

CHINA

July 8 – July 18, 2000

Saturday, July 8, 2000

The long awaited China trip has finally arrived. What a morning it was! The morning started off rather early for my liking – 5AM. Dick arrived with a cup of tea for me, bless his little heart. Richard was late as usual. I could deal with that more than Dick pacing the floor knowing it all: “I knew he’d be late”, “Is anyone in your family ever on time?”, “We’ll have to pay the \$33 in the parking garage after all”, etc., etc., etc. No big deal, we were on the road by 7AM, Richard and Dick in the front, Richie and I in the back seat. Hopefully, the ride to the airport would be more of an adventure than the flight to Los Angeles. Even with his late pickup we had plenty of time to get there without him driving 85 mph. Richard weaving in and out of cars, looking everywhere else but the road, etc. was a little unsettling. I was called a nag, back seat driver, and several other names, which I felt were undeserved. Don’t know which one of us, Dick or I, had it worse. Dick, being in the front seat confessed he went through 3 of his 6 pair of drawers in that hour. I had to deal with my legs being used as a dumping ground for all of the snot running out of Richie’s nose. Guess he figured it was as good a place as any. Hartsfield airport never looked so good. Said our good-byes, got e-mail addresses, arranged for pickup on July 18, and we were on our way. Once our stomachs loosened their knots we could relax and prepare for the flight to LA. That is until Dick had his first incident of the trip. Could he have at least waited until we were out of Atlanta? In his haste to get his nerve medication out of the bag, he cut his finger on a razor. We had a bleeder! It took four paramedics and 16 people asking him if he needed a Band-Aids to get this thing under control. I felt more sorry for David having the first of his 25 snacks for the day interrupted to help this bleeding individual. “It’s the boss man, I better help”. After going through Wash N’ Dry packets, 25 wet paper towels and who knows how many dry towels, it took only 3 Band-Aids wrapped around this finger to allow us to get on the plane. We had to dip into our emergency toiletry bag before we even left town. If this is an indication of things to come.

My God how right I was. I was completely wrong when I predicted the ride to the airport would be more of an adventure than the flight to Los Angeles. The flight proceeded normally until we began our descent into LAX. The pilot was obviously an amateur pilot from Walt Disney World trained on roller coasters. When I panically complained to Dick about dropping 1000 feet in 5 seconds, he assured me it was not the pilot flying the plane, but was the computers. But, he went on to say some geek like Anton wrote the program. Good thing Dick’s hearing aid was off when I started yelling. Apparently, we didn’t realize how bad it was until we de-boarded the plane and David was the last passenger off. He came dragging off as white as a ghost. It was quite obvious his stomach was upside down. All we could hear him mutter was something about that f***ing pilot. He needed fresh air quickly to recover. Well, he did not get it quick enough. On our shuttle ride to the International terminal, David gave a new meaning to the phrase “the back of the bus”. There he was, kneeling behind all the seats, almost like praying, puking his brains out. Dick tried to give him a Kroger bag to catch his brains, but I guess that as you get older, your reflexes are slower. David was quicker than Dick. I was concerned when we got off the bus that David took the Kroger bag, but he told me there was no need because his brains were all over the floor. When

David told us the bus driver left us off 6 blocks from the terminal we understood why. Two hours, a little fresh air, and some Pepto-Bismol did the trick.

OK. Now on to the China flight. David and his family went to fill their stomachs in McDonald's and Dick and I went to suck down some Bloody Mary's. They were great. We could "have them our way". The bartender left us Tabasco sauce, Worcestershire sauce, etc. Of course Dick needed some liquids to swallow his flight medication. By the time we returned to Gate 106 to meet David, he was a new man.

On the plane the attendants were very efficient and quick in delivering drinks, snacks, crappy meals, and SHANGHI beer. No hard stuff. I hope Dick does not write a letter to the Chinese embassy because of this. You remember how he dealt with Carly. We can't watch the movies because they are spoken in Chinese. Even though they have English sub-titles, they roll across the screen like Dale Earnhardt. Remember what I said about Dick's reflexes.

Sunday, July 9, 2000

Only 30 more minutes! Beijing here we come. Our flight took us over San Francisco, Washington, Alaska, the Koreas, and finally Beijing. Well, another crappy meal. Picture this for lunch – fried rice, potato salad, roll, and chocolate. What is the common element? You got it, carbos. Just what I need. I am absolutely starving. Every fork full that went into my mouth Dick yelled, “Don’t eat that”. What am I supposed to do, starve to death? Still don’t understand how these Chinese people stay so skinny eating all those carbos. Flight actually wasn’t bad. We actually slept on and off for a few hours. Dick took at least a hundred walks circling the cabin, busy work. Can’t wait to get to the hotel for a nice hot shower. We filled out our customs arrival card and quarantine card for arrival into China. Guess David has to check vomiting on the symptom list for the past 24 hours. By the way, we never saw the little weasel the whole flight, he was sprawled across four seats sleeping the entire time. When it came time to fill out the occupation box on the form we didn’t know what choice to make: Choice 1 – Professional or Choice 2 – Jobless. We chose 1. At least it is for the time being. Here we go again. Dick has managed to injure himself. He said some Chink pushed him. Can’t he accept responsibility for himself? He slashed his ankle this time. Claims it was from some stupid metal loop on his other shoe. Needs a hammer to fix it. There goes the same box of Band-aids. This time though many interested Chinese passing by gawked at him not saying a word until some official guy tried to tell David where first aid was. Have they never seen a bleeder before?

Made it through customs AOK. Met David’s wife’s sister and brother. Boy is her brother skinny. David told me her sister is another big mouth. David was the tallest guy in the airport. Kelly left for Linda’s hometown with her sister and brother on another flight. I have to ask David about the toilet situation in the woman’s bathroom at the airport. There were five stalls, four with normal toilets. The fifth was just a ceramic hole in the floor with a small cover on the front of it. What do you do there? Just squat to pee. I was not going to try.

Our van driver (Ping) and tour guide arrived. The drive into Beijing was beautiful. These people drive in the dark without headlights. When we inquired we were told, “No street lights on equals no headlights on”. Pretty scary. The road out of the airport was beautiful. The street was lined with trees aglow with green and white lights. Once we reached Beijing boy did the fun start. You think it is bad driving in Atlanta? Where was Richard when we needed him? I will never complain about his driving again. I’ve never seen 8 lanes of traffic merge into 1 in 5 nanoseconds before. It’s like 8 million people playing chicken. Obviously, these local folks know what they are doing, who turns first, who lets who pass, etc. When I asked David how these people coordinate this, his response was “They just knows”. The bicycles, oh my goodness. I would never consider wrestling with a car if I was riding a bike, but it does not phase these people. I swear the ratio of bikes to cars must be 10 to 1.

