

China – Fall 2002

We have had, since several years, an exchange program, sponsored by the Dutch and Chinese Academies of Science, with a university in Wuhan, Huazhong (Central China) Normal University. This year I was to visit them again. The main purpose was to discuss a paper we are jointly writing on work done in part by visitors to Nijmegen from Wuhan using data from the L3 experiment. Further, I would hear what some students there are doing and maybe get ideas about continuation of our collaboration.

My previous trip to Wuhan had been three years ago in the Spring, which is perhaps the best time of the year. Summers are very hot, but the end of September and October were also supposed to be nice.

Since I had to be in CERN just before going to China, I decided to go to China from Geneva. I could fly KLM, changing in Amsterdam, and break my flight back, *i.e.*, come back to Holland and use the Amsterdam-Geneva ticket the next time I went to CERN. This is even slightly cheaper than flying from Amsterdam directly.

Friday, Sept. 27. The flight yesterday from Geneva to Amsterdam and the connection to the flight to Shanghai went smoothly. The plane was full, but unfortunately not so full as to get me an up-grade to business class. Fortunately, I had a window seat next to the exit. So I could stretch out and didn't have anyone crawling over me to go to the toilet. However, it was not so nice, since that was where people congregated waiting for a free toilet and where mothers tended to stand trying to calm their screaming babies (in order not to disturb their sleeping husbands?). Nevertheless, I could get some sleep.

On the approach into Shanghai's new Pu Dong airport, a stewardess sat opposite me. It was her first flight to China. So she was looking out the window as much as the rest of us. Her comment: It's just like Holland, flat, green and lots of rivers and canals.

The plane landed exactly on time at 6:30 a.m. Having the exit seat meant that I was first off the plane. And it seemed we were the first plane of the day, since the immigration police were rushing to their posts as I entered the huge arrival hall, which was otherwise deserted. The passport check did not take long, and having only hand baggage I could proceed directly to the green customs exit. There wasn't a customs officer to be seen. Maybe they sleep later than the police.

But nothing was open yet, and I still had to buy my ticket to go to Wuhan on Monday, as well as change some money. It is impossible to buy tickets for domestic flights outside of China. The most you can do is reserve a flight and buy a voucher for it, which you can exchange for a ticket at your travel agency's correspondent in China. No doubt such a ticket is more expensive, and since Wuhan was paying for this flight I had to do it their way. Prof. Liu had said I should just buy the ticket at the airport. It seems difficult to reserve a flight in China, but there would be no problem getting a flight a couple of days in advance. I did not object, since seven years ago I had lost a lot of time trying to find my travel agent's office in Beijing.

Pu Dong airport is new, and built for growth. So early in the morning with few people around it probably seemed even larger than it is. It was like being alone inside a large cavern. After some searching I found the right airline desk, but no one was there. However, after a short wait someone showed up, and I could get on the flight

I wanted on Monday evening. They did not accept credit cards, only cash. But by this time the bank was open and had turned on its ATM. So I could withdraw some money.

There were several buses to various parts of Shanghai. I found the one which would go to the main railway station, but I must have just missed a bus, since I waited more than half an hour before it left. It was a long ride into Shanghai, but we finally got there. In a few months it will be much faster when the new Mag-Lev train line is completed (built by Siemens). Fortunately I spotted the train station from the bus, and so knew which way to go when the bus ride ended in a side street a couple of blocks from the station.

I had looked at the airport for a tourist office, but could not find one. There was also supposed to be one in the metro station at the train station, but I could not find one there either. I had wanted to get a map of Shanghai and to ask what the best bus was to go to Zhouzhuang. So I had to rely on my best guess from a small map and description in *Lonely Planet*, which was to take the new light-rail line one stop and then to look for the bus station. The rail line was no problem. After a few false starts looking for the bus station, I “asked” someone, by which I mean that I pointed to the name of the bus station in Chinese in the guide book. Following some vague pointing, I found it and got a ticket. However, the bus was not for a couple of hours. Normally, I would have walked around, but that was not really convenient with my suitcase, even though it does have wheels. I bought some muffins at a convenience store and waited.

The bus ride took 2 hours, and I arrived at the bus station on the edge of Zhouzhuang around 2:30. On the way something happened, which I found amusing. The driver spotted some kind of road block ahead. I am not sure what it was. At the time I thought it was a toll gate for the bridge ahead, but maybe it was the police, since from the way our driver reacted it seemed not to ordinarily be there. At any rate our driver wanted to avoid it. He turned off on a small side road. Apparently as a bus he was not supposed to be on this road, since he took down the bus identification board from behind the windshield. After several turns and various small roads, including one which I don't think was open, we got back on the main road. He put the bus identification back behind the windshield, and his partner (who collects the money) and some of the passengers, who seemed to be regulars, congratulated him on avoiding whatever it was he avoided.

