

Bill and Nancy's Trip to
Beijing and Shanghai

Nancy's Travel Journal
April, 2004



Day 1 April 23, 2004 (Friday)

We arrived in Beijing at 5:30 in the morning feeling great. The “No Jet Lag” tablets worked like a charm. Our Chinese guides, James and David, herded us onto the bus headed for our hotel. James did a big sales pitch pushing extra tours. Almost everyone signed up, except for Bill and me. Our goal was to explore China on our own and mingle with the folks in Beijing and Shanghai. We did not want to be corralled in a group of Americans. Being free from the herd proved to be an excellent choice.

On the way to the hotel, I asked James, “What happened to all the pollution in Beijing?” Five years ago, that brownish gray yuck hung over the city - but now I could see clearly. James said that the government is doing everything to clean up the city. They planted thousands of trees. That alone has reduced the pollution by 20%. The city is now a forested area. Most major walkways have four trees abreast.



*Strolling Down the Tree-lined Avenue
Near Our Hotel*

I wondered how the trees matured in just a few years. Later Bill and I discovered the reason. Late one night we saw a steady stream of large trucks each carrying a huge tree to be planted in the city. It was amazing to see such greenery.

The 2008 Olympics, Beijing’s debut to the world, is the driving force to beautify this old city. We saw big changes since the last time we were in China in 1999.

NOTE: I was the designated tour guide for Beijing. Bill’s assignment was Shanghai. I studied those Beijing guidebooks and was prepared!



Capital Hotel - Our Home in Beijing

The Capital Hotel was as nice as it was five years ago. At 8:30 a.m., we arrived at the hotel and had a big buffet breakfast. Before we left, we wrapped extra French bread, cheese and ham in our napkins to smuggle them out for our lunch later in the day. We went to our room to unpack and then hit the tree-lined streets on our own while the rest of our comrades boarded two big buses for their first of many tours.



Shopping Malls on Wangfujing Street

Our first stop was the Wangfujing Shopping Street, right around the block from our hotel. We couldn’t believe our eyes -- Wangfujing is the commercial heart of Beijing, the modern face of China. We saw row after row of classy high-rise mega malls packed with shoppers carrying bags full of merchandise.

We found the Foreign Language Bookstore, a large four-story building, and bought a map. Now we were ready to do Beijing. Believe me, this place is no third world country – marble floors, elegant stores and displays that knock your socks off. They have many clever ways to advertise products -- even the luggage conveyer belts at the airport displayed billboard ads. In fact, China is better at capitalism than the good ole U.S. A.

Bill took a picture of a beautiful “live” model that winked at us from the store window.



Smile for the Camera!



Cute little Chinese girls were promoting make up – Estee Lauder must be turning over in her grave!



How 'bout a Make-Over?

No wonder foreign investors want a piece of this commercial action. China has millions of people with a few bucks in the bank and strong consumer tendencies (just like the rest of us). From what we observed, China is better at capitalism than the good ole U. S. of A.

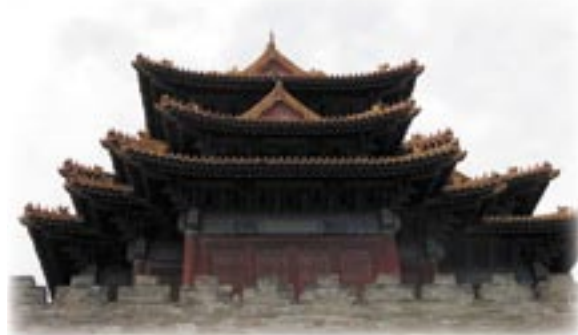
However, just off the main shopping drag, tucked down alleyways, the old marketplaces still stand.



What a Difference a Block Makes

From the Shopping Malls to Ancient China

We left the commercial area and headed east toward the Forbidden City. We covered the Forbidden City (and all its crowds) in 1999. This time, we walked along the moat and ancient walls, pursued by postcard vendors. A huge cedar woods once covered this entire area – now only a few cedar trees remain. The area was still gorgeous and the vendors still annoying.



*Outside the wall of the Forbidden City
(Forbidden City Rooftops)*

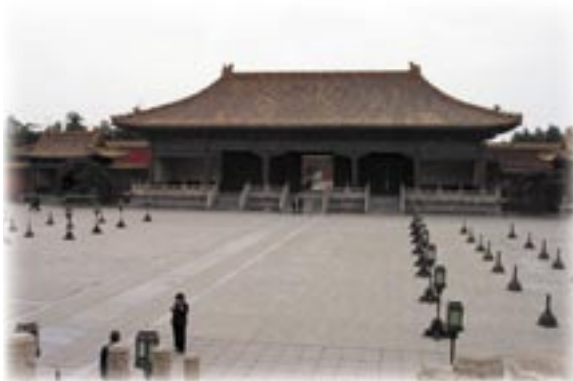
We grew weary of the street vendors so we paid a couple of bucks to duck inside Tai Miao. It was money well spent! Tai Miao was the place to honor the imperial ancestors who were former residents of The Forbidden City (just across the street). It is the only example of an imperial ancestral hall remaining in China. The buildings and surrounding gardens were magnificent, just like The Forbidden City, but without the crowds.



Tai Miao

Worship of Ancient Imperial Ancestors

Wooden tablets once commemorated the ancestors. However, during the Cultural Revolution, these tablets were pilfered. There was an Altar of Land and Grain and beyond a gate (untouched since it was constructed in 1420), three main buildings lined up on a central axis -- oh so Chinese.



Southern most Building - Tai Miao

Sacrifices to the ancestors once took place in the southern most building, but now it houses some bronze bells. We passed on the bells -- didn't care to see them when they were touring in San Diego, so why bother now?

Chairman Mao renamed this sacred ancestor site "The Workers' Cultural Palace." He and his

"workers" really messed up the grand historical landmarks all over China. The workers have moved on, and the complex is largely deserted, but a nice place to stroll and enjoy the sandwiches we took from our breakfast buffet. However, it was a little irritating when a Chinese guy dressed in a nice business suit hovered around us while he talked on his cell phone. What the heck was he up to? We gobbled up our sandwiches before we could find out -- first day paranoia, I suppose.

First Glimpse at Tiananmen Square

During our last trip, we only did a "drive-by" viewing of Tiananmen Square because it was closed for renovation in preparation for the 50th anniversary of Communism. Others speculated that the real reason was to avoid any gatherings commemorating the 10th anniversary of the deadly student revolt in 1989.

Tiananmen Square is the world's largest public square. It's mostly a concrete slab the size of 90 football fields. The square has lots of people, a few structures and fewer trees. On the west side of the square is The Great Hall of the People.



The Great Hall of the People

The Museum of Chinese History and Revolution is on the east side.



The Museum of Chinese History and Revolution

A couple of huge gates stood at the south of the square.



Front Gate (Qian Men)



Arrow Tower (Jian Lou)

In the center of Tiananmen Square is Mao's Mausoleum along with a granite obelisk erected in 1958 showing scenes of the communist uprising.



*Granite Obelisk in Center of the Square
(Mao's Mausoleum, left of photo)*

The square was packed with people – mostly families. We saw lots of only children (little emperors and empresses) surrounded by loving parents and grandparents.



The Little Emperor



3 Chinese Siblings? How Can That Be?

Most of the people appeared to be poor, country bumpkins, certainly not the stylish Chinese shopping just a few blocks away at the malls.

We just hung out at the park, watching the people and the marching soldiers. They were watching us as well. There are not many of us "Big-Nose Foreign Devils" traveling on their own. Even the large groups of Chinese (wearing the same color baseball caps) were touring together, following their leader's flag.



Chinese Tourists - Money to Travel!

We gave the children toys (made in China, but brought from home) and took lots of pictures.

Almost all the children were reluctant to take the gifts. The parents had to encourage them, then came the smiles and thank you's.



It's OK



Field Trip to Tiananmen Square



Proud Little Soldier

We were shocked to see a woman yelling at a man in the park. Crowds gathered, police came and the woman ran away crying. So unusual to see such behavior in Asian cultures. We decided to move on down the road and explore an old shopping and residential area south of Tiananmen Square.

Walking Tour in Liulichang Dong Jie

The farther south we walked from Tiananmen Square, the narrower and more meandering the streets became. We found ourselves in a maze of the old shops and neighborhoods called "hutongs."