David, Ping, and the travel agent checked us in at the hotel. They asked for our passports again. All of a sudden David got loud (in Chinese) and we could not figure out

why. We could only stand there and wonder. When all was said and done, we came to find out they did not have all three rooms we reserved and were going to put David in a suite for the first night only at the standard room rate. Oh no, all the nights, David was not moving.

We all went to eat at a restaurant across the street from the hotel. It was very difficult to picture what the food was like so the waitress suggested we check out the display they had. There were squids, eels, stuff we could not recognize, but we finally chose from meals that were delicious. What faith we had in David. The waitress looked like she was 12 but she was 19. We took a picture of her for Dick. He probably would have gone after her, when did a 12-year-old stop him before?

After dinner, we took a walk down the street. There was lots of construction going on in the area. About 15 minutes from our hotel we encountered bicycle riders that wanted to take us to Tiananmen Square. Every bike rider yelled at us. None of the bikes looked sturdy enough for Dick. We were very surprised at how much this place was hopping on a Sunday evening. Don't these people have to go to work in the morning? Women hold hands when walking with each other in the streets. David's wife can tell if they are "good" or "bad". Dick did not care. We passed a porno shop so I asked Dick to check out the vibrators for me. I needed a 12 incher. They did not have thermos size here.

We all decided to go to bed so we could get up and out by 8:30.

Monday, July 10, 2000

Great Wall Day!! Woke up at 4:45am. To my surprise the sun was already up and shining through the window (we are on the 10th floor and Dick is afraid of earthquakes). Why does the sun rise so early? There is only one time zone in China. One and only one. I got up, got dressed, and tried to figure out where to plug in this hair dryer that works on different current. I knocked on Dick's door and scared the hell out of him, he thought I was some Chinese woman because of my wet hair. Finally got my hair dried, what a waste of time, it looked like shit. So did everyone else's. Who cares, you are on vacation. Dick and I went to get tea and coffee while we waited for David to get his ass out of bed. What a joke! They put something on the table that was supposed to be cream but looked like the soybean crap David drinks every morning. Dick asked the waitress for milk but got a spoon in return. How do you get spoon out of milk? I had to point to the word "milk" on the menu to get this woman to understand. David and his family joined us soon after. We ate so much even though the eggs were green. After breakfast we headed upstairs to the business center so I could send an e-mail to the kids. It cost \$2.00/minute. At least they know I arrived in China safely.

Ping picked us up. It was rush hour. Nothing like Atlanta traffic, at least it moves. Again, too many games of chicken for me. Don't know which were worse, the cars or bikes. The main streets of Beijing were beautiful, the side streets were poverty. Dick kept asking David what the people did all day since they were not at work. I said they are on welfare. David said no such thing there. There is 35% unemployment. Dick said I shouldn't complain about writing Crystal reports. Guess it is the lesser of two evils. Would not like to live here. Atlanta looks great. Even Long Island. Once we got out of the city the country was very mountainous, beautiful.

It took us an hour to get to the Great Wall. Went through two tunnels. Dick whined and whined. Do you want some crackers with that wine? I told him to just shut his eyes, he wouldn't know a thing. We arrived at the Great Wall in the town of Badaling. What a magnificent structure! The minute you walk out of the parking lot the street vendors start yelling at you "Hello, Hello, Hello". Sounds like a parrot. Just want to tell them to shut the f*** up. How annoying. They all sell the same exact things. Probably imported from Los Angeles. I'll never understand. David and Diana each bought a hat for \$2 American dollars. Dick bitched about paying \$8.99 for his at Target. Just figured he could never get one his head size in China, you know how swelled that head is. On to the big decision. To climb or not to climb. Dick's poor ankle. He insisted on taking the gondola up. Linda and I wanted to walk. Of course David, agreeing with the boss man wanted to ride. What did David do? Buy round trip tickets on the gondola. Some nerve. Insurance I guess. We ended up riding the gondola up and walking down. You would have thought Dick would have been happy riding the gondola since he got his way. Oh no. Once they shut that door he panicked. He needed to replace his drawers again. Only had three extra pair to start off with, remember? Two left. Got to the top and had to pay again to "walk the wall".

Dick talked to us about the Travel channel special he saw about the Great Wall. Over 1,000,000 people died building the wall and were buried inside. The mortar mix

contains rice floor causing the actual stone to wear away before the mortar mix. Could not believe the magnificence and views. It is unbelievable what it took to build these walls up and down the mountains over the span of 2000 years. Dick would have been happy if we could have built a Mason-Dixon wall like this to keep the Yankees out of the South.

The walk down the wall was a cinch. Dick tried to justify the gondola ride up. You can talk yourself into anything. Encountered a camel on the way down. I took pictures of these poor guys while Dick, David, Linda, and Diana disappeared. Left me flat. How in the world can the locals walk a camel half the way up the wall? The vendors by the camel were trying to sell things for a cheap price. Where was David when I needed him to bargain? I was looking for a delicacy but didn't know if it was a stallion or a mare. Down to the bottom. The climb up would have been just as easy. What was Dick's problem? What a faggot. Especially wearing that pink shirt of his that got full of sweat. David said Dick looked very feminine. Most of the tourists were Chinese, very few Westerners. As we were exiting the Great Wall several Chinese people asked us to take a picture with them. David said we could sell this service. Dick told them we were from Long Island, NY. David requested that we take a picture of me on the wall, looking out into the distance, with my back to them. The caption, "Great Crack on the Great Wall". Time to leave.

On the way back Ping almost got arrested for speeding. The cops had the radar pointing at our van. All we could try to interpret in Chinese was "Oh shit, Oh my God, God Damn". Dick was giving me a rolling commentary on what this guy was saying. Like he really knew. The fellow bus drivers help each other out when they know speed traps are around. Like flashing lights in the United States. The fine would have to be paid on the spot or jail.

Had lunch at a tourist trap. Inside the restaurant was a pottery factory. We walked through watching the teenagers making fine pottery, sort of like Kathie Lee Gifford sweat shops. Again Dick remarked, "And you complain about writing a few Crystal reports". Passed by peach vendors along the road. David started singing "Pickin' Them Peaches". Getting ready for karaoke.

One more stop before we returned to the hotel. A tomb site. Was interesting, they sure honor the dead. I had another toilet episode here. Couldn't hold it anymore. Diana gave me moral support. Showed me how to squat. Asked me "Was it so great?" when I finished. No matter how long I stay in China I will never get used to this way of peeing. As we were driving out of the tomb site, there were hundreds of vendors selling peaches on the side of the road. David again, immediately sprang into singing "Pickin' them Peaches". Country music in China?

We continue to notice strange things in China. We thought we could go 12,000 miles from home on the other side of the world and forget that Moody F***er Murdock. ON NO. There are 8 million Murdocks in China. I hear that awful sound coughing up a loogie, and then on the sidewalk, splat. There it is. Gross. Disgusting. Horrible. Don't these people have manners? I give up. Many places have spit bowls next to garbage

pails for these gross people to use. What is even more disgusting David told us the homeless people drink from the spit bowls at night. I'm going to puke. Also, we see more and more of the same sex people holding hands walking together. Not gay, this is just normal custom for them. Sure looks strange.

