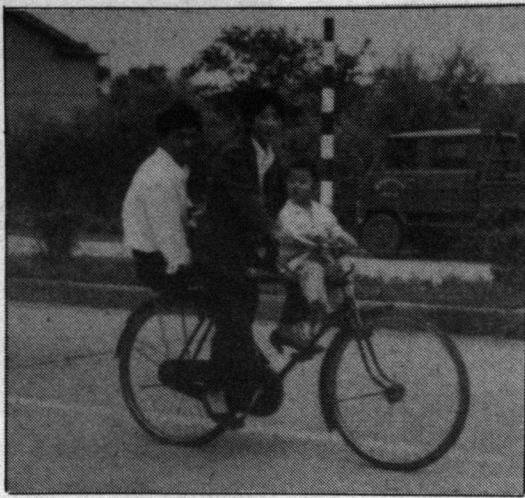


# Mongolian di

A Chinese family outing is quite an amusing sight: it only requires a single bicycle. Little children straddle the bar between the seat and the handlebars, the father sits on the seat and peddles, and the wife sits side saddle on the carrier. As we rode by, the little children would excitedly call out "Waigo ren, Waigo ren." Waigo ren means foreigner. And in China, I was the foreigner.



On May 3rd of this year, 21 students from the University of Alberta and two students from University of Calgary participated in the Alberta - Heilongjiang China summer exchange. The course is offered every second summer and is an oral immersion course for students of the Chinese language. I was one of the lucky few chosen to go and I'm sure I will remember the experiences I had in China.

I remember walking through the forbidden city (a remarkable single family dwelling), and watching the antics of our frantically frustrated tour leader. Never before had she had a group that was completely unafraid of being lost. We were all competent enough in the language to find our way back to our hotel. Our tour leader was accustomed to foreigners following her every step. Everytime she turned her back, people would have dropped behind, their curiosity aroused by some interesting artifact. The tour guide was constantly turning around and blowing out some bystander's eardrums with her electric megaphone in an attempt to attract our attention.

And I can't forget meeting the elderly Chinese man playing his Chinese violin in a Beijing park. He called himself Murphy and spoke English very well. Murphy was very glad to hear we were from Canada. He claimed to have been personally treated by Norman Bethune, a famous Canadian born doctor who is a hero to the Chinese. Murphy's gift to us was his music. He demonstrated how versatile the two-stringed Chinese violin is by playing us traditional Chinese music as well as Irish jigs and Ukrainian, Spanish, and American country music. The man was truly amazing. In exchange we offered him small souvenir pins which he was very grateful for.

One of the more diligent students asked Murphy what pin was called in Chinese. He replied, "baaroche". She repeated it, trying to commit the new word to memory. Murphy repeated the word again, trying to

correct her pronunciation. The other students were starting to laugh but she was completely absorbed in learning this new word and didn't notice the laughter rising around her. Murphy carefully repeated the word at least five times and each time she sounded out the word. Finally, one of the more compassionate students spelled out the word for her: b-r-o-a-c-h.

I laugh when I think of the evening we spent in a yurt in Inner Mongolia. The main course of our delicious dinner had been previously introduced to us by our host while it was still eating grass. A Mongol held the sheep to the ground, cut a small incision below the rib cage, inserted his arm and twisted the heart. Moments later the skin was peeled off. One of the less squeamish amongst us videotaped the whole operation. That night, there were a lot of green faces around the dinner table.

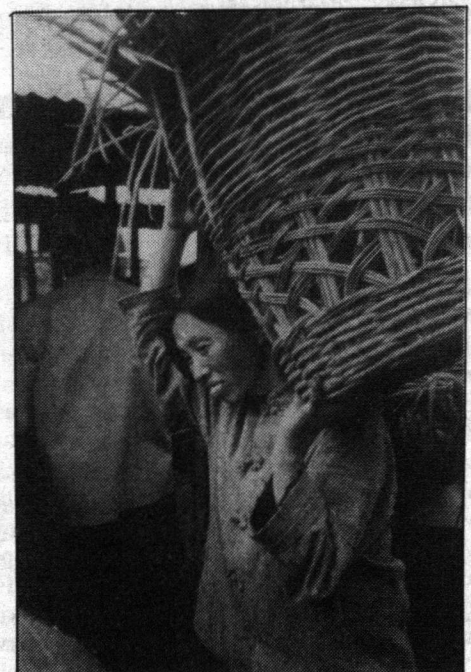
After dinner, we gathered in the main yurt. The Mongols filed in wearing their traditional costume. The scene could have probably been witnessed 500 years ago. We were all anticipating something truly unique. The ambience inside the yurt was timeless and mysterious, and everybody was spellbound. Suddenly the booming voice of Donna Summer and Disco fever resounded throughout the yurt. Unfortunately, nowadays even Mongolia has ghetto blasters.

Our national tour leader, upon first meeting, seemed rather strange. His name was Tiger and this was only his second tour. The first tour group had come from Brighton, England. Upon meeting, he would say hello and then smile deviously and ask if you knew what f--- meant. He'd say this to either men or women and all were equally shocked. Often he'd laughingly address women as "See you next Tuesday." I couldn't understand the humor of this remark and so I asked him to explain; afterwards, I still couldn't appreciate the humor ("it is an acronym with the first two words mis-spelled"). Eventually, we realized where Tiger was coming from. These English tourists must have amused themselves by teaching Tiger these swear words, and thus he expected us to also find these expressions entertaining. I must con-

fess, before we left we also taught him some Canadian swear words. We assured him that these words were far worse than the ones the English had taught him. And I can imagine him now, greeting the next tour group, with his leering grin, "Do you know what gosh darn golly gee means?"

Our course was held in Harbin at Heilongjiang University. Harbin is Edmonton's sister city and Heilongjiang is Alberta's sister province. At Heilongjiang University, Heida for short, we lived in the Foreign Expert's Building (this sounds even more impressive in Mandarin). We shared the building with 21 Russian students from Vladivostok and 25 Japanese students. They had lived at Heida for a year and many of the Japanese were planning to stay for two years. We Canadians were only there for six weeks; however, we quickly made Chinese, Japanese, and Russian friends.

I became especially close to a Russian who had four names: Alexander, Uruepy, Sasha and a fourth one I've forgotten. He and I would often cut afternoon class and go out exploring the town. We would usually borrow a couple of "Flying Pigeon" brand bicycles from some Chinese students. These flying pigeons weighed a ton and usually had no brakes. They were hard to get moving forward, but once started the momentum was frightening. We would race each other down to the center of town dodging three wheeled carts full of chicken, cardboard, furniture, concrete slabs, and anything else you could imagine. Other cyclists would be distracted almost to the point of falling off their bicycles by the sight of two white foreigners speaking awful Chinese and flying along the road.



## GFC Executive, Academic Development, Facilities Development, and Planning and Priorities Committees: Review of Composition

The composition and size of GFC's Executive and three planning committees are being reviewed.

Information about the present composition of these committees is available from Mary Delane, 2-5 University Hall.

If you wish to submit your views on this matter write to Dr. D. Massey, c/o 2-5 University Hall by November 25, 1988.

## The Faculty of Arts

### STUDENT REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEES

Students registered in the Faculty of Arts are invited to participate in the planning and administrative activities of the Faculty by volunteering for service on its various major committees (e.g. Academic Affairs, Academic Standing, etc.)

For further information, interested students should call or visit the Faculty Secretary, Room 6-18 Humanities Centre, or the Arts Students Association, Room 2-3 Humanities Centre.

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