

N.Z.CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY
Hamilton Branch
Newsletter June 2003



GENERAL MEETING
and Farewell Supper

WEDNESDAY June 18th 2003
W.C.A.COMMUNITY CENTRE
LEWIS ST. GLENVIEW
7 30 pm

Guest Speaker
Topic

Tracy Wilson
Living and Studying in China

Tracy is a young New Zealander, who has completed two years of her five year course studying Chinese Traditional Medicine at Shanghai University. She is an ex pupil Diocesan School for Girls here in Hamilton, and completed her degree majoring in Chinese at the University of Waikato. Tracy is at present on a working holiday in New Zealand.

Our special guests at this meeting will be the Teachers from Hebei, who we met at the mix and mingle Pot Luck dinner in April. They have completed their studies and are returning home at the end of this month. This supper is an opportunity for us to say farewell!

Please bring a plate for supper. (with something on it of course !)

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Sue Clark, guest speaker at our May meeting gave us a quite different, enthusiastic account of a recent visit to China by she and her husband. Keen travellers they did considerable research into the geography and culture of the country, prior their visit, This enabled Sue to bring a perceptive understanding to her observations. Excellent, large photos, highlighted aspects of her talk

On two occasions now members of the committee have manned a NZCFS Branch stall at a Cambridge Market Fair held on the second Sunday of each month. As previously reported, Youxie gave the NZCFS a large collection of gifts, which Branches were to sell as a means of raising extra funds. The first effort proved most successful, and while it was quieter this last Sunday, it is considered worth continuing. However in view of winter weather, we are discontinuing participation until September or October. By the way if members have items, not necessarily Chinese, they have grown tired of, and which are likely to sell, bring them along to a meeting. . In this coming issue will be full details of the Midwinter Luncheon to be held at the WCA, hall on Sunday 20th July at Midday. Any change of date will be advised. This will take the place of the usual Wednesday General Meeting for July.

Conference.

Stan, Meryl, Ian and Diane, will be attending the Annual General Meeting of the Society on June 21 – 22. A report on this meeting will appear in the July newsletter. Here below is the Annual Branch Report, which will be presented to the meeting.

Annual Report Hamilton Branch NZCFS

The Hamilton branch of the NZCFS is in good heart and is actively engaged in the important issues that face the Society generally. Branch numbers, while a little down, remain stable. One of a list of priorities put forward to the committee and members for 2003, is the urgent need to increase membership, with an emphasis on the recruitment and involvement of younger members. At the time of writing, one of our committee, is seeking to increase the involvement of local Chinese families in the activities of the Branch

Another, perhaps the most important of our major priorities, was to increase our contact with overseas Chinese students studying in our community, and provide links and activities, likely to meet their needs and interests. We need to make them aware, that we are vitally interested in their welfare, and are able and willing to provide, advice and assistance whenever the occasion arises. A full report on this aspect of our work has been forwarded to National Executive.

As in previous years we have maintained close, friendly relationships with her Excellency, Mme Yang, Chinese Consul General in Auckland, and members of her staff. As in previous years, the Branch works closely with the Waikato Chinese Association, sharing celebrations of National Day, Chinese New Year, ,Lantern Festival, Mid Autumn Festival, join them at their monthly Games Evening, and co-operate with them on community issues of mutual concern.

Without a doubt the most important event of 2002 was the 50th Anniversary National Conference, held here in Hamilton.in June. While this was overall a memorable occasion, perhaps the one aspect we look back on with pride and pleasure, was the panel discussion on the history of the Society , by some of our eldest long standing members. That the late Jack Ewen was there, and participated in this important occasion, is something we remember with gratitude.

At this year's Annual Branch ,meeting, President Ian Howat stepped aside after several years of sterling service. Stan Boyle was elected to the Presidency, and at the same meeting was made a Life Member of the Branch.

In early April we again hosted the Consul General, Mme Yang and members of her staff at our annual get together at Raglan, where we were joined by members and students from China. Attendance on this occasion exceeded fifty. Also in April we hosted twenty Chinese science teachers from Hebei , who are currently studying at Waikato University, to a mix and mingle pot luck dinner. At this function there was an attendance of sixty.

Early in the year we held a well attended meeting of home hosts, Chinese students, and representatives of Language providers in the area, at which difficulties, as well as the positive aspects experienced by both parties, were aired and discussed by a representative panel.

In April, a City to City delegation from Sister City Wuxi, paid a short visit to Hamilton. Led by Mr Mao Xiaoping, acting Mayor of Wuxi, they visited various locations in the area, and some members of the committee accompanied them. In late April President Robin and Beverley met briefly with members of the executive, and discussed some of the important issues facing the Society. The Hamilton Branch looks forward to the rest of the year with confidence and enthusiasm.

Stan Boyle
President

Accommodation Required.

Accommodation within the city is required by a Chinese Visiting Scholar. Liu Yan, Professor of Computer Science at Shaanxi University of Finance and Economics, is working at Waikato University School of Management for one year. She wishes to live in a Kiwi home to improve her command of English. Liu Yan would like to do her own cooking. While the vicinity of the University would be desirable, it is not essential, since Liu Yan has her own transport. If you can help, or know of someone who can, please ring me. Ph (7) 847 4504.

