

How KWF Covered the Olympics in Beijing

YOU CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE, EVEN AT NIGHT

—By Terril Jones '96

I used to take “Jichang Lu,” or “Airport Road,” from Beijing’s International Airport into the Chinese capital in the mid- and late-1980s. It was more of a tree-lined country lane, with room for only one car going each direction. Today the way in from Capital Airport is a multi-lane freeway, and instead of trees and fields, the entire route is lined with building after building.

It’s a far cry from my first trip to China in 1976 with my mother, a Beijing native, to visit my grandfather. It was an era when Flying Pigeon bicycles ruled the streets and Westerners were viewed with curiosity, awe and suspicion – I unfailingly drew a crowd wherever I went.

I encountered history unexpectedly. Mao Zedong died three days after I arrived, and my memories are of traveling in a China gripped by emotional mourning and fear of a Soviet attack, and of a Beijing strewn with piles of rubble from the ruinous Tangshan earthquake.

My visit to the Olympics this summer was my first to China in 19 years. The phrase I heard the most – “Beijing de bianhua hen da!” (Beijing has changed a lot, eh!) – was borne out daily.

My last trips had been in 1989, when China was a huge story of another era: the student-led protests at Tiananmen Square. I was an Associated Press correspondent covering the movement and the eventual army crackdown. Urban youth rebelled against their government, chiding their leadership and citing western countries as models of governance and press freedom. Westerners were less an oddity, and when people found out I spoke Chinese, they peppered me with grievances of how few choices they had in life.

Today, the same demographic bursts with national pride and assails western governments and media for interfering with or misrepresenting Chinese affairs. Young Chinese I met in August were eager to share their tangible delight that the country has modernized enough to host the Olympics. “Beijing can now be considered an international city,” a clearly pleased 20-year-old woman told me in front of the Water Cube swimming stadium.

In another conversation right on Tiananmen Square, a 36-year-old man expressed satisfaction with his life today, noting that eighty percent of his coworkers own cars. And the government? “It’s all rule of law,” he said. “If I don’t steal, rob or kill, they’ll leave me alone.”

I feel lucky to have been in China at its most historic moments in the past 30 years, and to have witnessed some of the country’s dramatic transformation. The extent to which some things have changed – and some haven’t – was brought home to me after dinner with some relatives.

Thirty-two years ago several of them lived in a fading courtyard home without plumbing. One cousin moved from that courtyard into a high-rise apart-

ment building; his son, who grew up with nothing fancier than a bicycle, now owns a gleaming, Chinese-built Buick LaCrosse – an unimaginable aspiration two decades ago. Ironically, in these modern times, my cousin in the high-rise can’t get mail delivered, because in a throwback to the lackadaisical times of 20 and more years ago, “mei ren guan” (nobody looks after it).

Hmm. “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” It wasn’t Mao who said that, but in some ways it could have been. ▀



Jones' first visit to Tiananmen Square in 1976...



...and again this past August, thirty-two years later.

From the Head Fellow

—By Charles R. Eisendrath '75

WHERE THEY GO, NOBODY KNOWS

In a time of serious, serial, perhaps suicidal, cutbacks across “old media” journalism, 10 alumni write about the Beijing games for this Olympics issue of *The Journal*. That’s more people on the ground than many of the big boys of journalism. Their number and the stories of how they got there say as much about the expansion of KWF as the contraction of parts of the business. I’d like to introduce them by saying something about who they were when they walked in the Fellowship’s door, what they studied, and what happened afterwards.

I’ll begin, however, with non-alum Richard Pound because he represents a revolving group of outrageously talented people – including Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist Patrick Oliphant, ragtimer Bob Milne, and novelist Richard Ford – who return for periods ranging from several to many years just because they like what goes on at Wallace house. Pound belongs among them as leader of the anti-doping movement in Olympic sports – as well as being a former Olympian himself, a member of the International Olympic Committee, and chancellor of McGill University. Nobody who has heard him speak thinks about sportsmanship the same way.

Second, the “team” shows that the Friedman Fellowship in Sports Reporting, the first and only endowed position of its kind, is attracting committed people who are remaining in “old” journalism and getting top assignments.

Most of all, the roster shows the glory of people getting where they want via career pathways ranging from the linear to the tangled, reflecting the breadth of

interests KWF encourages, including growth some could not imagine. When he invented journalism fellowships (with other people’s money) in 1938, Walter Lippmann intended that journalists would think, study and then go back where they came from and do the same thing better.

KWF honors this constituency. If you didn’t know Linda Robertson ’07 by the time she walked up to shake hands you’d say “sports type” by that lope of hers. She studied “the emerging overweening culture of sports” and took that back to her column at the *Miami Herald*, one of the most closely watched in the business. Vahe Gregorian ’04 of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* did much the same with his study of “the history and demise of sports-manship.” So did Dong Seok Kim ’07, who returned to the *Chosun Daily* after a year’s examination of the crisis in Korean professional sports.

For others, following their dream wasn’t that simple and I like to think time spent at Wallace House gave them a broader approach to pursuing it, anyway. James Miles ’95 arrived as BBC’s Hong Kong Correspondent, studied “American Intellectual History” and returned after his Fellowship. His dream was becoming a leading journalistic commentator on China, which, as Beijing correspondent for *The Economist*, he assuredly is.

