

TRAVEL JOURNAL

A CHINA DIARY

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On 4 October 1991, a six-person delegation from the University of the Philippines (U.P.) left on a ten-day visit to various cities in China, hosted by the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU). The members of the group were Professor Celeste (Lily) Botor of the College of Education, Mr. Vicente (Nonoy) Encarnacion of the Office of the President, Professor Josefina Mariano and myself from the Department of English and Comparative Literature, and Professors Normita Recto and Carol Sobritchea of the Asian Center. Carol and I also represented the University Center for Women's Studies.

Beijing

Friday, 4 October 1991

Our plane left at 2:45 instead of the scheduled 2:30 departure -- nothing unusual but it seemed inauspicious. There were few passengers to be seen when we were checking in at the China Southern Airlines counter, but the small plane that was to take us all the way to Beijing was quite full with Filipino, especially Chinese-Filipino, and Chinese passengers. We saw the delegation of Chinese University officials that had just visited U.P. and Nonoy E. found an old friend -- Mr. Luis Sison, present head of MWSS. It was quite a coincidence that we should meet him then, as only a few days earlier, his wife had been our guest at the seminar on women entrepreneurs held by the University Center for Women's Studies.

At about 4:20, the plane began its descent and we were excited at the thought that we were completing the first leg of our journey -- a stop at Xiamen for refuelling, only to find that this wasn't Xiamen after all. Apparently, communications with the control tower at Xiamen had been cut off -- they suspected a temporary power failure -- so the plane had to land at the nearest airport. We didn't have the vaguest idea where this was. The crew was not very communicative, not in English, at any rate, but even our Chinese-speaking co-passengers weren't sure. I heard the name Swatow mentioned several times and perked up. This must be the home of Swatow

ware, poor cousin of Ming blue and white trade ceramics found in the Philippines, which antique dealers used to sell to small time would-be collectors like me. A look at a co-passenger's map showed that we were indeed in that vicinity.

The sun was quite low on the horizon when we took off again, but it was only 5:40 and Xiamen was apparently only twenty minutes away. After an hour's stop at Xiamen where we cleared immigration and customs, we were on our way to Beijing.

We finally arrived in Beijing one and a half hours late. Madame Zhu SuHua and Mr. Gao Weibing of CAFIU who were to be our guides throughout the trip greeted us warmly. Mr. Wang, CAFIU protocol officer, was there as well and saw to it that we didn't have to worry about claiming baggage and other such details.

They have booked us at the Beijing Grace Hotel, impressive with its all-marble lobby under a Chinese-style roof. The rooms are in the high-rise part of the hotel and we are on the 14th floor. After we had checked in, Madame Zhu invited us for a late-night "snack" which turned out to be a full meal with a large array of flavorful dishes: duck, sweet sour pork, fish, mushrooms and baby corn, fried rice and porridge, refreshing because totally bland in striking contrast to the other rich dishes. A preview of things to come?

Beijing

Saturday, 5 October

We visited Tiananmen Square this morning. The Chinese National Day had just been celebrated so the Square was gaily decorated - masses of potted flowers: yellow chrysanthemums, purple coxcomb, red flowers which I couldn't identify and other colorful blooms glossed over unhappy events of recent memory. (Incidentally, I read somewhere that Tiananmen means "Gate of Heavenly Peace".) Thousands of brightly dressed people thronged the square: women in aqua, yellow, fuschia and red blazers, jackets or sweaters -- I actually saw a couple of women in sequined cheongsams; children in gaily colored track suits or bright red and white school uniforms. Apparently these school children were out on a field trip; we stopped to watch a young boy demonstrating shadow boxing to his groupmates. He showed great skill for his age and we joined in the applause.

Just off Tiananmen Square is the Forbidden City, royal enclave of the Ming and Qing dynasties, but forbidden no more to hordes of tourists and visitors like us. We marvelled at the huge bronze lions guarding the gates, peeked (the only thing visitors are allowed to do) into the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Middle Harmony and the Hall of Preserved Harmony from which the late feudal emperors ruled their minions and then went on to some of the halls housing the museum collections. We only had time to see

a small fraction of surviving Ming and Qing treasures: the 18th century English clocks in high baroque style presented as gifts to various emperors; the valuable jewelry -- rings, necklaces, hair ornaments, scepters encrusted with precious stones; the potted miniature landscapes with jade trees, coral blooms and malachite mountains. On our way out, we walked through one of the Imperial gardens, with its saucer-sized dahlias and a tall rock structure on which was perched a small house for the empress in her meditative moods.

