

# **The Jon Monthly**

(March 1994 – December 1996)

***Other books by the author:***

Starman #1, Assault on Mars  
Starman #1, Mutiny on Mars  
Starman #2, The Runaway Asteroid  
Starman #3, Journey to the Tenth Planet  
Starman #4, Descent Into Europa  
Starman #5, The Lost Race of Mars  
Starman #6, Doomsday Horizon  
Starman #7, The Heart of Danger  
Starman #8, The Last Command  
Starman #9: The Lost Tomorrow  
Starman #10: Master of Shadows

Danger at L5!

The Starman Appendices, Volumes I – VI

Final Destination

Stryker #1, On the Edge of Eternity

TSJ #34, Tom Swift and the Extrasolar Planet  
TSJ #35, Tom Swift and His Nuclear Hyperplane

Tales from Infinity, Volume 1

Collected Sunday School Lessons (2008 – 2009)

The Complete Tom Swift Home Page

# The Jon Monthly

March 1994 – December 2006

*The complete newsletter collection – spanning  
all of the Cooper family's adventures in China*

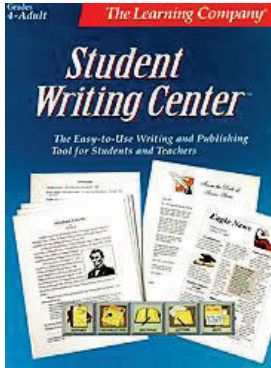
Edited by Jonathan Cooper

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First Edition  
8/11/2010



## Introduction



In early 1994 my father purchased a computer program called Student Writing Center. This ancient application was a word processor, designed to make it easy for students to create newsletters and other documents. As soon as I saw it I knew I had to use it for something. The software made newsletter creation look like a lot of fun, so I decided to start writing my own monthly newsletter.

Under normal circumstances it's likely that the newsletter would have been short-lived, but as it turned out I actually had something to write about. Around the time the newsletter began our family learned that they were going to be moving to China. My father was a project manager and worked for a company that had just gotten involved in a joint venture with a Chinese firm. They needed someone to move to China to manage the construction of a shampoo factory, and Dad was their man. For the next two years we were going to be living in Wuxi, a small town of 5 million people that was located two hour's west of Shanghai. As a fourteen-year-old kid I found this incredibly exciting, and over the next three years I chronicled our many adventures. I kept at it until we left Wuxi at the end of 2006, at which point I was 16 years old.

China has changed tremendously since we lived there. I think this is best illustrated by this photograph, which I found online. The top photo shows what Shanghai looked like in 1990. The bottom photo shows what Shanghai looks like today (in 2010). As you can see, the passage of 20 years has completely transformed the city. In my newsletters I described Shanghai as a place filled with cranes and constant construction; now I can see the final product. The growth is simply phenomenal.

These newsletters are a snapshot of what China was like during the middle of the 1990's. That country is no more; it has been replaced by something far more modern. Wuxi is no longer a town where the only western restaurant is Kentucky Fried Chicken. Times are different now. I have not been back to China since I left, but I suspect that if I made a trip back to



that amazing country I would find a country that is far more modern than it used to be.

These newsletters would not have been possible without the support of my family. Besides keeping me supplied with ink cartridges and paying for postage (the newsletter was sent to quite a few people!), my parents supported the publication, edited it, and even wrote articles for it (as did my brother Mike and my sister April). Oh yes – and they also took me with them to China, and Australia, and Singapore, and many other fascinating and amazing places! I am very grateful for the opportunities they gave me. Life in China built a lot of character; we had to learn to live with the idea that some days we might have electricity and water and other days we wouldn't. It built character and taught us to be grateful for the amazing life we had in the United States – a life we took for granted. We really are blessed.

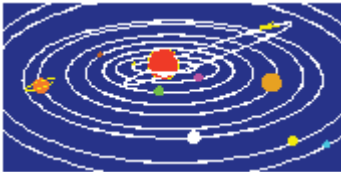
If you're reading this, I invite you to sit back, relax, and enjoy reading about my family's many adventures in the land of China. You will read tales of flies and plumbers, of furniture being delivered on the back of a bicycle and of houses being built by people who knew nothing about building houses. The fun starts in issue #8, where I give my first impressions of the land of China.

I hope you enjoy this collection!

Jonathan Cooper

August 6, 2010

# The Jon Monthly



## The Moons of Mercury

By Jon Cooper

The moons of mercury are fascinating to study. As shown in the picture above, Mercury is the first planet from the sun. It is a very small planet, second in smallness only to Pluto, which is the very last planet in the solar system. Mercury is a small, sort of red planet, with a temperature hot enough on one side to melt lead, and on the other well below zero. It has an earth equivalent year of 88 days.

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## China!

By Jon Cooper

China is the blackish country pictured just above.

The Coopers are soon going to move to China, one of the world's oldest countries. The first Chinese dynasty began about 3000 BC. The Cooper's are very excited about this prospect, and are going to go in May. If you have any

question about the Cooper's moving, please call us at: 1-908-329-2800 extensions 1122 or 1121 .

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Medieval, a game written by programmer Paul Seufert.



Medieval

It's finally here! Medieval, an adventure game by Paul Seufert, as available through Paul Seufert at 1-615-239-5974, or through Jon Cooper at 1-908-329-2800-1122. Medieval is an intriguing adventure game where you try to get out of the castle. It is a lot of fun and is very tough. If you have any problems or would like to get a copy, please call one of the numbers above.

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(Did you know, a monthly feature)

## Did You Know: Cars



The fastest car went over 620 mph, faster than the regular speed of a jumbo-jet!

If you have money to burn, you could order a custom-built limo. Some of these have swimming pools, 1 hole golf courses, water beds, and almost every comfort of life-except space. <-----

# The Jon Monthly



## The Statue of Liberty

by Jon Cooper

The Statue of Liberty is located off of the coast of New York City on Ellis island.

It is a very popular tourist attraction in New York City. It is over 300 Feet tall, and it takes 352 stairs to reach the top of the crown (I know because I climbed all 352 of them last April). There is, however, an elevator to get to the top of the pedestal. The Statue of Liberty is green because it is made of copper. When the air strikes copper, there is a chemical reaction that turns it green. The statue was a gift to the Americans from the country of France. The Americans, however, had to supply the pedestal. The Statue is made up of thin pieces of copper hammered together.



## The Empire State Building

By Jon Cooper

The Coopers enjoyed a visit to the Empire State Building last April. The Empire State Building is located in the heart of New York City. It is one of the tallest buildings in the world. At the observatory deck, 108 floors above the ground, you can see up to 80 miles on a clear day. The Empire State Building is owned by a major company. It is currently an office building, but there is a few apartments for rent. There is a complete shopping center inside of the building. In the basement of the building there is a Guinness Book of World Records exhibit hall.

## Chinese Money

By Jon Cooper



Did you that in China, as the denomination of the money gets larger, so does the size of the bill? The largest bill is the Chinese \$100 bill, and the smallest is the 1 cent bill, just a little bit larger than the dollar sign on this page.





### The Philadelphia Mint

By Jon Cooper

The Philadelphia mint, located in Philadelphia close to the Liberty Bell, makes most of the coins used on the east coast. This mint only makes coins; pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, half dollars - and commemoratives. Tourists can visit and see a good deal of the process of making money. In the lobby you can see all of the different commemoratives issued since the 1800's, as well as huge bins of pennies, quarters, and the like. There is also a small shop in which one can buy freshly minted coins. You can also see coins being made. You can see the **blanking**, a process where coins are stamped out of large sheets of metal. Then comes **annealing**, **washing and drying**, where the blanks are heated in an annealing furnace to soften them and then ran through washer and dryer to cool them for **striking**. But before this can be done, the coins must be sorted onto a **riddler** to sort any coins out that are not the right size or shape. Then, the blanks go through a **upsetting mill**, where the rim is raised around the edges. Then the coins can be struck with the designs and inscriptions to make them real coins. Finally the coins must be inspected to make sure that there are no mistakes, and then they are bagged and sent to a bank near you. Any tourist can see all of this if he wishes - Which I got to do a few weeks ago-from a distance.



### The Lost Film

It was D-day, 50 years ago. One reporter for a local newspaper just happened to be at Pearl Harbor at the same time as the Japanese. As he watched them bombing the harbor, he got an idea. Quickly, he took out his camera and he shot a whole roll of film of just the Japanese blowing everything up. Once he had shot his roll, however, he had a slight problem. He did not know how he was going to get his film back to headquarters in time for the next edition of his paper. He couldn't wire it because of all of the confusion and the Japanese. He was trapped there with his film. Suddenly he had an idea. Quickly he took out the film, wrote his name on it, sealed it in a container, and sent it to headquarters - by carrier pigeon! However, the pigeon didn't go to the newspaper office. It went to Germany! They printed all of his pictures in their paper and even gave him the credit for it. He didn't get his money for the article, however.

### Holidays for the month of May

Mothers Day - May 9th

Armed Forces Day - May 15th

Victoria Day (Canada)- May 24th

Memorial Day - May 30th

Memorial Day (observed) May 31st

# The Jon Monthly



## Trips to China

by Jonathan Cooper

Not too long ago Dad made a three week long trip to China. While he was there, he saw Tiananmen Square and a silk factory in Wuxi, the city where we are going to live. On the 20th, Dad is going to make another trip to China with Mom. The trip is going to last two weeks, and they hope to find us a house to live in. While they are there, the Cooper kids are going to West Virginia go be with grandparents. The Coopers hope to be settled in China by July the 4th, and are going to leave sometime in the end of June.

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## Holidays for the Month of June



Flag Day  
June 14th



June 19th

Father's Day



Canada Day (Canada)  
June 24th



## A Trip to the Farm

by Jonathan Cooper

Longstreet Farm is located in Holmdel Park, a large park in New Jersey. It is a farm preserved from the 1890's. It is a living farm. It is still used and there are animals there, and crops are still planted and gathered in just as they were 100 years ago. The farm is open to the public. The public can see about all of the things that happen on a farm. They give tours of the farm and the farmhouse. On certain days you can see a blacksmith, someone shearing sheep, planting, and ladies quilting. There you can see live sheep, cows, a pig, several mules, and a whole lot of chickens. They have some nice gardens as well as several trails to follow.

\* \* \*



## Did You Know the Eclipse

On May 10th, 1994 there was a Solar Eclipse. In this solar eclipse the Moon covered 88% of the surface of the Sun and was visible to 300 million people. Another eclipse like it will not happen until 2017!

# The Jon Monthly



## Moving to China

by Jonathan Cooper

Recently, Mom and Dad made a 3 week trip to China. While they were there they found us a house to live in. It is a moderately sized house, two stories tall with a garage, even though we won't have a car while we are in China. It is located in Wuxi, China. The house is still under construction, and will be completed sometime in September. When we first move to China, we will probably live in a hotel until it's done.

\* \* \*

## Holidays for July



Canada day (Canada)  
Thursday, July 1st



Independence Day  
Sunday, July 4th

\* \* \*



## A Trip to the Country

by Jonathan Cooper

While our parents went to China, we kids went to Charleston, West Virginia to stay. After 1 week in China, Mom flew to West Virginia but not Dad, he had work to do in China for two more weeks. Before Mom came back, we stayed in the city and had many fun activities with Grandma Kinder. After Mom came back, however, we made some visits to the country where I have Great Grandma Barrett and Grandma Dailey. In order to get to the country you have to pass some cities with some weird names. You pass the cities of Winfield, Tornado, Hurricane, and Nitro. We had a great time out there. We caught a few small, silver fish, a whole lot of crabs, frogs, and a turtle. Great Grandma owns over 200 acre's that we like to explore. There are several small creeks, too, that we sometimes follow upstream. Great Grandma has some chickens that we originally raised from eggs in Tennessee. Grandma's chicken coop got destroyed last winter when a huge tree limb demolished it. All seven chickens were OK. However, they now like to stay under the house.

## Information on Charleston

CHARLESTON, W. Va. The capital city of West Virginia, Charleston is the trade and industrial hub of the scenic, mineral-rich

Kanawha Valley. The city spreads along the north bank of the Kanawha River, where it is joined by the Elk River. It is surrounded by coal, chemical, steel, glass, and timber "company towns." The plastic Lucite [whoever can write by August 22nd and tell me what Lucite is wins a free subscription to my newsletter!] as well as Nylon and other chemicals from which plastics were developed originated in the [Charleston] area.

Charleston's history dates from the establishment of Fort Lee in 1788 by Col. George Clendenin. Its early settlers were Scots-Irish and Germans from the Shenandoah Valley. Daniel Boone lived here with his family for several years and represented Kanawha County in the Virginia Assembly.

Charleston became the permanent state capital in 1885. The neoclassic Capitol [whatever that is] [define it correctly for me and get a free room and board in China (pay your own way to China, though)] houses a natural history and art museum. A symphony orchestra and little theater group are among the city's cultural attractions. Population (1990 census), 57,287.

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### **Notice!**

Contrary to what my last newsletter said, only Dad will be moving to China in July. Since the basic construction of the house will not be completed until sometime in August, but September is a better guess.

\* \* \*

## **The Water Slide**

by Jonathan Cooper

While we were in West Virginia, we had the chance to go to a water slide park. They had three long water slides. One used an inner tube, and another was really fast. All three emptied out into a small pool. A short distance away there was a wave pool with artificial waves. One wave would come right after the next. We all had lots of fun. We spent several hours climbing the forty-five steps to the top of the slide and sliding all the way down. It is located right outside of Charleston, and has been there for several years.

\* \* \*



## **The Great Comet Crash**

by Jonathan Cooper

On July the 16th, we plan to celebrate my Mom & Dad's anniversary by having the shattered comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 collide into Jupiter, the largest planet, with the force of fifty million atomic bombs. This celestial event will take place at 3:28 P.M. Eastern Time, and will continue until the day before Mike's birthday, July 23rd. The comet was first noticed last year to be on a collision course with Jupiter. Jupiter's gravity trapped the comet and shattered it into 21 separate pieces, the largest is 2 kilometers.

# The Jon Monthly



## China, our Expectations

by Jonathan Cooper

What do we expect China to be like? Mike is not real sure. I expect it to be sort of, well, not as advanced as America. April said it will be different, dirty and humid. I think that the most fun thing to do when we get there is to see all of the differences. April said that she will like moving into a nice size house, and Mike again isn't sure.

\* \* \*



### *Notice!*

I said last month that July 4th was on a Sunday. It was really on a Monday. I am sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused you. Also, this newsletter is front and back.



## The Little Chickens

by Jonathan Cooper

In my last newsletter I mentioned that my Grandma Barrett kept chickens. Well, when we went to the country, we thought that since we gave the chickens to her over a year ago, they should have started laying eggs by now. So when we went out to the country, we looked for eggs. We looked EVERYWHERE! and we didn't find a single egg. Well, about a week before this was printed, Grandma Barrett said she had seen some little baby chickens! She said that there were three and that they liked to stay near their mother. She also said that they were all black, like the other chickens.

\* \* \*

## Holidays For the month of August

by Jon Cooper



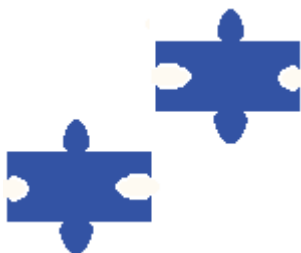
Civic Holiday (Canada)  
Monday, 1st.

## Contests

Last month, I had three contests. They were: tell me what Lucite is, and define neoclassical. As of July 22nd, nobody has responded. This contest ends



August the 22nd. Prizes: See my last newsletter, for July. \* \* \*



## Grandpa's Impossible Puzzle

by Jonathan Cooper

For Grandpa Cooper's birthday we gave him the "hardest puzzle in the world". It was a 500 piece two-sided puzzle, having the same picture on both sides, except one side is rotated 90 degrees from the other. It is a picture of a whole lot of penguins on the front and back. Grandpa Cooper finished the puzzle in 25-30 hours! He said that he did it mathematically. He would hunt through the box until he found two pieces that were the exact same. He would then find where one piece would go, then, since on one side the puzzle was tilted 90 degrees, he would calculate where the next piece would go. He said it looked nice when it was done. (P.S. I made the puzzle piece for this article picture myself)

\* \* \*



## The Liberty Science Center

by Jonathan Cooper

The other day we (Mom, me, Mike, April) went to the Liberty Science Center. While we were there we saw a lot of neat things. The Liberty Science Center is sort of like a big museum, except you can experiment with things. This time, they had a special exhibit of

Lego's. The Lego exhibit is huge. Mom said that it is a traveling exhibit. This means that it goes from place to place. The exhibit consisted of the Statue of Liberty, a lot of tall buildings, from the Sears Tower to the Arch of St. Louis, 3 model race cars, a voice-controlled robot, and a number of other things. The



Statue of Liberty is made out of white bricks, not green, and is partly hollow, so that you can see the inside. It is quite tall, about 6 feet tall, and has a spiral staircase inside, complete with people and even a cameraman! There was a large group of buildings in the middle of the exhibit. They were, on average, 6 feet tall. They were all scale! There was the



AT&T building, the Sears Tower, the Twin Towers, the Arch of St. Louis, and others. The AT&T building was made out of red bricks, the Twin Towers were white, the Sears Tower black, and the Arch gray. All of them (except for the arch, of course) had clear bricks for windows. It is my opinion that they are all glued together with glue. The voice-controlled robot was approximately one foot tall. You could control him by saying into a microphone, "left, right, forwards, backwards". The object was to score points by pressing certain buttons that were on the sides of 3 ships. The robot was neat, as well as the ships where the buttons were located. The racecars were roughly one and one half foot long. They had 2 different kinds. There was also an exhibit where you could make your own car and race it with others. There was also a number of other things, such as working pistons, windshield wipers, and a Lego drill, all which could really work! There was a neat ball track, made entirely of Lego's, where a ball would start at the top, go down a track, turning on lights and ringing bells and things, until it got to the bottom, where a lift would carry it up to the top. I noticed that 2 balls had somehow got stuck, and one had fallen off of the structure. There was a very miniaturized amusement park on display, complete with a merry-go-round, a shooting gallery, a refreshment stand, and

several other rides. All of the things worked, by means of gears and things. All in all, it was an interesting display. While we were there, we also saw an OmniMax screen picture entitled "Grand Canyon". It had some lovely scenes of the Grand Canyon. It was also quite breath taking, especially when you went downstream with the rapids. It all seemed so realistic. All in all, we had quite a good and full day there.



## The Comet Crash

by Jonathan Cooper

As I said in my last newsletter, Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 smashed into Jupiter at July 16th, 1994. The comet smashed into Jupiter over the period of a week. Scientists hope to learn a lot about comets through this explosion. They say that if you have a good backyard telescope, you can see where the explosion hit Jupiter. The explosion was so big that it is likely to linger for about a week. There was a large amount of light given off by the explosion, so much that, about 10 minutes after it took place, it overwhelmed the light sensors. So, if you have a telescope, I would suggest taking a look.



## Moving to China an update

by Jonathan Cooper

According to what I understand, it's like this. The joint venture must be finalized by September 6th. If the joint venture is finalized,

we will probably move into a hotel sometime around then. If the joint venture is not finalized, we will probably stay in New Jersey, either forever, or, until Dad gets to do another project.

\* \* \*



## The Day We Didn't Go To the Beach

by Jon Cooper

On July the 15th, we decided to go to the beach. We called our friends, and got all ready. We gathered up our snacks, our beach floats, and everything. Then we noticed that gray clouds were gathering, so we decided to go over to their house instead. We got in the car and drove to their house. When we got to our friends neighborhood Mom realized she didn't remember exactly where they lived! So, we cruised around, and suddenly the car broke down! It wouldn't start. Somebody stopped, and jumped our car. It started, but when Mom put it in gear, it died. She jumped it several times, and the same thing happened. So a nice guy pushed the car to the side of the road and Mom called our friends. Our friends drove to where we were, which, as it turned out, was only two blocks away from their house! They picked us up and drove us to their house, where Mom called a towing service to tow our car and get it fixed. We had a great time. At 4:00, our friends drove us home. But, the day wasn't over yet. We didn't know it, but there was a yellow-jacket in the car! It happened to land on Mom's armrest. Mom, not knowing that the bug was there, put her arm on the armrest, where she promptly got stung. The bug, not hurt at all, just kind of dazed, started to crawl up the door. I spotted it and screamed, thinking that it was a huge spider. Mom rolled down the window and it flew away. Mom felt that God was watching over us by sending the gray

clouds. Otherwise, we all would have gone to the beach in our car. We would have broke down an hour from home with two mom's, five kids and a heat index of 105. Dad was in China at the time.



## The New Cousin

by Jonathan Cooper

On July 18, 1994 a new cousin, Jonathan David Farmer was born. He weighed 7 lbs, 14 ounces. He was born to the Farmers, who already have 5 other children, 2 boys and 3 girls. Their names and ages are: Scott, 17, Christina, 15, Ben, 11, Melissa, 10, and Amy, 6.



10



**Happy  
Birthday,  
Mike!  
July 23rd**

### DID YOU KNOW...

That there are 1.2 BILLION people in China? Did you also know that the Chinese invented paper money?



# The Jon Monthly



## Moving to China

by Jonathan Cooper

Dad is going to China on Sept. 3rd and will return 3 weeks later to get us. This is semi-official!!!!



## Great Adventure

by Jonathan Cooper

We were driving along and suddenly a mean-looking black bear appeared right along our little car! The bear got closer and closer... We zoomed past him, just in time, too. All of the sudden, some huge, brawny male lions started a big fight! They fought, and some other lions joined in, just 100 feet. away!

Were we in Deepest Africa, on a safari? No! We were in the Safari park in Six Flags. There are nearly 1,500 animals there, representing 60 species from six continents. They all roam freely on 350 acres. The different

kinds are, however, separated from one another, because some of them don't get along together very well. The park is divided into about 10 different sections, each area supporting about 4 or 5 different kinds of animals. Except for the elephants and rhino's, they are allowed to roam around freely, and you drive your car around and look at all of the animals. They had a lot of ostriches, some lions, and albino tigers which, by the way, were also caged. There is also a monkey section where there are a lot of monkeys. We saw one car that had 4 monkeys on it! There was this one car with a monkey pulling off the trim! Fortunately, the red vinyl top Grand Marquis that we normally drive was in the repair shop so we were in Dad's work car. At the beginning of the exhibit was this sign: Monkeys can be dangerous to your car (especially to vinyl tops). Enter at your own risk! Two different monkeys got on our car!



## Six Flags

by Jonathan Cooper

We were entering Edwards Air Force base to try to break the sound barrier. First, we looked over the shoulders of people like John Glenn. We watched the testing of the engines used to power the plane we were about to fly. After a short delay, we entered the bay doors. Here, we got our flight instructions for our mission. We boarded our plane and took off!

Were we really breaking the sound barrier? No! We were at Six Flags, where they had a neat ride: "The Right Stuff", that stimulates breaking the sound barrier. It is a real

good mock-up of an air-force base. Inside, you watch an IMAX (a huge movie screen) of breaking the sound barrier. It is, in my opinion, really realistic. What really helps is that the chairs move in sync with the movie. It is a great ride. We had a good day at Six Flags. It was a nice, hot Monday. There were a lot of people there, and some really long lines. We got to see several water shows, one with people doing water skiing, and another with a lot of divers. About the middle of the afternoon, there was a real rain shower. It poured! We stayed, but a lot of other people didn't. When it stopped, about an hour later, there were not as many people there as there had been. We still enjoyed ourselves. They had some neat water rides. On one of them, you board a rather large boat, and go to the top of a large hill. Then, the boat goes all of the way down the hill and creates a tremendous splash, and you get really wet. As you get off, you cross a bridge over the water, at just about the right time when another boat goes down, and you really get soaked. We had lots of fun.



## Our Trip to Here and There

by Jon Cooper

About a week ago, we went on two different trips. One to Philadelphia, and one to Boston and Plymouth. We took Grandma and Grandpa Cooper on one of the trips to see the sights. Descriptions of the sights we saw are all mixed up in this article. It is your job to sort

them out. We saw: Plymouth Rock, The Old North Church, the US. Mint, Liberty Bell, a wax museum of the pilgrims, Benjamin Franklin's house, Paul Revere's House, a statue of Ben Franklin covered with pennies, the old state house, a park where the seed of one of the trees that had germinated on the moon was planted, the Mayflower II, and a graveyard.

On one trip we saw the old warship U.S.S. Constitution, also known as old Ironsides. The boat is over 200 years old. It is the original boat, or 20% of it is the original live oak wood. They give guided tours of the boat. When we were there, they were remodeling it. The boat is in dry dock, but it goes for a short sail every 4th of July.

We saw Independence Hall, which, back in the 1700's, used to be known as the Pennsylvania State House. We saw the room where they had their court cases resolved and the room where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were signed. Tour guides give guided tours of the building every 15 minutes, and each tour lasts 35 minutes. They tell you interesting facts, like during the colonial days during the trial there were 3 juries, 1 to 5 judges, and the jurors were always male white landowners except when the defendant was a female. In the room where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were signed, the only original objects that were there from the 1700's was the Sunburst chair, where George Washington sat, and George's silver inkstand. The building itself is over 260 years old. During the Revolution, when Philadelphia was captured by the British, it was used as a hospital for wounded soldiers.



We went inside the building where the Senate and the Congress met for seven years. On the bottom floor of the building 112 Congress met to decide issues. Above where the



Congressman sat there was a balcony where anybody who wanted to could watch. On the second floor, the 32 Senators met. There was no balcony there, and no one from the public was allowed to watch. The Senators were more powerful than the Congressman so they had a nicer room. The original carpet got lost when the Senate moved to Washington, D.C. The original portraits got destroyed in the American Revolution. There were still a few original pieces, though. There was this weird desk that had drawers on both sides where 2 clerks sat at the same time. That was an original. There were also 20 original Senators' desks.

We visited a really nice wax museum. It had statues that told the story of the pilgrims. It started when the pilgrims were in England, and ended after they had been here for a year or two. One wax figure was standing outside a display, and I thought he was real.

We went into the Old North Church, where Robert Newman put lanterns in the steeple so Paul Revere could warn all of the people that the British were coming.

We scrutinized the bare remains of Benjamin Franklin's tenant houses, which was just 2 of the outside walls. Outside, across the street, they had, under special cases, what was left of Franklin's house, which amounted to: 1 pit, an old brick wall, and some stone.

We saw Paul Revere's house. It is also an original, and is all there, unlike Benjamin Franklin's house. You can go into the house and walk around. They have it set up just like it was when Paul Revere was alive. For Benjamin Franklin's house they had a large bare, new, white frame, just where his house used to be. There were bricks on the ground showing where the walls and doors used to be. It was neat.

We also saw the U.S. mint, which was a lot of fun, even though they didn't give out any samples. They did have worn \$100 bills for sale for the price of \$1. The only problem was that the \$100 had been shredded into confetti.

We visited the replica of the Mayflower, the Mayflower II. It is just like the real Mayflower that brought 101 Pilgrims across the Atlantic Ocean. You were allowed to walk all around it, and look at everything. There were several people on the boat that were pretending they just landed on the beach in 1620. (Or then again, maybe they just had.) They talked with old English accents and had never heard of a bathroom. They were dressed in 1620 clothing and couldn't understand why we were dressed the way we were.



We went to Christ Church, where George Washington and Ben Franklin went to church. George Washington had seat #40. Benjamin Franklin had #60, and Betsy Ross had #16. The church is over 200 years old. I thought it was interesting that there were graves inside the church, right in the center isle! The headstones are laying flat, and they are quite long. There are at least 5 people buried indoors, even though they have a cemetery outside. Benjamin Franklin is buried in a cemetery near the church.

We saw the graveyard where Paul Revere was buried. He had a very small tombstone that was a present to him when he was 51. Twenty-seven men got together and gave it to him because he was so old. They thought since he lived to be 51, he deserved a reward, and they thought that he might need it soon. As it was, he lived to be 82, and he outlived everybody who gave it to him except one. The inscriptions on the graves were weird, like "Here Lyes Y Body" or "Here Lyeh Y Body". There was also the grave of Samuel Adams. Mom is now a famous graveyard tour attraction. Mom was wearing a red shirt that day, and when we stood at the graves, a tour

trolley bus stopped in the street at a red light and the driver yelled out "Hey you in the red shirt! Move over so we can see Samuel Adam's grave!" We saw a statue of Benjamin Franklin where he started the first school. We saw the Plymouth Rock. It is a large rock, but it was a little bigger before some people took pieces for souvenirs. By the time we saw it, 374 years later, Plymouth pebble was behind iron bars under a shelter.

## *Holidays for September*



Labor Day  
Sept. 4th



Grandparents Day  
Sept 11th



Citizenship Day  
Sept 17th

## Contest Winners:

The winners of my contest are Grandma Kinder and Grandpa Cooper. They defined both Lucite and Neo-Classical correctly, so they both get the grand prizes of free room and board in China (pay your own way, though). I would tell you what the correct answers to the contest are, but I am afraid that somebody would cheat and send in the answers, saying that it was delayed in the mail. Ha ha ha.

