Donald Tsang, BAAFF Film Festival, Chinatown’s New Reading Room and Immigration Tips.

When are you considered overweight? Learn how to calculate your BMI and the Great American Smokeout.

New Affordable Housing in Quincy Center.

A Culture of Employee Appreciation - the Adcotron EMS story

Featuring Adcotron EMS, Inc.

It is not difficult to understand the cheerful feeling one gets when entering through the glass doors of Adcotron EMS, Inc. Not only is the environment spotless - the pearly white walls visible all around the 35,000 square foot lot the company occupies in South Boston's Marine Industrial Park - but in a supremely organized manner, highly-automated equipment place components on boards with precision and efficiency. However, neither the sophisticated machinery nor the complex products are the true reason of Adcotron's success, as the company's Chief Executive Officer and President Agnes Young would suggest. Patrolling, pushing buttons, checking components, turning dials, peering through microscopes all throughout the facility, clad in blue, anti-static overcoats are the true success: the employees.

"My employees are more important than anything," said Young, who herself wore a blue, anti-static overcoat during a tour of the facility. Young's connection with her employees is unmistakable – every employee turning to greet her as she made her way around explaining the intricacies of each machine and station.

Adcotron, a premier Electronics Contract Manufacturing service (EMS) provider that specializes in manufacturing low to medium volume complex electronic assemblies and systems integration for a broad range of industries including medical, military, industrial, telecommunication and alternative energy, sits in a Boston Redevelopment Authority-owned building along Boston's beautiful waterfront district and boasts a story few, if any, businesses around can claim.

Born out of the closure of a previous company, Adcotron got its start in 2005. When Advanced Electronics, a company that had been around since 1978 decided to close its doors in October of 2005, Young, who led the management team in acquiring all of the assets from Advanced Electronics, Inc., formed Adcotron EMS, Inc.

On Friday, December 23, 2011, the Asian American Civic Association held a graduation ceremony for more than 70 Next STEP students.

The Next Steps Transitional English Program (Next STEP) provides free ESL classes for immigrants in the Greater Boston area.

"The students really appreciated being honored for their hard work," said Melanie Marcus, Next Step & ESOL Instructor.

"It was fun teaching the students," said Alan Philips, Next STEP instructor, who also left his students a work of advice.

"The more they speak English outside of the classroom, the better they will learn inside the classroom."

www.sampan.org

Chinese New Year Issue is Coming Out on January 20th, 2012!

Happy New Year!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (ABCD) would like to wish our friends at the Asian American Civic Association (AACA) and the Asian American Community a

HAPPY AUGUST MOON FESTIVAL!

ABCD CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY
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Wishes Sampan Readers A Happy August Moon!

中秋快樂
New housing project breaks ground in Chinatown

By Teresa Cheong

Developers, state officials and Chinatown leaders attended the ground break ceremony for the real estate project at 120 Kingston Street on September 21.

The 26-story high-end residential building will have 240 rental units with a 4,000 square foot ground floor retail space. Renters on the upper floors will see the Boston Common out their windows in one direction and the waterfront in another. The project is co-developed by the Forest City Enterprises and Hudson Group of North America.

Frank Wuest, president of Forest City Enterprises’ Boston office, said at the ceremony that the 120 Kingston is the first residential building to be constructed along the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy. “The seamlessly integrated public and private land, along with the outdoor terrace, will activate the ground level of the building and enhance the pedestrian experience at this very important corner,” Wuest said.

Nancy Brennan, executive director of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, also welcomed the new neighbor to “one of the Boston’s most celebrated and historical neighborhoods.”

Bill Moy from Chinatown Neighborhood Council specifically thanked Ori Ron, principal of Hudson Group North America, for responding to the housing need in Chinatown.

“It has been a long time coming,” Moy said. “I remember when Ori first came into the neighborhood, he asked me, ‘What does Chinatown need?’ And I told him we needed affordable housing. I think it would be best if we had affordable housing for the immigrants that really need it. And Ori went to work.”

Among the guests attended are State Representative Aaron Michlewitz, City Councilor Bill Linehan, John Fish, chairman and chief executive officer of Suffolk Construction, Ron Ratner, president and chief executive officer of Forest City Residential Group and Ori Ron, principal of Hudson Group North America.

Chinatown leaders such as Frank Chin (Uncle Frank), Paul Chan from Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, Gilbert Ho and Tony Yee from Chinatown Main street and Henry Yee from Chinatown Resident Association were also presence at the event.

The residential tower is expected to be finished in 2014. The builder is Suffolk Construction.

The 26-story residential building will also provide affordable housing units.
Menino vetoes second redistricting map

By Faye Zheng

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino rejected the second redistricting map submitted by the Boston City Council on September 24, citing once again concerns of an “over-concentration of protected groups” in districts.

The City Council passed a second redistricting map on September 19 in a 7-6 vote after Menino rejected the previous redistricting map passed by the Council in a 7-6 vote on Aug. 23. The second map was created by District 7 City Councilor Tito Jackson and District 6 City Councilor Matt O’Malley created. The other five votes in favor were: Felix Arroyo, Frank Baker, John Connolly, Ayanna Pressley, and Mike Ross.

The six votes against were: Stephen Murphy, Charles Yancey, Bill Linehan, Sal LaMattina, Rob Consalvo, and Mark Ciommo.

Menino’s concern about the first map was that it concentrated “our many citizens of color into too few districts, and in doing so may limit their equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.”

“The second map you passed shares the very same problem there and almost the very same figures.” Menino said in his letter to the city council. “I am returning, with disapproval, your ordinance. In a city where diversity is found broadly, I had asked that you endeavor to avoid over-concentration of minority voters, and I make that same request again.”

Menino said under both maps passed, District 4’s voting age population is Black and almost 95 percent is Non-White. Orange’s concern about the second map was that it concentrated “our many citizens of color into too few districts, and in doing so may limit their equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.”

“The second map you passed shares the very same problem there and almost the very same figures.” Menino said in his letter to the city council. “I am returning, with disapproval, your ordinance. In a city where diversity is found broadly, I had asked that you endeavor to avoid over-concentration of minority voters, and I make that same request again.”

Menino said under both maps passed, District 4 is especially over-concentrated.

“Under both maps passed, almost 70 percent of voters are Black and almost 95 percent is Non-White,” Menino said in his veto letter. Boston has until November to approve a redistricting map. The Census and Redistricting Committee has called for a hearing to take place Friday at 11 a.m. at City Hall.
The Boston Public Health Commission today announced another confirmed human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) this year. The case, a Boston resident in his 70’s, was hospitalized, but has been released. It is unclear at this time where he was contracted.

Earlier this month, a woman in her 50’s and a man in his 40’s were both hospitalized with WNV and released.

Last month, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health elevated the WNV threat level for Boston and several surrounding communities after confirming other human cases of WNV in the region. In Boston, many neighborhoods have had mosquito pools test positive for the virus.

The Boston Public health officials continue to remind residents to take simple precautions to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitoes.

“It’s clear that mosquitoes aren’t gone yet,” said Dr. Anita Barry, director of the Infectious Disease Bureau at the Boston Public Health Commission. “We can’t stop being vigilant until the first hard frost, so I encourage Boston residents to take some easy steps to avoid getting bitten.”

