

Dear Friends and Relatives, (20 July 2010)

The program continues to go well here. In reply to a previous letter, one of my students (Cherry) from last year commented: "It is really a great way to spend one's declining years." That echoes my outlook very well. I like to be useful for a good purpose.



These pictures show my washer and drier for this summer. I had to buy my own bucket. The hose and sprayer is my shower. The clothes dry quickly in this climate when draped over the railing in front of my window.

On Saturday our team went to locations southwest of the city, perhaps about a quarter hour drive on an expressway. The first place was to a carpet factory. We did not get to see the looms because those workers were off for a holiday. We did see workers trimming carpets with electric scissors (illustrated) and the equivalent of woodshop planers to get a uniform surface. We also saw many stacks of finished carpets. Relatively few had bright designs or scenery like these; most were just various patterns. (The woman, Jean, at the left of the first photo is our language interpreter and interface between our program and the host school.)



Next we had lunch in a neighboring city, famous for its "lamasary". That is a large complex of Tibetan Buddhism temples and monk training facilities. The first photo shows our team entering the grounds. Prayer wheels are at the left. Smoke from an incense altar is

at the right. Artwork in the temples has a strong Indian influence. Signs requested that no photos be taken within the temples.

At a high point overlooking the complex there was a small bird (Dusky Warbler) with a sweet song. It stayed in a small tree and I was able to get close to it for photos.

Sunday morning we had breakfast at a local restaurant and then took taxis downtown for our normal weekly meeting. There was nothing worth photographing from the outside, and it was obscured by scaffolding anyway. Overflow crowds were in many adjacent rooms and in a central courtyard. Sound and a video view



were provided to such locations. Three of our team were in the balcony and the other five in the courtyard. In this view from the balcony a song leader was leading the people in a half hour warm up from the song book before the main event. The video camera in the bottom center was the source for remote viewing. Later a robed choir was at the left. The entire event was in Chinese, so we had difficulty knowing its content. Some of the song tunes were familiar. There were only benches in the balcony, but elsewhere the seating had backrests. It became very warm in the balcony, in contrast to the pleasantly cool air in the courtyard.



Sunday afternoon I took another hike into the hills, following the same road as the previous weekend. This time I was taking a census of the birds for later submission to Cornell University's eBird web site for scientific studies. In June that site opened up for worldwide submissions, and a correspondent there said that they would really like some data from China. The weather was warm and sunny as I walked the 5 kilometers into the hills, and I used my umbrella for shade, like the Chinese do. Coming back the skies were becoming overcast from regional thundershowers, but there was no rain here, only a cooling gust front when I was half way back.

Once near civilization again I explored around a park-like area where there were numerous sites for parties, of which there were many. I also took this photo showing a contrast between old style architecture and the high rise towers in the background. The hills in the far background are beyond the hidden city of Xining. The crop in the foreground is oats. The small trees look like spruce. This time I took plenty of water (and a cookie, unused) for my 11.5 kilometer hike and I returned in good health. I just had sore foot bottoms but no blisters.



Ed Holroyd