Something similar befell Matthias Schepp ’05. As Beijing bureau chief for *Der Stern*, he studied the perception of Communists decay in Western Media, intending to return to reporting it. But then management beckoned...until he fled back to reporting as Moscow bureau chief for *Der Spiegel*.

The *Baltimore Sun* shot the Beijing bureau out from under Gady Epstein ’07 while he was running it. He took a

Fellowship, studied “authoritarian and formerly authoritarian states,” tried the *Sun* again and when foreign work did not materialize there, found it running the Beijing bureau for *Forbes*.

Those are the easy ones. Now consider Mark McDonald ’97. When he applied for KWF he had already covered the Olympic Games and other major sports assignments for the *Dallas Morning News*. I told him his chances for admission were better as a business Fellow, which is what he studied, along with Islamic politics. But by April he had decided none of the above, and decamped for Vietnam for the *San Jose Mercury News*. Permutations later, he is Hong Kong editor of the *International Herald Tribune*.

Terril Jones ’96 has a Chinese mother and spoke the language at home. He took a Fellowship as an AP Paris correspondent, studied the emerging Chinese Auto industry and reported for the *Los Angeles Times* before landing the Kiplinger Fellowship at Ohio State University.

Janet Kolodzy ’91 came from CNN while it was still the old CNN – full of kids, full of beans and with the stock price posted in the newsroom. A writer/editor, she studied the culture and history of Eastern Europe but within a few years of her return, CNN changed. So Kolodzy transformed her passion for producing journalism into teaching it. When Olympic organizers chose U.S. student volunteers to be pool reporters and media liaisons during the Games, she led the Emerson College crew.

Can’t tell you about Richard Deitsch ’09 of *Sports Illustrated*. He just got here.

KWF Covers the Olympics

THE BAD BOY OF BADMINTON

—By Richard Deitsch ’09

I had come to see the Bad Boy of Badminton, the shuttlecock king of Asia who had captured a pair of world titles along with the hearts of young women across his land. You’ve probably never heard of Lin Dan, but in China, which treats badminton and table tennis with the same fervor with which Americans treat the National Football League, Lin is a full-fledged sporting idol, a handsome and charismatic 24 year old and the best badminton player in the world.

Watching him in person, it was easy to see why the man called “Super Dan” is The Man in his sport. He was deft, athletic, and brimming with charisma. Lin stalked across the court during matches, pumped his fist after points, and offered a back story (including fights with coaches and opponents) that felt more at home in the NFL. For a sport I had previously associated with aristocrats, Lin was a revelation, at least for me.

Badminton is an obsession in China, and the closest I think I came to discovering part of China’s soul was attending the men’s singles gold medal matches for both badminton and table tennis. How popular are those sports in China? The men’s team final in table tennis drew an estimated 478 million viewers on CCTV (China’s state-run television), according to CSM Media Research. The entire population of the United States is a little over 300 million.

For the badminton final between Lin and Lee Chong Wei of Malaysia, I was flanked by a group of young Chinese students, mostly female, working for the Olympic News Service. The women did not hide their affiliation. With every point Lin won, they increased the intensity of their fist shaking, and they were not alone. Throughout the match, the crowd at the Beijing University Institute of Technology



Linda Robertson enjoying the view from inside the Water Cube.

roared for nearly everything Lin did, chanting, “Come on, China” in Chinese before every point. For the men’s table tennis final at Peking University’s Gymnasium – a match that pitted the flamboyant Wang Hao, the world’s top-ranked player and a young heartthrob like Lin, against the veteran Ma Lin in an all-China final – the crowd unleashed the phrase “Jiayou, Wang Hao” with drumbeat regularity. The chant literally translated to “Add oil, Wang Hao,” though one need not be fluent in Mandarin to understand that they were urging Wang to fight harder. In the end Ma proved to be the steadier player.

Though I witnessed Usain Bolt’s sprint double at the Bird’s Nest as well as some remarkable swims at the Water Cube, my exploration of badminton and table tennis are the most indelible sporting moments of my stay in China. Few in the United States paid attention to the results of either final, but the nationalism exhibited in those halls was mesmerizing and palpable. I’m not sure how much I know about China after a 24-day stay, but I do know it is an interesting place, a global tiger filled with energetic young people primed to take over the world. ▀

THE NEW OLYMPIC SUPERPOWER

—By Linda Robertson ’07

China was once known as the “Sick Man of Asia.” Long an Olympic weakling, China did not even participate in the Olympics from 1960 to 1984 due to the “Two Chinas” dispute and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution.

But today, China is the new Olympic superpower. KW Fellows at the Beijing Games witnessed the Sleeping Giant awoken in the sports arena. China won the gold medal race, tallying 51, and surpassed the United States, which won 36. The U.S. still stood atop the total medals scorecard, but China could dominate in 2012.

China’s athletic ascent has been more rapid than its economic one. No wonder, considering that it spent about \$1 billion per gold medal, counting construction costs. While the U.S. continued to excel in team sports (and China failed in its favorites – men’s soccer and basketball), China’s “Project 119,” begun in 2001, targeted medals in sports where it could maximize its harvest, such as shooting and weightlifting. The U.S. will have to “redouble its

efforts,” said U.S. Olympic Committee chief Peter Ueberroth, if it hopes to compete with China’s government-run, 3,000-school sports system.

Now the U.S. has a new Red Machine rival to get those jingoistic juices flowing.