## *Where's Mike ???*

While visiting Ben Franklin's tenate house which was merely a huge room with four walls and a basement, Mike got lost from the rest of us. The house was originally three stories and for tourist purposes five flights of stairs went to the top with plaques to show where things had been. Mike went up the stairs but nobody saw him come down. So Dad yelled up the stairs for Mike, "Mike, are you there?" His voice echoed in the hollow building for all to hear. We were relived when we heard Mike answer "Yeah." Come down here!" Dad called to Mike. "Down where?" Mike replied. "All the way down" Dad insisted. We heard Mike's puzzled voice reply, "But I'm in the basement!"

## *The Coopers Great Adventure*

# The Jon Monthly



## Moving to China at Last

*by Jonathan Cooper*

On Sept. 29th, 1994, the Coopers are going to go on a year and a half trip to China. We are going to fly from Newark to Tokyo, to Shanghai, and then after spending the night at Shanghai, take a van to Wuxi. This is it! The time has finally come! This is the point of no return! The last mile. I bet you were beginning to wonder if we really were ever going to ever go. Some of you were even hoping that we wouldn't go. But, here it is! This month, we are getting ready to go to China. Are we excited? Of course we are excited! Who wouldn't be? Our house is not quite finished being built yet. We are going to live in a hotel until the house is done. We hope that we will not be in a hotel too long.



We do not know our address in China as of yet.

We have all the things that we are going to take all packed away, and the stuff that we are leaving behind is in storage in New Jersey. Most of the stuff that will be going to China is on a three-month long boat ride to China. Here in New Jersey, we have just the bare necessities. When we actually go to China Sept 29th, most of the stuff still here will be going by air shipment, such as the computer, ect. By the way, this is going to be my last American newsletter. I hope all of you can read Chinese! (ha ha)



## *Notice:*

Due to the fact that the computer will be shipped to China, my next newsletter might be a bit late. Also, if anyone would like to get on my mailing list, please either call or write me. My list has grown quite a bit recently. I had no idea that it was so popular. I am quite sorry that some of you who had wanted it had not been getting it. If anyone would like to back-order an issue, just write and tell me which one. I have issues 1 through 7 available. Also, I recently acquired some new black & white pictures, which I will be trying out in this newsletter. You can tell me how you like them.



## Apples

*by April Cooper*

On Sept 11th, 1994 Mike, Jon and April were flying a kite, playing frisbee, and jump-roping. April noticed an apple tree behind them. So Mom (who was with them) told Mike and April to go and get eight apples. Then they looked at other trees until they had ten apples, then they went home.

\* \* \*





## *The* *Runaway* *Kite*

*by Jonathan Cooper*

On Sept 11th, we (April, Mike, Mom and myself) all went to the playground at our apartment to fly our kite. It was a wonderful day to fly a kite. There was a strong, steady wind. The kite went up right away with no trouble at all. We soon had it to the length of our string. While Mike and April took turns flying it, Mom and I played frisbee.

It was hard to throw the frisbee straight, thanks to the wind. I would throw it straight at Mom, and it would curve beautifully and fly out onto the small gravel road that was nearby. Mom, for some reason, never had any trouble at all. I had finally gotten the hang of it when suddenly I heard Mike screaming "The kite got loose!" I ran after the kite until Mike had finally grabbed it and regained control. For some reason, the kite had not crashed! It was still flying! Satisfied that my assistance was no longer needed, I went back to Mom to play frisbee.

Since it was almost 2:30, we decided to go inside for lunch. After we ate lunch, we went back outside. Mike and April managed to get the kite back up in the air again, but Mom was too tired to play frisbee with me. So I just sat on the old, rusted, wooden swing set and got splinters while Mike and April flew the kite. I was in the middle of a discussion with Mom when suddenly Mike shouted "The kites getting away!" So I went after the kite and managed to get it, but not before it had crashed.

They had a little trouble getting it back up this time. It seemed that whenever they had just launched it, it would crash into this certain tall pine tree. After they had successfully launched it, I asked for a turn. They agreed, and went to play on the swing set while I stood there, holding the kite.

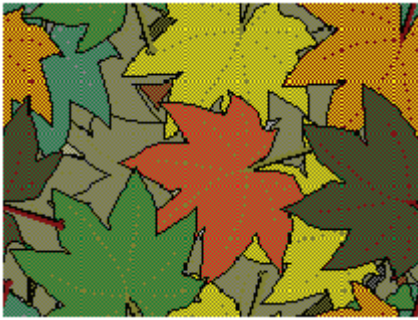
Suddenly I heard a 'twang' and I realized that the kite string had just broken. I screamed and ran after it. It kept flying until it hit a row of pine trees, where the string got tangled up in four different trees. They were really tall, and I was in doubt as to whether or not I could climb up and get it, if it was stuck in one of them. When I went to look and check out it's position, I saw that it was just hanging there, upside-down, in a tree. I reached up and grabbed it.

By this time, Mom, April, and Mike had managed to catch up and see what had happened. I straightened out the string and Mom rolled it up. I went to the other end to hold the kite, and thought that perhaps I could fly the kite while they were rolling up the other end of the string. So I tried a couple of times to fly the kite, and finally managed it. After they had rolled up the string to a certain point, I let the kite go and gave it to Mike. They flew it for a little while, and then we went home.

\* \* \*



**Wanted: Someone to write to from China so I won't get bored. Please write to April Cooper.**



## ***Holidays*** ***for the Month of October***



Universal Children's Day  
October 3rd



Columbus Day  
October 10th



Thanksgiving Day  
(Canada) Oct. 10th



United Nations Day  
Oct. 24th



Daylight Saving time ends  
October 30th



## ***My Flight Home***

*by Jonathan Cooper*

On August the 28th, I went to Tennessee to stay for a week at my friends house. We had a wonderful time. We went camping, rode bikes, and had altogether a great

time. The week was over far too soon, and I had to leave to travel back -- by plane -- to New Jersey. So I got up at 5:30 and went to the airport to travel back... alone!

## **Part 1: The Boring Flight to Pittsburgh**

We (me and my friend's dad) arrived at the airport and went to check in my baggage. Then he took me to my gate, entrusted me in the care of an airline stewardess, signed some paperwork, and said goodbye. I followed the stewardess to the airplane, which turned out to be this small, noisy commuter plane which was to take me from Kingsport, Tennessee to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. I must admit that I had my doubts. I looked at my ticket and took my seat, which just had to be right by the engine. At least I had the window seat. Not that I could see much -- it was wet, foggy and raining.

The plane took off uneventfully, and I looked to see who was sitting next to me. It was this business executive, who was sound asleep. I wonder how he did it, with the sound of the engines, the creaking of the airplane and all. I busied myself with staring out at the dense fog. Presently, the plane broke out of the clouds and I could see the nice sunrise. The captain announced that we were presently at 15,000 feet and on our way to a cruising altitude of 20,000 feet. He also mentioned that the weather was great in Pittsburgh. I then read my magazine until the stewardess asked me if I wanted some peanuts or a drink. I said yes to the peanuts and no to the drink. After I had finished my peanuts, the stewardess came and collected the garbage. Then the captain announced that we would be arriving at Pittsburg shortly, in about 10 minutes. He mentioned something about chairs in their upright and locked positions.

It really was a nice day in Pittsburgh. It was sunny, and there weren't very many clouds. We landed. I waited until everybody else had left, and then I got off. Another

stewardess signed some more paperwork, and they took me to the terminal. Then this guy signed more paperwork (this story has a lot of paperwork in it, doesn't it?) and took me on one of those little cars that they have in airports. I got to ride in the front seat. He took me to another terminal, where I waited until another lady came with another car to take me away. She signed some paperwork, and then took me to this little special waiting room, where I waited for over an hour until it was almost time for my plane. Then they signed some more paperwork and another lady took me on another little car where she drove me to my terminal, and then they signed more paperwork! and they checked me in. I waited for a short time, and then I boarded the plane, where more paperwork was signed.

## Part II: The Uneventful Flight to Newark

I boarded the plane and prepared for takeoff. After a while, the captain said that they were calling the fuel truck back because they short-changed him of enough fuel to make it to Newark. I looked out the window and wondered if it would be better to have atomic reactors in jet planes. No refueling!

We eventually took off. It was a nice day, so I looked out the window for a while, until we got into the clouds. It is a very nice plane. There is a TV set (for in-flight movies, I suppose) embedded in the back of every seat. The armrest had a radio, and a little fax/telephone machine. The plane was no jet prop! It was a large Boeing 747. I looked at the passenger sitting beside me. He was a business executive, only he wasn't asleep. He had a lot of papers on his lap. The top one seemed to be an ad for some new kind of tablet or medicine. Part of the ad had been crossed out, and there were a few lines that had been penciled in. The guy seemed real worried about something, or at least nervous. He took out the fax/phone several times, and started to dial, and then he

would stop, and put it back. He would look out the window, look at the ad, and think. Eventually he settled down. Then the 'fasten seat belt' sign flashed off, and another stewardess came and offered me my choice of 3 different kinds of cookies. I choose one, and turned down the offer of a drink. After I had eaten the cookies, I looked out of the window for a while. Then the pilot announced that we were coming in for a landing. We landed without any undue complications, and they started unloading the passengers. I waited once more until everybody was off of the plane, and then I exited. Some MORE paperwork was signed at this point. Mom was waiting at the airport to pick me up. She had to sign (guess) more paperwork, and then I went home.

\* \* \*

## Notice (II):

Until we get our new address in China, please mail any mail to:

**Stanley E. Cooper**  
***Rhone-Poulenc Inc., Bldg.I***  
***CN 7500***  
***Cranbury, NJ 08512-7500***

It will be forwarded to us in China.



## My Trip to the Farm

*by Jonathan Cooper*

A few weeks ago, my whole family made a trip to West Virginia to visit the country. We stopped at Charleston to visit Grandma Kinder and had a good time there. We proceeded to the country where we visited our cousins and saw their new baby, which I mentioned in my last newsletter. We played in the creek and had a good time. We caught a



turtle (or Scott, the oldest, did) and we played with him (he was a very active turtle). Mike and April caught a frog and some lizards and enjoyed playing with those. We tried to catch fish and crabs, but didn't do too well.

Mike fished with a worm tied to a string. We saw Mom's cousins that she hadn't seen in years. We enjoyed ourselves and were sorry when it came time to leave.



## **Programming Trouble**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

In my first newsletter I mentioned Paul Seufert and the program *Empire* that he was working on. Well, we have been working on it and have completed it, at last. But we both recently got the programming language C and are having a whole lot of trouble converting it. *Empire* is a text adventure, and requires one to type in information to do something. It is written in Qbasic. It seems to me that C doesn't support case statements where you can type in text and get a reply depending what the text is. Please help! Also, if anybody would like a copy (to help us convert it) please write to me.

\* \* \*



## **The Day We Did Go to the Beach**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

One day last week we went to the beach. It was a nice day, not too hot, not too cold. Just right. It was nice and windy, too. We got out our blankets and went right down to business. April and Mike went to play in the waves, and I built a huge sand castle with a complex moat. As soon as I had finished, the tide started to come in. It survived for quite a while, with me managing the emergency repairs. Eventually though, I got tired and watched to see just how firm my walls were. They held for quite some time, but eventually the gallant castle succumbed to the relentless waves.

After that I tried to fly the kite. Boy, was that hard! At first, the kite wouldn't go up at all, but would just curve and crash straight down and crash into the sand. It would do this time after time after time. Eventually it went up. But it sure wasn't easy to keep it there! One moment it would be just fine, and the next it was zooming straight down. Then I had to run for it and it would (hopefully) go back up. Then I would find a nice wind stream and fly it a while, taking a rest, and head back to the rest of the family and then I noticed that it was heading straight down again. I managed to fly it for about a half of an hour and it only crashed three times, once into the ocean (it didn't get washed out to sea though) and once into the sand and once into Mommy. I got too

tired to fly it, though, so I rolled it in, and then we went home.

\* \* \*

## Quote of the Month:



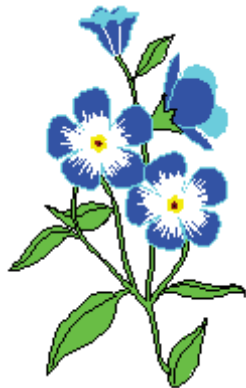
*"Poorly educated indeed is a man who doesn't know at least two ways to spell a word."*

**Benjamin Franklin**

## A Special Thank You

*Thank you, Grandma Kinder, for taking care of my fish while I'm in China. I know that it's a lot of work, a lot of hard work, cleaning out the tanks, scrubbing filters, and feeding fish. I know that you also have fish of your own to take care of, two 10 gallon tanks and your own 38 gallon. My 38 gallon and my 10 gallon must be hard to take care of. Thank you, Grandma Kinder.*

*I know that this hinders your enjoyment on vacations, always worrying about the fish, even when someone else is taking care of them.*



*I know that nobody else in the entire world could do as good a job as you are. Your tanks are overflowing with fish that you bred yourself. You have had to go and sell fish to the fish store, you have had so many. You have bred the most beautiful guppies that I have ever seen. You also*

*have the biggest fish that I have ever seen. I did not know that any fish gets as big as the size of your guppies and loaches. This must take a lot of work to keep a tank in such condition. Thank you, Grandma.*

*Consider the other activities that you do. You work actively in the church with the children. You go to exercise, and help others*

*when they need assistance. You mow the lawn, and keep the house in tiptop condition. You do all of this and yet you still find time to take care of my fish. Not many grandmas would do all of these things for her grandson. Thank you, Grandma Kinder.*

*You also let me keep my most treasured possessions at your house in your attic. This uses up any space that you might need to put something later on. Thanks, Grandma Kinder. I am a very privileged boy to have a grandma who would do all of this for their grandson. I hope that you will come and see me in China. Thank you, Grandma Kinder.*

# The Jon Monthly



## Our New House

*by Jonathan Cooper*

As I have said, we are having a house built for us in China. As of now, the house is not quite done, due to delays. It is quite close, though. The main holdup before was getting the wooden floors finished, and that has (at long last) been completed. Now just about all that remains to be finished is the plumbing, piping, wiring, and the fixing-up of the mistakes, and we are waiting for the appliances for the house to arrive (the stove, refrigerator, etc). The house should be completed in a couple of weeks, hopefully. The house that we are getting is a white, two story house with a green roof. It has 5 bedrooms (one of which we will make into a schoolroom), 3 bathrooms, 2 living rooms, a garage, and a kitchen-dining room. It will do quite nicely. I think that it is a very nice house for China, even more so when one considers what we could have had. It is in the middle of a sub-division built just for us westerners (I.E., people from Europe and North America). The sub-division is not quite halfway finished, although there are some people already living there. I will notify you in my next newsletter if anything else comes up.

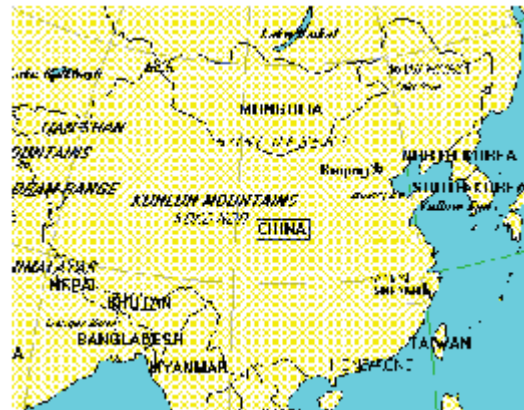
\* \* \*



## Notice:

I am quite sorry that this edition of my newsletter is late, but it could not be helped. It takes quite a bit of time to ship something from the U.S. to China, and once something does get here it has to go through customs and things, so I did not get the computer to make a newsletter in time to meet my deadline. I am quite sorry about this, and I hope that my subscribers did not get too terribly bored waiting (he he). I hope that this next edition will suffice.

--Jonathan Cooper




## My First Impressions of China

*by Jonathan Cooper*

My first impressions of China were a bit muddled, since I was still a bit sleepy from the long 24 hours spent traveling from our house in New Jersey to our hotel in Shanghai. All I wanted to do was to go to bed. But in the morning... That is another story.

I awoke and looked out the window of our hotel room in Shanghai. The first thing I noticed was all of the buildings. There are old shacks right next to the big, tall new buildings. And the cranes... I could see many, many cranes. Later we counted them and found that we could see 16 from our window, and that was just our side of the hotel! There was massive construction going on in all directions. Trying to modernize, I suppose.

We then had breakfast and took a walk around the city to go shopping and to see what there was to see. The very first thing that hit me was the amount of people and the amount of bicycles. There are tons of people in Shanghai. People were everywhere. One could not get away from people in China. There were especially a good number of people on this particular day, as it just happened to be a Saturday, the one right before a national holiday, too. It seemed to me that all of Shanghai's 15 million people were out shopping that day. It looked like a Christmas-eve rush to me. Later I found out that it was just another Saturday.

Trying to shop here was something else, too. First off, almost all of the words that you could see were in Chinese characters. Not exactly helpful in knowing what you wanted to buy! Also, the prices were different. Chinese money is different from American, in both denomination and value-wise. It takes  \$8.50 to make one US dollar, so if you wanted to know how much something was, you had to mentally count up the value (let's see here. This jacket is \$200.00. \$200 divided by 8.5... that's \$23.52). The bills are also different. It seems that the Chinese have a bill for every coin that they have, not to mention their 1\$, 5\$, etc. bills. Shopping here is quite different.

One thing that I forgot to mention was the taxi ride to the shopping area. That was an experience. It was like a nightmare to me, but you eventually get sort of halfway use to it after a while. It was a wild ride. Later on in this newsletter I will go deeper into this subject. Even crossing the street was totally different.

You don't just simply look both ways and wait until the street is clear, because if you did you would be there all day! Instead, you cross the street about half-way, and then you wait until the other half of the road is clear, and then you continue on across. That part really got to me. To be standing in the middle of a busy road, with cars whizzing around you at all sides, nervously thinking what would happen if one of them hit you...

After we finished shopping, we visited the markets. That was another totally different experience. To see all of the different vegetables just sitting there, not canned or



prepackaged was bad enough, but the meat... It was quite different, to see all of that live, unsuspecting food there, just waiting to be bought and slaughtered on the spot. There were buckets full of live crabs, live fish, live

shrimps... And then there was this one lady who was slicing live eel into strips... Ugh. But it was interesting. There are a lot more different kinds of fruit here than in a supermarket in the US. Still, to think that we would be shopping for all of our groceries at a place like this is a, hmmm, interesting thought. Being in China gets quite interesting at times. Its almost like being in another world!

### Notice:



*Now is the time to start getting your passports ready to go to China. It takes a while to get a passport, and you don't want to wait until spring -- when China is at its best -- to get them. So, everyone, go out there and get your passports!*





(Mother looking for her bicycle (ha, ha))

## Getting Around in China

by Jonathan Cooper

To get from place to place in China is nothing at all like getting around in the U.S. It is quite different. For starters, the main transportation is the bike, by far. Everywhere you go you see bicycle after bicycle. There are literally millions of them. Getting around with them is a far cry from easy, too. I say that anyone who can easily ride a bike in China is an expert, and here's why.

First off, riding a bike here is much harder than even driving a car in the US. It is almost like an arcade game. Dad said that it is a training course on what not to do.



You try to get to your destination as fast as possible, and the only rule is to try not to run anybody down, especially not a policeman. But beside that, it's a free world. If there is a slower bike in front of you, you pass him. No matter if somebody else is trying to, or if you have to cut somebody off in the process. Or, let's say, there is a slow bicyclist in front of you, and you want to pass him on a two way street, do you stay in your

lane? Absolutely not! Instead, you speed up, in order to pass the slow cyclist before the other guy collides with you head on.

Another minor thing is that there are seldom any of those nice, white lines painted on the road to keep you in line. So, bikes, cars and taxis are going everywhere, all at the same



time! On top of this fact, Wuxi has only about 10 stoplights or so, and only when there is a policeman there does anybody actually obey to them. At many (excuse me, all) major intersections it is a nightmare. Everyone is going everywhere at the same time, and nobody would ever dream of slowing down very much. Stopping is unheard of. I think that everyone thinks, "Why would you ever want to slow down? It's just a waste of time, and besides, I'll be all right. After all, I've got the right-of-way." Trucks are zooming left while a bicycle narrowly misses hitting him from the back, and a taxi is swerving around the whole bunch of them, getting in the wrong lane in the process, and almost colliding into somebody else, but swerving again, getting into the right lane, and a bike almost hits him... This sort of thing is quite common here. Words cannot describe riding a bike (or taxi) in China. I have personally done both, and I think that they should put huge, red warning signs on all new bikes:

**Warning: Riding This Bicycle Can Be Hazardous To Your Health.**

It would be hard enough even if everybody drove correctly (correctly, that is, by my standards), what with the 4.1 million people here in Wuxi, but when they drive like the roads an open racetrack it is ten times harder. One must not only watch out for himself, but must make sure that the other 100,000 bicyclists that also share the road with you (or try to hog it) don't somehow hit you. I have been lucky, however. I have ridden a bike eight times so far, and the closest I've had are

near misses. Somebody said that you can drive a car without headlights, without seat belts, almost without a motor, but you cannot drive a car in China without a horn. People here are constantly blowing their horns at everybody they see, and they see a lot of people. It is a lot of racket!

After bikes, the next most popular transportation is the taxi. Taxis are something else. The majority of them are red, by the way, not yellow. They are not very expensive -- most average about \$1.70 RMB (that is about 20 US cents) per kilometer. It's better than a roller-coaster ride, not to mention that it's cheaper than going to Six flags. Driving a car is worse than riding a bike, I think. Taxi drivers are expert drivers, in my opinion. You not only must miss all of the bikes that think that they have the right-of-way, but you must also make sure that no other cars are going to crash into you, and you must watch out for pedestrians, trucks and the like, and you must do it all at the same time. The speedometers on taxi's go up to about 120 mph, and it seems to be a game among taxi drivers to see how close they can get to that number. And to ride in one is a nightmare, especially in the front seat. It is a lot like riding a bike, or watching a demolition derby movie with the camera positioned so that it appears that you are the one who is driving. In the front seat you can clearly see the color of the driver's eyes of the car that came within an inch of hitting head on with you. It seems to me that there is an endless line of bikes appearing from all directions. Suddenly a car I hadn't seen almost hit us, and when the driver swerved, he almost collided with a bicycle... Of course, none of this ever does so much as make the driver blink.



## **Riding the Rails Last Class**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Traveling by train is the best way to cross long distances in China, so whenever we go to other cities (Shanghai, for instance) we almost always travel by train. Train seats in China come in two categories: hard seat and soft. Now, by name alone one might not think that there are not many differences between the two, but there is. I know because I personally have ridden both soft and hard seat. Most of the time we ride soft seat, (we are quite soft, us westerners) but this particular time we rode hard. Boy, was that a ride! This is how the ride went:

First off, we (Dad and I) boarded our train. Immediately after we got into the car I noticed a big difference. The benches that you sit on are a bit longer, but instead of fitting 2 people they fit 3 (I thought that two people on those benches was stretching it a bit!). The fluorescent lighting was not very good (I.E. every other light worked) and there was no air-conditioning. Fortunately, though, it was a perfect day for hard-seat traveling, not too hot, not too cold. In the soft seat cars, smoking is not allowed, and people are not allowed to just stand in the isles during the ride. Here, in hard seat, both of these bans were lifted. The air was just full of smoke, and people were everywhere. It was literally packed with more people than it could hold! It seems that the ticket sellers can (and do) sell standing-room only tickets. It was really crowded. It was so crowded that the vendors who peddled their wares up and down the isles could hardly push their buggies for all of the people! One could

certainly believe that there is 1.1 billion people in China. It seemed to me that all of them were on this train with me! We also just happened to pick a very slow train. The ride, you see, lasted a *full three hours*. Three hours of boredom. Three hours of staring motionlessly out of the window for fear that if you moved you would bump into somebody. It was quite a ride, let me tell you. We did, however, get the good fortune of getting a window seat, so we left the window open for the entire ride (to let the smoke out of the car, you see). And, like the name, the seats were just barley padded. One really got sore on these rides. I did manage to get a brief moment of sleep in, which helped (just barley, though) to make the ride seemed shorter.

I did, however, see a few interesting sights out the window. One thing that I never



saw was just nothingness, just trees, like you would see in the U.S. if you were traveling. One

could always see a house or a person or something. There was always something out there. Another thing that I saw was a lot of was little patches of farm land. It seemed to me that the Chinese were farming every available inch of land. Not a bit of land was wasted. I also saw a few grass huts here and there, and somebody plowing with an ox! There were lots of Chinese out there farming, wearing their traditional pointed straw hats.

Let me tell you, though, for all of the uniqueness of that ride I was quite pleased when the train pulled into Wuxi and I could get off. I learned to be quite grateful for soft class on that trip. It was, all in all, quite an interesting trip.



## **Trips and Things in China**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

We have been to so many places and seen so many things that I do not know if I can summarize the rest of them enough to fit into this article. Yet I am going to make a grand try.

I have made one to Nanjing, many trips to Shanghai and, of course, Wuxi. Here is a brief description of the things that we have seen:

In Shanghai, among other things, we saw the Shanghai Acrobatic Theater. There you can see different acrobats doing fabulous tricks. They do all sorts of things, such as



twisting, turning, bending, jumping, flipping, among other things. There was this one guy who just spun plates on a little narrow table. He started out with 3, then a clown would wheel

out another row of plates, which he would spin, and the guy would go and get more plates... In the end he had 27 plates spinning at once. They also had a panda bear. He did all sorts of tricks, like driving a toy car, sliding down a slide, jumping through a hoop, and other things. It was quite neat.

I also, as I said, went to Nanjing. There, I saw the tomb of Sun Yet Sen, an important person in Chinese history. He had quite a tomb, better than most other tombs I have seen. It is



on top of a tall mountain, and consists of three buildings. The first building is at the foot of the hill, the second is half-way up the hill, and the last is at the very top of the hill. The stairs are quite interesting. They are grouped together like this: First stairs, a long platform, more stairs, another platform. If you are at the foot of the hill you only see many, many stairs -- no platforms. It looks all up-hill. But, if you are at the top of the hill, all you can see are the platforms. It looks almost level! Climbing up those stairs was quite a walk. It got to be very tiring after a while. There were these two guys, though, at the foot of the hill who, if you paid them, would carry you up all of those stairs in one of those Chinese chairs supported by poles. Once you get to the top, though, you could see a nice view of the city. You could see for miles in all directions.

The burial chamber itself was quite interesting. The actual tomb lies at the top of the hill, like I said. When you enter, there is a statue in the middle of the room and the walls are covered with a whole lot of Chinese characters. I could not read them, so I cannot tell you what they say. After you looked around a bit you enter a small back room. It is guarded like a bank vault. First off, there are two guards right outside the door. The first set of doors are solid brass, several inches thick. The second door is solid steel, and resembles a bank vault door. It is at least a foot thick, and has about five dead-bolts in it. Nobody was going to enter that room illegally! The room that all of those doors leads to is in the shape of a circle, with guards in all directions. In the middle of the room, in a sort of deep depression in the floor, was the coffin. There (at the mouth of the 'pit') is a solid marble railing. The coffin is solid marble, but much purer. On the lid of the coffin is a life-like carving of Sun Yet Sen. He looked quite impressive down there, with his Chinese coat on and his mustache. It was all quite impressive. There were (as I have said before) several guards standing guard, and Dad said

that if I jumped down there I would spend the rest of my life in jail. I did not care to try it.

At the back of the tomb is a little sort of open-air museum, with pictures and things on the walls. It shows the history of both Sun Yet Sen and the history of the tomb itself. I could not read the characters, but I enjoyed looking at all the pictures.

We also visited the home of Dr. Sun Yet Sen, though we did not have a lot of time to see much the day that we visited. We did, however, look around a bit. The grounds were quite beautiful. There is a pond in the middle of the complex, and in the middle of the pond is a building. The building was locked, but we could see through the windows that there was a lot of furniture inside. It was not just any furniture, though. It was a very nice, hand-carved mahogany furniture that must have cost a fortune. It was very delicately made, It looked as if the chair had sat in a meadow too long, and that vines had grown all over it. It was really very beautiful.

There were also a lot of queer, big gray rocks around. They were quite big and Dad said that they were special rocks that were exported to other countries. He said that they were used for decoration. I thought that they looked interesting.



## **The Other Side Of The Coin**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

After all I have said about China, I suppose that the opposite is true, too. I can just picture some Chinese family out there, going over to America. I can see them preparing themselves, getting all of their stuff that they can't find in the US. Then they will go to America and marvel at the differences. They will wonder how a culture could possibly live the way that we do...



They will be shocked at the number of cars on the road. They will wonder whatever happened to their safer method of transportation, the bicycle. They will wonder how they will ever learn to get around in the horribly dangerous car, and will wonder how long this has lasted, what with all of the crazy drivers.

