

## Journal - Around the World in 79 days - Spring 2013

### Part 1: The Beginning - to Shanghai

**March 3, Sunday:** After a one hour line for checking in, and verifying my aisle seat, I left Mary at the security line of the International terminal of O'Hare: - The Asiana airlines noon flight to Incheon, Seoul airport, Korea, left about 30 minutes late - and we arrived close to 13 hours later. The cabin was darkened right after the first meal so really no chance to read and got very little sleep, but saw a couple of interesting movies - "The life of Pi", and "Argo" - even "Lincoln" was available, but we had already seen that. Pi was remarkably done giving a real sense of the danger from the Tiger - need to find out how it was done; the ending story was a little weak compared with the book, but interesting in its differences; Argo appears to be a close-to-the-truth story of trying to liberate six Americans from the Canadian embassy in Tehran during the Carter hostage crisis - the street scenes were very realistic and, of course, a thrilling story line. (I won't tell you if they got out of Iran safely!). The airline food was OK - 2 ½ meals - on the flight - hence no temptation to buy food in Incheon during my three hour wait for the 2-hour flight to Shanghai.



We had arrived at Incheon about 5:30 pm on Monday their time, and left promptly at 9 pm (getting to Shanghai's Pudong airport at 10 pm (another 1 hour of time difference, putting Shanghai 14 hours ahead of Chicago - it will only be 13 hours after the coming weekend's "Spring-forward" time change in the USA). Another meal on this flight, but the most interesting part was the baggage stowing process: the flight was completely full, and probably most people must have not been allowed to check more than one bag (I had checked 2 for free in Chicago) - I don't think I have seen more "stuff" stuffed into the overhead baggage compartments - with lots of very enterprising work done by both the stewardesses and several passengers.

Passport, baggage pick-up and customs at Pudong airport were a breeze: the only negative was the HSBC ATM machine in the baggage hall which accepted only my HSBC card (not a US Visa card) - possibly I hit the wrong buttons in my tiredness - but 1500 yuan should last me a while (6.25 yuan = \$1US - 1.5 pounds). One of Roger Hutton's graduate students (Tai) was in "the placard line" exiting the customs hall - we walked over to the taxi line, and off we went on the 45 minute trip into Shanghai and the Fudan Yan Yuan Hotel - next to the Fudan campus - I guess it was after 11 pm by the time I checked in to my fairly standard hotel room - and so to bed...

.....and so that day was Monday March 4<sup>th</sup> too, although 11 pm was really 9 am Monday morning in Chicago - so much for the International dateline trick. You probably remember how Magellan's gang (he died on the way) were surprised at the date when they got back to Spain - off by a day (do you know which way?) - which meant that they also kept pretty accurate journals!

**March 5, Tuesday:** Surprisingly I did not sleep well, waking up several times in the early morning: the room (418 on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor) has a large comfortable king-size bed, plenty of space, bathroom, open closet, 30 inch TV, two internet outlets (no Wifi) - a typical US style medium grade hotel room. It has a hot water maker and tea packets, but no refrigerator since that apparently would double the cost (from \$55 up to \$100 US); presumably Brigid's Doubletree Hilton on the other side of town has one.

The room looks down on Shanghai's version of the Yvette River - wider, slower-flowing, but the same dark muddy dark green color and artificially straight (its name is the Qiujiang river). For those of you never in Bures-sur-Yvette, our rental house there back in 1981 bordered the rapid flowing, creek that the boys could reach through the nettles of the backyard, or over the

access road bridge - great for playing “stickboat races” and other enjoyments... The Shanghai version seems to originate on the Fudan campus, then flows into the Huangpu river (which goes thru the center of Shanghai) and a kilometer later into the Yangtze river estuary and then the East China sea about 100 kilometers later.

On the other side of the “river” are blocks of fairly old apartments - reminds me of Singapore - dirtier, but with the same arrays of bamboo rod washing lines out the windows - but these are supported by square arrays of metal rods, fastened by cables at 45 degrees above to the building. Less danger here of the Singapore-type downpours, but all the clothes are removed each night.