Linda Robertson

A bit of local flavor on the streets of Beijing.

Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt were the jaw-dropping stars of the Games, but Yao Ming was the most charming. The 7-6 center ran with the torch in Tiananmen Square and carried the flag alongside a Sichuan earthquake victim during Opening Ceremonies. Olympians mobbed him for autographs. We met Guo Jingjing, the diva of diving and subject of constant gossip, and Lin Dan, the racquet-throwing



bad boy of badminton. We glimpsed Liu Xiang, whose withdrawal from the 110-meter hurdles after a reclusive season left many questions.

China’s tot gymnasts (if the three youngest were 16, then Joan Rivers is 29) rushed through the media mixed zone with heads down. But one evening, Cheng Fei paused to talk, and started to cry. It was a rare peek behind the Chinese athletes’ game faces. She’d had a disappointing routine, and Chinese reporters shed tears with her and yelled words of encouragement.

Various China experts (including U-M professor Kenneth Lieberthal, whose 2007 class helped me prepare for the Olympics) say reform is inevitable in China’s harsh sports system. Just as Dwyane Wade and Serena Williams were busy “branding” their personalities to 1.3 billion Chinese consumers, China’s celebrity athletes want to cash in on the growing obsession with sports in a \$15 billion industry by marketing themselves and keeping more of their earnings. Basketball’s Yao Ming made \$55 million last year. Chinese gold medalists’ bonuses and endorsements averaged \$220,000 (the average income in China is \$2,400). Capitalism is booming; communism is passé.

I hadn’t been to China since 1986, when everybody still wore Mao jackets. Although China has been transformed, it still feels like an authoritarian society. But the graciousness of the people made up for the Big Brother scripted control of the government. Of the nine Olympics I have

covered, Beijing was the most bizarre – from the fake breeze fluttering flags inside Bird’s Nest Stadium to the phony “protest zones,” empty because all applications were denied – and the most intriguing. The fried silkworms were tasty, too. ▶

CHINA CRACKS DOWN FOR OLYMPIC UNITY

—By James Miles ‘95

China may look like a political monolith, but it often struggles to keep its local governments in line. The central leadership scolds and cajoles them, but they continue to do their own thing – seizing land from peasants and selling it to developers, pumping up their bubble economies with lavish construction projects and fostering rampant corruption in business and government. Just occasionally, however, a directive is issued in Beijing that brings the country to heel. In the last decade such orders can be counted on the fingers of one hand: crack down on Falun Gong (largely successful), eliminate SARS (done) and make sure the Olympics are a success (done, as far as the Communist Party is concerned).

These commands were obeyed because they came with a carrot and a stick. Other work could be put aside for the sake of fulfilling them. And failure to comply would have consequences for careers. Putting on a good Games came with another incentive. Most Chinese (not including Tibetans and Uighurs) wanted them to

One morning, I went to Beijing’s Temple of Heaven to observe the strange exercise rituals. It was like a scene out of Dr. Seuss – people walking backwards, standing on their heads, practicing tai chi and swordplay. It began to rain. A smiling older woman appeared at my side, took my hand, pulled me under her umbrella and escorted me to the shelter of the Echo Wall, where she joined a group arrayed around a man with a flute. They began singing “Amazing Grace.” It was just as memorable as any gold-medal performance at the Water Cube.

—By Linda Robertson ‘07

be a success anyway. The result was an elevation of the Games to the highest levels of political priority for officials at every level. The furious political bickering that normally consumes Olympic host countries over how much money to spend and on what was non-existent in China. The party suppressed it. And the Chinese media – though increasingly feisty as the market economy weakens the party’s grip – fell in line.

Criticism of lavish spending on Olympic projects, or of the huge disruption suffered by the many tens of thousands of Chinese who happened to be in their way, were taboo topics. Occasionally a more daring newspaper might suggest that political reform in China (a stated party goal, though not vigorously pursued) should involve greater public scrutiny of budgets. But no one dared to propose a good look at the Olympic numbers (more than \$40 billion, including money spent on cleaning Beijing’s air and revamping its public transport system).

A successful Games, in the leadership’s mind, did not mean putting on 16 days of untrammelled fun. The event had to impress foreign visitors (those allowed in – officials tried their best to screen out undesirables such as human rights activists), the athletes and television viewers. But street parties of the kind seen in other host cities were not on the agenda (spontaneous revelry was deemed a security threat). The success of the games was defined much as North Korea’s leaders define the success of their mass shows. They had to be awesomely spectacular. The director of the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies in Beijing, Zhang Yimou (who himself drew unashamed comparisons with North Korea) achieved this brilliantly. Few inside or even outside China were likely to dwell on the subtleties – the fact that the majority of the performers at the opening ceremony were soldiers, for example, or that their routines played into prevailing Western stereotypes of a well drilled nation locked in a uniform mind-

set. Most of the time, much of China is chaotic, factious and even at times rebellious. Their Olympic directive fulfilled, provinces will resume their wayward ways. Beijing’s public transport will be much improved, but the air will turn grey again. Problems concealed and grievances crushed by local leaders in their efforts to fulfill the party’s mandate of Olympic harmony will resurface. Post-Olympic China will be back to form. ▶

A KOREAN PERSPECTIVE ON RISING CHINA

—By Dong Seok Kim ‘07

The Crouching Tiger and Sleeping Dragon are about to wake up. That’s what the Far Eastern countries witnessed during the Beijing Olympic Games. South Korea was among the nations watching



Dong Seok Kim

Dong Seok Kim keeps an eye on the action inside the Bird’s Nest.

the magnificent opening ceremony with mixed emotions. Congratulations, admiration, wonder, exclamations and, from some, a little bit of shock and awe.