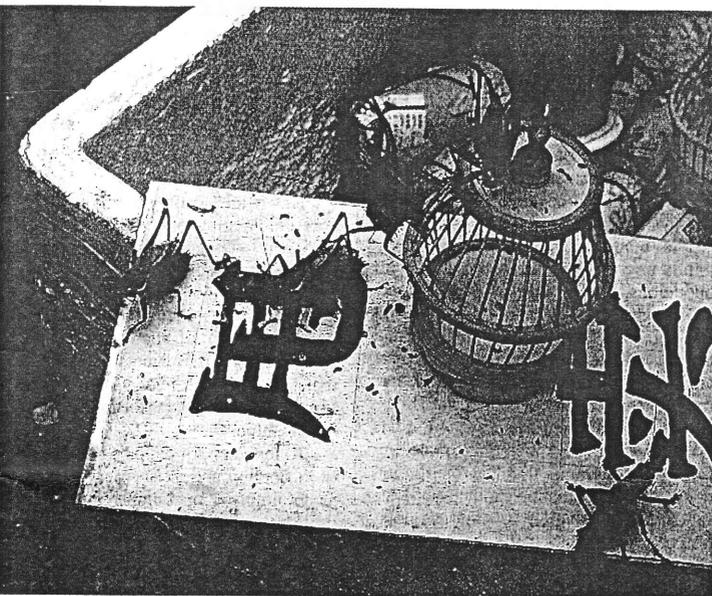
AID money for China - SARS

Marion Hobbs announced on the 29th May, that "New Zealand has pledged \$850,000 of aid money to help China fight the potentially fatal disease, Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). At the same time a further \$300,000 of NZAID funding will help Pacific Island countries prepare in the event of a SARS case reaching the Pacific."

New Zealand's contribution in China will go towards technical assistance in provinces with large numbers of cases, and to provinces who have reported only a small number of cases, but need to establish how prepared they are if the situation gets worse. New Zealand money will also go towards an international collaborative network to research the new disease.

\$700,000 of the allocated money for China will be channelled through the World Health Organisation, which is coordinating the response to SARS in China. The other \$150,000 will go to the international Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (IFRC), which is working with the Chinese Red Cross in China.

Joy of Old Men And Fighting Crickets



LIZI SHEN

By KATIE BENNER

When I was in second grade we were asked to bring in pictures of things that lived in the woods. My grandmother lived on a farm in the mountains; and so when the other students placed illustrations of bears, beavers and deer, bats and bugs on their desks, I had a photograph of my grandmother to show, probably earning me the first "F" of my long academic career. But I liked her better than I liked rabbits; and I liked her better than almost anyone else. With my relationship with my grandmother so began my longtime desire to be old—to have age as an excuse to be ornery, forgetful and to not always make it to the bathroom in time. To my mother's great pleasure, I rubbed my head in flour to gray my hair and walked with a pronounced stoop at the age of seven.

The author is a freelance journalist from the U.S. living in Beijing

Upon arrival in Beijing I was dropped into a paradise of old men who dominated sidewalks and parks with chessboards, tea thermoses and kites. I would shuffle over to their stools to check out a card game, then maybe join my geriatric sisters in a couple of kneebends at the nearby set of outdoor exercise equipment. Despite my large furry earflap hat, my mauve crocheted scarf and my fancy tuoxie, I was never really recognized as a kindred elderly spirit, but perhaps as a mentally unstable, overly eager and potentially dangerous, friendless weirdo. In the United States, a lot of my companions had been old, but it was probably because of their confinement in nursing homes that they endured my youthful idiocy and poor bridge skills. Here, old people had purpose, namely to walk slow and sling Beijing accent. They didn't need me to talk to when they ruled the streets in short, wrinkled gangs, listening to transistor radio Peking opera.

At the Bird, Fish and Insect Market just north of the Fuchengmen subway stop it is possible to purchase all the trappings of age. I stopped in to admire kites and compare the merits of fighting crickets, and my youth was given away when I asked a stall vendor to explain why some crickets fight.

"Instinct."
"What instinct?"
"To fight."
"What for?"

He took two steps away from me, the possibly deranged woman with too many questions, and only silence remained. I wandered over to look at birds. Had I had the foresight to bring money with me, I would probably have purchased a pair of cloth covered cages to blend in; but I didn't have a Mao cap, a jar of tea or a 5-kilo pair of glasses so the bird cages were really a non-issue. Even still, despite my foreignness and my bad accent, no one paid me any notice. No one cared that I was there and foreign and young, because the people there were surrounded by the far more fascinating world of the price of mealworms and best food for songbirds. Their lives were full and they didn't have time to worry about which country I was from, and maybe that's what makes old people different from other Beijingers. They know better than to care, or to admit that they care, about the supposed specialness of expatriates in China.

It's true that I enjoy going to bars and restaurants and pretending to be the 25-year-old that I am. But sometimes while I watch people on a Saturday night I can't help but think that the men and women who will be out walking backwards and slapping trees at dawn are more attractive than the boys and girls dancing at, say, Maggie's or Poachers late in the evening. But what I like best about activities for the elderly is the special intimacy that can only be found between an old man and his pet bird; the camaraderie in fighting crickets in *hutong* corners.

I like that senior citizens are free to roam the streets of Beijing like animals in a forest. I'm sure that nursing home confinement is just around the corner as the city starts moving too fast to accommodate packs of septuagenarians sauntering backwards down the sidewalk. But for now there are still some activities in Beijing that only are accessible after one has been blessed with a lucky insect box and the passage of time.