

**DEEP
ROOTS IN
TWO
COUNTRIES**



Deep Roots in Two Countries

by Jim Veneris

They called him a “turncoat” when he chose to remain in China at the end of the Korean War. But Jim Veneris, an American GI from a small town in Pennsylvania, had made up his mind. For the past 23 years, he has worked in China, married, and raised a family. His recent return to the United States—for a brief visit—cleared up many misunderstandings. His hometown gave him a hero’s welcome, and, in a coast-to-coast speaking tour, he found that the rest of America was ready to hear his side of the story and what his life in China is really like.



Jim and his wife and kids (all wearing Mao buttons) pose proudly for a family portrait.

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1. When ‘Enemies’ Became Friends

It was up north, in the mountains of North Korea. I'd gotten separated from my outfit during a night retreat, and somehow stumbled onto this cave. It was cold as hell – the coldest winter they'd had in years – and my clothes weren't doing such a great job of keeping me warm. No food, nothing to drink. And surrounded by the “enemy” – North Korean soldiers and Chinese People's Army volunteers. I could see them all around me from my cave.

I couldn't sleep for the cold or for thinking what to do. Because I'd been told about “the enemy,” and what would happen to me if I surrendered to them. The Communists were cruel and ruthless. They hated Americans. They didn't take prisoners, they just killed whoever they captured. Or worse, they'd torture you or starve you to death to try to get military information. American newspapers had told us that, and American officers. And American politicians like Joe McCarthy. And they were on our side, right? But if I didn't get out of that cave, I'd freeze to death.

I'd only been in Korea a couple of months, and in some ways I was pretty ignorant then, but I wasn't completely green, and I didn't think I was a coward. When I first joined the army, back in World War II, I was just a kid of 18, full of piss and vinegar and patriotism. But I'd fought all through that war, in those Pacific island jungles, and I'd held up my end. And that war had a different feeling about it than this one. World War II was rough on us ordinary GIs and, sure, we complained about this and that, but morale was *high*. We were united with most of the world's people – the Russians, the Chinese, and people all over Europe and Asia and

Africa – against the fascist forces of Germany and Japan. And we felt it, felt we were helping liberate people from something really evil.

One of the reasons I'd re-enlisted, when Korea came along, was for thinking about all my buddies out there, fighting and dying, while I was safe at home. And when we went to Korea, they'd told us that the North Koreans were like slaves. That they were just being made to fight by their Communist slavemasters. But I'd noticed that the North Koreans were fighting us like hell. They were the *fightingest* slaves I'd ever imagined. They just didn't seem to want to be “liberated.”

Morale on our side? It stunk. I remember going to a medical station once, just for something minor, and there were these two guys lying outside on stretchers. They looked in pretty bad shape. So I said to the doctor, “Hey, don't you want to treat them first?” But the doctor got a real angry look on his face, and he walked over to one of the guys and *kicked him in the ribs!* Jesus, I didn't know what to think. Later I found out that both those guys had deliberately shot themselves in the leg – just badly enough to be sent home. Because they didn't want to fight in that war anymore. And things like that were happening all the time.

So I had a lot of questions on my mind, while I was sitting up in that cave freezing my tail. But I also knew what American bombing was doing to North Korea – it was technically a United Nations command, but almost all the planes and the pilots were American. We were knocking North Korea *flat*. You could hardly see a building left standing, not even peasants' huts. And

when the pilots couldn't find any other targets, they'd drop their load of bombs just on some farmer or farmer's wife all alone out in the middle of some field, or a cow, or just anything that moved! And we'd bombed Chinese territory, across the Yalu River, which is what brought China into the war. We'd killed thousands of Chinese citizens. So maybe these Chinese and Korean soldiers had reason not to feel very friendly toward American prisoners.

I kept peeking out of the cave to see what was going on, and finally I spotted what sure looked like a bunch of prisoners. So maybe they didn't kill everyone they captured. And by that time I was so cold and so tired and so hungry I just had to take the chance. I kind of crept down out of the cave, stuck my hands in the air, and walked toward them shouting, "I surrender, I surrender," on the chance they'd understand me. They kind of surrounded me, and when they realized I was an American they took me over to a Chinese officer who spoke English.