*From the hotel window*

On to an excellent chinese breakfast - this takes place at a cafeteria (7 to 9 am) about 100 meters away, for residents at the hotel and at 2 or 3 other blocks of lodgings, all within the same gated community (I think they are for people attending conferences- the giveaway was the identical green bag that many were carrying). A great selection of foods, including two types of porridge, toast, dumplings, boiled eggs and meat and vegetable dishes - self-selection, and then large round tables - although I loaded up with the chinese stuff, one of the assistants assumed that being American (or European) I would also want toast, jam and butter, and brought it to me at the table. The chinese were seriously eating, hardly talking even to their friends (?) at the same table.

Roger Hutton, my host, is English, from close to London, but is married to a Swedish lady, with 2 children, and got his Ph.D. in Lund, Sweden with Indrek Martinson - I had known Roger then (early 1990s), but have not been in touch with him since. He is now a professor at Fudan University and head of a flourishing “EBIT” lab. [For those of you who are non-physicists, and will not be reading my “physics research labnotes”, the EBIT is a machine that uses high energy electrons to produce and trap highly ionized atoms, whose properties are then studied - mostly their energies and collision properties by looking at the emitted x-rays and other photons - a modern version of “beam-foil spectroscopy”- this latter field now mostly moribund that I was involved in for the past 100 years before I decided that I could help in science education in general. Oh, EBIT stands for Electron Beam Ion Trap, as I am sure you already guessed - as on the sign here...].



Roger was teaching in the morning, and so we had arranged to meet at the hotel at noon.

I took a morning walk: about 200 m to the University gateway, and just beyond, the Fudan University “twin-towers”, erected in 2005 to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. They are connected up to the 12<sup>th</sup> story, a bit like the twin towers of Kuala Lumpur; people, mostly older, exercising on the grass swards in front, in the pleasant morning sunshine (temperature around 60F). I wandered back to the main gate, over the bridge of the muddy river and up what turns out to be University Avenue, filled with modern, small shops, eating places, etc, with upscale apartments in the buildings above. After about ½ mile, I reached a main road which straddled two shopping centers (with the line 10 metro stop on one corner). The shops inside one center were mainly chinese department stores and shops, but also some more familiar (but avoided) landmarks - e.g. Dairy Queen, KFC, Burger King and a big Walmart, (later I also found McDonalds and Marks and Spencers in the basement). A 100m down the street and I was back at the hotel (just opposite the

“Hard Rock” bar).



*Road to the lab - on Fudan campus*

When Roger appeared around noon, we had lunch at the hotel restaurant - Roger ordered 4 different dishes, and we ate probably less than half - one dish per person if we return in the future. The walk



*The EBIT lab - offices on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor*

into the lab goes past the twin towers and another quarter mile beyond - to most of the science labs. The EBIT labs take up one wing of a 2-story structure of non-descript concrete - a visitor's office 202 is next to Roger's - he and Yaming Zhou run the facility, although now she is the director of another section of the department. We toured the EBIT labs - there are 3 EBITs, one just completed a few weeks ago, at least one year late; plus lots of peripheral equipment where an experimental physicist can clearly play contentedly for a month or so.... Clearly some pressure on Roger to publish results, and to get students completing their PhDs: I think he is doing pretty well in both respects.

Before coming I had agreed to give some classes on graduate atomic physics, and thought I still had a week to prepare, but Roger let me know that the first class (3x45 minutes with 10 minute breaks) was to take place Wednesday, the following afternoon: apparently the administrators are getting serious about these “visiting scholars”, requiring a full set of class synopses, etc, (a new requirement, especially before they pay out any money - a sign of the changing chinese economy). So to work I had to go.... To complete a tiring but enjoyable first day, Roger had arranged dinner at a nearby chinese restaurant (in the shopping mall next to the metro station) with about 6 of his students. The really convenient part was that we had a round table in a private diningroom, so that my low-quality hearing was not destroyed by extraneous noises. One student, evidently a gourmet, took charge of the ordering - great choices, and the food kept coming to the revolving table center as we ate family-style.

Afterwards, a short walk back to the hotel and sleep.

