

Features Editors: Rachael Witt and Martin Gibson

Ten Days in China

Thomas Leong
Staff Writer

In one blazing mid-summer week and one day, my family and I took a tour (all expenses paid by my dad) in China! Places that gave me a feeling of nature were the famous Summer Palace of Beijing, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall of China, and the pandas!

In Beijing, we went to the Summer Palace for a spectacular sight of an elegant palace. However, what made the Summer Palace so famous was not the palace but its imperial garden. Sea boulders from imperial times symbolized the dominance of the emperor, and we were able to go inside one. The tour guide said the bushes form an outstretched dragon, leaving us to marvel at the artwork.

When we visited Beijing, construction was continuous in the Forbidden City. I saw the portrait of Mao Zedong, who was a swimmer and political genius of the Chinese Republic. We made our entry through the Meridian Gates, *Wumen* in Chinese, the finely redefined red palaces built of luxury and shining, yellow rooftops. The carefully crafted artifacts that

remain on display today all have fun backgrounds from dance to sacrificial and are worthy of picture taking.

The must-see, must-experience event of our tour was none other than the Great Wall of China! Restrictions closed down some sections of the Great Wall available to the public, but even this aspect did not alleviate the challenge of the journey to the highest top.

Throughout the journey, I used breaks along the wall to cool off. The Great Wall consisted of steps, about two thousand plus steps, some varying in height from 1-3 feet. On the way down, I had little room to run due to the oncoming tourists. As Andrew Leong, senior, commented about the trip, "We should've brought the camera."

In the city, my eyes were blinded by thousands of lights. The cities of Shanghai and Beijing earned a reputation for the nightlife as lights, parks, and clubs brightened the streets and the parks in every turn. We rode in the tour bus at 2 a.m., looking at the people gathering in the seaside parks, admiring the lights that brought

color and life to the city.

Rural parts of China also show distinguishable characteristics without the need of electronics. They have shown hospitality and love as Daniel Wu, sophomore, accounted his trip, "The experience there was a very drastic change to the American lifestyle. Everyone in the small community helped out one another, everyone worked in the fields together, and everyone was considered family. No sewage though, which was a bummer, since sometimes maggots and tiny insects were in the...well...holes. But it was really interesting to experience life. Even though they had electricity, it seemed that I could've gone gladly without it."

An important factor in regard to China is the major global event: the 2008 Olympics, hosted in Beijing. I had learned that the Olympic committee had been working on a universal symbol system for the language barriers between the participating countries. From a few hundred yards away, I was able to see the arena in its final touches, its popularity will become even more profound Aug. 8, 2008. I guess I can say I had my vacation "Made in China."



Photo by Thomas Leong
FAMILY PORTRAIT... Lincoln students, Thomas Leong and Andrew Leong, right, stand with their family in front of the Imperial Palace in Beijing, China.

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Visualizing a New Library

Lange Luntao
Opinion Editor

Ask for ideas on how to best revitalize Stockton and solutions are anything but scarce. A new sports arena, say many, a vibrant downtown restaurant scene, more police presence, safer places for youth to spend time.

But ask Na'eel Cajee, Executive Director of the youth advocacy group Stockton2020, what would benefit the community most and he will confidently respond: a world-class library.

A member of the LHS Graduating Class of 2006, Cajee now attends Harvard University, and is entering his sophomore year. Last year, in his school's library, Cajee noticed a particularly interesting section containing information on other libraries, which captured his attention. When he arrived back in Stockton for his summer break, he researched into the city's plans for revitalization to see how public libraries were to be incorporated into Downtown Development. What he found was startling.

"The city's plan for revitalization excluded any reference to America's premier public institution," said Cajee, "the public library." So, along with a committed group of young people - many of them current students and alumni of Lincoln High - Cajee founded an organization to change this, with the main goal being the eventual inclusion of a state-of-the-art library facility in Stockton's General Plan.

But, why a new library? "Studies have been done to show that libraries are the most equalizing of public institutions in America," said Cajee. "No matter whom you are, farmer or businessman, you're treated with the same respect in a library." Especially in a region with such a division of socioeconomic classes, argues Cajee, a new library would bring the population of Stockton together.

While the new library seems like a perfect solution for many Stockton residents, others need some convincing. LHS Senior Esseim Sharma, the organization's Education Liaison,

admitted that, at the beginning, he was "skeptical" of the group's plans. "But after seeing that there are statistics that support our idea for a new library," said Sharma, "I was won over."

As the group has worked together over the summer months, the vision of the organization has become much more clear. "On one level," said Cajee, "this organization is about getting this new building added to Stockton's plans.

"But on another level," he added, "it's about challenging young people in America to invest in their infrastructure and it's about changing the culture of education in Stockton."

Sharma is an example of this thinking in action. "I wanted to be involved in the organization," said Sharma, "because I saw it as a good venue to being involved in local government." Since then, Sharma has stayed active in the group and hopes to remain a member for the foreseeable future.

Since Stockton2020 was founded at the end of last year, the group has been working hard to research what makes a 'good' library and reach out to other organizations in the community. The group has taken tours of the new San Jose and Santa Clara libraries, and has identified exemplary libraries like the one in Salt Lake City, Utah as potential models for Stockton's own version.

The agenda for the group has been full, with members of the organization meeting with the Campaign for Common Ground, individual City Council Members, the Mayor of Stockton, the Provost of U.O.P., and the Lincoln Unified School District School Board.

As the summer winds down and many of college students return back to school (some, as in the case of Cajee, further than others), Stockton2020 is investigating how to proceed from here. One thing is for sure, said Cajee: "This is just the beginning."

*If you're interested in finding out more about Stockton2020, go to www.stockton2020.org