China is a big country with a population of 1.3 billion, about 22 times that of

South Korea. And it’s definitely rising in every sense of the word.

Historically, China thought it was the Center of the World. Now the Chinese say that hosting the Olympics means 100 years of dreams coming true. From the Opium War (1856-1860) onwards, China feels it has suffered unprecedented humiliation of submission to western powers. Then came Mao Zedong’s revolution and establishment of the People’s Republic of China. But great China was still poverty stricken.

Now everything is different. For China, the Games’ meaning clearly goes beyond the realm of sports festivities. They mean that “the history of 100 years of disgrace” has finally come to an end. It is more of a declaration of self pride, the joy of hosting the world’s greatest sporting events.

During its “disgrace,” China viewed the economic success of Japan and South Korea with wonder and curiosity. Many Chinese seemed to think they had to follow Japan after its 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games and Korea after its 1988 Seoul Olympic games, which marked serious economic breakthroughs for both coun-



Linda Robertson

The Water Cube glows at night during the 2008 Summer Olympics.

tries. In fact, Beijing is only the third Asian city to host the Olympics.

Thus, Tokyo and Seoul became symbols for the Chinese. They tried to get many ideas from Seoul and Tokyo while preparing for the Olympic Games. Last year, a bunch of reporters from the influential *China Youth Daily* came to Seoul to find stories about the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. It was surprising that they wanted to meet the Games’ theme song singers, who sang “Hand in Hand,” which was almost forgotten back in Korea. During the Beijing Games, the song was given new life. It seemed like every Chinese remembered that 20-year-old song. The Tokyo and Seoul Olympic games, after which both Japan and Korea experienced rapid growth and prosperity, gave China the inspiration that they could do the same once they hosted the Olympic Games themselves. “Hand in Hand” simply symbolized that.

But clouds have two sides: while they look beautiful, they block the sun.

As they say: When the fireplace is burning, you can only fully enjoy the warmth when you have a fire extinguisher close by.

For Korea (and perhaps for other neighboring states, too), the rising China can be good news as well as worrisome news. Having a superpower neighbor could be a blessing – or it could lead to a nightmare if things are going wrong.

The new powerful China could be demanding and eventually even destructive. A strong China could be a balancer and ruler. Those are lessons the neighboring states learned from history.

Before and after the Games, one could feel the sinophobia rising. Which way will

China go? Will it try to be on the road to cooperation with other countries or try to regain the hegemony they once enjoyed? To skeptical eyes, the beautiful and luxurious opening ceremony of Beijing Olympic Games could mean both. ▶

OLYMPIC ILLUSION OR CHINESE REALITY?

—By Vahe Gregorian ‘04

Even considering the spectacles I’d witnessed at six previous Olympic opening ceremonies, the commencement of the Beijing Games was an unparalleled, \$300 million assault on the senses. With precise, jaw-dropping concepts and choreography, thousands of performers ushered the world into China past and present.

Or was it all a contrived concoction?

After all, the pyrotechnics that the worldwide television audience saw were digitally enhanced. The relatively clear sky over the Bird’s Nest was the result of clouds and haze dispersed by rockets. Even the young girl singing solo turned out to be lip-synching, standing in for another deemed not cute enough.

None of that was inconsistent with our own ways of dressing things up, of course, and any host would spruce up for the most monumental visit it may ever have. The backdrop for the Beijing Olympics involved tens of thousands displaced for Olympic construction, censored websites in the Main Press Center and rejected applications (and even arrests for applying) for protest zones. There were reports of intensified rounding up of dissidents and

classes on how to smile properly. One had to wonder what was illusion, what was reality and what the legacy would be.

Logistically speaking, as far as we could tell from our media bubble, the Games could hardly have been smoother. No one I know had any computer connection issues (other than if you tried to Google, say, “Tibet” or “Falun Gong”), key venues were marvels and concentrated together, security measures were streamlined and transportation virtually was flawless.

And while KWF colleague Linda Robertson ’07 and I were among those stranded by a misinformed report of a shuttle from the Bird’s Nest near dawn one day, the Chinese often adjusted transportation by simply adding on buses.

At every turn, there were a million volunteers trying to help. Almost always, there was a warm smile, extended eye contact and attempts to engage conversation – which leads me to my most personal experience trying to process it all.

At our media village restaurant and at cafes in the Main Press Center, I had the pleasure of speaking with several young Chinese with Western names like Jenny, Sarah and Peggy. As the last days approached, I felt a twinge of sadness about saying goodbye and likely never seeing them again.

On my last morning, as I approached the coffee machine, Sarah turned toward me and misted up. Maria burst into tears. I was touched and felt myself tear up.

“It is too hard to say goodbye,” Peggy said, “so I will just say, ‘See you.’”

Then I had a miserable thought, tweaked by all I’d read and heard about il-

lusion: Could it be that they were manufacturing that emotion? I couldn’t tell what made me feel worse – the possibility that they were or the fact I thought it possible.