And I can also picture them going shopping. They will go into a grocery store and wonder at all of the prepackaged foods, and will wonder if it is safe to eat or not. They will hunt desperately for any food that looks familiar, and they will try new things with hesitation. When they arrive at the meat section, they will wonder whatever happened to their fresh, live meat, and what all of this stuff is. They will, just like us, hesitate to get something as strange as that. When they go to buy something, I can just see them changing the price into Chinese dollars: "Let's see here. This box of cereal is \$2.99. That's about \$25.41. A little high, I think". And I can also see them, scanning the labels to see anything that looks familiar, and wondering; why couldn't the US adopt a much easier route; characters. And they will have trouble figuring out what bills are what, and where their currency bills went to.

I can also see them going on a vacation, to see some famous landmark. I can see them going to the Statue of Liberty and wondering what in the world it is. And I can see them wondering why in the world nobody is staring at them, wondering if their hair is out of place or something. I can see them going up the stairs inside the statue, and wondering why would Americans climb up to the top of a statue just to see a good view. And I can see them walking through a park, and seeing a big sign that says: Keep Off The Grass. They will probably wonder what it means, and, since the sign is in red, and since it is a rather large sign, they will stop to take a picture of their family by it, since they cannot read it.

And, I can see them coming home to China after 2 years, and telling their family how they braved living in the US.



## **The Great Chopstick Problem**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Eating with chopsticks is a necessity in China, of course. Everyone eats with them here. In fact, their food is sort of designed for it. Since most of their food is in a noodle-type shape, you really must eat with chopsticks (anyway, they do not have nice things like forks and spoons here). Now, by just looking at the little innocent things it would look like there was really nothing to it, you just pick them up and... Or is there? As you will see, it really is quite a problem.

First off, you must pick up those things. That alone is not too hard, but you must do it in such a fashion that you are able to eat with them. It is not easy. Several times I have thought that I had tried the perfect plan all laid out until I tried to eat. I would practice a bit before the food came, and then I would try out my new method, and it would not work. I might be able to get the food to my plate, but once it was there it just would not go any farther. I would pick it up and it would just slip out of my chopsticks. It is certainly not easy. If you think about it, it is really not easy. In the US, you just have to use one object at a time -- a fork, a knife, a spoon. And each object is designed for its own purpose -- a spoon for scooping, a fork for stabbing, etc. But with chopsticks, you not only use two objects at the same time, with the same hand, but you use those two objects for all of your purposes. It, like I have said, is not easy. I am, however, slowly catching on.

Let me say, though, that the Chinese have the same problem with eating with silverware. When Dad and I went to Nanjing,

the Chinese took us to a 'western' restaurant. It was a lot of fun to see them having trouble, for a change. They did not handle their silverware very well, and the way they used it! One guy sliced his biscuit with a knife and fork, and then he dipped it in ketchup. It was very funny. I think it is the same with us and the Chinese. I bet that, unconsciously we are making a whole bunch of stupid, but easy to make, mistakes. One day, hopefully, we too will be good at chopsticks, and then, when we return to the US, we will wonder how to use silverware!

## **Why This Issue is so Late**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

You know from the notice on page one about the delays in receiving the computer. But that is not the half of it. Here's how things went:

When we finally got the PC, we (Dad and I) gallantly plugged in the monitor. It, of course, instantly blew up, since it could not run by the Chinese power. Oops. We got a new monitor. Then, one day, Mom was making bread with the bread machine through the transformer (we learned after the monitor blew up) and the transformer blew (the transformer not being big enough for the bread machine. So much for running the printer with the transformer. So, I run up my editing copies on a B&W printer, and, just as I am printing up my first real copy, the printer runs out of ink. So, I wait another two weeks past the 22nd to print it. Maybe I'll move up my deadline...

# The Jon Monthly



## Now You See It, Now You Don't

by Paul Seufert

Aha! There it is! Hush everyone! I've... lost it. Shucks. Hmmf. Maybe I could get a job as a janitor...

THAT is the life of every computer programmer, folks. We get a sudden inspiration and POOF, it's gone. Every single day we poor sods engage in countless wild goose chases. Well, sometimes the younger of our frustrated class do something relaxing. Such as playing Legos, computer games, or reading. USUALLY, however, we give in to our urge which compels us to design Lego computers, play games that WE made up on the computer, or read programming language books. Just an in-born instinct, I suppose.

Recently I had a sudden, powerful brainstorm. This brainstorm came in the weirdest of circumstances. I was sitting at the computer, writing to Jon Cooper, and listening to Mozart on the stereo. Then, suddenly, out of the blue, I was struck by an inspiration to dramatically improve my most difficult program.

You see, Jon and I have been working for around four months on a program called "Medieval Empire." A very simple program. So it seemed at first.

The biggest problem has always been memory. See, Qbasic can only hold a limited

amount of code in its main file. So you buy more room by putting some code in sub-programs and sequential files (weird names where you stick stuff). I had the general idea of what to do, but was never able to figure out the details.



But I finally found "it" -- the key to all my labor! I found it by using a sub-program looping around a global array which would trigger a case statement, which would... forget it. Now, it will only take around five months to convert the whole program to this new idea of mine... if it doesn't disappear first.

*Paul Seufert is a 12-year-old writer/programmer. He has written an article for the magazine "God's World Today", and he is currently working on another one.*



## Hong Kong, Here We Come!

by Jonathan Cooper

On November 25, we left our hotel room to travel to our destination: Hong Kong, the New York City of the Orient. We had been preparing to go for weeks, anxiously waiting and dreaming about what Hong Kong would be like. But the time was finally here! We were actually going to go! Here is how the trip went:

## **Part 1: From Wuxi to Guangzhou**

On Thanksgiving Day, after a good, wholesome lunch from the hotel restaurant, we looked at our watches and realized that if we did not hurry to the train station, we would miss our train to Shanghai! So we rushed down to the lobby, caught a taxi to the train station, ran to our terminal. But, as it turned out the train was late. That was good, for if it had been on time, we could have missed our train! So we sat down and waited. Finally, we boarded our train.

It was an average soft seat train, good air-conditioning, nice seats, ect. I was certainly not complaining (not after that hard seat trip). It was a long ride, though. Not much happened. Mostly, I just stared out of the window and took naps.

We arrive in Shanghai, and had our average wild ride to the hotel. We were going to stay in the Cypress hotel, but it seemed that nobody (van driver included) knew where the hotel was. So the driver drove us to his headquarters, and asked the people there where it was. He returned, none the wiser. So we decided to stay in the Holiday Inn instead, a well known hotel. He had parked the van when he went to ask, and now that he was ready to leave, did a u-turn in the middle of the road to turn around. As it turned out, he did not curve tight enough, and he ended up blocking an entire lane. And, to top it off, the van wouldn't go in reverse. So we sat there, parked sideways in the middle of the road, with cars whizzing past us, while the driver unhurriedly tried to go in reverse. He finally did, and we made it to the hotel in one piece (I think).

So we then decided to have supper. We went to a nearby bakery and had doughnuts for supper, (You can't get those in Wuxi) while the rest of the world was feasting on turkey, ham, pie, and everything else. But we were content.

The next day we took an airplane to Guangzhou. It was a nice airplane, as Chinese



airplanes go. It was roughly the same size as the one I flew in from Japan to China. It did have a few differences from its US counterparts, though. For one thing, it was a



very bumpy ride. I don't know why, but it was. The 'Fasten Seat Belt' sign was on almost constantly. Another difference was in the service. They did serve lunch, but they did it a bit differently. First off, they did not make just one slow, unhurried trip down the aisles. They rushed around just as fast as they could go, and instead of just one trip, they made several. Also, they showed a movie constantly, throughout entire the flight.

After several hours, we touched down in Guangzhou, one of the oldest cities in China, where the second stage of our journey would begin.

## **Part 2: From Guangzhou to Hong Kong and Back**

After arriving in Guangzhou (known as Canton to westerners), we took a van (yet another wild ride) to the hotel. We stayed at the White Swan hotel. They have a Presidential Suite that President Nixon and Queen Elizabeth have stayed in.



Guangzhou is one of the oldest cities in China, and for over 1,000 years it has been one of the main gateway into the country. Taxi's are a lot more expensive in Guangzhou (compare \$1.60 RMB with \$2.80), possibly because it is so close to Hong Kong. Guangzhou has a lot to see. It is quite a westernized city, as Chinese cities go, but it also has a lot of really old buildings. It has a lot of nice parks, and (something that cannot be seen most at places in China) it has a lot of old trees. Old trees are very rare in China. Guangzhou also has a lot of palm trees, as it is quite tropical there. Although we did not spend a lot of time sight-seeing, we did see a few sights, such as a 'public telephone' (a phone on a desk on the sidewalk





that somebody charges money to use.) Mom saw a 'laundromat' (a washer on the sidewalk that was plugged into a metal pole).

The next day we caught a train to Hong Kong. It was quite a long train ride, about 3 or 4 hours long. I spent most of my time gazing out of the window, looking at things like grass huts and oxen. I also saw a lot of people working on the railroad.



Finally, after the train ride was over, we pulled into Hong Kong, went through customs, and we took a taxi to our hotel, the Regal Riverside. Hong Kong was just as I had expected it to be in some ways, and better in other ways. It was, like I said, a Chinese New-York City. It's very modern. They even have fast-food restaurants! (something that China is sorely in need of)

Hong Kong was like a paradise to us. It had everything that China is lacking to make China more like the US. The only thing is their driving. Most of them drive just like the Chinese. There were, however, no bicycles whatsoever.

Hong Kong has everything. It has good subways, orderly lanes and street signs that people actually listen to, skyscrapers, cars, fast-food, and English-speaking people! It also has the biggest shopping malls that I have ever seen. The one we went to goes on and on and on... On our first day in Hong Kong we went to the mall, and we had the hardest time finding Hardees. Eventually, after walking what seemed like miles, somebody took us through another part of the mall that we had not yet seen and told us where to find it. Another day while we were shopping, one of our Chinese friends who lives in Hong Kong took us to the Pizza Hut (something else that China needs). We were sure that we had seen all of the mall, and we did not remember seeing Pizza Hut. But they took us through a new part of the mall, and there it was, in another unexplored section.

While we were there, we bought a lot of items that we are unable to get in China (i.e.

food). Shopping in Hong Kong is just like shopping in the US. We managed to get almost everything that we wanted. In fact, we got so much stuff that we had trouble carrying it all, and we ended up taking a van from Shanghai to Wuxi, instead of the train.

When we were not shopping for things to take back to China, we were out sight-seeing. There are a whole lot of neat things to see in Hong Kong.

For example, we rode in a Chinese Junk. There is a picture of one in my picture at the head of this article. As you can see, there is quite a contrast of old and new in Hong Kong. The nicest boats that I have ever seen I saw in Hong Kong, right next to the worst boats that I have ever seen. There



is a whole fishing community that lives out on the bay, complete with garbage boats, house boats, fishing boats, recycling boats, grocery boats (where the fisherman go shopping, so that they do not have to go to dry land), everything that one would need to live out on the bay. We learned quite a bit about the life of



a fisherman, as well as a few interesting facts, such as they go out at night to fish. We saw some interesting things, too. For instance, there is a huge floating restaurant out on the bay. It's simply gigantic. It must have been at least 4 stories tall!

We also went to the top of a mountain on HK Island. It has a wonderful view of the city, once you were actually at the top. We rode to the top of the mountain on a double-decker bus. It's quite a ride on a steep, 2 lane road that wrapped around the mountain (one lane coming, another lane going). We rode mainly on the outside lane, too. And the way the Chinese drivers drive combined with the fact that we were on the top floor of the bus (by a window, too) gave us



quite a memorial ride. It was even better that a taxi ride! (Just ask Mom! I think she left fingernail marks in the back seat.)

We started up the mountain just before dark, so by the time that we reached the top, it was dark. The view was spectacular with all of the city lights. We could see the bay on one side, and the city on another. There was also a path that went all around the mountain. It's about 1 mile around, with viewing places placed at different points, so you can get a better view. We chose not to go on the path because it was dark.



When we went back down the mountain, we went down a bit differently. We took a tram that went almost straight down the mountain. When we looked out of the window, it looked as if all of the buildings were steeply slanted! It was much shorter than the bus ride, too. (The bus ride was 30 minutes long, the tramway was 5.)

After a long, 4 day stay in Hong Kong, we finally had to go home. So we boarded a train to Canton, where we stayed for 1½ days, before we flew back to Shanghai.

While we were there, we saw quite a few sights. Some of the things I had already mentioned, like the pay telephone. Guangzhou has a lot of very nice, large parks. Most of them have a number of statues of famous Chinese people that we have never heard of. The parks there are very nice. They have some of the biggest palm trees that I have ever seen, as well as some really neat, old trees that have a lot of character.



One park that we went to must have had a million stairs. We climbed one especially long set of stairs to find this sort of lighthouse-shaped building on top, not the statue that we were looking for. So, we walked down a different set of stairs (aiming for the statue). We ended up on a rather long road, with paths going off in all directions. We choose one. It

went downhill, to what the sign said was a part of a Ming Dynasty wall. It is old, black, and covered with moss. We continued on and we finally found our statue. It is the 'most photographed' statue in Guangzhou. It's a large statue, consisting of 5 rams. We photographed it, and then endeavored to find a way out of the park. It was harder than we first thought. After a while, we found the entrance to the park. There was a large map of the park, clearly showing where all of the paths and statues were. We found it just a bit too late. We did, though, eventually find our way out.

One last thing we saw in Guangzhou



This picture shows Dr. Sun Yat Sen (he is the one that is seated)

was a memorial for Dr. Sun Yat Sen. He, like I said in my last newsletter, was a famous revolutionist in Chinese history. The memorial for him is a large, octagonal Chinese monolith building that is 47 meters high, 71 meters wide, and has a seating capacity of about 4,000 people. It was built with funds donated from overseas

Chinese. In front of the memorial building is a large, life-size statue of Dr. Sun Yat Sen. When we were there, though, nothing going on. It was quite dusty. It looked as if nobody had been there for ages. They supposedly have meetings there.

Well, the next day we boarded a plane going back to Shanghai, where we took a van to Wuxi. The great trip was over, but I felt that we had accomplished a great deal for the week-and-a-half that we had been on vacation.



## **Notice: Our House**

I mentioned in my last newsletter that we might move into our house soon, and I was right. If everything goes as planned, we should move in around the 27th of December. Finally, after many delays, setbacks, and everything else, we will finally be moving into our house.

Since we will not be in the hotel, do not mail any more letters there. Just send it to my Dad's office in New Jersey. I have already given it to you in a prior newsletter, but I will give it to you again. Here it is:

**Stanley E. Cooper**  
**Rhone-Poulenc Inc, Bldg. I**  
**CN 7500**  
**Cranbury, NJ 08512-7500**



## **Holidays For the Month of January**



New Years Day  
 January 1st

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# The Jon Monthly



## Ready Or Not Villa, Here We Come!

*by Jonathan Cooper*

As you well know by now, we have had a house built for us in China and we, at last, have moved into it. But moving into a house in China is not as easy as it seems, as you will find out...

Let me start at the beginning. Our house, if everything had gone as planned, should have been completed by the end of July, or (at the latest) the beginning of August. But, as things rarely do happen on time in China, it was January of 1995 before we could move in, and even then we had (excuse me, have) a lot of problems!

For starters, we found out that the heating system in our villa had a few problems. In other words, it did not work. It should have at least put out a little heat, since it is a brand-new system. But no, it was broken. (We still, one month after we moved in, have not managed to get it working!) So we spent the next few days going around and buying heaters and all of the other necessities that we would need so that we could move into our villa.

After we had finished our initial shopping, we moved all our stuff into our house because we thought we would move into our villa very soon.

Due to the fact that we lived on the 9th floor of the Milido Hotel, the bellboys had to take all our stuff we had brought to China down 9 floors to a truck that was waiting outside. That was interesting. They grunted and groaned and moved all of our possessions down to where this dirty, open-air



truck was waiting to drive our computers, bread machine, and all of our other stuff to the villa. And the worst was not over, because once our stuff actually got to the truck, our stuff was just thrown aboard with the utmost disregard of what it was. Nobody showed the least amount of concern whether the box they were moving contained clothes, glasses or a VCR. Amazingly, most items survived the rough, harrowing trip from the hotel to the villa. But, by the time we got all of our stuff safely into our villa it was too late in the day for us to stay there that night. We said that we would stay in the hotel for 'just one more night'.

The next day we went to our cold villa and plugged in our heaters. It was quite a normal thing to do, since the heating system did not work. It was a cold, blustery day and we wanted to clean up some the dirt that somehow managed to get into our villa. (I will talk more about our dirt later.) But it turned out to be a bad mistake, because three hours later, **POOF!** no electricity. We had to eat our lunch at our neighbors' house because our house was too cold.

After lunch, an electrician came out to our villa and told us that we had



overloaded our circuits. It seems that we did not have enough electricity to run our 4 heaters. He hot-wired the circuits to make do until tomorrow, and he said that he would be back the next day to fix the problem permanently. So we stayed in the hotel another night.

The next day, we came back to our cold, dirty house, and we waited. And waited. And waited. Nobody came, (least of all any electricians) and nothing happened. We tried to clean, but have you ever mopped a floor with 3 shirts and a coat on? So we just froze in our villa, and stayed in the hotel another night.



The next day, the same thing occurred. We went out to our villa, and we waited. All morning, nobody came. It was late in the afternoon before the electrician finally came to our villa. We were overjoyed, but we quickly found out that he came too late in the day to finish the problem before it got too dark to see. So we spent yet another night in the hotel.

The next day, he came and fixed our problem permanently, but it took all day to fix, so it was too late in the day for us to move in. But, at least we could move in the next day, which is exactly what we did.

The next day (finally) we moved in, and we found several problems that we had not noticed before, or, at least, we had not noticed that the problem was so urgent. One of these minor, little problems was (or, is) the vast amount of dirt that somehow managed to accumulate into our brand-new house.

We had the dirtiest house that I had ever seen in my entire life! There was so much dirt there when we moved in that you could have had a garden in our



living room. Actually, it was not quite that bad, but it was (is) **very** close.

For instance, a few days before we moved in we mopped the entire house. We mopped every room, we cleaned the windows, we swept the floors, we scrubbed the cabinets. We worked very hard all day to get our house clean before our furniture arrived. It looked quite clean by the end of the day. Our neighbors had told us that it took them 3 months to get their house really clean. I thought that we had beaten them by far. Boy, was I wrong! The next day we came back. It looked as if the house had been deserted for 30 years, not brand-new. The entire house was a mess. It was dirty, dusty, and cold. But we moved in anyway.

Over the next few days (er, weeks) we have been constantly waging a war against dirt. It seems to me that China has much more than its share of dirt. One day we would sweep the house top to bottom, and the next day we would mop the entire house. We are slowly getting there. I think that in about 10 years (hopefully) we just might have a clean house.

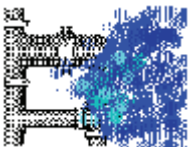
And the dirt is not the only problem with the house. It seems that some of the plumbing is, well, not up to American standards. They did not hook up the



dishwasher right, so we cannot run that. That alone would be bad enough, but it is hardly all. The sinks in two bathrooms leaked, two toilets leaked, one would not flush, and one bathtub, when you drain the water, the water comes up a drain hole in the floor and floods the bathroom. It makes the bathroom floor just perfect for raising fish. But fortunately we have gotten a few (painfully few) of these problems fixed,

while others (like the dishwasher) are still giving us problems.

One night, after supper, Mom was washing dishes when we suddenly heard the sound of water running very hard. I thought that the dishwasher had finally decided to start running. April shouted that the pipes had burst, and Mom asked (yelled) how she knew. She said that it was



the same sound that had accompanied a similar incident that had happened just yesterday in the upstairs bathroom. Mom opened the

cabinets under the kitchen sink, and she got an unexpected shower! Mom screamed, I screamed, and we all ran around screaming for about 30 seconds. Every time Mom opened the cabinet door hot water sprayed everywhere. Then Mom called Dad to ask if there was any way to turn off the water without going under the sink and getting scalded with hot water.

Dad answered when Mom called, and he told her how to turn off the water. We turned it off, and then we had a grand time trying to clean it up. First we got all of the rags and towels in the house and we laid them all on the kitchen floor. Then somebody shouted that the water had

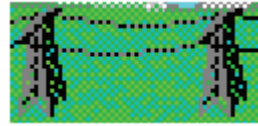


leaked under the cabinets and there was a huge puddle in the dining room! (you see, our kitchen and dining room is really just one room -

separated by a little counter with bar stools) So then we grabbed a few rags, got them soaking wet with water from the floor, wrung them out, then I threw the water outside, then the whole process of drying and wringing out was repeated, again and again. Then Dad came home in the midst of all of the confusion. At least by

then most of the water was cleaned up. The floor needed a good moping anyway.

There are several other 'things' that are missing. First off, the electricity. For 2 days in a row the electricity went off for



about 6-8 hours each day, between 10:00 to about 4:00. Several other people who live

in the villa got upset (those 2 days were very cold ones, and nothing will run without electricity) and they appealed to the electricity company. It seems that the Wuxi power company does not have electricity to go around, so they cut off our power, even though we are paying extra money for it. So, they went and tried to stop the power outages, but the electricity is still not 100% dependable (try 40%). **-Editors note:** This is still an open issue. Currently it is getting colder, and the power is going off more often. As of now the power has been off about 7 times in 3 weeks. We will keep you updated.

Then about our lights. We have what our neighbors call 'eight hour lights', because they only work eight hours. They are fluorescent lights, but instead of being straight, they are curved into the shape of



a circle. They have been giving us all kinds of problems ever since we moved in. The one in my room never worked to begin with, Mikes broke, April's burnt out (and the replacement bulb did not work), and the list goes on. All this happened within 1 week of us moving in! So now we are replacing them with ordinary light bulbs. Even so, our problems are not over yet. Some lights use light bulbs of one size, and others use lights of another size! Something that happened recently is the glass cover over one light broke. It seems that it was not screwed on tight enough, so it fell off and crashed onto

the floor, scattering pieces far and wide. Nobody was hurt, though.

One last thing the builder promised to get for the villa was a satellite dish. The



neighborhood had been promised one for months, and we were wondering what had happened. It seems that there is a telephone cord for the Chinese army running through the area, and they are afraid we could listen in on their top-secret conversations with our satellite dish (as if we could understand them.)

That is most (but not all) of the problems that we have had (and some we still have) with our house. I have tried hard not to produce a false image of us living in luxury here in China. All of the things that I have mentioned did actually happen to us at our new house.

Even so, we are still very glad to be out of the hotel. We would not go back into the hotel for anything (well, almost anything). We are so grateful that our villa was finally completed, and that we could move in. Before, in the hotel, we had to live out of boxes, not having enough room to get hardly anything out. It was cramped, there was no place to play outside, ride bikes, and all of the other out-door activities that kids like to do. Our new house is big, and roomy, with a nice yard. The neighborhood is just great for riding bicycles, with rarely a car to be seen. We can get out our stuff. We really do enjoy it here. And, it could have been much worse (really, I'm not kidding). We could have had problems with the, um, walls or something.

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## **Information About Jon Monthly.**

*by Mike Cooper*

Did you know that the Jon Monthly is getting more popular by about 4 people, And it is getting longer? I wouldn't be surprised if it turned into a national paper! Then we would have to start a factory! Well, let's get back to the subject. Let me see here, where was I? O yes!



## **Back Issues Available!**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

If anybody has not received my newsletter and wants back issues, or if I forgot to mail an issue to you (or you think you might have been forgotten), I can send you back-issues. Just send me a letter telling me which issue you want (i.e. give me the date or the volume number on the issue that you want), and I will mail you the issue that you requested promptly.

## **Notice:**



As we have moved, we now have a new address and a new telephone number. It is:

**011-86-510-676-1060**

**Note:** 011 is the international code, 86 is the code for China, 510 is for Wuxi, and 676-1060 is for our house.

\*

\*

\*

**Jonathan K. Cooper**

**42 Lán Bǎo Yuán Villa**

**Xī Yuán Nòng Huán Hú Cūn Xī Cáo Xiāng.**

**Jiangsu Wuxi China**

## To Market To Market To Buy A Fat Pig

*by Anonymous Cooper*

Have you ever woke up on a cold morning, put on two pairs of long johns, and five shirts and bicycled 20-25 minutes through traffic to go to a market to buy groceries? Can you imagine a huge, outdoor (canopy covered) market where everything is sold from eggs to vegetables, meats, flour and grains, live chickens and live fish?

Have you ever bargained for onions and eggs only to find out later that you paid too much? (Twenty cents for 6 big onions!) Can you imagine looking over table after table of fresh pork, then walking down a section of the market where choice delicacies are sold that are only for those with strong stomachs? You have no idea what most of it is, not that you care to. Half of the vegetables are not familiar. You recognize the pork, but none of the cuts look familiar. Farther down there is another table of meat that you only glance at. Dog meat just doesn't seem overly appetizing today. Can you imagine looking over cages stuffed full of chickens, picking one out and handing it to a man to butcher for you, who doesn't understand why you don't want the head?



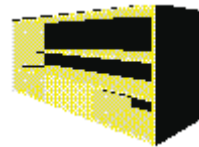
All the while everyone is staring at you because you're a "dà bizi" (big nose). The people manning the tables all speak a local dialect that you don't understand. The prices are in Chinese and everything is weighed on an ancient hand held scale which you only pretend that you understand. Can you imagine doing this? It is certainly different from going to your average grocery store. More exciting, too.

\* \* \*

## How Our Furniture Came

*by Jonathan Cooper*

How would you expect our brand-new furniture to arrive? You would probably - at first - think that it came in the same manner as furniture did in the United States - by truck. But then remember, this is China (the other side of the world), and they do things just a little differently here. (They write from the top of the page to bottom, they eat dogs and walk birds, they wear coats in the summer as well as the



winter.) So, how did they bring our new furniture?

They brought it on the back of a bicycle. Yes, you read right. On the back of a bicycle. No, they did not bring all of our furniture that way - some of it was brought by truck. They only brought the expensive imported furniture that way.

That was something to see. To see all of that furniture towering precariously on the back of a little three-wheeled bicycle was really a sight worth seeing. It was even more interesting to see how they got all of that furniture off of the bike into the house. I wonder how all of the imported furniture survived the trip from the store, knowing how the Chinese drive. But what puzzles me the most is why the *imported* store chose a bicycle, and why the other cheaper furniture stores choose a truck.



# The Jon Monthly



## To Suzhou And Back

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Most Chinese do not celebrate New Year's eve on December 31, or New Year's Day on January 1st. The Chinese calendar is quite a different calendar, since it is based on the moon. Every year New Years Day is on a different date. This month, the honors of the first day in 1995 fell upon February 1st.

Most Chinese take a full two weeks vacation for Chinese New Year -- one week before New Year, and one week after. Dad had to work all of Chinese New Year except for the two days we went to Suzhou, China.

Suzhou is a very old city, having been founded around 2,500 years ago. It is not a very big city - it has only about a million people or so. It is said to be one of the most beautiful cities in all of China.

This is how our trip went. First we got up, had breakfast, and then we got in the car. Before we went to Suzhou, however, we stopped at Fan Wei's house and we picked him up. (Fan Wei, in case you don't know, is my English-speaking Chinese friend.) Then we drove to Suzhou.

Suzhou is really not too far away from Wuxi. It's only about an hour drive. It did not take very long to get to Suzhou, saving us a lot of time for sight-seeing. First, we checked into the hotel. At the hotel we met our Chinese friend, Xin Liu, who took us sight-seeing all over Suzhou.

The first thing we saw was the North Temple Pagoda. It is the tallest pagoda in southern China, standing nine stories, and is 249 feet tall. It is a very old pagoda, since the original was built almost 2,000 years old, but it has been built, burned and rebuilt many, many times. The current pagoda dates back to the 1600's. It is located in the entrance of a garden that has a lot of other old buildings in it.

We paid our money and climbed up all 211 stairs to the top. Well, almost to the top. There was another floor above us, but there was a door barring the way, and the door was locked. So we just stayed on the 8th floor and looked around, since there is a balcony all around the pagoda.

At the bottom of the pagoda was a man who was renting binoculars. We got a pair and took it with us to the top of the pagoda. It was a very clear day, and you could see Suzhou very well. Since the pagoda is located in the heart of the city, you could look in all directions and see the beautiful city. A distance

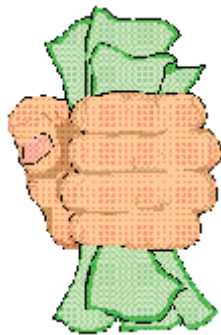




away I spotted the Tiger Hill pagoda, which is the oldest pagoda in Southern China, since it has never totally been destroyed. (We saw it later during our trip, and I will talk about it later.) Below us I could see a lot of other buildings, and nearby I saw a lot of houses, with Chinese-style roofs.

After seeing the view of the city, we walked down the 8 flights of stairs and left the garden. We then went to Kentucky Fried Chicken (one of the very, very few fast-food restaurants in China) to have lunch. After we were full, we shopped around Suzhou.

Shopping in China is very interesting.