The first thing he did was give me a cigarette! He could tell I was scared, so he carefully started to explain their policy on POWs. They didn't kill prisoners, or mistreat them. They followed Chairman Mao's policy of leniency toward prisoners. They had no quarrel with ordinary American soldiers, or with the American people. The war wasn't *our* fault. They'd take good care of us, and when it became possible they'd send us home again. I guess he could see I didn't really believe him, because he explained all over again! I still thought it was a trick.

At first they put me with a bunch of prisoners, most of them American, but some other nationalities too. They got me something to eat right away. Then, because American planes were bombing all around the area, they divided us into small groups and took us off to Korean peasants' huts that were scattered all over the mountains and hard to spot from the air. I didn't know what they were up to at first. When we got to our hut, the Chinese guard talked to the Korean peasant for a while. Then he stuck his hand in his pocket, pulled out this wad of money, and counted some out into the peasant's

hand. It was to pay for our food and clothes! I couldn't believe it – it just wasn't the kind of thing that happened in any army I knew about. Later I was told *very* matter-of-factly that this was standard practice for the Chinese Communist army from way back during the Revolution. They were just following Chairman Mao's policy, not to take anything from workers or peasants – not even something as small as a needle or a piece of thread – without paying for it.

So where were all these "ruthless" Communist soldiers we'd been told about? Me, I was still suspicious. I thought maybe this was somehow an act they were putting on for our benefit. We'd also been told how clever and underhanded they could be. For a long time, and I was a prisoner for three years, there was this struggle in my mind between what I'd been told about the Communists and what I was actually experiencing. But like Lincoln said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool *all* of the people *all* of the time." Finally I just had to admit to myself that it wasn't any act – that they had a way of thinking, a way of doing things, that I'd never seen before.

I could tell so many stories. How they kept us fed, even when they didn't have much food themselves. How they risked their lives to get us food when American planes were bombing their supply lines. How they saw to it we all had warm, quilted clothing – and boy, did we need it during those Korean winters. How they got us athletic equipment, so we had some recreation (we even had our own little "Olympics" between the different prison camps). How they threw a Christmas party for us, wine and all. How they managed to get special food for the prisoners who had special religious diets – like some of the Turkish Muslims who couldn't eat pork. Or this skinny guy who had an ulcer. They got hold of a nanny goat from somewhere so he could have fresh milk. And I tell you by the time he went home that guy was *fat*!

But I've got to tell about two incidents I'll never forget. There was this American boy from the South in our camp, who never got any mail and never wrote any letters home.

We knew he had a family, and he always seemed upset when other people were getting their mail. The Chinese guards noticed this, and took him aside to talk to him. They found out he'd never even learned to read or write, and was ashamed to let anyone else write for him. Next thing you know, they'd quietly moved him down to headquarters where there was someone who could teach him to read and write English. In six months he was back, reading and writing, and I've never seen anyone so happy and so proud. Yeah, that was how "cruelly" they treated us.

The other story's about a Chinese doctor I met. Now one thing we had in the camp was really good medical care. They didn't always have the latest medicines or equipment, but those doctors – and they were all volunteers who'd come all the way from China especially to work with us prisoners – took such pains, they really seemed to care about us. Sometimes, when a bunch of wounded prisoners would be brought in, the lights in the medical tent would be on 24 hours a day, and the doctors would be operating around the clock. So one day – I'd cut my finger or something like that – I asked one of the doctors why he worked so hard. Why had he come out there in the first place, and why was he so willing to help his country's "enemies"? He grinned and said, "International solidarity."

I said, "And what does *that* mean?" So he started to tell me about the Communist view that working class people all over the world should unite and help one another – and that someday they *would*. How it was really class differences that counted, and not all the national or ethnic differences that sometimes seemed so important. And that made a lot of sense to me just from my own experience.

I was born in the little town of Vandergrift, just outside of Pittsburgh. My grandfather had come from Greece, and he, my father, and me were just plain working stiffs. And my friends – good friends, that I could count on – they were black and white, and all different nationalities. Irish, Polish, Italian, and so on. Working people like us. And I had a hell of a lot more in common

with them than any of us had with the bosses who hired us and laid us off and made all the rules and thought they owned us because they paid our wages. And a hell of a lot more in common with my army buddies I'd fought with through World War II and Korea than with the people who'd sent us off to war.

