

Journal - Around the World in 79 days - Spring 2013

Part 4: A third weekend in Shanghai - March 23, 24 - and some extra commentaries

16 March, Saturday: The usual hearty buffet breakfast, vegetables, some cold, some hot, some spicy, some not, dumplings, hard boiled eggs, a slice of bread and jam, and a glass or two of hot juice: then off by metro to the science and technology museum, way over on the southeast of town - the subway station lies between two museums in a fairly nondescript area of ugly concrete structures, but a beautiful semicircular building in the distance is clearly the place to go. At 10 am, there was already a steady stream of entrants -- it is nice to see that science is very popular here in China - an important avenue to a good job. I booked in to see the 11am showing of "cosmic collisions", and went off to see the natural history



Front and center of the S&T museum



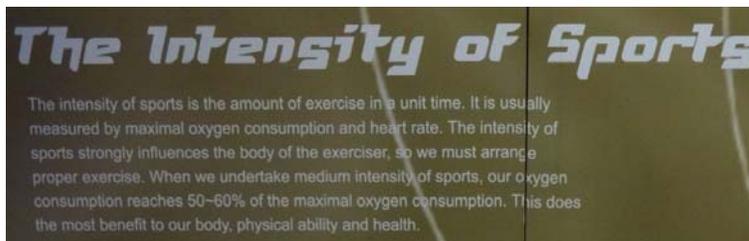
Africa

exhibit (the museum is a combination of Chicago's Field and Science museums). The natural history section was a wonderful walking tour: first animal dioramas - one for each continent - , and then a magical tour through various landscapes, including waterfalls, wood-and-rope bridges, giant insects, etc. The children were loving it, but almost no reading of the many educational signs.



Rope bridge - a bit scary

Too soon it was time to dash up to the 4th floor space area with the modern computerized planetarium (slightly smaller than the one at Notre Dame) - ready for the half-hour show on colliding galaxies and other exciting extra-galactic events. Surprisingly, many of the chinese (children, teenagers and older people) continued



One of the Government's exhortations

to talk and eat throughout the film. The narration of the film in chinese seemed to be a female voice, and so the film credits were another surprise when Robert Redford was the acknowledged narrator. (The film is part of a Denver/Shanghai planetarium collaboration).

I covered the other floors fairly quickly - but quite fascinating exhibits on DNA, cloning, and stem cells; chinese work at creating a green society; a three part diorama of a river scene: scene one, idyllic and pastoral with rice gatherers; part two, smoky factories, dirty water and black mud; part 3, again clean



Fountain in People's Park

water, riverbank promenade and high rises in the distance. The benefits of regular exercise filled one area (there were lines to play table tennis, and to kick soccer balls against a computerized goal and goalkeeper); plus a quick return to the missed part of the natural history tour.

Lunch in the cafeteria looked crowded and unappetizing, so off i went towards the subway, and found a nice restaurant (squid with rice and various vegetables) in the underground shopping area well out of the rain. A short subway ride took me back to see



Fascination



Texas cattle cornered by wolves



The winner



1000 year old Mary



Ming Gordon

the 2.5 remaining floors of the Shanghai museum, and then I dashed back thru the increasing rain to the subway and home and a little rest.



A (hard) pillow

17 March, Sunday: today we have a trip planned: Reinhold Schuch who recently retired from being head of the Siegbahn Institute (the old Nobel Institute where i worked in 1969-70), joined us at the EBIT lab for 10 days. With a post-doc as guide, plus a chauffeured Fudan limousine (Buick), we are off for a day in the "countryside" - actually, it is supposed to be an old-time village as in the good old days.

Very disappointing for several reasons: first, it rained the whole time (cold too); second, it was mostly just a tourist trap, narrow walking streets with roofs nearly meeting overhead (I bet most of the houses, although looking old were probably built less than a dozen years ago - call me a cynic!); and third, very

unstimulating company, but perhaps the rain had dampened their spirits...

Some positives - i had brought my umbrella, another, there might have been more crowds without the rain, and also, the photos in the rain were different from the usual... The streets were surrounded by narrow waterways where gondolas plied under picturesque stone and



Stone bridge & gondolas in rain



Old(?) Houses



Wet riders



Ke Yao and Reinhold



A wet gondolier



Fresh fish delivery

wooden bridges. After an hour or more, with shoes and socks gradually filling with water, we retired to a really nice teahouse -- good china tea, with lots of refills, and 3 bowls of snacks. By the time we were done it had



All for sale...

stopped raining and we headed for the limo in the carpark, woke the chauffeur, and 2 hours later were back at the hotel -- with dry socks and shoes etc.