There are a lot of little shops, all ready to sell you whatever they can. Now, the prices that are listed are not the real prices. Those prices are for the people who are not bargainers, or for the foreigners. A good bargainer (i.e. a Chinese bargainer who is a good customer and a local person) can get a cheaper price than the listed one (say, 30% off or so). It varies from store to store. One person will not go down one cent, while another will give you a 50% discount with little trouble. (Little trouble being a 30 minute argument.) Of course, it always helps to speak Chinese, preferably the local dialect. (It also helps to look Chinese.) One note, though: bargaining is impossible in the larger, government-owned stores.

After shopping for a while, we went to another garden. I mentioned in a prior newsletter that, on a trip to Nanjing, I saw a garden that had a few neat, gray rocks in it. Well, this garden had a lot of gray rocks, and they were all set up in a maze. There were over-passages, under-passages, and secret passages. I thought that it was really neat. It was a big garden, with a large pond in the middle. The rocks went all around the pond. There were hundreds of rocks, and I was

assured that they had all been imported from somewhere else in China. They were made by being immersed in Lake Tai for eighty years or so to weather. Once they had eroded into a nice shape, they were taken out of the lake. It must have been a colossal amount of work to set them all up. There were supposed to be the shapes of 365 lions in the rocks, if you used your imagination. While I did not find that many, I'm sure it is possible, given the vast amount of rocks there.

After that, we just wandered the streets and we shopped, like we did when we were in Hong Kong. We bought a few paintings, and a



few souvenirs. Chinese paintings are quite different from American paintings. I do not think that the Chinese over-strive for realism. Most of the paintings have a number of large, black characters on them which others tell me are poems. The strange thing is that they cannot translate the poem for me from Chinese into English. It seems that a literal translations of Chinese poetry is very difficult.

Once we finished shopping, we went to the hotel, and had supper. Since our family ate western food, our two Chinese friends also ate western with us. Like always, it was amusing to see Chinese eat American food. Fan Wei ate his french fries with a fork, and our other Chinese friend ate her bread with a fork. Once dinner was over, we went to bed.

The next day, (after breakfast) we went to a place that is very famous in China. This garden has several famous items. There is a very old stone bridge, temple and bell, complete with a legend. It seems that one day two brothers were walking by the river and they saw a bell floating down the river. They wanted to get the bell, so they tried to get the bell with a rope. One boy got a rope, and another boy swam after the bell. But when the boy on the shore threw the rope, the bell floated away with his brother, taking him to

Japan. In memory of this daring feat there are two identical temples - one in Suzhou and one in Japan. There is a very famous poem about the legend, and there are also famous paintings. The place is so well-known that every New Year the place is closed to the Chinese, because thousands of Japanese come to visit the site and hear the memorial bell ring.

After that, we went to Tiger Hill. I think that Tiger Hill is one of the nicest gardens in



Suzhou. It is very large, and it has a number of interesting sights, like the Third Most Famous Fountain. The Third Most Famous Fountain is famous because a long time ago somebody famous came and tested the water, and declared that it was the third best water in all of China.

(The first is in Hu Nan, and the second is right here in Wuxi.) Now, however, I am sure that that is not the case, as the fountain has been covered with a thick green scum and is full of litter.

Another very famous thing is the Tiger Hill Pagoda. The Tiger Hill Pagoda is the oldest pagoda in southern China that has never been totally destroyed. It was built in 966 A.D. It looks old, too. It has not been restored for a long time, and only then it was restored enough so that it would not topple over. You see, the Tiger Hill pagoda is leaning. Not quite as much as Pisa, but it is still a very noticeable lean. I think that the lean is getting worse every year, because just 10 years ago people were still allowed to go up to the top of the pagoda. Not now, though.



(The pagoda (as a whole) is not in good enough condition to stand all of those Chinese that would come and see it.)

We also saw (in the garden) a large farm

of bonsai trees. Bonsai trees are little trees that cost a lot of money. This farm had many, many bonsai trees. Xin Liu said that they were indeed for sale, but the person who did the selling was on vacation for Chinese New Year.

After that, we decided that it was getting late in the day, so we decided to go home before it got dark. We dropped off our Chinese friend at her house, and we drove home, so ending our trip to Suzhou.

## Questions About China

*by Jonathan Cooper*

(These questions were asked by Paul Seufert)

### 1. Are the sewage systems modernized in China?

Not by a long shot. I recently saw part of what they said was our sewage system. All it was was an enormous gray pipe coming out of the ground over a stream. The pipe had a huge leak in it, and it was spurting sewage water everywhere into the stream below. The stream below, needless to say, was slimy, green and smelled bad. No, I would say that the sewage systems are not modernized.

### 2. Have you eaten chopped eel (and what did it taste like)?

Yes, I have eaten chopped eel. It was apparently fried, and it did not taste very good at all. What I prefer by far is chopped snake. I had it once in a restaurant. It was steamed, and it tasted really good, barring all of the bones in it.

### 3. How much do computers cost?

Like most imported things, they cost twice as much as they should have. I saw a very average computer (a 386 worth less than \$1000 US Dollars) in Wuxi that costs about \$2,100.00 US dollars. Most things (locally made or grown) usually cost about the same, or cheaper, unless it is good quality. Then it is more expensive.

#### 4. What kinda stuff do they eat for breakfast?

Bean curd milk, steamed dough, tripe, pickled vegetables, jellied ducks feet, boiled peanuts, salty duck eggs, blood pudding, and a sliced, soy-sauced green vegetable.

If you have any questions about China, please write and I will print the questions here, but only if I have questions to answer!



### Louie

*by April Cooper*

Louie is a parakeet. He has a yellow head, black and yellow striped wings, and a green stomach. Fan Wei gave him to me for my birthday. He has a green cage. He eats out of my hand. He also likes to clean his feathers. Sometimes he can be very cute. Sometimes he turns flips on his bar.

I'm teaching him to say "Pretty Boy." If you opened the door to his cage and leave it open all night he wouldn't fly out unless he gets really scared. When Louie's food is low and he decides to eat he sounds like a typewriter. He pecks at his seed and shells it and eats the inside, like we do. I think Louie is a very nice bird.



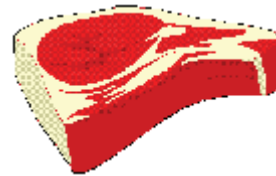
### My Trip To The Market

*by Jonathan Cooper*

In my last newsletter I had an article about going to the market. At that time, I had not been to the market to get meat, so I could not (and did not) write about it. Now that I have actually been there, I can say that my earlier report did not tell the half of it.

Anybody could tell right off the bat that this market is very different from an American market. Like the other article said, it was covered with a very large tent. All of the food was laid out on long concrete counters, including the meat.

All of the meat was just lying there, on the tables. Huge chunks of bloody meat were just laying there, as ordinary as can be. I saw halves of pigs with the legs and feet still intact. There were big slices of meat just laying



around, without any plastic on them or anything. All of it was just as exposed as can be to all of the germs in

China (and there are a lot of germs in China.). When we picked out some meat, the person got the meat, picked it up with very dirty gloves, and he put it on that ancient (and also dirty) hand scale to weigh. We bargained a bit, then he just put the meat in a little pink plastic bag. The bag wasn't even sealed! It was the type of bag that you get at the supermarket to put food in. That took me by surprise. To just put meat in a bag like it was fruit or beans is unthinkable in America, and here everybody does it. Strange.

In my last newsletter I had a picture of an ancient hand scale. That picture was not quite like the real thing. The scale they use is like half of that scale. It has a plate on one side, and there is a long wooden rod, with a movable weight. The person moves the weight to one of the little notches until it balances. The only trouble is that there is two scales of notches on the wooden pole, and you never knew which one they are using. Not even all of the Chinese know how to read the scale!

That trip was very interesting, but I could tell even more interesting stories, but I am out of room.



March 22, 1995

Volume 2.3

# The Jon Monthly

## BIRTHDAY



## Happy Birthday, Jon!

by Jonathan Cooper

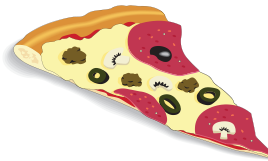
I use to wonder how the Chinese celebrated their birthday. When New Years came around, I got to find out, because that is when the Chinese celebrate their birthday.

You see, the Chinese do not celebrate their birthday on the day they were born. Instead, they all celebrate their birthday on New Year's Day. In fact, that is when the Chinese get older, because they all add a year to their age on New Year's Day. They ignore their 'real' birthdays almost entirely.

As for me, however, I celebrated my birthday when I was born -- on February 26. I had a wonderful time celebrating my birthday in China. Here is what I did:

The first special thing that we did for my birthday was have pizza for lunch. That may not sound very special to you, but it was quite an occasion here, because of the rarity of pizza.

Pizza of any kind is very, very rare in China. The delicious home-made pizza that we had for lunch was certainly no exception. Pizza is rare in China for a couple of reasons. First off, the Chinese hate cheese. They really dislike any kind of cheese. Because of this,



there is little market for cheese, so it is quite hard (and expensive) to get real cheese for our pizza. Another reason is that it is very

hard to get the pizza sauce needed for pizza. In fact, you have to go to Shanghai or Hong Kong to get any kind of tomato paste to use for sauce at all. Ordering pizza from a fast food restaurant is not possible, because there are very few fast food restaurants in China, and none of them sell any kind of pizza. So, pizza is a very special occasion after all!

After lunch, the guests began to arrive. Most of the guests, by the way, were Chinese. (There are very few foreigners in Wuxi, you see.) All of them spoke at least a little English, however. After the cake, pie and presents (other great rarities in China) we went to Wuxi's Plum Garden.

Plum Garden is a small mountain in Wuxi covered with many, many plum trees. Plum Garden, when it was first built in the

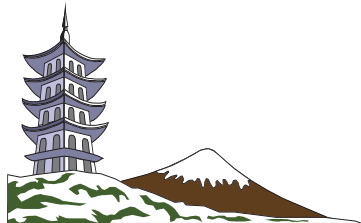


Qing Dynasty, was originally a peach garden. Now, though, it has hundreds of red plum trees. There are still a few peach trees and cherry trees left, though. In the early spring all the plum trees bloom at the same time. It is said (and I agree) that it is quite



beautiful.

On the top of the mountain is a small, 3 story pagoda that gives the whole garden a very Chinese look. The pagoda has a nice view of the park, and you can also see Lake



Tai from its top. Plum Garden is a very popular tourist attraction in Wuxi for foreigners and Chinese alike.

After paying to get in, we walked around the garden. There are so many trees there that it almost takes your breath away. There are hundreds of trees covered with pink and white blossoms.

We visited the park at the perfect time. All the trees were in full bloom at the same time. The whole park was covered with blossoms. It was a perfect place for pictures.

Along with all the magnificent trees was a lot of Chinese. The garden was full of them. There were Chinese looking around, talking and taking pictures. Some of the Chinese were looking at us, too. In fact, there were several Chinese who wanted to take Mike and April's picture. I was not surprised. When we visited Turtle Head island in Lake Tai, some Chinese people just walked up to us and asked if they could take their picture. They seem to be a popular tourist attraction.

Besides the plum trees, there were several other interesting things in the garden. One of these things is a large fountain with a statue of a turtle in the middle of the fountain. Beside the fountain was a person who had a little stand with a large amount small change on it. People would give him money, and he would change the money into coins. Then the people would try to throw the money onto the back of the turtle. When they had thrown all the money into the fountain they left. Then the person took a long bamboo pole with a cup on the end and he fished the change back out of the fountain. He was doing very good

business. I think that I might go into a business like that...

As I had said, there was a pagoda on the top of the mountain. It was very close to the pond that I just mentioned. It is a small pagoda, only 3 stores tall. (All pagodas, by the way, have an odd amount of floors because the Chinese people consider even numbers to be unlucky.) This pagoda has a very good view of Wuxi, not to mention the entire garden. You also could see a few boats floating around on Lake Tai.

Most gardens in China do not have any flowers of any kind, but this garden was an exception. It had quite a lot of flowers, beside the ones that were on the plum trees.

After we had looked over the entire park, we went home. My birthday was over until next year, but I was quite satisfied with my first birthday in China.

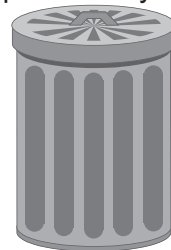
#### POND

## The Pond



e have a large pond near our house. It is not very special or interesting. There are no birds by it, no grass or cat-tails by its edge. In fact, the only thing that I like to go and do near it is to skip rocks in it.

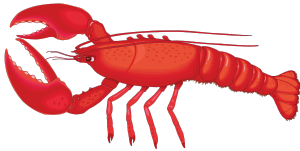
The pond does have a few fish, but not many. I think that the fish keep alive by eating all the garbage that is thrown into the pond every day. You see, the pond acts as



sort of a dump. The Chinese get our garbage, walk all of 10 yards from our house and they throw it into the pond. They act just as if dumping garbage in the lake was the most normal thing in the world.

Until now, that is all that they would do to the pond. Recently, though, they have begun to drain the pond. One day they started draining it. They put a long pipe into the water, and attached a little motor to it that pumped out the water. The water flowed out of the pipe into a little canal that is quite close (it is the one that the water from the leak in the sewer goes into). The next day they came back and fished out a lot of fish from the lake. What they did was they dragged huge nets across the lake. They caught many fish, quite a lot more than I thought lived in the lake.

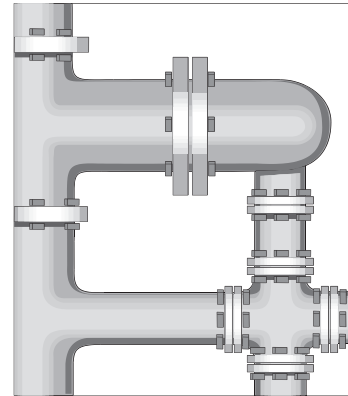
For the next few days they continued to drain it. After about a week, however, they drained all the water out, and all that they have left is pure mud, with little puddles of water here and there. Then a whole lot of Chinese came and they fished out every little crawfish and fish and little shrimp that they could find. Then they left.



We asked different people what they were going to do to the lake next, and we got 3 different answers. The first one that we got is that they are going to make a little garden for the villas, which would be nice. The second answer was that they were going to build more houses there. I can see no sense in that. The houses would settle quite badly, and they have not even finished building houses on all the land that they already have!

Then we asked the guard what they were going to do. (The villas are enclosed in walls, and there are a couple of guards that operate the gate, collect garbage, and deliver mail to the villas.) The guard said that they were just going to get out all the fish, and then re-fill the lake and put in new fish.

What do you think they will do with the pond? Do you think that they will build houses, a garden, or do you think that they will just re-fill the lake? **TO BE CONTINUED...**



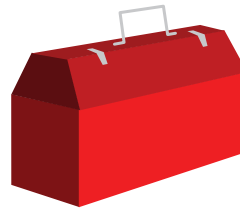
#### HOUSE PROBLEMS

## Plumbing Problems

**A** couple of newsletters ago I mentioned some of the more major house problems that we had had. Most of the problems have been fixed, but not all of them. In fact, fixing some of our problems created more problems!

I will explain. We had (and still have) been having problems with our plumbing. The bathtub water would leak out all over the floor, creating a puddle. The toilet was also stuck up. So we called in some plumbers, quite hopeful that they could quickly resolve the problem.

They came, and they marched right up to the bathroom with their muddy boots. Mom explained (through Fan Wei) the problem to the plumbers. They then

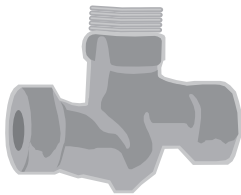


went in to the garage and saw the pipes coming out of the ceiling, curve, and go under the cement. (The Chinese have never heard of the great art of concealing pipes in the walls. Most of the bathroom pipes can be plainly seen in the bathroom.) So they took the cap off the pipe before it bent to determine whether the problem was before this particular section of the pipe or after.

Mom went up and flushed the toilet. The water went straight down into the bucket that the man was holding. That told the plumber that the problem had to be with the commode. He was all set to go up there and take apart the toilet. Mom desperately tried to explain that the problem could not possibly be there, because the water had come straight down the pipe. The problem had to be after this part of the pipe. The plumber would not give up his idea. He was sure that he had located the problem. After much haggling, the problem was finally resolved. But, somehow they managed to break the telephone in the process.

So then we had telephone problems. We managed to get the telephone fixed, and now the plumbing does not work. I think that sometimes our problems can be quite funny.

Our plumbing problems are all centered in one bathroom. First off, if you take a bath, the water instantly drains out into the floor. It takes all day to drain the water so that you do not have a pond in the bathroom. The commode also backs up, so much that it absolutely cannot be flushed.

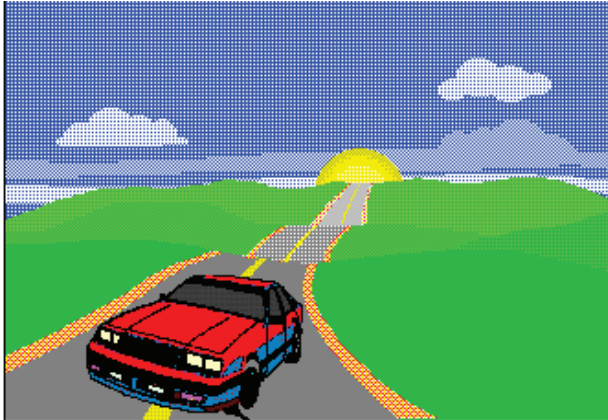


Not all of our water problems are entirely our fault. We have not lost power for quite some time. It appears that the power company has finally gotten its act straightened out. Now, though, it is the water company that is giving us problems.

We currently have two water problems. One of the most frequent (and annoying) problem is the water pressure. At times the water pressure is great. At other times, though, the water just slowly dribbles out of the faucet. Most of the time it is in-between, where the water pressure is pretty weak, but still there. Sometimes, though, we have water shortages where we have no water at all. That is a problem. It does not happen very often (say two or three times a month) but when it happens, it usually lasts all day.

Living in China can be quite interesting at times.

# The Jon Monthly



## To Yi Xing And Back

by Jonathan Cooper

**M**y Dad had to go to Yi Xing for business reasons -- he needed to check up on buying some pumps at a factory there. Since we would have some time to go sight-seeing, Mike and I went with him.

The first part of the trip (the business part) was exactly like my trip to Nanjing. (I think that all Chinese businessmen try to

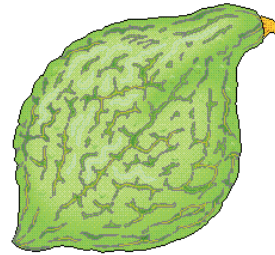


sell you their product in the same way). After we had arrived at the plant they took us to this fancy but cold room. Dad talked to the Chinese businessmen about pumps and James, his interpreter, translated what he was saying into Chinese. Then the Chinese talked

(through James) with Dad. This went on for about an hour or so.

Once they had finished talking (for the moment, anyway) they gave us a guided tour of the plant. (So far things were right on schedule.) After we had finished looking over the plant, the Chinese (just as I expected) took us to lunch at the company's restaurant there at the plant.

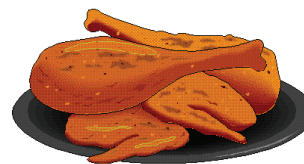
The manager led us to a back room with two tables in it. One table was set for lunch and had some cold food on it. We sat



down at that table and started eating. As we ate, they brought out more and more dishes. Some of the food they brought out was OK (like the delicious Mandarin fish they

served us). Other food was best to be left alone (like some of those suspicious-looking vegetables that were saturated with soy sauce).

At Chinese banquets anywhere in China they always do their best to fill you up



with a large variety of food. The people at the pump factory in Yi Xing were certainly no exception. They kept bringing out food. Every ten minutes a new dish or two would be brought out.



Some of the food they brought out was quite weird. In fact, they brought out a few foods during that lunch that I did not know were edible. Like turtle.

During the meal they brought out a big pot of soup with a whole turtle in it. The head, feet, shell and tail were all intact. The first thing they did to the turtle was take off its shell and offer it to Dad, who politely refused it.



Then they offered it to James who also refused it. They finally managed to give it away to the Chinese guy who sat next to me. Once they had given it to him, Dad

told me that it was a great honor to be offered the turtle shell to eat. It was, however, an honor that I could easily do without.

I was curious how the Chinese person who got the shell would eat it. After all, turtles have very hard shells. I found out that the shell had weakened enough to eat when it was cooked. He just started eating it like I would eat a cookie. He picked it up and started biting off the edges of the shell. After he had eaten away the thin edges of the shell, he broke the shell in half and sucked out the stuff that was in the center of the shell.

While I did not eat any of the shell, I did try a little of the turtle meat. It was not too bad. It was edible. It tasted something like tough meat. Still, it is not something that I would want to have very often. Once a lifetime is enough for me.

Some of the other unusual food that they brought out for us to eat included pigeon (head and feet included) and quail. The quail they brought out did not have its head with it, though. (Not that I wanted to eat it.) I didn't try any of the pigeon, but I was brave enough to try a little of the quail. The quail was so small that there was hardly any meat on its bones. I thought that the quail was quite tough, a lot tougher than the turtle was.

After we had finished eating that huge meal, we went back to that fancy, cold room and they talked some more about pumps. After about 30 minutes of talking they finished and then (just like in Nanjing) the plant manager took us sightseeing.

The first place he took us to was a pottery store. Yi Xing is very famous for its fine pottery. All over Yi Xing there are pottery stores after pottery stores. The pottery stores they have in Yi Xing are quite large. I had never seen as many pottery stores as they have in Yi Xing anywhere else in the world.

The pottery store that the manager took us to was actually a shopping center made of a lot of little pottery stores all lined up in a row. The manager took us behind a row of stores to a little courtyard where there were more stores. There he walked into one of the stores and then went to the back room. In the back room of that store was all kinds of pottery. The room was lined with shelves, and on the shelves were clay pots, teacups and just about everything that you



could possibly make out of clay. Many of the teapots had a lot of imagination put into them. There was one teapot that was disguised as a small cabinet. Another was pictured as a turtle (like the one that we ate for lunch). It had a few baby turtles on its back. If you pulled up the baby turtle on the

center of the large turtles back, a hole was revealed to pour the tea into the pot.

After we had finished looking at the pottery we went to a cave. The cave was a good distance from town, so we had a nice drive through the countryside. One thing that I noticed all along the road; there were many fields with a lot of plants with little yellow



flowers on them. James said that the flowers are used to make vegetable oil.

The cave we went to is naturally divided into 3 distinct sections -- the middle layer, the top layer, and the bottom layer. You entered into the cave through the middle layer. The middle layer was mainly just a place to stop and wait for a tour guide. You didn't have to have a tour guide to guide you around the cave, but it helped. The tour guide that our group got told us a little history about the cave and pointed out neat-looking stalactites.



You had to watch your head in the middle layer of this cave because it 'rained'. There was a constant dripping of water from the ceiling onto the floor. The top layer of the cave was quite hot. The hot air instantly fogged my glasses so that I could not see. The top layer is hot because of the natural boundary of rock between the top level and the bottom level that keeps the air trapped on the third level instead of letting the air circulate throughout the entire cave.

On the bottom layer there was a little river. They had a boat tied to a dock inside the cave which they used to row tourists down the river. It was interesting, but you had to watch your head because the ceiling was low.

After that, we went home. We had had a very interesting Saturday.



## Which Way To The Pagoda?

*by Jonathan Cooper*

**O**n just about every free Saturday my friend Fan Wei comes over to our house. By "every free Saturday" I mean Saturdays when he is not in school. In China everybody does not always get Saturday off. For example, this week he will go to school for 6 days, and next week he will go to school for only 5 days. It varies from week to week. Another interesting thing is that not all the Chinese are off the same two days. One person's weekend might be on a Wednesday and Thursday, while somebody else might be off on Monday and Friday. It varies from company to company.

When Fan Wei came over one Saturday we decided to go see the Three Deer Hill pagoda. The Three Deer Hill Pagoda can be seen from our house. It appeared quite close, and it looked like it would not take very long to get to it. So we bundled into the car and left.

We only had a little trouble finding the island that the pagoda was on. It's on

Turtle Head Island in Lake Tai. We parked our car and we started out for the pagoda.

There was a large map put right inside the entrance of the park, showing just where all the sights of the island were. We looked at the map and we found the pagoda. According to the map, we should follow the path until it forks, and then we were to turn left. It looked as if the map was right, too. We could see the top of the pagoda not too far away.

We walked down the path for a while, looking at all the pleasant scenery until the path curved to the right to avoid the mountain. According to the map the path was not supposed to do that. After all, the pagoda was to the left, not to the right. So, instead of following the path like we were supposed to we opted to go up the mountain. On the mountain it looked as if there was a path leading not only in the direction that we wanted to go, but also to the top of the very mountain where we thought the pagoda was located. So we eagerly followed it.



The path was quite a long, twisting one. It started leading us to what we thought was the wrong direction. So, when another path came in sight, we took it. And then we took another path.



We diligently climbed up the mountain until we got to its top. At the top of this mountain was a little clearing. It turned out that this was *not* the mountain that had the pagoda! We had climbed up the wrong

mountain! The correct mountain was still a long way off. We decided to take another path that we thought would lead us to the pagoda.

After a long walk down the mountain the path ended -- not at the pagoda, or at the foot of the mountain where we thought the pagoda was, but at a blacktop road without a pagoda in sight. We could not figure out which way to go. We followed the road for a while, and then I spotted a little path through the forest which lead to a gravel road. The road looked to me as if it would lead us to the pagoda. I called to everybody, and after much talking I had them somewhat convinced. So we walked down the steep path.

It turned out that the pagoda was in that direction, but there was a high barbed-wire fence between the mountain that the pagoda was on and us. So we had to turn around and go back up to the blacktop road.

After a while we made it back the blacktop road. We walked down the road some more. Presently the road forked. We took the road that led us to the left, because we now knew in which direction the pagoda was. And we were right. It led us right to the mountain that the pagoda was on. As we were climbing the mountain I (once again) spotted a path that went straight up the mountain. I tried to convince my family to go up it, but by now they had lost faith in my paths. Besides, the path I saw was steep and we were tired. The path that we were currently on gradually sloped up the hill. Dad said that he and Mom would continue up the path that we were already on and the rest of us could go up the one I saw.

So we did. It turned out that my steep path was the shortest path up the mountain because we beat Mom and Dad to the pagoda. We sat down and rested until Mom and Dad came.

Once Mom and Dad made it to the top we went inside the pagoda. It was a small pagoda, being only three stories. From the outside it looked like it was four stories, but once we were inside we saw that the third floor just had an extra tall ceiling. The whole pagoda was very beautiful. When I first walked inside the first floor I saw a huge chandelier. On both sides of the door were twin spiral staircases going up to the next floor. The third floor had a tall ceiling. Around the ceiling was a carved wooden border. There were windows on all sides of the pagoda. We climbed to the top of the pagoda and we went out on the balcony.

The day was perfect for sightseeing, and that was emphasized by the view at the top of the pagoda. It was crystal-clear. We could see all around for miles. We saw Lake Tai as it flowed all around the island. Across from us on the mainland we could see a lot of Wuxi. In fact, we even spotted our house! We saw boats fishing in Lake Tai and cars zooming wildly on the roads, and we spotted a few bicycles here and there. I saw a small plane flying around. I asked Fan Wei about it and he said that they have planes in Wuxi where you can hire somebody to fly you over Wuxi. After we finished looking around, we left.

Well, compared with the long walk there, the walk back was quite short. We just followed the path that we were supposed to and we made it to the car in almost no time at all.



## **Plumbers Again**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

In my last few newsletters I have mentioned our plumbing problems, and how fixing them almost always caused more problems. Well, this time it appears that we will have had the last of both plumbers and plumbing problems.

Mom and Dad decided to get our plumbing fixed once and for all. Before I tell you what they did, I will first tell you just why we are having problems.

Our plumbing was built wrong when they built our house. We have a pipe going out into the sewer. Before it reaches the sewer pipe, though, it comes to a little hole. On one side of the hole is our pipe, and on the other side of the hole is the pipe leading to the sewer. All that is just fine if it was not for the fact that the pipe leading to the sewer is higher than the pipe that comes out of our house. So, all the stuff that comes out of our house goes into the hole. After about a day or so, the hole is full, having not gone into the other pipe. So, what happens is the stuff gets backed up back into the pipe leading from our house. Eventually it gets to where if we drain the water it comes back out into the floor.



So, Mom and Dad (like I said) decided to get it fixed. We got some plumbers to come to our house and we explained to them what we wanted them to do (raise the pipe coming from our house). They said they would come on Monday.

On Friday (not Monday) a few workers came. They brought with them a sledgehammer, a pickax and a shovel to bust up the garage floor. Mom showed them to the garage and they went to work.

Before they could get to the pipes they had to take up part of the concrete in our garage. To do that, one man would crack the concrete with a sledgehammer. Then another man would come up behind him and shovel out the rocks into the middle of the garage. If they came upon any stubborn rocks they used the pickax to loosen them.