And this Chinese doctor told me how *he* had learned about international solidarity, which was quite a story. It seems that way back in the thirties, when the Communists held just a few base areas and the Revolution was a long way from being won, they had almost no doctors or medical supplies and lots of their sick and wounded were dying for lack of medical care. And then this Canadian doctor, Norman Bethune, had come all the way from Canada to China, and made his way to the base area at Yan'an (Yenan), because he believed in the Revolution and wanted to help in any way he could. He'd saved many lives, and tired himself out caring for the sick and wounded and passing on his medical knowledge to the young Chinese who worked with him. Bethune had died in Yan'an of blood poisoning, but ever since the Chinese people remember him with great love and respect. He was a perfect example of international solidarity.

And my doctor, in Korea, had been one of Bethune's young students in Yan'an! That was why he had volunteered to come to Korea. He felt he had to use the skills and knowledge Bethune had passed on to him to serve not only his own people, but other peoples of the world.

I learned a lot while I was in that prison camp. Were we "brainwashed" by the Chinese and Korean Communists? Well, they certainly held classes in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, once they got us settled in permanent camps. What was socialism, what was the dictatorship of the proletariat, why there was exploitation, and class antagonisms, in capitalist societies. Hell, if you had something good, wouldn't you want to pass it on? At first the classes were for everyone, but later on, just for those who wanted to go. Brainwashing? Well, you can lead a horse to water, but you

can't make him drink if the water isn't sweet.

Why would any of us have listened to those ideas if they hadn't made sense according to our own experiences? I'd grown up during the Great Depression, when so many millions of people couldn't get jobs, even though they were good workers and really wanted to work. Was that all just economic "conditions" that nobody could help, or was it the result of the capitalist system? And I'd worked at all sorts of jobs and known all sorts of bosses. Including bosses who treated their workers like garbage - like the theater owner I worked for all through high school, cleaning out all the muck after the last showing at night, for \$3.50 a week. And after a couple of years - business was booming, and he was sure getting his profits - when I asked for a raise, he told me to get lost, because he could always get someone else to work for \$3.50.

So I'd figured he was just mean and greedy, and after high school I left home looking for a decent place to work. And didn't find things much different. When we got back from World War II, a lot of us thought things would be different. All we wanted was to get a job, get married, and settle down. But no matter how hard you worked, how willing you were to work, there was still that struggle to get a job. There were still those layoffs that "weren't anyone's fault." There were still those bosses who didn't give a damn about your welfare, just about profits. And it was all the same, whether it was the little theater in Vandergrift or the big auto plant in Detroit where I worked just before going to Korea.

The U.S. was a rich country, and who had created that wealth? Wasn't it people like my father and my grandfather, and all the rest of the working people who'd farmed the land, worked in the mines and factories, built the bridges and the roads and the big cities? And who really profited from all that wealth - wasn't it the big capitalists who owned and controlled everything? I'd never really thought in terms of working class, capitalist class. But it began to make sense. And I learned that in China, and in Russia

and North Korea, the working class had taken over. They were changing everything around, so that things were run in the interests of the working class.

In 1953, the final truce agreement between the UN forces, the Chinese, the North Koreans, and the South Koreans was signed. It brought about a cease-fire and an exchange of prisoners. Now one of the provisions of the truce was specifically about POWs. It said that *any* prisoner held by any of the combatants had the right to go and live in any country he chose. It also said that all prisoners were to get copies of the truce so they could study its provisions. In fact, the Americans had pushed hard to have that included, apparently expecting that many Chinese and North Koreans would decide not to return to their homelands, which would be a great propaganda victory. I guess it didn't turn out that way. We heard later that many prisoners held by the Americans and South Koreans were never given copies of the truce, but were instead told their own countries didn't want them anymore. We also heard that many Chinese prisoners were taken to Taiwan against their will.

In our camps, copies were passed out, and there was a hell of a lot of discussion and quiet thinking. Many of us were really impressed by what we'd seen and heard of socialism from the Chinese and North Koreans. Some of us just had to go and see for ourselves what was happening in China. But some had families and other ties at home, or weren't sure enough to make such a big break with everything they'd known. Some guys changed their minds half a dozen times before they finally decided.