To me, this was at the very crux of perceptions of the Beijing Games. How naïve are we? How cynical are we? What are we supposed to believe? I believe this: No matter what was hidden, no matter what was temporary, countless Chinese and their visitors forever will view each other differently because of what we shared.

As for Peggy and Co., I know the emotion of the moment could only have been real, even if spurred more by the symbolism of Olympics’ end than any profound connection to me. Just the same, I was thrilled to get an e-mail from her the other day. She wrote: “Hello, am Peggy. How are you? ... I am so missing the day in (Media Village One), thanks to the chance worked there, know lots of friends!” ▶

NO PAIN, NO GOLD MEDAL

—By Matthias Schepp ’05

At first I could hear them whimper, then fear crept into the fifty children’s eyes. After all, any one of them could be next. A cry of pain suddenly filled the shabby gymnasium, reaching as high as the corrugated iron roof. Several days before China was awarded the Olympics in July 2001 I visited Xiantao, a nondescript town located near the Yangtze River in Central China. I wanted to see the future 2008 champions firsthand.

A boy is lying on his back on the floor, naked apart from his white pants adorned with the face of Mickey Mouse. Coach Zhang pushes the six-year-old’s right leg down to the ground. Then, lifting the other leg to his knee with his foot touching the mat, he performs reversed splits – 10 seconds that seem to go on for an eternity. It’s as if some lifeless rubber bands are holding the child’s body together and not sensitive tendons. The boy resembles a long line that’s somehow been

glued to the floor – the only thing rebelling against the state of order is his chest, which he is wrenching in pain.

The little gymnast’s cry slowly dies out and is replaced by a tearful moaning. Zhang, a stocky but well-trained former military coach, orders him to: “Sing, go ahead and sing!” His voice shaky and eyes watered with tears, the words come out of the child’s mouth: “Men made out of iron don’t cry. We want to be heroes. Victors! Take home the gold.”

The man who wrote these lines to help the athletes stay the course, takes a deep breath and lets out a sigh. “Sometimes this breaks my heart,” he says. “But is top performance possible without this pain?” Director Zhang Yongping has amiable eyes. He dyes his gray hair black like his president, Jiang Zemin. And he raises Olympic champions using the credo: “Beat them once, comfort them three times and praise them.” To motivate his students he tells them tales about the more than 1,000 world records beaten by Chinese athletes, about the female volleyball team that won the world championships six times in a row in the 1980s. And he tells them about his own achievements. Since Barcelona in 1992, at least one of his protégés has taken home the gold from each Summer Olympic Games.

“The golden phoenix rises from a miserable chicken’s nest,” star coach Yan says with a laugh. Cracks in the glass windows meander like the Mekong in its delta. The glass is missing from some of the windows, and Yan’s staff has covered the holes with plastic to protect against the torrential summer rain. Instead, the outside heat mercilessly presses into the gym. And the cob webs on four of the gym’s eight ventilators make it clear that they have long been broken. But the Chinese are world champions when it comes to far exceeding expectations with only modest means. In impoverished mountain villages, I have seen children use old pine doors to play table tennis. They used two bricks and a thick bamboo stick for a net. In spite

of that, or perhaps because of that sense of ingenuity, Chinese players are winning almost every gold medal at the table tennis world championships.

It’s no different here. The mats in Xiantao’s gymnasium are so tattered that little pieces of rubber foam are scattered across the floor like crumbs. Cracks have formed in the leather of the vault. And the climbing pole on the wall is made of iron that the director picked up himself at a shipyard on the Yangtze and then welded together twenty years ago.

“Progress is fast here,” he says, expressing his obvious joy. “Fifteen years ago there were no mats. We had to practice on straw.” He’s painted the board on the wall with black characters. Today’s slogan: “Lay a strong foundation, boost talent and grab the gold.” The only luxury here is a glass photo case at the front of the gym. It shows the Olympic champions director Yan has raised. ▶

THE JOKE’S ON EVERYBODY

—By Gady Epstein ’07

The most surprising question I heard from some friends after my brief turn in front of the camera on The Daily Show



Gady Epstein

Gady Epstein and Linda Robertson, both ’07 Fellows, reunite in Beijing.

with Jon Stewart was, essentially, were you in on the joke?

Believe me, by the time Daily Show correspondent Rob Riggle walks into your house and asks you whether China will be cruel masters or benevolent overlords when they take over the world, you're long past being in on the joke. The real question is, did the audience get the punchline?

About three weeks before the Olympics began, a friend of mine in Beijing who had been contacted by The Daily Show asked me if I wanted to participate. I'd be interviewed as a "China expert" for a Riggle sketch on how China will soon be ruling the planet. Riggle would think this is great for all of us ("authoritative!" as he would say on the show), and my job would be to point out why the prospect is not necessarily so awesome.

In the end, there were no surprises, except maybe how little they ended up using in the show. We taped the interview at my house in central Beijing for about 2-1/2 hours, going through repeated takes on multiple questions. When the show aired on August 13th, almost all the jokes were left on the cutting room floor. That included the bit when Riggle brushed aside my concerns about China by pointing to himself and saying, "You see this shirt? 99 cents," and when he looked around nervously and said loudly to the rooftops, "I'm not with him! I'm not with him!" You know, just in case I might be under surveillance.

