



December 31, 2009

James and I visited Ligaya in Xining, Qinghai province in September 2008 and then all 3 of us took the train on the world's highest railway from Xining to Lhasa. Elevation reached more than 16,000 ft. Oxygen is pumped into cabins so passengers can cope with high altitude. About 710 miles of track, some on permafrost requiring cooling pipes. Once in Lhasa, it was Buddhist temples, prayer wheels, prayer flags, and goddesses.



In December 2009 Maria writes: Towards the end of 2008, I realized I had met most of the goals that required my presence in Afghanistan and suggested it was time to bring in a new Chief of Party for the project who would be resident in Kabul and to allow me to backstop the project from Spokane as a senior program advisor on a part-time basis. My mom who has lived in California since 1973 died within 3 days of my return to Spokane in February 2009. I have spent time reflecting on and writing about the Afghanistan experience. In September 2009, I read a paper on global development alliances in higher education: the Afghanistan case at the UK Forum on International Development Education at Oxford. In November, James and I did a workshop together at the International Leadership Association conference in Prague. I'm writing a paper about e-learning in Afghanistan for the LINC conference at MIT in March and visit David in the Boston area.



Train to Lhasa (from Internet)
Maria presents certificate to Afghan project participant
Prague photo by James

In March, Ligaya writes:

新年快乐 and Tashi Delek from Qinghai! I'm finishing up my second year with Volunteers In Asia. My Mandarin Chinese has gone from beginner to intermediate level and my Amdo Tibetan has gone from non-existent to travelers' greetings. My teaching experience at Qinghai Normal University has evolved from difficult to fun and my work at Shem Women's Group continues to be inspiring.

I am currently fretting about re-patriation. My visa is up in July so I'm trying to think of ways to transition back to American work life OR getting my foot in the door of becoming a career expatriate.

All in all, I feel very blessed to have had this opportunity to live and work in China. I am also very blessed to have come from a community of friends and family who are models of international sojourning. I'm grateful for everybody's support, but I'm also glad to finally be able to share my own "peace stories" around the table. I was also extremely lucky to be able to host a bunch of visitors including my mom and dad. Unfortunately, David couldn't make it, though he was here in spirit. We took the Lhasa train from Xining to Lhasa. Dad took about a gazillion beautiful photos, which we will never see because the camera was lost or stolen. I thought that was a sad, yet timely message about non-attachment and impermanence.

This year also marked my first return to the States since I started with VIA in July 2007. Being back was kind of strange; I'd forgotten how to drive and how to deal with being able to understand everything all the time. Being back was wonderful. I really enjoyed spending time with the Beebe family and our extended family (families) in the Bay Area. Even though the occasion for being together was sad, I'm sure Lola would have loved seeing everybody together, laughing, cooking, eating, and making chismis. She would have loved that.

The picture shows Rashit, our Kazakh host and the policeman who tracked me to return my lost and found passport while visiting Heavenly Lake.



December 2009 update. Ligaya extended her stay in China through at least mid-2010, moved from Xining to Jinan, the capital of Shandong Province, and took a job teaching English at Aston English, a private school where she has the time to study intensive Chinese.



From David: *"Sometimes, the Bear eats you... sometimes you eat the Bear"*

2008 was a tumultuous ride which started in a somewhat darkened forecast of future growth at Tilted Mill Entertainment. SimCity Societies didn't do as well as expected. Tilted Mill started having layoffs in April and David was in the first round of folks who were let go. In May, (just around the time that Dmitry Medvedev was replacing Vladimir Putin as President of Russia) David landed a job at Gizmo 6 as the producer for the Disney Princess flash game website. www.DisneyPrincess.com <<http://www.DisneyPrincess.com>> David worked from the comforts of his living room as he managed an international team of coders and artists in France, and Bulgaria, while coordinating with the leads in California. His newfound knowledge base made inroads with Elisa's 4 year old niece. The first princess (Aurora) went live in November. Gizmo 6 had a corporate retreat and holiday dinner in Napa Valley where David and Elisa were treated

to a 10 course tasting meal where David inadvertently caused extra work for the Sommelier by asking if the dinner party could only have wines from California. (The sommelier acquiesced defeat by admitting that one of the wines was actually from Japan; as apparently he didn't feel there was a

suitable sake substitute made in California... Defeat is such a strong word. The meal was excellent and the wine tastings from the California region (minus the one sake!) were perfect. David was promoted to Senior Producer. In early January of 2009, the project was starting to wind down and it came at a time when a yearlong courtship with Harmonix Music finally came to fruition. David was offered a job as the Web producer. Harmonix Music created the original Guitar Hero and Guitar Hero 2 games and went on to create the Rockband franchise. Harmonix Music isn't working on the DJ Hero game with the mix turntable toy but is working on the new Beatles Rock band game: www.theBeatlesRockband.com <<http://www.theBeatlesRockband.com>> . There's other stuff happening at the company as well, and David concedes that sometimes video game companies take themselves too seriously with all this "it is a secret" stuff but in this case... "it is secret!"