The ride back to the hotel was during rush hour. What a ride! I swore we were going to have a car wreck. What did we see? A bike wreck. This traffic reminded me of leaving the Clemson parking lot with Sean driving. Finally back at Tawain Hotel. David, Linda, and I went shopping. Dick went to bed. What a lazy SOB. He who hoots with the owls cannot soar with the eagles. I bought two new pair of dress slacks and a new dress. Dick got sleep and Jack Daniels. What an experience shopping. Tried on the first pair of slacks, my thunder thighs almost split the legs open. Asians have small legs. First time Chinese sales people see a fat ass. Ended up in try on room (3-foot by 3-foot area) with another woman. This woman was NOT "normal". Get me out of here. We had the hem put on my slacks and headed back to the hotel. Woke up Dick. Boy did he look good.

Tuesday, July 11, 2000

David wrote: I woke up around 5am and tried to wake Dick up by knocking on his room (1011) door. A strong Jack Daniel's smell almost make me pass out. Apparently, he had a good time last night.

What a day! By the way, the Dickster was instructed to journal today's activities. Breakfast again, strong coffee, etc. Ping picked us up about 8:30am. Let me tell you what – driving in Beijing requires the eyesight of an eagle, the courage of a lion, and total disregard for human life. We arrived at Tiananmen Square after a few God Damns, Fucks, Oh Shits, Watch Outs, and close calls. Tiananmen Square is spectacular. Almost like Washington D.C. with Lincoln Memorials, Washington Monuments, Legislative Buildings, museums, etc. (only no Lincoln, Washington, only Mao). Lots of people, mostly Chinese on vacation, some Westerners. This place is huge! The line to see Mao's body is about 6 miles long. Six miles to see a corpse, go figure. The only corpse I would stand in line for would be Billy Bob Clinton's. Local gypsies (street vendors) trying to sell you everything (they all have the same stuff) must be government issued.

Sue got into trouble again by taking pictures of a demonstration that resulted in the demonstrators being arrested by the local cops (military police). Six uniformed police officers grabbed Sue and one ripped the camera from her and ripped the film out of the camera and exposed and destroyed 24 beautiful shots. Sue didn't say much, think she enjoyed the grabbing. It took us \$200 US dollars to bail her out. Just one more international incident caused by the Long Island flash! By the way, these Chinese police mean business. Spitting results in a \$5 fine (\$40 US). If you don't pay on the spot off to jail you go.

After 2 hours of fixing the camera that the officers f***ed up we went into the Forbidden City. Huge buildings, huge courtyards, five miles of walking, listening to Sue's whining. Sue, Linda, and David went into the local piss rooms. Came out demonstrating how they had to squat over the holes in the ground. Sue took pictures, another \$200 to bail her out again. Ping picked us up at the other end, long way through mansions, etc. Interesting but not as stimulating as the Great Wall and "Great Crack".

Ping took us to a McDonald's in the city – My God! People out the ass pushing to order something. Of course, Sue wanted one of everything on the menu. She tried to tell the workers how she used to do it at McDonald's years ago, they were not impressed. Ate lunch back in the van.

Went to the Summer Palace next. Boy, tree lined streets on the way looked just like Savannah, Ga. Minus the moss. Beautiful! The Summer Palace Park was great. Big. Spectacular. Street vendors again like gnats. Sue kneed two of them in the balls, but on the way down they were still trying to sell their wares.

This Summer Palace Park was built for some woman empress. She must have been good! Great place, large man-made lakes, etc. Took a ferry across the main lake. David confronted his phobia of water once again. We had to tie him down but he confronted his phobia none the less. This place was great.

Sue writes: Bought some gifts for the kids. A woman was painting pictures of people's names, spelling out the letters by drawing Chinese artwork. Really neat. Another woman was doing amazing artwork. She was working with a glass bulb that contained a frosted ball inside with a picture of the animal representing the Chinese year the person was born on it. She inserted a thin paintbrush inside the globe and wrote the person's name from the inside. I wanted one. Not knowing the animal representing the Chinese year I was born, I confronted David. "Pig of course, we all know you are a pig", was his response. I did not believe him for one minute. The woman looked it up on the chart for me. Pig it was. Oh my goodness, David will never let me live this one down. It's just a coincidence. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. We only regret the woman did not write "Pig" instead of "Susan".

Dick writes: Came out of the park and no Ping. Sue dealt with additional street vendors while David called Ping. We came out of the wrong gate. Went back to the hotel. On the way back, Sue confessed that she had not taken a crap since Friday. My God! Don't it make your brown eyes blue. Or vice versa.

Our dinner was the best we've had so far. Went to the best Peking Duck restaurant in the city. David had wanted to go here since his childhood. Our dinner included Peking Duck, lobster, asparagus, and garlic broccoli. The chef cut the duck right in front of us. He went through great lengths to catch this duck and let David cut its head off. Linda ate the head. We wrapped the sliced duck in wraps with green onion, cucumbers, garlic, and paste version of soy sauce. They were great, new version of duck fajitas.

Took a taxi to Tiananmen Square to see it lit up at night – NO LIGHTS. The city sleeps. Ping thought it was only lit on weekends.

Wednesday, July 12, 2000

The plan was to meet for breakfast at 8AM. Only woke up at 8AM. Now I'll be late. You know how Mr. Edward's feels about people being late. At least I'm acclimated to China time. Called Dick to be sure he was up. Of course he was ready. God forbid I get a wakeup call. First attempt at breakfast was Popeye's. They had no earthly idea what breakfast was. If they don't serve breakfast, why are they open at 7AM? Micky D's it is. At least this experience in McDonald's was not like the last. The only problem –only ONE menu item for breakfast. McDonald's Egg Pork Sandwich - #5 Combo. Basically, we ate an egg hamburger (egg, sausage, cheese on a hamburger bun). Their idea of hash browns were French fries. As we know, that is the best food in the world according to David. Most people there eat the lunch/dinner food for breakfast. Big Mac first thing in the morning –GROSS! Don't forget the ice cream cone for \$.12, yes, even for breakfast. Off to shopping again, this time Dick's ass was not in bed. Shopping for a suit for him was an experience. The saleswoman remarked at his broad shoulders. She then grabbed him in the crotch and remarked "What a big man we have." Anything is big to those small Chinese women. He just loved to hear this. What we were looking for were 100% worsted wool suits – they only had 97% wool. Don't know what the other 3% were. He tried on a navy blue jacket. Fit great. We made him try on the slacks over his shorts, thank God, or we would have seen that "big" man. Decided not to buy, we moved on. Just wanted the woman touching him. Men's shirt section – nothing to please this picky person. Not 100% cotton. Don't like stripes on the collar. Wrong weave. What did we leave the store with? Two rolls of film and two pastries. Dick did check out the vibrator store on the way back to the hotel. I went in with Dick and David, the clerk just smiled. Would you believe a vibrator costs \$60 American money? That's how much an inch? I bought mine in Atlanta for \$9. It has never failed me. Besides, I could never pack a 12 incher in the suitcase without being caught.