First we made our way through a jumble of stands, shops, hole-in-the-wall cafes and carts peddling goods -- fruits, vegetables, cheap clothing and your basic bric-a-brac. The vendors wanted us to buy their goods and the cooks wanted us to try their goodies.



Lunch Time



Hole-in-the-Wall Cafe -- Mmmm, Try Some!



Street Scene



Shopping, The Old Fashion Way

We also saw several “beauty shops” with hairdressers hanging out in the doorways and windows. Later, we learned that these “hairdressers” didn’t really cut hair, but were practicing the oldest profession. We were strangers in a strange land and the experience was great fun!

After the local shopping area, we entered a quaint residential area. The courtyard houses lead out into narrow alleys. They are hundreds of years old, have no indoor plumbing and are in danger of disappearing as bulldozers clear the precious land for high rises.



Narrow Alleys



Running Home - Late for Dinner?

We saw a lot of people – children playing, old men just hanging out, grandmothers knitting, guys pulling carts and bicycles everywhere.



*Checking the Laundry
Hanging in the Courtyard Entrance*



A Cutie Pie Thanking us for Her Little Toy



Who are the People in Your Neighborhood?

We also smelled the public toilets as we walked by. (A few less quaint hutongs and a few more high rises, with modern facilities, might not be so bad.)

In the next neighborhood, the hutongs were much classier. They definitely had been remodeled and I assume, with the latest plumbing tucked behind those ancient reconstructed walls.

We found the Post Office in the middle of a lovely community. Even without language or street signs in the twisty, narrow alleys, we were right on course.



The Old Post Office

As we walked on, the houses turned to shops. These shops once were two- and three-story houses with beautifully carved wooden balconies that hinted at past wealth.



Shop Across the Street from the Post Office

The old shops have some of Beijing's oldest retailers and remain the proletarian answer to Wangfujing (the fancy malls we saw in the morning). Here, we saw China as it once was – filled with shops selling Chinese medicines, books, jade, antiques, art supplies (paper, ink stones, chopsticks, brushes, and frames), woodblocks, paintings, calligraphy, traditional Chinese instruments, lacquer ware, ceramics, cloisonné, jewelry and lots of other curio shops mixed in.



Cool Curio Shop (Is that a Bar Next Door?)

We discovered a small wooden carving museum that was once a resident for a wealthy family. All the items were donated by some rich and famous Chinese gal (somebody named Song). A darling young Chinese guide showed us around and pronounced English words in the cutest way. Instead of absorbing the information presented on all those wood carvings, we had more fun just seeing the old house and exchanging constant smiles with our guide.



Shy Little Chinese Guide - Out of Smiles

We stopped in at a tea shop. The young girls wanted to serve us tea, but we needed our afternoon beer, not tea. Chinese don't have many bars and are mostly "tea-tottlers." At last, we found a little restaurant that happily served up a local brew for us.

On the way back to the hotel, we stopped at an Internet Café (three-stories up in an old Railway Station) to check for messages from home.



Beijing Internet Cafe - Connection to Home



Cool Internet Sign



*Bill Checking the Market
Can we afford this trip?*

The Internet place would become our connection to home. We stopped there often and played with the two little puppies the owner just adopted.



Owner with One of the Puppies

No mail from home. We sent a message to Amy, Brian and ZiZi to touch bases and let them know we were roaming the streets of Beijing.

We walked back to the hotel to relax and find a restaurant recommendation in our guide book. Bill found one called BTBS - "Be There or Be Square." It was nearby, located in the basement of the Oriental Plaza (one of fancy malls we visited earlier). The place was just what we needed – hot tea and noodle dishes. It was all very good and modern and cheap!

We went back to our room, happy travelers with tummies filled and ready for bed. We had been on the go since we "de-planed" at 5:30 this morning. My first day as Tour Director was a success – covered a lot of territory and didn't get lost once.



Tiananmen Square at Night

Day 2 April 24, 2004 (Saturday)

As usual, we had a big buffet breakfast at the hotel and then wrapped up extra goodies for our lunch -- French bread, cheese and ham.

Our first stop was Tiananmen Square to view Mao's body.



Tiananmen Square

Because it was Saturday and a week before the big May Day holiday, Tiananmen Square was packed with Chinese sightseers. May Day (May 1st) came to China from the western world and it's really big. People take off a week from work to travel with their families. We were one of the few Anglo-looking types on the square.



Chinese sightseers - Tiananmen Square

Outside Mao's Mausoleum, there was a long line that snaked its way around the square. There was also some confusion about where to check our backpacks. We finally figured it out, disposed of our bags and got in line. The line moved quickly -- took only 30 minutes to make our way into the mausoleum. Most of the folks, clustered in family groups, appeared to be poor with worn out clothing and shoes, and greasy hair. The crowds were very serious as they paid homage to their national hero. A large marble statue of Mao Zedong sitting in a chair -- kind of

like our Abe Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial was in the mausoleum entry hall. In Reverence Hall, Mao laid in a crystal casket that is lowered into a freezer every night. Mao looked like he was made of wax -- really spooky. His whole body was draped with the Chinese flag so you could only see his rubbery fat face. (Ho Chi Minh looked much better when we visited him in Hanoi.)

Next stop - inside The Gate of Heavenly Peace -- Tiananmen Square's northern most gate.



Gate of Heavenly Peace



Mao's portrait hangs above the center door. Once inside, we bought tickets -- for what we weren't sure. This language thing can be challenging (and fun, too). Males and females were corralled into separate lines. I was a little worried about the setup until I figured out that some of the people in line were frisked and the Chinese promote same-sex frisking.



Inside the Walls - Gate of Heavenly Peace

Our tickets took us to the upper platform for amazing views of Tiananmen Square. It was here, on October 1, 1949, that Mao, with his little red book in hand, declared the founding of the People's Republic to the crowds below. In the huge room behind the platform, we saw where Mao met with the leaders.

From the platform, we saw all the cranes and construction equipment in the distance. Beijing has 1/5 of all the construction cranes in the world. Skyscrapers are going up daily.



Beijing - A Booming Town

We saw a weird contraption attached to each of the large columns on the platform. Five or six "I-V" bottles filled with liquid were attached with twine around each of the columns. Plastic tubes from the bottles dripped the liquid directly into the columns. GO FIGURE!



What the heck is this?

People were buying junky Mao souvenirs everywhere in the square. We got into a little trouble with the guards when I tried to get Bill to videotape me with the guard. The guard put up his hand -- They don't take kindly to that behavior!

We ate our packed lunch (from breakfast) in a little park next to Tiananmen Square. I gave out toys to kids that wandered by. One little boy was very reluctant to accept the little car from us (even though it was originally made in China).

After lunch we walked through more hutongs. These narrow streets were even more fascinating than the ones we saw the day before -- so much life tucked away in the alleyways.



Hutong - Narrow Entrance to Courtyards

Occasionally long lines of rickshaws each peddling a couple of overweight Anglo tourists passed by. The tourists looked bored and confined in those little rickshaws.

Without a map, Bill guided us through the hutong maze to the next attraction -- the seldom-visited Underground City (Dixia Cheng).



Underground City - a Rare Sign in English

Kelly, our guide, led us downstairs and through amazing tunnels connecting the residences of Party leaders at Zhong Nan Hai to the Great Hall of the People and the numerous military bases to the west of town.

With just the three of us, Kelly led us through the dark, damp, and eerie tunnels. The floors were slippery and rusty wires littered the place. A portrait of Mao and a map of the tunnels were posted on the main entrance.



Kelly, Our Guide to the Underground

Army engineers built this secret network of tunnels during the 1960's. With border skirmishes with the USSR as the pretext, the tunnels could accommodate all of Beijing's six million inhabitants once completed -- or so it was boasted. In 1976 and 1989 large numbers of troops traveled through the tunnels and emerged from the Great Hall of the People to keep the people in check. With the recent construction boom there is only one remaining entrance to the non-secret tunnels (and we found it!).



Bill Lost in the Underground

At the end of the tunnel tour there was a silk shop (not the typical light - Ha, Ha). Kelly showed us how silk is unwound from the silk worm cocoons and then we watched five workers make silk blankets. They stretched layers of the fine fiber across a table. There was absolutely no pressure to buy. Kelly said she liked us and shared more information about the tunnel than she generally does. She also told us where to find the real silk (and jewelry) bargains in town.

