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AN EDUCATOR'S TRIP TO BEIJING IN 2018



Wayne Urban with students at Beijing Normal University.

IN THE SUMMER OF 2017, I WAS IN

Argentina at a meeting of an international group to which I have belonged for two decades. While there, I met a young faculty member from Beijing Normal University. We had a chance to talk a good bit and I was pleased, later that year, to receive an invitation to come and talk with her and her students.

I left Atlanta in April, 2018, for a full week at Beijing Normal University. The United States and China had just begun their rapidly escalating "tariffs war." While I was, as usual, not afraid to criticize American education or to comment critically on contemporary American politics, my students and my host did not reciprocate. This was the only-- but important--sign that I was in a society much more controlled than my own.

I gave five talks on aspects of American educational history at Beijing Normal University, and had one long question and answer session with graduate students. I also gave one talk at Capital Normal University, also in Beijing. I was treated royally by my host and her students. Students were knowledgeable about US society and about the role of education in our society. They also were sophisticated in terms of their grasp of our educational history and historiography.

They arranged visits for me to the Forbidden City, to Tiananmen Square, to the Great Wall of China, and to the Beijing Botanical Garden. Given that it was spring

time in Beijing, things were in full flower and little of the pollution for which the city is famous plagued my trip. I was taken to lunch and dinner often, and enjoyed both the food and the student contact.

A highlight of my trip was a visit with an old Chinese couple in the Botanical Garden, who had been to Buffalo, New York, as well as to the Finger Lakes region there. All in all, I had a great time in China, great enough to want to be invited again.