

from our viewpoint...

Hangar may be lost; sign can be saved

The 72-year old barrel hangar at Renner Field may not be worth saving because of the cost, but it is a historic building that deserves to be remembered.

Over the last 80 years, the City of Goodland has put money into the airport. Its strategic location between Denver and Kansas City is as important today as it was in 1926 when the first air strip was opened in a buffalo grass field.

The foresight of Dr. M.G. Renner to have the city buy the land has paid off as the airport has expanded to be the best rural airport between Denver and Hays.

When the nation was in the grip of the Great Depression, the federal government under President Franklin D. Roosevelt came up with a series of federal programs to put unemployed men to work on public projects. The barrel hangar and runways at Renner Field were among those Works Progress Administration projects built across the nation.

Having the airport brought the Army Air Corps to the flatlands of Kansas to do the glider training in 1942. The Army used the hangar during the few months the men were in Goodland.

Looking at the hangar today, the layers of paint and stucco peeling away show the old concrete blocks the men made by hand for the walls. Inside light streams through the wall and the roof. The steel beams and trusses appear to be solid, even if the roof and walls are not.

John Collett, airport fixed-base operator, said the biggest problem he sees is that the old layers of roof were never taken off when a new layer was put on. Today, he said, the roof leaks, the east wall is weak and the main doors are hard to open.

Estimates to fix the hangar run from \$150,000 to \$200,000, and city officials are not sure they can afford that. Maybe not. Maybe a newer and better hangar would improve the airport.

The hangar is a piece of our history, and WPA buildings are not exactly a dime a dozen today. You'd think someone would care. Anyone who does might want to talk with a city official, and soon.

There is a piece of the old WPA project that should be kept, regardless of what happens to the hangar, and that is the huge GOODLAND sign on the ground to the south. It has not been painted, and there are weeds growing up around the letters, but from the air it is still visible.

Saving this piece of history would not cost the thousands of dollars that the hangar would.

Saving the sign and doing some cleaning and painting would be a great project for a civic club or a youth program. We would think the city might even be able to help with the paint.

— Tom Betz

Letter Policy

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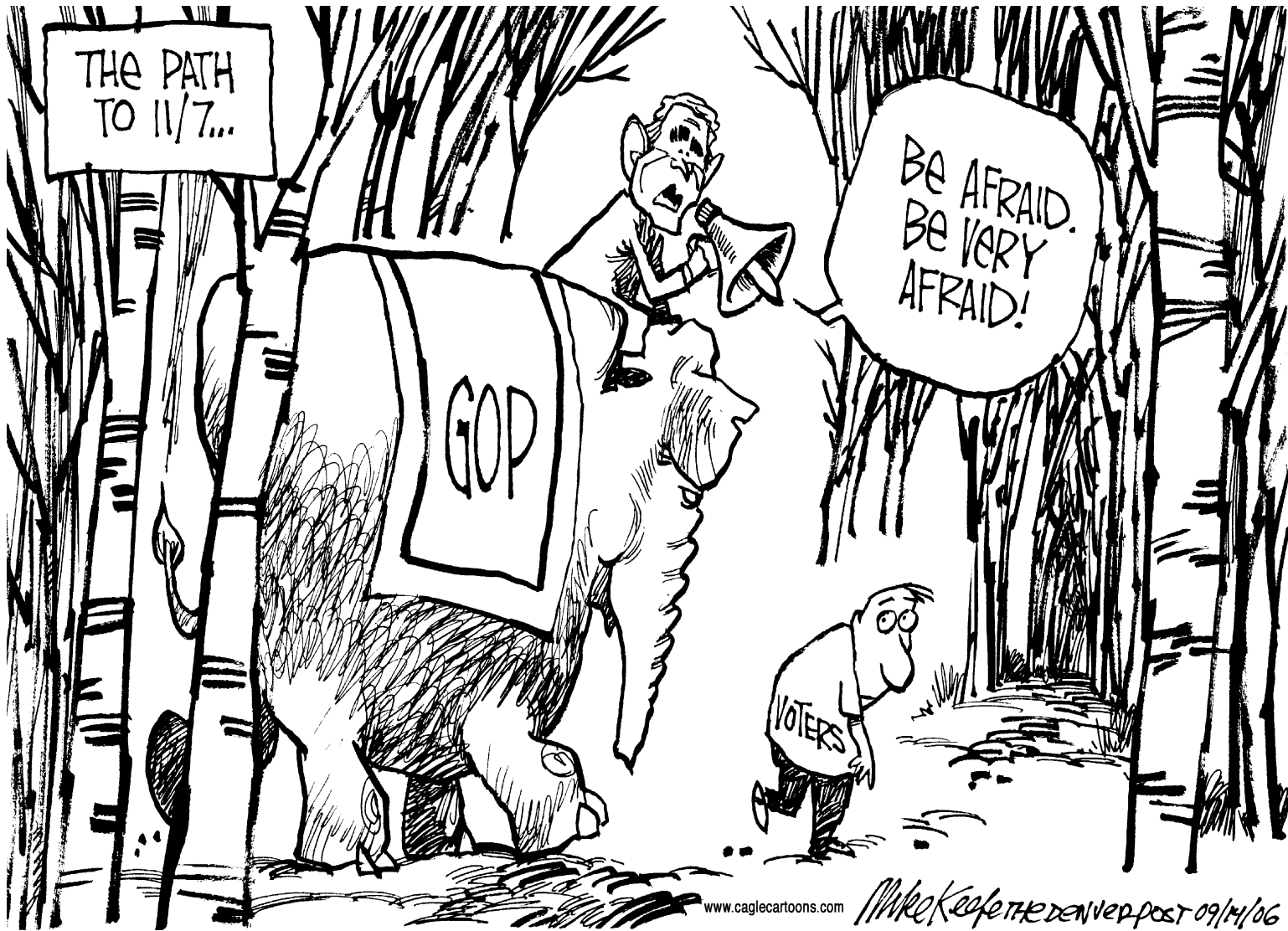
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China travelers return to the U.S.A.