It was maybe a kilometer from the Zhouzhuang bus station into town, and the pedicab drivers could not believe I wanted to walk. So several followed me, frequently asking if I wanted a ride. The last one finally gave up about half way. My hotel was on the same side of town as the bus station. It was quite a nice place with several buildings in a park-like setting on the edge of a lake. I had booked it, and also a hotel in Shanghai, on the Internet.

I spent the rest of the day exploring Zhouzhuang. It is a town with many narrow canals, streets too narrow for cars, and old bridges, and that is nice. There are a couple of old rich person's houses, which are well worth seeing, although there are nicer ones in Suzhou. But the town is very touristy. Almost everything is either a restaurant or a souvenir shop. Probably this has gotten much worse since it became a UNESCO World Heritage cultural site. Dinner, at a restaurant by a canal, was a real rip-off. Even at half the price I would regard it as one of the worst I have ever had in China as far as price/quality goes. I think this is the only time I have really

felt cheated in China.

Saturday, Sept. 28. I was up fairly early, awakened by the gardeners, who apparently start taking care of the grounds at 7. I ate a muffin left over from the day before and drank a cup of tea, since breakfast was not included in the ¥240 price of the room.

I walked into town and out of it on the South side to get an idea of the surroundings: flat, small fields with wheat or vegetables, shrimp laid out on flat surfaces, I guess to dry. Then I visited a Buddhist temple, nice and peaceful with few people so early.

I went back to the hotel around 9:30, checked out, and walked to the bus station. I bought a ticket for Shanghai, but the bus would not be for about two hours. I sat down for a long wait. But after 10 or 15 minutes a woman came in and asked “Shanghai?” So I started to go with her. But the ticket seller made a sign like “no.” However, a Chinese couple she had also asked went along. So I decided to go too. It was a minibus, which followed a very circuitous route through small villages before finally reaching the end of the line, which was not Shanghai. The woman took us (the Chinese couple and me) to another bus 100 m or so away. I worried about where it was going until finally I spotted a familiar, *i.e.*, on my map, street name. The end-point of this bus turned out to be close (a few hundred meters) to my hotel. So, in fact, it was better than the regular bus, which would have taken me to a bus station much further away, from which I would have had to take the light rail and metro to get to a place which still would not have been as close.

After checking into my hotel, I ate my last muffin and then felt fortified enough to head for the Shanghai Museum. It is a beautiful, modern museum. The building is in the shape of an ancient *ding* vessel, round with straight sides. It contains nicely displayed collections of ancient ceramics, ancient sculptures, and ancient bronzes. Of somewhat less interest to me were the Chinese paintings, calligraphy, and seals. There is also a collection dealing with various ethnic minorities. It was more than enough to fill the afternoon.

I ate at a restaurant recommended in *Lonely Planet*, which more than made up for the previous evening. Three dishes, all good, in a nice restaurant for less than ¥60, including beer. The restaurant, Yang’s Kitchen, was in the former French concession area of Shanghai, and the architecture showed it. Unfortunately, it was already dark, and so I could not see the area as well as I would have liked.

Sunday, Sept. 29. After breakfast (included in the ¥198 price of this perfectly adequate, nicely located hotel) I set out for a day trip to Hangzhou, famous for its West Lake. I walked to Renmin Square from which I took the metro to the railway station. It was amazingly easy to buy a ticket—there is an English-speaking window at the Shanghai station. I had to take “hard-seat” (second class) since soft-seat was sold out. But hard-seats are not really hard, just less space, and I did get a reserved seat. I asked where to go and she pointed. Actually, it was the soft-seat waiting room, but no one objected. At the entrance leading to the waiting room and the trains there was an X-ray scanner, like at airports, but I walked up to an official who was checking tickets, being a bit afraid that I would be told to go to the hard-seat entrance. But she waved me through, although out of the corner of my eye I could see the woman

at the scanner motioning that I should come to her. The soft-seat waiting room lived up to its name—soft seats in the form of sofas and arm chairs.

After a half hour or so it was time for the train. There were a couple of Western tourist groups with guides heading for the same train, but to the soft-seat cars. I found my hard seat with no problem. The train was nearly full, and became more than full at the first stop. While soft seats are not oversold, you can buy hard-seat tickets without a reservation. So there were people standing (but that also happens in Holland during rush hour, even in first class). There was a nearly constant stream of vendors walking up and down the aisle. Besides drinks and packaged foods like muffins or pretzels, there was also hot food in open trays from which pieces would be served in a plastic bag. I'm not sure what it all was, but I did recognize fried eggs.

