

Travels with the Spirit: A Summer Travelogue Through the Book of Acts
Travel Testimony
“A Roadside Parable”
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Members of our family have had many meaningful experiences during travel, including when my husband, Al, dressed as Santa Claus, rode in a parade for the 60th birthday of the King of Thailand. But the experience I would like to share with you today is simpler, a parable rather than a National jubilee.

One of my favorite Bible verses is Hebrews 13:2, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

A small group of us had an opportunity to share the blessings of hospitality when I was in China in 1998. Our son, Eric, was working for a joint venture company in Guangzhou. Eric arranged for me and my young friend Lisa to travel to Beijing, Xian, and on to Guilin. During that trip we were north and east of Chengdu in high mountains covered with terraces of ripening rice and fields of Jasmine. The air was full of sunshine and fragrance.

Billy, our guide, had chosen his name after Bill Clinton visited China, and our driver, who wrangled our utility vehicle, was referred to only as “Uncle.” Our travel was enjoyable, but we had been riding since early morning. The roads were rough and we were tired, so we asked Billy if we could get something to eat. Billy said, “All right, I’ll find a suitable place to stop.” We pulled over. Billy went to inspect a grey, old building close to the road. It was large and quite open. Very little traffic went by, only an occasional truck hauling rice. Billy led us inside to a big round table. The waitress arrived with a tin dishpan filled with cups and bowls. She went back to get a kettle full of boiling water which she poured over the dishes. Miraculous! a clean restaurant.

Billy ordered for us, and we began to relax and look around. In this country of 1.4 billion people, there were only seven of us present: Billy, Uncle, Lisa, a waitress, a Chinese farmer in black, a little boy about six years old dressed just like the old man, and myself. I asked permission to take a picture. When I raised the camera, the boy dived under the corner table and slipped out the side door. He had been told that strangers, especially foreigners, might steal him. After the boy was retrieved by his grandfather, we invited them to eat with us. Billy translated, and we had a great time learning about one another. A sad fact we discovered was that there was no school for the boy.

As time drew near for us to leave, the grandfather became very animated. “Why is he so excited?” I asked Billy. “He wants to give you a present, but he has to go get it from his farm, and it will take about 45 minutes.” We decided to delay our travels. Grandfather took off on his bike with the boy on the back. Uncle took a nap, Billy played his mouth organ, and Lisa and I rested.

It was almost an hour before Grandfather returned. Tied to the back of his bike was a three foot tall Jasmine plant recently dug from the Chinese soil. Grandfather had taken a quick lesson in English from Billy. He threw open his arms and with a broad smile shouted, “A gift for America!”

Later, when we flew back to Guangzhou, the airline gave us a free seat for the Jasmine plant. Of course, we couldn't bring the plant to the USA, but we love to tell the story about the generous Chinese farmer and his grandson and about the hospitality of a guide, a driver and a waitress.

I sometimes wonder how the Holy Spirit works in our lives? Who are the Angels? One thing I do know, Travel can bring us closer to God.