The back-story and after-story: The Stockholm lab is now closed and Reinhold is retired (also divorced - his wife and family went back to Germany - where they all came from - he apparently lives in Stockholm with his “fastmo”) - he travels between various accelerator labs to keep himself busy, and has arranged transfer to Fudan of quite a large piece of equipment from the now defunct Swedish lab - it is presently in large crates waiting for a room to be prepared (too late for his present trip). A few weeks before, he was in Argentina (Bariloche, in the Andean foothills for you who know your South American geography), and had trouble walking as his calf muscles seized up - sure enough, on Monday the same thing happened, got worse on Tuesday - he was unable to walk home, so Roger and Udi (Roger’s “super-tech”) drove him to hospital, and after threats of needling him, they finally decided nothing much was wrong and gave him some herbal pills - these apparently worked well enough to help him walk slowly to the lab each day and to get him to his plane home on Friday. Our conclusion - cold and wet are not good for old men (even though Reinhold is 5 years younger than me, and you would think that Swedish winters would have acclimated him).

A few other meetings and happenings in Shanghai

Roger Hutton runs an amazingly productive lab - i think he is one of Indrek Martinson’s best students from the University of Lund, Sweden. Roger, who is English, had married a Swedish lady in London (she handled orders for a Swedish gravestone company - and still does in Shanghai) before coming to Sweden in about 1990 for his Ph.D. work - which is where I first met him. After working as a post doc in various labs in Berkeley and then in Germany, he became joint leader, with Yaming Zhou (whom i had met at Indrek’s *festschrift* meeting back in about 2005) of this EBIT group. Yaming has had some very serious health problems in the past 3 years (now has only one kidney), so they really need Roger to lead: but how does a person who does not speak chinese (he does speak a little) lead a large group of graduate students, post docs and technicians to run a multi-accelerator lab? He does a great job! He successfully applies the standard “Guided Inquiry” methodology that Mary describes in her SIP process: the students are doing satisfying, *intentional* problem-solving all their waking hours]. In addition, although he is

able to teach in English, all department meetings, proposal writing, review committees, etc., only take place in Chinese.

One example that I had: the students and techs meet once a week on Friday afternoons to talk about progress or lack thereof during the week in the lab - generally there are .ppt slides which can be understood, but the first meeting i went to, there were no slides (no new data to show!). What ensued was an animated discussion amongst the 18 or so chinese, but Roger and I could only sit and wait for it to end, eating a few cookies in the process. I found the animated discussions impressive in that many of the students spoke, even though it was mostly led by the postdocs, although that was apparently the only one without slides. The meetings always include refreshments...provided by the “student fund” - this comes from Fudan University who pay the group about \$100 for each publication (more for prestigious journals): Roger turns the money over to the students to look after, and use, for example, for “lab parties” while they work over the weekends, or at night (accelerator slaves!). They gave me and Reinhold each a nice office pen container engraved with the Fudan twin towers - mine is now sitting on Daniel/Anita’s desk in Chengdu. Needless to say, i did not attend any more of the weekly meetings, finding one-on-one discussions with the students much more productive.

Roger and Yaming have been very successful in obtaining government research money, having beaten out a very well-known national group in the last 5-year competition,



Roger, 2 Finns & Udi's wife

but they are clearly under a bit of pressure to publish (each doctoral student must be first author on at least 3 publications) and are about a year behind schedule in getting the latest EBIT machine running. Fudan University likes to support him by bringing in foreign visitors (like me), and he has 3 or 4 visitors per year, all the recent ones being from Europe. He clearly appreciates having a few English speakers around, and he likes to socialize in the evenings at local wine bars/pizza houses etc - which we did a few times - one memorable occasion with the 2 Finnish directors of Fudan’s “Norge Center”, plus Udi and his wife, (she runs the budget office of the physics department).



Udi, Roger, server, Yaming, Reinhold and Ke

Here is a picture of part of the group with Roger, Yaming, and Reinhold at a room in a local restaurant - all such meals are served family style with dishes - lots of them - zipping around on a rotary center of the table.

At the end of the visit, I took Roger and his wife out to dinner at a very elegant restaurant - we were almost the only customers, except for a group of chinese who exited from a private dining-room as we were almost finished - I mentioned the story on Mia’s facebook page as an example of short tempers - especially noteworthy since it was the only time I saw any Chinese visibly expressing their anger: it was clearly about the bill and the shouting between one or two of the 10 guests and in the end all the staff in the restaurant went on very loudly for 15 to 20 minutes - it ended with the manager slipping them a 20 Rmb note (the whole dinner for them probably cost at least 500Rmb), and off they went leaving us in merciful quiet.

