

CHINESE & JAPANESE STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Valparaiso University

CHINESE & JAPANESE STUDIES PROGRAM
Prof. Zhimin Lin, Chair 219/464-5749

FEBRUARY 1999

THE EAST ASIAN CLUB

invites you to attend a

Chinese New Year Dinner

Thursday, February 18

6:00-8:00 p.m.

Huegli Hall Dining Room

Please join us on Thursday, February 18, at 6:00 p.m. in the Huegli Hall Dining Room to celebrate the Chinese New Year--the Year of the Rabbit!

The dinner, starting at 6:00 p.m., will, as usual, feature delicious homemade Chinese dishes. From 6:45 to 7:15, several VU students who have just returned from China will lead a panel discussion, which will be followed by other celebration activities.

Any students, faculty, or staff who are interested in East Asian culture are welcome to attend our annual Chinese New Year dinner. We do need some volunteers to help arrange the room before the dinner and to clean up the area afterwards. If you are interested in helping or have suggestions, please contact Prof. Lin at 5749.

Annual East Asian Symposium for High School Students

On Thursday, February 18, the Chinese and Japanese Studies Program is holding its seventh annual high school symposium for regional high schoolers and their teachers. The morning program in the Union Great Hall includes presentations on the theme "The Asian Challenge."

Prof. William Moore, new Dean of the College of Business Administration who spent last year in China, will speak on the "Student and Learning

Environment in China." Prof. Zhimin Lin will discuss "Japan and the Recent Asian Financial Crisis," and Prof. Stephen Craft, a new member of the History Dept. who taught for seven years in Taiwan, will present the topic "A Changing Taiwan."

Also included will be demonstrations of Asian music, martial arts, and calligraphy; a photo exhibit on China; and a Chinese lunch, catered by a local restaurant.

Any VU student interested in attending all or part of the symposium should speak with Prof. Lin.

STUDY IN CHINA OR JAPAN!

Each fall semester, students study Chinese language and culture in VU's own exchange program at Hangzhou University located in Hangzhou, China -- a city renowned since Marco Polo's day for its scenic beauty. The campus is about 15 minutes away by bicycle from the center of the city and its main attraction, beautiful West Lake. Students live in an international dormitory with air conditioning and private baths.

VU has two study opportunities in Japan. The program at Kansai Gaidai, located in the culturally rich area between Osaka and Kyoto, is available in both fall and spring semesters and offers Japanese language instruction and a number of East Asian courses taught in English, including topics in business, art, economics, and history. Students may live with host families or on campus in dormitories.

The year-long program at Osaka International University also offers language study, but has the added feature of a two- to three-month internship with a Japanese company or organization, and is especially suitable for business and engineering students.

For more information on study in China or Japan, contact Prof. Hugh McGuigan at the International Studies office (x. 5333).

WEEKLY NOODLE LUNCH

All students who are studying Chinese or Japanese are invited to attend our weekly noodle lunch held in Huegli Hall from 11:00 to 11:50 a.m. every Tuesday. The lunch is designed to help students converse in the foreign languages they are studying.

VU to Add Chinese Minor

The Department of Foreign Languages is in the process of establishing a Chinese minor. Meanwhile, students who want to pursue such a minor may do so through an individualized minor in Chinese. For more information, please contact Prof. Zhimin Lin, x. 5749.

Editor's Note: In this issue, we are publishing several essays by students who have just returned from last fall's Hangzhou Study Program in China. We thank them for sharing their personal experiences with us. There is no better way to appreciate a different culture than to live and study in such an environment. We will continue publishing essays from students returning from China and Japan in subsequent issues of this newsletter.

Teaching English at a Chinese Primary School

by
Lisa Lorino

(My journal entry, September 25, 1998:)

It started with a phone call to my room asking if I wanted to teach at a primary school. I really didn't want to teach young children, but the lady seemed nice so I thought that I would meet with her to learn more about the job. We met in my dorm room, so I picked up a little bit of the clutter in my room. She was a little late, but came with the principal of the school, which surprised me a bit. We talked about the logistics of teaching -- that I could barely speak

Chinese and that I have never taught in my life. Why they still wanted to hire me was confusing. I really did not want to teach primary school students, so I told them that I would call them back the next day to let them know if I would accept the position.