These steps include using insect repellent when outdoors, especially from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are more likely to be biting and, when possible, wearing clothing that includes long sleeves and pants. People can prevent mosquitoes from entering their homes by making sure that window and door screens are in good repair.

To help prevent mosquitoes from breeding, BPHC advises limiting places around the home where standing water can collect. People should turn over unused flower pots, buckets, wheelbarrows, and garbage cans; remove leaves and other debris that can clog gutters and trap water; dispose of or cover old tires; and cover swimming pools and kiddie pools when not in use.

In addition, city officials, in conjunction with the Governor’s community college initiative to put more people in Massachusetts back to work and to strengthen the connections between community colleges, employers and the workforce.

Most people infected with WNV are asymptomatic or have mild illness. However, in rare cases, illness can be more serious. WNV is most commonly transmitted to humans by the bite of a mosquito infected with the virus, but the risk of becoming ill can be reduced by taking these simple precautions.

“By partnering with our community colleges and strengthening their ties to businesses and career training, we will help close the skills gap facing many industries,” said Lieutenant Governor Deval Patrick. “Ensuring more students and those seeking work are trained in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is a major component of our efforts to increase skill training and support job creation and professional growth.”

The community college grants awarded today through the Performance Incentive Fund (PIF) deliver on Governor Patrick’s pledge to invest further in our community college system, and will give campuses the additional capacity they need to promote higher completion rates of degrees and certificates, be more responsive to the needs of local economies as well as of the state’s fastest growing sectors and adopt a system-wide standard core of course offerings.

The FY13 budget set aside $5 million for community colleges to be used for 1) the development of efficiency measures that may include consolidation of information technology platforms and services; 2) creating innovative methods for delivering quality higher education that increase capacity, reduce costs and promote student completion; 3) engaging in statewide and regional collaborations with other public higher education institutions that reduce costs, increase efficiency and promote quality in the areas of academic programming and campus management; and 4) improving student learning outcomes. These assessments set forth by the Board of Higher Education under the Vision Project.

Three human cases of West Nile Virus confirmed in Boston residents

Governor Patrick announces $4 Million for community colleges
Cathay Bank awards grant to support workforce development

On September 18, Cathay Bank awarded a $10,000 grant to the Asian American Civic Association’s Workforce Development Center to establish scholarship funds for the Careers in Banking and Finance Program students.

“It is our pleasure to support the program. Many of its graduates are now working in our bank and Grant Patterson, Cathay Bank’s vice president and manager in commercial lending in the Massachusetts region. “Celebrating our 50th anniversary, Cathay Bank always believes in community reinvestment and we show it through our actions.” The 13-week job training program, which started in 2011, is designed for adult students interested in the retail banking and financial services industry. Cathay Bank and other local banks work closely with the program staff to develop curriculum, organize professional training workshops and provide work opportunities for graduates.

Asian American Young Leaders Symposium

Mayor Gary Christenson, with evident enthusiasm, “Malden is the second most diverse city in the state of Massachusetts and we want to make sure that all residents get the training and resources they need to be able to support their families and give back to the community. This is why we welcome the English Works Campaign and the resources it brings to Malden businesses and their immigrant workforce.”

Launched in 2008, the English Works Campaign has successfully brought together diverse sectors in numerous cities, a success record the Mayor plans to extend.

“We have a great working relationship with the Malden Chamber of Commerce and other business groups. We look forward to connecting these groups with the assistance the English Works Campaign can provide to them,” Mayor Christenson said. “There is no downside on investing on English language training for our newcomer residents. It will allow them to succeed, which in turn will help our entire city to excel.”

In addition to the Mayor’s Circle, the English Works Campaign includes a leadership circle composed of 10 high-profile members, a steering committee, and a campaign committee of 75 organizations that work together to increase the availability of English language classes that will benefit immigrant workers, the businesses that employ them, and the Commonwealth.

The greatest need is human capital,” says State Treasurer Steve Grossman in his opening remarks. “I am useful for the Asian American Commission in pioneering this initiative with youth, who will build the new ideas and be the driving forces of our future.”

Hosted by the Asian American Commission (AAC), the Young Leaders Symposium aims to identify and support the development of future Asian American leaders by introducing inspiring speakers and resources. Statistics show the imbalance of Asian American representation in office. In the Commonwealth, the 350,000 Asian Americans make up 5.3% of the population, but only 0.02% of the legislature.

The symposium featured two elected officials: City Councilor Vesna Nuon of Lowell and Mayor Lisa Wong of Fitchburg. These two speakers encouraged political activities and recognized some non-traditional path to elected office, and emphasized the importance of family support and financial planning in their campaign strategies.

“People may not have the long resume, but they have the innovation, energy, and new ideas and are dictating policies to impact change,” says Mayor Wong.

In addition, community organization leaders were on-hand to discuss the importance of social change and self-empowerment.

“Social change is about the importance of youth, initiative, and drive,” says Sarah Suong, Coordinator at MAP for Health.

Another highlight of the event was the networking opportunities offered. Staffs from over 20 departments, including the Department of Labor and the Department of Transportation, were present to network with participants who were eager to learn more about careers and internships within the government.

The symposium was funded by the Asian American Commission, the State of Massachusetts, and numerous local businesses.

Founded in 2006, AAC is a non-profit organization with a mission to provide leadership, economic, and political integration.

In closing, AAC Executive Director Jason Chou challenged participants to strive for the “Rising Star Award”, which will be given to the individual with most improved activism in public service and will be awarded at the 2nd Young Leaders Symposium, slated to be held in mid-Spring 2013.
How to find the best possible House

MYTH: I will find the perfect house if I wait long enough and keep looking.

FACT: Buying a house requires compromise, a big dose of reality, and an awareness of market conditions. There is no such thing as a “perfect” house. Each will have pros and cons. It may be on a busy street, in need of some repairs, or simply outdated. The goal is to find the best possible house that meets your needs.

If you find a house that has 9 out of the 10 things you want, then decide if the 10th thing is really a deal breaker. First-time buyers often get hung up on one less than perfect detail. They are so focused on the enormity of the decision. They have never made such a substantial purchase and want to make sure they do it right.

The house doesn’t speak to me. GET REAL! Houses don’t speak or have emotions. As a first-time homebuyer, you may want to wait for a house to “speak” to you or evoke a particular emotion before making an offer. Houses are staged for potential buyers to feel an emotional connection. Look past the paint and decor, and with a critical eye, determine if the house is right for you. Here are some strategies to finding the best possible house for you. Buy for the long term - search for a house that you can see yourself living in for at least 5-7 years. Buying and moving takes a lot of time and effort, and can be costly. Leave room to grow - look for a house that can adapt to your needs as your life changes. For example, if you have a new baby. If you can’t afford a house that is large enough to meet your anticipated future needs now, find one with rooms that can serve multiple purposes, so the house remains highly functional through the years. An open floor plan is very adaptable. A kitchen overlooking a family room is helpful with young children, and great for entertaining friends.