Back to the present. After lunch, we went across town to the CAFIU headquarters for a briefing on present-day China and the CAFIU by Mr. Song Wen, Deputy Secretary General of the Association. His presentation was very well-organized, very informative and entirely credible; we were much impressed by the great strides China has made, particularly in the area of rural reform. We talked through interpreters, but Mr. Song knew English very well and occasionally corrected the interpreter to make a fine point. He pointed out that we had majored in similar fields -- his was Comparative Literature and Linguistics -- so we established immediate rapport. Noting that our delegation was composed primarily of women, he talked about the status of women in China. According to him, women enjoy equal rights with men and are given equal pay for equal work. Twenty two per cent of the delegates to the National People's Congress are women and there are many women leaders. The acting President of the CAFIU who is also Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress is in fact a woman!

Dinner was at one of the city's famous Peking Duck restaurants, hosted by Mr. Zhang Zhixiang, Vice President of CAFIU. Our party had no less than four perfectly roasted ducks (specially raised in a suburb in eastern Beijing where the best ducks come from) and we ate them in six different ways: soup made with the innards; the roasted liver eaten with "kropeck" ; the sliced meat in sauce and, as *piece de resistance* the crisp golden skin, rolled up in pancakes as well as stuffed into hollow, sesame seed-encrusted buns; lastly, a light, bland soup made from the carcass so as not to cloy the appetite.

Conversation was lively, particularly as Mr. Zhang had just recently visited the Philippines, and dessert was an adventure: it consisted of caramelized apple slices which had to be eaten hot, so you had to dip them in cold water first to avoid burning your tongue. I burnt mine anyway, but not too badly.

Beijing Sunday, 6 October

A day for sightseeing. We went to climb the Great Wall in Badaling, two hours north of Beijing. We were properly awed by this major human

achievement, the only human-made structure visible from the moon, but our experience was somewhat diluted by the throngs of people pushing and shoving to get to the top and posing for pictures with the costumed guards (touristy, but we too succumbed to its "picturesque" possibilities) along the way. It was cold and windy -- the cold winds of Siberia which we only get a whiff of in the Philippines were blowing in full force. We were glad to get down and shop for souvenirs in the many shops below. Carol and Normita just had to document their ascent by buying "I climbed the Great Wall of China" sweatshirts.

After lunch, we went to the Ming tombs which were nearby. Actually, we visited one tomb. I don't know if the information is accurate but I was told that of the 13 Ming tombs, only one has been found. The story is that the workers who dug out the tombs were ordered killed after the work was done so they would not reveal where the tombs were located. Another forbidden city, only it's underground. In fact, the tomb is an underground imperial palace by itself, vast, with massive furnishings and huge blue and white porcelain jars. The Ming emperors made sure they were surrounded by luxury in death as in life.

It being a Sunday, we stopped by a Christian church on our way home -- the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Concepcion in Beijing, originally established by the Jesuit fathers. There were no services but it was worth a visit.

Beijing

Monday, 7 October

I was very sick this morning but was equally determined not to miss out on anything so I took quick-acting Lomotil. On tap was a visit to Peking University where we were met by senior professors of the university. Vice President Luo Haocai came into the briefing room to say hello but had to leave for another appointment. After the briefing on Peking U, I in turn gave a short account of the U.P. after which we asked questions, mostly directed at Professor Qi Wen Ying, head of the Center for Women's Studies. We had been pleasantly surprised to learn about the Center's existence and she was only too happy to tell us about it. The Center is only a year old, even younger than our own University Center for Women's Studies. It is essentially a coordinating center for the several courses on women offered by the different departments. According to her, about one in two students at Peking University are women; likewise, approximately one third of the faculty are women. In its one year of existence, the Center has been busy establishing linkages and she expressed happiness at receiving, for the first time, representatives from a women's studies center in the Philippines.