Introduction

Darin and Kati (Amos) Curts were WorldTeach volunteers in the People's Republic of China. The group, affiliated with Harvard University, places volunteer English teachers with the Hunan Department of Education and Foreign Affairs. Darin and Kati taught at Yueyang Ba Zhong (Yueyang No. 8 Middle School) for a year.

August

Nimen Hao!

Rain tickled the back window of the black sedan as we pulled away from our apartment building on our final day in the People's Republic of China.

A handful of short, thin figures waved goodbye under dripping umbrellas as we rounded the corner and left behind not only the weathered concrete structure that had somehow become our home but also the people who made our year in China an unforgettable experience.

As the tear-stained faces of our friends disappeared and our tiny, bustling neighborhood passed by outside our windows, Kati cried softly, whispering inaudible farewells.

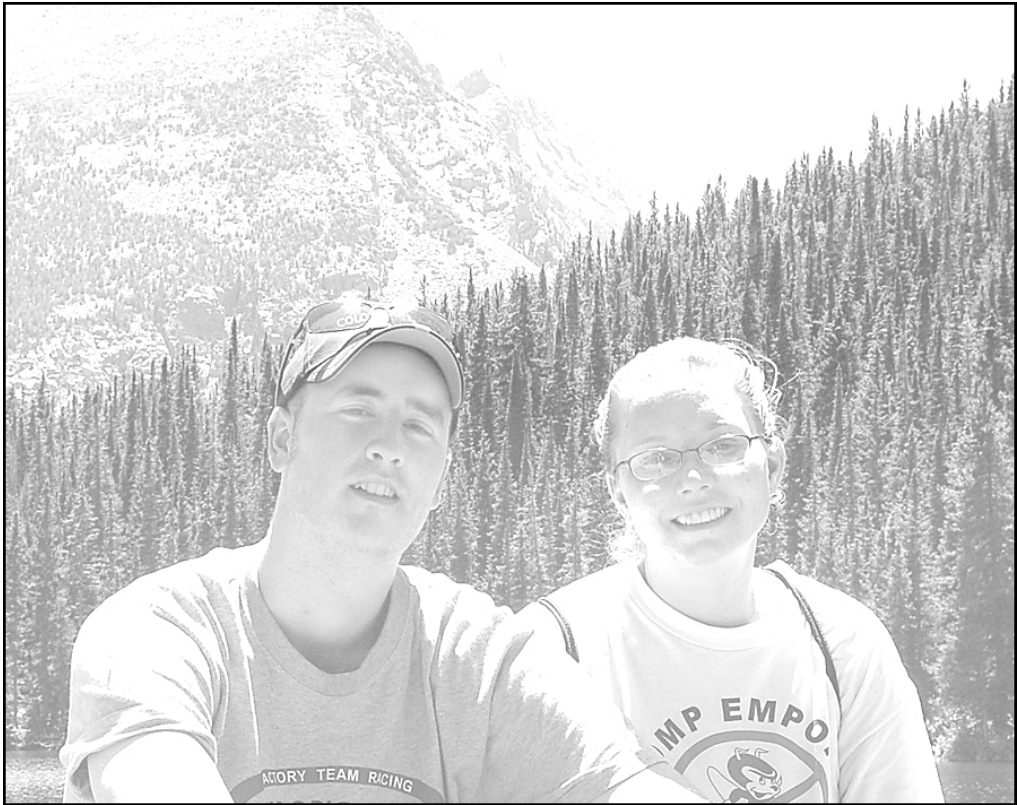
A year of moments flickered through Darin's thoughts as he swallowed the bittersweet emotions they conjured up. Our year in China was over.