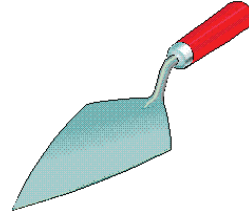
They worked at it until about 11:00. By that time they had dug a hole about 6 or 7 inches deep. After an hour's lunch they came back and continued working. They did not overwork themselves, though. Quite often they would stop and just chat for a long time.

It took them all day to complete the hole. By the end of the day they had a hole the length of the pipe and about 2 feet deep -- and a big pile of dirt, rocks and bricks in the middle of our garage.

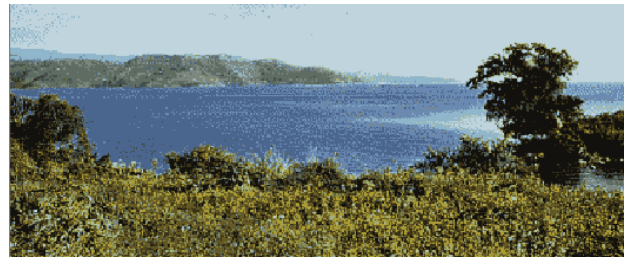
The next day they came back and fixed the piping. They pushed, pulled and fixed our pipes while we were enjoying ourselves at the Three Deer Hill Pagoda.

Once they fixed our problem they put the dirt back into the hole and then they covered the hole with cement. We watched them pour the cement. The first thing they did was mix the cement. This they did on the street right in front of our garage. A worker put a big pile of gravel on the road outside our garage and he shoveled the cement mixture on top of the pile of gravel. Then he

thoroughly wet the whole mixture. When the mixture was sufficiently wet, he shoveled it into the hole. Then he went over it with a trowel a few times and smoothed out the concrete.



After they finished they left, and we hope it was for the very last time. (Note: our plumbing is fixed, but somehow the plumbers managed to break our telephone again!)



## Pond Update

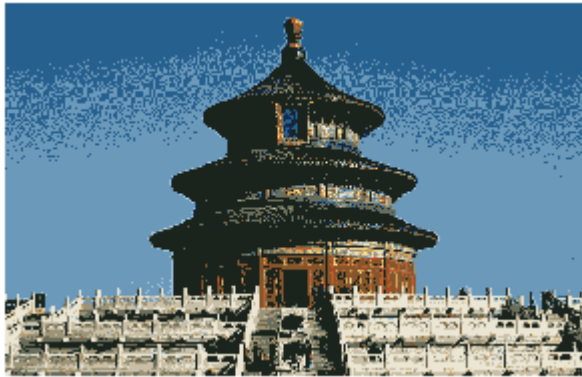
*by Jonathan Cooper*

**I**n my last newsletter I mentioned that we have a pond nearby, and that the builder was draining it. We wondered what they were going to do to the lake, so we asked several people, and we got several different answers.

We recently asked the builder what they were going to do. He officially said that they were going to start building houses on the pond sometime this month.

In China, though, 'this month' can (and most often does) mean 'perhaps this year'. I think that this is the case here, because right now they are doing nothing to the pond. In fact, it is starting to fill up with rain water. If they wait too long they will have to drain it again!

# The Jon Monthly



## Our Vacation

*by Jonathan Cooper*

When my Aunt Jeannette came to visit us in China, we took a vacation and went to Beijing and Xi 'An (pronounced "she an"). We had not been to these cities before, and had been really looking forward to it.

To get to Beijing, we first had to take a train to Shanghai and then we flew to Beijing. After arriving at the airport, we took a taxi to the hotel where we were staying. That is when I got my first impression of Beijing. Beijing is very different from the rest of China because it is much more modern. Beijing has highways, fast food restaurants and supermarkets, unlike other Chinese cities. It is the closest to an American city that I have seen in China.

Beijing is a little like Hong Kong in terms of development and modernization, but Hong Kong is still a lot better. Anybody who had only seen Beijing, though, would not have a good idea of what China is like. Beijing is a big exception from the rest of China. At least, I have not seen two Pizza Huts in Wuxi (or Shanghai).

The first place we visited was The Forbidden City. The Forbidden City is the palace where the emperors use to live. It is

called "The Forbidden City" because it is as big as a small city, and it was forbidden for 500 years for anyone to enter it except by the emperor's command. It is located across from Tiananmen Square, and it covers a total area of 180 acres.

The Forbidden City really is a miniature city. Long ago there was a canal all around it,



and they would ship food into the palace by barges. The Forbidden City is made up of 800 buildings and 9000 rooms. It is very big and

elaborate. Each building had a very high threshold (about 7 inches high), and almost all of the ceilings had dragons or something painted on them. Even the roofs were decorated! The whole palace was in the shape of a square, and the tall, thick walls are painted bright red. I think that emperors really liked to live in style.

While we were strolling around a large courtyard inside the Forbidden City, some men

suddenly came up and ushered us to the far side of the courtyard.

We protested, saying that we wanted to look around. We



PORTUGAL

were ushered to the side all the same, along with everybody else that was in the courtyard with us. About half an hour later a group of people walked through the courtyard, accompanied by a



group of photographers and reporters. We later found out that the President of Portugal was in that group of people. (Later in our trip he would catch up with us again.)

After we had finished looking around The Forbidden city, we went to Tiananmen Square, one of the largest public squares in the



world. It is said that it covers 100 acres. I think, though, that 100 acres

includes the land and the building in the center of the square (where Chairman Mao was buried). However, that is not saying that the square is small. The square is very big. In fact, I'm sure that hundreds of thousands of people could fit in it.

Tiananmen was very busy when we visited it. There were a lot of people flying kites. One man had a large group of people around him because his kite looked like a long dragon. There were people strolling around, and generally everybody was enjoying themselves.

That night we wanted to try Beijing Duck, a very famous food in China. Since we were in Beijing, we assumed that it would be easy to find.

A friend in Wuxi had highly recommended a certain restaurant. We had made preparations ahead of time to go there. We asked our friend to write down the name of the restaurant in Chinese, and circle it on the map. We brought the map with us and we showed it to a taxi driver. The taxi driver dropped us off in front of a building and he pointed down the street. Then (obviously thinking that we understood him) he drove away.



We looked up and down the street for the restaurant, but we could not find it.

We even asked a few other people and they just pointed down the street and left, leaving us in

the dark as much as ever. After much frustrated search, we decided to visit another restaurant that was near Tiananmen Square. But we could not find that restaurant either. We then gave up and tried to go to any old restaurant to get Beijing Duck. But we couldn't find a restaurant that served it! Each Chinese restaurant we went to they said "I'm sorry, we don't serve that here." By then it was 8:00 and we still had no success, so we decided to go to Pizza Hut instead. We decided that we would try again tomorrow.

The next day we hired a driver and a tour guide to take us on a tour of the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs.

Our first stop was the Great Wall. There are two different sections of the Great Wall close to Beijing that are opened to the public. One is more well-known, and therefore more crowded, and the other section is a lot more scenic, but it is not as well known as the other section. We decided to go to the scenic spot.

The Great Wall is located on top of a range of mountains. That meant that we would have to do a little bit of climbing, because the parking lot is located at the bottom of the mountain. There are three methods of getting from the parking lot to the Great Wall -- walking up the stairs, having somebody carry you up in a rickshaw chairs, or taking the lift. Since the lift was broken, we took the stairs. It is quite a walk to the top of the mountain.

There are 1,100 stairs to the top. That may seem like an exaggeration to you, but I



assure you that it is not. It felt like there were a lot more steps than there really was. Once you get to the top, though, you have quite a view. I could see why they built

the Great Wall at the top of a mountain - if any enemies came, the guards could see them from

far off and they could get help in ample time. You could see the entire valley for miles around. A number of trees were in bloom which made the area even more picturesque.

After walking around the Great Wall, we went to the Ming Tombs. The Ming Tombs are the tombs of thirteen of the sixteen Ming Dynasty Emperors. All thirteen tombs are located in a certain valley. It seems that one emperor decided to be buried there, and all of the others followed in the tradition. Of the three other Ming Dynasty Emperors, two were buried elsewhere, and one lost his throne and went to another country.

While there are thirteen tombs in this area, the Chinese government has only opened up one tomb. This is because all the tombs are exactly alike, and it costs a lot of money to open up a tomb to the public. The tomb that they opened to the public was the tomb of the last Ming Dynasty emperor. He was considered the most important one.

His tomb is a very large one. It is a lot bigger than a simple coffin in the ground. His tomb is more like a large house.

They had a little trouble finding the tomb. The tomb is, of course, buried deep underground. Because of this, they did not know exactly where the tomb was. Nobody had left a map recording the exact locations of each tomb. They had a good idea of where it was, but archaeologists still had to dig two deep holes before they found it.

The tomb is guarded by two large iron doors. There is one door at the front of the tomb, and another door is right in front of the burial chamber. There are a total of four chambers -- the one where the Emperor's and Empresses' coffin is, the main hall, and two side-rooms. I do not know what the two side-rooms are used for, as we didn't go see them.



In the main hall are three thrones made of marble. Each throne is roped off, and there is money all around the throne, on the throne, and on the floor around the throne. I have no idea why the money is there. It seems to me that people just throw it there. I asked our tour guide and he said that he didn't know why. He said that he just did it because everybody else did.

After visiting tomb, we returned to Beijing to find the duck restaurant. This time we successfully located the restaurant. The chef brought the roast duck to our table on a cart, and carved the duck as we watched. The meat is then put into tortillas and rolled up like a taco. It tasted quite good. It reminded me of chicken.

The next day we went to see the Summer Palace. The Summer Palace is another palace where emperors used to live. The site has long been a royal garden and was considerably enlarged by Emperor Qianlong (Qing Emperor from 1736 - 1795). In 1888 Empress Dowager Cixi rebuilt the grounds supposedly using money reserved for the construction of a modern navy.

The original palace was used as a summer residence to escape the ferocious heat. The residents of the Forbidden City also used the Summer Palace for holidays. It covers a total of 700 acres. By the way, there was a Winter Palace, too, but it burnt down and they never rebuilt it.

The Summer Palace is very elaborate. It has an Opera House (a three story house where



the Beijing Opera was played), a house built for the emperor to watch the opera, and two houses for the emperors officials to watch the opera. It has a house for sleeping, a house for eating, a

house for his birthday, a house for writing, etc. It even has a huge archway just for the emperor to stand under so that people could come and congratulate him on his birthday. Not to mention an artificial lake and an artificial island that was built just for the emperor's relaxation.

After we had seen the Summer Palace, we flew to Xi 'An, a city of about five million people. Xi 'An is a city located about in the middle of China. It is the only major city in China that is surrounded by a Ming Dynasty wall.

The day after we arrived we took a tour of Xi 'An. The first place we visited was the terra-cotta soldiers. On the way to the site the tour bus stopped at the Hyatt hotel to pick up some people. There, we once again caught up with the President of Portugal. We had to wait over an hour until he was escorted to his limo. The bus could not leave until he left because people waiting to get on could not go through the hotel lobby.

After that delay, we went to see the soldiers. The terra-cotta soldiers are clay soldiers that have been dug up out of the ground. There are thousands of these soldiers buried in the ground, but they have dug up only a few hundred. They are thought to be part of the tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang.

The area is divided into three pits, called Pit 1, Pit 2 and Pit 3. First we went to Pit 1.



Pit 1 is basically a huge pit that has a roof over it. It is the actual site where they discovered the soldiers. They just built a roof over it to protect them from the weather. The whole pit looks like an aircraft hanger. The pit has a long sidewalk all around it that permits you to see the artifacts from

different angles. Down in the pit you could see row upon row of soldiers. There must have been hundreds of them. They were all lined up in rows. Occasionally in the rows there was an empty space. That is where a wooden chariot would have been, but since the tomb is so old (2000 years) it has long ago rotted away.

The soldiers were incredibly real. Each soldier was unique. You could imagine that the whole army was just about to march off to battle. Each soldier looked poised to start marching any minute.

Most of the soldiers were all in one piece, but every now and then you would see a soldier missing a head, or an arm, or a hand. This is because originally they were all standing in a hallway deep inside a mountain. The hallway had a wooden roof, and during a fire the roof gave way, crushing the soldiers into pieces.

After the tour group lady thought we were done seeing Pit 1, we then went to Pit 2. Pit 2 was thought to be the headquarters for the soldiers. They think that it was the headquarters because they found a deer horn that people once used to tell the armies to move on. There are only a few soldiers here, and almost all of them were missing their head. That is because there was no wooden roof for this area. They were all just in a hole in the ground. An earthquake long ago brought down the ceiling, smashing the soldiers into pieces. Because of the uniqueness of the soldiers, and the tiny fragments that they were crushed into, they were not able to rebuild a lot of the heads.

Pit 3 was closed to the public. There was, however, a building which housed two bronze chariots which had been restored. Unlike everything else that I had seen, these were not life-size. In fact, they were exactly half of life-size. They had dug them up from a nearby mountain. It took more than 8 years to put the more than 3000 pieces back together to rebuild the chariot. Since they found these small chariots there, they think that the Emperor Qin Shi Huang is actually buried in

that mountain. They do not want to dig up that mountain because they are afraid that everything will disintegrate when the air touches it because of the immense age.

Next, we went to the emperors hot springs. We did not stay very long, though. In fact, we only stayed five minutes. It was very crowded. Everybody was out. There were many children there, and a lot of them were fishing tadpoles from the water.

The next morning we went to the Bell Tower that is in the middle of the city. The Bell Tower, which dates from 1384, was used quite often in ancient times. They used it to sound the beginning of the day and the ending of the day. In fact, the Bell Tower moved as the center of the city moved. As a matter of fact, the Bell



Tower really is in the center of the city.

The Bell Tower is two stories tall. The first floor was just a shop for foreigners. They have those everywhere. The second floor was sort of a museum. From a balcony you could look out at the city.

After visiting the Bell Tower, we then walked to the East Gate of the city wall. The city walls around Xi An are currently in the process of being restored to what they were like in Imperial times. They are all in one piece, but they still need some touching up here and there.

The walls are very thick. It is said that on the tops of the wall there was room for two way chariot traffic. I think that there is also room for two way car traffic.

We returned home after a wonderful and interesting trip.

## Questions...About China

(These questions were asked by the Wegrecki's.)

### 1. Do they play ping-pong in China?

I asked Fan Wei (my Chinese friend) if the Chinese play ping-pong. He said that almost all Chinese play ping-pong. He also said that it could be called China's national sport. He said that it is the most popular sport in China. In fact, on May 1st they had a big ping-pong tournament in Teinjin.

### 2. We have a stereotype of the Japanese tourists with cameras around their necks... Do the Chinese also have easy access to cameras, ect?

Yes, I would say so. You can get a camera with little trouble. Quite a few Chinese have cameras and love to take pictures of their child. You often see them taking pictures in parks.

### 3. How does film development compare between China and the US?

I asked my Mom and Dad, and they said that it was cheaper to develop film here, but the quality is not as good as in America.

In China, they like to use everything as long as possible. In fact, they are building new houses all over my neighborhood, and all I see are piles of rusted material. In fact, I watched them as they laid a foundation of a house with old rusted steel beams. So, they like to use the chemicals that you develop film with over and over. Because of this, the quality is not very good.

Do *you* have a question about China? Send your questions to me, and I will answer them here.



## **Food, Glorious Food!**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

We are going to go to America for a vacation in late June, and we all are looking forward to American food. Mom would like a nice salad, Dad looks forward to **NOT** eating chicken, Mike wants lasagna, April wants American milk, and I want a good pizza!!!

## **No Hamburgers**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

A big treat for us is to visit McDonalds, which is just what we did while we were in Shanghai with Aunt Jeannette.

We walked into the McDonalds and Dad went up to the counter to order our supper. A minute later Dad came back and said that the man at the counter said that they didn't have hamburgers. No explanation was offered.

I looked back into the kitchen, and saw all the cooks just milling around. Nobody was cooking anything.

Somewhat surprised by the announcement, we all said that we would eat fish sandwiches instead. Dad returned to us again, and he said that they didn't have any sandwiches at all. Fine, we told him, we will just take french fries. Once again Dad came back, saying that they lacked french fries, too.

We were flabbergasted. Did they have anything to eat at all? We told him that we would just take apple pies and ice cream. Dad came back with three apple pies, some pineapple pies, and a few ice creams. He said that they only had three apple pies.

While we ate our food, at least ten employees stood around and watched us eat, evidently not having anything else to do. When we were almost done eating, Mom noticed a man, carrying a tray with french fries and a Big Mac. He sat down at a table near us. Mom shouted "Where did he get those?" The man looked at Mom rather strangely.

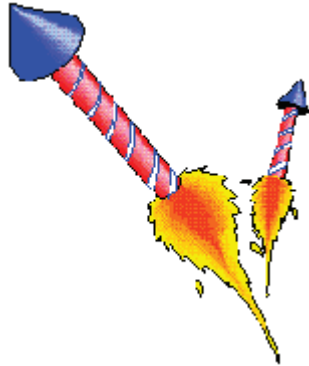
Dad went back to the counter to investigate, and found out that you could order

anything on the menu now. Some of us were not hungry, while others still wanted some real food. We ate our hamburgers, savoring every last bite. We left with full stomachs, feeling a bit puzzled. The only explanation that we had to offer was that we were in China.

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# The Jon Monthly



## The Fireworks

*by Jonathan Cooper*

One night we were upstairs when we suddenly noticed that many fireworks were being shot off. (Actually, the fireworks had been shot off ever since we returned from our vacation, but we had never watched them. They were being shot off to honor our return to China, you see. Ha ha!). They were apparently being



watched them. They were very beautiful, and we had a perfect view.

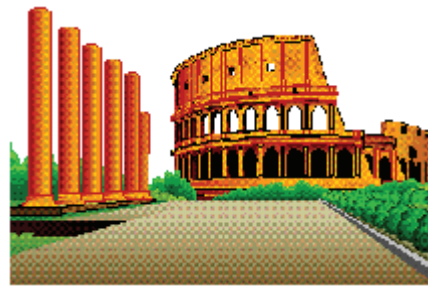
All different kinds were shot off, and in all different colors. Most of them were large, round spheres. Some of them whistled, and others changed colors from red to green, and then they sparkled out of sight. A few formed distinct shapes, such as a candle.

After watching them for a while, Dad suddenly decided to go and see where they were

coming from. April and Mike went with him, and I stayed home with Mom.

Soon after they left there was a spectacular grand finale, and then they stopped. Dad came back, and he said that they stopped too soon for him to find the exact location, but they were probably coming from the European Cities.

The European Cities is a park that has scaled-down



replicas of famous landmarks

from all over Europe

(hence the name). For

example,

there is a Roman Coliseum, a small English castle, and the Arc of Triumph from France, to name a few.

When Fan Wei came over, we asked him why the fireworks were being shot off, and he said that they were being shot off to honor some French holiday that had something to do with Napoleon.

The fireworks continued night after night. The other night, though, was a little different from the rest. Once again, the fireworks were shot off, but this time we decided to go out on April's balcony in order to see them better. First Mom, Dad and Mike went out on the balcony. I stayed inside because I had no wish to get eaten up by mosquitoes. Besides, I thought that the view was just as good indoors as it was outdoors. Soon Mike came inside, complaining that there were too many bats for him outside. Bats! I went outside to see for myself.



Sure enough, Mike was right. There were bats everywhere, feasting on the all too plentiful mosquitoes. I couldn't see them very well because they flew so fast, but I could tell that they were indeed bats, and there were indeed lots of them.

I wondered out loud where the bats sleep in the daytime, and Mom replied that they probably slept in our attic. She wasn't kidding, either. If anything, she was right. The bats probably go into our attic through some hole or other, and they sleep there in peace (or, as much peace as they can get with all of the construction going on). We haven't gone into our attic for a long time, but it would be interesting to find out if they really DID sleep there...

The next night the fireworks were back again. This time they were just as beautiful as ever, but there were some new kinds. Now there was one that made a ring, and there was one that looked a lot like Saturn (with the ring and all) but it was missing the middle part of the planet.

After the show was over, I went upstairs to check for the bats. Sure enough, they were out. They seemed to like the area over the lake the best.

So far the fireworks have continued every night. They seem to be part of our schedule now, which is all right with me. (Continued next month...)



## **A Mouse In The House**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

On the day that this happened we didn't have any water. That happens a lot, though, and we have sort of gotten use to it. It is annoying, though, to go and try to wash your

hands or take a bath and not get any water, regardless as to how high you turn up the faucet.

However, this time, for some odd reason, the sink in the kitchen was giving out a pretty steady trickle, while the rest of the sinks wouldn't.

So, Mom went out to get a large red bucket from the garage. She was going to use the bucket to catch the water from the sink and use it to flush the toilet. In the dark garage she picked up the bucket, and then brought the bucket inside, shutting the door behind her. When she looked into the bucket she suddenly screamed, dropped the bucket and screamed louder. The little brown mouse that had caused the scream ran unhurt at top speed into the bathroom.

After hearing Mom scream, April immediately went downstairs to see what was the matter. I decided that it was best to see what happened to April before I went downstairs myself. I had no idea what had happened, but I thought that something horrible must have happened to get Mom to scream like that.

April asked Mom what was the matter, and Mom said that there was a mouse in the bathroom. Finding out that the floor hadn't caved in, I ran downstairs to see what I could do. Mike also came downstairs following close behind me.

The bathroom that the mouse went into was the downstairs bathroom. It is rather small, and it does not afford a lot of good hiding places. However, the mouse seemed to have found a good hiding place -- we could not see him anywhere. First I went into the bathroom and started looking carefully around for the little brown intruder. I was very careful to stay well out of reach of any mice, though. I had no wish to get bit.

However, I didn't find him. Mike came into the bathroom and he started looking for him too. We were stumped. I could not think of where he could be. Then Mike, in a flash of

genius, thought of one last possibility, behind the garbage can. Mike went to get a stick to turn it over with (he didn't want to get bit either). However, while he was gone I flipped the empty garbage can over with my foot.



Mike was absolutely right -- that was where the mouse was hiding. As I saw him, I screamed too. That brought Mike back. The mouse, once his hiding place was revealed, fled behind the toilet.

Then we had to keep him cornered there until Dad came home, about one and a half hours later. Nobody had any good ideas as to how to get rid of him. (I did offer up a few, but nobody (except for me) liked them.) So we had to keep him cornered until Dad came home.

After Dad came home, he caught the mouse and he killed it. And that was the end of the mouse in the house.



## **Heat Wave!**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

After our wonderful vacation, we went home to a very hot China. It seems that the rainy season was just ending, and the heat season (with its 90 plus temperatures) that would last



until September had begun in full earnest. That fact would not have been quite so bad, though, if it hadn't been for the fact that we didn't have any air conditioning that worked. Actually, we sort of had "working" air conditioning. We have a central heating/cooling unit that cools the house in the winter and heats it in the summer, but it doesn't do much else.

When we finally got home at about 12:00 at night after our long transcontinental flight, it was hotter inside the house than it was outside. We immediately turned our air conditioning on full blast, but it didn't help the situation at all.

Because of this, we really spent a miserable first night home. It was just too hot to go to sleep. We laid on our beds and baked. It was miserable.



Nobody had a good night's sleep.

The second day was a lot like it. We did as little as possible and we still baked. I had to have a fan blowing on me constantly or I would start sweating right away, even if I was just sitting down reading. And this was inside!

To top it off, we only had one fan. Inside the house it was above 90 degrees and the humidity was 90%. However, when Dad came home for lunch he brought four fans with him, which would have to do until we got some more air conditioning.

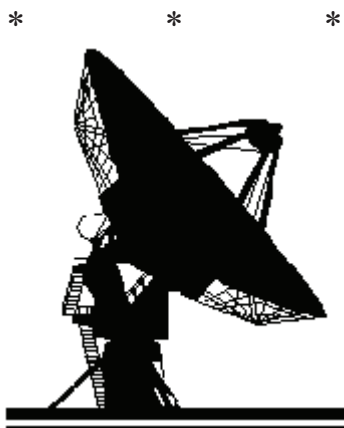
We didn't do much unpacking that day. We did do some (that which was absolutely necessary), but it was just too hot to do a whole lot.

That night we went to the hotel to get some sleep, because it was (of course) still too hot to go to sleep in our house. We decided to get some air conditioning put in the next day. We just could not possibly stay in the house without it. That next day we went back to our house, and (late in the day) some men came and they put in a big air conditioning unit in our kitchen. By the time they left they had the

new air conditioning working, and it cooled the entire downstairs. However, because all of the bedrooms are UPSTAIRS, we didn't sleep very well that night. It was a good deal better than the first night, though.

The next day some men came early in the morning and started to install a unit upstairs in Mom and Dad's room. They worked all day, and by nightfall it was running. However, they made a huge hole in the wall in the process, which didn't look very nice. Also, they left an old bamboo ladder in the yard and they left some long black tubes dangling out of the hole. We dragged away the ladder a few days later.

However, because of the air conditioning, we all slept better the next night.

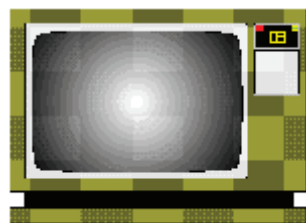


## Satellite Dish Update

*by Jonathan Cooper*

In a prior newsletter I mentioned that the Chinese were putting up a large satellite dish for the entire neighborhood. Well, the satellite dishes (they put up two) are now completed.

However, that does not mean that we can get more TV channels. Quite the contrary. When they ran wires from the satellite dish to the houses in the neighborhood they found out that they had no idea where the wiring for cable was inside the house.



It seems that when they were building the house,

they put in the wiring and covered the outlet up. Now they have absolutely no idea where it is, or even where to look.

The Chinese are looking into the problem, but they have thought of no solutions as of yet. It looks like it might be a long time before the satellite dish gets working.



## The Soccer Game

*by Jonathan Cooper*

The other day we went to a soccer game. It was held at the large white stadium that is close to our house.

When we arrived, we were surprised to find out that almost all of the gates were locked, and that almost nobody -- beside the teams -- was there. We wandered around, wondering where we were supposed to get in, and we had to walk all the way around the stadium before we found a door that wasn't locked.

And, like I said, almost nobody was there. That surprised me. I had expected there to be hundreds of fans there. They were playing in what I am sure was the biggest stadium in the area, (it could hold thousands of people) and there was only the teams and a few people related to the players. There were no big crowds or anything. Fan Wei, though, was there.



One of the teams was made of assorted westerners from the Milido hotel. I am sure that none of them played soccer for a living. They were probably businessmen. The other team was made up of local Chinese men. When we arrived, the game had already started.

I asked Fan Wei how long the game was going to last, and he said that it would last about 45 minutes (or less, I thought, if they all died of the extreme heat). It is my opinion that they were just playing for fun, not for real competition (hence the lack of people).

Of the two teams, the Chinese team was a good deal better. They were better coordinated, they kept the ball close to the other teams' goal, and they were faster. However, because we left before the game ended, I never found out who won. It was probably the Chinese team. Then again, the westerners had a better goalie...

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# The Jon Monthly

## The European Cities

(a continuation of "The Fireworks" in the August issue)

by Jonathan Cooper

One night we decided to visit the European Cities in Wuxi. We wanted to get an up-close view of the fireworks that we have been seeing every night.

We took a taxi because the car was being "repaired". You see, once a year all of the cars are required to go to this government-run store to get "fixed". They had our car for four days and, not only did they not fix anything (there was a lot wrong with it) they managed to make things worse. But, to get back to the story...

The European Cities, like I said in my last newsletter, is a large collection of many famous landmarks from all over Europe.

To get into the park you have to enter through the Parthenon (or, a 1/4 scale model of it.). It was lit up with a lot of pale orange lights. (It's funny - the Chinese's taste in colors. I've seen green blinds for sale, and our ping-pong ball is orange.)



The first place we went to was the Arc of Triumph. It is (like everything else in this park) a 1/4 replica of the real thing. It is situated a little away from the center of the park. It, too, was all lit up (it being nighttime, you see).

After seeing the arch we went to a replica of a European town that is encircled by a moat. The streets are paved with real cobblestones. There are all sorts of shops there that have things for sale that might have been

imported from Europe. It was just little things, though, like T-shirts and ice cream.

We could see from a distance an old Greek ruin (all lit up in orange and yellow lights). There was also a small English castle.

The castle, though, was a little bit unusual. For starters, there was a man outside collecting money for people to get in. We paid and went in, and once inside, we were ushered in to sit down in a flying saucer. Once seated,



we proceeded to watch a short IMAX of a Star-Wars type journey through space. It was interesting, but it wasn't what I thought it would be like inside an old English Castle.

Afterward we continued our walk around the park. We saw a little church from Norway, we walked down a street from Holland, and saw a replica of the Stonehenge. We also saw the Coliseum.

The Coliseum was very crowded. Most of the visitors in the park were crowded into the Coliseum. Every night during the summer there is a reenactment of a coronation ceremony and they were waiting for it to



begin.