When it was announced that 21 Americans, including me, were going to China, a few to Russia, and a few staying in North Korea, the storm really broke. We were traitors, we were turncoats, we were crazy, we were everything in the book. We were immediately given dishonorable discharges, and all the back pay due us was forfeited. Politicians like McCarthy made speeches about us, and American newspapers just tore us apart. Never mind what the truce said. Never mind that President Eisenhower

had signed that truce in the name of almost 200 million American people. Never mind that therefore those 200 million American people had given us *permission* to go where we wanted to go.

They couldn't explain it any other way, so they said we were "brainwashed." Well, I'll tell you who did a pretty good job of brainwashing, and it wasn't the Chinese. McCarthy and his bunch sure filled our heads with a lot of garbage about the Chinese and the North Koreans when they sent us off to fight that war. And the military authorities did a pretty good job on the POWs who went home. Those guys were really pressured not to say anything good about the Chinese, to keep their mouths shut about what it was really like in those camps. They'd get dishonorable discharges, and no back pay, and they'd be blackballed when they tried to get a job. I know, because I've talked to some of them, including one guy from Milwaukee who got in a whole lot of trouble because he didn't keep his mouth shut. Most of them did keep quiet, and I don't really blame them. Hell, they had to go back and live with a whole system that was just interested in having bad things said about China and communism. But they all know the truth.

I've been asked whether I consider myself an American or a Chinese now. I've spent 23 years in China, and I've never been sorry I made my choice. My life is bound up with the Chinese people. My wife and children are in China, and close friends from the

factory where I've worked most of those years, and the friends I made in my three years at a Chinese college. I'm a part, as everyone in China is a part, of the great struggle to build socialism. I love the Chinese people, and I will never forget Chairman Mao. It was his teachings that saved my life at a time when I expected only death, and it was he who offered me a new life in socialist China.

But that doesn't mean that I won't always be an American, and proud to be one. I have great faith in the American people; I love them. It wasn't the great masses of the American people who labeled me a turncoat, it was McCarthy and his bunch. All those years when there weren't any government relations between China and the U.S., and hardly any contact between the Chinese and American people - I don't think that was the will of the American people, just of the few people whose interests it was to keep the American people from really knowing what was going on in China. One of the great times of my life was when Nixon came to China and the Shanghai Communique was signed. Boy, was I happy, and so were all my friends. Because the Chinese and American people *should* get together.

That's what I believe. That's what I hope. The American people are a great people. The Chinese people are a great people. Long live the friendship between the Chinese and American people!

2. *Deep Roots in Both Countries*

I've been asked all sorts of questions about China in the time I've been back in the U.S. And some that seem real simple I have to think about a while before I answer because they're about things I've taken for granted so long. Such as, "What's it like to work in a Chinese factory?" And the *strangest* questions! Like this newspaper fellow, he wanted to know if the Chinese had any sense of humor, if they ever told jokes. I looked at him, I just couldn't believe my ears. What did he think the Chinese were? *Human beings* have a sense of humor, and the Chinese are real human. I said, "Hell, yes, we joke and kid around all the time," and I tried to give him some examples. But most the jokes I could think of offhand turned out to be a little bit too, uh, earthy for his newspaper, so his story ended up not saying anything about Chinese humor!

I guess one of the things I'm asked most often is, did I have a lot of trouble adjusting to life in China, was I treated any different because I'm an American. It kind of took me by surprise, though maybe it shouldn't have, because the truth is that outside of the language I never did have any trouble adjusting, and nobody ever treated me badly because I was an American. When I first came to China in 1953 it was as one of 21 ex-prisoners of war, and if any bad feelings were going to show up, they'd have shown up then. But everyone seemed to understand that it wasn't us, the ordinary soldiers, who were the enemy. They seemed happy that we were interested in China and what they were doing there.

One of the first things the Chinese did was send us on a tour – like a vacation – all over the country. They showed us this and

that, all the historical places. But – and you've got to remember this was only a few years after Liberation – we also saw a lot of the destruction left behind by the years of Japanese occupation and the civil war. And the poverty and suffering and backward conditions caused by even more years of exploitation by foreign imperialists and the Chinese ruling classes. But everywhere people were working hard to build things up.

When we got back to Peking, they asked us what we wanted to do. They gave us three choices. We could go to work in a factory, or on a farm in the countryside, or we could go to college. Actually there was a fourth choice. If we didn't want to do anything, nobody would make us. We were their guests. But with everyone working so hard all around us, there was just no way we'd just sit around and loaf. For me the choice wasn't hard at all. I'd always been working class. Factories were what I knew best. So I asked to be assigned to a factory, and they sent me to the State Paper Mill in Jinan (Tsinan), which is right on the Yellow River in Shandong Province. Which is pretty much where I've been ever since.