They offered to give us a tour of the campus with the university library as the first stop. Here we went to the card catalogue to see what books they

had on the Philippines: fairly recent ones, although their books on Philippine history may not have been fully up to date. We visited the reference room and part of the stacks and saw some of their new accessions, the English-language books, in particular, which included some recent books on women's studies. As we toured the campus, I noticed that the Chinese style roofs with their colorful ceramic scrolls unified the essentially functional architecture of most of the buildings. The highlight of the tour was the natural lake around which the university is built. Overlooking the lake is a pagoda which can be seen reflected in the clear water. The lake itself is calm and serene with willows weeping over its banks and benches beside it for students to sit on and relax.

I was glad I came. I really felt at home in Peking U and felt I was among kindred spirits. At the end of the brief tour, we bade our hosts a warm goodbye and agreed to keep in touch.

On the way back to the hotel, we stopped by a free market where one can bargain a la Divisoria. It was a small market and we didn't stay long but we bought a few things just for the fun of it.

It was our turn to work this afternoon: we were scheduled to give a briefing on the Philippines and on the U.P. to CAFIU researchers and council members. I gave a brief overview of the Philippine situation and of the University after which they asked a lot of questions which we took turns answering. I thought it was good collaborative teamwork. By now, we had become something of a team, not just a group of individuals from U.P. wondering how we would get along spending 10 days in each other's company.

Just now we attended a performance of Swan Lake rendered by the visiting ballet troupe from Liao Ning Province. They had apparently just won second place in an international ballet competition held in Moscow last year and they are quite good. The *corps de ballet* danced with coordinated grace and the principal male dancer performed his leaps and lifted his partner into the air with effortless ease. The principal female dancer was good, too, although she was rather thin and her protruding bones distracted me from the fluidity of her dancing. A pleasant end to a very satisfying day, in spite of my stomach trouble which has now quietened down somewhat with the aid of Chinese traditional medicine provided by Mr. Wang.

Beijing .
Tuesday, 8 October

Reading the English-language *China Daily* at breakfast, we saw an interesting supplement to what we have been learning about women in China in the form of an article detailing the results of a survey on the comparative status of urban and rural women with regard to marriage and the family. Apparently, urban women are better off as a greater percentage

participate in decision making on various family concerns. Moreover, wife beating occurs twice as much in rural areas as in urban areas. The survey also measured the political awareness and participation of Chinese women as compared to men, and found these to be much lower. The survey concludes that China's 550 million women need to work harder to make their status equal that of men.

We left bright and early for our visit to Evergreen Township, a rural, self-sufficient collective such as Mr. Song had talked about in his briefing. But our driver got lost and couldn't seem to find anyone to give him the right directions. We knew we were practically there but it took us another 45 minutes to find the entrance.

From what we saw and heard, the collective is well-organized and very productive. Their main product is vegetables, of which they raise 70 different kinds! We visited their vegetable gardens where lettuce, radishes, tomatoes grew lushly. They grow under a sort of bamboo frame which is covered with plastic in the winter, thus creating a greenhouse into which heat is piped; this enables them to grow vegetables all year round, hence the name "Evergreen". While we were visiting, they were carting in some fertilizer (human waste) so we couldn't wait to get out of there.

The collective also offers excellent social services to its members. We visited a kindergarten full of bright-eyed, active and outgoing three to five-year olds who were very eager to talk to us and make friends. They are all taught to play a musical instruments so they happily performed for us. We listened to an accordion trio, a piano solo and an organ selection. But since they were learning Western instruments, they were also taught Western music such as "O Susana, Don't You Cry for Me." We expected to be depressed when we were told that we were to visit an old-age home next. But no, the old people looked happy in their clean, well-maintained and comfortable quarters. There were also accommodations for couples, as well as attractive gardens and a well-equipped exercise room. The average age of the inhabitants is 78 and the oldest is 94. We were told that, although some of them had children to care for them at home, they actually preferred to stay there. Perhaps this was more true of the male inhabitants since 70% are men and only 30% are women. Or maybe men live longer in China.

