind, there are large incongruities in Chinese life. It seems everyone here has at least one job, yet many don't work on the job. Store clerks sit like wax dummies while an enthusiastic crowd hisses and snarls for sale items.

To the untrained Western ear, the Beijing dialect sounds like cats fighting. Yet with rudiment. Any language study, one realizes that these humanly impossible sounds carry the constant flow of comment present in any Chinese crowd.

Crowds are everywhere - the impression is that there are too many people in China. Crowds line up to see the body of Chairman Mao. We joined that impatient line yesterday - Mao is still dead.

Most lives here have had a ten year gap, the cultural revolution, torn from them. During the revolution educational institutions were converted into factories that produced one product - adherents to the Chairman's little red book.

Lastly, the Chinese people are poor yet rich, they are wretched yet happy, they are an enigma yet just like us and they are a great people to be with.

Leon Applegate

China is one industrialized country that is yet untouched by the West in many ways, but that is changing. Last night I was talking to some Chinese girlfriends, and they wanted me to explain the difference between "boyfriend" and "lover." In the streets, the phrases a Westerner hears most often after "mei you" (don't have) are "Hello!" and "Change money?" Everyone wants an American friends, to learn English, to go to the U.S. I want to tell them, "it's just a fad, a phase you're going through. Be patient . . . it'll pass." But China is running headlong into the future.

China is a wall-dust, crowds, and sidewalk political propoganda. But the true face of the Middle Kingdom is reflected in its old faces. They stare with a mixture of curiosity and naivete,

not having seen foreigners until recently. Children urinate in the road, chickens and fish hang from bicycle handlebars, sheep graze in the side alley. And the rural lifestyle hasn't changed much in decades, except that the boy digging a trench might be standing by a telephone pole.

Yuppies, Nintendo, and cream cheese are hard to come by, but give them a few years. China was built on the backs of her people, it's true. And underneath its calm surface, Beijing may be ready to erupt with inner-Party factionalism. But the uncertainty is part of the adventure. If I had wanted it Western, I could have stayed home. If the East is Red, then maybe Red ain't such a bad color.

Pam Whitfield



The adults quickly glance away when you turn toward them, but the children stare openly, curiously. How can a person have yellow hair and BLUE eyes? I feel the small fingers tentatively touch my hand as I grip the subway bar. I turn to see a tiny Chinese scurrying back to her mother's skirt. She peeks out to smile shyly at me.

I am teaching English two nights a week. These are excerpts from my students' journals:

"I am 20 years old, I am dying for the Hunger of Truth in China (this is what I wrote on the wall on the beach of Sanya). I like thinking on philosophy of life, and like reading books, enjoy music, I travel a lot but I can easily get bored with the nonsense of life. I take my life as a Hell sometimes and sometimes enjoy it as a Paradise."

"I don't know which is the best way of learning English. How to learn and how to use English very well. I hope my teacher, Miss Amy could help me.

I earn 180.00 yuan monthly. But I have spent 400.00 yuan on English.

Including my wife, we have spendd about 900.00 yuan on learning English. We must study English very well.

If we cannot learn English well, we shall not want any child even though we are both 28 years old."

Campus life:

"Anyone know what's for dinner?"
Unanimous response, "Rice."

Walking to class I pass by some of my Chinese friends. We exchange glances of recognition but nothing else because teachers are watching. We meet off campus to do things together. The school officials say that they want Chinese and American students to become friends, but we know better . . .

The young Chinese with middle-aged minds watch us 'waiguoren' in our snowball fight with envious eyes. They long to let the children inside free to come and play with us but, they cannot. I do not fully understand why.

Amy Snow

- Do you have any desire to travel to the United States?

- Yes I do very much, but I can not travel right away. I have to work for six years after I graduate before I can travel. Ever since the incident in Tian'anmen the government created a new policy stating that students who are to become teachers can not teach abroad until we have taught in China for six years. After the six years I can go.

- Do you have a choice of where you can teach or does the government just put you in a position?

- I can choose, but it's a very limited choice. It also depends on my grades. The better grades I receive, the better jobs. I don't have to work right away, but then I would have to pay the government back for my education. But that is not possible.

- Whv?

- Because my family cannot afford it. That is why I'm becoming a teacher. The government pays for my education and I already have a job after graduation. I like teaching o.k., but there are better things to do.

- Like what?

- Well, I always dreamed of being a dancer. I can't do it thought, because I will have no work. I want to study some place where dancing is popular, but my parents can't afford it. They only make about 200-300 kuai a month. I probably won't even be able to travel to the U.S. after I have taught for six years. It's almost impossible because of financial reasons. It's too expensive. You are very fortunate that you can study in China.

- Yes, I am!

Lorrie Jean

Cheneyde

*crawling through valleys
with trees knee deep in snow
pollution rising
above the pagodas
of red and green temples
we climb
to meet a 28 year old woman
who flatters us
with her clear Chinese
whose father
is too bashful to speak*

*this peak is the emperor's
phallus, a monument
carved by nature
in clear view
of his one-time palace
teaching the concubines
respect
teaching villagers
fear
I touch it's base
for good luck
or sexual potency
or whatever it might be good for*

*not even the brush moves
nothing to hear
nothing to give
but sweat and breath
that becomes the wind
that carves rocks
to celebrate the anatomy
of emperors
or at least their zest
for living*

*the old man
descends by a different path
for him
the villages on either side
are equally far
the straw basket has
lengthened his arm
like the climb has
lengthened his years*

- Pam Whitfield