Check the surroundings - when you buy a house, you also buy into a neighborhood. Find a house in a community that you will enjoy. Go for your type - think about the style of house that fits you best. They are not one size fits all. A single-family house that sits on its own lot and maintained by the homeowner may be just right for someone seeking privacy, but not for someone who doesn’t want to deal with the lawn. Alternatively, a condo may be ideal for someone who has an on-the-go lifestyle, but not for someone who doesn’t want to share a wall with his neighbors.

Not sure what type fits you? Get ideas by signing up for an MLS feed. You may find that the right house for you is not close to the city. However, it is near public transportation, is in your price range, and offers easy access to supermarkets, shops, and other amenities. Or the house is close to the city. However, it is near the top of your price range and has less space. There is no formula for finding the right house. Keep an open mind, look at all options that meet your criteria, and you will find the best home for you.

CALL TO READERS: In the process of buying or selling and have questions? Call or email and your topic could be the next discussion. Mildred Wong is a Licensed Real Estate Agent at City Central Realty, LLC. She can be reached at 617-236-2020 or mildred@citycentralre.com. Follow her on Twitter at @GetRealMildred.

Ask the CFP® Professional

How to improve your Credit Score

In your daily life, your credit score may not seem that important to you. However for someone who is trying to buy a home, a car or get a business loan, your credit score is vitally important and can be the difference between getting the loan or not. Even if you’re approved for the loan, your credit score has an impact on how much you can get and what rate of interest you will pay. So here are some tips to improve your credit score.

Pay your bills on time. Not paying your bills on time is the worst thing you can do when you want to improve your credit. Even if your payment is a few days late, this will count negatively against you. So pay your bills on time! If you’re having trouble remembering to regularly pay on time, consider setting up an automatic payment every month with your credit card company.

Get copies of your credit report and make sure it is correct. The 3 main reporting agencies are Equifax, TransUnion and Experian. You can get one credit report each year for free. I recommend to clients to split up the reports throughout the year (1 every 4 months). This way you can stay within the free report and you can regularly check your credit history throughout the year. So get those reports and go through it to make sure the information is correct. This includes reviewing your balances, credit limits, payment history etc.

Pay down your credit card balances. Of course paying off your credit card balances will improve your score. This is a lot easier said than done but setting up a strict budget and over time it can be done sooner than you think!

Don’t close unused credit cards. Closing a credit card that you don’t use or recently paid off can actually hurt your credit score. Part of your credit score is made up of the ratio of debt used to debt available. The lower this ratio is the better and ideally you want to aim for lower than 25%. So by closing a card, this reduces the debt available number hence increases your ratio.

Time and Patience. If you start just building your credit or just got back on track with responsibly paying your bills on time, your credit score will improve, but it will take time. How long you’ve had credit is a factor in your score, so continue using your credit responsibly, pay on time and over time your credit score will improve.

Don’t have too many inquiries on your account. Too many credit inquiries will have a negative effect on your score. So the next time you’re at a store and they offer you a discount on your purchases, politely say no thank you! Only open accounts that you need and the credit in a future article please email me at mtow@newbostonfinancial.com.

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, Michael Tow is President of New Boston Financial. He is a registered representative of, and offers securities and advisory services through Commonwealth Financial Network, a member firm of FINRA/ SIPC and a Registered Investment Adviser. He is located at 58 Harvard Street in Brookline and can be reached at 617-734-4400 or www.newbostonfinancial.com.

How to improve your Credit Score

MYTH: I have to wait until my credit score is perfect to buy a house.

FACT: There is no such thing as a “perfect” score. Credit scores range from 300-850 and a 740 credit score is considered good. The goal is to make sure your credit score is as high as possible before making an offer or applying for a loan.

How do I improve my credit score? Here are some strategies to improve your credit score.

Pay your bills on time - payment late fees can add up and negatively impact your credit score.

Check your credit report for accuracy - you can get 1 free report each year for free. If you find an error on your report, correct it.

Pay down your credit card balances - if you have a high credit utilization ratio, your credit score will decrease. The ideal ratio is 30% or less. Pay down your balances or if your payment is a few days late, this will count negatively against you.

Don’t close unused credit cards - closing a credit card that you don’t use can actually hurt your credit score if the credit limit is high.

Time and Patience - your credit score takes time to improve. It takes patience, dedication and time to significantly improve your score. So start now and when the time comes to get that loan, you should have no problem!

For an application or questions, contact

HEICH

At Millennium: The Takoda Oncology Company located in Cambridge, MA, “We Aspire to Care Cancer.” To learn more about our company focused on oncology, Millennium conducts more than 200 clinical trials nationwide and camarade of a start-up with the resources of Japan’s largest pharmaceutical company. The result is an entrepreneurial culture where the priorities are quality science and making a difference in patients’ lives and the communities we serve.

Our achievements change lives. Our people inspire cares.

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Boston: No immediate plan to ban super-sized sodas

By Faye Zheng

Boston Publish Health Committee is watching closely on New York City, which has approved regulations on September 13 and become the first city in U.S. restricting portion sizes at restaurants to fight obesity and diabetes.

NYC approved restricting portion sizes regulations on September 13. Any establishment with a food-service license, including delis, fast-food places, movie and Broadway theaters, and the concession stands at Yankee Stadium and the pizzerias of Little Italy, will be barred from serving sugary beverages in cups or bottles larger than 16 ounces.

Public health experts, the restaurant and soft-drink industry around the nation are watching closely—BPHC is not an exception.

Barbara Ferrer, Executive Director of BPHC, made comments about NYC’s regulations on soda sizes.

“I am impressed with New York City’s comprehensive approach to reducing consumption of sugary beverages and share their concerns with the easy access to super-sized beverages that contain unhealthy quantities of sugar and exorbitant empty calories,” said Barbara. “We would like to be kept informed of the successes and challenges with the implementation of their regulation as we look at what strategies to pursue in Boston.”

Boston has been ranked the 3rd healthiest city in the country for the last two years by the American College of Sports Medicine’s American Fitness Index. Still 56 percent of adults in the city are overweight or obese.

At this point, BPHC is addressing the issue through public education, and it doesn’t have any immediate plans to propose a ban on super-sized sodas. Meanwhile, it will keep a close eye on its counterparts in NYC to see how their strategy is working, according to Nick Martin, Director of Communications, BPHC.

BPHC sees the importance of education on healthy nutrition and active living.

“The more we can educate the public about healthy nutrition and active living along with increasing access to fitness resources,” said Nick, “the healthier we will be as a city.”

Boston Moves for Health campaign earlier this year has been launched by BPHC to increase access to free and low cost fitness resources for people that live, work and play in the city, and the Mayor Thomas Menino has challenge the city to come together to lose 1 million pounds and move 10 million miles together through exercise.

Research shows weight status relates to diabetes mortality

Adults who were normal weight at the time of incident diabetes had higher mortality than adults who were overweight or obese, according to a research paper published on The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in August.

Type 2 diabetes in normal-weight adults (body mass index [BMI] <25) is a representation of the metabolically obese normal-weight phenotype with unknown mortality consequences.