Leaving wasn't easy, emotionally or physically. After an entire day, 26 hours in all, we found ourselves standing in Denver International Airport.

Jet-lagged and groggy, our heads spun with familiar sites and sounds. Suddenly we could understand nearly everyone around us. Not having seen so many Americans for a year, we felt as if we recognized everyone. We were on sensory overload. Then we saw our family. We knew we were back.

Just as was the case upon our arrival in China, initially everything around us was exciting. Our first encounters with central air-conditioning, carpeted floors, western toilets, clothes dryers, drinkable tap water, and channel surfing reminded us about comforts of home we'd somehow forgotten to miss. Our first tastes of steak, pizza, burritos, dinner rolls, coffee, barbecue and chicken-fried steak made us thankful for choices other than rice, noodles and tea.

We went shopping in hopes of replacing our worn clothing and felt thankful for the diversity of people in the U.S., all shapes, sizes, col-



Darin and Kari Curts with the Colorado Rockies behind them spent a year in China, and have returned to the United States.

ors and backgrounds. We called people we hadn't talked to in a year, happy that the time differences between us had shrunk been eliminated altogether.

Cities seemed cleaner, streets seemed wider. At banks and fast-food restaurants, we gladly fell into line, appreciating the fact that we were back in a queuing nation. Hugging our families sealed the deal. We were happy to have returned.

It didn't take long until we were back in the game. Not having been behind the wheel in a year, we reintroduced ourselves to the open road, and although the cars around us seemed to be speeding by, we found ourselves soon zipping down the freeway.

Our speech resumed its normal pace and tone instead of the slow speed and enunciated quality that we'd adopted for a year. We realized we could use descriptions beyond "beautiful" or "interesting." And we remembered to say "excuse me" when we belched or bumped into someone (an unnecessary and very rarely used statement in China). It seemed easier than we'd thought it'd be to re-enter daily life in the U.S.

However, after being Stateside for awhile, the reality of our move back began to sink in. We noticed how much more expensive life is here and were forever converting prices back into Chinese yuan.

We began to miss the closeness that 1.3 billion people bring, and wondered why everyone seemed to be standing so far away. Meat, rooms, people, even shopping carts seemed noticeably larger in this "super-sized" country. When we walked into a store or boarded an airplane, we were conscious that, unlike in China, no one seemed to be looking at us. We were no longer unusual, special, or exotic; we were just another customer or passenger. People seemed too busy. Interest in our experience waned.

And as we recounted our tales to family and friends, it began to sink in just how far away from our former home we were.

When showing pictures to friends and family, we started to see them through their eyes. Things that seemed routine and familiar to us even just weeks before began sounding strange, unusual, even glamorous or mysterious. Occasionally, we find ourselves talking about it as if it was a dream, wondering if our entire year abroad really happened. It had been so real, so substantial, and explaining it seemed impossible.

Then, as we headed across the country (Colorado to Pennsylvania), we began to understand that although it might be hard for others to imagine, it was indeed real. As we admired the lovely scenery of America the Beautiful, we began to appreciate that the experiences of the past year were ours to live, ours to learn from, ours to share together, and ours to remember.

While we made our way across the Great Plains of Kansas and the rolling hills of the Ozarks, through the fast cornfields of Illinois and over the mountainous terrain of Pennsylvania, we looked at one another and felt thankful to be on our way to our next great adventure in life.

Keep exploring!

Darin and Kati Curts

For more information about the Curts' experience, contact them directly at chinacurts@gmail.com. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering with WorldTeach, you can find information at www.worldteach.org. WorldTeach places volunteer teachers all around the world, and volunteers need no experience. The agency provides training, orientation and in-country support.



"I'M TAKING THAT CLASS AFTER MIDTERMS."