**March 6, Wednesday:** Just science today... into the lab early to prepare for the afternoon class. Two of the tech students spent about 2 hours getting my computer on line though the lab's cable



*Office and computer experts*

internet - apparently this amusing scenario happens with each western visitor. To jump forward a bit: I took the computer home since I have only cable, no wifi, at the hotel, where I had to play around with it a bit more to get connected - back in the lab on Thursday, the 2 students found it impossible to link up again, and hence turned to the university wifi connection which works fine. There are still strange

connection problems with particular websites, especially yahoo and facebook, but I think that may be due to the more general chinese controls.



*Chinese peasant? At base of twin towers*

Roger and I went to the student cafeteria for lunch - pretty decent food - one chooses helpings of three different items plus rice - chopsticks provided, no water or napkins around. The afternoon class, 1:30 to 4 pm had 10 students plus a video camera - I started them off first asking them to write down what they wanted to learn, and then a fairly simple quiz to see what they know about atomic physics; I think that really surprised them; Roger was amazed since they have previously had other highly theoretical presentations from other visitors - so much for interactive learning and thinking!

I went exploring the shopping centers again in the evening finding supper in “Shanghai’s First Food Court”. An impossible place to order: one had to choose the dish at one of the vendors, and then go pay at a central kiosk, picking up a slip and taking it back to the vendor - reads easy, right! The problem is that the dish descriptions are only in Chinese characters!

Impossible to write down or pronounce, of course - the problem was solved by the helpful vendor going to the kiosk and explaining what I wanted - the food was on a par with the student cafeteria - but about twice the price - \$3.50 for dinner, \$2 for lunch.

**March 7, Thursday:** Another science day - half the time catching up on the past 10 years of EBIT atomic physics, and half on finishing off the class “synopsis” [you can read it at my Notre Dame website: <http://www3.nd.edu/~nismec/nismec11.htm>]. That plus copies of my passport and boarding slips lead to



*The spectrum of lightning*

reimbursement in RMB or Yuan two names for the Chinese currency. Another evening spent in exploring the local environs

- found a “Paris Baguette” store with all sorts of delicacies fit for supper. Since South Bend is enjoying 8 inches of snow, I should point out that for the first few days here, the temperatures were in the low 60s, but reached 70F today, and ready for shirt sleeve weather this weekend. The ground is very dry - apparently the rainy season is in the summer, but with some rain usually the whole year round. The magnolias I pass on the way to the lab are just beginning to bloom.



*Magnolias on campus near the lab*

**March 8, Friday:** Researching EBIT stuff in the morning, lunch with Roger at the cafeteria, then the student presentations in the afternoon - unfortunately all in Chinese so that neither myself nor Roger understood a thing - quite a lively discussion amongst the 17 young Chinese, of which about half are graduate students working on their theses, the others are doing technology support work of various types. Roger told me afterwards that he was surprised too: they usually have some slides to present, but apparently this week because of machine problems they had no new data. Nice Chinese cookies and cakes however. Each paper the group publishes is rewarded with about 6000 RMB - Roger puts it into the entertainment bucket to pay for such things “because the students did



*Flower beds just inside campus entrance*

all the work”, as he says. I noticed that 9 of the 17 students wear glasses, all near-sighted, apparently a little fewer than the norm for young chinese.

At 5:30 pm, we stopped for the day, and Roger and I went out for a couple of beers - along the fairly upscale University avenue. We found a “bar” bought our beers and sat at an outside table on the sidewalk. The “bar” is just a small shop with shelves and a refrigerator filled with different mostly foreign beers, plus a young lady at a cash register, with nowhere to sit down inside. They even had Yorkshire beers - for example a nice stout from John Smiths of Tadcaster. At one point, I was surprised to see the cashier locking the door to the bar and leaving. Back she came about 10 minutes later, after several customers had been unable to buy any beer. Explanation: the bar has no bathroom, hence, she locks up and goes elsewhere, presumably to an public toilet. The winebar next door operates on essentially the same principles.



*From the campus bridge looking north - hotel center on right - I am in second lower building*



*Trees protected by straw - at entrance to shopping center near campus*

**We will continue the journal in part 2....(before the file gets too big)**