To test the association of weight status with mortality in adults with new-onset diabetes in order to minimize the influence of diabetes duration and voluntary weight loss on mortality, researchers pooled analysis of 5 longitudinal cohort studies: Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities study, 1990-2006; Cardiovascular Health Study, 1992-2008; Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults, 1987-2011; Framingham Offspring Study, 1979-2007; and Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis, 2002-2011. A total of 2625 participants with incident diabetes contributed 27 125 person-years of follow-up. Included were men and women (age >40 years) who developed incident diabetes based on fasting glucose 126 mg/dL or greater or newly initiated diabetes medication and who had concurrent measurements of BMI. Participants were classified as normal weight if their BMI was 18.5 to 24.99 or overweight/obese if BMI was 25 or greater.

Researchers applied total, cardiovascular, and noncardiovascular mortality as main outcome measures. The proportion of adults who were normal weight at the time of incident diabetes ranged from 9% to 21% (overall 12%). During follow-up, 449 participants died: 178 from cardiovascular causes and 253 from noncardiovascular causes (18 were not classified). The rates of total, cardiovascular, and noncardiovascular mortality were higher in normal-weight participants (284.8, 99.8, and 198.1 per 10 000 person-years, respectively) than in overweight/obese participants (152.1, 67.8, and 87.9 per 10000 person-years, respectively). After adjustment for demographic characteristics and blood pressure, lipid levels, waist circumference, and smoking status, hazard ratios comparing normal-weight participants with overweight/obese participants for total, cardiovascular, and noncardiovascular mortality were 2.08 (95% CI, 1.52-2.85), 1.52 (95% CI, 0.89-2.58), and 2.32 (95% CI, 1.55-3.48), respectively.

SAMPAN HEALTH SURVEY

Answer the survey to win PRIZES!

Help us improve on our coverage of health issues that are pertinent to the Asian American community in New England, and get a chance to win a $20 STARBUCKS gift card. Fill out the survey below and send them back to Sampan, 87 Tyler Street, Boston, MA 02111 for a complimentary gift!

Name:_____________________________  Address:_________________________________________________________

Contact np.:__________________________   Email:________________________________

1. How often do you read Sampan’s Health Page?
   [ ] Every issue  [ ] Occasionally  [ ] When I find the topic(s) interesting  [ ] Never

2. Do you find our health news useful?
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

3. What health topic(s) do you want Sampan to cover more? (You may check more than one box.)
   [ ] Cancer  [ ] Fitness and exercise  [ ] Mental illnesses  [ ] Pregnancy and pediatric care
   [ ] Social/Family issues  [ ] Seniors’ health  [ ] Other:__________________

4. What interactive element(s) do you think we should include on the health page? (You may check more than one box.)
   [ ] Q&A with Doctors  [ ] Health tips for daily life  [ ] Exercising tips  [ ] Recipes  [ ] Other:
   [ ] Cover more news on scientific researches  [ ] Add more interactive elements  [ ] Writing style  [ ] Other:__________________

Other comments:
Moon Festival is a traditional festival for China and many other countries in South Asia. It is the second most major festival apart from the Chinese New Year. Moon Festival is the Aug 15th by lunar calendar, on this day the moon is extra round and bright. Traditionally family members get together on this day to admire the full moon and sacrifice moon cakes to it. However, moon cakes gradually became a traditional festive snack that everyone in the family takes a share.

Su Shi, the famous poet of Northern Song dynasty, was once enjoying moon cake and wrote a poem about moon cake, “eating this little cake just like taking a bite of the bright full moon, so savory and sweet”. He even mentioned pork fat and sugar as the basic ingredients of moon cakes, just like today! over 2000 years after his time. Generally moon cakes can be categorized based on their origin:

Guangdong Moon Cake pursues “thin skin and precious stuffing”. Precious ingredients like dry scallop, abalone and ginseng are used to make the stuffing. “White Lotus Seed Paste with Double Egg Yolks” is the most popular and classic item—the sweetness of white lotus seed paste complement the richness of egg yolks to create a real enjoyment for your taste buds.

Northern Moon Cake is also called Beijing/Tianjin Moon Cake. The skin is usually a mixture of fruit and meat. Lard, ham and dry fruit are common ingredients.

As a symbol of the festival, moon cake has fairly low nutritional value for the modern diet pattern. The most popular style, Guangdong Moon Cake caters the taste of most people, but it is astonishing high in fat, sugar and salt. Guangdong moon cake uses lard, which is satu rate fat and will elevate your cholesterol levels. It is also high in salt that would be problematic for people with high blood pressure and kidney conditions. The caloric content is even scarier, since a big “White Lotus Seed Paste with Double Egg Yolks” moon cake carries over than half of the daily calorie need for an average size adult. People with chronic diseases need to pay attention to the portion size, 1/8 to 1/6 of a moon cake will count as a portion.

Food safety is another issue about moon cake. In 2005, China Central Television (CCTV) exposed a food safety scandal of well-known moon cake producer, Nanjing Guan Sheng Yuan. This producer recycles the stale moon cake stuffing from previous years to make new batches of moon cake. The producer even said the entire moon cake industry was doing the same thing, because moon cakes are so over produced each year that the stuffing has to be recycled to maintain the profit margin. Not surprisingly, Nanjing Guan Sheng Yuan closed down because of its bankruptcy shortly after. This event reminds consumers that, those elegantly packed moon cakes that you can keep a long time must contain a large amount of preservatives. It is best to buy simply packed and fresh moon cakes directly from bakery, because they are more economic and tasty, and surely will go bad before they can even be considered to be recycled.

In China, all the supermarkets and bakeries start to promote and sell moon cakes 2-3 months before Moon Festival. All sorts of traditional or renovated styles come to market, and the Guangdong style is usually the most popular in recent years. I came to Boston for school several years ago, and found the Moon Festival very quiet here in US. The only place I used to get moon cake was the Chinese Student Association Moon Festival gathering, and the moon cakes were divided into numerous little pieces that toothpicks are needed to pick them up. It felt so much like the sample tasting in supermarkets. It also reminds me of my childhood in my hometown in north China, every year I look forward to sharing moon cakes with the entire family. A trip to the bakery with mom was the most fun part of the festival. My favorite moon cake at that time was “five kernels”, since the various dry fruits, seeds and large chunks of crystalline always left me a mouthful of wonderful-ness. I also love the hard crust for its bland sweetness—because of its hard texture, I had to take little bits, chew thoroughly, and take my time to swallow. That sweet taste felt like a reward after all my hard work, a simple but dignified enjoyment.

Lately consumers pay more attention to health, and the demand for high nutritional value Moon Cakes increases. I was very glad to read that many bakeries in Taiwan this year start to produce “Healthy Moon Cakes”, which are low in sugar and oil and high in fiber. Healthier ingredients such as dry fruits, sweet potato, pumpkin and mushroom are used. That sounds very like a renaissance of old style of Northern Moon Cakes. Hope in the near future, Northern Moon Cake will come back to market and become people’s favor again, with the mild taste and high nutrition value. Maybe at that time I can truly feel like home again in this piece of land on Moon Festival.
Many of you have probably heard of moon cakes or have had the chance to try some at some point in your lives. For those of you who haven’t, you should definitely try some. Whether you have savored this delicious food or not, you probably do not know the story behind this festival food. There are quite a few variations to the story, but every single one of them will be bound to make your moon cake eating experience even more meaningful.

