

David's China Journal – July 2007



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In July 2007, my wife, Joan, and I took our fourth trip to China in the last six years. Like our previous trips, this one had been arranged by our dear friend, Dr. Zhihe Wang. Our relationship began in 1998 when Zhihe was studying for his Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate University. He came across my first book, *Conscious Capitalism: Principles for Prosperity* in the Claremont library and contacted me offering to translate it and have it published in China. To make a long story short, both of my books have now been published in China and Zhihe has used his prodigious contacts to arrange conferences and lecture opportunities for me. In the meantime, Joan and I have become very friendly with him, his wife and 18 year-old son and have helped Zhihe establish a business to use his contacts to arrange specialized trips to China for people interested in more than the standard touring. See: <http://postmoderntour.com/index.htm>

This trip began the usual way – minimal sleep for 2 days and the need to get up to speed fast. Wenhua Nan, a Ph.D. student from Suchow University, had corresponded with me for several months prior to the trip and I knew he wanted to spend a little time with me while I was in Beijing. I didn't know that he and his wife and daughter had traveled 16 hours on the train to get to Beijing. He had to make a return trip the day after I arrived and so a time was set up to meet with him a few hours after we arrived at our hotel. The get together went well although I was shocked to learn that he had already finished a 250-page draft of his dissertation, the subject of which was my writings and philosophy. He also has written and published four articles taken from various chapters in his dissertation. I readily agreed to correspond with him and answer any questions he had as he received feedback from his supervisor and worked toward defending the dissertation.

The next day was spent largely reworking my presentation for a press conference to be held the next day at a local hotel. I have often rewritten my presentations after I arrive in China and realize how fast things have changed and how sophisticated my audience is likely to be. That night we had a very enjoyable dinner with old friends and their parents. We met this young couple when they lived in Philadelphia where the husband (Hongtu) was doing post-doctoral cancer research at the University of Pennsylvania and the wife (Xiaoying) was involved in real estate. We had met Xiaoying's parents when they visited their children in Philadelphia and were very impressed with their sophistication and cordiality. We later learned that the father had retired from a top-level diplomatic position and had met with many world leaders while traveling the globe in his official capacity. While we had expected that Zhihe would meet us at our hotel and go with us to dinner, we were very surprised when he showed up accompanied by his mother, with whom he stays when he is in Beijing. On earlier trips, we had invited Zhihe to bring her and his father (who has since died) to have a meal with us. He always told us that she was shy and somewhat nervous about meeting foreigners. Now here she was in the lobby of our hotel, bearing gifts and a huge smile. She was really charming and it was wonderful to meet her after all these years. I am sure that she is very proud of the wonderful man her son has become.

The major event of the next day was the press conference. To my surprise there were 50 – 60 members of the media and invited guests in the audience. The presentation seemed to be well received and the question and answer session was lively. We later took a tour of the facilities of the Global Village of Beijing and had dinner with Sheri Liao, the founder of the sponsoring organization.

On Friday July 13th I spoke to a class of business people who were part time MBA students. Before the presentation a member of the Chinese State Department met with me to tell me of some of their socially responsible business (SRB) related activities. He and an associate stayed for the presentation. After a delicious and copious luncheon banquet, we took a short rest before we were met by a van to take us on a 2 hour ride to Tianjin for a Socially Responsible Business Conference hosted by Tianjin University of Commerce (TUC).

We had helped establish the SRB Center at TUC during our China trip in 2005 and have had very good relations with the University since; they even appointed me a visiting professor. We were met by our good friend Prof. Ruijie Shi and escorted to our accommodations. I really didn't know what to expect and was pleasantly relieved to see that the campus hotel was brand new and

very comfortable. In fact we had a well-appointed two-room suite complete with full kitchen including stove, microwave, refrigerator, dishwasher and washing machine.

Before the conference we met for a second time with the President of the University who was very cordial and told us that he and the University were committed to teaching about Socially Responsible Business principles and practices. The conference itself was well attended by both academics and business people and was very professionally managed. My presentation, entitled *Green is Golden*, was well received and it along with some other presentations will be published in "*The Chinese Corporate Culture Review*." We also met a lovely young woman who headed the Tianjin Bureau of the *Beijing Business Times*. We had a short interview over lunch and she asked if I would be interested in writing an article for her publication. Meals, transportation and sightseeing were provided for all attendees and everyone seemed to have a very enjoyable and instructive experience.

After the two-day TUC conference it was off to Dalian for an Ethics Conference. Our hosts from Dalian University of Technology greeted us warmly at the airport when our 10 pm plane arrived. Since I was giving the keynote speech the next morning and it was already past 11pm, I was anxious to get to bed and see if I could get some badly needed beauty sleep. We were taken to the campus hotel and the accommodations, while not quite as sumptuous as in Tianjin, were, nonetheless, quite comfortable.

The room appeared filled when I was introduced to give the opening presentation for the conference. While I had been allocated a very generous 90 minutes, I choose to keep my talk, including the translation, to one hour so that there would be ample to time for questions and discussion. As I suspected, the topic, which was focused on the relationship between ethics and health, was provocative and stirred a good deal of discussion including more than a modicum of positive feedback. Since this work is the focus of the non-profit Institute for Ethical Awareness, where I serve as president, the discussion and supportive comments were very gratifying.

The conference lasted three days and a cadre of graduate students kept everything moving smoothly. I was especially impressed with the students' hunger to learn; they were constantly asking thoughtful questions and seeking more opportunities to learn from the impressive group of Professors from countries around the world. The last day in Dalian we were all treated to a sightseeing tour of this delightful seaport city (some compared it to San Francisco in the 1950's). The final night in Dalian we asked a couple of graduate students to accompany us to dinner as our guests and we had a delightful time getting to know them better. One of the students, Lillian, spoke beautiful English and we have kept our dialogue going via email since my return to the U.S.

The trip home was long but uneventful. As Joan and I got home we were reminded of how great it has been getting to know China up close and personal during our four trips to this often frenetic but always hospitable country where so many people have touched our hearts.