We then visited a peasant's home where three generations of a family lived. Probably it was a model home which they showed to visitors, since the family not only had one TV set but two and a washing machine as well. However, ordinary everyday life was going on -- the daughter in-law was cutting up things for lunch; she was making some sort of vegetable dumpling which looked good and smelled better.

Evergreen Township not only grows vegetables; it also has industrial enterprises. We saw a garment factory where women workers were making

silk and polyester blouses with an American brand name. Apparently, these were subcontracted to them by a Hongkong company which then marketed them to clothing stores in the U.S.

Our last afternoon in Beijing was given to shopping. This was at a big handicraft exhibit hall where there weren't very many handicrafts, at least not traditional ones. But there were some exquisitely embroidered table linens at reasonable prices, so I was happy. We also visited an English language book store -- they didn't have the book on outstanding Chinese women nor the second volume of Chinese women writers that had been reviewed in *The China Daily* several days ago but I got some Panda Books on Chinese fiction and poetry. These are the equivalent of Penguin books, only much cheaper -- they cost only a little over a dollar each.

We packed for an early departure for Shanghai in the morning.

Shanghai Wednesday, 9 October

We got to Shanghai at 10:45 A.M.-- enough time to settle in and rest a bit before resuming our whirlwind pace. After lunch, we were taken to a "worker's village" in a busy section of the city. This was the Yu-Yuen Road Sub-District, Municipality of Shanghai Jing-An, well-known for the many professionals who resided there. We were much impressed by a group of retired professionals who had organized themselves into a chorale and sang for us then and there, including a "friendship song" in both Chinese and English:

When you go back home
Take my song with you
But never take your smile away
Tomorrow these songs will be heard
Every corner of the world
Tomorrow these smiles will be flowers
Blossoms in the springtime.

I had a chance to talk briefly with Mrs. Margaret De-Zhao Lin, a retired music and English teacher and an utterly charming, vigorous 80-year old. Apart from singing with the group, she took up traditional Chinese painting in her 70s and has held several exhibits since. Our next stop was a typical home in the sub-district, that of an English lecturer at the Shanghai Maritime College. We ended up having an extended conversation on English teaching and learning in China. Finally, we visited a temple located in the municipality, the Jing-an Temple, oldest Buddhist temple in Shanghai. It's a busy temple -- several worshippers came in and out while we were looking

around and in some of the rooms, a lot of people were eating, no doubt patrons of the vegetarian restaurant run by the temple.

Going back to the hotel at dusk, we saw something of the city. Shanghai gives the impression of being a cosmopolitan, sophisticated city but it has a charm and character of its own, particularly old Shanghai with its European style architecture side by side with traditional Chinese houses. The streets are narrow but tree-lined and the temperature remains comfortable at 17 or so degrees Centigrade throughout the day (so far), unlike Beijing where it is cold at night but gets somewhat warm during the day.

In the evening, we were hosted at a banquet by Mr. Gao Sen, the vice-president of CAFIU Shanghai and Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs Office. It was a dinner to remember -- our host urbane, the table appointments elegant and the dinner itself, a symphony of colors, textures and flavors. A sampling: succulent black mushrooms nestled beside yellow baby corn and green miniature celery cabbage on an individual leaf-shaped dish; the color, texture and flavor of white fungus contrasted with black chicken and mushrooms in soup. Definitely gourmet!

We are billeted at the Hong Quiao State Guest House which is a pleasant, sprawling hotel with long balconies overlooking a garden courtyard. At lunch, Nonoy brought up the subject of how we might balance our academic and diplomatic behavior during the visit, leading us to assess the visit so far. On the whole, it has been successful, although we agreed we shouldn't be so pushy about where we want to go and what we want to do or see. Our hosts have prepared a full itinerary so we should defer to them.

Shanghai

Thursday, October 10

We visited the Shanghai Minhang United Development Company which is one of three development zones in Shanghai. On the way, we passed another township and saw plots of lush, green vegetables side by side with high rise buildings (!) where the farmers lived. In China, one has to re-define one's ideas of what is rural and what is urban. At the SMUDC, we were given the usual briefing on their various projects and enterprises, but since these were either joint ventures, multinational or fully foreign-owned, we had a lot of questions to ask. What controls did the Chinese have over them, particularly in the treatment of the labor force -- how did they make sure the workers were not exploited and their health protected? What style of management prevailed -- Chinese or Western? We were told that, since the foreigners were in China, they were expected to follow China's labor and health laws which were quite stringent. As for management styles, whenever there was a conflict, a compromise was often worked out.