In deciding to cooperate with a comedy show about China, I was concerned that I wouldn't be giving due respect to important issues, especially to the dissidents, activists and ordinary citizens whose human rights are routinely trampled on here. But just as the show cleverly exposes the absurdities of American politics, Riggle's sketches from Beijing probably raised awareness about the dark side of China in a way that NBC's Olympics coverage would never dare.

When Riggle stood in Tiananmen Square, put on his best ignoramus face and told Stewart he had no idea that any-

thing important ever happened there, and when he dismissed a litany of complaints about China by yawning with indifference, the joke is not on me or on him – it's on everybody.

That's the serious logic behind the show's take on China: The Tiananmen massacre is a distant memory at best for many, and most of the world does yawn at China's ongoing human rights abuses, or just doesn't bother to think about them. They're too busy buying 99-cent shirts to care.

At the same time, some of those same people, whether in the U.S. or elsewhere, have a vague feeling of nervousness about China's rise, and the show's humor pinpoints that anxiety, too. So when China rules the world, will they be cruel masters or benevolent overlords? You'll have to watch The Daily Show to get your answer. ▶

LIVING OUTSIDE THE OLYMPIC BUBBLE
—By Janet Kolodzy '91

Climbing the Great Wall, strolling through the Summer Palace grounds and dining on Peking Duck top everyone's list of things to do in Beijing. But touring a sewage treatment plant? Welcome to the start of my two-month Olympic adventure.

It was no ordinary sewage plant but one that would be providing water (albeit not drinking water) for the main Olympic area. So the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) provided some 300 U.S., British and Australian college student media volunteers (and faculty coordinators like me) with their metaphor for the Olympics of a cleaned-up city with cleaned-up air and water. Several of my Emerson College students objected to this blatant spin and propaganda. It was one of many times when the ways of the Chinese, the Olympic organizers and professional journalists confounded them and challenged me.

Because we lived so far outside the areas most tourists and journalists frequented during the Olympics, our Beijing experience differed from what we read online in some Western media. Our home away from home, the Communication University of China, is outside the Fifth Ring Road, Beijing's version of what would be the Outer Outer Beltway if Washington had one. We truly lived outside the bubble of the Olympics and Beijing expatriates.

Unlike some of the stories we were reading, we didn't have major problems with the Internet or Googling Free Tibet. Our Blackberrys generally worked. It wasn't the Chinese but NBC-Universal

that took one student's YouTube videos down from the Web. The air was bad but it was a lot worse in early July than in early August. Our first clear day was four days into our trip, and that's when we discovered the cooling towers of the nearby power plant on our horizon.

During the Olympics themselves, 13 Emerson students worked in media services at sports venues like volleyball and boxing, often being the only native English-speaking volunteers. They would have to navigate between Chinese supervisors who had one operational plan in mind and non-Chinese journalists who had quite another. That required delicate diplomacy.

Another 20 students served as Flash Quote Reporters at the National Stadium for track and field events. They engaged in the journalistic scrum of scrambling for athletes' quotes. Several liked mixing it up in the mix zone with the pros. But a few were perplexed to learn sexism survives in 2008 as they overheard some sports reporters discuss female athletes' derrieres.

Finally, many of the Chinese people my students encountered didn't talk of Tibet oppression and the Tiananmen crackdown. My students interacted with college students like themselves who talked of China's growing pains and how they expect to take charge of their country's future. A few Chinese, who now have to put together post-Olympic professional lives, said they prefer to make their mark in the business world, not in government. That may be an unplanned Olympic legacy. As for the sewage treatment plant? That will live on. ▶

A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR WORLD PEACE
—By Mark McDonald '97

A story on the Olympics – that was the assignment. But really, haven't we had enough of those for awhile? Instead, here's a modest proposal for world peace: Every president, prime minister, petro-potentate, sheikh, king and crown prince, every

guerrilla leader and tinpot dictator, all the Fourth World despots, every goofball president-for-life, every bug-eyed mullah with an army, every Dear Leader, every Lion of the Savanna, all the fundamentalists foaming at the mouth, the Pope, the secretary general of the United Nations, the head of Mossad and Osama bin Laden – they should all be made to come to the Summer Olympics.

They'd have to fly coach, in the middle seat on a full flight, with no wives, mistresses, aides, entourages or security goons. They would pay for their own tickets and their own crappy hotel room. They'll catch the shuttle buses, which will be late and crowded, and which will drop them three kilometers or so from wherever they're actually going.

They'll get to stand in line with the sweaty body politic. They'll sit in the hot metal bleachers, cheer themselves hoarse

and wave their little flags. They'll do the wave, or try to. They'll buy their own hot dogs and nachos, and the fat guy from the Congo sitting behind them will spill beer on their backs. They'll trade lapel pins, talk some international smack and wear funny hats, like the Dutch.

And mostly, except for Osama, Fidel, Kim Jong Il, George Bush and the Dalai Lama, nobody will know who the hell they are. Vladimir Putin in some Rafael Nadal clam-diggers, with wraparound Oakleys and a beer helmet – who's to know? Angela Merkel could get into some baggy jeans and show off those Teutonic abs. For 17 days, they'd all be sweaty, tipsy and nobody special.

In the process, they'll see that a Georgian judo player can kick the hell out of his Russian opponent and the world somehow manages to stay on its axis. This actually happened, by the way, in Beijing.