NOTE: The ticket to the Underground City of Beijing reads: The tunnels were originally built as an air-raid shelter in 1969 and were completed ten years later. It can hold all the population in this district. It is divided into three sections for defense purposes and tunnels lead to different parts of the city forming an immense underground network. In 1979 it became a tourist attraction.

From the Underground City, we took a taxi to the Lama Temple (Yonghe Gong). We bought our tickets and rented audio headsets that turned out to be not very helpful, but very annoying.

The Lama Temple (Lama for Dahli Lama) is for the Chinese followers of Tibetan Buddhism. The temple, built in 1694, is a complex of progressively larger buildings topped with ornate yellow-tiled roofs and beautiful incense burners.



Lama Temple Grounds

There were a lot of young Chinese dressed in their western ware (i.e., blue jeans) hanging out around the incense burners worshipping Buddha, I suppose.



Teens Burning Incense

The temple complex went on and on. There were large buildings (with strange names like Hall of the Wheel of Law and Tower of Ten Thousand Happinesses) that housed large statues. One huge Buddha was made out of a single piece of sandalwood, a fact verified by a Guinness Book of World Record plaque posted outside.

After a couple of hours, we were “temped-out” -- so much to see. Because taxis are so reasonable and we were so tired of walking, we caught a cab to our next stop – Lao She’s great little courtyard house (Jinianguan No. 19). Lao She was one of China’s best-loved writers.



Lao She’s Courtyard House

He wrote “Rickshaw Boy” and several other famous books and plays (that I was unfamiliar with). When Lao She returned from overseas in 1950, former premier Zhou Enlai gave him this lovely, quiet courtyard house, in hopes that Lao would write to support the communist line. He didn’t and “drowned himself in a Cultural Revolution-induced suicide.” TRANSLATION – He was probably murdered by the Red Guard.

The house was just as he left it. I enjoyed the snoop and all the sweet family portraits.



Lao She’s Writing Table (AKA Desk)

Finished for the day, we had beer at a local restaurant across the street. The waitress reenacted pouring beer for Bill’s video camera. What sweetie pies.

We came back to the hotel and asked the receptionist to book us a reservation for an evening variety show at the Lao She Teahouse (named for the famous author we had just visited).

Bill found another winning spot for dinner – a place when translated means “Dogs Don’t Touch Dumplings.” The restaurant was packed with locals and the dumplings were to die for.



How I Miss Those Dumplings!

We shared a table with 4 other people (all Chinese, of course). One guy, who spoke perfect

English, ordered three bowls of soup, placed them carefully in a circle each with the spoon handles pointing outward. He worked on a little handheld computer and stopped occasionally to stir his soup, always placing the spoons and bowls in his set pattern. He told us he ordered three bowls of soup because he needs water. Other than being crazy, he was a very nice and interesting fellow.



Our Dinner with the Dumpling Guy



YUM YUM YUM!

After our cheap and wonderful dinner of pork and veggie dumplings, we roamed the streets looking for the Lao She Teahouse. Finally, we found the place in time for tea and the 90-minute variety show.

The Teahouse opened in the 20's. Tonight, as with most nights, it was packed with people sitting at black lacquered tables having tea and goodies. We were glad we made prior reservations because the show was sold out.

The walls were covered with photos of rich and famous folks who had visited the teahouse. In fact, we passed by a strange and funny statue of George H. Bush shaking hands with some Chinese guy in the foyer. I wonder if it was on that fateful trip when Bush up-chucked on the poor Chinese leader!



Statue to Honor George H. - "Big Bush"

We had a very good table close to the stage. The waitress brought us three little plates of goodies (figs, cookies, nuts, something unidentified) along with jasmine tea. Everyone had to pick the tea leaves out of their teeth – even the pros – so I didn't feel so bad.

After a few rounds of tea, the performance started. The show was hosted by an Asia version of Anita Bryant – aging, but trying desperately to hang onto some glamour (it wasn't working). And there was lots of variety --

Musicians with ancient instruments;

A terrific magician – just like in Vegas, only he was dressed in a long Asian robe with a beautiful assistant, also in a long Asian robe;

Two comedians dressed like bus drivers talking to each other in bird chirps – weird, but a clever way to break any language barrier;

A beautiful woman singing some really awful screechy songs;

Acrobats (some with swords, some balancing barrels on their head, etc.), and dancers.



Twirling a Planter on His Head

It was a lovely evening. We stopped at our local Internet place to check our e-mail. So nice to hear from Amy and find out how the birthday party planning is going for our big girl. Brian's hard at work constructing a May Pole as part of the festivities for Zi's third birthday party.

Day 3 April 25, 2004 (Sunday)

Rain in the afternoon! We had our big breakfast buffet at the hotel with wrapped, smuggled sandwiches to go.

We took the subway to the Back Lakes area. Beijing has a great, easy-to-use subway system. We were all over the city for just 35 cents a ride. Glad I got a copy of the subway map off the Internet before we left home -- no handy subway maps available at the station or anywhere else.



Beijing's Subway -- Fast, Cheap and Clean

We took the subway to the area north of the Back Lakes area and then walked to Xijiekou, a little shopping street known for clothing and CD's. The shops were filled with western-styles mixed with interesting Chinese designs. I bought Amy some pants (made in China -- with the GAP label attached) -- size XXL -- these folks are tiny.

After about an hour of shopping, Bill had had it. At last, he found the art museum tucked within the shopping area -- Xu Beihong Memorial Hall.



Xu Beihong Memorial Hall

We quickly recognized the watercolors because the copies of them are sold everywhere. Xu Beihong combined traditional Chinese brushwork with Western techniques he learned while studying and traveling in Europe. We were amazed by the large incredible collection housed in a little sad sack museum. His great works deserved better.

I especially liked Xu Beihong delicate, detailed hand stretches of Beijing in the 1920's. We saw many of those same scenes in the back alleys of Beijing just yesterday. Although modern, high tech buildings go up everyday, much of China remains the same.

After the museum, we headed south to the Back Lakes District -- a lovely area -- fast becoming "The Place" in Beijing. The area has three idyllic lakes and tree-shaded neighborhoods.



Floating Restaurants - Back Lakes District

We walked along the lakes and crossed marble bridges. We saw people fishing everywhere. It was very peaceful and quiet.



Fishing in the Back Lakes District

A few drops of rain fell on us and gray clouds were moving in. Maybe our luck with sunny weather had run out. I had my poncho for protection, but Bill, the plan ahead guy, left his umbrella back at the hotel.



Rain Over Marble Bridges

Beyond the lakes, stretching out to the east and west is the city's best-maintained network of hutongs. These were up-scale hutongs with charming little restaurants, shops and walled houses. Many families have lived in these lanes for generations. Prior to 1911, only wealthy residents with connections to the imperial family were allowed to live here.



Back Lake Lanes

A block-long of parked rickshaws, filled with Anglo customers, dressed in rain gear, were waiting to tour the area for a fee of \$50, lunch included.

We visited the former imperial palace. Rumor has it that China's last emperor, Henry Puyi, was born here. And later, Soong Ching Ling (1892–1981) would lived in the palace.

Soong Ching Ling was the wife of Sun Yat-sen. He was 30 years her senior and a close friend of her parents. (The parents were against the marriage, which cooled down the friendship.) Sun Yat-sen was a little guy. He was a leader during the 1911 Revolution and later became the "Father of Modern China". He came from a poor farming family. He was very intelligence, well respected and wrote several books.



Bill Buying Tickets for the Imperial Palace

Back to our hero, Soong Ching Ling, the wife of Sun Yat-sen and former resident of the house....



Soong Ching Ling and Sun Yat-sen

The Chinese revere Soong Ching Ling as a modern Communist saint – educated in Wellesley, wealthy, adored children, and a friend of Mao to boot. She was the middle daughter of a famous Bible salesman, Charlie Soong. Her family was a leading supporter of the Nationalists while she remained neutral, leaning toward Communism.

Her younger sister married Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Nationalist Party and China's "Public Enemy Number 1" until his death in 1975.

Soong Ching Ling nearly died during the "white terror" of 1927 when the Nationalist Party was purged of Communist sympathizers. Can you imagine how those Soong family holiday gatherings might have been!