My first job was learning how to run a lathe. I had a real good teacher, so I didn't have any trouble learning the job. And let me say again there was never any trouble with my fellow workers because I happened to be an American. I guess we recognized right off that we were all basically working class, with the same working class attitudes, and that made all the difference. Not that I didn't have a lot of problems with the language. And didn't I get teased! But it was all a humorous teasing, between friends, not

the hurtful kind. And when my Chinese got better, did I get my own back! As for the written language, oh, oh, oh, I can remember tossing books across the room in total disgust, thinking I'd never master it. But how else could I read newspapers and books, and find out what was going on? I couldn't just depend on my friends to translate every time. So I finally mastered it.

I worked at the lathe for years, but then I asked for a transfer. Basically I'm the kind of guy who likes to move around a lot, and really use my muscles, instead of sitting in one place all day. And the department I'm in now, I think people here would really be interested in - I hear there's a lot of talk in the U.S. now about recycling things so as not to waste resources. Well, my factory has been recycling since right after Liberation. You know the cloth shoes that people wear all over China? We collect the shoes, when they get really worn out, from all over the countryside, and store 'em in a warehouse and kind of let them mold for awhile. Then we haul them out and dump them on conveyor belts. As they're carried along they get chopped, mashed, watered, pulped, and finally rolled flat.

What comes out at the end is toilet paper. Our best grade is real fine, soft stuff for export. It goes out under the brand name Double Happiness, and it's very popular in Hongkong, Singapore - all over. We're very careful about quality, what isn't up to standard gets rejected. Rejects are bundled up and set aside, and when enough has collected, workers from the factory who want to buy it can get it cheap. But we really try to keep quality up, because exports are so important in building the economy.

People have asked me to compare working in a Chinese factory with working in an American factory. I guess I don't have to say it's very, very different. A couple of Americans who've visited Chinese factories have told me that they sensed right off that the whole atmosphere was different. And that's true. Like, we'll work our tails off when something really important comes up. And not because someone's making us, but because we know it has to be done. But when things aren't so busy we'll, you know,

take a tea break when we think it's needed, and sit around talking about the work, or about some political struggle, or just kid around and relax for a while. Because we know what has to be done, and how much time there is. And we take the responsibility.

Responsibility - who decides things, how problems get solved - I guess I don't have to say that everybody from the Revolutionary Committee on down who has a position of responsibility is somebody the workers trust. Somebody whose working style has been watched and evaluated by fellow workers. Because that's how they got to be in "responsible positions." That's one aspect of it. Another aspect is that many, many things are settled at the "grass roots" and kind of informally.

Say, for instance, that a worker was always coming in late. I don't mean just every once in a while, but all the time. The first thing, probably, would be that one of his close friends would try to find out if there was some special problem nobody knew about. Sickness in the family, something like that. If he couldn't find anything, maybe a few of the worker's friends would sit down with him, try to find out what the problem was. Then if that didn't work, maybe his whole work group would talk to him, remind him that he has a part to play in socialist construction, help him to see that he's letting everybody down. If *that* didn't work, they might ask a Party cadre to call a special criticism meeting where everybody would struggle with him. But that would be very, very rare. Usually the problem would be worked out long before that stage.

In the same way, each shop or department has a routine production meeting once a week, to talk about production goals and generally see how things are going. But if they need to, they'll meet more often. Or sometimes whole sections or even the whole factory will meet to discuss things like goals for the whole year. The same thing goes for political meetings. When there's nothing special going on they're usually held once a month. But when there's a big campaign, an important struggle, then there are meetings going on all the time.

One of the things discussed in meetings

like this is which workers should be recommended for college. That happened to me about 1960. The people in my factory asked me if I wanted to apply, because they thought I'd be a good candidate. By that time my Chinese was good enough to handle the work, and I'd always been interested in ideas and theory. So for the next three years I studied philosophy and politics at Peking University, wrote my thesis, and graduated. Incidentally, I got my full salary from the factory all the time I was a student.