Our Shanghai guides must have heard we were fond of shopping so they took us shopping this afternoon. First, to a machine-embroidery

factory, then to a Friendship Store where everyone had her or his shopping agenda: Lily 's red lacquer jewelry, my cloisonne covered boxes, Nonoy's *pasalubongs* for his grandchildren, Josie's pandas, Carol's bangles and rings. We stayed so long at the Friendship Store we no longer had time to go back to the hotel before going to see the Shanghai acrobats, reputedly one of the best in the country. We gasped and held our breaths at every acrobatic feat of derring-do but were reminded that nobody's perfect -- they had to make several tries before they succeeded at a particularly difficult feat. Their program was well balanced, with comic episodes provided as a relief to the tension-creating high trapeze act. Instinctively, too, our hosts know how to balance our program. Just before leaving for the acrobat show, we stopped awhile to look at the Huangpu River which bisects Shanghai into east and west. The view of the river at night with the lights of Shanghai's skyline twinkling in the distance and the cool breeze playing on our faces brought a few moments of calm relief into the fever pitch of our activities.

Guilin
Friday, 11 October

Our last day in Shanghai -- we managed to squeeze in a visit to the Shanghai Museum. They have a wonderful collection of bronzes, from the beginnings of the Bronze age in the second millenium B.C. to the late Zhou dynasty (around the 4th century B.C.). I was particularly interested in the bronzes of the Shang Dynasty which I had written a paper on in my Bangkok Museum Volunteer days and sure enough, there was the ubiquitous animal mask motif; it was exciting to be able to trace its development as well as see the emergence of the other motifs -- the cicada, the phoenix, the dragon - - in actual pieces instead of just from pictures in art history books. China must really be a land of art treasures -- apart from the great collections in the Taiwan National Palace Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Musee Guimet and other big museums, they have equally good, if not better ones in the local museums. And we didn't even see the Museum in Beijing. All of the bronzes displayed in the Shanghai Musum -- some of them very large pieces -- are in an excellent state of preservation and were all excavated from that area. I really went to town on their porcelain collection. They had everything, from the Neolithic painted pottery (not too many of these, although the ones they had were in very good condition) to the great variety of Qing porcelain. Their celadons and blue-and-whites, compared to what we have in the Philippines, are mouth-watering. I could have stayed all day but we still had other things on the agenda before our departure this P. M., so we could not even look at the paintings any more. We dropped by a silk factory on the way back to the hotel and I just couldn't resist buying a

most unusual piece of silk. It is completely reversible: lustrous green with a small red print on one side and the same print, in a more sober black and rose on the other.

We took the Shanghai Airlines to Guilin in mid-afternoon but our plane was late as usual so we didn't get to Guilin till 6:30 in the evening. Even though it was dark, we saw the many bodies of water dotting the city: small lakes, tributaries of the river, a moat surrounding the city wall.

Guilin **Saturday, 12 October**

I looked out of my window and saw some of the famous mountains of Guilin, celebrated in many a Chinese poem and painting. They're limestone formations and form interesting, irregular shapes. Although they don't have the vastness and massive grandeur of the rock formations of the American Southwest -- e.g., Bryce Canyon, Grand Canyon, etc. -- their tall, spare forms are massed together in large groups, so that one sees mountains beyond mountains beyond mountains . . . (Now I understand why the mountains in Chinese paintings look that way, those narrow tall mountains in several layers). We saw all these on a slow boat as we went down the length of the Li-Jiang river, the main river in Guilin. It was raining gently and we saw the mountains in a mist; they kept on changing shape and form as we moved, from shadowy silhouettes in the distance to solid rock face right beside the boat. I felt as if I were moving through a Chinese landscape painting entitled "Mountain and River in the Mist". The river itself is long and winding (it took us over two hours to go down its length) but not very deep -- one can see the river bed of stones beneath the clear water. Every now and then, we would see flocks of ducks on the water or carabaos bathing and eating the river weeds. Vendors on rafts would come up to the boat to sell huge paper fans. They belong to the Yao, one of the largest ethnic minority groups in the region (this reminded me of Thailand where the Yao are also to be found in the northern hills) who live on the river's bank. Occasionally, we would catch a glimpse of ordinary life in the river: a woman washing, children playing in the water, yelling at the boat in greeting and swimming toward it to get little handouts given by some of the passengers.