Ping's van broke so we had a substitute driver for the day. Definitely not as good. Much worse driver too. First stop was Tian Tan Temple of Heaven. It was 150 degrees outside, sweating like a pig. I found this place very interesting. If I were playing roulette, number 9 would be it. We all stood at the center of heaven. Some Chinese woman told Dick to get out of there he did not belong. According to the legends, there are 9 levels of heaven. Could Dick not make it into at least one of the levels? I figure I'm going to level 1. Nine concentric circles surrounded the center of heaven, each circle containing a multiple of 9 blocks. The number of steps going up to the center of heaven was 9. Nine it is.

The Echo Wall, a cement block wall surrounding the courtyard, was fascinating. If two people stood behind the east and west library buildings respectively, they could carry on a conversation with each other. These buildings were over 100 yards apart. "Bullshit", Dick said. "It would not work." Lo and behold, we stood behind a woman carrying on a conversation with someone on the other side. It was amazing. Talk about "surround sound".

As usual, we had to deal with the gypsy vendors again. One pushed me when I said no, so I slugged him back. Taught that jerk a lesson.

As usual, David had to eat again. Get back into the van and it is hotter than 500 hells. This driver did not cool the van for us like Ping did. Went to very good restaurant, had Kung Po chicken, beef, pot stickers, sea bass, celery, and some other green vegetable for lunch. Food was good even though all we were looking for was a snack. Diana and Linda headed off in a bus to Linda's family. David, Dick, and I boarded a plane for Chongqing for our river gorge cruise. What did David do on the plane? You got it, sleep. Dick ate David's meal. Non-eventful flight, landed at Chongqing airport, brand new. Tour guide met us; Mary was her name, pretty, could speak English better than Sue. The drive into the city was spectacular. Hilly, mountainous terrain, lots of people living on mountainsides. Mary said that there were 33 million people living there, including the metro area. Biggest difference from Beijing was that there were very few bicycles. Too hilly, traffic is the same; nobody is killed but came close at least a dozen times. Parts of this city will be under water when the Dam is completed. Mary and driver took us directly to the dock where the ship "Elaine" was anchored. We boarded and checked in as I-Trak, Inc. David and I are in Room 232; Sue gets 230, right next door. We asked if they would move her to the other end of the boat, they did not take us seriously, we know her they do not! The three of us made a bee-line to the bar at the bow of the boat, ordered beer and a MAGNUM ice cream bar. Sue laughed at the name Magnum and Jessie (the bartender) asked her why the laugh. David explained there was a condom brand in the USA called Magnum (used by above average men). Jessie is cute and got a lot of entertainment from our conversations.

Thursday, July 13, 2000

David writes: "Thought the flight to Chongqing was smooth, yet the first night sleep on Elaine was not so. I had no problem went into sleep initially, however, nightmare started when I start having dreams of riding a freight train. Pretty soon I wake up halfway. Initially, I thought the noise came from Susan's vibrator because the room is only separated by a one-inch board. But after I was fully awake, Oh my God, it was Mr. Edward's snoring. He promised before we agree to sleep in the same room that he never snore. It's was about 2AM and I did not go into sleep at all until the wakeup call at 7AM when Mr. Edwards got up and went out. Dick's snoring is entertaining if you do not try to sleep. I had to experience it for 5 f***ing hours. Whenever he changes his sleeping position the snoring sound changes also. If I have to describe the sound it would be like violin if he is facing side, horn if he is facing up, and the worst, piano and drum if he is facing down. Finally I had my one-hour sleep from 7AM to 8AM. I got up and went to the dining room for breakfast. Dick and Susan had already finished. "Do you want to explain to the group why you are late?" asked by Mr. Edwards. "Yes, it's because of you, ASSHOLE".

Dick writes: We met for breakfast at 8AM. David said he did not sleep at all, said I snored all night. I told him the sound that kept him awake was the engines on the ship, I do not snore. Good breakfast. Omelets cooked while you watch, etc. Had on ship briefing, safety, on-board amenities, etc. Sue volunteered me for a body massage demo. Had to strip down to nothing and lay on a table. Some little good-looking girl worked on me while Mike the "fag" from Seattle (English-speaking on-ship tour man), described the Yangtze River, Dam project, the entire history of China, etc. etc. I didn't mind because this little girl's fingers did the job! I was embarrassed when I got up because the magnum was obvious. I told the Mike Man that I would marry the little girl on board the ship. Bloody Mary time followed, Sue and I had 6: me 1, Sue 5. David had a Coke and we sat on the deck taking in the scenery. What beautiful terrain, very mountainous, very green. We farted around until lunch. Lunch was buffet style. Everything was good but Sue complained about each dish. "What is in it" kind of questions.

About noon we docked at FENGU "Ghost City" for an excursion. We were assigned to Bus #2 and a tour guide whose English sounded like garbled Swahili. Could not understand a single word, not even David could understand this fart. Hotter than 400 hells. Sue and I took an aerial tram up the mountain to the "Ghost City". David refused to go because of his fear of heights. We think he stayed behind to flirt with the local women (this is where we found him when we returned). On top of the mountain there were many "Buddha" type worship places all burning incense, smelled like a Las Vegas whorehouse. Mosquitoes out the ass. We probably will have malaria. What is the incubation period anyhow? Sue bought the "Gorges" book for 35 Yuans here; they wanted 100 on the ship. David was pissed that she did not buy him one at this price. She got it for 35 because of her Long Island expertise – Give it to me for 35 or F*** you. There was a bridge up there still containing its original structure, over 4000 years old. Supposedly, if you can cross it in three steps or less it will make you 20 years younger.

Dick did it several times; he needs as many years back as he can get. We walked by sort of a wishing well or prayer well and there was a table full of various denominations of coins. Sue grabbed a coin from the table and dropped it into the "well". The vendor (a little woman), ran over to collect 5 Yuans for the coin drop. Again a Long Island F*** you. The little woman called over a man that looked like a Summa wrestler to collect from us. Again, f*** you and Sue took off running. After I got out of a chokehold, I took off running too. Caught up with Sue at the tram. Got on for the down trip. Halfway down the tram stopped. Sue started yelling. I told her to shut up and I would take care of things. I had some incense in my pocket. I lit it and prayed. Lo and behold the tram started again. Buddha is my God.

