

Wanderlust Family

June 11, 2008 Wednesday

We arrived at 10:00 pm. Two young curators (a man and a woman) picked us up at the airport and delivered us to the Hilton. We pretty much fell into bed.

June 12, 2008 Thursday

The day dawned cloudy, but not rainy.



HKG Central and Kowloon.

This is the view from our hotel window looking out at the Kowloon side of HongKong. Some of the "little" boats are the Star Ferry boats, several of which continuously take passengers back and forth between

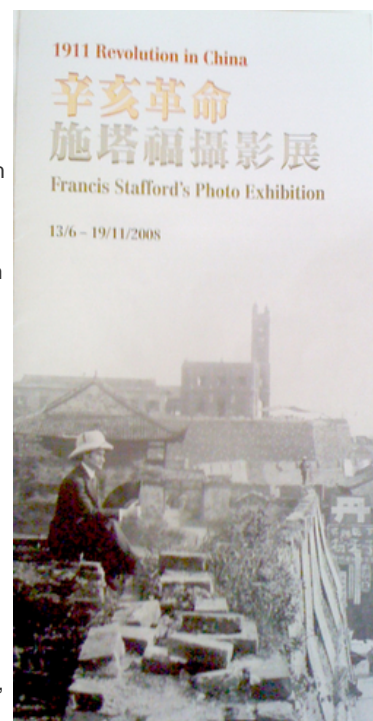
The exciting day of the opening of the Stafford (Photo) Exhibition arrived. Despite insufficient sleep, Nancy and I wandered around the shopping centers connected to our hotel in search of wrapping paper for gifts for our hosts. As it turned out the Chief Curator left early, so we were unable to give her a host present, but we did give 3 of the assistant curators small gifts from Minnesota. Two of the assistant curators had met us at the airport at 10pm the night before to take us to our hotel.

See on the right the cover of the brochure from the Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum for the exhibition of Francis Stafford photos. Our exhibit will go for 5 months and will have English as well as Chinese descriptions of each of the approximately 60 photos. The link to the museum website about this can be found at the very end of this story.

Our first exposure to the people with which I had been sending hundreds of emails over the past two years was for lunch near our hotel. At a lunch of Shanghai Chinese food in a fancy restaurant, we were properly introduced, to Elsa Leung the Chief Curator of the Hong Kong Museum of History, Ang Yee, the Curator of the Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum, a subsidiary of the other Museum, and to Osmond Chan, the principal Assistant Curator. It is with Osmond that almost all of my communication has been over the past two years.

After lunch they gave us an hour to take a nap at the hotel. I guess we looked jet lagged. Then they took us by taxi to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Museum, which is perched on a steep hill about a 10-15 minute ride from the center of Hong Kong city. The museum has no parking, so it is necessary to take a taxi to get there. Walking or a bus is an option if you know your way around the tangled city streets. You can also get there by taking the half-mile long escalator up from Hong Kong Central.

As soon as we arrived, they showed us the exhibition room and the official photographer started



taking pictures of us wandering around looking at the photos and printed descriptions of the photos. The exhibit was very professionally arranged on about 10 large panels in a beautiful room that used to be the dining room of a very wealthy Chinese family in the 1920s. In fact the building itself is historically important and very beautiful, and many visit the museum just to see the mansion. Here is the entrance to the Stafford exhibit. You can see the beautiful decor around the photo panels.



You may not be able to see him, but that is a photo of Francis Stafford between the two doors.

After about 50 people had squeezed into the exhibition room, the curators welcomed everyone and then asked me to give a welcoming talk. Fortunately I had written a short speech, as had the Chief Curator. And since I used some of the same paragraphs that I used for my welcoming speech seven years ago in Shanghai, it was not difficult to prepare. Nor was it difficult to remember while giving the speech.

Nancy will put a movie of our speeches and some of the other happenings up on You Tube, with a link here, so you can hear and seen what it was like. (Nancy is surprised, as she reads this right now.)

Just before the ceremony I was interviewed by a reporter from the South China Morning Post, the principal English newspaper of Hong Kong. After the speeches I was hounded by about 6 other reporters for Chinese language daily newspapers. They all wanted to know how I felt when I first saw that pictures. Of course, I couldn't remember when I first saw the photos, much less how I felt. Furthermore, my biggest emotional reaction to the photos was one of disgust because of the photo showing only the chopped-off heads of the first martyrs of the revolution. The exhibition did not include this picture, so I could not really talk about it either.

It turns out that the Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum visitors during the week days are mostly high school students. Bus loads are brought in to see the exhibits and about 5 traveling exhibits have been made to send out to schools for their history classes. The Stafford exhibition will be transformed into a traveling exhibit for schools and other nonprofit organizations after the current exhibition ends, which will be November 19.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the Curators are planning to have a second exhibition of the Stafford photos beginning about a year from now. The second exhibit will focus on the cultural context of the early 1900s in China. The current exhibit features the key events of the nationalist revolution.

