

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE AMBASSADOR PROGRAMS

The roots of People to People Ambassador Programs reach back to 1956 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower founded People to People.

Eisenhower's perspective as Supreme Allied Commander and President led to his belief that private citizens reaching out in friendship to the people of other nations could make a significant contribution to world peace.

In his "Report to the Nation" following the Geneva summit talks, President Eisenhower called for "increased visits by citizens of one country to another to give each the fullest opportunity to learn about the people of other nations..."

President Eisenhower served as the first chairman of the board. Over the years, Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Bush and Clinton have served as Honorary Chairman of People to People International. It was Eisenhower's dream: that "personal communication and mutual respect among men and women of many cultures can be powerful forces for peace."

"The nature of People to People activities is as varied as the individuals involved. The housewife whose recipe contains the yeast of kindness, the soldier whose arms embrace homeless waifs, the doctor who heals with humility; all assert a single theme – the power of people, acting as individuals, to respond imaginatively to the world's need for peace." – President John F. Kennedy

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Clowns, Fun, and Humor in Medicine Delegation to the People's Republic of China September 17-29, 2000

"All people need to join hands in a common humanity and feel a brotherhood and sisterhood. From this context can grow peace and justice. Few things foster this precious dream like the direct application of sweet humor and love, both embodied in the clown.

"No previous clowning experience is required on these trips, only the desire to spread love and fun in a silly costume." – **Patch Adams**, Delegation Leader

Clown Ambassadors

We went to let the Chinese people experience Americans as individuals rather than a foreign government. It was a privilege to represent the fun loving spirit of the American people and to show and discover that we are all truly alike in the play fields of the human heart.

Someone looking at all Shobi's China pictures said, "Oh, you're a Clown Ambassador!" "Yes" I thought, once there was just the street clown, then the circus clown, then the community clown and the hospital clown. Now we offer another service clown -- the Ambassador Clown. –*Shobi*

From Priscilla Pearson

Delegate from San Rafael, California

"Noses off to People to People Ambassadors for even contemplating integrating a group of unpredictable and outlandishly dressed people into a culture steeped in history and quiet dignity. Now, it's no easy task to assemble 40 "odd" clowns from different parts of the world. Nevertheless People to People accomplished this feat admirably and I am sure I can speak for everyone when I say it was, without a doubt, a trip of a laugh time.

"Our mission was to reach out with open hearts and hands to the people of China which everyone did with ease, no matter the level of clowning expertise. The outpouring of love and caring from every clown was phenomenal and our reception was perception-changing for all. Whatever preconceived notions we had of the Chinese (and vice versa) were altered from the first wave of our hands. They welcomed us with broad smiles, genuine trust and a refreshing honesty, which gave us the green light to enter their world and change ours forever.

"Natural endorphins were generated wherever we went. We were like free radicals, the good ones of course. The ones with positive output and input, bridging the gap between reality and hilarity. Remembering always, that to bring a smile in adversity is a gift to be treasured. The treasure is in the gift and the gift is in the giving.

"Although the focus of the trip was to visit hospitals, a blind institute, various schools, a retirement home, a center for the physically challenged and a hospice, we had many opportunities to stop along the way in the villages. Time and time again we saw life as we don't know it.

From Bill Waters of Marquette Michigan who came to China from South Africa where he was a visiting professor

"Our purpose was simply to bring the 'lighten up' message to as many Chinese institutional administrators/staff/residents as possible and anyone else along the way with whom we might mingle. What became evident early on however, was that the Chinese people in general don't seem to need this message. They've already gotten it. Indeed, they seem to be the most lighthearted, eager to smile, receptively open people on earth!

"We were overwhelmed with wide-mouthed, childlike smiles and grins, laughter and merriment which greeted us everywhere we went in China. Simply driving down the crowded streets of Beijing in our bus would bring enthusiastic waves from pedestrians, who would glimpse our bright colored faces and clothes in the bus, wave excitedly and point at us or throw us kisses. Children would jump up and down with delight. Often such behavior outside our bus would compel Patch to yell "Stop the bus!" Whereupon the driver would pull over, we'd all get out and something just short of joyful pandemonium would result in the streets as clowns and folks mingled.

"It was all quite unbelievably beautiful and gratifying. We were there to promote openhearted, lighthearted love and understanding among people and they were there to receive and welcome it. What a privilege. Such a joy."