One variation of the story states that at one point in time, there were ten suns in the sky and an able archer was ordered by the Emperor to shoot down nine of them. When he completed this impressive feat, he was rewarded a pill that would give him the ability to shoot down nine of them. When he completed this impressive feat, he was rewarded a pill that would give him immortality. However, the archer never had the chance to consume the pill because his wife had found it and ate it herself. As a result, she was banished to the moon as punishment for her reckless actions. Legend has it that the radiance of her beauty is most visible on the 15th of August and thus people eat moon cakes while observing and enjoying the presence of her beauty in the night sky.

Another variation of the story is that it is possibly more realistic and related to history has to do with the rebellions against the Mongol rulers in China. The rebels, knowing that their Mongol overlords did not eat moon cakes, used moon cakes as a means of communication to organize a large scale rebellion. Apparently the rebellion against the Mongols occurred on the middle of August or August 15. Knowing the historical background behind a food such as moon cakes helps us gain greater appreciation for its value as a cultural symbol. Personally, in my family, the August Moon Festival is a highly valued holiday, an equivalent to American Thanksgiving. During the August Moon Festival, my family would gather together, no matter how busy they are, to enjoy the festivities and traditions that come with the holiday. There would be a lot of traditional food cooked, with the aroma filling the air around the house. Part of the tradition is also having the whole family gathered around the table, observing and enjoying the radiance of the full moon together. Particularly this year, even though I am a freshman in college, my family has already made it mandatory that I come home on the lunar date of the August Moon Festival, which is September 30th. I honestly think that it is very important that young people spend more time with their family and the August Moon Festival offers the perfect opportunity for them to do so.

Remembering back to my childhood in Hong Kong, I recall that the Mid-Autumn Festival was one of the largest celebrations of the city.

On that night, the park across from my apartment building was a bedlam of families taking evening strolls.

As hundreds of families poured into the park, they were greeted with policemen controlling the crowd. The reason for the crowd? The Mid-Autumn Moon Festival is a time of the year when the park is adorned with beautiful lanterns lit by LEDs. As the families strolled along, they saw animal lanterns glowing brilliantly, each fighting for the attention of admiring eyes. Ahead of parents, the children ran carrying lanterns of all sorts. Depending on the year, different cartoon characters hung from the many sticks that the children carried, all shining from LEDs, creating a lantern that sometimes stayed silent and sometimes erupted with the noises of the character. Although the most popular, the cartoon characters were not the only kinds of lanterns. Standing a little behind the children, some adults and teenagers carried traditional lanterns lit with small candles.

Eventually, the crowd found its way to the center of the park, where a stage was set up for all types of performances. Traditionally, the lion dancing began first. The cacophony of the drum, cymbals, and gongs created a lively atmosphere as the performers stunned the crowd with a series of acrobatic movements. Each lion contained two partners, synchronizing to perform thrilling high jumps and stacking one lion partner on top of the other. Other performances included the graceful steps of traditional Chinese dancers and the pounding of the Chinese drum solos. The noise of the drums was so powerful that my small, fragile body rocked to my center from the continuous vibrations. After the performances, I wearily walked with my family back to my apartment for a good night’s rest.

Throughout Chinese culture, the moon is a symbol of family union. Just as the moon gathers itself, the family gathers itself. Just as the moon eventually fades away, the children will grow up and drift from their parents. Just as the moon cycles through its phases, the children will cycle and become parents themselves.
August Moon Special

Thoughts on August Moon Festival
By Kevin Huang

Although I don’t celebrate the holiday myself, I feel that the August Moon Festival is an important holiday.

The event is a great way to celebrate my Chinese heritage, but I don’t really put much importance on it because I’m hard to truly celebrate it unless you are in China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, or Taiwan.

My family’s heritage is from China, so we are supposed to celebrate it. We celebrate it casually, and we don’t go overboard with events and colorful decorations. It is good to celebrate with lanterns, but my family doesn’t buy lanterns for the holiday. My parents prefer to save money for other major celebration events. Also, my mother has to work on the holiday, so she doesn’t want to spend too much time on it. She needs to relax and get more rest for another day of work. The lanterns are decorations. It would be cool to spiritually celebrate with them. Since I live in the city, it is hard to find scenic landscapes to see the moon and celebrate with bright lanterns. The skyscrapers and tall buildings prevent the glowing visual brightness of the moon.

The surrounding busy lifestyle and lack of culturally designed buildings don’t make the atmosphere feel appropriate for the holiday.

So, my families just buy moon cakes, grapefruits, coconuts, and other kinds of fruits from Chinatown and from other kinds of supermarkets. My relatives, especially my grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins come over to my house to celebrate the holiday by having a family reunion dinner.

We eat our typical Chinese dishes that we can make with the food we bought. We eat a variety of meat and/or vegetable dishes with rice as always. There isn’t really a major specific type of dish that we have to make, so we eat whatever we can make. Afterwards, my parents and the rest of the family pray to the moon god. Later, we eat the fruits and moon cakes to enjoy the taste of these sweet foods. There are many different kinds of moon cake flavors. However, I personally don’t like the ones with egg yolk, so I usually eat the ones without the egg yolk inside.

I think my family should do more special things for this event. It would be cool to have bright and colorful lanterns though it is okay to celebrate the holiday in a simple way. I don’t want this event to cost more than other major holidays like Chinese New Year, the US New Year, Christmas, and Thanksgiving. Those deserve to be and will always be the most important holidays for my family. Many people would say the same thing. In all, this holiday doesn’t have much importance for us.

Other families might have a different opinion, but we just don’t make a big deal out of to decorate everything in our house.

I think my family should have a small, special thing on this holiday. We could have a reunion dinner at Chinatown instead of at home. We could have some decorations inside our home. We could spend some time outside looking at the moon. We could attend August Moon Festival events in Chinatown. It would make the holiday seem special and unique, but I don’t think we can truly celebrate it unless we are with a mass gathering of other people in other parts of the world that can really put on a show.

American Born Chinese: My August Moon
By Macy Kwan

The moon, enormous and round fills the world with bright lights. Such reflection off the window, I imagine the moon as two separate worlds bond together. Tonight is one of those special nights where happiness is spread worldwide. This is where I describe the two worlds conjointing as one big family.

USA and China will always be good friends; however they will never be the same. My mother would start out by telling me her childhood memories from the holiday she celebrated in China. “Back when I was a little girl, August moon was a very special holiday for us kids. That specific morning, my family would buy an abundance of food, for the evening feast. There is nothing to do in the morning, besides sitting around and waiting for the evening hours to come. When the sun is set, that is when the celebration begins. My sister and I would light up the wonderful lanterns, while walking around and dancing to music. We would dance and have fun till midnight! At the very last moment, a special desert call moon cakes will be served to wrap up this wonderful holiday.” My mother explained.

As an American born Chinese living in the US, I never get an actual experience of how exciting it feels to hold a lantern at night. Listening to my wonderful family members share their memories, makes my heart wanting to experience it even more. However, I am very pleased with the moon-cakes we get each year to eat. This delicious treat always puts a smile on my face as the holidays last. Although here in the US it is not that exciting as it is in China, holding a family gathering is what matters the most. Family is what makes this holiday special to everyone.

