



OUR RETURN TO CHINA

Kevin & Tracy Crotchett

Our trip to China was amazing. Arriving in Suzhou, Tracy and I had the first day to ourselves, which we spent first securing our train tickets out of Suzhou and then heading up to Tiger Hill by canal. We eventually met up with Julia (Jiang Qin), Hilda (Xu Hong), Kathy (Feng Zhiyun), and another No. 10 teacher who goes by Vivian, for lunch at Yang Yang. This one place was a biggy for Tracy and me. It seems silly in a way, but we spent so many meals there in the past. The owners recognized us right away, as did the “grandma,” who also frequents the spot.

The next three/four days were spent at Suzhou No. 10 Middle School, attending various speeches/lectures (all in Chinese) and outings with No. 10 teachers. The campus is unbelievable. Classrooms are all tiled, and heated, with new desks and chairs. The office spaces are also amazing. Every building got a fresh coat of paint, as did many of the surrounding courtyards, alleyway walls, and homes surrounding the campus. It was clear much work had been done and it looked amazing. I met the new principal while renewing the contract between No. 10 and Jackson. While reading the new contract, I added a couple of elements to it, ensuring that the school understands that in continuing with a teacher exchange, Jackson Middle School is trusting Suzhou No. 10 Middle School to send teachers with a level of English proficiency equal to past teachers. Once the principal and I agreed on this point, we signed, and teachers from Jackson and I presented him with a gift.



Teachers from Jackson Middle School attend the 100th Anniversary of Suzhou No. 10 Middle School (left to right: Michael Lang, Tracy Crotchett, Linda McCann, Ann Ott-Cooper, and Kevin Crotchett)



Kevin and Tracy Crotchett at dinner with Yiyi

The next night was to be our last in Suzhou. Yiyi (daughter of Jiang Qin, and a playmate of our son when we lived in Suzhou) joined us for dinner and after about 5 minutes things were just as they had been four years ago! I She was fun, playful, and talkative. Seeing Yiyi was a real highlight. That night we walked around the new industrial district park, Rooster Park, which was just being built when we were there. Now it is complete and it looks beautiful! High-rise apartments have also gone up all around. It’s amazing. That night we said goodbye to Julia and Hilda. Although it was hard I know that ties this strong will not be broken easily. Tracy and I will return and hopefully someday Julia and Hilda will visit Portland



again with Yiyi and Michael (Julia's husband).

Tracy and I then headed off to Shanghai and had a fantastic 4 hours with Roy Bergeson. We sat at a Starbucks (of all places) and had a great talk.

The final few days were spent in Hangzhou and Beijing. We had a fantastic time and noticed some big changes: more cars and fewer bikes. I was amazed that the pollution really seems better in both Suzhou and Beijing. Also, the streets are so quiet without all the moped noise!

Chris Walderhaug (Suzhou 2006-07) is wonderful. She is just a joy to be around. She joined us every chance she got. We all liked having her there.