Sun Yat-sen died in 1925. In 1963, Mao rewarded Soong Ching Ling for her loyalty by giving her the house to live out her years (1981). We loved the grand old mansion with its wonderful rooms and beautiful gardens.



Guest House on the Palace Grounds



Garden Area with Covered Pass Ways



The Grand Old Mansion

We had to wear booties over our shoes to protect the floors. There weren't many people (tourists or guides) so we just roamed freely from room to room on our own.



Soong Ching Ling's Study and Bedroom

The last room was an exhibition on her life. We both got a good dose of Chinese history. Our knowledge is limited because in the 1950's, Texas schools weren't big on teaching anything that had to do with Commie Red China.

The light sprinkles were turning to rain, so we ate our sandwiches on the side porch. Unfortunately, after lunch, it started raining harder.

We removed our protective "booties" and once again, found ourselves lost in the Back Lakes' maze of streets. I put my poncho on and Bill bought a broken old umbrella from a local Chinese guy for a buck. We couldn't find the shop recommended in our guidebook, "The Zen Cat" (I was hoping for some cool stuff for our cat loving friends). We were sad because we could have walked for miles exploring this wonderful neighborhood. Instead, we picked our next indoor Back Lakes' attraction, Prince Gong's Mansion (Gong Wang Fu), the most lavish of the courtyard residences.



Prince Gong's Mansion

There were so many Chinese tour groups it was impossible to see the alleged spectacular gardens and pavilions. We just ran in the opposite direction to avoid the on-coming crowds of matching baseball caps. The only thing we got out of the experience was that it looked lavish and was built by a corrupt eunuch who stole money from the treasury.



Chinese Tour Groups - Getting out of the Rain



Visions of Umbrellas Everywhere

We caught a taxi and returned to our hotel to assess plans for the evening. It was too late to go to the Sunday Ghost Market, so we decided to go to another market. We didn't want to hassle with the subway, so, for a couple of bucks, we hailed a cab from our hotel.

After about 20 minutes of driving, the cab driver stopped, opened the door and indicated that we were at our destination. Bill pointed on his map and said, "This is not the place."

The non-English speaking cab driver communicated to us in no uncertain terms: "Yes it is" and dumped us out.

Luckily I spotted a metro stop right across the street. For 35 cents and a little delay, we were back on track.

Before we went to the market, we decided to have an early dinner. The place wasn't open, but the owner let us in to get out of the rain and have a drink. It was a Belgium restaurant called Morel's and was listed as "expensive" in the book.



Out of the Rain with a Nice Cold Beer

We both had Chateaubriand with some delicious sauce. The total was about \$15 with drinks and all (expensive? I don't think so). The dinner was good -- can't ever afford to order Chateaubriand in the States.

We finally found the four-story mega market. I was overwhelmed. Nothing "spoke" to me -- so we left empty-handed. Everyone was trying to strike a deal -- "Come back, come back" was the mantra. It was a long day. We took the subway back to the hotel to crash. Still raining

Day 4 April 26, 2004 (Monday)

Rain in the morning – But off to the Great Wall

Background Facts -- The Great Wall:

- Is not a single, continuous wall;
- Cannot be seen from space;
- Is the world's largest historical site;
- Is referred to in Mandarin as Wanli Changcheng ("10,000-Li Long Wall" or "Very Long Wall");
- Begins at Shanhai Guan on the Bo Hai Sea and snakes west to a fort at Jiayu Guan in the Gobi Desert, approximately 4,000 miles long;
- Was started in the Warring States Period (453-221 B.C.), when rival kingdoms built defensive walls for protection;
- Originally was built almost entirely from tamped earth, and often crumbled away within decades of being constructed;
- Was once considered a monument to folly until Westerners visited it and were impressed;
- Is now a source of national pride; and
- Was first promoted as a symbol of national strength by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, an idea the communists adopted, including it in the National Anthem.

Back to our story -- We had a big buffet breakfast at the hotel and with wrapped, smuggled sandwiches in hand, we were off to the Great Wall. It was still raining and had rained throughout the night, but we weren't about to miss the Great Wall. Four years ago we visited the Wall at Ba Da Ling, the section closest to Beijing. It is the most easily visited section and hence, very popular with tourists and tour buses. We decided to go Mutianyu, 56 miles NE of Beijing.



Great Wall - Section at Mutianyu

The hotel receptionist called a taxi for us. The cost was about \$50, but well worth it for a day's exploration of the wall. It rained during most of the taxi ride to Mutianyu, but as soon as we arrived, the sky cleared up.

The wall was as grand as I remembered, but those darn vendors with their stalls on the narrow lane leading to the entrance were pests. We found ourselves in a den of thieves. Because we were about the only tourists on that day, we were prime pickings – but we shoed them all away with the phrase, "Later, maybe later."

One guy tried to sell us a map of the area for \$5. I said the map looked like something you'd get when you buy your tickets, so we passed him by, although he lowered the price down to 25 cents. (By the way, we did get the same map when we purchased our tickets!)

The tickets were about \$4 each plus a few dollars extra for a one way ride on the cable car. The cable car was great fun – lifting us up the mountain with the incredible scenery and Great Wall perched on top. The area is heavily forested and especially photogenic in this foggy, misty weather, with occasional outbursts of sunshine.



Cable Car Ride to the Wall



Bill Shooting Video from the Cable Car

We loved walking up the mountains on the wall. Local women tried to sell us books and postcards. “No No,” we’d yell back playfully. One of the women followed us all the way to the top of the wall as we sped along hoping to lose her. She was huffing and puffing -- bet she doesn’t go to the gym every day! She asked how old Bill was and then said that we must be Germans – a real compliment. When she reached the top platform, Bill handed her a buck for the postcards.



To the Top!



The One Who Got a Buck from Bill!



Nancy with a View from the Top

We ate our pilfered sandwiches at the top, ducking down below the wall to avoid the wind. We

said “No” to one last vendor on the top who was trying to sell us a book.



Vendors at the Great Wall

We walked down the wall, marveling about the beauty. When we left the gate and entered the lane of vendors, we were in trouble again. They swarmed us like a pack of jackals. When we negotiated a deal, they changed their price or tried to confuse us with money exchange conversions. At the last stall, Bill bought two kid T-shirts for a buck each and while I was bargaining for my own T-shirt, they must have taken the kids’ T-shirts out of the bag, because, later on, the T-shirts were missing from all our stash in the bag.

We returned to the cab. The driver was waiting, ready to take us back to our hotel. I slept part of the way back.

Back at the hotel, I bought some cool things in the gift shop – a baby outfit for Susie, jade earrings, silk scarf, just to name a few. Everything was half price, plus they were bargaining. Bill rested in the room while I was on my personal shopping spree. I know I could have gotten better prices with Bill (the Real Negotiator), but I had to give it a try “all by myself” as Zi would say. (Glad the master wasn’t there to observe me!)

We walked to our local Internet Café to check our messages, have a beer and play with the puppies – going to miss those little puppies.

For dinner, we were both craving dumplings from the “Dogs Don’t Touch Dumplings” restaurant. This time they seated us upstairs. The darling servers, in their red dresses, were entertained by me using chopsticks to maneuver those big dumplings -- going to miss this place as well!

We came back to the hotel and packed for Shanghai. (Instructions -- Luggage outside the hotel door by 7:45 the next day – We’d be ready.)

Day 5 April 27, 2004 (Tuesday)

Rain is gone – sunshine is back! We got up about 4:30 and dashed to the 5:20 sunrise changing of the guards on Tiananmen Square. We saw lots of families and little children sitting on their parents' shoulders straining to see the action.



Can you see the soldiers marching?

We saw little of the procession, but heard the band play and felt the national pride well up in the crowds (which were HUGE). I took a lot of pictures with my digital camera and showed the screen display to my subjects. They loved seeing pictures of themselves instantly.



Cool Glasses



Keeping Warm in the Cool Early Morning Air



Pomp and Circumstances Over

After the ceremony, the people dispersed as quickly as they had gathered and the new guards began their watch over Tiananmen Square. It was time for families to go home and for vendors to start their day selling postcards, books, kites, anything else of interest to us tourists.



Skies Over The Square Filled with Kites



Kites -- One Dollar!

We came back to the hotel to have breakfast; then wrapped and smuggled sandwiches out, as usual.