After 2½ hours we arrived at Hangzhou East Station, which is considerably further from town than the main station. The guide book said that bus 31 went to the lake. A young guy who was also on the train asked if he could help me. By asking a couple of people, he found bus 31 faster than I would have by myself. He said he worked for Nestlé in Shanghai and was going to visit friends he studied with (in Georgia, I think he said). His English was very good. He asked if I could speak Chinese, or read it. I said “no,” and he said “good luck.”

I got a map from the Tourist Office, which was where the guide book said it was and very near where I got off the bus. But the woman there spoke no English. I walked along the lake shore a while—quite nice really. At one very nice place there was a constant stream of brides and grooms for wedding pictures. At another place young people were stretched out on the grass, but were being told by policemen that that was not allowed. Then as I was looking at the map trying to figure out where I was and how to get to the temple, Ling-yin Si, a couple of school girls asked if they could help and took me to the right bus.

The temple, which dates from 326 A.D., was packed. It cost ¥20 to get into the park of the temple and then another ¥15 to get into the temple itself. It seems the temple was nearly razed during the Cultural Revolution, but that Zhou Enlai was able to prevent it. In one of the buildings monks were having a service. The chanting was pleasant, though not so pleasant as the chanting I heard at a temple in Kyoto two years ago. Besides the Great Hall with a huge statue (20m high), there was a building in the shape of a cross. Each of the four wings was lined with sitting statues along the walls and a double row in the middle. At the center were large Buddhas.

However, I was running out of time and had to catch the bus back to the center of town. There were many people waiting for the bus. But buses were frequent, every 5 minutes or so. So the bus was completely packed. But I refused to let all the school kids push me aside and I got a seat. When it comes to buses, Chinese respect for the aged disappears.

After some searching I realized that the No. 31 bus might not be on the opposite side of the street going in the opposite direction from that when I came. So I boarded it about where I had gotten off heading in the same direction. I showed the driver the map and pointed to the East Bus Station. He nodded yes. I hoped he would tell me when it was time to get off, but in any case I spotted it and got off by myself. I had decided to take a bus rather than a train back to Shanghai because (1) they are more frequent and (2) I would be sure of getting a seat. I bought a ticket and 10 minutes later we were on our way.

It was soon dark. I had expected the bus to go to the North Bus Station, and I

think it did. Using my compass, I headed south and should have come to the train station and metro. But the road curved east through some residential neighborhoods, which was interesting. I followed my compass and headed south again. There was one street where nearly everyone sold tea. There must have been 20 or 30 shops all next to each other. I apparently bypassed the train station, intersecting the metro a couple of stops further along. I got to Nanjing Dong Lu, which is now a pedestrian street with lots of bright lights and signs—made me think of Times Square—and ate noodles with a beer at what appeared to be a Japanese restaurant chain, Asia Noodles.

Monday, Sept. 30. The time change and the strenuous past two days caught up to me, and I awoke late. I was so late (9:00) for breakfast that I was afraid I might not get any. No one was in the restaurant except the waitresses who were setting the tables for lunch. But I was waved to a table and a couple of minutes later a Chinese man came in for breakfast, and he was also seated at my table.

After breakfast I went down to the reception to ask how to make a phone call. The carpets in the elevators now say Monday whereas yesterday they said Sunday. I had to call Prof. Liu to tell him when I would arrive. The instruction card by the phone in the room was only in Chinese.

After calling Liu, I just walked around the Bund area and the area between my hotel and the Bund. At 11:30 I checked out of the hotel and asked what bus I could take to get to the airport—this was the old Hongqiao Airport, not the new airport where I had landed. Bus 925 from Renmin Square next to the Shanghai Museum was the answer, within easy walking distance of the hotel. It cost ¥4 and took about 45 minutes to get to the airport. The bus was air-conditioned and the stops were announced by a tape in both Chinese and English, just like in the metro. The only disadvantage was that its final stop at the airport was around the corner from, and out of sight of, the passenger terminal. But it was not difficult to find. That all went more smoothly and more quickly than I had expected. So I had a couple of hours to wait.

Sitting waiting, a little girl (5 or 6) nearby was singing the alphabet (a, b, c, ...) to the same tune as a Dutch children's song, *Kort Jakje is ziek*.

The security check not only had the usual X-ray scan, but you had to take off your shoes and put them through the scanner too. However, when I started to put my camera down, they took it around to check by hand.

The plane was nearly two hours late, which is apparently not abnormal. Meiling, a graduate student who had spent a few months in Nijmegen, had been delegated to meet me. She was there with a university car and driver and took me to the University guest house and then out to eat. We were too late for the university restaurant and so went to a place off-campus. Pork and bamboo shoots, eggplant, and dumplings—pretty good, though maybe just a tad too hot, which made the nose run a bit.

The room looks like they were remodeling it for foreigners but had only started. The air conditioner worked; there was a new TV, but the central antenna seemed not to be connected yet—no signal. There were no coat hangers in the closet, and the paint was peeling from the walls. The room three years ago was nicer.