Back with my feet on the ground I renounced my religion. What level will that get me to? We met David and walked the streets for awhile. My God, the smell. The street vendors yelling "Hello, Hello" to sell their stuff. We stopped in one shop where the woman looked to be 18 years old. David asked her age, she was 32. These women look very young for their ages. She guessed my age at 38, but then David told her Sue was my daughter. She said I was very blessed to have such a beautiful daughter. She showed her 8-year-old daughter's pictures, all 400 of them. We then went back to Bus #2 and our idiot tour guide. Got on the bus, and this guy (we call him the "blond guy") was late as usual, and made the entire group wait inside the 120-degree bus. This asshole wandered around like he was the center of the universe. This guy is married to a "slut-looking" oriental woman and they have two girls 9/10 years old. What a group! This guy the entire trip was ALWAYS the last on but the first off so he could stop and chit chat and block the exit. He carried on a secondary tour with anyone who would listen. He was the guy that would always be in front of you blocking the photo op. He was always the guy that thought he was so cool, asking questions of the tour guide and then repeating the answers to everyone, just like he personally developed all of China. What an asshole. Then there was the "Mindy" and her entourage. JAP in the truest sense. Big ass. One of the chosen few. She was the one breaking in line always. Always first up front in the bus, on the ship, etc. Expecting special services. Ran her mouth the entire time. Had that "special" air about her. Bitch! I almost considered myself fortunate to be around Sue and being able to leave these two behind.

Back to the bus. Forgot to document how I saved Sue from being hit by a taxi. You know how she walks around with her head up her ass. Had to push her out of the way of this car. Saved her life, but as usual, bitched about me pushing her and called the car driver an asshole because he did not stop for her majesty to cross the street. Lots of thanks I get. Typical.

After we boarded the bus (waiting on the blond center of the universe), they took us to the Travel Agency's building for a dance/gymnastics show put on by 4 beautiful kids. The first little girl, about 7 years old, absolutely gorgeous, did some amazing dances and gymnastics with lit candleholders on her feet, head, and hands. She will grow up to make some guy quite a wife, being able to contort her body that way, about 100 different sex positions came to mind while watching. Then three other kids joined for some amazing gymnastics. One was only four years old. Cute kids. I gave the kids about 30 dollars each. Sue says that even hard stone-faced Dick has a soft heart. We

then walked back to the ship. On the way a farmer came by with 2 pigs tied and strapped to a cart, obviously on the way to market. Sue thought the pigs were dead until one of them winked at her. She went crazy chasing after them for a photo. She told me and David how cruel it was to kill a live pig. Obviously, she likes to eat her pork alive. The one born in the year of the pig strikes again. Later on the pigs.

Sue writes: We got back to the ship. Had a few drinks with Jessie in the lounge. Desperately needing to fix my hair, I decided to take a shower. Dick went to his room too. No hair dryers were available yet for loan. When I knocked on Dick and David's door to go to dinner the smell would have knocked you over. Oh my God, what crawled up his ass and died? I passed out in the hallway, banging my head on the wall, getting a concussion. He probably should have taken the anti-diarrhea medication long before this. I'll have a headache for the next three days. Ate dinner and then went up to the Jade Palace lounge. Dick was the star. "Tennessee Waltz" was the song. Karaoke was the subject. \$10 was the price. Can't believe he did it. Probably shouldn't have. I couldn't find a song I liked so I didn't sing. David wimped out too. But we have great pictures of Dick. I told Dick he should have some manners, be polite, and let David get some sleep before the freight train arrives again tonight. We sat on the deck while Dick polished off his Jack Daniel's and David got at least two hours of quiet sleep. Boy does the journal writing seem to flow with Jack Daniel's.

Friday, July 14, 2000

Woke up this morning with a migraine due to my concussion. Of course, Dick says it was due to Jack Daniel's and not the concussion. Dick requested some medication, guess the trots are present. Today should be a relaxing day sailing through the Three Gorges. Breakfast was served early due to passing through the first gorge at 8:45am. They are absolutely spectacular. The entrance to the first gorge, called the Qutang Gorge, is depicted on the 5 dollar Yuan. As we cruised down the Yangtze River there were signs displaying the height the river will be in the year 2003 (135m) and 2009 (175m) when the Dam Project is complete. Our tour director (remember Mike the fag?) gave us the pros and cons of this project as seen by the people. The pros include: (1) enabling the Yangtze River to flow into the Yellow River causing it to fill up, (2) reduce pollution as coal will no longer be needed to generate power. The cons: (1) thousands of people would be displaced, however, they would move into brand new apartments with plumbing. Many feel losing their ancestry and hometowns devastating, and (2) destroy the habitats of wildlife and destroy the beauty of the region. This first passing of the gorge took only 15 minutes.

The passing through the second gorge, the Wu Gorge, took one hour and a half to pass through. This was the narrowest one to pass through. The views were beautiful. Felt like we were in the Canadian Rockies, just more beautiful. It is so hard to believe that all the cities we are passing through will be flooded starting in 2003. The cruise guide told of many stories, legends, etc. We saw coffins permanently stuffed in the high cliffs of the mountains. Very interesting history.

Lunch was served early today so we could take our boat excursion on the "Shennong Stream". David bailed out on this tour too, would not go on the wooden boats into a capillary of the Yangtze River. Boy did he miss something. A ferry took us over to the shoreline where we boarded the wooden boats and picked up our rowers (4 in front, 3 in back, one of which was the steerer). The views here were even more spectacular. What was so amazing was the water color in the capillaries, very pretty green/blue, no more garbage brown on the Yangtze (like the Chattahoochee after a rain). Saw garbage 25 feet above the waterline. This was the height of the 1998 flood. Dick pointed out a bra. Said it was one of mine. AAA. Our tour guide was an itty, bitty, tiny thing, absolutely adorable. She was so cute trying to speak English, very deliberate and slow to pronounce everything correctly. She would never understand Dick with his southern English. She sang for us and then asked us to sing for her. There were about 20 of us on the boat. The St. Louis contingent lead the chorus, "Row, Row, Row Your Boat", "You are my sunshine", etc. As everyone was singing Dick told me he was going to puke. You know how he loves this kind of stuff. We got to talking to them and they remembered Dick as the guy who got the massage and who wanted to marry the girl that did it. No they did not remember the karaoke. Thank God. He could have learned something from them.

Got off the wooden boats to guess what? More "Hello, Hello, Hello". These local people trying to sell more stuff. Jokingly, Dick asked for a pig. You know a stone pig.

Can't he just let this pig thing go? The local showed him one. He said no. Now this guy latched on to him like June bugs on a duck (or is it reversed?). He hounded him the entire 20 minutes we were there. When this guy would not settle for 2 Yuan (about 24 cents), we left. He wanted 20 Yuan. For this one inch pig. That's how much an inch? We walked around for a bit before having to board the wooden boats back. There was a beautiful young lady carrying a baby on her back in a basket. David said this was very common.

