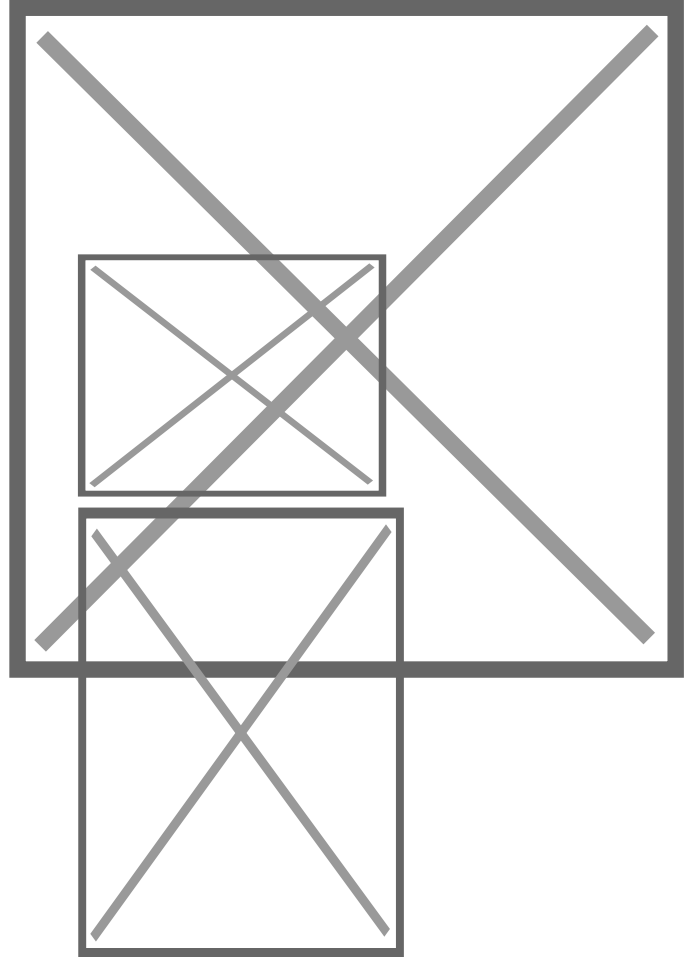


What am I doing here?

Western officer Captain Ian Robinson reports on his expedition to China.

by Ian Robinson, Captain –



Above: Captian Ian Robinson greets one for the residents of the Xin Yie (Christian) home in China. Right: Robinson is shown near the top of Laoshan mountain.

Captains Ian and Isobel Robinson are directors of the Peacehaven Nursing Home in Singapore. New Frontier first reported on the potential project in China in Vol. 24, No. 19, Nov. 10, 2006.

China is everything you expect it to be and nothing like you expect it to be. I was there to evaluate potential for collaboration between Peacehaven and nursing homes in Qingdao, a city of 8 million people by the Yellow Sea, halfway between Shanghai and Beijing. Modern skyscrapers stand beside old shop houses, and contemporary European and Japanese cars vie for road space with wheelbarrows and bicycles. The pace is much slower than Beijing or Hong Kong—I had a sense of

being in an English seaside resort like Brighton or Blackpool. The German influence is strong—Tsing Tao beer is its most famous product.

I wondered, “What am I doing here?” as I had lunch with representatives from the Charities Commissioner’s office, the Social Welfare Institute who oversees nursing homes, and the Three Self Patriotic Movement—the governing body for all official Protestant churches in China. Our hosts could not understand why we would not drink their famous Tsing Tao beer, and we had to explain our abstinent stand at every meal. However, after three days of explanations, our host waved the waiter away with the Mandarin equivalent of “Lemonade all round!” Then he turned to me and through the translator ordered me to pray for the meal!

What began as a trip to explore possibly helping to run a small Christian nursing home escalated into potentially providing ongoing basic nursing care training for hundreds of nurses in Shandong province. Many of the nursing home directors and city officials visited Peacehaven for two days in June this year, and returned home determined to achieve the same standard of care for their own homes. Peacehaven will be registering as a nurse training school in Singapore, enabling us to offer a highly desirable level of certification. Many hours of classroom interaction will help build relationships and open doors for ministry. Part of the curriculum is “Person-Centered Care,” involving the spiritual aspect of care—providing another opportunity to share our faith. Our obstacle now is funding. The Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar Territory and the Hong Kong and Macau Command (responsible for the Army’s work in China) do not have the financial resources to support this project. But we believe that if God is opening the doors, he will provide the funds.

At the same time, we hope to work with the Xin Yi Christian home, which needs more than basic training. The facility is very run-down and administrative skills are weak. In this setting, under the umbrella of the Three Self Patriotic Movement, we can minister and preach openly.

I was fascinated to learn that despite the Three Self Patriotic Movement’s Communist hierarchy, many of their churches are very evangelical and some are quite charismatic! The Chinese government is finding it increasingly more difficult to hold back the wave of Western modernism, with mobile phones and the Internet, and the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, and Qingdao may be the catalyst that blows the lid right off. Without wanting to appear naïve, I believe that these doors that are opening are more than a coincidence. We are aware of the difficulties of dealing with the Chinese government, but there is a new and pervasive “openness” that presents opportunities for ministry we cannot ignore.

“What am I doing here?” I think God is answering that question. God’s message is that we can’t go back, only forward. There is no bypass or shortcut, and no escape. To achieve our goal we must follow the prescribed path to its end. Where “forward” will lead is anyone’s guess, but, “We must keep going in the direction we are headed now” (Philippians 3:16 – Contemporary English Version).