I was barely 20 minutes in the room—it was 10 pm—when two Chinese in pajamas came up to complain that the man underneath me couldn't sleep because I was making

too much noise walking around. They said that after 11 one must be quiet, and I pointed out that it was only 10.

Tuesday, Oct. 1. The university restaurant near the guest house has improved since last time in that its menu has been translated into English. But the only beverage on it to go with breakfast was milk, which I remember from last time is served warm. So I had some greasy fried noodles, a greasy fried egg, and nothing to drink. A fried egg is not so easy to eat with chop sticks, but the yolk was cooked solid so it was easier than you might expect.

Meiling had given me a program for the week, which had me giving talks the first two days. But I had understood that we were going to discuss the work of three students here and had not prepared any talk. So this morning Prof. Liu presented a revised schedule with nothing for today. That meant we were free, and so one of the students took me sightseeing.

Today is a holiday—anniversary of the revolution, although, in fact, they celebrate all week. That meant that there were lots of people about. All buses were packed to overflowing and taxis were difficult to come by. Finally we got a taxi which fought its way downtown. We finally gave up and got out at a brick building, now a museum. My student said it was Sun Yat-Sen's headquarters during the civil war which ended the Qing dynasty in 1911. My guidebook says it was the headquarters of the Wuchang uprising and that Sun Yat-Sen was abroad and returned after it was all over and he had been chosen as President.

A short aside on Wuhan: Before being united in a single city, Wuhan was three separate cities: Hankou and Hanyang on the left bank of the Yangtze River, themselves separated by the smaller Han River, and Wuchang on the right bank. Hankou was a major commercial city and in the bad old days Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan all had concessions there.

Anyway, we walked past it and on to the Yellow Crane Tower. I would have called it a pagoda, but I guess pagodas are Buddhist. This tower was apparently originally a military observation post. It has burned down a number of times, and the present version is not much more than a hundred years old, maybe less if they forgot to mention a more recent fire.

It was crowded with people enjoying their holiday. And because of the holiday the whole park around the tower was specially decorated, including lots of life-size mannequins in traditional costumes of Chinese ethnic minorities. I didn't count to see if all 56 were represented. There was also a more or less continuous show by various folk-dance and song groups.

We climbed the tower. The interior of almost every floor contained a souvenir shop. But, of course one wanted the view, and everyone dutifully walked around the tower on the balcony of every floor. Admiring the view at one place, a young woman next to me started talking to me. She said she was an English teacher and introduced me to her mother. It was quite warm, maybe 35°C, and the sun was strong, but several floors up on a shady balcony with a breeze it was quite pleasant, except for the crowd.

After seeing the tower and the surrounding park, we got a taxi and headed toward the museum. I had been there before, but wanted to see it again. On the way we realized that it was lunch time. My student asked the taxi driver if he knew of a restaurant near the museum. The taxi pulled up at a typical hole in the wall, but

my student thought (rightly, I think) that it wasn't good enough for me and asked the driver if he knew a good place. He did. It was a little further up on the shore of East Lake on the grounds of Mao's Wuhan villa. A very nice location! Apparently you can visit Mao's villa. On the grounds there is also a luxury hotel, and on the shore of the lake a nice little restaurant with tables outside along the shore with tall cypress (?) trees providing shade. It was very pleasant. The restaurant was quite expensive; fortunately the institute was paying for everything. And it specialized in Thai food—a new experience for my student, and, I gathered, not entirely a pleasant one. I thought the food was quite good. The beer was Heineken, brewed under license in China. I was at first slightly insulted when they brought me a knife and fork, but later I was glad to have them, as the pieces of meat in one dish were very large. In fact, I ended up cutting the pieces on the platter in two to make it easier for my student, as well as me, to eat them with chop sticks.

After a long, leisurely lunch we headed to the museum. Being a bit out of the way, there were no taxis, and I was looking forward to a nice 15-minute walk. However, just as we started walking one of these converted motor-bikes came up, basically a three-wheeled motor-bike with a seat between the two back wheels, on which two people can sit, and an enclosure around it to protect the passengers from sun and rain. They provide cheap transportation. My student insisted that we take it.

The museum was much as I remembered. What I especially wanted to see again was the set of bells. Like most of the other items in the museum the set of bells comes from the tomb of Marquis Yi of the small state of Zeng. The tomb was near the present-day city of Suizhou, about 200 km north of Wuhan. It dates from around 433 B. C. during the Warring States period. The tomb had four chambers totaling an area of about 220 square meters. The marquis must have been a real music lover. In one of the rooms were 125 musical instruments, the most impressive of which are the 65 bronze bells. They hang from two large wooden frames, the one perpendicular to the other forming an "L". The arms of the L are 7.48 m and 3.35 m long and 2.73 m high. The largest bell is 153.4 cm high and weighs 203.6 kg; the smallest 20.4 cm and 2.4 kg. The bells are not circular, but elliptical giving each bell two tones depending on where you hit it. The whole installation is very impressive. They say that all but two of the bells were in perfect condition and sound good. You can find out more about these bells in an article in the April, 1987, issue of *Scientific American*, which I just ran across when I was cleaning up my study. If I had found it before my trip, I wouldn't have had to spend so much time reading all the explanations in the museum.

