

PKS Couple Find China Booming

By Linda Seale

Plans for our trip to China and Korea began last year when our goddaughter Emily Durham received a Fulbright scholarship to teach English for a year in South Korea. Some of

you may remember Emily who lived with us in the summer of 2006 working as an intern at the aquarium. We signed up for an Elderhostel study program that took us to China for 27 days followed by our own 10-day trip to South Korea.

China is home to 1.35 billion people who are warm and friendly and very proud of their ancient history and current progress. It has been said that China is like a sleeping dragon: awaken it at your peril.

Believe us, China is awake! Growth is out of control and this was most evident in our first stop, Beijing, where they are frantically preparing for the Olympics. When asked our impression of Beijing, we both said "demolition, construction, and air pollution." We happened to arrive during the three day holiday of Grave Sweeping where the graves of ancestors are cleaned and gaily decorated. Therefore, we were accompanied at the Forbidden City, Tiennamen Square, and most especially the Great Wall by hoards of vacationing Chinese. Total culture immersion!

A six hour train ride took us to Luoyang where a visit to Longman Grottoes with its 110,000 Buddhas carved into the limestone caves and cliffs was a highlight. Of course our visit to Xi'an included a tour of the Terra Cotta Warriors which were awesome. A three-day river journey on the Yangtze through the Three Gorges, the Lesser Gorges and the Mini Gorges was misty, cold and beautiful. We visited the birthplace of Chairman Mao and we spent four days in the mountains learning about the minority tribe, the

Miao. We stayed in ten different cities and really had a chance to see much of the country. Since this was a study trip we enjoyed lectures on Chinese Culture and

crazy in anticipation of the arrival of the Olympic Torch. Busloads of Chinese students filled the streets waving flags and banners while waiting all day for the torch which finally passed us at 7 p.m. We also took a day trip north to the DMZ. This tour is run by the USO and took us to Check Point Charlie, the MAC building, Checkpoint 3, the Bridge of No Return and the Third Tunnel. It was a sobering experience.

We spent a marvelous evening with Patrick Gahan, his wife Charmaine and their daughter

in their home this year - the parents and their three host sisters who are pen-pals with our granddaughters. The funniest experience we had on the trip was at the hotel in Hongseong. As we prepared for bed the first evening we realized there were no sheets on the bed. Assuming the room had not been made up properly, we went down to ask for sheets. The fellow followed us up to our room since we had a major communication problem. By sign language and body language we came to understand that one sleeps on the mattress pad! We should have had a video of this conversation! Another day, the high speed KTX train whisked us to Busan, a huge port city at the southern end of South Korea, to see the ocean and visit a cliffside temple. Thus, in a few short days we covered the length of South Korea from the DMZ to the Sea of Japan. Our final day back in Seoul was the eve of the ten-day celebration of Buddha's birthday so the city was festive with gaily colored

lanterns, musical performances, parades, food vendors and shoulder-to-shoulder people in for the holiday. We said a sad goodbye to Emily on Sunday but look forward to her return to North Carolina in July.

One reason to travel is to experience the land, people, language, food and customs of another country. We were most fortunate to have so many marvelous opportunities in both countries. It is truly a

"Wonderful World." It is also awesome to realize we can travel so far in a relatively short time. Incredible as it seems, on Thursday, May 1, we dipped our toes in the Sea of Japan in Pusan. On Sunday, May 4, we dipped our toes into the Pacific during our layover in Los Angeles. And on Tuesday, May 6, we dipped our toes into the Atlantic, safely and happily back home in Pine Knoll Shores.



history, its land and peoples, its language and calligraphy, and rice, tea and silk cultivation. We visited museums to see treasures and relics and paintings, we attended performances of native music and dance, earth opera and acrobatics, visited primary schools and universities, practiced Tai ji, and picked tea and had a tea ceremony. We rode in rickshaw and bus, boats and sampans and subway and trains. In Shanghai we experienced the ultimate train ride when we took the Maglev or Magnetic Levitation train reaching a speed of 431 Km/hr!

This train "runs without wheels and flies without wings." And, of course, we ate fabulous food. Despite warnings to the contrary, we still like Chinese food!

Our Korean adventure began in Seoul where we met Emily and spent the weekend exploring the city, attending a Buddhist Temple program, and enjoying a performance of Korean Traditional Song and Dance. On Sunday the city went

Natalie at their home in Seoul. Patrick is Arlene Terrell's son and Natalie is, of course, her granddaughter.

We then traveled by train to the city of Hongseong where Emily is living and teaching English to fifth and sixth grade students. We spent one morning at school "teaching" with Emily, which was great fun. Even more special was the chance to meet the family that has hosted Emily