

Education

The last several days have been involved in various aspects of



education and learning and meeting with friends. Thursday morning featured a visit to Front Range Community College in Westminster, Colorado for the annual Water Festival. My role was to make it snow inside the classroom. (See www.EdHolroyd.info/snowstorm.) I was given 5 classes of about 24 to 30 fifth grade students and their adult teachers and assistants for about 20 minutes each class. During a lunch break I photographed classes outside enjoying their own lunches. Snow-capped mountains are in the background. On Thursday next week I will do the same for six classes at the Community College of Aurora for their annual Water Festival. Dozens of other demonstrations in other classrooms and outside have other relations to the importance and uses of water. These community colleges (first two years of university studies) let the regional elementary schools use their facilities for a day during a break in the college class schedule.

From Wednesday evening to Sunday morning my friend, Chunlei Liu, and her friend, Christa, came from Houston, Texas, and stayed at our home. (Christa had to leave early because of the death of a relative.) I had been encouraging Chunlei for about four years to finish her work for a Ph.D. degree in petroleum engineering from the Colorado School of Mines. I read her thesis several times and offered corrections of her English and technical details. The thesis was about computer simulations of drilling down to a rock stratum that has methane gas and petroleum oils, turning the drill to go horizontally through that rock layer, and using a pressurized process to fracture the rock in that layer to release the fossil fuel products. Late Thursday afternoon had the graduation ceremony for about 250 students who earned the Master's and Ph.D. degrees.



Christa and Chunlei and other graduates with their faculty advisors. Chunlei receiving the Ph.D. hood from her advisor and chairman.

Friday morning had the ceremony for about 835 receiving the Bachelor's degree at Colorado School of Mines.



The university is located in the small town of Golden between mountains. The weather was excellent, though a cooler wind arrived near the end of the ceremony. One of my nephews, Tyler Holroyd, graduated with a degree in Metallurgical and Materials Engineering.



Graduates arriving.

Tyler after receiving his diploma.

Later on Friday Gail and I went with Chunlei for an excellent dinner at the New Peach Garden Chinese Restaurant. I had previously known the owner from the weekly Friday evening fellowship of Chinese people in Golden. That evening Chunlei told the fellowship group of the difficulties and unexpected provisions and benefits in her struggle to complete her Ph.D. requirements. Later I conducted (in English) a small study with a video clip introduction of the topic.



My plant fossil displays, with no view of mountains beyond the road cut.

Saturday morning I went to Dinosaur Ridge, south of Golden, to set up my display at the plant fossil site. Other guides were speakers to tell about the dinosaur bones and footprints and rock formations. This started my 27th year of doing so as a volunteer. The weather was not pleasant. When I arrived the cloud base was below the site and we were in a fog and mist with a temperature of 4 deg C (39 deg F). The photo shows that the view to the mountains was blocked beyond the edge of the road. Later the clouds lifted somewhat and we could see some of the nearby scenery. To keep warm I used my sun shade canopy as a blanket. I was the last speaker present, leaving at 3 PM.

Saturday afternoon and evening we had a family gathering and dinner at our home to celebrate Tyler's graduation. I introduced Tyler to our neighbor, Pete, because of their common interest in metal creations. Pete showed his beautiful collection of fancy knives that he made with fancy ivory handles from mammoth and walrus tusks. Tyler's family (from near Rochester, New York, and Massachusetts) and the families of our son and younger daughter were all here. That included four of our grandchildren. Our older daughter's family lives too far away in Wisconsin.

Sunday morning a friend and I visited the weekly fellowship group of Chinese people at a location just south of my University of Denver. I had previously visited there for special Chinese holiday events, but this was my first time to be there on Sunday morning. Many people from our Friday evening group in Golden were present, including the restaurant owner. After several songs, a speaker gave the main talk in Chinese language to a group of about fifty. Then there was a snack time with English-speaking Americans joining us from the upstairs room for a time of fellowship. Later a different speaker conducted another study for 24 Chinese adults. Lunch with pizza and Chinese noodles with vegetables followed before we went home.



Ed and Qunling

Sunday afternoon Qunling Zhang showed me her school and classroom. (No one else was present because it was Sunday.) She has been teaching Mandarin there to 5th grade students for this past school year while living with a host family that we knew. The Global Village Academy is a



“charter school”, a privately operated school within the public school system. The school teaches classes in the Chinese, Spanish, and Russian languages, with some English studies as well. Qunling works there under the Confucius Institute program and will return to her family in Anhui Province in early June. While the younger grades have one or two large classrooms, her room is small because of fewer students at that age. During parts of the day the room is occupied by Russian students instead of Chinese.



Times in China, Spain, Russia.



Spanish Village hallway



Qunling and her room entrance.



Student artwork



The Chinese side of Qunling's classroom.



Another wall of her classroom

It appears that there is an increasing need for teaching Mandarin language in American schools.