From where the boat docked on the other end of the river, it was a two-hour ride back to the hotel. On the way, we stopped by an embroidery factory where we saw the very young workers -- girls in their early teens -- working at their embroidery frames. The prices of the embroidered products were high, apparently aimed at affluent tourists. In the evening, we were given a banquet by Madame Luo, the Deputy Chief of Foreign Affairs, a very busy department since Guilin is primarily a tourist city. We were told that this past year alone (1990), they received approximately seven million visitors, 6.5 million of whom were overseas Chinese and the rest from other nationalities. And there are only 385,000 inhabitants of Guilin! It was another sumptuous

dinner at which we were introduced to the specialities of this river city: braised turtle, chicken and turtle soup and a special eel-shaped fish served coiled like a dragon.

Guangchou
Sunday, 13 October

It was raining even harder in Guilin this morning but we went to the Reed Flute Cave, a really vast limestone cave. Colored neon lighting was used to show up the beauty of the stalactites and stalagmites, some shaped like flutes, others more massive, reminding me of the bamboo organ in Las Pinas. It being Sunday, some of us were disposed to think of it as Nature's vast cathedral. Some parts of the floor had been shallowly dug out and water dripping from the roof of the cave had accumulated to form a reflecting pool -- the reflected stalactites shimmering in the water made a pretty sight. On our way home, we stopped by a jewelry factory and showroom where there was a large display of jade, diamonds and other precious stones set in gold. This was Normita's moment -- she found the jade ring her sister-in-law had asked her to buy, and after agonizing whether she could afford to spend money on jewelry, bought a small diamond ring and earrings with diamonds. We encouraged her by pointing out that these were good investments anyhow.

The afternoon was free; since it was raining, the hills we were supposed to climb would be too slippery. I took a much-needed nap and afterwards sat by the window, watching the mountains continually changing face as the mist cleared. Towards evening, there was an interesting show on TV on the history of Chinese ceramics from prehistoric times to the present. It provided good documentation for the pottery we saw at the Shanghai museum. I felt really rested for our late evening flight to Guangchou.

Our plane was delayed; it left late and arrived late. I pitied our Guangchou hosts who had to stay up to wait for us. They brought us to Dong Fang Hotel, a large five-star hotel decorated in Chinese style, with red and gold woodcarvings and huge porcelain jars in the lobby. Our luxuriously appointed rooms overlook a Chinese-style courtyard garden.

Guangchou
Monday, 14 October

We visited Zongshan University, founded by and named after Dr. Sun Yat Sen, and talked to some faculty members from the Institute of Asian Studies and the Department of Foreign Languages (English). Discussing our respective universities, we found some problems in common including lack of funds for programs. They also bewailed the loss of interest in scholarly studies such as literature and history. Their students were more interested in practical studies such as computer and management sciences

and as for languages, they only studied them, especially English, as a means of getting ahead. Which I suppose makes sense, as Guangchou is an industrial and business hub, but saddening to see universities becoming feeders to business and industry at the expense of scholarship. Shopping was not on the agenda but we stopped at a Friendship store along the way to buy a few more souvenirs.

In the afternoon we went to an integrated commercial, industrial and agricultural corporation -- something like a township but this seemed on a much larger scale than Evergreen in Beijing. They had this huge pharmaceutical company which manufactures both traditional Chinese and western medicines. We had to walk all the way up to the fourth floor -- we weren't sterile so couldn't take the elevator -- were whisked through a lot of narrow corridors where we glimpsed some laboratories and processing rooms through glass windows and that was it. We didn't see much. Anyway, their disparate activities in the corporation include manufacturing cosmetics, toys and household appliances, as well as raising pigs.