There was also a set of 32 chime stones, sort of boomerang shape and hanging from another frame, 1.09 m high and 2.15 m wide. They think there were originally 41 stones forming chromatic scales in three octaves. The stones are inscribed with explanations on tones and theories on pitches and modes.

They give short demonstrations on replicas of the bells and stones accompanied by zithers, pipes and harps. I bought a CD of this (for a rather exorbitant price).

Beside the Marquis's coffin in another of the rooms were arranged several smaller instruments: zithers, harps, pipes and a drum. In another of the rooms were 21 painted coffins each containing a girl aged about 13–25. They are assumed to have been musicians and dancers buried alive with the instruments to keep the Marquis entertained in his after-life.

Then my student brought me back to the university. Actually, I should not refer to him as my student. He is in his mid-thirties and teaches physics at a teachers

college. However, he wants to get a Ph.D. His English is quite good, but with a funny accent which I couldn't place until during lunch he told something about himself. He had spent two or three years in East Africa (I forget now which country) teaching school, and that explained his accent. After that he had visited Europe—10 countries in 7 days or something like that.

I was so full from lunch that I skipped dinner.

Wednesday, Oct. 2. Just as I was ready to leave my room this morning there was a loud pounding on my door. It was the guy from below shouting about all the noise I make. Very quickly a Chinese boy (maybe a student) came to see what was wrong. He could translate a bit for the angry old man. I was a bit angry too at being confronted this way but remained calm and said that I did not stomp of the floor, as was suggested, but walked normally and further that I was in bed before 11, the hour after which they were saying that one had to be quiet. Finally he left and the Chinese boy said that he would try to help. He went and explained to the concierge and she made several telephone calls. She was trying to find a different room for me. But that was impossible; everything was full. She said they would talk to the Japanese man and that they were sorry about the incident. Apparently it all worked, because I had no more problems with him.

Hua came today. She was my main guide when I visited Wuhan in 1999. Afterword she visited Nijmegen twice and then went to Berkeley where she did the research for her Ph.D., which she got this year. Now she is back in Wuhan and has a position there. It was good to see her again. I liked her a lot. Prof. Liu, two students, Hua and I discussed physics, mainly what the two students have been doing. Hua, reflecting her Berkeley experience asked the most questions.

After our discussion Prof. Liu took us all to eat at one of the University restaurants (not the one near the Guest House where I normally eat). This one is better. We had cold sliced donkey meat, very tasty, some peanuts, some pickled vegetables, a Mandarin fish, spinach or something similar. The best was a fish dish: pieces of fish with mushrooms and some other vegetables in a sauce poured over toasted rice cakes. Hua drank beer with lunch, something she learned in the U.S., quite a change from the Hua I knew before.

In the afternoon I talked some more with Hua. Besides learning to drink beer, she has picked up an American accent and learned to drive, having 3 accidents (none serious) during two years in the U.S.

In the evening I was still pretty full from lunch but went to eat anyway.

Thursday, Oct. 3. This afternoon we went on an “excursion”. Prof. Liu had a university car with driver, and at 3:30 we (Liu, Gang and I) set out to see some of the lesser sights of Wuhan. Gang is, like my student of two days ago, a teacher at a teachers college. He is nearly 40 and has just completed his Ph.D., based largely on work he did while visiting Nijmegen twice in the past 2 years, which was a real ordeal, since his spoken English is almost non-existent.

First we went to a monument commemorating a local ruler long ago before China was unified, who is credited with being the first to build dikes and dredge channels in order to control flooding. Then we went to the place where the smaller Han River enters the Yangtze. This is where the dike has broken in the past and there are

appropriate monuments and markers showing how high the floods were in various years. Liu said that in 1954 (?) he helped strengthen the dike there.

We were standing by the railing looking at the river and a few idiots swimming in it. A small boy came up next to me and stood there looking up at me. He said something to Liu, who told me that the boy wanted to talk to me but was afraid. So I said “Hello” to him. He said “Hello” back and told me his name. I told him mine and asked how old he was. He said 10 and I complimented him on his good English. It was remarkable how good his pronunciation was.