We took a taxi to the park at the Temple of Heaven (Tian Tan Park), a very famous place. The beautiful grounds are laid out in one huge square shape to represent the earth, while the main temple's shape is round to represent heaven.



Entrance to the Temple of Heaven



The Main Temple



A Stroll Through the Park

Each winter solstice from about 1410, the Ming and Qing emperors would lead a procession here to perform rites and make sacrifices so that the harvest would be good and the empire would prosper. The last winter solstice celebration took

place in 1914 (12/23/14) when the unpopular emperor had to enter the Temple of Heaven in a bulletproof car.

Since we had already explored the Temple of Heaven on the last trip, we skipped the central part this time. Instead, we walked throughout the surrounding gardens. What a wonderful place to be in the morning with so much activity and so many people enjoying life.

There were many groups of people exercising, dancing and even singing.



Keep Those Arms Straight!



Watch Out for Your Neighbor



Doe, a Deer . . .

The dancing was the most fun to watch -- so many wanna-be Fred and Ginger's.



Ah One, Ah Two -- Ah Swinging Couple



It Takes Two to Tango

Several people were involved in individual exercise, doing strange things, like hitting themselves or rubbing their backs against the trees -- but the weirdest site was the large groups of people all walking together backwards.



Walking Backwards - Trust Me on This One!

Old guys were sitting around playing cards (or a form of checkers), women were knitting, and, of course, everyone was drinking tea. Some of the older men were practicing writing Chinese characters with large brushes (the size of mops) on the sidewalks. They painted with water because paper is so scarce.



Getting Those Characters Just Right



My Work Is Never Done



Check it Out Before It's All Dried Up

We especially loved interacting with the people, taking digital photos for instant review, giving toy trucks and stuffed animals to the grand kids, and even joining in on the fun. I tried my foot at "kick the feather ball" and then joined in on some Tai Chi. The folks seemed to appreciate my sad attempts. Everyone was having a marvelous time

-- so many smiles. On our way out of the park, we found the "60-Year-Old Gate." In 1769, the ruling emperor had reached the ripe old age of 60 and was having trouble walking all the way up to the altar on the main road. Thus, for the emperor's sake, a "short cut" gate was added.



60-Year Old Bill by the 60-Year Old Gate

Next we walked to the Museum of Ancient Architecture (Gudai Jianzhu Bowuguan).



*Across the Street from the Museum
(All Front Tires Point the Same Directions)*



*Museum of Ancient Architecture
(One of the Exhibition "Halls")*

There were very few tourists. The exhibitions were in a series of large ancient Chinese buildings (called halls) connected with courtyards.



Courtyard Display of Doorway Statues

There were English explanations of everything from the construction of the complicated brackets, which support temple roofs, to the role of geomancy in Chinese architectural thinking. Although we didn't comprehend many of the displays, we enjoyed viewing the large model of Beijing because we had seen most of the places.



Temple Roof - Brackets and Geomancy

We walked through the last large building to check out the altar of Agriculture where sacrifices to the gods were made.



Altar of Agriculture

In the courtyard, we met a lovely, gentle elderly couple. They were sitting on a bench by a tree, holding hands. I motioned with my camera that I wanted to take their picture. Instead of the usual

nod, the man spoke in perfect English, "Of course – and where are you from?" We launched into a nice conversation.



A Wonderful Couple

The man was a retired doctor and very familiar with Scripps Institute in La Jolla. The rest of his family all left the country after the Revolution. He stayed in China and worked as a doctor in the hospital where he was born. He and his wife had many struggles after 1949 – things, he said, that we can't even imagine – but now, he told us, there is so much hope for his country.

He was so excited to tell us about his father who turns 102 this week. The entire family is flying out to Beijing for a grand celebration.

He said that he and his wife come to this very spot in the museum courtyard everyday to enjoy the beauty. He knew so much about world events and of course, had grave concerns about Bush's limitations as a world leader. As we left, he wished us well and said, "Not only America, but the whole world needs John Kerry."

We left the museum grounds and grabbed a taxi to the Pearl Market – a huge market / department shop with loads of stalls. We were in the shopping spirit and quickly bought T-shirts; wine bottle covers, a ducky clock for Carolyn, a purse for Bill's sister and some other stuff that I can't quite recall. After some searching for the kid's toy department, we bought Zi a set of Monster's Inc. characters and a magnetic flying saucer.

NOTE: Later, at the airport, Bill spotted two other people playing with their flying saucers. The man paid 400 yuan (\$45) for his saucer while the woman paid 100 yuan (\$12). Bill, the bargaining master, only paid 30 yuan (\$4), but didn't say anything to the others.

We got back to our hotel, found an entrance to a private garden (where we were all alone) and ate

the sandwiches we had made from our breakfast buffet. It was very peaceful. Then we went into the lovely lobby and filled out our postcards while we waited for the bus to take us to the airport.



Capital Hotel Lobby

At 2:30 p.m., we took the bus to the airport. We had to wait for the other "Smartours" bus that had taken a wrong turn. Then we lined up to go through security. Bill forgot to pack his pocket knife in his suitcase and had to show it to the guard along with his keys. To our surprise, she waved him through with no problem. Guess Beijing isn't worried about tight security at the airport.

On the plane from Beijing to Shanghai, we sat next to Bob and Marseley from Sacramento, a nice couple from the Smartours group. Bob had a super-duper new digital camera that gave me "camera envy". The food on the plane was really bad – especially the fish, which I ordered. I couldn't eat it. Bob and Marseley graciously gave me all their extra rice and rolls so I wouldn't starve to death.

We asked Bob and Marseley how the guided tours were going. (Bill and I didn't buy any of the packaged tours – we were completely on our own.) Marseley reported that some of the people were just plain nuts. It wasn't difficult to guess who she was referring to. One person, named Andrea, was a real pest on our flight out from L.A., but we knew we wouldn't have to be around her very much, so we could spare a little kindness.

However, a lovely black family from Atlanta (I believe) is on the tour. About a dozen or so family members, from teen cousins to one great grandma, are all energetic and having the time of their lives. Great Grandma is a hoot. She

is in a wheel chair, but that doesn't dampen her spirits. Do wish I could get to know them better. One of their family members about our age, Nanci, seems like an Oprah, loaded with charm and charisma. She is out having all kinds of extra late night adventures and she's always the first at breakfast. We look forward to her reports.

When the plane landed in Shanghai, we went through SARS screening. The passengers all walked through a dimmed room with infrared light aimed at us. On a large video monitor, mounted in the corner of the room, I saw a sea of yellow and orange haloed faces. A red face indicated a fever and a possible SARS carrier. Red faces were taken aside for further investigation.



On SARS Watch at the Airport

The group made it through the screening. We collected our luggage and boarded the bus.

We arrived at our home in Shanghai, The Ocean Hotel about 8:30 p.m., exhausted and ready for bed. Everyone was tired, except for Nanci, our little Oprah. She painted the town red that night (with report-outs at early morning breakfast).

James, the tour guide, seems very efficient. He quickly distributed the keys and announced that breakfast would be served at 7 a.m. on the top floor of the hotel, in a fancy revolving restaurant high above Shanghai.

The hotel is another very nice, high-rise hotel, but not in a central location and without connections to the subway. Unlike Beijing, it would be a pain in the butt getting around Shanghai.

Bill and I went to our room, unpacked, reviewed our Shanghai guidebooks and went promptly to bed.

Bill is now the official Tour Guide -- I can rest my guidebooks.

Day 6 April 28, 2004 (Wed.)

If it's Wednesday, it must be Shanghai.

At 7 a.m, we went to the top floor of our hotel for breakfast to find a circular revolving restaurant with amazing views of Shanghai. This was way cool. The breakfast was good, except for the lack of bread and ham and cheese – our sandwich-lunch mainstay. Looks like we'll be buying lunches in Shanghai.

At 8 o'clock, we grabbed a taxi from our hotel to Old Town (Nanshi). Traffic was a little problem – took about 20 minutes to get there. We walked around the charming Old Town. The stores were just starting to open.

We got lost a few times. It took a while to get our new Shanghai bearings. We were so used to navigating around Beijing.

The old buildings and neat shops were a change from Beijing – much more colorful. The sun was shining and people were just starting their day. A wonderful place to be.



A Morning Delivery



A Peaceful Pond within the Old Town



Shanghai' Old Town (Nanshi)



A Corner Market

At 9 o'clock we found our way to Yu Garden, located in the heart of Old Town.