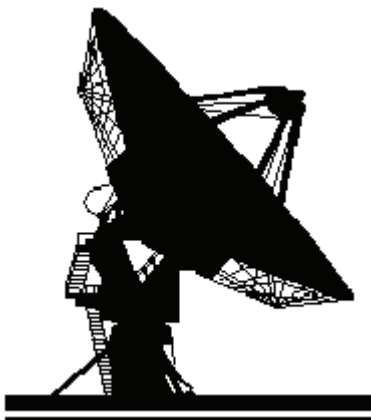
Then the parade began. It was a very big parade, with lots of people in it. There was a group of soldiers on foot who were followed by a group of soldiers riding horses. Then the royal carriage rode by with Napoleon and his wife,

Josephine. The whole procession went to the Coliseum, where the reenactment was held.

The actors in the parade came in spurts with a several minutes lapse between the different groups. During the lapse the crowd would push forward (everybody wanting to be up front) until the crowd filled the street. And, each time the procession got to the people, the people would slowly get pushed back by the police, only to surge forward when the street was temporarily clear again.

After Napoleon was crowned by the Pope, there was a large celebration, which ended with fireworks. The fireworks were shot off very, very near to where we were. I watched as they fired them off into the sky, where, in the next second they would make an ear-splitting BOOM. I had never been that close to fireworks before. They were right over us, and it seemed that if I were any closer I could just reach out there and touch them.

Then, once the fireworks were over, we all went home.



## **Satellite Dish Update**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

In my last newsletter I mentioned that we were having trouble getting TV stations from the newly installed satellite dish. You see, when the Chinese ran wires from the satellite dish to our house, it seems that they couldn't find the cable wires inside the house that were installed when the house was constructed.

Well, they finally decided to forget about the cable wires that were hidden somewhere in our house and run new ones. First, they dug a trench around our house which led to the wall where we have our TV set. Then they put the wires inside a tube and placed the tube inside the trench they had dug.

Then they drilled a hole through our living-room wall. They stuck the cable wires through the hole in the wall into the living room.

However, they weren't finished yet. They still needed a special cable to connect it to the television set. This took them a long time. Several weeks went by before they came back to our house with the cable cord.



When they came again they brought three men to install the cord. One man installed the cord, one man loitered around and the other man gave directions.

After they had it connected, they programmed in the new channels for us. Then they left.

So, after waiting nine months we finally have cable TV (but still no news in English). I will keep you updated as to what happens next...

## **Pond Update**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

A few newsletters ago I mentioned that the Chinese had drained the pond to build some houses in it, but it had filled up with rain water. Well, now they have drained it again, and they are working as hard as they can to build houses in it.

Several weeks before they started building the houses they built a bamboo fence half-way around the pond. (The fence is around the half near our house.) Next they marked off places in the lake for houses. Then they got a lot of people with shovels and they started

digging out the mud in order to build the houses.

You see, after they had drained the pond there was a whole lot of mud left. Obviously, they could not build anything on the mud, so they had to dig it out.

To get all the mud out they were having a lot of people dig with shovels, hand-carry the mud to a waiting tractor, which hauled the dirt away. Day after day they worked at it, and tried to remove the mud.

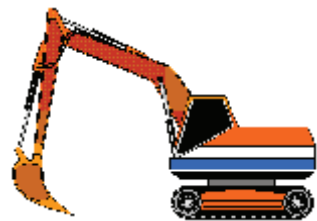


This was taking a very long time. They had accomplished relatively little, and not even all of the foundation of one house has been laid yet. If they keep on going at the rate they are now it could easily be another year or two before they finish even one house.

Evidently they realized that, because last week they brought in a new piece of equipment to help them. Up to now all they have been using is a lot of ancient tractors to bring in and haul out materials, and people to do the work with shovels.

Well, they brought in one of the only bulldozers that I have ever seen in China. The only other place that I have ever seen a bulldozer in China was by the side of the road near Yi Xing (a small town near Wuxi).

It proved to be very entertaining to watch them use this tool to help them dig. First, the



bulldozer dug out some of the lake and piled it in several large piles. However, these piles did several things: they covered up a lot of steel rods that they use to build the foundations of the houses and they (with some help from the fence) trapped in one of those ancient tractors.

Now, the owner of the tractor realized that he needed to get his tractor out of there before it was buried. However, there was that

matter of the bamboo fence in the way. The owner decided that it was the fence or the tractor, and he chose the fence. He then drove his tractor right through the fence, over the mounds of steel wires and other materials, including an electrical wire, which not only splintered the fence but also ruined the little bushes in our yard. (He ran over them when he went through the fence.) But he got his tractor out!!

In the meantime, the other workers realized that they had better move the materials in the road by the pond before they were buried too. A few people started moving the slender steel bars (re-bar) to a safer place, while another guy started heaving over the fence some thin pine logs (the pine logs are actually rarer than the bulldozer; I had never seen logs of any size in China before).

After the tractor came through the fence. Then one Chinese came over and pushed part of the fence to the ground. This made moving the logs much easier. They then started moving the logs across the pond by means of a bamboo bridge that they had built.

The bulldozer, meanwhile, just kept on digging out the lake, not taking (from what I could tell) the least notice of all the confusion that was going on around him. He seemed (to me, at least) to be accomplishing a lot more than it seemed likely the workers could ever do.

The bulldozer continued working all day and then through the night with the aid of a headlight. By morning the bulldozer was gone but the entire length of the road near the pond, including all their construction materials, was covered with an eight foot mound of dirt. It looks like it might indeed be a long time before they get those houses built.


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## **The Shopping Trip**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

One hot Saturday afternoon we decided that we had to go shopping. So, when the car arrived at 2:00 (one of Dad's co-workers was using it that morning) Dad, Fan Wei and I set off for a hard days' work.

First we wanted to buy some more barstools for our kitchen counter. So we drove to a large department store that sold furniture and we got out of the car.

The day, like I said, was a very hot day. The thermometer said that it was 98° outside, and I had no trouble at all believing it. The  inside of the department store was no cooler than it was outside because it was not air-conditioned. I mentioned in a prior newsletter that the Chinese do not heat their buildings. Well, they do not cool them either. Only foreign-owned buildings are cooled, from what I can tell.

So we walked up to the 4th floor where the furniture was kept. (A nice place to keep furniture, I thought. If we buy anything, they will just have to hand-carry it all the way back down those four long flights of stairs.)

However, the store didn't have the kind of barstools that we wanted, despite the fact that they had them earlier this year. We had Fan Wei ask if they sold any ping-pong tables. They said that they didn't, but they told us about another large department store nearby that did.

So we went to that other department store and inquired around. It turned out that they only had the accessories out on display. However, they did sell ping-pong tables. They didn't have room to display one in the store, so they kept them in a warehouse somewhere near the outer edge of Wuxi.

We talked to the manager, and he agreed to sell us one and deliver it to our house on Monday. (Actually, it didn't come until Tuesday afternoon.) We asked a few questions about the table, and found out that it was dark blue, it was for international games, (I thought

that I could play Fan Wei, and that would be international) and it didn't come with a net. So we bought a net, some paddles and a lot of ping-pong balls.

With this done, we wanted to buy a doorknob. Fan Wei thought that a certain new electrical appliance store that was nearby might sell them. So we went to the electrical appliance store.

This store, unlike almost all other stores in Wuxi, was air-conditioned. I already liked it, even if it didn't sell doorknobs. Maybe, I thought, I could find some excuse to stay in this store and cool down.

Unfortunately, they didn't sell doorknobs. Before we left Fan Wei noticed that right across from a large TV display they were selling water faucets. Dad said that we needed one, so we went over to look.

After debating over a few different ones, we decided upon the one that we thought was the best. I didn't think that it was very good, but it was (in our opinion) the best one they had.

We then returned to the car. On the way Fan Wei spotted a place that sold doorknobs. The store turned out to be a paint shop/wallpaper shop, but they did indeed sell doorknobs. After deciding on which one we wanted, my Dad said that he would take three of them. The man said that he didn't have three. In fact, he only had the one that was on display. (By the way, this is often the case. Earlier, at the furniture store that we went to first, Dad found a doorknob that he liked. However, they only had the one that was on display, and no others to sell him, so he didn't get it.)

Dad then decided upon another one that he said would do and we left. After getting some fried chicken for next week's suppers, we went home. I was glad that the shopping trip was over, but I was even more glad to get into our air-conditioned house.



# The Jon Monthly



## To The Yangtze River And Back

*by Jonathan Cooper*

The longest river in Asia and the third longest in the world, the Yangtze River flows 3,400 miles from Tibet in western China to the East China Sea just north of Shanghai.

The Yangtze is one of the world's busiest rivers. Much cargo and passenger traffic travel along its course. Its deep waters allow large ships to reach as far as Wuhan, 700 miles upriver from the coast.

It also has a lot of beautiful scenery. It has some of the most famous scenic spots in China like the Three River Gorges. Dad went to the Yangtze River on a trip once and he decided to take us there. So one day we went to see the river.

Before we left we packed some snacks to eat on our trip because the Yangtze River is far away from Wuxi and there wouldn't be anything there for us to eat except Chinese food.

After a little more than an hours' drive we reached the Yangtze River. However, at this point I couldn't see the river yet because of all the buildings that were in the way.

There was a hotel across the river where we could stop and rest a while. However, that was across the river. The only way to cross the river was by ferry because there are no bridges across it. (They are building one, but it is still under construction.) So we got in line to catch a ferry. When one docked we drove right on.

There were two different types of ferries there making the long trip across the river. One was larger and faster than the other and had an observation deck high above the cars. The other one was smaller and slower and it didn't have an observation deck. We unfortunately got the smaller one.

After we drove onto the boat we got out of our car and looked at the river. The river extended as far as I could see in both directions and it was very wide. The width of the river was amazing. Suddenly I could understand why there were (as of yet) no bridges across it.

Another aspect of the river is that, like I said, it is a busy river. There are all kinds of boats and barges going their own ways in the river. It was kind of orderly traffic, though. From what I could see, all the boats going one way stayed on one side of the river and all boats going the other way stayed on the other side of the river.





The river was also very muddy. I guess it manages to churn up a lot of mud as it goes along.

From looking around on the boat I could see that there really wasn't a whole lot of

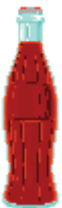


development in this area. However, there were quite a few shipyards. There were a few big ocean-going

ships docked that might have been getting a load of things to ship to America.

Once we got off the boat we first went to see where they're building a bridge across the river. The construction site wasn't very busy that day. I didn't see anybody at work. However, it was evident that somebody had been working hard on it. I could see where they were going to have a large highway come up to the bridge. Dad said the last time he had been there, there was a very large pile driver in the river on a barge that had driven in the piles for the new bridge. After taking a few pictures of the site we left for the hotel.

The hotel seemed to be a very nice hotel. It struck me as being kind of empty, though. It seemed like they had built a hotel there and no one was there to use it. We, however, used it as a rest stop.



After a warm coke and a bathroom stop we went back across the river. This time we got on a large ferry. After parking our car we climbed up to the observation deck and looked at the river.

Once on the other side of the river we went to see the old army lookout point. The lookout point was at the narrowest point of this section of the river and is located on top of a tree-covered mountain. I think that the lookout was in use until the last world war. After that they turned it into a memorial with a museum nearby. (I don't know what the

memorial was in memory of because I couldn't read the characters that told me.)

First we went to the museum. I thought it would be a collection of old artifacts that were found on the hill. In reality



it was quite different. All it was was a tall building that had lots of locked, empty rooms. It's like they planned to have a big museum but somebody lost all the

artifacts.

However, the building was not a complete waste because it was very tall and at the top they had a lookout. I am sure that this tower was the tallest point around. I could see for miles in all directions. There was a very good view of the surrounding countryside.

After we had finished looking around we went to the old military site. It consisted



of an old underground tunnel that was lined with a lot of empty rooms. Dad said that the soldiers who guarded the point probably slept in those rooms. Above the tunnel they had a small clearing with a few benches

around a large concrete circle. I suppose that's where they used to have their really big cannons.

After looking around the top of the hill we decided that it was time to head back home. We had had a neat trip.

## **The Great Shopping Trip**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

One day Fan Wei was at our house when we decided to go shopping. Fan Wei had told us about a new department store that

had opened up the week before and we wanted to see it. We also wanted to talk to our postmaster who wouldn't deliver our packages.

So we left for the department store and, once there, we took a look around. The department store was very large. It was four stories high and some signs said the fifth floor and the basement would be opening soon. The store was just packed with people. There were hundreds of people browsing around. Evidently this was a very popular place.

After we had finished looking around we went to the post office. You see, the post office has not been delivering most mail to our house except letters. If a package of any size or shape comes we sometimes have to go to the post office to get it. This is a lot of trouble because we don't get to use the car very often. It's not easy to go to the post office for our own mail, so we decided to go and see if they could deliver it to our house.



We went up to the counter and we first asked Fan Wei to get the package that we had waiting. You see, two days ago we had gotten a little slip of paper that announced we had a package waiting for us at the post office and we needed to go and get it. Fan Wei asked for our package and we got it, but first we had to pay an "overdue fee" because we took too long to come and get it.



Then we had Fan Wei ask them if they could deliver all the packages we would receive in the future to our house. The lady at the counter said no. So we went up and asked the manager, and his reply was the same. When we asked him why, he said packages were a personal matter and he could not be responsible for their delivery. He did say, however, that we could get someone from our housing development company to come and get our packages for us.

Then we went to buy a long board. For my birthday I had gotten a 49 gallon aquarium. However, the stand that we had made for my fish tank wasn't strong enough to support the tank's weight and its bottom broke when we filled it full of water. We had fixed it but we still needed to get a long board to put under the tank.



Dad knew of a store that sold lumber so we went there to buy a board. Once there, the shop owner helped us pick out one, but when we started bargaining the price, the man suddenly ran off, leaving us alone in the store. Fan Wei said that he had something very important to attend to and the store owner said that we should buy our board elsewhere.

We were at loss to know what to do. We went to the neighboring shops but we couldn't find the right size board that we needed.

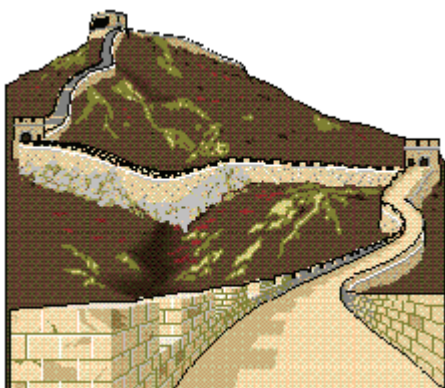
Before long, however, the man came back with a helper. It seems that a truck had pulled up in front of his store with a load of wood and he needed to get someone to help him unload it.



After waiting for him to come to a stopping place Dad bargained down the price of the board from ¥143 (US 16.82) to ¥103 (US 12.12) and then bought it. The men at the store had doubts about it fitting inside the car, and their doubts were confirmed as the board was too long to fit in the car. However, we were content to let the board stick out the trunk.

Then we went home after an interesting trip.

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## The Great Wall of Wuxi

*by Jonathan Cooper*

In my last newsletter I told you about the bamboo wall that used to run alongside our house and how it was torn down and replaced with a huge mound of dirt. Well, now I will tell you Part II of that story.

When I came back from America a few weeks ago, I noticed the dirt mound had been replaced with a wall made out of many large square rocks. I was curious as to how strong the wall was, so one day I went over and pushed one of the rocks on the top row. Just as I had thought, the rock wobbled.

It wouldn't take much to knock over that wall!

Well, the other day a Chinese worker had just emptied his tractor's load and he was all ready to go and get another load. He was in the process of turning his tractor around when there was a loud **CRASH!** behind him.

When he turned around, he saw that he had rammed the back end of his tractor into the wall and the wall had given in -- just as the bamboo wall had for the other tractor. There was a large pyramid-shaped hole in the wall



where the bricks had toppled over onto the

road. While great damage was done to that part of the wall, I could see no damage to the tractor.

The man quickly drove his tractor to the hole when two men came up and started arguing with him. I couldn't make out what the conversation was about, but I imagine that they were arguing about the damaged wall. They made him write on a piece of paper, and then they loudly argued some more. They were still arguing when I went to eat lunch.

When I came back from lunch they were gone, but the hole in the wall (and the large rocks in the road) were still there. There were no repairmen there fixing it so I guess that repairing it wasn't a very pressing need (to them, anyway -- I had other ideas).

I will keep you updated as to what happens next...

\* \* \*

# The Jon Monthly

## News About Water

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Late one morning we lost water. It was an aggravating situation, but it had happen to us before and we were use to it.

Sometimes when the water gets cut off the guards put out a sign that tells us when the water is suppose to come back on. Well, this time there was no sign.

So we waited for it to come back on. It didn't. All day we waited, and when we went to bed we still had no water.

The next day the water came on without warning and went off two hours later. It was off the rest of the day and night.

The next day the same thing happened. Once again, during the morning we lost water and water didn't return until the next day.

However, we didn't loose water the next day. That was wonderful because we were beginning to think that we were going to loose water every day.

That night Mom told me that the sub-division next door had also lost water for three days. (You see, next door there is another sub-division that was built by the Japanese. Construction started early this year, and is just about finished.)

Mom told me that loosing water had caused them a lot of problems. All of the plants that they had just planted were dying because of a lack of water.

So the manager of the sub-division went to see the water company. After that he contacted the mayor of Wuxi and asked him to look into the problem. It didn't do any good, though.

He then called the local TV station and asked them if they were interested in our water and power problems. They said that they were very interested and that they would come to our subdivision the next day.

The next day a TV reporter and cameraman arrived. The manager of the sub-division next door served as an interpreter.

The manager told us that the reporter wanted to know about the times we had lost power and water and what we had done about it.

The German and Swiss families in our neighborhood have installed water tanks in their garages. They can hold enough water to last through the average water shortage. We had purchased a small generator big enough to run the refrigerator and one heater.

After the reporter had finished interviewing Dad about the water and power shortages, she talked with our neighbors to hear their experiences. Then the cameraman and the reporter went to the Swiss' house to look at their water tank.

Then, after looking at our generator, they left.

The interview was on the news that evening. Our Swiss and German neighbors came to our house and we watched it together.

They showed the interview with Dad. Everything he said was translated into Chinese characters, and displayed at the bottom of the screen. While he was talking they also showed a picture of the generator.

What good did it do? Not much, as we lost water the very next week. But it was a lot of fun being on TV!





## **Fish Tank Update**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

In my last newsletter I told you about the fish tank I received for my birthday, and how it broke. Well, this is a continuation of that story.

After buying the board to help support the tank, we drove home. When we got home, we looked around the neighborhood for someone who could cut the board to the specifications we needed. (You see, the board that we had bought was much too long.) After searching a while, Dad found a Chinese man who was able to do it.

The man got a saw and another Chinese man to help, and they sawed the board into three pieces. When they were finished we brought the board inside and put it under the fish tank.

Later in the week I filled the tank with water. A few days later Dad noticed that the board looked a little wet, but I attributed that to an optical illusion. However, by the next week we could tell that there was a leak because most of the space under the tank looked wet. It was not a very big leak, but it was getting worse so we had to empty the tank.

Thus ended our only attempt to keep fish in China.



## **Notice:**

Due to the immense amount of time it takes to put out a newsletter, and due to my busy schedule,



I am officially making **The Jon Monthly** a bimonthly newsletter, and am unable to take new subscriptions.



## **A Fishy Story**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

One afternoon we decided to go fishing. Dad got some bamboo rods and worms, so off we (I, Dad, Mike and April) went.

One of Dad's co-workers had shown him a good fishing spot, and that's where we wanted to go. However, Dad couldn't remember where the spot was. After driving around for a while Dad finally remembered and we parked.



The first thing we did was try to figure out the fishing rods. Dad thought that if we had any trouble we could enlist the help of a nearby Chinese (there is always at least one Chinese around). However, that was not necessary because the rods were easy to put together.

There were three rods -- one for me, one for Mike, and one for April. After we had assembled the rods we started fishing.

Soon after we started fishing Mike caught a fish. It was a small fish, probably no more than four inches long. After getting out a container to keep the fish in, Dad unhooked the fish and dropped it in the container.

After that, I almost caught a fish, but he got away. He must not have wanted my bait very much.



Then Mike caught another fish. It was the same size as the one he had caught before. Seeing all this success over where Mike was, I decided to go over there too. Soon after I moved I caught a fish. It was rather small too, but it was still a fish.

After that, Mike caught another fish. Then for a long time nobody caught anything. I waited and waited, and nothing happened.

Because by now the sun was going down, and because it was getting cold, we decided that it was time to go. So we packed up our stuff, threw the fish back into the water, and left.

Thus ended our first fishing trip in China. I will inform you if we have another...



**Wanted:** A Chinese friend would like a recipe for pizza that has no cheese and can be cooked stir fry.

## **My Friend Chen Chen**

*by April Cooper*

One day Jon, Mike, Dad and I (Mom wasn't feeling well) went to Chen Chen's house for supper. Chen Chen is one of my Chinese friends.

When we drove up to their apartment building Chen Chen and her family were waiting for us at the bottom of the stairs. (Their apartment is on the fourth floor.) After we said hello, they told us that it was Chen Chen's birthday. If we had known ahead of time we would have brought her a gift. I did happen to bring her a coloring book, though.

Their house was really nice. The wooden floors in their house were a lot nicer and flatter than ours. Their cabinets looked similar to ours. They definitely had the nicest and most modern house that I have ever seen in China, except for the Emperor's mansion in Beijing.



After entering the house, Chen Chen and I went to Chen Chen's room. The first thing we did was try out her hula hoop. Chen Chen was a lot better at it than I was. Even Mike was better at it than I was. You see, I hadn't seen a hula hoop for a long time.

After that we played with her jump-rope. Once again, she was better at it than I was even though I have a jump-rope at home. She could jump-rope very fast and her feet would hardly make any noise at all. When I did it, my feet went thump, thump, thump.

Then we put together a puzzle. I was better at it than she was, though. After working the puzzle we played with a building set she had. It had plastic boards, wrenches, screws, and nuts. Chen Chen built two telephones and Mike built some sort of thing with gears. I was in the middle of building a house with strange rockets when it was time to eat.

For supper we had all different kinds of food. There were over sixteen different dishes. Some of the food was edible, like the turkey. Other dishes were not so edible (like pigs' ear). The birthday cake we had for dessert was really good.

I found out that the Chinese eat cake with their fingers, instead of using chopsticks. I, however, used chopsticks. Jon convinced Fan Wei to use chopsticks, and I think he liked that better. After eating the cake Chen Chen's mother brought out some very good noodles. I had two helpings.

I spent the rest of the evening cleaning up the mess we made before supper and coloring. Chen Chen thought that you were supposed to color clouds light yellow and that you shouldn't color the insides of paint cans! She only colored the paint spilling over the rim. She really enjoyed doing the dot-to-dots (most Chinese people know how to count in English!).

After that, we had to go. We took Fan Wei home, then we went home.

\* \* \*

## **About The Stamps...**

On the back of the envelope that this newsletter came in, there should be five

stamps: two 20 fen stamps, two 50 fen stamps, and one 230 fen stamp.

These five stamps are a set of stamps featuring Lake Tai, which is a very famous lake in China. Wuxi borders on Lake Tai, and we have visited it many times. Monkey Island and the Three Deer Pagoda (that I've written about) are part of Lake Tai.

All Chinese stamps have the characters fenfenfenfen on them, which is Chinese for "Chinese stamp". In the lower left-hand corner of all Chinese stamps is the year it was printed and the number of the set it was in. (For example, one stamp says 1995-12, which means it was published in 1995 and it was the 12th stamp set issued that year.)



In the lower right-hand corner of all Chinese stamps are two numbers. One number tells how many stamps are in that particular set, and what number the stamp is in that set. (For example, one stamp says 5-1, which means that there are five stamps in the set and that stamp is the first stamp in the set.)

All the stamps in the set featuring Lake Tai were drawn by Fan Yang. The date of issue was July 20, 1995. All of the stamps in the set are 50x30mm except for the special 500fen collector stamp, which is 122x187 mm.

The first stamp in the set has a picture of a small hill with an island in the background. (It's number is 5-1). Its title is "East and West Mount Dongting". It is a 20 fen stamp, which is worth a little more than 2¢.

The second stamp is also a 20 fen stamp. It has a picture of Lake Tai with a peninsula on it. It is entitled "Turtle Head Peninsula". Turtle Head Peninsula is part of Turtle Head Island, which is an island in Lake

Tai. I've been there, and I've also written articles about it in previous newsletters.

The third stamp in the set is a 50 fen stamp which has a picture of a building complex situated beside a lake. It is entitled "Lihu Lake" and is worth US 6¢.

The fourth stamp in the set is also a 50 fen stamp. It has a picture of a white building with a pagoda in the background. It is entitled "Jichang Yuan" (a name, perhaps), and is also worth 6¢.

The last stamp in the set has a picture of plum trees in full bloom with a tall pagoda in the background. It is entitled "Plum Garden". Plum Garden is the garden that we visited on my birthday. It is a well-known garden in Wuxi which has hundreds of plum trees. I wrote an article about it in the March 1995 issue of my newsletter.

There is another stamp in this set. It is a special 500 fen collectors stamp. It has a picture of what might be Turtle Head Island on it. In the picture are some rocks with some characters on it. It is worth about 58¢.

Keep your eyes open for a variety of Chinese stamps on the back of your envelopes...

## Memories...



My cousins and I during our vacation. Who are they? From left to right; **Back row:** Jon, Paul, Larry, Ben, Michelle. **Front row:** Mike, April, Christa.

# The Jon Monthly



## Back To Suzhou

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Last week we made a two day trip to Suzhou. While we were there we saw Tiger Hill and took a trip to an island that is in Lake Tai. Here (in two parts) is the story of our trip.

### Part 1: The Return to Tiger Hill

After arriving in Suzhou the first thing we did was check into the Aster Hotel. After lunch we went off to see Tiger Hill.

Tiger Hill is a very old and famous park. Covering more than fifty acres, it has more than thirty famous sights, such as the third most famous spring, the Emperors tomb, and the Tiger Hill Pagoda.



After entering the park, there are several rickshaws available. If you want, they will take you to the top of the mountain, right between the Third Most Famous Spring and the Emperors' Tomb. The last time we went to Tiger

Hill Mike and April rode to the top of the hill in one. This time, though, Grandma Kinder got the ride.

After she had been carried to the top we



went to the Third Most Famous Spring. Long ago the spring was said to have the clearest and best water in the country. Now, though, it probably has the worst. The spring is stagnate and there is a lot of algae growing in it. However, it is in a picturesque ravine so we took a few pictures of it.

After that we then went to the Tiger Hill Pagoda. The Tiger Hill Pagoda is a very old pagoda, built in 959 A.D.. It has eight sides, eight floors and is 155 feet tall. It is made entirely of bricks.

This pagoda is unusual in the fact that it is tilted. Because they didn't want it to fall over they recently stabilized the foundation of the pagoda.

After taking a few pictures we went down the hill. Rather than going down the way we came, we took the scenic route that lead us through a small bamboo forest and beside a canal.

Near the exit of the park there were several small shops. After bargaining for a few souvenirs we left the park.

### Part 2: The Island

The next day we went to the new bridge.



Just recently they have finished building a very long bridge that links several large islands that are in



Lake Tai. The island we saw had several parks as well as a splendid view of the lake.

The first thing we saw on the island was a small park that was famous for having two of the oldest trees around. The park itself was rather small, being mainly composed of the two giant trees.



The smaller, younger tree is 1,300 years old. It is 23 feet in diameter and 134 feet tall. The larger tree is over 1,300 years old. It is 30 feet in diameter and is 147 feet tall.

The plaque with this information also had the Latin name of the tree, which is "lauraceac". The trees keep their leaves year-round.

After taking a few pictures of the trees we left for a cave that is on the island. The island we were on is made up of many large hills, and inside some of the hills are caves.

The park that had the caves was quite large, covering almost an entire hill. The park offered more than just a cave. It also had (atop the mountain) a wonderful view of the island, as well as a nice pond and a mountain to explore. We first went inside the cave.

The cave was a lot bigger than I thought it would be. The roof of the cave wasn't very



high, but the rooms were huge. The cave really wasn't "alive", though. All of the rocks were dry, not moist like they are in some caves.

And while it didn't have a lot of big stalagmites, it did have some unusual rock formations.

It took us about an hour to see the entire cave. After looking the cave over, we left the cave and sat down at a nearby gazebo.

After resting a while (it was a long walk through the cave) Dad, Mike and I hiked up the mountain to see the view. It was a short, steep walk to the top. At the top of the hill there was a small pagoda that we hadn't noticed before. (It was shaded by the trees.) Near the pagoda was a large, empty field.

From the field there was a gorgeous view. I could see for miles in all directions. I could look down into the valley and see the houses and then look out at the lake and see a boat or two.

After taking a few pictures, we went back down the mountain and went back to the hotel to eat lunch. After lunch, we went home.

## **Bathroom Trouble**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

A few months ago one of our toilets broke. That in and of itself was really no big problem. We had two other bathrooms, and we could always go out and get some parts to replace it.