Hugs, Unabashed Hugs, Outrageous Hugs, Free Hugs, and More Hugs

The Chinese people would gather around and after a few seconds of bewilderment, break out into laughter. After the first day we were on national Chinese TV, so people saw us and waved. Little kids would jump up and down with excitement. We would run into a crowd and just hug people. And the Chinese People returned our hugs. We got thumbs up everywhere we went. Shobi has never felt this free clowning before. It is definitely a result of being with 44 clowns. We would come in a wave of bright colors joy and foolishness.

Play, Outrages Play, with Everyone Everywhere

We would greet everyone alike with clown "equal vision." It didn't make any difference if they were street cleaners, cooks, cops, or businessmen. Restaurants were especially fun. At the right Bart Marcy "Dooney" from Tucson plays with kitchen staff. Above is Arne Swenson from Scottsdale, Arizona in Tian'anmen Square.



Happy Thelma Miller of Old Tappan, New Jersey reported that while walking up the 327 steps of at the Mausoleum of Dr. Sun Yatsen, she was miming that she was having a tough time going up. "This couple looked at me. Each one grabbed an arm and pulled me up. Then, about half way up, they got another couple to pull me up the rest of the way." That seemed to be the attitude of the people -- cooperation, mutual support and understanding..

At the Mausoleum (see photo at left), Shobi was doing this "down the stairs" dance all by herself. A group of around 30 Chinese tourists were coming up the stairs. Shobi stopped and took a deep bow "Ni Hao" (Hello) and then tried to remember how to say "I love you" in Chinese. "Woo. . ah. . woo" and without skipping a beat the entire tourist group said "Wo Ai Ni!" (I love you). I was completely blown away!

At all the sites we visited we would see the "other" tourists. They would file off and on their buses and listen to their guides -- something we often did not do. They had little contact with anyone but themselves. Often they would stand around and watch us. Of course nobody stood around watching us for too long before we engaged them in some sort of play. Just because they were American or Japanese tourists didn't mean they were exempt from our frolic and foolishness.

We were not watching China, we were engaged in China. You can't imagine the hundreds of people we 44 clowns connected with, and all the hundreds of pictures that we had taken with families, children and friends.



Stop the Bus! Clowns off!

Our guides quickly discovered that it took us forever to get from one place to another. A simple five minute walk from the bus to the hospital would take an hour! So our schedules were rewritten. We never did get to the Forbidden City, but it didn't matter. The "sights" became like a movie being played in the background. We'd catch a glimpse of it every now and then, we were too busy clowning around. Everywhere we went, we stopped to play with people. That included anyone in a uniform. Many ended with painted red noses. We were warned not to approach the police, but that warning proved unnecessary. They played the most!

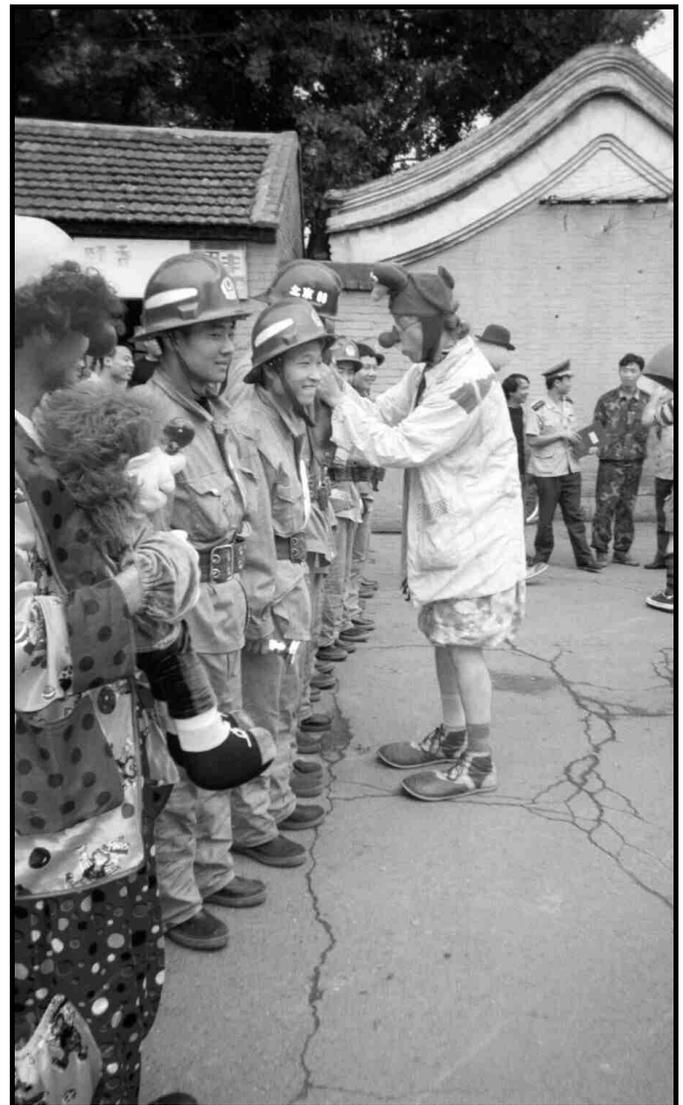
All the Chinese workers seem to stand in front of their business establishments for "inspection" before the doors open. When we saw the firemen standing for inspection, it was just too much to resist. "Stop the Bus!" We all got out. Sometimes when stuck in traffic just five or six clowns would get off to shake hands and give hugs!