Now when you look beyond the golden valley, and between the glistering rivers, there you’ll find the sky and the moon waiting for the celebration to begin.

As the lights are slowly filling up the dark night, you’ll know that the Mid-August Moon Festival has just begun.

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Living in the heart of an African village granted me an exclusive opportunity to experience the unique way of life and cultural traditions of locals, as well as view family structure and relationships with a new lens.

In the 14 months that I lived and worked in a small rural village in southern Mali, I learned to crack bean-eating jokes with my neighbors and friends. “Shodunna!” Bean-eater. The implication of one’s flatulence elicits uproarious laughter from children and adults alike. Joking, as I discovered, is used as a common ice-breaker. A well-executed joke dissolves any barriers across family and ethnic lines.

My host family bestowed upon me my family name, and I became known as Sanaba Ouattara. I happily embraced the name, for it meant another step towards community integration. My new family name made me an honorary member of the Senoufo ethnic minority and granted me the power to accuse others—my “joking cousins”—of being chronic bean-eaters.

Just as people of diverse cultures and ethnicities reside here in America, the same goes for communities in Africa. No village is the same, and traditions, languages, ethnic minorities, and religions can vary greatly from one village to the next.

But what I observed from my experience in West Africa and throughout my travels in South and East Africa is that the family and community are central to African cultures and identity. Elders are highly respected, and babies and children receive a lot of affection.

In Mali, greetings are an extremely important form of respect and courtesy. One is expected to greet a passerby, even if s/he is a stranger. A greeting is never complete without inquiring about the person, the person’s family and children. When greeting a village chief or someone of authority, one must shake his/her hand and either give the respect arm (left hand touching right elbow) or return the hand to touch one’s heart. After each meal, everyone is expected to say “Al Baraka” to his/her elders and wish them a good digestion.

Children as young as 4 or 5 years old begin taking care of their younger siblings by playing with them and giving them piggyback rides. Infants are strapped to the back of their mothers with a piece of cloth, and the majority of their time is spent together, whether on the way to the fields or cooking and cleaning at home. Fathers often times play with his children and keep them sleeping near on the plastic mats during the afternoon siestas.

Without the help of my host family, whose members graciously adopted me into their home, I would never have fully comprehended the family structure and its quirks. I discovered that strong ties exist between extended family members, and no distinction is made between first, second, or third cousins—everyone is a brother or a sister. No matter the relationship, everyone lends a helping hand when necessary.

Within my host family’s
August Moon Special

CONTINUED FROM P.12

concession is four small huts that house the father (Bakary), his two wives (Barakisse and Bakary), and six children of his own. All of Adama’s wives and children are considered to be Bakary’s children. Families often times split household responsibilities and spend time playing together, especially on evenings with the full moon, which lights up the village.

The daily schedules differ between men, women, and children. The remarkable women of the family rise at the break of dawn to start cooking and cleaning before heading to the rice fields, while the men make an early trek to the other agricultural fields, such as corn and cotton, to farm.

Children attend school in the mornings and enjoy an early afternoon siesta from 12 to 3PM. During this break, children bring empty buckets to the water pump or wells to draw water and ensure that there is a sufficient amount for cooking, cleaning, and bathing for the entire family.

When the sun sets, the adults would return from the fields and the women would proceed to cook the evening meal. Men would eat together from one communal bowl, women at another communal bowl, and the children at yet another. Occasionally, we would eat dinner at my host uncle, Adama’s concession where brothers and sisters gather to eat and chat under the star-lit sky. As the children grow older, they are expected to take on more responsibilities and offer their mothers a slight reprieve.

Fatemata, the 17-year-old daughter, learned how to cook the evening meals for the family, and her younger sisters, Assana and Aisha, clean the dishes before going to bed. Depending on the season, the family would either sleep inside their huts in the rainy/cold seasons or outdoors in the hot season, when the heat and humidity make it unbearable to sleep indoors.

I was reminded of the importance of family during the two major Islamic holidays, Ramadan and Tabaski. Evenings of the holy month of Ramadan are spent enjoying family and community meals. During Tabaski, an animal is sacrificed, and the 3-day event is spent with family and friends. Women, men and children dress in their finest clothes and accessories. Adults bless one another for a good year. Children walk around the village greeting and chanting “sambe sambe” to elders in hopes of obtaining candy or loose change.

The similarities of the customs of these Islamic holidays, as celebrated by my neighbors, to those of Asian holidays, especially New Year and August Moon are striking. I remember the days when I donned my New Year’s clothes, paid visits to family friends, and greeted everyone “gong xi fa cai” in exchange for red envelopes. Evenings were spent dining on heaps of food with family, and consuming moon cakes in celebration.

Although the uniqueness of African cultures makes it seem like the peoples live in another world, the values of family transcend cultural and linguistic barriers. It is these values that bind us all together, regardless of race, religion, socioeconomics, and politics.

August Moon Special

Celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival Away from Taiwan

By Ling-Mei Wong

Mid-Autumn Festival, or Moon Festival, conjures up memories of gazing at the moon on a hot summer night. For one night, Taipei citizens stop to look up and marvel at a perfectly round moon.

My earliest memories include walking with my parents and siblings by the box of moon cakes from the Cantonese barbecue shop. Then I would wait eagerly for my mother to cut the palm-sized moon cakes into quarters and climb the stairway to the roof to light sparklers. It was a magical night where I could stay up late outside and chatter with my parents.

Barbecues are a uniquely Taiwanese way to celebrate the Moon Festival. No one knows how grilling became a tradition in the 1980s, but all that moon gazing and chatting makes folks get hungry as an act of fast. While the grilling phenomenon has been blamed on barbecue sauce companies with savvy marketing, it’s a savory complement to sweet moon cakes and juicy pomelos.

My Taipei church hosts an annual Moon Festival barbecue for the community, bringing together food, fun and friends. While Moon Festival usually occurs during Taiwan’s typhoon season, Turkey — utter sacrilege, would take place regardless of the weather. Even on the cloudiest nights, you could glimpse a silver moon peeking through the haze. The hallowed traditions of Moon Festival were craning my neck at the moon, stuffing myself silly on moon cakes and hanging out with people I loved best.

When I came to America for college, Moon Festival marked the start of classes. There were no sticky hot nights in California and moon cake became an expensive delicacy. Celebrating a Moon Festival without moon cake is akin to celebrating Thanksgiving without a turkey — utter sacrilege. However, as an international student who needed to pay for tuition, rent and insurance, blowing an exorbitant amount of money on a box of sentimentality seemed unreasonable.

Apart from craving moon cake, I was away from my family. Sitting in a classroom was nothing like welcoming a folding chair to a Taipei rooftop, simply to behold the moon with my parents and neighbors. In a foreign land, my fellowship friends and mentors became my support network.

After college, I moved back to Taiwan and created new memories with my family. Then I got married and moved to Boston. My husband and I have now a standing date with my parents every Sunday night for a video chat. It’s not the same as sharing moon cakes under a muggy sky, but “seeing” them helps lessen the heartache.