So we went out and bought some new insides for the commode, and spent some time that Saturday afternoon installing it.

However, there was one problem that we hadn't counted on. The toilet leaked. Because we were very busy at that time, we decided to wait and fix it later.

Later we got out the tools and tried to fix it. However, we could not fix the problem. We attributed the leak to faulty parts and we went out and bought another set.

We then spent another weekend laboriously removing the old parts and putting in the new ones. However, after doing all that work we found that the new parts also leaked. Once again, we had to go out and buy another set.



This time we were determined to get it to work. We bought good quality parts (or so we thought) and we took

extra care when we installed them. After all, this was our third set.

However, that set also proved to be faulty. It also leaked, and we could do nothing to fix it. Another case of bad quality parts.

So we went out and bought our fourth set. These parts were all metal, though. I thought that there was no way that this set could leak.

Wishful thinking. After spending more hours taking out the old parts and putting in the new parts, they still leaked.

By now I was getting rather frustrated. Were all of the parts in China bad? They couldn't be.

So we went and bought yet another set (which makes our fifth set) and once again spent several hours installing it. The result? It still leaks.

## **How We Got Our Christmas Tree**

*by Jonathan Cooper*



When we had Christmas last year, we were still living in the Milido Hotel. Because of that the only thing we could do for a Christmas tree was decorate a little plastic hotel tree.

This year we were living in our villa. So we decided to buy a live Christmas tree. Nearby there's a little place that sells flowers, trees and plants. We'd gone there before to buy flowers for our yard, so we decided to go there to buy a tree.

So on a Saturday morning in December we went there to buy our Christmas tree. After much looking, we decided on a nice tall evergreen. Because it was still planted in the ground, we asked them to deliver it that afternoon and bring along a large pot as well.

(At least we thought that's what we communicated to them, using broken Chinese and hand pointing as nobody there spoke any English.)

Well, that



afternoon the tree arrived (roots intact) but there was no pot! What were we to do? We didn't have anything large (or sturdy) enough to hold that tree. The tree must have been 8 feet tall! What were we to do?

Dad asked me to go back to the store on Monday and get a pot. So I did just that. Because the store was only a few blocks away, I walked.

After arriving at the store, I tried to locate the manager to tell him what I wanted. However, he hadn't arrived yet. He soon arrived on a motorcycle. After he parked I told him that I wanted a pot.

He lead me back to where the large pots were kept and I picked out the same pot that we had decided upon the Saturday before. However, he told me that he couldn't sell me that pot. That pot was reserved for specially-grown trees.

So I picked out another pot with flowers and a lion etched on it. He then went to his employees and told them that someone had to deliver it. After much debate among the employees, one of them finally got out a three-wheeled bike and loaded up the pot. Because I had not brought my bicycle, he offered me a ride. I got on the back and held onto the pot as we rode to our home.



Once home, he unloaded the pot. With a lot of work, we managed to put the tree in the pot and brought the tree inside.

After I paid him, he left.

Afterward, Mike and April decorated the tree. It was a fine tree, one of the best ones we've ever had.

After New Years' Day we undecorated the tree and then we brought it outside to be planted. This picture is of our tree.



# The Jon Monthly



## Australia

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Australia is a beautiful country. It has large deserts, mountains, tropical rain forests and beaches. For most of the year it is quite warm, even in the winter. This is wonderful for going to the beach or doing anything out doors.

We visited Australia in January, during the peak of the summer season. While we were there the temperature was in the 90's, which is great beach weather.

Australia is a very modern country. It is much like America in many ways, but in other ways it is quite different. For example, they drive on the left side of the road, and they speak a language that isn't American English and yet it isn't British English either. While they have a very British accent, they have some of their own unique words they like to use as well.

Australia is quite clean, much much more so than China. Australia also has a lot of trees and plants. Fifteen million people live in Australia, which is about the same amount of people that live in Shanghai.

We had an absolutely wonderful time in Australia. Here is an article about a few things we did there...

## To the Blue Mountains and Back

*by Jonathan Cooper*

One of the things we did while at Sydney was visit the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains is a mountain range located about forty miles inland from the coast. They are called the Blue Mountains because they have a sort of blue haze covering them.



We drove all around the mountains and stopped at whatever lookout points we found. By driving all

through the mountains we got to see some really beautiful scenery. The mountains were covered with trees, and the mountains were also very clean. The day we chose was a good one, as the sky was (for the most part, anyway) clear, with only a few clouds here and there. It did rain around noon, but it soon cleared up.

Besides the marvelous scenery we also saw some local wildlife.



We saw a couple very large (about a foot long) black lizards, a wallaby (which looks a lot like a kangaroo), and a number of very colorful tropical

birds flying around.

After taking one last ride around the mountains, we went home after a great trip through the Blue Mountains.



## **The Gold Coast At Last!**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Our last stop in Australia was the Gold Coast, which is located on the eastern shore of Australia. It has some of the most famous and beautiful beaches in Australia.

The Gold Coast offers more than just beaches, though. There are also some mountains nearby which is sometimes referred to as "the green behind the gold". We spent a whole day just driving through these beautiful mountains.

Our hotel room was located on the 29th



floor of a building that was right by the beach.

Our apartment was facing the beach, so

we had an excellent view. We had several balconies, so we could look all the way up and down the beach. During our second day at the beach we had a beautiful double rainbow over the ocean just outside our window.

We visited the beach many times during our stay at the Gold Coast. The ocean was a blast, and the sand was great for building things. While we were there we got a couple of small surf boards and had fun riding the waves. It was great fun

Of course, we didn't just visit the beach. Here are a few articles about some of the other things we did at the Gold Coast...

## **MovieWorld!**

*by Jonathan Cooper*

While we were at the Gold Coast we visited Warner Brothers MovieWorld, which is a theme park/movie studio. The first thing we did was ride a roller coaster called "Lethal Weapon". (That should have been ample warning to stay away.) They told us that there isn't another roller coaster like it in the entire Southern Hemisphere and it is one of the few of its kind in the world. (This was very easy to believe after riding it.)

Needless to say, when I rode it I could not keep my eyes open. I had never ridden anything like it in my entire life. After only three seconds you were already forty feet off of the ground and climbing sharply. You spent most of your time upside-down, sideways, or doing loops. This roller coaster didn't waste any time going straight up and down.

Besides the rides there were a number of shows and acts, like the Police Academy Stunt Show. The Police Academy Stunt Show featured a group of very inept, bumbling officers who tried to catch some crooks who are stealing a payroll. It was quite hilarious, especially when they did something crazy like accidentally getting tangled up in the ropes on a flagpole and having someone else raise them along with the flag.

By the end of the show the police officers had managed to catch the bank robbers and recover the payroll. However, the buildings were all but demolished, all the squad cars were totaled and the police helicopter had been fried to a crisp.

We also took a guided tour of the movie studio. Because of the studio's great size, the tourists rode around the studio in a special kind of bus with a tour guide pointing out things of interest.

They used an empty studio to demonstrate different techniques used in movies. To help demonstrate they selected five volunteers from the audience, and one of them happened to be Dad! His part was to "fly" an old WWII bomber, but I will come to that later.

The first technique they demonstrated was the use of a blue screen. To demonstrate it, they had one of the volunteers walk on a ledge that was a few inches off the ground. The ledge was suppose to be part of the top floor of a building.

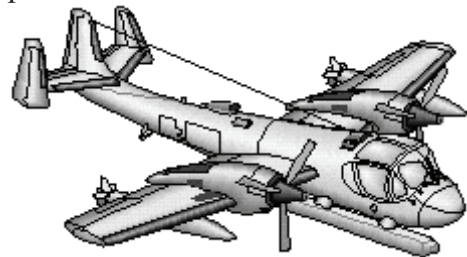


The screen showed the lady on the top of a very tall building hundreds of feet off the ground, with a huge screaming crowd below and several fire trucks as well.

In another part of the same studio they demonstrated sound effects. First they showed us a short scene from a movie. Then they told us that all of the sounds (except for the voices) were added after the scene was filmed. After telling the volunteers what to do, they showed the movie again and had the three volunteers make the sounds for the movie.

Afterword they showed the scene again with the sounds the volunteers had made. Needless to say, the results weren't exactly perfect. The knock on the door was delayed, the shoes clomped at the wrong time, ect. It gave us an appreciation of the sounds in the movies.

Next, we went to a room full of different parts of WWII bombers. For this part they



needed Dad. After giving him a leather jacket and a hat they asked him to get into a life-size hull of a plane. The screen showed a view of Dad looking out the cockpit window.

Then they demonstrated a few things they could do by putting a huge explosion right in front of the plane, and the screen showed a wall of fire that appeared to be right outside the cockpit window. The entire time Dad was looking at the camera, smiling, and waving.

That concluded the tour of the movie studio. After seeing and doing everything we could, we left after having a great day at MovieWorld.

## Sea World

*by Jonathan Cooper*

While at the Gold Coast we visited Sea World, which is an amusement park with shows, rides, and a water park.

Sea World has a 3D movie theater, which featured a movie about the oceans. It was quite realistic, especially when the images seemed to jump out at you. It seemed as if it were right there, and you could reach out and grab it.

We also enjoyed the Ski Show, which is a show with lots of people doing all kinds of tricks and things on water skis.



After the ski show we saw a seal/dolphin show which had trained seals and dolphins performing all sorts of tricks. They were well trained and very entertaining. There was also a penguin show which was interesting as well as informative.

We then bought Mike an Aussie hat, and then we went home.

## Aussie English

*by Jonathan Cooper*

Here are a few words and phrases that are commonly used in Australia. Most of



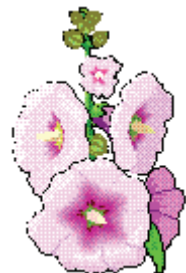
these are very different from their English counterpart. In Australianese:

a **shopping cart** is called a **trolley**,  
**dishes** are really **crockery**,  
 an **egg timer** is called a **minder**,  
 you get money from a **hole-in-the-wall**, not an  
**ATM machine**,  
 you use **power board**, not **extension cords**,  
 you leave via the **way out** instead of an **exit**,  
 the bathroom is **engaged**, not **occupied**,  
 you put clothes in a **suitpack**, not a **hanging bag**,  
 the road signs say **give way**, not **yield**,  
 you use **lay-by plans**, not **lay-away plans**,  
 and **Australians** call themselves **Aussies**.

## The Botanical Gardens

*by Jonathan Cooper*

While we were in Singapore we visited the Botanical Gardens. We could have easily spent all day there and still not see all of the park. It was full of all kinds of plants, ranging from palm trees and coconut trees to trees that were totally different from any other tree that I had ever seen before.



One tree had round balls on it that, from a distance, looked like coconuts. However, the sign told us that it was a cannonball tree.

The garden was also overflowing with plants, much like Singapore itself. There was a blue lake and a lot of benches where you could sit down and just enjoy the garden.



One of the most famous things in the park is the Orchid Garden. The Orchid Garden is a large garden inside the Botanical Gardens that specializes in all different kinds of orchids.

When we were there

it seemed that all of the flowers in the garden were in bloom. There were hundreds of varieties in all sizes and colors. There was also a small greenhouse that displayed a few special varieties.

After seeing the Orchid Garden, the park started to close. So we left the park after a lovely day at the Botanical Gardens.

## Notice:

Our New Jersey address has been changed. The new address is:

**Stanley E. Cooper**  
**c/o Rhone Poulenc Inc.**  
**CN 5266**  
**Princeton, NJ 08534-5266**

## A Day At The Zoo

*by Jonathan Cooper*

While we were in Sydney we visited a wildlife park. The park was a lot like a zoo, and it specialized in animals from Australia.

Some animals were in pens, but there was also a touch zoo where you could pet animals like small kangaroos, sheep, and geese.



You could also hold a koala. However, you had to be an adult, so Mom and Dad were the only people in our family who qualified. So Dad held one.

The koala was so soft and still that it looked unreal -- in fact, it looked just like a stuffed koala.

However, it was, in fact, alive. We were able to pet the koala and take a picture.



The park was full of Australian animals, from a wallaby to penguins to a Tasmanian devil. There were also a lot of colorful Aussie birds flying around in their cages, including a bird just like our pet



parakeet, Louie. (They live in the wild in Australia.)

The park itself was very

nice and well-kept. There were many trees, and a lot of shade as well. After seeing all of the animals, we had a picnic in the zoo picnic area. After a nice lunch, we left the park. We had had a great time at the wildlife park.

# The Jon Monthly

## THAILAND



## To Thailand And Back

by Jonathan  
Cooper

**O**n April 7, 1996, my Dad went on a five day business trip to Thailand and he took me with him. The trip was going to be only three days long, but because we could not get plane tickets to go back when we wanted to we had to stay another two days.

You see, the week we choose to go was the same week that the people in Thailand celebrate their new year.

Like the Chinese, they have a lunar calendar that is out of step with our calendar.

Thailand is a very hot and humid country, since it is close to the equator. The temperature when we were there was always in the 90's with humidity to match.

Bangkok, the capitol of Thailand and the only city in Thailand that I had the chance to see, is similar to China in the areas of dirt and modernization. While there are a few new buildings and shopping malls, Bangkok in general lags behind America.

Thailand has the worst traffic problem that I have ever seen. It takes a very long time to get anywhere. The traffic is literally bumper-to-bumper for miles and miles. The people who get around the fastest are the ones who ride motorcycles and zoom between the rows of cars and get to wherever they are going.



The people in Thailand are oriental, but they look more like people from India than people from China.

They have a very different style of writing and a very different language. The majority of the Thai do not know English, but a few of them knew it well enough to help.

Thailand, like China, is a land of extremes. New, modern buildings are right next to small, old buildings. It seems that everything (except the air) is dirty there. It is not quite as bad as China, though.

Because the trip was primarily a business trip, we did not have time to do any sightseeing. We did get to do a few interesting things, such as try a Liu Lian (pronounced Leo Lee-an) and visit a crocodile farm. We had a great time in Thailand, and I was sorry when we finally had to leave. 📖



## IN THIS ISSUE...

- ① *To Thailand and Back*
- ② *The Crocodile Farm*
- ③ *The Liu Lian*
- ④ *The Garage Makeover*
- ⑤ *The new newsletter layout*

## UNUSUAL FRUIT

## The Liu Lian

by Jonathan Cooper

The Liu Lian, which is pronounced *Leo Lee-an*, is an interesting fruit that is popular in Thailand.

The Liu Lian, which is also known as the King of Fruits, tastes pretty good. The fruit itself is inside a large, thick shell, which is covered with inch-long "spikes". The fruit itself is yellow and large, and looks like an overgrown lima bean.

The Liu Lian is special because of its smell. You see, it has a very, very strong smell that is hard to describe. It has the sort of smell that makes you want to go away and leave it alone. It isn't exactly a bad smell, it just isn't a good smell. And it is *very* strong.

A friend said that you can always tell where a Liu Lian has been because you can smell it a mile away. If you were to leave it in your refrigerator overnight, your refrigerator would smell like Liu Lian for a long time to come. Leave it in your car, and your car will be unusable for quite some time.



I tried it for myself one night at a Thai restaurant. Once you got past the smell (after five minutes or so you couldn't smell it), it tastes OK. It tasted somewhat like a banana. I would say that it is well worth trying, if you can stand the smell... 📖

## NEW NEWSLETTER LAYOUT

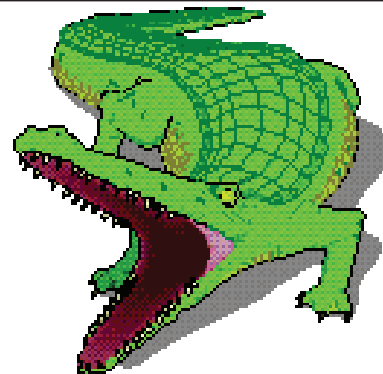
### About the new layout...

For this newsletter I am trying a new layout. I got the idea to remodel my newsletter from *The ISR Courier*, a newsletter put out by Paul Seufert. After looking it over, I decided to adapt some of his ideas into *The Jon Monthly*. If



you like it, please write to me and let me know! Also, this newsletter was rushed -- we suddenly decided to go back to America for a while, which meant that I had to hurry up and finish this newsletter. Sorry if it's not perfect! 📖

## FEROCIOUS ANIMALS



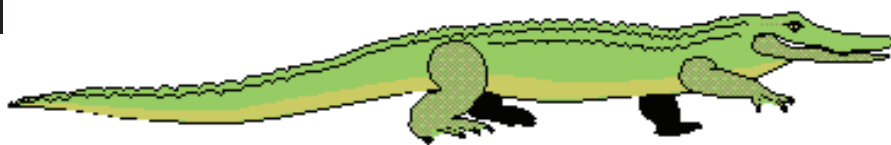
## The Crocodile Farm

by Jonathan Cooper

While I was in Thailand I went to see the Samutprakarn Crocodile Farm and Zoo, which is the largest crocodile farm in the world. There are over 40,000 crocodiles of all sizes living there.

The first thing we did was go see the crocodile show. The crocodile show was very interesting. Two men got into this large area where there were over twenty crocodiles lying around. They did tricks with the crocodiles, such as dragging them (by their tails, of course) onto a large rock and opening their mouths. After they got a couple of crocodiles onto the rock, they proceeded to put their head into the crocodile's mouth!

Besides that, they spent a lot of time dragging the crocodiles through the water by their tails. The crocodiles didn't seem to mind



this (with a few notable exceptions) and they seemed quite compliant, overall.

After the show was over they invited tourists to have their pictures taken with a crocodile. A few (evidently crazy) people went, but I stayed where I was. I did not intend to be eaten up by a crocodile who just happened to miss breakfast.

Then we walked around the park. Hundreds of large crocodiles (eight years old and older) were all sitting motionless in a long sort of river area. They seemed to like being very close together, and most of them were in groups, fast asleep. I did notice a few exceptions, however, who seemed to be fighting over something.

The smaller crocodiles were separated from the larger ones (probably to keep them from becoming lunch) in large, concrete river-like areas. In some of them there were hundreds of small baby crocodiles who were all sunning themselves on a stone slab. There was a large sign in their cage that read: DON'T WAKE THE CROCODILES.

In other areas there were larger ones, with crocodiles that were 2-5 years of age. Like I said, there were

hundreds of them everywhere. It would be very bad for someone to fall into the cage. There was no danger of that, however; steel mesh and a concrete wall separated a would-be lunch from the crocodiles.

After seeing the zoo and all it had, we left the zoo after having a great time. 📖

#### GARAGE REMODELING

## To Remodel A Garage

by Jonathan Cooper

One day Mom went into the garage to get something and she quickly ran back into the house, slammed the door, jumped up and down and screamed for about a minute. She had seen a rat in the garage!

Having a rodent in the garage is nothing new. In a prior newsletter I wrote an article about where Mom accidentally brought a mouse into the house in a bucket and the trouble we had getting rid of it.

The problem was that several large rats had taken up residence in our garage. So, after much consideration, we decided to wall up the garage door (we couldn't fit our car into the garage anyway -- the car was too long) and

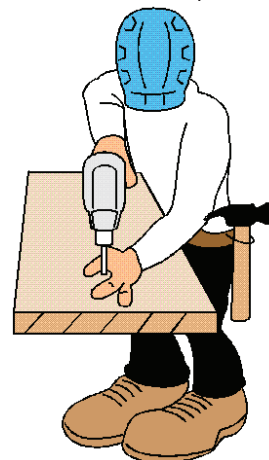
## The Jon Monthly

make a room out of the garage.

The first thing we had to do was clear out the garage. This was a lot of work because our garage resembled a junk yard. The garage was full of stuff. So Dad, Mike and I carried everything into the house. First, however, we had to dust everything (everything in the garage was filthy), and in the process I think we ruined two perfectly good rags.

After hauling off everything we didn't want and relocating everything we wanted, the workman came. For one of the first times ever they didn't do anything weird or unusual. They (there were two or three of them) took down the garage door and walled it up, and put in a window and a door.

It's not finished yet, but it is really shaping up. I'll let you know when we get it finished... 📖





# The Jon Monthly

## Flies, Flies, And More Flies

by Jonathan Cooper

**B**eat it, flies! Can't you see I'm trying to write? I can't possibly do anything with all of you flying around everywhere! Shoo! Scram! Ah, that's better. *Back* to my article.

You see, we have been having major problems with flies. Our house was filled with hordes of flies. There were flies in every single room in the house. How did this happen? Let me explain.



Everything started when our house was broken into while we were in America. The only thing missing was the safe, which they carried away in one piece. Three other homes were also broken into at the same time.

Because of this recent rash of robberies we decided to install deadbolt locks, security doors, and security bars on the windows. To do all of this, of course, we had to hire a Chinese construction company to do the work.

On Thursday Dad was going to Shanghai and we wanted the security bars installed before he left. He was promised that it would be done. The workers would come on



Wednesday and the job would be completed in one day. So on Wednesday morning at about 8:00 the construction manager arrived without any workers. He spent about an hour on the phone calling people.

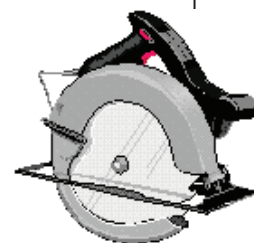
About an hour after the manager arrived thirteen

workers suddenly showed up. That was when we found out that they were going to do more than just put bars on the windows and add more locks to the doors. They were also planning to put up a porch awning, replace April's balcony door and put on a new garage door; projects we thought would be done later.

The first thing the

workers did was hook up electrical cords for their saw, drill and welding

machine. Because all the cords from these items were leading through the front door to our electrical box we could not shut the front door.



The garage door was removed and the door

## INSIDE

- ① Flies, Flies and More Flies
- ② Ride Down A Canal
- ③ Chinese Funerals
- ④ A Few Notes

leading from the house to the garage was open. One worker explained that since we had the front door open and flies were coming in we needed to have another door open to let the flies out.

April's balcony door was also removed. This was because her door was being replaced. All of these doors open meant that we had a lot of openings for flies to come in, and during the summer in China there are hordes of flies.

Besides all the flies that were buzzing around the workers were also a problem. Of the thirteen workers that spent the day at our house only around four of them actually worked. Barring the one time eight men carried April's door upstairs (we think the reason they helped was because they wanted to see our house), the workers spent the entire day talking on the phone, lounging around and drinking up our Coke supply. One worker took a nap on the back of a motorcycle.

Later in the day after a few workers had supposedly finished installing April's new balcony door the construction manager took Mom upstairs and asked her how she liked it. Mom spent over an hour trying

to explain to them that a two inch gap around the top and one side of the door would not do. In the end she called Dad and Dad sent his secretary over to translate what Mom was saying, but it didn't help much.

By midday it became apparent that it would take at least another day to finish everything. The door in the garage and April's balcony door still needed work, the awning wasn't finished and no work at all had been done on putting up the bars on the windows.

It also had become apparent how many flies we had. Flies were everywhere and covered everything. According to Mom, who counted several large piles of dead flies, we had about one thousand flies in our house by nightfall. In fact, there were so many flies that we decided to retreat to our beds protected with mosquito netting and wait until the next day to deal with them.

The next morning the flies were terrible. The flies that were resting the night before were flying around in swarms so thick that you couldn't even walk through the kitchen. Mom got out the spray and sprayed

throughout the house in order to kill them. In a few minutes the floor was literally covered with dead flies, and Dad said it "rained" flies all day. (In spite of this, we still killed flies for days with bamboo fly swats.)

After breakfast the manager arrived again and soon afterward four workers came. This time we suggested they hook up their equipment elsewhere, as we did not want to be invaded with flies again. (Mom kept a huge pile of dead flies near the door. This way she could point at it every time a worker left the door open.)

We also tried to force the workers to stay outside. This worked at first because there were only four workers instead of thirteen and because they actually worked for a change.

In the afternoon Mom looked out the window and saw a worker standing on the new glass awning, putting on the finishing touches. When a big crashing sound was heard about ten minutes later Mom couldn't bear to look. But Mike and April did.

The glass the worker was standing on had broken under his weight and crashed down to the porch



below. Amazingly nobody was hurt, but the cord of the saw was cut clean in two.

By late in the day the workers had finished all of their work. However, after all was said and done, the workers had been such a pain that Mom said that she would *never* have workers over to work on the house again, no matter what happened.



## To Ride Down A Canal

*by Jonathan Cooper*

**R**ecently I went on a voyage down a canal on a Chinese tour boat. Andy, one of Dad's co-workers, was getting another job in America so the voyage was a farewell party for him. A lot of people from the factory were going and Dad invited me to come along.

The voyage began at 8:30 AM. The tour boat really didn't seem to be made with sight-seeing in mind. It had lots of windows, yes, but they were all tinted. The design of the boat made it difficult to see what was outside. The best way to see out was from a little deck on the back of the boat.

The Chinese who were on the boat, however, didn't really seem interested in looking at all the sights. They were more interested in talking and playing cards than seeing what there was to be seen.

And there was a lot to be seen. There were lots of barges traveling down the canal, and the canal itself was lined with factories and old buildings. It was fun watching the heavily-loaded barges go by and to look at all of the scenery.

The canal was very polluted. It was said that twenty years ago you could swim in it but nobody would dare try that now. The factories lining the canal were pouring out pollution, turning the water into a dark brown color. Besides all the chemical pollution there was also a lot of garbage floating around.

After stopping at Li Yuan (an, old beautiful Chinese park filled with Chinese-looking things), the boat traveled down the canal to Monkey Island. It took several hours to get there so we had a Chinese lunch on the way.

After eating lunch we arrived at Monkey Island.



Our family had been to Monkey Island in January and saw many things under construction. This time we saw that much of the construction work was finished.

We strolled around the park, looking at the new, finished buildings and the unfinished ones. We strolled completely around the island in a hunt for monkeys. By the time we completed our hike around the island everyone else on board was waiting for us. So we boarded the boat, which headed back to its dock and to the end of its voyage down the canal.

## Funerals In China

*by Jonathan Cooper*

**O**ne fine day we were driving through the countryside when we spotted what looked like a lot of graves on a hillside. Curious, we decided to drive up closer to take a look.

Upon driving up we found out that we were right, and the place was indeed a cemetery. We were puzzled at this because in China all dead people are cremated.

However, several appeared to be new graves.

There were literally thousands of them on the three or four hills in that region. Some of the graves looked new while others appeared to be old. They didn't look like graves you would see in America, though. For one thing, a lot of the gravestones had one or two black-and-white photographs on it. Another difference was that all the gravestones were surrounded by a very small wall with a small bench and a little box inside the wall. The whole grave -- wall, bench and box -- took up quite a bit of space.

At first we thought that it was a very old graveyard, or one not in use, but then we spotted a place where new gravestones, benches, and walls were being made.

After looking around we left and decided to ask Fan Wei about it later. He told us that what we had seen was a Chinese graveyard. It was in graveyards like these that the ashes of dead Chinese are buried in very ornate boxes. When I asked him why the Chinese were cremated instead of being buried whole (land space couldn't have been the reason because the same space that was used to bury the ashes could have been used to bury the body whole) he said he didn't know. If I find out any more information I will be sure to let you know...

## A Note About the Jon Monthly

My policy concerning when I send out a newsletter has been causing a little bit of confusion, and I thought that I might clear things up. For a long time I sent out my newsletter once a month. However, as I became busier it became necessary to start sending it out every other month. This I have done twice so far.



Now that I am starting to have some

more free time I think that I will be able to start sending it out on a monthly basis again. In fact, this newsletter would have been sent out last month, but we had company which arrived before I had the chance to finish my newsletter.

## A Few Notes...

♦ **Gary and Jennifer Cooper** and their three children recently paid us a visit in China. They stayed at our house for a week, seeing the sights of Wuxi, Suzhou, and Shanghai. After the week was over they left to see Xi An (where the famous terra-cotta soldiers are) and Beijing before returning to the US.

♦ It looks as if we could be returning to the US sometime in December, but this is not certain. We still, however, have no idea where we might go after we leave China.

♦ Recently it has been raining a great deal, and the ceiling in Mike's room has felt the strain. His ceiling has begun to leak, which could mean that we will have Chinese workers in the house again. Look for an article about more worker trouble in future newsletters.

China has been experiencing a lot of rain recently and some parts of China have been flooded. Even in Wuxi many of the streets have several feet of water in them (clear up to the knee) and lots



of homes are flooded. Our sub-division, however, hasn't experienced any floods. I will be sure to keep you updated.



# The Jon Monthly



Our house as it was in 1995, before we added the bars and awning

## Our House

by Jonathan Cooper

**T**he house that we live in is a great house, especially when you consider that we are living in China. Our house does have its share of problems, though.

The first problem concerned when we would move in. This, at first glance, really didn't seem to be a problem as our house was already built. However, in China it's only after a house has been sold that they "decorate" (i.e. add floors, doors, and lights, paint walls, finish the wiring, and other things) it. We were promised that we could move in by May of 1994 at the very latest.

However, things came up, like contract problems, no land-use rights (that is, the builder didn't have a lease on the land that he built our house on (you can't own land in China; all land is owned by the government and is leased out), and he *still* doesn't) and oth-

er things delayed our moving in until January of 1995.