Then we went to the center of town—department stores, smaller shops, mobs of people. We went to eat at a restaurant which Liu said had been there for 75 years and had typical Wuhan food. As usual, they ordered far too much, which goes against my frugal spirit and makes me feel I should eat it all, which I know is contrary to Chinese custom which dictates that if there is nothing left over your guests are still hungry and you have been a poor host. We had bean curd in a fairly hot sauce with mushrooms, pork in a hotter sauce with mushrooms and some vegetable (lotus root, I think), braised fish, four different kinds of dumplings (about 10 of each kind), and a soup highly flavored with ginger. The most special, Liu said, was one of the kinds of dumpling. It contained the edible part (about a thimble full) of some kind of small crab which lived in the river. That meant about one crab per dumpling, which made these dumplings very expensive, ¥150 for 10 dumplings instead of ¥10–15 for the others. They did have a special flavor, and there were small pieces of crab shell in a few of them, but I’m not sure they were worth the price. All of the dumplings here had the unusual feature that besides the meat, or whatever, wrapped in the dough there was also broth inside, which made them more difficult to eat but also made them very good.

Then we walked along a pedestrian street, lined with shops, to the river. Along the street were a few nice bronze statues depicting old Wuhan, *e.g.*, a man with a fan seated at a table playing a Chinese board game (I don’t know the name, but have seen people playing it) being watched by another man with his shirt off and also with a fan. Very nice. Liu said that there was an old expression to the effect that a person would lend anything to a friend except his fan—in a city where temperatures of 40°C are not unusual in the summer, this is understandable.

This was the old concession area, and there were many buildings dating from 80–100 years ago, like the customs building and banks. There is a new park, not yet completely finished, stretching for a kilometer or two along the waterfront. It seems very nicely done. If only there were a few less people. We walked most of the length of it, where we were picked up by our driver and were back home by 9.

Friday, Oct. 4. Tonight in the university restaurant there was ping pong on TV. So when I was back in my room I turned the TV on to see if it now worked. Surprise, it did. So I watched the rest of the Asian Games women’s team ping pong finals between China and North Korea. China lost. Then on another channel—guess what: an American movie with Chinese subtitles. It seemed to be about the life of Jacqueline Kennedy. It was a pretty lousy movie.

Saturday, Oct. 5. They gave me my tickets for next week today. Tonight the campus restaurant had finished for the day when I showed up at 7. So I went down the hill to a restaurant I had liked three years ago. Of course, it had changed hands

and now was not nearly so good, but cheap: ¥9 for 2 dishes, pork with wood-ear mushrooms and eggplant with chili peppers plus rice and tea.

Sunday, Oct. 6. Tonight I again went off-campus to eat, to the same restaurant that Meiling had taken me to. I had sweet and sour pork, one of the few things on my short list of dishes that they had. It was great—not that horribly sweet stuff I’ve always had under that name in the West. It was more like a barbecue sauce.

Monday, Oct. 7. What a boring morning—there was almost no one at the institute. Shortly before lunch Gang showed up to tell me that he would meet me with a university car to take me to the train station. I went to eat lunch at the university restaurant. One of the other professors from the institute was there with a French guest. So I joined them, and as usual when there are guests, lots of dishes were ordered. So, I was not quite finished when Gang showed up. It was then a bit of a rush to the train station, but we got there on time. Gang was not allowed to come with me to the platform, but I found the train myself with no problem.

It was then a bit of a surprise. I had expected soft-seat, but it turned out to be soft-sleeper. Maybe this is supposed to be luxury having a bed for a trip from 1:40 to 10:00 p.m., but it seemed strange. I suspect that it is just that the workers would be overworked if they had to change the seats into beds in the evening and so just leave them always as beds on trains that continue traveling in the night.

So, I am in an upper bunk and looking out of the window can only see the next set of rails. The other three bunks are occupied by a couple with a small child about 2 years old and a man, who is sleeping. The child’s parents take turns sleeping and playing with the child. Seeing that they seem to like to sleep, maybe this really is luxury rather than laziness on the part of the railway attendants. But I wanted to look out and see the countryside. So I got up and stood in the passageway in order to look out the window. I saw lots of small plots of land being farmed in the valleys of rather hilly country, some of which were slightly terraced. There were also many small artificial ponds, I assume to raise fish. Threshing wheat is done by hand on large concrete floors—well, not entirely by hand; I saw one group speeding up the process by driving over it first with a small tractor.

Shortly before 10 the attendant came to give me back my ticket, and I got off at the next stop, assuming that it was Luoyang. It was, but it was the East Station, not the central station, although from the size it certainly seemed like a main station. It took me a while to realize it. But finally, it was clear that the topography simply did not match that indicated by the map in my guidebook, especially since the hotel at which I had a reservation was not where it should have been. So I got a taxi, which took me to my hotel, which was indeed just a few minutes walk from the central station. I have two rooms, a sitting room and a bedroom plus a bathroom. It is all rather dingy, but cheap. Hot water seems to be in rather short supply.