“One Country” Reality

The British handed Hong Kong back to the People's Republic of China in 1997, and every year since, the percentage of the territory's residents who self-identify as Chinese has gone up. Depending on the poll you believe, as many as 60 percent of Hong Kongers now consider themselves to be Chinese first. Polls vary, but the trend is clear and unmistakable: China first, then Hong Kong.

Social scientists in Hong Kong say the success of the 2008 Celestial Olympics is likely to increase that tendency, and perhaps dramatically. The Beijing Games were promoted and organized – as by most host cities and countries – around a spirit of nationalism and patriotism.

The Olympic torch relay that preceded the Games drew huge crowds in both Hong Kong and mainland China, in marked contrast to the anger that

many Chinese (and many Hong Kongers) felt when the relay was disrupted in Paris and London. During the Games, China's athletes were wildly received in the stadiums and arenas. The state media did its part, too.

And in recent elections in Hong Kong, the pro-Beijing party brought in China's gold-medal winners to promote its candidates – not unlike the traditional post-Olympic photo opps at the White House.

The slogan that has helped the Communist Party rationalize Hong Kong's unique and occasionally awkward status as a robust center of Chinese capitalism is “one country, two systems.” Both parts of that phrase have made for a convenient fiction. But now, more and more, the “one country” part is becoming a reality.

—By Mark McDonald '97



Janet Kolodzy celebrates Olympic spirit in front of the Bird's nest.

They'll see that a North Korean archer can stand on the shooting line right next to a South Korean – again, this happened, in the women's competition – and suddenly the notion of a unified, nuclear-free peninsula doesn't seem so utterly impossible. They'll see face-painted Cuban and American baseball

fans taunting each other, then trading high cincos, just as they did in Beijing, and suddenly that 90-mile embargo starts to look silly. They'd see Serbs and Croatians gamely bashing away at each other in their national pastime, water polo, and maybe the indignities of the 14th century start to seem appropriately antique and forgettable.

At the beach volleyball, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad could split a BLT and a plate of chicken wings with Ehud Ohlmert. Between the dressage and the show jumping, Bush and Osama could arm-wrestle, loser buys the Bud Lights. Little Kim, since he's not exactly a joiner, might have taken a solo bike ride out to the Great Wall, and he'd have seen that it works much better as a tourist trap than a foreign policy. Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe could score tickets to the synchronized swimming and then sit next to each other in matching "I'm With Stupid" T-shirts.

They'd have a blast. You know they would. And we'd all sleep a little more soundly. That's the Olympics for you. ▀

OLYMPIC DOPING IN BEIJING

—By Richard W. Pound

Organized doping controls during the Olympic Games began in 1968, after the International Olympic Committee formally banned certain substances and



A gate on the ground of Beijing's 700-year-old Confucius Temple & Imperial Academy.

methods and began testing during the Games. Prior to that time, athletes were undoubtedly using products that later became prohibited, but there were no sport rules which prevented them from doing so. The use may have been reckless and dangerous but, from a sports perspective, it did not constitute cheating.

With the advent of testing there began a cat-and-mouse game that continues to this day. Dopers try to stay ahead of the enforcers of the rules and the sport authorities try to narrow the gap between themselves and the cheaters. Testing during sport events such as the Olympic Games does not provide a complete solution, since the benefits of many drugs and methods can last well after evidence of doping has disappeared from the athletes' systems. Robust out-of-competition testing programs are required so that athletes can be tested without advance notice, wherever they may be. Targeted testing is needed to be sure that the athletes at the highest risk (normally the best athletes) are subjected to greater scrutiny than those at lower risk.

In the lead-up to the Beijing Games, great emphasis was placed on the state-of-the-art testing that would occur during the Games, higher standards even than those used at the Athens Games in 2004, when almost 30 cases of doping were identified. National teams were advised to be particularly stringent in their pre-

Games testing. This led to suspension of the entire Greek and Bulgarian weightlifting teams for steroid use and to several Russian track and field athletes for manipulation of samples.

The willingness of the IOC to work with the public authorities and police in Torino during

the 2006 Olympic Winter Games was a further signal to anyone contemplating doping that the risks of getting caught were significantly higher than on previous occasions. The additional prospect of being found in violation of Chinese law and the possibility of prosecution in China undoubtedly had a chilling effect on other potential cheaters.

The outcome was a much diminished number of positive tests during the Beijing Olympic Games and in the period immediately preceding the Games. While it may be tempting to conclude from the statistics that doping is "down" significantly from Athens, it would be naïve to think that a solution to the problem has been found. There may well be drugs for which no viable tests have yet been devised, or drugs which had cleared the systems of the athletes by the time of the Games. Or it may be that domestic pre-Games testing programs were not able to catch all athletes who were doping.

That said, it was nevertheless something of a relief that so few Beijing Olympic medalists were identified as dopers. It gave the Games more of an Olympic "feel" than has been the case for many years – athletes competing on a level playing field relying on their natural talents. ▀

Our Great Geniuses

Ali Adeeb al Naemi '08 is pursuing a Master's degree in journalism at NYU, specializing in "reporting the nation." Prior to his Fellowship, al Naemi was the news room manager for the *New York Times* in Baghdad.

Jamie Butters '06 has left his post as business and automotive editor at *The Detroit Free Press* to join Bloomberg's Detroit bureau as transportation team leader for North America. Butters will oversee Bloomberg's auto, airline, trucking and logistics coverage.