As in China, this museum considers the Stafford photo of Dr. Sun Yat-sen leaving Shanghai on January 1, 1912 to go to Nanking to be established as the first provisional president of China to be a photo of great historical value. They have enlarged it to cover the entire wall of a small room as part of the permanent exhibition of the Dr. Sun Yat-sen museum.

So in many ways the photography of Grandfather Francis Stafford has become permanently recognized as a contribution to the history of China. At the opening we were introduced to the nephew of Sun Yat-sen and he has promised to promote the photo exhibition to officials in Beijing in order that it might become part of the 100 year anniversary of the nationalist revolution. That event will be October 10, 2011. In the photo below, the nephew is on the right and the Chief Curator is the short woman in the center. .



All the remaining people in the above photo are official dignitaries, including Nancy. We are standing in front of one of about 12 photo panels of the Stafford exhibition.



Ron is being interviewed by a reporter from South China Post, the main Hong Kong newspaper and the only one that charges readers for their daily information. A feature story on the exhibition will be published within two weeks.



The scene from our hotel room on the least cloudy day of our trip. The view is looking across Hong Kong bay to Kowloon.



A helicopter flies in front of Kowloon apartment buildings.



The ferry landing on the Kowloon side, with typically many tall buildings everywhere.

Friday

Most of the day we relaxed, took naps and walked through the skyway system as it rained heavily most of the day. But in the evening the rain had mostly stopped, and our friend Nancy Law (who teaches at the Univ. of Hong Kong) drove us over the mountain to the southern side of Hong Kong Island. On the southern coasts are beautiful inlets with swimming beaches, restaurants and luxury condominium high-rises. It is a beautiful and welcome change from the bustle of the city, which consists largely of concrete towers.

Hong Kong Island is a sizable mountain, so most of the city is built on a steep hill. Often the slopes are 30 to 45 degrees of sharp incline, but on both sides of the mountains trees and green bushes fill all of the cracks between buildings and around busy roadways. Traffic is a major problem, not unlike LA.

Our dinner in Stanley on the Southern coast was genuinely Chinese. Nancy Law is native Chinese and so we depended upon her recommendations. We started with Gen-sing soup, which was tasty but to prove that it wasn't just flavored water, they brought out the plate of all the strange leftovers from cooking the soup. It is one time that garbage seemed to have value. Next they brought out veggie cube much like tofu, but made from flour. The cubes were tasty, perhaps because they did not taste like any vegetables we had every had. With the cubes was a substance that look like black spinach,

but was some kind of fungus. We are still alive and well.

A duck was the next feature of the meal. They brought an entire duck covered with brown sauce, and proceeded to carve very thin peaces of the duck. Each piece was shaped like a moon and all were laid in a circle. We were given extremely thin pancakes, about one tenth the thickness of a tortilla in which to wrap the duck pieces. In was very tasty, but it was hard not to feel sorry for the duck. The last feature was my favorite: mango pudding.



Stanley Bay on Southern Coast of Hong Kong Island

Saturday

The morning began with more rain but by the time we had lunch with John and Sue Mittelstadt, the rain had stopped. We walked a few blocks to the Hong Kong Central Park, which has an excellent restaurant mostly outdoors next to a large waterfall. After a delightful lunch we wandered through a huge, enclosed aviary taking pictures and enjoying dozens of exotic species of colorful birds.

John and Sue are friends of Ron's cousin Barbara Stafford Landers who is now living in Amsterdam. John & Sue are from Denver but he is working for a couple of years in Hong Kong helping to open businesses in Asia.

We took a taxi to the Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum and we all got a personally guided tour of the entire Museum again. It was late Saturday afternoon, but there were quite a few museum visitors wandering around and many looking at the Stafford photos. We were not able to take any photos inside the museum because visitors were there, but we took pictures outside next to a huge bronze statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen just outside the entrance. During the ceremony they gave me a foot tall replica of the bronze statue to take home.

You can find pictures of these events and scenes below. It will be a few days before we get photos up of the exhibit panels because we have to convert PDF files to picture files. Also, the Museum photographer took a lot of photos during the opening ceremony, but he will mail them to us on a CD.

Below is a picture of the urban water fall and a few of the many exotic birds in the Hong Kong Aviary:





Front & entrance of Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum

John & Sue Mittlestadt, Nancy & Ron in front of bronze statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen

We arose at 4am to the sound of deep thundering. We left for the airport at 5:30 and arrived home at about 6:30pm, which means about 26 hours of travel time including the first stop in Tokyo and the second in San Francisco. It is great to be home, but this has been a very special visit.

PS: More photos of the exhibition will be arriving within a couple of weeks and they will be installed on a separate page. All members of this Wanderlust Family Wiki will be notified when it is set up. To see what the Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum says about the Stafford photo exhibition, click on this link: <http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/Museum/sysm/en/opening.php>

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Sunday