They insisted on taking me out to dinner the next day at 3:50. I thought it was a little early, but agreed and thought I would tell them at the dinner my decision. They picked me up in a taxi and brought me to the school. (I thought we were going to a restaurant.) As I walked in the building I noticed a sign that welcomed the new American teacher. I thought that was nice that they had another foreign teacher at the school. They brought me into the principal's room which was full of people. Everybody was shaking my hand, and I had no idea why they were so happy to see me. I finally realized when they told me that in five minutes the school was having a welcoming ceremony ... for me! They were so glad that I was going to be a new teacher at the school. All of the students, parents and faculty were already waiting for me. This is when they told me that I had to give a speech and an interview. As if that weren't enough, the media was there also. I was going to be on the news the next day!

At this point I was shocked and horrified. All I could think of was "but ... but ... I haven't even accepted the position yet." They led me to the stage, gave me a megaphone, and everybody was waiting for me to talk. My heart was in my stomach. A man standing next to me was pointing to a red button on the megaphone. I couldn't understand what he was saying. I thought he meant push the red button, so I did. The siren on the megaphone went off. Oh no! At this point I introduced myself and told the kids that I would be their new teacher. I guess this means that I have accepted the position!?!

The next day I was on the news. They said that I was the first foreigner to teach primary school in the city of Hangzhou. I doubt that is true, but that is what it said.

* * * *

During my time in China I found myself in situations that were completely unpredictable. Initially I thought we were going out for a simple

dinner, but the reality of the situation was a whole welcoming ceremony for me, which someone had forgotten to tell me! This experience was probably the result of some miscommunication.

As it turns out I feel really fortunate that I had the opportunity to work at this school. My fellow teachers became some of my closest friends in China. By the end of the semester I think that I may have learned more from the children than I had taught. After all of the confusion settled, this had become one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

My Trip to Ningxia* **(Do you know where it is?)**

by
Elizabeth Ball

After being told by the conductor I would arrive at 4:30 a.m., I was finally off the train at 5:30, hoping to soon be napping in a heated hotel room -- Ningxia is cold in October! I could immediately see that Zhongwei is not a big tourist town. In some cities, no matter what the time of day, taxi drivers hustle you for a ride, sometimes before you exit the train station gate. Well, after a few hours of attempted sleep at the not-so-warm hotel, I discovered the reason for the absence of taxis -- Zhongwei, a small farming town in north-central China, doesn't have any automobiles! So, still cold and wearing almost all of the clothes I had packed for my nine-day journey, I set off in a three-wheeler motorbike to see the Shapotou Research Center and, hopefully, the Tengger Desert.

The driver stopped a few times along the way, and each time I wondered if we had arrived but hoped not because I couldn't see any sign of desert. Finally he explained we were stopping to warm up -- even a native of the region with proper dress thought it was too cold! When we stopped at a gas station, we took seats in a small office where some men were chatting. I sat quietly by, not understanding their words, despite my confidence that I was the topic of conversation, until they began to discuss my nationality. When I corrected a guess, they were shocked at my few words in Chinese and

became quite uncomfortable, assuming that I had understood the entire conversation. Not wishing to spoil my fun, I didn't correct the assumption by explaining I had only a limited command of the language.

Once we returned to the road, the backdrop of harvested crops began to give way to endless sand dunes, aside from some scrub bushes aside of the road and the train tracks. At the Research Center I actually had to pay a fee to walk through a gate into the desert, despite the fact it lay spread out all about me. I walked down the only dune in the Center not covered with grass (the others were part of the research) and found little to excite me at the bottom.

However, I soon discovered the leather rafts I read about and haggled on a price for a ride, half hesitating at the expense and half because it was too cold for a dunking in the water. The dried out, blown up sheepskins didn't look as if they could keep themselves afloat, let alone myself and another person. Still, I found myself heading down the Yellow River; it got a bit more exciting near the end when we hit a patch of rough water and I almost had a bath. But the raft was much sturdier than it looked, and I was glad I didn't fall in!

My alleged camel ride back to the Center came into question for a few minutes until a young Chinese woman came charging over the hill astride a running camel. My return trip wasn't quite the way I'd imagined a camel ride in the desert to be, but with the Yellow River on one side and dune after dune on the other, I enjoyed the unique experience. Back at the Research Center, I clambered up a ladder on yet another sand dune and set off in the three-wheeler to my next destination.

*[*Ningxia is located just south of Inner Mongolia.]*

Making Friends in China

by
Ryan Murray

I think one of the best experiences one can have in China is making friends with the Chinese. Chinese are a gregarious and friendly people, and it would take a dedicated recluse, or an extremely disagreeable personality, to avoid making at least superficial friendships with some of the residents. One of the best venues for making friends is

teaching English. My own experience in this area is and always will be one of my fondest memories of China. One of my students (his Chinese name was Xu Fei, but I gave him the English name "Frank" by which he was thereafter called even by his peers) became a very close friend of mine during my four and half months in Hangzhou.