After we moved in we discovered that the house did indeed have its share of problems. One of the first things to go wrong were the doorknobs, which would break and leave you locked in the bathroom or somewhere else, unable to leave. So we bought new ones to replace the "brand-new" ones that didn't work.

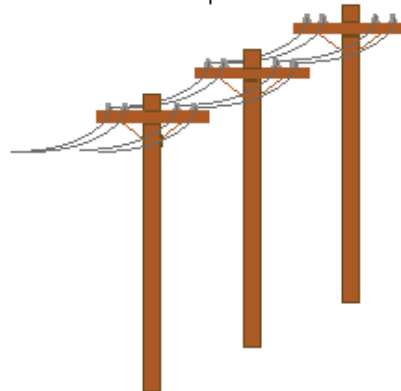
Then we had water problems. For six months stretching from the January we moved in until May the bathtub water would take all day to drain, the bathroom floors would flood, the commode wouldn't flush, and several water pipes burst.

The major reason behind all of these problems was that several huge rocks were stuck in the pipes, blocking off the flow of water. While most of the more major problems have been solved, there are still a few things that need to be fixed.

Lack of water and electricity was another major problem. For the first few months

after we moved in we usually lost water three days out of the week. We also lost electricity quite frequently; in fact, we figure we lost power at least 39 times in 1995. These were not short power outages,

either; usually we had no power for 8-12 hours at a time (during the daytime, too.) That number also doesn't count the



## INSIDE

- ① Our House
- ② The Pot
- ③ Shopping In China
- ④ The Intruder
- ⑤ The Neighborhood

number of times we lost power so that our electrician could fix our wiring.

Then we had air conditioning problems, but there is so much to tell that I will save it for another newsletter.

Another strange problem we had was that the plugs of the dishwasher, washing machine and hot-water heater melted, rendering those machines useless until the plugs were replaced. We replaced the plugs but I don't think we ever figured out why they melted in the first place.

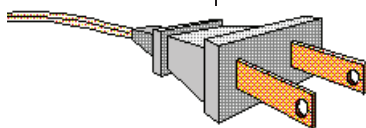
The gate was another strange problem. Our yard has a small white wall around it with a green metal gate. That gate has so far rusted off twice. We had it welded back on, but I never did understand why a brand-new gate rusted off its hinges in the first place.

Our door thresholds (or rather, the lack of them) was another mess. When our doors were installed they left a half-inch gap between all of our doors and the floor. For the doors inside the house this was not so bad; but for the outside doors it was terrible because a mouse could (and did) easily slip under it. This was remedied when, on one of our leaves to America, Dad bought some door thresholds and installed them himself when we returned to China.

Then the doors themselves caused trouble. You see, the door to Mom and Dad's room wouldn't close. It seemed that the door had

warped out of shape, preventing it from closing.

Soon after that the door frame around the bathroom door in Mom and Dad's room got severely warped. It was so bad that not only could you not close the bathroom door but you could look through the gap between the doorframe and the wall and see into the bathroom.



So we had some workers come to fix it. We wanted them to replace the faulty door and the warped doorframe; however, all the workers did was drive a few nails into the warped doorframe and sanded the other door until it would close. (A lack of communication, I suppose.)

One problem that we have never solved is the electrical wiring mess. Usually whenever we loose power and the power comes back on one of the breakers won't work, and it is a different one every time. I figure that at one time or another all the breakers in the electrical box have refused to work!

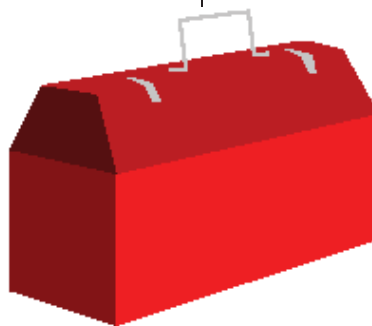
Our electrician, Mr. Ding, has tried to fix it but not even he can understand it. This has led to a lot of re-wiring. For example, when the outlet behind the stove didn't work Mr. Ding spent the entire day installing a new wire and connecting it to the electrical box so that our stove would work. He did the same thing

for our dishwasher, and more recently (a few weeks ago, to be exact) Dad re-wired one of the outlets in the living room.

However, we haven't always had to re-wire the outlets. Sometimes after losing power again (or after the space of several months) the faulty outlet suddenly starts working.

Recently we re-did the garage because of the rats, added the bars to the windows, put up the awning, and added new doors. All of these stories I mentioned in a prior newsletter.

The most recent problem has been the leaky roof. During the last rainy season the roof in Mike's room started leaking. We quickly got someone here to repair it, but before he arrived it stopped raining, and hence the roof stopped leaking. So the workers glanced at the ceiling, told us they didn't see any problems, and left.



Long before Mike's roof started to leak, though, April's balcony leaked water down along the living room wall. That was a major mess, but we were able to

have it repaired.

Our foyer light blew up as well. You see, in the foyer we use to have a small chandelier. Well, one day Mom right after gave it a thorough cleaning it refused to work,

Dad checked it over, and after a few minutes he told us that of course it wouldn't work, a wire was disconnected! Well, Dad connected the wire and turned it on, and the light suddenly blew and smoke came out of it for a long time. Dad immediately took it down and set it outside, where we let it finish smoking. (For months we didn't have a foyer light, but a few weeks ago Dad fixed it, and it now works.)

We have had other problems (like hedges being demolished by traffic three times and how we keep finding small pieces of plaster here and there), but I'd better stop.

Don't get me wrong, now -- I like this house a lot, and wouldn't have had it any other way. It's been great living here, and I'll be sorry to leave it. But let me tell you this -- it sure hasn't been boring!

## The Pot

by Jonathan Cooper

**"M**ORE CREST kitchenware series is an excellent multi-purpose pan which is piled on three layer stainless and iron. It can be used for 'boiling', 'steaming', 'burning', 'frying', and even baking. Three layer structure brings high heat-conducting and efficient keeping warm. You can take great advantage of its multi function. This is a best choice for a person who loves cooking life.", says the box of a pan that Mom bought a few months ago.

When Mom brought the box home and read it she thought it was very appropriate because she bought it to replace another pan that had been burned. She was especially thrilled that the box said you could use it for baking, and one day she put a roast in that pan and put it in the oven.

Later she noticed a funny smell coming from the kitchen. She knew that it couldn't be the roast burning because it hadn't been in the oven very long so she decided to check it. It was a good thing, too, because the handles on the pot and the pot's lid were melting and parts of them had turned to liquid.

Mom took the pot out of the oven, took the roast out and tried to cool off the pan. Mom told me later that she knew then what the box meant when it said the pan was good for burning!



The fruit and vegetable market, where we buy our fruits and vegetables.

## Shopping In China

by Jonathan Cooper

**S**hopping is an entirely different experience in

China for a whole host of reasons. Here is what I'd call our average shopping trip in Wuxi.

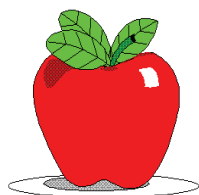
Usually we start out by going downtown (roughly a half-hour drive) to a large department store like Dream Island or Wuxi Trade Mansions. When we first moved to Wuxi the only department store was Wuxi Trade Mansions, but now there are several to choose from.

At Dream Island, the more modern of the two, we'll buy a couple of import items that none of the other stores sell, such as noodles or sugar, depending on what they have at the time. You see, just because a store has a certain item for sale today doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to have the same thing next week (or next month, for that matter). All too often you find something you like at one store that's gone forever when you return, and nobody has any idea where you could buy it.

After traveling around to several different department stores to get a few of the things we need, we would then either go to the fruit market or the vegetable/meat market to buy our food. In America (if I remember right) you could usually get most of the things you needed at one or two stores or at the mall. In China, however, it doesn't work that way. "Different" things (like meat, bread and sugar) are all located at different stores. To buy fruit, for example, we have to go to the fruit market, to buy meat and vegetables we must go to the meat and vegetable market



and to buy bread we have to pay a visit to a local hotel, or-



der it, and pick it up the next day. The imported items (and the non-

imported ones, for that matter) are scattered around stores all over Wuxi, which means that we have to go to a lot of stores to get everything we need.

Even with all the traveling in the world it's impossible

to get all of the imported items you need in Wuxi. We can buy a lot more imported things now than we could two years ago (like Prin-gles potato chips and sug-ar), but we still do the bulk of

our shopping in Shanghai or the US. The problem with shopping in Shanghai is that Shanghai is two and a half hours away by train and that we go to Shanghai about once every three months. This means that whenever we go to Shanghai we end up carrying all the luggage we possibly can back to Wuxi.

Recently, however, we've been using the new City Shopping Service that sells us imported items we would otherwise have to go to Shanghai for, and delivers them right to our front door in Wuxi (Mom

says it has made life more bearable).

About once a month we make a trip to the flour factory. Last year we were able to buy flour in the stores in Wuxi but then a law was passed that forbid a certain type of bicycle that was used to deliver flour from driving in the heart of the city. Not being able to buy flour in the stores was a real problem at first, but with Fan Wei's help we located the flour factory where we now buy all of our flour.



Other things that make shopping exciting are things like the language barrier, the crowds, the traffic, the lack of transportation, the fact that

some cars (like ours) can't drive downtown on weekends, and the fact that you never know what's going to happen. Don't let me give you the wrong picture, however. Things have been improving. Many more imported items can be bought now than when we first moved here. As time goes by new items (like butter) will probably be sold in Wuxi. As a final comment, let me say this: China has come a long way, but sure envy you guys with your huge Wal-Marts in America.

## The Intruder

by Anonymous Cooper

**T**hey harass you in public places, attacking unsuspecting victims. They are devious and cunning and can turn any pleasure trip into an unpleasant memory. They inflict misery upon their victims and sometimes death. They are not content with public harassment, but will boldly follow you into your private domain. They come uninvited, sneaking in quietly through a window or any way they can. Not even bars and locks can keep them out. They seek hiding places in your home where they patiently await the darkness. If left alone, they will quietly invade and attack. They are armed with patience and will retreat again and again if necessary waiting for darkness. They hide under beds and behind furniture and in dark corners. Although bold in their efforts, often the victim realizes all too late that he has been attacked. The intruder has long since retreated and seems to have vanished, leaving the victim with the unpleasant memory. Most of the time they are silent intruders of the night, preferring to rob sleeping victims. At times they can bring you out of a sound sleep with their loud harassment. You awake with a start and immediately sit up, alert and battle-ready. They are no respecter of persons; male, female, young and old are all targets for attack. They are sneaky and deceptive and even intelligent to some degree. They rob you of your sleep. Their night raids can cause you to doubt your



sanity. When you turn on the light to retaliate, the invading army seems to fade into nothingness. You retaliate with shoes and bamboo swats and even the dreaded spray. If one falls in battle, two more arise to take its place. The intruder seems to have little trouble finding you even behind protective netting. Any small crack or opening is sufficient for the intruder. The intruder attacks and retreats. You attack and retreat. Often you win the battle (although wounded) but they always seems to be winning the war.

*(Note from April and Dad: please let us know who the intruder is. We need a good letter from you anyway.)*

## Our Neighborhood

by Jonathan Cooper

**C**onstruction in the neighborhood has finally started to level off. The basic work on the seven houses around the pond is completed and now they are waiting on someone to buy them. Only one of the houses around the pond is currently being worked on.

The pond is finally starting to fill up to meet their expectations. When they first built the houses around the lake they built a large wall around the pond and tiled up the top half, leaving the bottom half bare. I suppose that they were expecting the water level to rise when the rains came to cover the bare area. Well, for a long time the water level didn't rise (it dropped, in fact) but now with all the rains we've



been having the water's finally risen to meet their expectations.

The water in the pond is very polluted, to the point where it looks pitch black. If you examine the water closely at the very shallow places in the lake (less than four inches deep), though, you can tell that the water's really an extremely dark, yucky green. An old Chinese worker told us that there are all kinds of fish in the pond, but I have my doubts.

We have all kinds of mosquitoes in our house, as Gary Cooper's family can testify to. We have slept with mosquito netting over our beds ever since last summer and we wouldn't know what to do without it. There are hoards of mosquitoes both inside and outside the house and the mosquitoes don't have any scruples about biting during the daytime either. We try to be careful and kill all the mosquitoes we find, but we still have all sorts of mosquito bites.

The noise in the neighborhood has gone down a lot. The first few months after we moved into our house we could

hardly sleep because of all of the sawing, hammering, tractors, trucks and other construction noise they did at night. Now, however, they usually don't do any work at night but their shrill saw still keeps going all day. (You can't win everything, I suppose.)

# The Jon Monthly

## TRIP TO SINGAPORE

### Singapore

by Jonathan Cooper

**L**ast month we took a week-long vacation to Singapore. We had been to Singapore in January, during our trip to Australia, and decided to go there again.

Singapore is a very nice country -- or city, whichever you prefer. It contrasts greatly with China, and, as Mom said, when you're there you have trouble remembering that you're in a foreign country!

English is the major language in Singapore, even though more than 70% of the people who live there are Chinese. Some Chinese is spoken there, too, along with a few other Asian languages like Thai and Malaysian.

Singapore is a very clean place, even by American standards. Unlike China, where trash is basically everywhere, you don't see a lot of garbage in the roads, or

layers of dirt covering everything, or a lot of old, run-down buildings.

Besides being clean, Singapore is also a very modern city, with many new, modern-looking buildings filling the skyline. There is also an excellent public transportation system, with buses, taxis and a well-designed subway.

There are many American restaurants in Singapore too, like McDonalds, Long John Silver's, Pizza Hut and Western Sizzler. Shopping is also a lot easier in Singapore than it is in China, mainly due to the many shopping malls scattered throughout the city.

While we were in Singapore we did a lot of



sightseeing. Here are a few articles about some of the things we did...

### The Night Safari

by Jonathan Cooper

**W**hile we were in Singapore we had the chance to go to the Night Safari. The Night Safari is basically a zoo, with one exception -- this zoo opens at 5:00 PM and closes at midnight.

## INSIDE

- ① Singapore
- ② The Night Safari
- ③ Jurong Bird Park
- ④ Indonesia
- ⑤ Coming Home

The Night Safari is very neat. It, like I said, opens right after (or sometimes right before, depending on the time of

year) dusk, so the atmosphere of the zoo is similar to being in a jungle at night. The zoo also goes to great lengths to make the different habitats look just like they would in the wild. The fences, while still there, are well-hidden by plants and other things, so it looks more like you were actually in the wild than in a zoo.

Sometimes, though, there wasn't anything between you and the animals, as with the tram rides. You see, some of the park's habitats (like the ones where deer and other animals like that lived) can only be accessed by a tram which drives right through the area. Many times animals came within a few feet of the moving tram, sometimes so close that you could reach out and touch them! In fact, April screamed rather loudly when she turned her head just in time to see a big wild animal just a few inches from her.

One thing that I noticed was the huge size of some of the leaves. Singapore is almost right on the equator and has all kinds of tropical plants. Some plants seemed to be all leaves, with the leaves being more than six feet tall!



The Tram

The zoo had a wide variety of animals, like large porcupines and rhinoceros to leopards and wolves.

The leopard cage was very neat. It was set up so that you could look through a thick sheet of glass at the leopards. We saw one leopard fast asleep about three inches away from the glass!

The Night Safari was a very nice place, and we had a great time there. However, that's not all we got to see in Singapore. Another place we went to was...



## The Jurong Bird Park

by Jonathan Cooper

**T**he Jurong Bird Park is basically a zoo for birds, but there's much more to it than that.

This park had a wide variety of mostly tropical birds, ranging from macaws

to toucans to penguins. Their penguin exhibit, which had a large variety of penguins, was also neat. The clear glass walls of the exhibit let you watch the penguins as they glided smoothly through the water.

There were all kinds of birds in the park, and the tropical plants that were both inside and outside the cages really added to the park's atmosphere. Besides just seeing the birds fly around in their cages, though, they also had a neat bird show. The birds performed all sorts of tricks. For example, two birds

raced each other with small bicycles, while another bird demonstrated how he catches his prey in mid-air.

The most interesting part of the show, however, was the act that had two birds try to out-talk each other. The two birds talked in both English and Chinese, laughed, cried, and one bird even sang "Happy Birthday"!

In my opinion, though, the best part of the park were the two areas where you could actually



walk into what amounted to huge bird cages. The smaller area was actually a large greenhouse that was filled with a huge variety of tropical plants and birds. There was a path winding through the greenhouse, that let people stroll through the greenhouse and observe the birds that were flying (or sitting) all around. Birds, in fact, were everywhere. Many, many times I got within just a few feet of a bird, and it seemed as if I wouldn't have had any trouble trying to catch one of them if I had tried.

One interesting thing about the greenhouse was that at precisely 12:00 noon every day they had a simulated thunderstorm inside the greenhouse. We happened to be inside the greenhouse during that time and we heard loud thunder coming from cleverly-hidden speakers within the greenhouse, accompanied by a light mist.

There was another area covered by a large net that was said to be one of the biggest ones in the world. It was simply huge. In fact, inside the cage was the largest man-made wa-

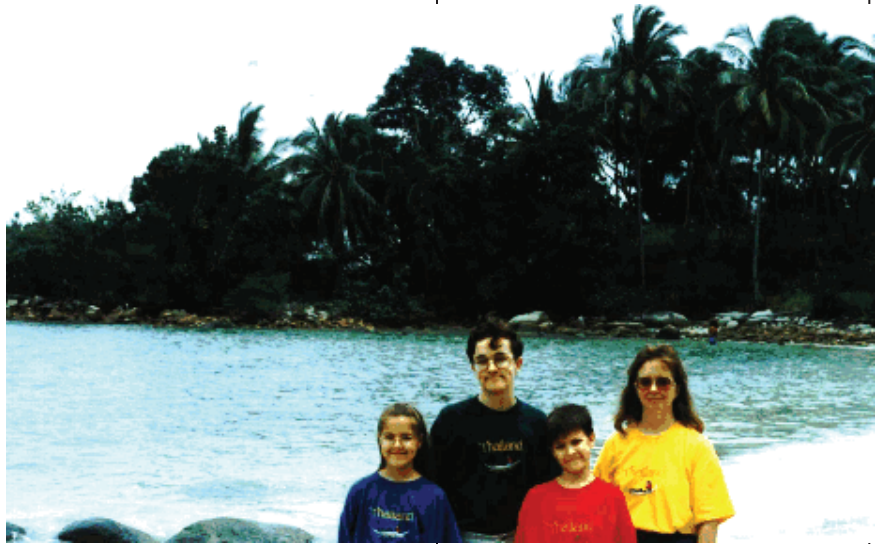
terfall in the world. As in the greenhouse, birds were everywhere, but this time you had to look a little harder to find them because of all the dense foliage.

One of the last things we did in the park was have our picture made with the birds. The park had a large group of birds (Scarlet Macaws, mostly) with which you could have your picture made.

Our trip wasn't over yet. While we were in Singapore we also went to...

fact, Bintan is only about 45 minutes away from Singapore by a high-speed catamaran.

Bintan is a large, tropical island. It's not one of the most developed of the Indonesian islands, which becomes immediately apparent when you are told that the nearest city (the capitol) is two hours away by car. While there were many signs of construction everywhere, the



## Indonesia

by Jonathan Cooper

**B**esides just visiting Singapore on our vacation, we also took a trip to Bintan Island, which is part of Indonesia.

Indonesia is a rather large country in the Pacific Ocean that is made up of a host of different islands. Indonesia is very close to Singapore; in

place was almost completely undeveloped, barring a few fancy resorts here and there.

There wasn't a whole lot of tourists at Bintan; in fact, we basically had the whole place to ourselves, which was a big change from the crowds of China.

The beaches in Bintan were excellent.





Palm trees were scattered all over the island, especially near the coast. There were also a lot of seashells (especially sand dollars) on the beach — something that I hadn't seen on any of the other beaches that I've been to.

While we were in Indonesia we stayed in a beach resort that was right on the beach. The rooms were modeled after small huts, and two adjoining rooms made up one hut. The huts had a neat tropical look, thanks to the "thatched" roofs.

We stayed in Indonesia for two days and one night. While we were there we spent our time playing in the waves, building sand castles, and walking up and down the beach looking for seashells and pieces of coral.

We also did some snorkeling in the ocean. While we didn't see as many fish there as we did in Hawaii (we found out later that we were in the wrong season

for that sort of thing), they were still very nice.

After our memorable trip to Singapore and Indo-

nesia we made our way home and found a few surprise waiting for us...

## Coming Home

by Jonathan Cooper

**T**he trip home from Singapore to Wuxi took us more than 12 hours (even though flight time from Singapore to Shanghai is only four hours), and when we finally got home, after our long trip, we had several surprises waiting for us.

The first thing that we noticed was that certain parts of the outside of the house had been painted. We had not asked for the eaves and the underside of April's balcony to be painted, but it was done anyway.

We would not have minded if it hadn't been for the fact that when the workers painted our house they didn't put anything down to catch the drops of paint. So, when the paint dried, large drops of paint fell onto the porch, the air conditioner, our gourd plant, and the grass. The porch was nearly covered with large blotches of paint.

Another thing we found out right after walking in the door was that the almost brand-new parts inside the (infamous) toilet had broken, and that water was spewing all over the floor. There was only about

an inch of water in the bathroom floor, though, because the floor had a built-in drain (probably put there for occasions like this). If it hadn't been for that drain the chances are the whole upstairs floor would have been covered with water and water would have been cascading down the stairs.

We managed to mop up the mess in the bathroom and put new parts in the commode. We also cleaned up most of the paint spots, and soon everything was back to normal. But it was an interesting reception...

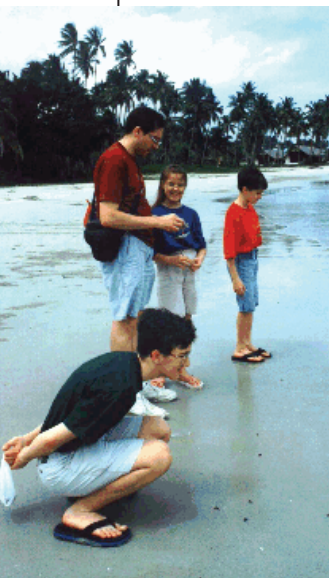


A Chinese tractor

## A Few Observations...

by Jonathan Cooper

**D**uring our two-year stay in China we have come across all sorts of things commonly done by the Chinese that seem a little odd to us. Most of the things recorded here are done because of Chinese



logic. The Chinese, you see, have a completely different way of looking at things that we do, and their actions (to us) seem a trifle odd at times. However, I will let you be the judge...

Here, in several different categories, are a few strange things that we've found:

**DRIVING:** Driving in China is a whole unique experience in itself. Mom said that taking a taxi ride in China is better than the rollercoasters at Disneyland, and I always said that just driving through town would make a very challenging video game.

The problem doesn't seem to be the lack of driving laws (they have thick manuals on driving regulations) but rather the lack of enforcement of the existing laws. Things that you couldn't get away with in America without colliding into someone — like suddenly cutting in front of a car or truck while riding a bicycle or motorcycle with no prior warning and then *slowing down*, or stopping to chat with someone in the middle of a busy intersection, or stopping in the middle of a road (either late at night or in broad daylight) — are commonplace here.

The lines that are nicely painted on the road basically function as decorations here, as cars frequent-

ly cross over into the side of the road that has incoming traffic. This is especially common on two-lane highways; that is, with one lane going in each direction. A favorite trick of all taxi drivers seems to be passing cars on two-lane highways — with or without a car coming in the other direction. Once, in fact, on a busy two-lane highway, a van we were riding in passed a car *that was passing another car*, and all this passing was



done *in the lane that had incoming traffic!*

The Chinese also don't have scruples against flying down dark, unlit roads at night without the aid of headlights. It's not too uncommon to find a bus or truck barreling down a road late at night without any headlights on. (They are getting better at using their headlights, though — after living here for two years we are starting to see a bigger and bigger percentage of buses using their headlights.)

In fact, one time a friend of Dad's was stopped right at dusk by a policeman solely because he had his headlights on. It seems that the Chinese really don't like for you to use headlights any more than they like you to wear seat belts in taxis (which, by the way, is something else that you don't do in China — it tells the driver that you have no confidence in his driving skills). Having your headlights on at night can

annoy other drivers to the point that they flash their lights at you — something done to show that they don't approve of whatever you're doing.

Honking your horn, by the way, does not have the same meaning here as it does in America. The horn, which is frequently used in place of breaks in China, means "Don't get in front of me — I'm coming in right behind you." The horn is indispensable here, much more important than, say, the seat belt (at least

in the eyes of the Chinese, anyway). The horn can frequently be heard while driving downtown — so much so, in fact, that about two years ago honking horns was banned in certain parts of Shanghai. However, that didn't last long — it only took about a year before honking came back to Shanghai, even though the ban wasn't lifted.

Crossing the streets by foot in China is not for the faint of heart. The streets in China are quite wide, and in order to cross the street you have to wait until one half of the street is clear, walk into the middle of the road, and there, while standing in the middle of the road and having cars zooming all around, you have to wait until the other side of the road is clear before you can finish crossing the street.

### HOUSE PROBLEMS:

During our two-year stay in China we have had all sorts of repairs done on our house. I covered most of the problems in my last newsletter, but there are a few that I left out for lack of space. Like what?

Well, one of the biggest problems had to do with our plumbing system. Just about everything that could go wrong with our plumbing

went wrong. We had drainage problems (that is, whenever we tried to drain the water in the bathroom the bathroom floor would



become flooded with water) for many months. In the end we had several pipes re-laid, our garage-floor torn up, and huge, 3-inch rocks taken out of the pipes before our plumbing system finally worked without flooding the floor.



One interesting feature of our plumbing system is the fact that many of the pipes both in the bathrooms and in the garage aren't hidden inside the

walls. This, I suppose, is necessary if you have as much wrong with our plumbing as we did, as you can get to the pipes easier if they're not in the walls. It's really not that ugly, really, once you get use to it.

Another thing we had re-done was the ga-

rage. It seems that when the peasants built our house (all of the houses built in this neighborhood, along with millions of other construction projects done throughout China, were built by Chinese peasants and farmers brought in from the countryside) they left about a half-inch-wide crack between the bottom of the garage door and the floor. This was just great for the rats, as it gave them easy passage into the house. Several times we actually saw rats in our garage (I wrote about an encounter with one in a prior newsletter), and it wasn't too hard to find evidence that they had taken up residence there.

So we had our garage re-done and turned into a storage room — something that other people in the neighborhood have done, as the garage is too small to fit a car into anyway. It took a while for the construction work to be completed, though (it was suppose to have been completed in one week, and it ended up taking about two months).

**WORKERS:** The workers that have built our house and the other houses in our neighborhood have some unusual building techniques.



For example, when the workers mix cement, they usually mix it right in the road, or on a sidewalk (as they did when they re-did our garage). They simply put the ingredients in the road, wet them with a water-hose, and then mixed the mixture with a pole or something. I have seen them mix cement inside a wheelbarrow, though, and then move the wheelbarrow around to where they need the cement, but usually they mix it in the road.

A lot of the workers I've seen don't use a lot of safety equipment. For example, only very recently have I seen Chinese construction workers start to use safety helmets. I've also seen people weld without the use of welding glasses (although sometimes welding glasses are used).

Some of their other techniques are strange, at least to me. For example, when we had Chinese workers over to install our water tank, the workers choose one of our wooden chairs to stand on when they welded the tank (we still have the chair, which is complete with many small black holes that the red-hot sparks burnt into the chair).

Then there was the worker who stood on the very

edge of April's balcony (which is on the second-floor of our house) to stand on a piece of wood he was sawing. I don't see how he managed to keep himself from falling over backwards

onto the ground below.

Another time, when workers were putting up the glass awning

over our porch, one of the sheets of glass that was suppose to go up to the awning was found to be too long. So, after installing the sheet of glass, one worker cut into the glass, took out his pliers, and then broke off the extra pieces of glass, sending small shards of glass onto the porch and grass.

The Chinese also have a unique method of delivering furniture. The three-wheeled bicycle seems to be the favorite delivery method — I've seen everything from furniture and bookshelves to washers and typewriters delivered using them. In fact, once I even saw a refrigerator being delivered on one of them!

The trucks here are always filled to capacity — and there's a big difference between what's full in America and what's full in China.

Many of trucks here are loaded to such a point that you wonder what's keeping the stuff from falling off. The usual practice seems to be loading things onto a truck until it can't hold anymore and then doubling that amount.

The unloading procedures can also be equally interesting to watch. I've seen Chinese trying to get a desk to fit through a second story window (perhaps they thought it would be easier getting it through the window

than it would getting it through the door). In fact, when my tall dresser was delivered to our house the

Chinese wanted very badly to move it inside through the second-story window, and it took some doing to convince them that we wanted it brought in through the door.

Well, this article is pretty long, and I suppose that I'd better wrap things up. However, let me say before I go that the two years we've lived in China certainly haven't been boring!