Old Town Square



Yu Garden

Yu Garden means “Garden of Contentment” and it was a lovely private classical garden. Admission was \$3 each, but well worth it. It was built in 1577 by an official, Pan Yunduan. He built it as the private estate for his father, who served in the Ming Dynasty as the Minister of Punishments. In 1709, an inner garden (Nei Yuan) was added. It was like a fairyland – so many curves and interesting angles. Bill and I were awe struck by the maze of gorgeous Ming Dynasty pavilions, rock structures, arched bridges, goldfish ponds, and little courtyards all surrounded by a massive wall with dragons on top.



A Building in Yu Garden



Springtime in Yu Garen



Yu Garden Bridge



Curvy Entry Ways



Yu Garden - YOU BEAUTIFUL!

After Yu Gardens, we strolled through the large park surrounding the gardens. We loved watching the locals enjoy their exercises and social activities. We also loved passing out more toys to the children.

We stopped at a large, open tea pavilion in the park and ordered a pot of green tea. As usual, we were the only foreigners. We sat and “people-watched” and smiled at the locals and they “people watched” and smiled right back at us.



Tea Time in the Park



Watching the Locals

We thought we had lots of tea and lots of time to enjoy the people just when a middle-aged Chinese woman (who was not quite right) joined us at the table. She spoke perfect English and wanted to discuss a book she had about love. She had underlined every word on every page using either pink or purple ink. Bill was friendly, but I kept wondering if this was a setup for some scam or was she just plain nuts. How jaded I have become from my travels! In either case, I didn't want to wait around to find out. So we said our good-bye's and left a half pot of green tea behind.

Next, we walked to the Bund Promenade. The Bund (which means the embankment) is Shanghai's famous waterfront, running along the west shore of the Huangpu River. This raised embankment is designed to act as a dike against the Huangpu River. The downtown, built on a soggy delta, is slowly sinking below the river level.



The Bund

We loved strolling along the a mile long pedestrian-only walkway and watching the people -- international visitors, Chinese tourists, and plenty of locals, many of whom are here to sell snacks and souvenirs from their carts and stalls.

Our cameras were busy capturing the dramatic views along the Bund -- Bill with his video and me with my still camera.



Here We Are - On the Run in the Bund

The Huangpu River below us was filled with traffic -- barges, fishing boats, ocean liners, and cargo ships all slipping past each other on the channel to the Yangzi River and then to the Pacific Ocean. That's why Shanghai is China's largest port.

On the west side of the river (just across the wide avenue Zhongshan Dong Yi Lu) that parallels the promenade, is old colonial Shanghai with the massive European Customs House and the historic Peace Hotel tower. This long stretch of

buildings was constructed during the prosperous and notorious 1920s and 1930s by foreign governments, trading houses, and expatriate millionaires. (Shanghai was loaded with gangsters and opium dens in the 20's and 30's).



Walking on the Bund (Old Colonial Buildings)



View from the Bund (Peace Hotel on the Right)



View from the Bund Looking East- Pudong

Just across the river (east of the Bund) is Pudong, the new financial center of Shanghai. I have never seen a skyline like that before -- filled with modern Tinker toy shapes (Oriental Pearl TV Tower) and skyscrapers that include the world's tallest structures -- the high-tech pagodas of the 21st century! Not only were there towers and

skyscrapers, but also, the new Shanghai International Conference Center with its enormous glass domes in the shape of world globes. What a place! It is indeed a booming economy with more structures going up by the minute.



*International Conference Center
(Oriental Pearl TV Tower in Background)*

Our eyes (and camera lenses) were filled with wonderful images -- until a Chinese guy, who was about 30 years old, appeared out of nowhere and began yelling at us. "I hate all Americans. They start wars. They are stupid." Of course, I was alarmed until Bill coolly lifted his video camera and said in a friendly voice, "Would you mind saying that again for me so that I can videotape you. I have a lot of American friends who would like to hear what you think about them." The guy was taken a back and said, "No, don't show my face." He then lifted his T-shirt to cover his face and said, "I hate George W. Bush very, very much." Bill has a short video clip of his statement and there I am in the background, trying to snap a picture of the guy. (I got news for him -- He's not the only one who thinks that way about Bush!)

We finished our stroll on the Bund. Everything seems to begin or end at the Bund. We walked down through a pleasant parkway where a large statue of Mao stands and then headed into old colonial Shanghai in search of lunch. (No pilfered sandwiches today for a picnic in the park!)



Chairman Mao Watching Over the Bund

For lunch, Bill, the Shanghai Guide, found an Italian place called Gino's. We had the businessperson's luncheon special -- a pizza and a spinach pasta dish. Pretty good.

After lunch, we walked to Shanghai's top shopping street -- Nanjing Road, a pedestrian mall right downtown. We didn't do any shopping, just took in the sights of a busy commercial center. Here the most modern and the most traditional modes of retailing commingle.



Nanjing Road Pedestrian Mall

On a side street, we found an Internet Café to check our e-mail (and gasp at the falling stock market)! The Internet Café was filled with young, over-weight Chinese nerds focused intently on their screens playing video games. I had not seen that many fat Chinese in one place on the entire trip. They should be out doing exercises in the park with grandma and grandpa! (Too bad they're becoming "westernized" like us!.)

Bill found a Magnum, his favorite treat. Because these ice cream bars are not sold in the U.S., we're always on the lookout for a Magnum when traveling.



Bill and His Magnum - Life Is Good!

We stopped in at the Peace Hotel (Heping Fandian), Shanghai's number one architectural landmark and historic hotel. It was built in 1929 by the colonial millionaire Victor Sassoon and known as the Cathay Hotel. In its heyday, it was famous throughout Asia. While staying here in 1930, Noël Coward wrote "Private Lives." Steven Spielberg filmed scenes for Empire of the Sun from inside the hotel. We walked through the hotel's lovely Art Deco lobby and then took the elevator to the rooftop and the garden bar for superb views. We got some wonderful shots of the Bund, the river and the city.



Views from the Top of the Peace Hotel



We tried to cross under the river through a tunnel to Pudong, the modern side of Shanghai. We heard there was a free tunnel walkway – but because we couldn't find it, we had to pay \$6 and take some strange “space car” through the tunnel. Lighting effects and sound made it a weird carnival ride. Rings of lights (in all colors and styles) would come blasting out at you. I thought it was stupid. Bill thought it was the strangest ride he'd ever seen.



Space Cars We Rode in the Tunnel

We emerged from the tunnel at the foot of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower (Dongfang Mingzhu Di-an-shi Tai).



Oriental Pearl TV Tower

This high-tech tower has two large pinkish purple spheres connected by large pole like structures. (Locally the tower is known as “twin dragons playing with pearls”). Admission to the circular

observation deck at the top was too rich for our blood, so we walked a few blocks to the next high rise (Jin Mao Tower - Jin Mao Ta) with an observation deck that is higher and an admission charge that is lower.



Jin Mao Tower

Jin Mao Tower is the tallest building in China and currently, the third-highest building in the world (1,379 feet). Completed in 1998, it has 88 floors. The Grand Hyatt hotel is encased in the upper stories. Because the tower is built on a former river delta, engineers had to drive pilings 328 feet down to reach bedrock.



Corner of Jin Mao Tower

The graceful lines of the building blend traditional Chinese with modern Western designs. The tapered skyscraper consists of 13 distinct sections reflecting the shape of ancient pagodas. The high-tech outside steel bands bind the glass like bands of bamboo. I normally don't marvel at high rise architecture styles, but this one blew me away. I loved how the building changed with the light of the sun, and then at night, with the different lighting effects. (From all over the city, I checked the tower out from about 3 p.m. until 10 p.m. It indeed has a life of its own.)

We bought our tickets to the top and waited for the elevator. It took just 45 seconds to rocket us to the top. The views from there were almost too high, but amazing.



Views from the Top of Jin Mao Tower



Being a seasoned (paranoid) traveler, I kept my eye on potential pickpockets – those guys with jackets neatly draped over one arm, who seem to always be where you are. After we circled the top, we waited in line for our descent. I made friends with a Chinese family by snapping pictures of them and then showing them the digital display. They all wanted their pictures taken. I love this little no-language-required, instant ice-breaker device called a “digital camera.”



