

Wednesday, July 7, 2010

Dear Friends and Relatives,

I am now in Xining (pronounced “she-ning”, meaning “western peace”), having arrived in the early evening yesterday. Air temperatures here are cooler (70s and 80s for highs). On Monday the Beijing temperature reached 108! During last night it rained here with a little thunder.

Last week on our first day in Beijing our team visited Tiananmen Square and the adjacent Forbidden City. It was my third time there. There was light rain and drizzle and pleasantly cool temperatures. Our umbrellas, used occasionally, were sufficient with no jackets.

The training sessions went well, getting us (and especially those teaching here for the first time) ready for our July activities.

On Sunday morning our team visited a registered church at its third morning service. As usual, overflow crowds had to be in adjacent rooms or outside under tent canopies. We were inside. The order of the service was traditional (like American styles) but in Chinese language. An English translation was given by radio to our headsets. We sang along in English from the bilingual hymnals to very familiar hymns. There was communion at the end. This particular congregation is the one visited by Condolea Rice and President Bush. This photo shows my Xining team outside afterwards. From left to right: myself, Grant Miller from Washougal (Vancouver) WA, Dr. Jim & Shirley Goering from N. Newton (Wichita) KS, Liz Fisher from Hatboro (Philadelphia) PA, Wayne Smith from Gulf Breeze (Pensacola) FL, Dan Thompson from Dunedin (Tampa) FL, and Richard Swenson from Davenport (SE of Grand Island) NE. Three (rear) are in their 20s to 30 (Liz); the rest of us ages 60s and 70s.



We had some free time Tuesday morning before our flight. We went to the Summer Palace, a large compound and a popular tourist place having a pleasant environment with trees and a big lake. The picture shows one of the beautiful buildings. Some of us climbed the hill to that building while the rest walked around the hill, avoiding the exertion in the morning heat. I have many more photos of this place. Though our time



was limited, I am glad we went there.

There was a large group of students also visiting the Summer Palace, having blue shirts saying New Oriental Cool Camp 2010. They had the assignment to find some foreigners, talk with them for about five minutes in English, and take a photo with them. The previous day they did not find any foreigners where they were located. Today we were the first ones that they found and they were desperate. So we became the tourist attraction. Sometimes they came running up to us before we got away. This photo shows Grant with some of the students. It was fun talking to these students.



From my previous studies of satellite imagery using Google Earth, I already knew many of the patterns of the Xining area and was able to recognize them from the air during our approach for landing. The plane flew westward beyond the airport, turned around over the city, and landed going eastward. I was able to spot our campus and take a picture of it. (There is a little haze.) Our dormitory and dining hall are in the building at the bottom of the courtyard in the center of the view. We will find out our classroom building today. This is the New Century technical school, training students for various trades. Our building is to train them for hotel work, so the building is being run like a hotel.



As I look outside at 6 AM, as it is getting light, I see cloudiness after last night's rain. The same amount of dim lighting was at 9 PM last evening but under partly cloudy skies. Breakfast is at 8 AM today. I need to walk several blocks to a large Internet Bar to send this email. There are also some stores along the way for purchasing food and supplies as necessary.

Today our students arrive. Tomorrow we meet them after they are tested for listening comprehension and divided into 7 classes.

Ed Holroyd