From Nurse Ducky (Marcy Graves): "In Beijing we visited Tian'anmen Square (pictured on cover). I never realized how BIG it was. Soon we were surrounded by hundreds of people. It was at that time we were told that the Chinese people had never seen clowns up close before. We were heartily greeted there, as we were everywhere. Everyone wanted their pictures taken with the "Funny Western Clowns." I was especially popular because of my appearance. Most Chinese people are small in stature, black-eyed, and have black hair. When they come face to face with a tall, "rubesque" blue-eyed blond woman from Texas, it must have been like Sesame Street come to life! Everyone had to touch me to see if I was real or if it was all part of my costume. I would soon get used to this reaction as it followed me the entire trip!"

From Jacki Kwan a.k.a. *Elfie* of Potomac, Maryland:

"A peak experience for me was in The People's Park in Shanghai. I was street clowning with "Happy". In the distance I heard the beat of contemporary rock music. *Elfie*, my clown character, started to dance as we walked closer to the live music. We got to an outdoor stage where a seated audience of at least 100 people were watching two young women dancing on a stage. *Elfie* was dancing through the crowd when people started laughing hysterically.

"One of the dancers extended her hand for me to join them on the stage. Next thing I knew I was on stage trying to copy their steps! The laughter fueled my feelings of freedom to just go with the flow! My nervousness disappeared, my belly was soft and I was in my element. It was pure joy for me. The roar from the crowd filled my soul. At the end of the music, the two dancers did some sort of bow. I fell to the floor of the stage in the same position. TA! DA! "Elfie" was free.....following her (my) passion to make a difference! I then jumped off the stage and started to walk away, when a lady came running after me and gave me a present for performing."



Patch took over the firemen's inspection with Warner Gehner and his puppet (far left) also in the line up.



A Little Divine Intervention

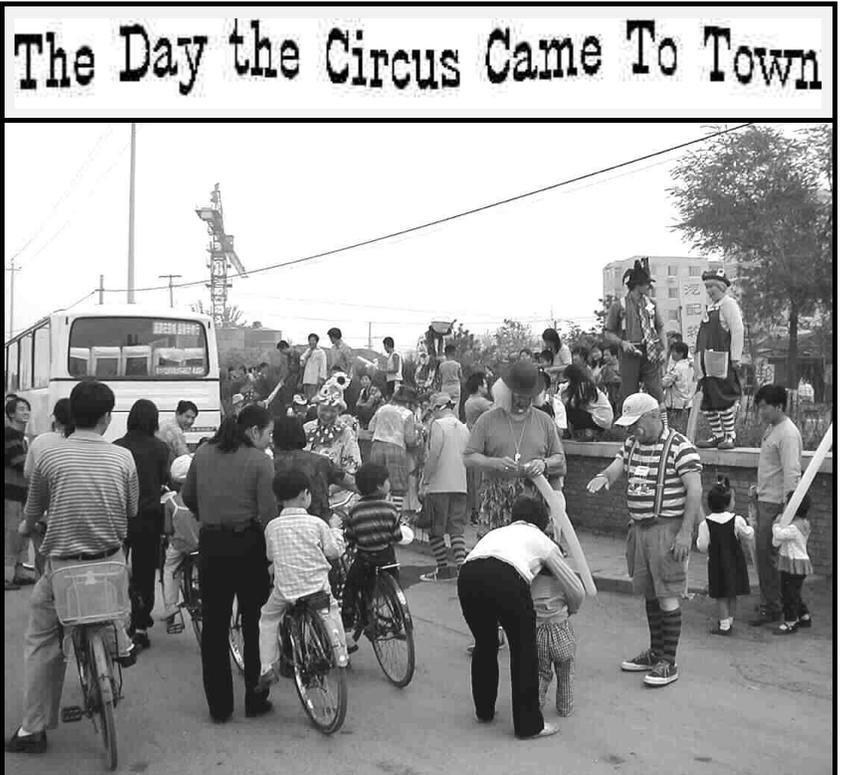
Clem T John Kapferer pictured above with Patch: “The event I will always remember is the stop along the road to the Great Wall when our bus broke down. I remember someone yelling “Hey Clem “T” there are some kids out there playing in the field” That was all it took for me to get out of the bus and start the ball rolling with the local population. Then I went up on the bridge and got the people to come down to see all of us clowns. We probably had over 300 local people gathering around us before it all ended.”