Smile for the Camera (Jin Mao Tower)

After all this modern stuff, we wanted a dose of Shanghai history. Bill found an old courtyard mansion just across the street from the tower. It was called the Lujiazui Development Showroom with admission of only 60 cents. One problem, barricades all along the street blocked our way so we had to backtrack way back to the Oriental Pearl TV Tower (adding about a half mile). What the heck, we did it, found the mansion and bought our tickets.



*Old Courtyard Mansion
(Lujiazui Development Showroom)*

Nestled Between the Pudong Skyscrapers

The house, built here between 1914 and 1917, was the estate of a very wealthy foreign taipan. The orange and black brick place with its large windows and carved wood door panels look out of place tucked into Pudong, Shanghai's modern district. There were a few photographs, old maps, and artifacts. Our favorite was a room that displayed a large crystal model of Shanghai.



Life in the Mansion before the Skyscrapers

We headed back to the Oriental Pearl TV Tower to cross the river and find a place for dinner on the old colonial side. As luck would have it, all the main streets to the ferry crossings were blocked by police. We didn't know what was up (maybe some important dignitary is in town).

We found our way through the maze of barricades and managed to walk down to the Riverside Promenade (Binjiang Da Dao). Similar to the Bund, it's a river walk on the Pudong side. However, unlike the Bund, it doesn't have the crowds and the colonial European architecture. We found a nice spot to sit down and study our tour books to find a "Plan B" spot for dinner. Bill, resourceful as ever, found a restaurant recommended on this side (Pudong) of the river – so we backtracked again.

Each time we walked up and down Pudong's main avenue, several nicely dressed young men tried to hand us a flyers (mostly airline schedules). We got to know the guys pretty well after all our walking back and forth along the same avenue. At first we took the papers and then

dumped them in the nearest trash can. Later, we tried various avoidance techniques. Avoiding the flyers got to be a game with us. Bill did a quick fake to the left, then a move to the right. That worked great. They laughed and Bill scored big points.

Finally we passed through the flyer distribution guys, through the old mansion we had just visited and found our restaurant, Lu Lu's. It was on the third floor of a nice hotel. We were happy campers at Lu Lu's. There were seafood tanks at the entrance where you could select your dinner and see it in a living state. We opted for the more Cantonese and went crazy over the shredded pork and scallions wrapped in pancakes. It was a very nice place – linen tablecloths and amazing service (and so inexpensive – our kind of place.)

We took a cab from Lu Lu's to the Ferry Landing, but as luck would have it, the cab driver dropped us off at the Pearl TV Tower again. Bill tried to tell him this was the wrong place for our ferry – but he insisted. We were tired of the Pearl Tower and just wanted to go back to our hotel, so we retraced our steps once again, trying to find the ferry landing that would deposit us right by our hotel. It was dark and we climbed over one construction sight after another. At one point we ended up inside the construction area with the night shift workers. They were nice and directed us back to the main road.

Finally we walked back to the Pearl Tower to take another ferry. Unfortunately, it appeared that the last ferry had just left. So we threw in the towel, grabbed a cab and went directly back to our hotel. How many miles did we walk today? Lord only knows.

Day 7 April 29, 2004 (Thurs.)

We went to the top floor for breakfast. None of our group was there – just a large group of Chinese business-looking people. The hostess let us in anyway. We ate a fine breakfast and took some video and photos from the top. (Later we learned our tour group was told to go to the second floor for a second rate breakfast, not to the fancy revolving restaurant on top of the hotel. We were glad we didn't get the message!)



Breakfast at the Top Floor of the Hotel



*Views of the Pearl Tower
Taken at Breakfast*



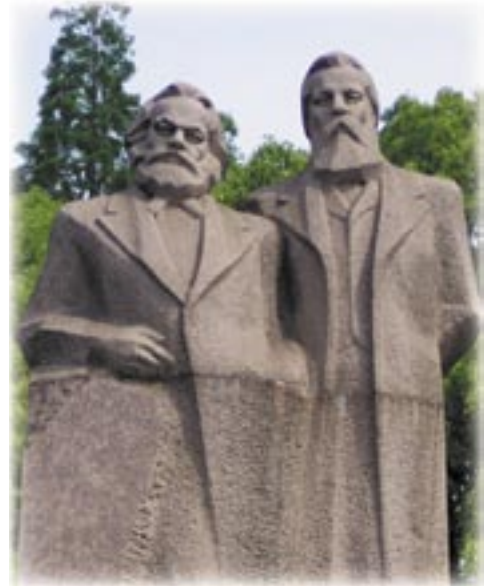
More Views of the City



Bill with His Camera and His Breakfast

Today was our day to do the French Concession (Luwan) historic district. As you might gather, this was the domain of the French colonial community (up until 1949). The French left their mark on the residential architecture and surrounding gardens.

Our first stop was Fuxing Park (Fuxing Gongyu-an). The gardens were once a private estate in the French Concession. It was purchased by foreign residents and opened to the public in 1909. It was popularly known as French Park, styled after a city park in Paris with wide, tree-lined walks and flower beds. This urban forest with 7,000 trees (120 species) covers 22.7 acres and is at the heart of Shanghai's busiest shopping district. Near the north entrance of the park, Chinese couples often practice their ballroom dancing underneath a statue of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel.



*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel
Watching Over Park Activities*



"Park"-Room Dancing

We loved all the other typical morning activities – exercising, group singing, card games, etc., just like the parks in Beijing.



Exercising Alone



Serious Men and Their Games



Exercising in Groups



Handing Out Toys to the Grand kids



Fun for Kids and Adults

How I wish we had such great parks in the U.S.

We did notice a few additional activities. Young women were touching probes, which were attached to machines along the arms and hands of older people and then making some diagnosis. We also saw a lot of birds in little birdcages. The chirping sounds of the birds added to the park's peacefulness.



What's the Diagnosis?



Bird Cages Hanging in the Trees

From Fuxing Park, we walked to the former house of Sun Yat-sen's (Sun Zhongshan Guju), also in the French Concession. As mentioned before, Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) was the Father of the Country and beloved founder of the Chinese Republic (1911).



Sun Yat-sen's Statue in the Courtyard

Sun Yat-sen lived in the house with his wife, Soong Ching Ling, from June 1918 to November 1924. Then the address was 29 Rue de Moliere – French, of course.



*Courtyard to Sun Yat-sen's House
(Note Sun Yat-sen's statue on the right)*

Later, in this house, Sun's wife met with such literary stars as Lu Xun and George Bernard Shaw (at the same dinner party) and political leaders including Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh (in 1933).

We bought tickets and waited for the tour of the house. There were about eight in our group, all spoke Chinese except for us. The guide spoke in Chinese and then translated to English for us.

Sun's study was upstairs, complete with ink stone, brushes, maps drawn by Sun, and a library of 2,700 volumes. Fake backs of books were displayed in the beautiful bookcases. (The real books were elsewhere).

Unlike our current leader, Dr. Sun loved books and was a real intellectual. We saw the bedrooms, the living room, the dining room, the porches and the lovely garden out back. Guests would gather in the garden and Sun would give speeches from the second floor veranda. A very historical place.



Back of Sun Yat-sen's House

We read where Sun re-financed his house three times to get money to help fight imperialists and turn the country into a Republic. Now that's dedication to a cause!

The gift shop inside Sun's courtyard was also a beautiful place. All the fabrics, clothing, bedspreads, stuffed animals, etc. were in dark royal blue and white with so many clever designs. We bought a few things there – a little table cloth which I adore. Wish I had bought more.



Gift Shop at Yat-sen's House

After our mini-shopping spree at Sun's residence, we decided to splurge for lunch and walked to a fancy Indian restaurant called The Tandoor.



Entrance to The Tandoor

The restaurant was so amazing, only wish I had taken pictures inside. The bathroom was a hall of mirrors – very disorienting. The food was good, but a little too spicy for me. Bill loved it. The waiters, young guys from India, spent a lot of time telling us about how they landed in Shanghai and how different the Chinese people are. They said we must go to India – I'm ready!

After lunch, we took the subway to People's Park (Renmin Gongyuan). People's Park is Shanghai's "Central Park." It was built on the site of

colonial Shanghai's horse racing track, a favorite weekend amusement of the ruling British. Now there are 30 acres of trees, ponds, rock gardens, amusement rides, etc., all packed with locals and their families.