Happy Moon Festival to all and may the full moon be far from your heart.
On my trip to China this summer my wife and I decided to visit some of the remotest natural wonders in the mountains of Sichuan. I had always wanted to visit this region ever since I first went to China eighteen years ago, but I never got the chance. This trip however, we finally went to the edge of the Himalayas in a journey that led us from the mountains of Greater Tibet to the East China Sea.

Hello, Jiuzhaigou

After living for the first week cheaply in my mother-in-law’s in Chongqing with six of us crowded in a two-bedroom apartment, my wife, Ling, and I decided to splurge and stay at a five-star resort hotel at Jiuzhaigou (九寨溝), a national park in Sichuan province.

On the map, Jiuzhaigou doesn’t look that far from Chongqing, but it is located in a very mountainous area that takes a long time to reach by bus and there are no trains reach that area. So we took a short plane ride to Jiuzhaigou’s small airport. Although it was small, the airport was crowded with incoming visitors. Jiuzhaigou is a very popular destination for Chinese tour groups.

Upon arrival, we could see that this was very different from the more populated sections of China that we were familiar with. Although this area was officially part of Sichuan province, historically and culturally it is really the westernmost part of Tibet. Much of the local population is Tibetan and you can see the Tibetan influence in the street signs and storefronts written in Tibetan as well as Chinese. Much of the architecture is different, with fewer Chinese-style curving tile roofs and more natural Tibetan-style stone brick square buildings that look like fortresses. The animals, too, are different. There were no water buffalos plowing rice paddies, but rather herds of hairy yaks wandering on the roads.

The city of Chongqing is nicknamed the “Mountain City” (山城) in Chinese, but what I thought were incredibly steep mountains and cliffs in Chongqing were nothing compared to here. This region is the eastern edge of the Himalayas and the mountains rise up to barren vertical cliffs near their summits. Further to the west they rise higher and higher as you head into Tibet itself.

This part of China is less densely populated than places we had been to before. Rather than unbroken stretches of crowded farms, villages, suburbs and cities, there were miles of uninhabited forest with occasional Tibetan or Chinese-Tibetan towns that were isolated from each other.

The hotel we were staying at was the Intercontinental Resort Jiuzhai Paradise and it certainly was an impressive place. The resort was a complex of a hotel, several restaurants and shops built in the style of a stone-brick Tibetan village nestled in a deep valley surrounded by sheer, pine-forested mountains. A stream had been diverted into the village where it flowed through man-made ponds, fountains and waterfalls. Black-feathered Tibetan geese lounged in the ponds for the benefit of the tourists.

What was really impressive though, was that the hotel, the “village” of restaurants, the stream, the pool and a hot spring were all covered in a series of huge, interconnected glass domes so that guests could stay warm and “outdoors” regardless of the temperature outside the dome. It was like living inside a Tibetan spaceship.

I made the mistake of not reading the guidebook carefully before coming to these Himalayan foothills. Although it was August and had been 90 degrees in Chongqing, we were now at 10,000 feet altitude and in a completely different climate. Gone was the subtropical vegetation, rice fields and humid summer of Chongqing. The mountains here were in misty pine forests and the weather was in the 50s. We had no cold weather clothes, so we hopped in a taxi and went down the road to a collection of stores and restaurants built to look like a traditional Tibetan village with stone brick facades and Buddhist swastikas painted on the walls. Here I bought a fleece jacket and Ling bought a wool shawl. Now we were ready for the next two days of hiking.

The next day we boarded a minibus with several other guests from the hotel for a ride to Jiuzhaigou town. The park entrance was half an hour away and the winding road zigzagged further down the valley from the resort between the steep mountains, passing larger and larger Tibetan villages until we reached Jiuzhaigou town itself. The quiet and seclusion we enjoyed in the resort higher up in the valley was broken by the crush of dozens of tour buses unloading literally thousands of visitors making their way through the ticket gates.

Jiuzhaigou is heavily advertised as a tourist site in China and despite its remote location, it’s extremely popular. Jiuzhaigou offers something that rarely seen in the densely populated eastern parts of China: uninhabited forests that stretch for miles, unpoluted bright blue lakes, and rivers and waterfalls where the water is as clear as glass. The price you pay for all this beauty, however, (besides the entrance fee) is that you must share it with hundreds of other shouting visitors. 
had to abandon the shuttle bus and walk on the boardwalks that follow the rivers and lakes.

Another thing that I failed to heed from the guidebooks was the warnings about altitude sickness. Jiuzhaigou is between 10,000 and 12,000 feet in altitude above sea level. Since we didn’t have the time or money to linger in this region, we planned to hike in the national parks right away without spending a day to acclimate. So despite using the shuttle buses to get around the park, I found myself out of breath from the lower oxygen and as the day wore on, my knee began to swell and I had difficulty walking up and down the boardwalk steps.

After we got back to the hotel, I spent the evening sitting in the hot spring under the glass dome trying to ease my swollen knee. We were going to visit another natural park the next day and I wasn’t sure if I could walk it again. But the next day my knee was fine and I could breathe easier. After a day of acclimatizing in Jiuzhaigou, I felt ready to the altitude. Now we were going visit Huanglongshan (黄山山) or “Yellow Dragon Mountain”, another national park similar to Jiuzhaigou. This place was more remote, however, so we hired a car to take us and our luggage there since we were going to the airport right after.

Chengdu and the Three Kingdoms

We flew back to Chengdu in the lower altitudes for a few days where it rained most of the time. (We would be dealing with rain most of our trip, unfortunately.) We went to visit the Wuhou Temple (武侯祠), a garden park and museum dedicated to the history of the Three Kingdoms period (三国时代). The Three Kingdoms was the time in Chinese history during the third century when the Han Dynasty fell and China divided into three countries. The classic Chinese novel, Romance of the Three Kingdoms (三国演义) is an account of the events in this period.

There were many halls housing statues of famous generals and kings of the Three Kingdoms era, many of which were made a hundred to three hundred years ago. But I was surprised when I saw several people kneeling and praying before the statue of Zhuge Liang (諸葛亮), a famous general of the Three Kingdoms period. I asked my wife why people were praying to this figure. According to this lady, he wasn’t a Buddha or Taoist god—he was a historical person, a general and strategist with no supernatural stories attached to him. It would be as if modern Italians prayed to statues of Julius Caesar or Marc Antony. Apparently in China, anyone can become divine, given enough time.

Before we left the temple, I bought a complete collection of picture books that told the story of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. My wife said these were popular among her classmates when she was young. I figured this could help me in my never-ending quest to improve my Chinese. Since each postcard-sized book only has about a single sentence per page with a big picture, it shouldn’t be too overwhelming for me. And even if I can’t understand the grammar, at least I can look at the pictures...

Taking a Bullet Train to Hangzhou

For the last part of our trip, we left the mountains for the sea. We have often been to Shanghai, but we wanted to explore the coastal cities of Hangzhou and Suzhou as well. We flew to Shanghai and took the bullet train to Hangzhou first. Most of the old “hard seat” and sleeper trains have now been replaced by the new high-speed bullet trains throughout China. For example, fifteen years ago the train ride from Chengdu to Chongqing took ten hours, so most people took the overnight sleeper train. Now the bullet trains make the same journey in two hours.