From Arne Swenson of Scottsdale AZ: “Following a touring event at the Summer Palace, we were on our way to visit the Great Wall. About 40 minutes into the trip, the bus faltered and finally stopped.

“What happened during the wait was one of the neatest experiences on the entire trip. There were four Chinese people at the site of the distressed bus



Jacqueline Kwan *Elfin* and George Greader *Geo*



when we first stopped. As the word spread through the neighborhood, the people continued to come. As the crowd grew, the enthusiasm of the group continued to rise, inviting songs and balloon twisting, juggling and merriment.

“Soon there was a full-scale carnival in progress, perhaps a hundred people in all. As we drove away on the new bus we reflected on what the Chinese will remember of this event. Perhaps they will tell their grandchildren about the crazy bus full of colorful creatures that passed through one day and stopped to host a “Happening”. Patch said it best....”The day the Circus came to Town”.

Hit the Streets

As most of us were always “in face,” every time we’d walked outside during our free time, we’d come across clowns in pairs or alone with crowds around them. One morning early, Shobi went to find a feather duster in a department store. There was *Dooley* Bart Marcy all by himself dancing to the music being set up on a bandstand. Of course, Shobi joined him for a while before she went inside to mime a feather duster to a store clerk.

From *Geo* George Greader of Nanuet New York: “The Chinese never saw anything like us. Clowns in China are mostly stage performers. It wouldn’t take two seconds for us to have a crowd of hundreds gather to play with us. Sometime a policeman would ask us to move along to break up the crowd.”

One time *Geo*, a retired New York City Police Detective, got off the bus in full clown to direct traffic during a traffic jam in Beijing. There might have been a lot of rubbernecking when he took over from the startled traffic cop, but the commuters had a blast.” *Geo* and *Clem T* clowned together a lot, so after that you never knew when you’d turn a corner and see them directing traffic.

One day as *Shobi* was walking back to the hotel in Beijing alone, she joined a crowd of people trying to cross a street (cars have the right of way in Beijing). Being inspired by *Geo*, the traffic cop, *Shobi* boldly stepped out into the street and made her clown self as big as she could. Traffic stopped! Everyone cheered and laughed as we crossed the street. (Do you think that could happen in Paris, New York, or Tokyo? Hmm?)

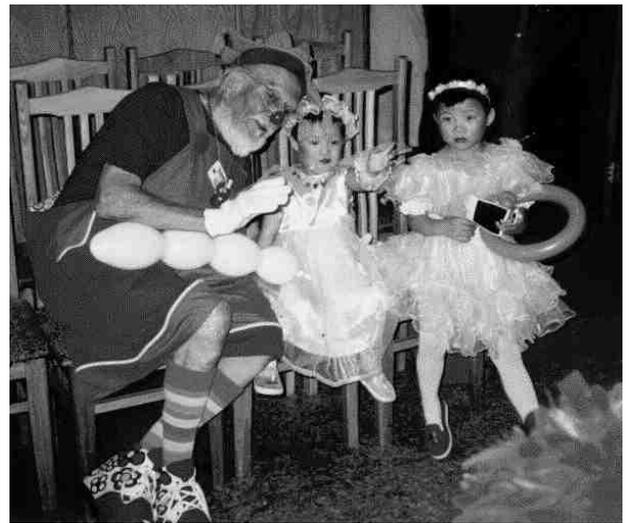
The Chinese Children

In every clown's heart is the brother and sister of the little people of the land we call children. We are there with them and they know it!



