

DAVE AND SUE REESE SPECIAL EOTEM REPORT NOVEMBER 2024

MA (Chinese characters 妈妈 for mother): A true account of China in 2014

The home where we are in Northern China is a simple four room apartment on the sixth floor (no elevator) of a nine floor apartment building. There are about one hundred apartments in the building and it is situated in the midst of twenty to thirty other buildings just like it. Go about 100 feet and you will find another complex just like this one; in fact, there are hundreds of apartment complexes like this in the city of eight million people.

Each of the newer complexes has a central park with newly planted grass and trees, tiled walks lined with benches, and areas to dance and play--with an indoor swimming pool underground, an oasis in the midst of a concrete maze.

At daybreak a few people seem to wander into the park and eventually, within an hour, hundreds of people are milling about. Some bring their songbirds in the bamboo cages, lift the cover from the cage and set the cage on the grass. Twenty to thirty birds begin singing, and the owners (mostly older men) sit around discussing whatever old Chinese men discuss. The birds chatter among themselves whatever birds chatter.



Others (men and women) gather in groups and with large fans go through their Tai Chi exercises for an hour. Later, they swap their large, red fans for cheap ornamental swords and practice graceful, chorused movements. Some walk the perimeter of the park in exercise fashion, swinging their arms, too busy for much talk. Much older folk merely saunter along, hands clasped behind their back, and enjoy the cool morning breeze.

As Sue and I wander around the park, several people stop us to ask where are we from, how do we like China, why are we there, etc. All of them afford excellent opportunities for us to practice our little Chinese and them, their little English. People offer us their little canvas chairs or seats on the bench, wiped dry from the morning dew. Hospitality to foreigners--especially Americans--is unbelievable. More importantly, all such casual meetings give an open door to begin relationships. Each morning brings you back to friends met the day before, and new ones.

One Chinese man who talked with me was a retired teacher and had interesting opinions as to the advantages of capitalism over socialism. He was very outspoken that individual liberty was much to be preferred over what China offered. I never introduce politics into conversation and attempt to avoid discussion of it by all means. We are not here to educate people on politics or make any political statement. Our interest is strictly spiritual. People need to be saved.. I moved the subject of conversation as soon as possible. Relationships must be developed due to culture and dangers to both your hearer and you. You must know who you are witnessing to in China. Chinese have more than one "yes." A "yes" may mean, "I acknowledge that you said something, but I don't think you know anything at all."

Night begins to fall and the park takes on another character--but still a friendly, safe, and social gathering place. The neighborhood street dance begins with all ages taking part. Red flags are waved in unison as the dancers begin an effortless, two step shuffle in a line of twos, to the blare of live Chinese horns and drums, playing traditional tunes. This goes on for about thirty minutes. At the same time, two separate groups gather in large, tiled, floor areas. One group is made up of beginners; the other are the more experienced. They dance to waltzes, polkas, and

simple two step, slow tunes played over the loudspeakers. It is not unusual to hear The Tennessee Waltz, Auld Lang Syne, Unchained Melody, or some piece from The Sound of Music. Only married men and women dance together, and here and there, two older widows dance together. Sometimes a person dances alone. No rock music--no rap--no sensual movements--just folks having a good time. Younger children rollerblade in an area and others simply play and run. At 8:30pm the music stops, the lights go out, and people gradually melt away, leaving the park for a few young lovers to sit on the benches.

Ma (Yuan Su Zhen) is 74. Often, she looks out her window at all the people in the park below. Her back is bent and her joints are swollen with arthritis. She, like many older Chinese, never learned to dance. Life was not easy in her former years. Her feet were bound when she was a baby to keep them from being large and ugly. Small feet (lotus) on a Chinese woman in those days were more desirable than a face and figure like Marilyn Monroe. Her memory is filled with both joy and sorrow. She remembers well the Red Guard and the Cultural



Sue Reese and Ma

Revolution of the early, unorganized ruffians loosed on China to eliminate educated and wealthy Chinese, and anyone else who was a threat to Chairman Mao in the early Seventies. She remembers the surrender and melting of home cooking pots and utensils for the communal kitchens and the cause of Communism. Her grandfather was a Christian but she refused his witness of Christ to her. Sometimes she goes out for a walk, or to buy vegetables at the street market, but it is painful and for the most part, she stays inside. Su Zhen is affectionally known as "Ma" and is the mother of our Chinese friend with whom we stay.

My wife, Sue, struck up a good relationship with Ma, a friendship that has extended over five years. Sue always brings her a special gift, looks out for her, and gives her those hugs an older person longs for. Last evening, friendship and a consistent witness of the grace of God, brought eternal benefits; Ma accepted Jesus Christ as her Saviour. After some casual conversation about God, sin, and death, Ma said, "I believe. I accept Jesus." It was so simple. No argument. No more talk. Ma had said before that she tried to do good things--and she did. But now she knows that Jesus is the only one with whom God is pleased.

The reason I mention "Ma" is that it just struck me in a strange way, how that for the most part, USA Christianity is caught up with one of two extremes. One extreme is almost total capitulation; we are so ritualistic to attend 11AM services and insist on an inoffensive "talk" and do nothing aggressive, "love" our neighbor--and know no Bible. The other extreme is that we minutely examine doctrine to the "nth" degree--arguing over some denominational specialty, raging at one thing versus all else, John's baptism, post, pre, split factions, anabaptists vs Baptists, local vs universal church, ripping and tearing, and devouring anybody who dares to differ. But both extremes, for the most part, care nothing for others while they carry on their holy interests. Lost souls all around us seem to be a last priority.

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BAYONA NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2024 SPECIAL REPORT



our Philippine ministry is growing and a report will cover it next month.

This month I want to mention one of our EOTEM Bible College Mindanao graduates who has worked in Japan teaching English for five years. Jessesa Nolasco is a Filipina who is one of our most distinguished grads. She has an excellent command of English and is in Japan teaching English in a Tokyo college. The picture is of her (center with white blouse and flower b/w dress) with one of her classes. (She has five men students but they had a special meeting when picture was taken)

Her testimony follows.

“Dear Dr. Reese,
Thank you very much for your thoughts and prayers! I pray that you are all well in the Lord.

I have been much busier since August, and my schedule continues to change. The work at school has been a bit more demanding as I am tasked to do more teaching, preparing (materials), etc

Other than teaching classes, In

November, I will do a kind of program that reaches out to Japanese families through the English language.

‘Gospel seeds have been planted. Overall, I continue to serve God here at school, international church, and as mentioned I will start the Go to Families ministry in Tokyo starting this November. Please pray for wisdom as I plan for it. There are already two families. One family this October and another family in November. I will also meet up a group of teachers this month. Please pray that I will be able to reach them out successfully. To the group of Filipinos that I lead, please pray for spiritual growth to them and to me as well. “

Jessesa is supported through her school teaching. Please pray for her. We also have several our graduates teaching English or working in Europe and the Middle East. ALL of our graduates see themselves as missionaries first.

In Jesus’ Name,
Roger Bayona

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