

A Yankee's observations of China

by Gary Puckett

While the purpose of the delegation to China for the AIDS symposium (of which Ken Tomory was a member) was one of seriousness, sightseeing and personal observations were also a part of the trip. Many of Tomory's observations reflect the interest the entire world shares in the ancient history of this great country. Also of interest are the observations which reflect the interest of the Western world in the affairs of a socialist country.

It's difficult for the people of the United States to visualize the experience of simply being among a population as vast as China's.

"One thing I was always aware of was the presence of so many people," Tomory said. "The city of Beijing has 10 million people and seven million bicycles."

While this type of mass transportation is certainly clean and fuel efficient, it is obviously much different from that which Westerners are used to. (A vision comes to mind of city streets in

Beijing being similar to freeways in Los Angeles, except that they are choked with bicycles instead of cars.) This is quite difficult to imagine.

Also, living quarters are much different in China than what we are accustomed to.

"Housing units are arranged like a courtyard. The average home for six people is no larger than half the size of this room," Tomory said. This indicated a home for six people in a space about 12' by 18'.

"There is very little privacy," Tomory said.

China is a socialist country. From a Western point of view this fact is seen as detrimental to the individual. However, socialism in China seems to have its benefits as well as its drawbacks.

"People belong to work units. These units usually provide housing and often provide such benefits as medical and dental care as well as family planning and contraception," Tomory said.

Contraception is important to the Chinese whose population, as



Ken Tomory stands in front of the picturesque mountains of the Chinese countryside.

of 1989, was 1,069,628,000. To put this in perspective, the Chinese population averages 288 people per square mile compared

to 64 people per square mile in the United States (1980 census).

"The average annual income per capita is \$116," Tomory said. "This is difficult to relate to our economy, but everyone works. The income of the average businessman is not much different from that of a doctor." While this doesn't provide much incentive to the individual, no one has to suffer the misery of unemployment.

Of obvious interest to anyone visiting China is the Great Wall. Concerning his visit there and elsewhere, Tomory issued this description: "We were shuttled off to the Great Wall. A feat of pure astonishment bearing the lives of many Chinese who toiled with its creation. The wall was built over several centuries and stretches for over 1000 miles. It was built to defend the land and fortresses of the great and many warlords and imperial kingdoms.

Next we were off to see the Forbidden City. These amazing grounds were the home to only the emperor and his concubines. No man was allowed in the city

after dark except the infamous eunuchs and the emperor. The many halls of the city represent the tranquility within the city contrary to the warring lands outside its grand gates. Walking through such a place truly cannot be described. Then behold the gate that opens to Tiananmen Square, the place where many revolutions began and ended. This led to Chairman Mao's Tomb, the monument to the Cultural Revolution, the People's Monument and more."

Obviously, China is of interest in many ways. These include historical, political, cultural, sociological and economical interests. Tomory was fortunate to be able to make the trip.

"I would definitely like to thank Student Government at UNLV. Without their support the trip would not have been possible," said Tomory.

One statement of Tomory's seems to sum up his observations of the people more than any other.

"They are into the being, and not the becoming."



The world famous "great wall" was one of the many beautiful sights visited during the trip.

Sino-American AIDS symposium exchanges

Ken Tomory, a student representative from the Campus Committee on AIDS at UNLV recently has returned from the People's Republic of China. He was invited to partake in a multidisciplinary delegation on the management of HIV Disease.

The delegation, composed of 138 members, was put together by the People to People International Citizen Ambassador Program. This program was established under President Eisenhower to enhance bilateral exchanges among the peoples of the world. The exchanges are set up under the auspices of technological, medical and scientific realms to promote the better understanding of joint efforts on global problems and advancements.

The symposium was at the request of the Ministry of Public Health of China and the Chinese Medical Association. The two-day symposium convened in Beijing with bilateral exchanges between American and Chinese experts. The broad exchanges on HIV entailed topics in diagnosis, treatment, research, prevention, psychology, sociology, ethics, education, law and religion.

The delegation was the first one in China of its size and na-

ture of multiple disciplines. It was headed by Dr. Constance Wofsy, professor of clinical medicine at the University of California at San Francisco. She is the Director of AIDS activities at San Francisco General Hospital.

After the Beijing symposium, the delegation split into four teams and traveled to two inner provincial capitals separately before reconvening in Hong Kong. Each team had tedious schedules from morning to night. Between

site visits such as western hospitals, Chinese traditional medical hospitals, anti-epidemic stations, AIDS surveillance centers and the Institute of Virology, the teams enjoyed cultural visits as well.

The Great Wall, The Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square were among China's capital sites and each city offered their own history and character.

AIDS, in China, is still an unknown epidemic. Currently they have approximately 446 carriers of HIV. This is different than the abundance of cases that are in the U.S. One reason is that China has only been open to the rest of the world for less than twenty years.

Chinese methods for HIV antibody testing are costly and are not widely available in most of the country. Of the known cases, 360 are found in the Yunnan Province which is bordered by Burma, Laos, and Thailand (The Golden Triangle). Drug trafficking is known to be commonplace in this area. Intravenous drug use is claimed to be responsible for these cases. As for sexual transmission and homosexual contact, the beliefs of Chinese society and culture are stern: these simply do not occur.

The routes of transmission are still being discussed as unknown or unacceptable practices.

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Almost everywhere one looked in China, there were striking differences from our Western culture.