

Oak Ridge goes to China (Part 1)

written by Dr. Dan Nobles, President, ORMA

Family and Friends at Oak Ridge Military Academy, *Ne How*. This is the common greeting in China. Last Wednesday, Nov.5, I began my visit to the Chinese cities of Wuhan, Shanghai, and Beijing. This is my first visit to China and I have been welcomed by everyone with a warmth and hospitality very similar to the experiences of my Southern roots. The food is different, noodles and rice are as common as grits and black-eyed peas, but the people are welcoming and very interested in Oak Ridge Military Academy. Their dreams for their children include safety and quality learning to prepare for college and successful lives. Understanding these things is a great value of trips like this one.

Wuhan is actually 3 cities, similar to the Triad in North Carolina. Two small differences are; Wuhan is about 3,000 years old and its current population is 10 million people. It is a rich culture, an education and manufacturing hub, and very modern. They have three subways (underground trains, not sandwich shops) and will open a new subway every year for the next five years. When it's completed there will be more than 300 miles of rail connecting every part of the city. Wuhan is the home of Cadet Jerry Zhang. His father is Prof. Ben Zhang who hosted me during this visit. The families are eager for their children to study abroad, learn English language and culture, and attend American universities so they may be successful in their lives.



Dr. Zhang & Dr. Nobles



Dr. Nobles in Wuhan

More than twenty families, as well as school teachers and university professors meet with me to discuss our Academy. They are interested in a school that offers excellent education, will keep their children safe, will nurture and love them while away from home, and will teach discipline, duty, honor, and selfless service. The values of ORMA resonate with these parents.

After Wuhan, I visited the coastal city of Shanghai. Mr. Zheng, who is the father of Kedi Zheng, Class of 2014, met my host and I at the hotel. He is so appreciative of Oak Ridge that he flew to meet me. This speaks to the legacy that the Academy imprints on its alumni and their families. Kedi prepared a video in his native language from the campus of Wake Forest University, where he is a freshman. I have shared his video with all of the families here.



Kedi Zheng
National Scholar,
2014

Mr. Zheng's pride in his son is obvious.

My visit to Shanghai was filled with one-on-one meetings with parents, visits to middle schools, and a dinner conference where I had the opportunity to share the story of our Academy. Ten families are very interested and plan to contact our admissions office to begin the process of enrollment. Mr. Zheng also presented from a

father's eyes. He was very helpful. After the formal meeting, several of the parents sat with me in the lobby and we continued to talk about their desire for a better place for their children. It doesn't matter where I have visited we share the same hopes and fears for our children. Our role at Oak Ridge Military Academy is to contribute to equipping future generations of leaders to shape our environment for good things to happen.

The call to character, knowledge, and influence resounds in every parent's heart. All share that the focus on building strong character is more important to them than quality classroom education. They are committed to good education, but they understand that education without good character is a bad combination. Sound grounding in positive values that produce good character enhances knowledge and produces positive influence on society.



Chinese Grads
Class of '14

Shanghai is a major banking and trade center for China. Between meetings, we walked through its version of Wall Street. The buildings, some dating back to the 1890s, show the architecture of Europe and America. It was interesting to see the influence of different societies and cultures here. A very modern skyline blends in with a culture proud of its past. If I could sum in a word the attitude that I see it would be – confident. Confident they can and will provide for their needs; confidence to stand on their own and confidence to adapt to current environments while holding to their values. So, once again we are led back to *character*. Perhaps that is a reason character resonates with the parents that speak with me. Well, it's time to head for Beijing and then HOME! It's so good to think about coming home. ☺



Shanghai's 'Wall Street'