We had fun at the banquet this evening where we ate gourmet Cantonese food and drank all sorts of friendly toasts in a special Cantonese rice wine (we were assured it was not inebriating). Somehow, we felt very much at home in Guangchou. Perhaps it was the food which is very similar to the Chinese food in Manila. Or perhaps because it's closer to home? Our CAFIU hosts, Mr. Zhuo Yi, Vice-President of CAFIU Guangdong, and Mr. Feng Weng Zhi, Secretary-General, were warm and jolly and we were feeling relaxed; the better part of our visit was over and everything had gone well. In that atmosphere, we talked very earnestly about pursuing the possibility of educational exchanges and promised to keep in touch.

Right after dinner was our last chance to shop in China and use up our remaining Yuan. The hotel shops as well as a Friendship store nearby were still open, so off we went. I found what I wanted in one of the hotel shops: cloisonne chopsticks and tiny, jewel-like porcelain bowls.

Guangchou

Tuesday, 15 October

For once throughout our ten days in China, we had an all-Chinese breakfast, a welcome change from the Western style buffet breakfasts we've been having. There were all sorts of *dimsum* and porridge with a variety of toppings to choose from. After breakfast, we held a farewell ceremony with Madame Zhu and Mr. Gao who had become our good friends through ten days of travelling together. I read them a little poem, then each member of the group presented them with little gifts from the Philippines and said a few words. They took us to the train station where Helen, our Guangchou guide, took us through the whole process of departure formalities quickly and efficiently. We were all quite sad at having to say goodbye

-- to China, to our Chinese friends.

The train ride was very comfortable and we arrived in Hongkong at 12:45 P.M. It was raining rather hard and as we queued for a taxi, lugging our heavy bags, we certainly missed our Chinese guides who always saw to it that we didn't have to worry about such details. Nevertheless, we made it to the Y. We went on a shopping expedition later in the afternoon but it was a complete disaster: we walked what seemed like miles, got soaked in the rain and almost lost our way home, people kept on giving the wrong directions. As it turned out, there are two YMCA hotels and they were giving us directions for the other one, the better known one, apparently. When we got to the hotel, Nonoy who had gone on ahead hadn't arrived. He got back after half an hour, having also lost his way and gotten thoroughly wet. I hope we don't all get colds from this expedition.

Quezon City

Wednesday, 16 October

We went our separate ways this morning so as to shop more efficiently. Carol and I took a bus to the Star Ferry terminal to shop at Toys R Us. On the way over and back, we met not a few Filipina domestics, some of whom we "interviewed" informally. It was a Chinese holiday so most of them had the day off. Those we talked to seemed happy enough, particularly about the good pay (they were getting the equivalent of P10,000 a month) although they had some complaints about their female employers: these were overly strict, demanding and "jealous". One woman we saw was apparently working overtime, as she shepherded her two young charges around; another spoke of moonlighting so she could get more money to send home. True, she ran the risk of being found out, but working at another job was surely better than just hanging around the Star Ferry terminal on her days off, according to her. The bus home was full of Filipinas; one woman narrated an amusing incident about a newly arrived Filipina who tried to get off the bus by shouting at the top of her voice to the driver: "Para, mama." Cultural habits aren't that easily shed, I suppose.

In the afternoon, we shopped at nearby stores but we finally managed to buy all the *bilins* of assorted relatives and friends and were ready to go home. We said goodbye to our Filipino acquaintances at the Y (one of them was a young Chinese Filipino who had come to Hongkong to visit some relatives and try to learn Chinese -- he didn't speak a word -- and maybe find a job. He had no intention of staying permanently, he told me, only long enough to earn some money and then go back home to Davao) and wished them luck. Although it was rush hour and hard to get a taxi, we made it to the airport in good time. It was raining when we arrived in Hongkong; it was raining when we left. We had to board the plane on the tarmac, inadequately protected from the rain and wind by plastic-film raincoats the airlines had supplied. The short trip home was uneventful and as the plane touched Philippine soil, I may have imagined it but we heaved a collective sigh. It seemed unbelievable that we had been gone only 12 days! With our heads still crowded with impressions of China and our bags crammed with souvenirs and *pasalubongs* we went through arrival formalities and out into the familiar traffic jam and milling crowds at the NAIA arrival area. No doubt about it: we were home.