Those college years were pretty exciting for me. I'd always tried to study this and that work of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, but when you're working and have other responsibilities you don't always have a lot of time. Even though you try to make time for it. I have the feeling not many Americans really understand what Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is, or how important it is to all of us in China. It's a philosophy, a *scientific* philosophy – not just a bunch of abstract ideas. It sums up all the ways people relate to the physical world and to one another, and how things change. It's a weapon in the hands of the working class – a weapon they can use to understand everything, analyze everything, and *change* everything.

And we need that weapon. Why? The Chinese working class people won a great victory in 1949 when the People's Republic was established, but that didn't mean the end of the struggle – which, Mao Tsetung pointed out, is bound to last all through the period of socialism. There are always going to be some forces working to turn the clock back to the old, bitter days of exploitation. We've seen it happen in the Soviet Union. And it isn't always so easy to tell right off who has a correct line, who has an incorrect line, who'll lead us forward along the socialist path, and who'll lead us backward.

Lin Piao, for instance. Did he say, I'm a revisionist, and I'm only interested in grabbing power for myself? No, no, no. He said, oh, oh, oh, what a good Communist I am, I really support Chairman Mao, everybody should listen to me. As Premier Chou En-lai said, Lin Piao waved the red flag to defeat

the red flag! And you know what happened. We saw through him.

Let me tell you a story from way back then; I think at that time even Liu Shao-chi was still around. I wanted to get copies of the complete works of Mao Tsetung. They were real scarce; hardly anyone had copies. I found I had to go to a lot of trouble, get written permission – which I did – and then go to the warehouse myself to pick them up. When I got there I saw the warehouse was just packed with thousands and thousands of copies of Chairman Mao's works. And from the dust, they'd been there a long, long time. So I said to the guy in charge, "What goes on here? People I know are just begging for these books! The Chinese people aren't good enough to read what Mao Tsetung wrote?" And he said, "Sh, sh! Someone might hear you." It was all part of the political struggle. There were good people working to build socialism – the books had been published. But there were people in authority who just didn't want those works in the hands of the masses. That's all changed now, everybody's got copies. After a long, long struggle.

So there are big, national struggles, but there are smaller struggles going on all the time, everywhere. Not physical struggles, but people studying, discussing things, arguing, testing. The entire leadership of my city Jinan, for instance, has changed completely three times in the last four or five years.

And sometimes the struggle is inside your own head, and you have to sit down and figure out just what class attitude your ideas really reflect. But that's why we need Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought – because it teaches us how to struggle, and who to struggle with, and where the struggle is leading.

When I finished college, and some of my teachers asked me what I wanted to do next, I had to think about my own part in the struggle. It wasn't hard to decide; I said I wanted to go right back to my factory, that's where I could be most useful. And that's what I did.

The next important thing that happened to me was that I got married. I should say, got married for the second time. The first

time was a few years after I got to China. My first wife had a terrible life in the old society. When Liberation came, she was begging in the streets, wearing rags, just half-starved. When I met her she was working in my factory. Like many people in the old society, she had contracted TB. When we got married, we thought she had licked it. But a few years later it came back again, and in spite of everything the doctors could do, she passed away. We didn't have any children.

Much later, when I'd finished college and been back at the factory a while, I went to a friend of mine who was a cadre at the factory and one of my old teachers. And I said, "Look, I've got no wife. None of the women I know seem right. But as long as a man's alive he's going to be thinking about a woman - and a woman about a man. So if you'd look around at all the women you and your wife know, and you found someone who seemed right, maybe you could introduce us . . .?"

A couple of months passed, and one afternoon my old teacher came to invite me to dinner. There was this woman. . . . Well, I'd almost forgotten my request, and I had something else I wanted to do that night. And then he told me she was a widow with *four kids*. Oh, boy. But he coaxed me until I said yes, and along I went! And then I saw her, and she was so . . . she was just about everything I could ever dream about in a woman. Then I was really scared that she wouldn't have any interest in *me*. So we ate dinner, and talked, and after dinner my friends left us alone for a few minutes. So I got up my courage and asked her, as delicately as I could, if she might possibly be interested in seeing me again. She wouldn't look at me, she looked down, and after a minute she gave a little nod. And then she blushed. Did she get *red*! And oh, boy, was I happy.

For about six months we went courting. We'd go walking for miles, all around the lake near my factory. We talked and talked, about politics and just about everything else. So each of us could see what kind of ideas the other one had. My wife says I did most of the talking.