Tuesday, Oct. 8. I went down to the desk to ask about breakfast. One of the girls lead me outside and down the street to a little hole in the wall. There a friendly woman took me into the kitchen, such as it was, and pointed out everything they had. I took two dumplings and what I thought was the ubiquitous thin rice soup, but it turned out to be, I think, slightly sweetened warm milk. It all cost ¥1.

Then I walked over to the train station. Next to it are buses. I got the No. 81 bus which took me, for ¥1.5, to the Longmen Grottoes about 14 km outside of town. I spent the morning there looking at thousands of Buddha statues. Most are only a few cm high, but there are also some big ones. The earliest are from around 600 A.D.

Then it was back to town to get another bus to the White Horse Temple. Between buses I visited the old market, where inside there were 10–15 stalls selling spices—very colorful and nice smells. The White Horse Temple is supposed to be the first Buddhist temple in China and dates from the first century A.D. Of course, nothing is left from that time. The name comes from the legend that Buddhist scriptures and statues for the original temple were brought from Afghanistan on two white horses. The temple was nice, but after 2 pictures I was at the end of the roll of film, and when I started to rewind it, it came loose from the cassette. So I could not change film, which was too bad.

The city bus drivers have a rather remarkable driving style. At a well-calculated distance from the next stop they put the gear to neutral, cut the motor, and coast to the stop. They also cut the motor at stop lights and when going down hill. The city buses have a tape in Chinese and English which announces the next stop.

Back in town I looked for two restaurants from the guidebook. One is definitely not there any more. Maybe I just didn't find the other. Buildings presumably have numbers, but they are almost never to be seen on the building. That makes it difficult to find something by its address, especially when it is a long street. So I tried another restaurant, which was OK. There was one waitress in it who spoke a little English and was glad to be able to make use of it.

Back in the hotel I turned off the lights and unloaded the camera under the bed-covers, managing to wind up the film successfully without its getting light-struck.

Wednesday, Oct. 9. I got a minibus at the bus station across from the train station to Shaolin Monastery, which is 40 km or so from Luoyang in the hills around Song Mountain. Shortly after leaving something seemed to be wrong with shifting gears. So the driver pulled into a sort of garage—a big empty parking area that had a couple of covered areas with pits for working under cars. After some playing around underneath it was apparently fixed. So we continued, although I noticed the driver had a 5l can of oil, which he didn't have before. Then, swerving to miss a bike the steering wheel seemed to lock. But he managed to straighten it out. I was having misgivings about the safety of this trip, but after about 1½ hours we arrived at Shaolin. And I got off. From the sign it appeared to be another 2 km down a side road to reach the temple. But there was a driver there with a van who, for ¥5 would take me. So OK—that had been the standard taxi rate in Luoyang, ¥5 for the first 2 km or less.

Shaolin Monastery was rather a disappointment. Most of the buildings had been destroyed in a war in 1928 and rebuilt, following old models the signs assured, in the 1970's or later after the Red Guards had destroyed even more. Shaolin is supposed to have been founded in the fifth century A.D. by an Indian monk who preached Zen Buddhism. For relief between their long periods of meditation they imitated the natural motions of birds and animals, which developed into a form of unarmed combat. The skillful warrior monks are supposed to have helped (the good side) in many of China's wars and uprisings, which maybe explains why it was sacked so often. Today its reputation lives on in the form of several schools where martial arts are taught to hundreds of kids, all hoping, I suppose, to become big movie stars. I

saw several contingents of them practicing.

Across the road is Shifang Monastery, a cross-shaped building containing 500 or so Buddhas, like at the temple in Hangzhou. The combination ticket, which you are forced to buy, included not only these monasteries but several other attractions, including a stupa “forest”, a not very interesting aviadome, and some other things even less interesting.

I walked up a hill to a cable car station. The cable car was not operating, which meant that it was nice and quiet, and I could sit in the shade and look out over Shaolin. I also walked up the hill behind Shaolin Monastery and circled around through the woods and farm plots—any place that was flat was being farmed. The corn had been harvested and now they were getting the fields ready for something else.

Just outside the entrance to the monastery area there was an empty minibus waiting which went, they said, to Luoyang. They asked ¥20, and I offered ¥15, which is what I paid in the morning. They seemed happy with that. Probably I could have gotten a bit lower. Before getting in I asked when they would leave, and to my surprise they said right away. So I got in and paid. I was not really surprised when we got up to the main road and they stopped where another, almost full, minibus to Luoyang was waiting. After a bit they told me to move to the other bus—I wouldn’t have to pay. We left a few minutes later for a really wild ride—I haven’t had such a bus driver since Indonesia.