Our rowers were the most inexperienced crew out of all the boats that launched from our ship. We ran aground, came in last place (even though we left first), and the boat turned around in the only swift part of the stream. The boat almost turned over. These guys were yelling at each other like it was the other one's fault. Learn some Chinese curse words. David would have shit his pants. This little excursion was definitely one of the highlights, 600 to 900 foot cliffs at the edge of the water. Dick and I wished David would have been with us but we understood.

Our return ride on the ferry back to the cruise boat was eventful. A ten-year-old kid was selling the same stuff that was being sold on shore, but he was good. Dick wanted to hire him as a sales person. I ended up getting David his Gorge book for 40 Yuan and Dick ended up getting his pig in my remembrance for 20 Yuan. This pig however, was 6 inches.

Upon returning to the boat, we passed through the third gorge. It was raining slightly so we waited out most of the time in the bar with Jessie. David and I were talking –I was still concerned about the two poor little pigs we saw on the cart yesterday. I asked him if he thought they were slaughtered already. He told me that by now they were probably shit floating down the Yangtze River. We docked close to the Dam site. Dinner was good as usual. All of us were tired so we went to bed by 10:30pm.

Saturday, July 15, 2000

The travel agent and a driver picked us up early to take us to Yichang airport 60 miles away to fly to Beijing. We left the ship a day early so we could visit David's hometown. The car ride was beautiful. We passed the dam under construction, which was a sight in itself. What a tremendous feat. This will end up being the biggest dam in the world. Entire towns including factories, roads, etc. were built to support the construction project. Unfortunately, this drive took us through several tunnels, the longest being 6 miles. Dick shit in his pants, yelling for medication. I swear to God, just shut his eyes and deal with it. The airport was brand new, our flight was the only one that morning. Guess what? 737. Dick freaked again. We even had to walk out to the plane and climb the stairs. At the base of the stairs is when he remembered he forgot to take his medication. There I was rummaging through baggage trying to find the stupid little pills. Dick had a problem the first ten minutes of the flight. David kept asking him. "What is wrong with you Dick?" By the way, what did David do the whole flight? No surprise – sleep. Upon arriving in Beijing we had 10 hours to spare before our 8-hour train ride to Datong began. Took a taxi to the train station to unload our bags. Dick's bag weighed 500 pounds and we could not carry it all day. There was a teenage hawker at the entrance to the station asking to store our bags for a fee. When we showed up with her at the storage location, her boss congratulated her (in Chinese) for getting two foreign devils with their interpreter.

Bags gone, we headed for shopping. David was still not feeling well due to the shits. First stop Chinese drug store. David got drugs, Dick checked out Chinese condoms. All were too small. Second stop the shitter in the department store. Poor David. No toilet paper. He had to finish up, pull up pants, go buy toilet paper, and return to toilet. Could never imagine shitting on those floor toilets. Nasty with a capital "N". While David was doing his business, Dick and I went to buy film and underwear for Dick. You could imagine trying to ask someone who only speaks Chinese where the men's underwear was. Dick had to drop his shorts to show them. All they could say was "Magnum, Magnum, Magnum". Got them. Two pair. Dick needed XXL but all they had was XL. 16 Yuan each - \$2 a pair. Went back to rescue David. Still in the shitter. Poor David. Next stop Dairy Queen for ice cream. No luck shopping for kids stuff. We headed to Beihai Park. What a spectacular park built around a lake. People come out at night to make out, hang out, sing until after dark. Very relaxing environment. Saw the Wall of Nine Dragons, very intricate art work. We noticed the Imperial Palace restaurant in the park that a woman from the St. Louis contingent on the wooden rowboats told us about. Decided to eat dinner there. We had our own private little room with décor from the 1400s and a gorgeous waitress. Relatively expensive, but the service and food were excellent. Too bad David did not eat his share. Afraid of getting sick. We were served on the original china the Empress ate off of. As we always say part of a meal is the presentation, this 20-course meal had presentation. Dick fell in love with our attendant. Got a picture of them.

We rolled out of the restaurant, flagged a taxi, and headed for the train station for our overnight trip. Drove past Tiananmen Square to see the lights. Very pretty. It's amazing how many people were still there at 9 in the evening. Almost as many as during the day.

Arrived at the train station 9:30pm. The three of us paid for a 4-berth cabin so we wouldn't have a stranger in our room. Since the train did not leave until 11:30pm we decided to wait the hour and a half in the resting area of the station. The smoke almost killed us. The bums. The everything else. What did David do? You know by now. Sleep. Time for the train. We got situated in our cabin. It was actually quite nice, very comfortable. The train pulled out exactly on time to the music of Kenny G. playing in our cabin. Quite soothing. We got ready for bed. David guarded the door to the restroom while I changed into my sleeping shorts and tee shirt. Dick did not give a shit. Stripped right down to his BVDs. Embarrassed us. Turned the lights out quickly.

Sunday, July 16, 2000

Woke up to a little Kenny G. music again at 6AM. Apparently, Dick and David were having a major discussion. Dick wanted to brush his teeth and take a piss and was heading out the door in his BVDs. All I could hear was David yelling, "Where are you going Dick? You cannot go out like that. You will be arrested". Guess that is the way people are when they are born in a barn. Not a modest bone in his body. However, several guys out in the hallway did ask for his autograph. 6:30am arrival time. We were cleaning up the cabin and David asked me to throw away something for him. It looked like tighty whities. David confirmed that is indeed what they were and that he needed to get rid of them because he thought he was going to fart, but shit instead. Gross. Bunking with two men is disgusting. David's cousin was there for us at Datong. Easy to spot, 6' 8" tall. Tallest Chinese person we ever saw. Very, very, nice guy. Took us to his home for breakfast. Another 10 course meal- eggs, cucumbers, dumplings, cantaloupe, bananas, peaches, ham, etc. Dick started drinking with this guy at 7:30am doing straight shots. When you toast with people in China, you don't sip your glass after the toast, you chug it. The Chinese people call this gan bei. Translates to "dry cup". Our equivalent, "bottoms up". The bottle said 50 something. Dick thought it was 50 proof, which would have been 25% alcohol, but the bottle said 50% alcohol. He was on his ass after several shooters. Obnoxious. He "had" to straight shot with this guy because it is tradition. They hold up a glass to toast, you gan bei. I wimped out, didn't want hair growing on my chest. David does not drink. His family wanted us to eat, eat, and eat. Very hospitable. On to Shuangjin, David's hometown village of 250 people. This was most definitely the highlight of our entire trip. David's cousin had a driver take us there, a two-hour ride from Datong. He had taken food there yesterday so they could prepare a meal for us. David's two brothers met us there. The ride to the village was beautiful. Too bad Dick did not see it. Was sleeping off his drunk. My poor shoulder was so sore from that swelled head of his that I had pins and needles in my hand due to the cut off circulation.

Stopped at Buddha tombs on the way to the village. These were huge, massive, very interesting. During President Nixon's visit to China in 1976 this was the only attraction he visited there. Dick was becoming crabby, guess the alcohol was wearing off, hangover in progress.