But with the spread of the bullet trains, some old customs of travel in China have changed. In the old days, peasants would often bring cages of live chickens on board the trains. But nowadays, the railroads don’t allow live animals on their trains. At the train station, we saw chicken farmers, who were refused to enter into the train station because they want to bring a live chicken along. Undeterred, they went outside of the station, cut the chicken’s throat, and let it bleed out into a garbage can. No longer carrying a live chicken, they could now get on board the train.

Fortunately there were no chickens, live or dead, on our train to Hangzhou. Hangzhou was once the capital of China in the Song Dynasty and Marco Polo even called it the most beautiful city in the world. In the 700 years since then, however, Hangzhou has suffered a lot from wars, civil wars, Cultural Revolution and neglect. But much of it has been saved or restored in recent years.

Hangzhou’s most famous attraction is the West Lake (西湖), surrounded by parks, causeways and temples. We spent our entire first day walking around the lake and exploring the temples. But the rain and fog that followed us most of the trip made Hangzhou dark and gloomy and most of the lake was invisible in the fog.

The next day we went to Lingyin Temple (靈隱寺) on the edge of town. Like many temples now in China, it has been restored beautifully and has an active Buddhist clergy and following. Thousands of people pass through here lighting incense and praying at the various shrines. One unique feature of this temple is that they had hung signs around the temple grounds with cartoons that explained concepts of Buddhist philosophy and teachings. Sadly, unlike most of the signs here, there was no English translation so I had to rely on Ling to explain the esoteric teachings of the cartoons.

Recently in the news there was some complaint from local city residents that Starbucks was going to open a coffee shop next to the collection of restaurants outside the temple. I found it odd that folks would complain about Starbucks yet no one seems to mind the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant that is already there.
Going deep into Suzhou

With time running out on our vacation, we got on the bullet train again to visit Suzhou, a city very close to Shanghai. We had visited Suzhou on a previous vacation briefly on a day trip from Shanghai. Now we wanted the chance to see it in more detail.

Suzhou is famous for its gardens, many of which date back centuries. One of the largest is the Humble Administrator’s Garden. This is a beautiful garden restored to its Ming Dynasty glory full of lotus ponds and wandering paths connecting halls and pagodas. Although its designers never would have predicted it, the walled garden is a perfect place to get away from the traffic and noisy streets of modern China and relax for a few hours.

Another smaller garden is the Lion Grove Garden. This is a beautiful garden entirely in another section of the city entirely. Compared to other Chinese cities, Suzhou seemed very laid-back. It was less hectic and much quieter than most Chinese cities where you are subjected to sensory overload day and night. Part of the reason is that building codes don’t allow high-rises to be built within the older part of the city where the gardens are. Also, many streets are pedestrian-only and follow the canals which crisscross the city. We spent much of the afternoon and evenings wandering these streets and sitting at the cafes and teahouses here.

A secret Museum of Shanghai

Before we left for home, we had some time to spend in Shanghai, and one of the places I’ve always wanted to check out was the Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Center. This is a small private museum that has a collection of Chinese Communist propaganda posters from 1949 to 1979. The museum is very hard to find—it’s not mentioned in any of the Chinese language guides to the city. Only foreign language tour guide books seem to write about it. It is actually in the basement of an apartment building complex. When you arrive at the apartment building entrance there is no indication of it. You have to ask the guard for the museum and then he’ll give you a card with a map printed on the back which you follow to a hidden door. Part of the reason why the museum doesn’t advertise itself so much is that its subject matter is still a bit controversial in China today. Many of the posters lay bare some of the embarrassing contradictions of Chinese politics in the time of Mao Zedong. For instance, a poster from 1959 shows a Chinese man standing hand-in-hand with a blond man with the caption “Long live the friendship of China and the Soviet Union”. But less than ten years later, posters are denouncing “Soviet revisionism.” A very rare poster shows Mao Zedong standing beside his chosen successor Lin Biao. Most of these posters had been destroyed after Lin Biao’s fall.

The thirty years covered by the museum show a great range of styles and a rapidly changing subject matter from anti-American posters of the Korean War, to the stark red and black prints of the Cultural Revolution showing Red Guards stomping on all sorts of class enemies. The posters end around 1979 when the economic reforms began and propaganda posters began to be replaced by more advertisements. Probably the reason why the museum doesn’t advertise itself so much is that its subject matter is still a bit controversial in China today. Many of the posters lay bare some of the embarrassing contradictions of Chinese politics in the time of Mao Zedong. For instance, a poster from 1959 shows a Chinese man standing hand-in-hand with a blond man with the caption “Long live the friendship of China and the Soviet Union”. But less than ten years later, posters are denouncing “Soviet revisionism.” A very rare poster shows Mao Zedong standing beside his chosen successor Lin Biao. Most of these posters had been destroyed after Lin Biao’s fall.

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Time to go Home

Finally as we arrived at Shanghai Pudong airport to fly back to Boston, we got a view of the East China Sea from the terminal window where we could see cargo ships making their way up and down the coast. We had traveled a thousand miles to the foothills of Tibet and back for three weeks, and now exhausted, we were ready to go home.
There’s great interest in our Quincy opening.

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Happy August Moon!! 中秋佳節愉快！！

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<tr>
<td>Washington St. Clinic</td>
<td>Hancock St. Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>華盛頓街診所</td>
<td>漢考克街診所</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South St. Clinic</td>
<td>Holmes St. Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>南街診所</td>
<td>霍姆斯街診所</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington St., Boston</td>
<td>Sunshine Hancock St., Quincy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>617-482-7555</td>
<td>617-745-0280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>885 Washington St., Boston</td>
<td>88 Holmes St., Quincy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>617-318-3200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

成人科、婦科、小兒科、足部科、神經科、社會服務部，及家庭計劃
Adult Medicine, OB/GYN, Pediatrics, Podiatry, Neurology, Social Services and Family Planning

牙科、眼科、骨質篩檢、X光乳房攝影篩檢、心理科、幼兒培育組，營養科/奶卷，及課餘活動
Dentistry, Optometry, Mammography, Bone Density, Behavioral Health, WIC, Early Intervention, BASE

成人科、340B藥房及社會服務部
Adult Medicine, 340B Pharmacy and Social Services

婦科、小兒科、牙科、眼科、心理科、社會服務部及家庭計劃
OB/GYN, Pediatrics, Dentistry, Optometry, Behavioral Health, Social Services and Family Planning

SUN 星期日 8:30AM – 2:00PM
MON 星期一 8:30AM – 5:30PM (Adult Medicine to 6:30PM)
TUE-FRI 星期二至五 8:30AM – 3:00PM
SAT 星期六 8:30AM – 3:00PM

MON-FRI 星期一至五 9:00am – 5:30pm
SAT 星期六 9:00am – 3:00pm

SUN 星期日 8:30AM – 12:30PM
MON-FRI 星期一至五 8:30AM – 5:30PM (Optometry: 1st Sun)
SAT 星期六 8:30AM – 3:00PM

http://www.scchc.org

華人醫務中心悉心協助有需要人士申請醫療福利及麻州全民保險計劃
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