People's Park (Renmin Gongyuan)



The southern portion of the park (free admission), People's Square (Renmin Guang Chang), is Shanghai's Tiananmen Square. Opened in 1951 and renovated in 1994, the square has become Shanghai's cultural center with an underground shopping arcade, the central subway station, the Shanghai Museum, the Grand Theatre, the 20-story Municipal Hall, and the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall.

The square is a popular place with locals who feed the pigeons, gossip on the benches, teach their kids to fly kites, attend ballroom dancing lessons and do all the other fun activities that go along with being Chinese in this wonderful "park" culture.

We walked to the Shanghai Museum – impressive building. It looked like rain clouds forming, so we decided to skip the museum and save it for a rainy day (which turned out to be tomorrow, excellent planning)! Instead, we walked to the Grand Theatre.



The Grand Theatre

After much confusion, we finally found the place to buy our tickets for a backstage tour of the theatre. (There was a very pushy Chinese guy who broke up in front of us in line – the way things are done in these big cities. I poked him in the ribs – guess that showed him!)

With our tickets in hand, we broke through the barricade and climbed the stairs to The Grand Theatre's lobby (Da Ju Yuan).



The Grand Theatre Lobby

A lovely young tour guide directed us to the main theater. The red seats were soft and comfy so we settled in. We watched all the stage hands assembling a massive set for the big May Day production.

Bill took a little nap. After he woke up, he said, "Let's go." I said, "This can't be the tour. We paid \$5 to get in here." Then I saw one Chinese man and two Chinese women go up on stage and talk to someone that looked like the director or producer. I told Bill to act like we belonged there and we followed them on stage. What a huge place! After awhile, the group left the stage and we followed behind. The group then left through an exit door to the outside, leaving Bill and me alone, unaccompanied in the inner sanctum of

the Grand Theatre. What fun! Luckily, the signs were in English. I wanted to go to the dressing rooms and Orchestra Pit. We got on the elevator. When the doors opened, we were caught by one of the lovely young guides. I turned myself in immediately and said, "We're lost." In the sweetest voice, she said, "It would be my honor to show you around the theater."



Our Adorable Grand Theatre Guide

Our Guide was wonderful. She showed us the white marble from Greece, the main painting and the grand chandelier. She told us the main theatre had the largest stage in the world to accommodate huge sets. She also took us to all three theaters (the largest seating 1,800), the VIP rooms, the ballet studio and the place where they have press conferences. It is truly a space age complex and city's premier venue for international performances, dramas, and concerts. Several greats have performed there – but I can't recall any of them now.

NOTE: Later, I learned from studying the guidebook that the tour is self-guided and terribly overpriced, but we really got our five bucks worth!

We left the theater and noticed more grey clouds were moving in. We headed back to Nanjing

Road, the famous pedestrian shopping street, in search of an Internet Café and a beer. We didn't find an Internet Café, but did find a beer at a funny little spot where the young waitresses stared and giggled at us. I snapped their pictures and said, "A picture lasts longer." That made them giggle even more. They seemed friendly and happy and very interested in us.



*Young Waitresses Wondering
"Who Are These People?"*

We walked to the Bund. By then night had fallen. The old French Colonial buildings were lit up, some of the buildings across the river in Pudong were also lit and a few boats in the river had strings of lights. It was so beautiful.



Old French Colonial Buildings at Night



*View of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower
Looking Across the River toward Pudong*

Bill and I were documenting the scene, he with his video and me with my photos. Then something terrible happened. Bill felt something tug at a zipper on his backpack. He wasn't about to let a pickpocket take anything, so he quickly turned around. Unfortunately it wasn't a thief, but a little girl whose pigtail hair clip got caught in Bill's backpack strap. Poor thing was flying around. When we discovered what had happened we were devastated. We left her crying in the arms of her understanding mother.

We put away our cameras and walked to the Monument to the People's Heroes obelisk on the river shore on the north end of the Bund. The Bund Museum (Waitan Bowuguan) is housed under the monument. It was a free museum and mildly interesting. We saw Bund-related historical photographs in a circular gallery. The vendors, in the center of the gallery, surrounded by display cases were fishing, but we didn't bite.

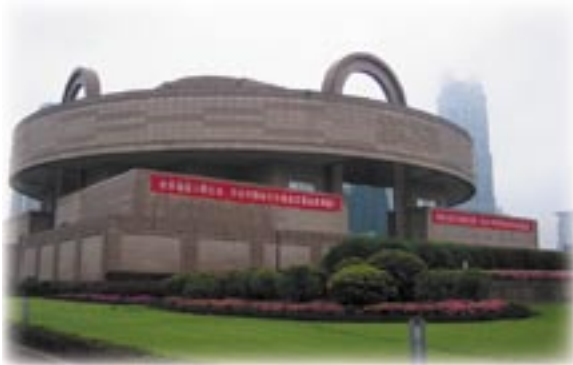
It was getting late and we were hungry so we headed across the street to a restaurant that was recommended in our tour book. It was closed for remodeling, but we found a good one across the street. It was a Brew House called the Feast Brewery. They served up some great dumplings (better than those in Beijing) and some wonderful beer. The small beers were 60 percent of our bill.

We got a cab and went back to our hotel – another day packed full of adventure in Shanghai. There were some sprinkles. Rain is coming.

Day 8 April 30, 2004 (Friday)

Last Day in China. We packed our luggage, left it outside of our hotel door and joined our group on the second floor for breakfast – no more fancy revolving restaurants for us. We had a nice breakfast and discovered that the second floor had stocks of bread and cheese and ham. We're back in the "smuggling out our lunch" business!

The bus leaves for the airport at 2:15, so we only had time for one museum and that happened to be the best museum in China, the Shanghai Museum. We caught a cab. It was raining and traffic was bad – took us about 45 minutes to get to People's Square and the museum. Everyone is gearing up for tomorrow's big May Day celebrations.



The Shanghai Museum

The museum has four stories with an atrium in the center.



Atrium in the Shanghai Museum Lobby

We rented audio phones and started the tour on the fourth floor, working our way down through the exhibits. We checked out all the major galleries – Bronze, Sculpture, Ceramics, Coin, Chinese (Ethnic) Minority, Jade and furniture.



Beautiful Museum Displays



Bill with His Head Phones



Nancy Caught Between Two Hard Guys



Ancient Boats

The displays were wonderful. Lights would brighten as you came near the cases and dim as you left – a very clever way of preserving the artifacts and other treasures.

We learned so much -- how the imperial family was involved in ceramics development, the masks and clothing of the Minority groups, the development of coins, etc.



Ancient Masks

We saw some of the kids in the museum sporting SARs masks.



School Kids with Modern Masks

NOTE: SARs' return was announced on the second day we arrived in China. Our timing for visiting China is amazing. Last time we toured China (1999), the U.S. had just bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

Once we had listened to all the featured audio excerpts and covered all the main exhibits, we were good to go. We got a cab back to the hotel and ate our sandwiches in the lobby. We finished the last of the postcards and mailed them.

The "Smartours" buses came at 2:15 and we were off to the airport for a flight to Beijing, then connecting to L.A. We expected our flight from Beijing to L.A. to depart at 8 p.m. – no such luck. The plane was 6 hours late – bummer! At first the crowds were happy, doing Tai Chi in large circles, then they got hungry and angry. No restaurants were open in the airport. One obnoxious American demanded western food – hamburgers and hotdogs. (I was embarrassed by his rude behavior.) They moved us to another gate, which added to the confusion. Finally, the crew arrived and we boarded the plane to L.A. (Bill surmised that the reason for the long delay was they were "crew-less.")

Bill and I were stuck in the middle seats in the middle section. We both took our No Jet Lag pills along with sleeping pills and we were out. 12 hours goes fast when you're on meds.

We arrived in L.A. at about 11 p.m., grabbed the shuttle to the Hacienda Hotel, where we had parked our car. With little traffic in the middle of the night, we drove to San Diego in record time. I was so hungry Bill said he'd drive straight to Rudford's, our local greasy spoon that serves breakfast 24 hours. A very sweet offer, but I remembered some food tucked away in our very own kitchen. We arrived home Saturday at 1:30 a.m., with ten hours to spare before Zi Zi's big birthday party along with our very own version of May Day and Brian's handcrafted May Pole.