The countryside as we approached the village was something else. The roads up the mountain would have been impassable if it were raining. Stopped along the way to pick and eat snow peas. They got another "Big Crack" shot of me bending over to pick peas. Our arrival into the village was an event for the people living there. They never saw Americans before. We were sort of like a freak show at the circus. There must have been 50 people lining the streets and driveway to get a peek. David could hear them say in Chinese how ugly we were, especially Dick because of his pink skin. Said my eyes were too deep set. We came out to talk to the kids but they all ran, were afraid of us. David equated us to gorillas at the zoo. You are curious, want to see, but afraid to be near. Some of the children eventually warmed up but not many.

David's oldest brother (Wang1) looks just like him. He's a surgeon. Could not believe the resemblance. His younger brother (Wang3) looks quite different, much smaller. He's a chemist. As we entered the house we met the rest of the family. David's cousin's sister, her husband, his cousin's mother (79 years old), and one of David's father's brothers. These people live a very primitive way of life. They too, were cooking another 20-course meal for us. Unbelievable. What nice people! Apparently David had lied about us because they treated us like royalty. Dick continued with the 50% alcohol straight shots, I drank local beer. Oh boy, I see another sore shoulder coming.

Needing to exercise off this wonderful meal, we took a walk through the village with Wang1 and Wang3. Hiked up the mountainside, walked through the villagers yards, saw the schoolhouse David's cousin's brother-in-law was principal of, and saw the village theatre. Bet Dick could put on some show singing karaoke there. Saw the home David lived in for six months. Could not hike up to David's mother's grave as it was too dangerous, but he pointed out where it was. We could now understand how David got so sick traveling to that location in the middle of winter with the extremely low temperatures. The village children followed us, but naturally kept their distance. One 10-year old boy was carrying a baby less than year old on his back the whole way. The baby's clothes were so torn his little butt was hanging out. The poverty in this village was unreal. But the people seemed so happy. This is all they know. I tried to take as many photos as I could but the kids kept running away from me. When we returned to the house David told Dick and I we were on our own, we had to communicate with them by ourselves. All the children stood there as we were trying to guess their ages. Most of them were much older than they appeared to be; they were so small because they did not have much to eat. The entire day was so sad with these children. I wanted to go home, get Amy's old clothes and toys, and bring them back. Sure makes you thankful for what you have. Time to leave for Wang1's house. Had to pee so bad. Guess where the toilet was? In the yard. Over a hole in the ground. Two pieces of wood to squat on. Oh my God. I see it coming. The whole town watching Sue take a leak. To go or not to go. I had no choice. To go.

As we drove off, the village people lined the streets watching us and waving goodbye. Like the President came to town for the day. The excitement in their faces. This really got to me. Very emotional. I will never forget these people.

Dick was now sleeping off his second round of 50% alcohol on my shoulder as we headed to Wang1's house two hours away. We checked into our hotel first so we could take a shower, after the train ride last night we were pretty gross. The hotel was right in the complex where Wang1 lived and worked. David, Wang1, his wife and 14-year old son "Mike", Wang3, his wife and 6-year old son Jin Jin, and David's Dad took us to a restaurant in the complex. Was sort of like the Melting Pot fondue restaurant in Atlanta, however, you cook your food in water, not oil. The servers brought us the meats: chicken, pork, and beef. You then pick out vegetables, seafood, from a central buffet table. It was a lot of fun cooking. After the 10 course breakfast, 20 course lunch, and then this dinner, we felt like we were going to blow up. Dick had downgraded to only beer, thank God. We went back to Wang1's house for tea and to talk to them. David's father said we looked very healthy, especially Dick. Think that was a polite way

of telling us we were fat. David told us they said I had very long eyelashes and my eyes were so deep. They asked me my real hair color, I told them 50% gray. They were amazed I had 4 c-sections, were very envious I had four children. It's one child per couple there or you lose your job.

Dick wanted to go back to the hotel, no wonder, he was hung over. You can't get up at 6AM, drink all day, and stay awake all night. Especially at his age. No hooting with the owls tonight. Headed back to the hotel. When I got to my room some guys were checking in the room across the hall. They left their door open and this made me very nervous. Called Dick and made him swap rooms with me. It was better to have him raped and beat up rather than me. What a prince of a guy. Taking it in the ass for me. Called it a night.

Monday, July 17, 2000

Not a good night. Dick had the shits all night. More of my anti-shit drugs gone. He was pissed there was not much toilet paper in the hotel room and had to use as a last resort, a bath towel. At least David has won that war and is feeling better. Sure the drugs he got from Wang1 helped. I had the shits too but didn't want David to feel bad so I didn't say anything at the time. Ate breakfast at the hotel before we boarded the train to Taiyuan, David's wife's hometown. Wang3 brought David to meet us at the hotel for breakfast on his motorcycle. Dick sent his eggs back three times before they came back well done. Wang1 picked us up to take us to the train station. Stopped at Wang3's house to say goodbye to David's father. Again he told us how healthy we were, even went so far as to point to my calves. Guess that is because very rarely do you see a fat Chinese person. What a fine gentleman.

Luckily, when the train arrived, there was a soft seat (sleeper) available. We headed straight for the beds. Yes, three hours and a half more of sleep. I could use that after being up half the night with the shits. This train had no air conditioning so it was hot.

Dick writes: "In the sleeper cabin we all decided to take a nap. Sue this time was not very modest in that she rolled around in the bunk in her short shorts and David said, "My God Sue, there is a tarantula inside your shorts". I verify no animal was present, however, she did need a trim job bad. David could not get over this site to behold. Good friends do point these things out to each other. David just took a little extra time to be sure of what he saw."

Passed through the countryside and small towns. Went through two tunnels. Again, what do you think Mr. Edwards did? Panicked of course. When it became jet black. I'm getting sick of this phobia thing. Get over it. The train was 30 minutes late in arriving in Taiyuan. David's wife and brother-in-law were waiting for us. His brother-in-law picked up my blue bag. More Chinese curse words. Heavy. Headed to Mickey D's for lunch. New in Taiyuan since last year David said. Dick was extremely upset that ice cream cones here cost 2 Yuan, not like the 1 Yuan in Beijing. Still, he wants his ice cream no matter what the cost.

Next stop, a beautiful park with a lake. Ran into a group of kids trying to get our attention because we were Americans. They were yelling "Hello", waving, jumping up and down, and giggling at us. Took a photo of them posing for us. We walked completely around the lake. In addition, we walked over a bridge that collapsed last year killing 200 people. Wondered if it would collapse when Sue walked over it but it was fine. There was a family taking pictures in front of a building, the woman was sitting on the steps. Perfect view of her crotch. David checked her out for a tarantula. Wanted me to take a picture of her in that position. We then went to the University where David went to school. Saw his old "dorm". He said there were 8 guys sharing the room. Each took turns cooking, etc. Said that you have to be good friends to sleep asshole to asshole that way. David was one of only 10 students given the opportunity to go to

school in the USA. Scored extremely high on the test. Of course, we all know he is "above average".