Another delightful experience ensued when I tried to locate a Chinese lady - we used to call her Madame Wei: - she had worked with me at Argonne National Lab during a

3 month visit back in 1980. (This is a fairly long story, but full of twists and turns...) At that time she was director of the Fudan University accelerator lab, and came to learn about lasers interacting with fast beam particles. Unfortunately, that was at the height of the Reagan Star Wars stupidity. Although we had got clearance for her visit, while she was in the plane on her way, we received a fax message from the US state department that she was not allowed into Argonne National Lab. The physics lab director, Murray Peshkin, initially got them to agree that she could at least stay at the Visitors' facility, but not talk to me or visit our laser lab. After about 3 days of continuous phone calls, he finally got the needed clearance, but we were not allowed to pay her any stipend or living expenses. She only had a minimal amount of Chinese money, but most of the problems were resolved when my student, Daniel Nikfarjam, an Iranian Jew, married to an American catholic, let her stay in one of the apartments in a building that he was managing for his father-in-law. He lived on North Avenue in what was then a fairly low-class neighborhood: I remember driving her back on July 4th evening and seeing groups on every corner of the intersections letting off dozens of fireworks. As part of the bargain, he agreed to drive her into and back from Argonne each day, and learn physics from her in the process. He never did finish his Ph.D., (not Madame Wei's fault) and his main claim to fame was voting twice in Chicago elections after he changed his last name to Neek, and voted on both names - republican! - probably the only one (two) in his neighborhood.

...back to Shanghai: I went down to the other corridor where the main Fudan accelerator is still in use to find Madame Wei. I assumed she was long-gone - the Chinese have to retire at 60 or 65, and she was older than me. No-one knew anything of her, including Roger, but there was a noticeboard with pictures of previous directors, including one lady who did not really look like her, and the Chinese character names were no help: however, one of the scientists gave me a phone number which I then called - although her name did not sound right (a clue as to what was to come!), but she agreed she knew a scientist from Argonne and we arranged to meet me for tea the following afternoon; once she arrived, it took just a few minutes us both to realize that I was not the scientist she knew, nor was she Madame Wei. But she did know Ye Wei, and found a list with her phone number and birthdate (1937), and we had a delightful conversation about physics and life in general. At the end, we started internet searching for her scientist, a Dr. Weimin, but could not find him at Argonne (he is a high-energy physicist). She then phoned Ye Wei, and we arranged a visit for a couple of mornings later at 10 am in the lobby at the hotel. [Side note: I later checked the Fermi lab directory and found that Dr. Weimin works there in the same CDF group as Sarah's father, and has written a book on "*The Beauty of*

Physics" published about 5 years ago - i will have to buy it on Amazon when i get back].

I came downstairs at just before 10 am with my computer (to show pictures of Mary and the family), and there was Ye Wei just entering the lobby, white-haired as in 1980, walking with a stick and a little bent over like most older chinese ladies; we were delighted to see each other. I had presumed that we would just sit in the lobby, have some tea and talk for a while - but no, this was going to be different!

A bevy of hotel personnel were around her taking orders, and clearly



Dr. Ye Wei

knew her as someone to be listened to. She was arranging a private room for our talk, and for lunch. As I discovered later in the conversation, Fudan University had arranged a chauffeured limo to pick her up and then take her home, about a 40 minutes drive away. She had also requested Roger and Yaming to join us for lunch, unbeknownst to me. Catching up on each other's history since 1980, I found the best way to show her our family was the set of photos from Nico and Sarah's wedding when we were all together, plus some more recent pics, etc. She herself had continued as director till about 1992 when she had breast cancer; following the Argonne visit, she had set up a laser/fast beam group at Fudan; the group continued till 2002, but no longer exists. After recovering from her cancer, she has been working with a missionary group (I think Episcopalian) in Shanghai, where she received her original schooling - for example, her English is excellent, probably the best of any Chinese I met during the visit. During the cultural revolution, she and her husband were sent separately out into the country like most academics, but the two children stayed with their grand-parents in Shanghai - this fortunate circumstance occurred because her father was one of the country's leading orthopedic surgeons, and several of the Communist Party leaders were his patients. One daughter has just moved to Toronto with her husband and child - hence, I hope we can see her sometime in the future in the USA. About six years after her visit to Argonne (in 1987), she spent 6 months at Vanderbilt University with professor Norman Tolk - another coincidence, since he and I had worked closely together in the 1970s when he was still at Bell Labs in New Jersey, plus she was good friends with another professor there, Dr. Charlotte Fischer, an atomic theorist, who also spent six months with me at Argonne - I think she was at Argonne when Roger spent 3 weeks there visiting.

It really is a small/tightly knit world of atomic physicists!

Udi's wife showed up for lunch without Roger or Yaming - Roger was teaching his class at that time, and Yaming had a doctor's appointment. Needless to say, a very good lunch and service; about 1 pm, it was time for Ye Wei to leave - so we woke up the chauffeur and away she regally went....