Eve Byron '99 was a part of two *Helena Independent Record* teams that won 2008 Society of Professional Journalists Region 10 awards. Byron was special projects editor and a writer for "Big Sky, Big Border," which won first place for multiple day comprehensive coverage. She was also the primary author for "Asarco – The End of An Era," which took third place for single day comprehensive coverage. In addition, Byron won first place in the 2007 Montana Newspaper Association Awards for outdoors reporting for daily newspapers with a distribution of 7,500 and up.

Deborah Caldwell '94 joined PEOPLE.com as product director. Previously, Caldwell was a founding team member, vice president of content and managing editor at Belief.net, which was sold to Fox Entertainment Group last December.

Chris Carey '06 and business partner Mark Cuban have launched Bailoutsleuth.com, a companion site to their existing Sharesleuth.com. The new site monitors the government's purchase and eventual sale of bad mortgages and other distressed assets under the \$700 million bailout plan.

Charles Clover '06 became Moscow bureau chief for the *Financial Times* of London in July. Clover has been with the paper since 1997, most recently as the analysis page editor.



Steve Edwards

Scott Elliott '05 has been named to the *Dayton Daily News*' editorial board and will be an editorial writer and columnist.

Gady Epstein '07 appeared on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" during its coverage of the Beijing Olympics. Epstein was interviewed as an expert on China's authoritarianism by correspondent Rob Riggie.

Steve Fennessy '07 was named deputy editor at *Atlanta Magazine*. Prior to the appointment, Fennessy was the magazine's senior editor.

David Green '91 has launched his own PR/Web content company, David Green Communications. This fall, he is also the ethicist-in-residence at the University of Tennessee.



Miles Harvey

to his Fellowship.

Alfred Hermida '05 was ranked as number 13 on NowPublic's MostPublic Index, which identifies the Web's 20 most visible individuals in Vancouver. Hermida is an assistant professor in the Graduate School

Steve Edwards '08 is now acting program director of WBEZ/Chicago Public Radio. Before his Fellowship, Edwards hosted WBEZ's morning show, "Eight Forty-Eight."

of Journalism at the University of British Columbia, an award-winning online news pioneer and an authority on digital journalism.

Jack Kresnak '90 left the *Detroit Free Press* in December 2007 after 39 years at the paper. In February, he became president/CEO of Voices for Michigan's Children.

Geoff Larcom '09, of the *Ann Arbor News*, took first place for column writing in the Michigan Press Association's 2008 Better Newspaper Contest. Larcom also won second place for spot news for his story about the firing of Eastern Michigan University's president.

Kate Linebaugh '08 has joined the *Wall Street Journal's* Detroit bureau. She previously reported for the paper from Hong Kong.

Aimie Lockwood '05S has been accepted to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law.

Joseph Mallia '00 was one of four lead reporters on a *Newsday* project recognized as a 2008 Pulitzer Prize finalist in the public service category. The project, which focused on the gap between New York's trains and its boarding platforms, also won a 2007 Investigative Reporters and Editors Certificate and is a finalist for the 2008 Deadline Club's Daniel Pearl Award for Investigative Reporting.

Mark McDonald '97 won the *New York Times* Publisher's Award for his series of stories on Myanmar. McDonald is currently editor of the *International Herald Tribune* in Hong Kong.

Jon Morgan '01 joined the Project for Excellence in Journalism at the Pew Research Center as senior editor. Morgan spent 21 years at the *Baltimore Sun*, most recently as the assistant managing editor for metro enterprise.

Ron Parsons '08 left his post as assistant managing editor/director of production at Yahoo! News to join the *Los Angeles Times* as director of product development.

Elizabeth Pond '77 wrote an article that appeared in the autumn issue of *The Washington Quarterly*. "The EU's Test in Kosovo" explores whether the rule of law and robust institutions can be built in Kosovo.

Diane Rado '00 has launched *School Week*, a weekly newspaper focused exclusively on local school coverage in Illinois.



Angela Shah '07 left the *Dallas Morning News* to join *The National*, an English-language daily based in Abu Dhabi. As assignments editor, Shah will be writing narratives, features and trend stories about business issues in the Persian Gulf.

Eric Sorenson '97 and the staff of Seattle-based environmental think tank Sightline have published "Seven Wonders for a Cool Planet: Everyday Things to Help Solve Global Warming." Sorenson is the senior writer for Seattle University.

Seth Sutel '03 has been named a supervisory editor on the spot news desk of the Associated Press business news department. Sutel, who spent nine years as national media writer for the organization, is helping to oversee the large daily news report of breaking business news on the AP wire.

Steve Titherington '06 will become executive editor of the BBC Global Division in January. Currently, Titherington is deputy editor of World Service news and current affairs.

Taos Turner '07 returned to Dow Jones in Buenos Aires in July, where he covers politics and economics, with a focus on energy. He has also launched a new website, *The Argentine Post* (argentinepost.com), which is on its way to becoming the number one English language site about Argentina.

Maurice Walsh '01 published "The News from Ireland: Foreign Correspondents and The Irish Revolution." The book examines the role of journalism during the development of the Anglo-Irish war.

Send your doings and a print-resolution photo to Birgit Rieck at briec@umich.edu

Publisher: Charles R. Eisendrath '75
Editor: Julia Smillie '06S
Production and Design:
Kathleen Horn, Blue Skies Studio

Views expressed in the *Journal* are not necessarily those of the Fellowship Program or the University of Michigan.

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