When we finally decided to get married, one of the first things we did was see about getting her a job transfer. At that time she was working in another factory, miles way, and we thought it would be easier if she transferred to my factory. As it happened, a woman at my factory was looking for family reasons to transfer to the factory where my wife worked, and the switch was arranged pretty quickly. So we settled down with our four kids - and now there are two more. Our big girl, our oldest, has been a Red Guard and spent two years working in the countryside. Now she's back living with us and working as a bus conductor. She's studying to be a mechanic. Our second, a boy, has graduated from middle school, and I got a letter from my wife a while ago announcing that he's taken a job in a factory in Jinan. He'd started smoking which my wife doesn't approve at all, but what can you do when they get that big? The third and fourth are still in school, and the fifth, our littlest girl, is just starting first grade. And our youngest boy will be starting kindergarten next year. Meanwhile, because our big girl is on the night shift now, she takes care of him while we're working.

For those Americans who have wondered if the two littlest ones might be experiencing some prejudice because their father's an American, I should say that if anything they're getting a little spoiled. Everyone knows them for miles around, and when dinner time comes around, half the time I discover they're off eating dinner at someone else's house! And you wouldn't believe the mischief they get into, especially the youngest. But even if it's me saying so, they're good kids. Beautiful kids. All my kids are.

Our lives are very full, and time passes quickly. My wife is terrific at any kind of sewing, and the women around us are always running in and out asking her help. I've been conducting English classes for some of my friends (we've found that old copies of *National Geographic* make excellent study materials). When there's any kind of political activity going on, I'm out of the house in the morning pretty quickly - I can hardly wait to find out what's going

on down at the factory, and to get my two cents in. After work I often get together with friends from the factory. We'll go to someone's house, have a little wine, some food, some cigarettes, and a lot of talk. About work, politics, whatever. As all of my friends know, I really love to talk. And when I get back home after this trip I'm really going to have my chance, because they're all going to want to know everything about my visit to the U.S.!

But before I stop talking to my American friends, there are a couple more things I'd like to say. One is about this idea some Americans have that Chairman Mao was a dictator. Now that's nonsense. He was a great teacher, a great leader. But there is a dictator in China, and it's composed of over 800 million people who have put down and now rule over the small handful of people who were exploiters in the past or who would exploit others now if they were given a chance. That's what's meant by the phrase *dictatorship of the proletariat*. Chairman Mao said that over 95 percent of the Chinese people support socialism, and I believe it. People remember the bitter past, and know how sweet the present is.

And people know that they can lose what they have gained if they don't stay alert. We've watched the Soviet Union go from a socialist country to a fascist dictatorship controlled by a new ruling class. We've watched the Soviet Union become an imperialist power eager to compete with the U.S., the other superpower, so that there seems more and more danger of war all the time - little wars, and maybe a big war.

Now I can't speak for the Chinese government or the Chinese people, just for myself. And what the Soviet Union has been doing reminds me of nothing so much as that old movie about the Frankenstein

monster, with the monster rampaging about the countryside, interfering in people's lives and causing all sorts of damage. And I've got to admit that what the U.S. government has been doing right along isn't much different - even if they're a little more on the defensive right now.

So both monsters are dangerous, and people all over the world have got to unite against that danger. You remember how that old movie ended? The villagers banded together, with torches and pitchforks and every weapon they could lay hands on, and they rose up and destroyed the monster. And that's what's going to happen to the imperialist monsters we have today. I have great faith in the American people, and in the Soviet people. Eventually they're going to rise up and overthrow both monsters. That's what I believe.

I love people. They've given me strength and hope, all the people I've known, and lived with, and worked with. In China and the U.S. Because I've got deep roots in both countries. When I die, I've told my family and friends I want to be cremated, and my ashes scattered over the Yellow River. Why? For one thing it's so rich in Chinese history. Over thousands of years the Chinese people lived and suffered and died along its banks. Second, the Yellow River flows into the Pacific, just as the Mississippi flows into the Gulf of Mexico. And all the waters of the earth eventually mix and mingle. So, if it's not too fanciful, I like to think that someday those ashes, all that's left of me, will stretch all the way from China to the U.S. But there's a deeper meaning. I believe that just as all the waters of the earth eventually are one, all the people, the working people, of the earth will some day unite as one. And my ashes in the water are a kind of personal sign and symbol of that belief.

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