Dick wrote: We went to David's in-laws' apartment. Very nice 3-level apartment. His Father-in-law was very well connected with the government. Now retired. Got introduced to all the clan. Everyone wanted to take a picture with us. Don't know why. David said that we would have made \$250 if we had charged them \$5 per photo. I guess everyone just wanted to be documented as being next to "the" Dick Edwards. Sorta like Nixon's visit. Sister-in-law's baby sitter sang us some songs. What a voice! Signed her to a contract. Got a tour of the apartment. Very nice. They had spent a bunch of money remodeling the place. David's brother-in-law's wife is a blast. She has that personality that you can't help but like. Very energetic, funny, cute and smart. She would pick up English words from us and repeat them back to us in the right context. She, however, could not say Dick. Sue told her to call me Richard. "Rick-chard" sticks with you. And of course, she asked the proverbial question, "How do you get Dick out of "Rick-chard". Does anyone know? We told her David's American name. She got a kick out of saying David over and over. We all then went to dinner. By the way, they pointed out the "burglar deterrent" on the way out. Pieces of sharp glass embedded in cement on top of the wall surrounding the building. Cool.

Dinner was at this very up-scale restaurant. Put us into a private room. Served us 48 different dishes. My god, how do these people stay so skinny? More beer, more toasts, more chug-a-lug races. Had a contest with David's Father-in-law. Not fair. He had Coke. I had beer. Had some good conversation with him through my interpreter, David. He asked me how I liked Clinton. During the translation, David cleaned up what I said. He asked about Chelsea, said she wanted to stay in China when they visited. I said that she was a "dog". Again, cleaned up to "she was ugly". Like his Father, David's Father-in-law is also a fine gentleman. He said that it was wonderful that the three of us could work together and still be close friends. He envied that. I told him that he should be extremely proud of his son-in-law; that it had taken me several years tutoring him, mentoring him, teaching him, and that he had turned out O.K. He agreed.

We dropped off the kids, the Father-in-law and mother-in-law back at their apartment and then we went karaokeing. Is that a word? We went through alleyways and back streets to get there. Jesus, the people out on the streets at that time of the night, cooking, eating, playing games, etc. We went into a building and to a private room. Looked like a whore house to me. Probably was. Talk about your karaokeing, wow! Had a ball. Everyone sang except for Sue. What's new? Her lips were moving but no sound. I sang about a dozen songs. Everyone sounded great, particularly my new signee and the driver. David's brother-in-law and his wife (the blast, see above) were great. She sang along with me on "Old Lang Syne". She in Chinese, me in Southern English. We sounded fantastic. Someone heard us from outside the room, came in and asked if we could sing at his wedding. We danced a little bit, almost passed out. Getting old. Sue can't dance OR sing. We had a ball with this crowd! My kind of people.

Left the room and went bowling. Brunswick Lanes in China, go figure. Rented shoes. Did not have my size. This caused me problems in bowling. Sue beat us all. Her

lousy 120 is nothing to write home about. What the hell! She had no beer and had good shoes. I threw five straight gutter balls. Professional bowlers could not bowl if they were drunk, had shoes 3 sizes too small, and had someone yelling "Go, Rick-Chard" in the background. Nonetheless, we had a great time. We will probably hear about the f***ing 120 the rest of our lives.

They took us back to the hotel. Had us in stitches all the way. I can't get over how much fun David's brother-in-law's wife is to be around. Great gal. Got in bed about 4:00am. Got up at 5:00am. Had to call Sue as usual. Again, that Long Island crap – f**k you, let me sleep, leave me alone, do you realize what f**king time it is, etc., etc. What did she say about the owls and eagles? Checked out. The driver, brother-in-law, David and Linda picked us up. On the way to the airport some locals were moving a cage (David said it was also a burglar deterrent) right down the center of the road. The brother-in-law leaned out the window and yelled something at them. They immediately moved out of the way. My best interpretation of what he said was "Get your f***ing ass out of the road or I will stick that f***ing cage up your ass". The brother-in-law probably weighs in at 80 lbs. However, he takes no shit. He is also well connected.

Got to the airport, said our goodbyes. David said that he was never so glad to get rid of somebody. Said he had no problem with me; it was Sue that drove him nuts.

Flew to Beijing. Bought T-shirts for Jake and Max. At the Beijing airport we stood in the wrong line for visa clearance about 2 hours. Next time Sue will listen to me. I had told her that we could not clear visas until our final departure from China, which was Shanghai. Of course, she is always right, her way or no way.

Our flight to Shanghai was smooth. The air over Shanghai is clean, not like Beijing. Had to disembark, CLEAR VISA'S, have a magnum bar and re-board.

The flight to L.A. required less time because of the tail winds. Had more hot beer over ice. One of these days I am going to introduce them to an ice cold beer. Food looked O.K. Sue ate mine, also. She's probably back up to the 152 level. Being locked in an airplane for that long (with hot beer) is a true test of endurance. About all you can do at 39,000 feet is play with yourself. Sue slept most of the flight. Remember the wakeup call back at the hotel. She said she needed her beauty sleep. God damn, she snores like a freight train. More Chinese movies. However, now I can understand the language. One of the actors was called "Rick-chard".

Landed in L.A. Had only 50 minutes to make connections. The line at customs was about 5 miles long. Sue started to panic. "We are going to miss our plane, the sky is falling, etc., etc." This time I did not listen to her. I said to her "stick with me, everything will be fine". Went to the line for USA citizens. It was only 3 deep. Cleared customs but not without incident. Remember the 12 incher. Had to leave it with the customs dike. The dike seemed pleased, Sue cried all the way home. L1011 flight. My favorite plane. Big. Sue slept all the way while I drank Bloody Mary's. My God Almighty, she snores.

All good things must come to an end. The trip started off with “Rick-chard” and ended with “Rick-chard”. Picked us up at the airport with Richie. Somehow his driving didn’t seem so bad anymore. Sue ran her mouth about the trip all the way to her house. I showed up at work on time the next morning, something I cannot say about others.

Epilogue

This was a great trip: Plane rides, praying in the back of the bus, great crack on the great wall, the shits, people being arrested, porno, more plane rides, river cruises, tram rides, pigs, more shits, concussions, snoring, hot beer, food-food-food, Jessie, gorges, wooden canoes, the dam, train rides, tarantulas, village, pissing in a hole, shooters, more train rides, tunnels, ice cream, Universities, karaoke, Rick-chards, bowling, two great families, more plane rides, and Bloody Mary's. As David's Father-in-law said, "It's wonderful to have such good friends". David went out of his way to have everything planned and in place for us. We thank him for that and for putting up with us for 10 days. Enough said. We are going to Great Britain and France next year.

End.