Thursday, Oct. 10. I got up at 7, checked out of the hotel, ate my usual breakfast next door, and walked across the street to the bus station to get the 8 a.m. bus to Zhengzhou. There are also minibuses which run quite frequently, but this was a full-size bus, which is more comfortable. Another possibility was the train, but then there is the question of whether there would be a seat. If the bus had been full I would have gone across the street to the train station and tried that.

Along the way we passed many cave dwellings. According to *Lonely Planet*, more than 100 million Chinese live in cave houses. Some of the dwellings have an addition built onto the front. The cave is warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, but dark. With a couple of “normal” rooms built in front you have the best of everything.

We arrived at the bus station in Zhengzhou at 10:15, more or less on schedule. The bus station is just across from the train station. I found city bus no. 2, which brought me to within 50 m of the airline office, from which there is a bus to the airport, just as the guidebook had more or less indicated. I asked and was told I needed to take the 4 o’clock bus. It was 11, so I had 5 hours. I could check my suitcase at the hotel next to the airline office.

I spent most of the time walking around and sitting in a couple of new parks. The older streets here, not the ones transformed into major traffic arteries, are lined with big trees providing nice shade. (This is also true in other cities.)

On one of these streets I actually saw a pet store selling puppies, and I have seen more people walking dogs than on previous trips. Times are clearly better—call this the woof-woof index of standard of living.

In the last park I was sitting in a shady area on the top of a little hill. I was at the edge of the area and for a while no one noticed me. But more people showed up (after their siesta?). An old man came over and started to talk. Of course, I couldn’t understand. Soon there were several more. This was clearly the senior citizens’ afternoon meeting place. Several tried to say things to me or ask questions. All to no

avail. The first noticed my camera and made motions like taking a picture. So I took his picture. Also one of a man making music on one of those old Chinese single-string instruments. It was fun really—wish I knew some Chinese.

The bus to the airport was uneventful. Here too we all had to take off our shoes for the safety check.

I was met at the airport by the secretary of the experimental physics group and brought to the institute's guest house, where I had stayed on each of my previous visits. Prof. Qin was waiting there to meet me.

Friday, Oct. 11. My talk was scheduled for 10. As the previous time I gave a talk here (3 years ago) I was told just to wait in my room until shortly before the talk. Then someone would come to get me. There was no offer to show me around the institute. The talk went well, I think. At least the senior people understood it well. Some of the students probably had difficulties, because they were working on other topics. After the talk three of the professors and two post-docs went out to eat with me. It was a delicious meal: barbecued pork ribs, beef in a mild brown sauce, a braised fish, herb soup, Peking duck, dry-roasted lamb with a mixture of spices to dip it in. I have the feeling I forgot something. All of the dishes were very good. As guest I had to be the first to try each dish. With fish I always have problems with chopsticks, but they asked the waiter to cut it so that there were small squares, which were more easily lifted off the bones using chopsticks.

After lunch I was free and took the metro to the Confucius Temple (or Imperial College). There the emperor used to lecture, and the exams were given for the civil service. The names of all those who passed are engraved on a (large) number of steles.

Saturday, Oct. 12. I was met by the group's secretary, who took me sightseeing to Fragrant Hill outside of the city. We climbed up all the stone steps to the top—200 m or so I guess—instead of taking the chair-lift. Unfortunately it was still too early in the year for the leaves to change color. That will be in mid- or late-November, and is supposed to be very pretty. It was quite windy on top and it was a cold wind. I had to put on my jacket for the first time this trip.

Then we walked back down and had lunch. The nicest dish was the sweet potatoes—cut in squares, stir fried, and then sugar or sugar syrup poured over them so that they got a crispy, sticky shell. When you pull the pieces apart, small strands of sugar stretch between the pieces—very good. The secretary said it is difficult to make, or at any rate she always has problems with it. It turns out her husband is a post-doc in nuclear theory and wants to get a post-doc position in Europe or the U.S. in a year. So she was interested in hearing about the West. She was particularly worried whether on a post-doc salary there would be enough money to support her too, or would she have to stay in China. I reassured her on this point.

After getting back to the institute, I went into town to try to find something to buy, succeeding only in finding a shirt for myself. I had read that everyone in Beijing is learning English in anticipation of the Olympic Games in 2008. And sure enough, the middle-aged woman in the department store knew a few words to sell me a shirt.

Sunday, Oct. 13. The driver was waiting at 7:30 and took me to the airport. There was little traffic. Unfortunately, there was no upgrade to business class this year. In

the business class lounge I watched a German couple, both overweight, in their 50's or so, loading up their hand baggage from the bar. They must have taken 6 cans of Tsing Tao beer plus hands full of packages of crackers and such.

After getting home I received an e-mail from Prof. Qin apologizing for not being there to say good-bye when I left. It seems he had a severe case of diarrhea and had to go to the hospital. So it doesn't only happen to tourists (and did not happen to me this trip).