David has transitioned from Capoeira to Aikido. Some of this was due to David's limited Brazilian Portuguese vocabulary when it came to understanding his Mestre's instructions. Mestre Ze didn't speak English very well so communication ended up being a lot of thumbs up and 'good?' 'good!' call and responses. The environment wasn't building up the spiritual aspect of a Martial Art which David was looking for. The other factor is that the Aikido dojo where Elisa practices at throws much better parties. David tested for his first belt in December.

David has lost weight, (but he's also gained some of it back). He's lost a job (but gained a more stable one and upgraded to another with a raise and a more comprehensive health plan!). David lost his focus in one martial art (but picked up another one).

Find him on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=608046888&ref=profile>

From James: The last 23 months since our last letter have been busy and fulfilling. I continue to make progress on my goal of not dying of boredom. In August the Doctoral Program in Leadership Studies moved into a modern building creased from a 100 year old warehouse. Windows to the outside cover an entire wall and the wall to the hall is entirely windows, designed to provide light to the inside offices.

In the last letter I indicated I was planning to spend some time in Afghanistan. Between February 2008 and July 2009, I made six trips to Kabul. While my primary activity was spending time with Maria, I was also involved in pro bono work with the University of Kabul's new Masters in Public Administration program including teaching a course on public policy and preparation of program documentation. This program was the brainchild of Maria and was supported by her Afghan eQuality Alliances. I designed and implemented a training program for Afghans chosen for Fulbright grants to study in the United States.



I also worked with the Afghanistan Civil Service Training Institute as a consultant funded by the United Nations Development Program on developing a plan for the development of a strategic plan that would be created by Afghans and response to their needs. As part of this activity I helped with the introduction into their training of Islamic concepts of servant and guardian leadership. In July 2009 Maria returned to Afghanistan I and joined her in August to teach the Public Policy course to a new group of mid-career Afghan civil

servants. Teaching the course for a second time gave me the opportunity to revise the course to include modules on the implications of Islam and the implications of working in what some have called a "failed state" for the development and implementation of public policy.

I had to leave Kabul a few days earlier than scheduled at the end of December 2008 when I received an email about water leaking from the ceiling of one of the upstairs bedrooms. We had developed an "ice dam" on the roof. This followed 60 inches of snow in December (including 17 inches on December 18). The total for 2008-2009 year in Spokane was 93.6 inches, the most since they started keeping records in 1893. This is almost double more than the average of 50 inches per year.

After losing our camera during the trip to Tibet, I bought a replacement mid-level Canon and in January took a digital photography course at the community college. As part of the course, I learned how to use a few of the hundreds of features of Photoshop CS4. I now know how to straighten the horizons in pictures like the sunset picture in our letter last year.

In addition to continuing to teach and work with students on dissertations, this past year I chaired a search committee to hire two new faculty members for the program. The process involved a tremendous number of faculty members, students, and former students and was characterized by being self-organizing, focused on selecting the best new members of a team, and used Google groups to make available to the search committee and others in the community the application letters, resumes, and recorded phone interviews of the 10 finalists out of the 38 individuals who submitted completed application. Believing that there is merit in trying to influence events, even if it is only as the African proverb says being the mouse that whispers in the ear of the elephant, I was elected as faculty member on the Gonzaga University Board of Regents. I was also elected for the second time to serve on the University budget committee, a position that looks to be especially important given the national economic conditions. In October I was appointed to the search committee for the Academic Vice President, the number two position at Gonzaga and have enjoyed the interaction with colleagues from throughout Gonzaga. It is very clear to me that the employment of new faculty and administrators at a University allows the organization to choose to look to the future and make changes.

I am working on the last two courses and an internship focused on ministry in higher education as the last requirements for my Masters of Divinity degree from Meadville Lombard, the Unitarian Universalist seminary in Chicago. I expect to graduate in June 2010 and will then face a decision as to whether to pursue ordination with a focus on community ministry. The experience of working on the MDiv. has been wonderful and has helped me understand that the work I do in higher education is "ministry."

To reach us: James Beebe <beebe.j@gmail.com>, Maria Beebe <maria.beebe@gmail.com>, David Beebe <thedavidbeebe@gmail.com>, Ligaya Beebe <lbeebe@gmail.com>