I found myself teaching business people and schoolteachers for the Sino-Scottish language center early on in my stay in Hangzhou. At first I disliked the experience altogether, because I was disappointed that I had ended up teaching adults, who seemed less serious about learning English. Soon, though, the less interested were weeded out, and I was left with a solid group of four students whom I regularly instructed.

Frank, whose sense of humor and mere appearance never ceased to amuse me, was far and away my favorite student, and we soon were regularly doing things together outside of class. He was wealthy, especially for a 26 year old, and he had made his fortune selling beverages for the Dole company. His desire to learn English arose out of his hope to attend school in England, and I have little doubt that he will do that someday soon. He became fairly well known by all of the foreign students in our circle, and I must say the butt of a few jokes. Frank had an excellent vocabulary in English, surpassing that of many native speakers, but he could hardly form a sentence and his pronunciation was among the worst I had heard. Soon, though, I became accustomed to his "accent" and found myself "translating" from the Frank version of English to regular English when he was engaging in discussion with other Americans or Australians.

He also helped me more than I can say in improving my Chinese. I can honestly say that before I started practicing Chinese regularly with him, my Chinese was going nowhere, and I was becoming frustrated with it. He was extremely patient with me (more than I was with his English, I'm afraid), and we both delighted in seeing each other's command of our respective language endeavors improve. I visited his home, met his brother, and ate with him at all of the finest restaurants in Hangzhou (which more than made up

for the scant pay I was receiving at the Sino-Scottish center).

We discussed our plans for the future and our feelings about the situation in China, which was extremely insightful coming from a fairly important businessman in China. His life, too, was very interesting. His family had been of the landlord class, and his grandfather on his father's side had been killed by the communists as a "feudal landlord" while his grandfather on his mother's side had died fighting the Japanese during the Japanese invasion. After this, his family was left penniless, and his parents, living in far western China, saw little prospects for a good future. But his father was a well-trained engineer and soon found himself in a meager but steady job working for the government.

Frank told me that all of his siblings (five brothers and himself, the youngest) had become wealthy businessmen on their own. While Frank was perhaps the most successful, all of them were members of what he called the "new wealth" of China. It is easy to become optimistic talking with such people, and I found my own opinion of China's current state and future prospects raised significantly by my conversations with Frank.

Whether it is biased or not I cannot say, but there are changes in China, and Frank is a stunning example. Of course I had to leave, but both of us were sure to maintain contact. I think that both of us felt that we had made a very strong and useful connection (*guanxi*) and a good friendship as well. I have little doubt I will meet up with Frank again someday in the near future; whether in China, England, or the United States I do not know, but it will be an exciting day for both of us.

Traveling to Yunnan Province

by
Katarina Repkova

While I was in China I decided to travel to Yunnan Province located in far southwestern China. My main reason for traveling to Yunnan was to observe the life of the Tibetan, Naxi, and Yao minorities.

I went to Lijiang, a town in the valley surrounded by magnificent Snow Mountain. Here lived most of the minorities. I stayed there for about five days and was able to observe the hard life of the minorities under the still-strong oppression of the Chinese communist government.

Even though it is difficult for the minorities to keep their culture, they still struggle and share their music with the locals and foreigners who travel to the area. Every night in the Naxi Music Concert Hall, the old Naxi musicians play Chinese traditional instruments from the Song and Tang dynasties. The musicians are 70 years old and older, up to 89. Their conductor is Mr. Xuan Ke. He was once imprisoned because he tried to keep the music of minorities alive.

It is interesting to come to this western area of Chinese because you do not see the industrialized part of the country. You get to see a true and realistic picture of China, where right outside of the city you can see peasants at work in the fields. People are friendly and invite you into their homes to share their culture with you.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This newsletter, produced by the Chinese & Japanese Studies Program at Valparaiso University (formerly called the East Asian Studies Program), aims to enhance communication among those who are interested in Chinese and Japanese Studies. If you wish to submit an item to the newsletter, please contact Professor Zhimin Lin at 5749 or email him (Zhimin.Lin@valpo.edu).

To have your name added to or deleted from the mailing list, contact Beth Schoppa at 6819 or email: Beth.Schoppa@valpo.edu.

CHINESE & JAPANESE STUDIES FACULTY

Prof. Steve Craft (History), 5186

Prof. Fred Kavanagh (Japanese), 5311

Prof. Janet Kerr (Christ Coll.)--on leave

Prof. Zhimin Lin, Chair (Pol. Sci.), 5749

Prof. Ted Ludwig (Theology), 5303
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