On Tian'anment Square Nat Kirkland, a family doctor from Maurertown, Virginia, cautiously clowns and extends a hand to a young girl. It was as if nothing else existed. There seemed to be a bubble of silence around the two. It took ten minutes for the connection, but it happened. Amongst all the cheerful chaos that we inspired everywhere we went there were the tender moments. Looking around at the crowd, there on the side of the road or in a corner would be a clown making a connection.

From Laura Haldane of Mesa Arizona (pictured below with school children): "Chinese people of all ages responded to us with absolute delight. Their responses were encouraging to this "newby" clown. I found them to be warm, kind, considerate, curious and fun loving. I was repeatedly amazed that we were laughing, playing, singing and dancing together. I grew up during the cold war. The messages I heard then were that China, like the Soviet Union, was to be feared and not trusted. It seems likely to me that Chinese people would have been told similar things about Americans, but there was no evidence we had ever been enemies. On the contrary, it seemed they made every effort to make us feel welcome. Children performed for us several places we went, and always included songs in English they knew would be familiar."



Bill Miller-Coulter of New York City with dancers from the Beijing Children's Welfare House (Orphanage)

Inevitably we'd walk into a Children's facility – hospital or school and they would have everyone ready for our stage performance. Well, that's not what we were there to do. So we'd just walk in and sit in the kids laps, lie on their tables, dance, and in general not act like orderly adults, but created our merry mischief.

♪♪♪♪ Study War No More ♪♪♪♪

At one school we were persuaded to all get on stage and sing. After a rousing round of "Old Mac Donald" complete with sound effects and Twinkle, Twinkle, we sang "Down by the Riverside." Before we realized it the children sang with us over and over again the chorus, "I ain't gonna study war no more, study war no more." With the energy of 40 odd clowns, we spilled off the stage. Beach Clown got down and asked a child to dance. I went over and asked one of the teachers, except it turned out to be the principal I asked to dance. Well that did it, the whole place went wild. Everyone was up and dancing. We started doing congo line dances around the room. "Study war no more." will be imbedded in their memories forever. Pete Seeger would be proud of us! I was proud of us!

In the Beijing Children's Hospital I was dancing in a hall with 2 nurses. They put their arms under mine and danced me down the hall through a door and down the stairs all the way to their ward. There I was with a children/s wing all to myself. It made me feel at home and I did what I do at home in my hospital.

At one point I turned around and there was a mother with a 2 year old child right behind me. The child took one look at me and screamed. We've all been there, but here the reaction was different. Everyone just laughed like "Oh isn't that cute the child is afraid of the clown." The mother simply walked into another room with the child. I thought a lot about that. There was no "bad clown" you scared the kid. It was just a cute part of growing up – acceptable normal behavior.



In the center of the orphanage (Welfare Education Center) were the old children. Many of these children had developmental disabilities. We blew bubbles and played. They were most taken by the Polaroid photos taken of them with the clowns. One young boy about 9 years old was just standing staring into space amongst all the jolly chaos, which we created everywhere we went. Patch walked over and got into his face with little response from the boy. So he picked him up and sat him in his lap. (See photo above) Patch went from outrageously funny to quiet silent compassion in a few seconds. There again was that huge bubble of silence around them as if nothing else existed.

Due to their large populations, Chinese cities have a one child per family policy. This is not the case in rural or "ethnic" areas. The Chinese people have a very sound family society, so there is concern among the people for what they call "The Little Emperor Syndrome." That one child has two parents and four grand parents to spoil them. The people worry also worry about the development of the child's social skills. To have a second child is very expensive for most Chinese not only because of the shortness of physical space, but because they would have to pay for all the schooling and medical expenses of a second child.

On the plane from Shanghai to Hong Kong, I sat next to Fionnuala McHugh, a staff writer for the South China Morning Post. She had just completed an interview of Robert Glover (from UK) who heads up Care for Children Project, started in 1996, which works with the Chinese government promoting a foster child program. This would mean the government would pay for the schooling and medical expenses. There are many interested in fostering a child with disabilities according to Fionnuala. Her article in full is in the file section of the Hospital Clown egroup page.

All photos on this page by John Haldane] Below Shobi on top right is Michael Gainer from Massachusetts, below him is Lucy Sheffield from New Jersey.





The Babies' Room - The Pictures say it all.

We could fill a book with the picture from this Baby's Room. To the left is John Haldane, below him Mary Dixon. Above is John Glick, and below Connie Coble-Roe. All photos are by John Haldane. See Vol 6 No 1 for story on how five of these children went for surgery to Dallas TX





Michael Gainer and friend in Hospice.

In the adults' facilities and senior centers we did the same "take over" as in the schools and children's hospitals. In one large senior educational senior center we took over the recreation room playing ping pong with balloons and even playing bridge. Sharon Wasko reported playing with four of the seniors. "All of a sudden I realized that I was in China playing bridge without speaking the language. I think they realized it to at the same moment and we all looked at each other with a sigh of recognition and then played on. Later we all went to the dance studio and you guessed it. Everyone danced. The staff greeted us with enthusiasm and trust. However as much as we played, we still had those wonderful quiet moments with the patients and seniors that we had with the children.

From Clem T John Kapferer: "The hospitals gave me an opportunity to work my magic with the Chinese people and children. They were so appreciative and caring to us that I will remember the love they gave to me as well as the smiles that we brought to their faces."

From Millie Read of Blackfoot Idaho: "My most vivid memory was the time I spent in a room at the hospice. Three little women who were there, each clung to me & smiled. They were able to communicate through touch, smiles & gestures. There was no indication of self-pity, just the joy of the moment. It's a lesson we'd all do well to learn, living in the joy of the moment, 'cause, after all, that's all we ever have, the moment."



Nurse Ducky Marcia Graves, behind her is Idano Joyce Olsen



From **Connie Coble-Roe** of Wexford, Pennsylvania (above): "We had a formal meeting with the doctors at the Drum Tower Hospital in Nanjing before going to the nursing units. They were so stiff and formal, that I had my doubts about reaching them with Patch's message. My experience on one of the patient's units proved otherwise. I was in a room with a patient, the only patient in the room. The patient had lines and tubes in all natural and unnatural orifices. He was drifting in and out of wakefulness. I was talking and stroking his hand when one of the doctors from the meeting came up behind me and said "Do you know you are in intensive care? I replied "No," anticipating that she would ask me to leave, but she put her hand on my arm and gently said "He really needs this, he's been in here 5 days". Honeybee joined me and before we left his room, he was smiling and his wife was tearful with gratitude. That was a very heartfelt moment for me."



Laura Haldane, pictured above in a hospital, reported: "A music class in a retirement center spontaneously broke into Auld Lang Syne when a few of us clowns sneaked down a hall and made an unscheduled visit to their classroom. It was an emotional moment as we sang together, then hugged, laughed and exchanged the few words we could. Laughter, song and silliness are universal and they connected us. I had deeply-felt moments of being connected: a sense of being part of a larger human family. Could it be that laughter, song and silliness are keys to world peace?"

Pictures Etched In My Memory



謝謝



Thank You China!

I am grateful to Yi "Louie" Nui our wonderful China International Travel Service guide and to Sherry Shaver our People to People guide for keeping their feet on the ground while we all flitted around in our colorful cheerful chaos. I think they expected a group of clowns, but I don't think they were quite prepared for 44 wacky clowns creating cheerful magical dis-order everywhere.

One day we convince Lui to come along "in face." I agreed to do his makeup as I wanted him to get the feel of what it was like to be a clown. He had been wearing a red nose, but with the above he couldn't take it off. He was a natural. The minute he left my room, after getting the full powder sock treatment, he got on the elevator of our 5 star Shanghai hotel. The business men looked at him with surprise. Lui pulled out the feather duster I had given him and without a word and with the grace of a seasoned performer he preceded to dust the businessmen. They all laughed appreciatively. I think after a week with us Lui's inner child was just "dying to get out!"

Lui commented "I am 29 years old and in the first part of my life. Today is a very special time for me. I think something happened in myself. I think I found another part of Lui." He had to stop because of the tears welling up in his eyes. He later told us. "The love you people give out so freely -- I've never seen anything like it before. I can say my life will be different from this point on. It is the best group I've ever traveled with."

From Arne Swenson: "The colors and bizarre props, the rhythms and incantations, the ancient settings and distant cultures all added to a surreal image difficult for the mind to grasp. We were doctors and nurses, writers and lecturers, clowns and humorists, priests and preachers, all dressed in similarly different garbs for the purpose of attracting other human beings, like a flower does to a honeybee. The common thread was simple... Laughter. The key device... A red nose."

Jenny Herrick of Sioux City Iowa reported, "One day a couple of us were asked by some young Chinese teenage girls "Who are you? Are you actors?" We replied "No, we are Americans on a delegation to spread humor, love and laughter to your country." "Oh," they said, "Then you are heroes! Red Noses Heros!"