

by Andrew McEwen and Ed Jocelyn

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384 days on the trail of the Long March.

Red Road

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Red Road - 384 days on the trail of the Long March

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Andrew McEwen

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Ed Jocelyn

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384 days on the trail of the Long March

Day 1	October 16, 2002	Yudu County Town	0 km
Day 12	October 27, 2002	Youshan Zhen	194 km
Day 17	November 1, 2002	Nanxiong	290 km
Day 32	November 16, 2002	Jiaoxi Xiang	607 km
Day 45	November 29, 2002	Quanzhou County Town	877 km
Day 69	December 23, 2002	Pingpu Cun	1,355 km
Day 87	January 10, 2003	Zunyi	1,796 km
Day 123	February 15, 2003	Weixin County Town	2,246 km
Day 137	March 1, 2003	Zunyi	2,548 km
Day 192	April 25, 2003	Ziyun County Town	3,249 km
Day 214	May 17, 2003	Qinglong Cun	3,612 km
Day 257	June 29, 2003	Jiaopingdu Bridge	3,956 km
Day 261	July 3, 2003	Huili County Town	3,981 km
Day 270	July 12, 2003	Dechang County Town	4,142 km
Day 281	July 23, 2003	Yihai Lake	4,308 km
Day 287	July 29, 2003	Luding Bridge	4,507 km
Day 314	August 25, 2003	Xiaojin County Town	4,806 km
Day 339	September 19, 2003	Mao'ergai Lamasery	5,100 km
Day 353	October 3, 2003	Lazikou Pass	5,409 km
Day 364	October 14, 2003	Great Wall of China	5,656 km
Day 384	November 3, 2003	Wuqi County Town	6,294 km

New Long March Total = 6,294 km



PREFACE

Two months into the New Long March, we spent 48 hours lost in the wooded mountains of northeast Guangxi. The forest trails were only wide enough to walk single file. No roads connected the outside world to a string of tiny villages, populated by peasants of the Miao ethnic minority. Early the second morning, we came across a young man cutting logs. We asked him the name of the next village down the path.

"Dawan Cun," he said.

"And what's after that?" asked Ed.

"Nothing," said the young man.

When we set out to retrace the Long March trail, we walked off the map of the known world. Our daily destinations didn't feature in any tourist guidebook, and even the best efforts of the China Map Publishing House showed only blank spaces where we hoped there might be paths.

And if we knew nothing of the road ahead, the people we met in those blank spaces also knew nothing of us. Few had ever seen a foreigner before. In some places, we were greeted not as foreign wanderers, but as strange traders from a far corner of China. "What province are you from?" they asked, studying our unusual costumes and bulging backpacks. "What are you selling?"

Our journey began in Yudu County Town in Jiangxi Province on October 16, 2002, 68 years to the day after units of the Chinese Workers and Peasants' Red First Front Army began crossing the Yudu River to start the Long March. They were abandoning the base they had held for five years in southern Jiangxi. With them walked the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, waving goodbye to the tiny "Chinese Soviet Republic" they had created to defy Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party, the Guomindang.

Chiang hated the Reds. Four times he had sent armies against the Soviet Republic. Four times, they had been repulsed. Chiang was determined not to fail again. In 1934,

he amassed a million men to surround his enemy. Throughout the year, the Nationalist forces advanced, step by step, gradually starving the Red Army of supplies and reinforcements. With less than 100,000 men squeezed into an ever-shrinking base, the Reds faced annihilation.

They chose instead to attempt a great escape. The entire army would break through the Nationalist blockade and charge 1,000 kilometers west to Hunan Province, where another Communist army had established a base. United with their Hunan comrades, the Party leaders hoped they could resist Chiang Kai-shek's relentless war of attrition.

The plan failed. The Reds broke the blockade, but the reunion in Hunan never happened. Chiang had guessed their intentions and sealed the routes. At the Battle of the Xiang River, the First Front Army lost more than half its strength. The remnants fled west, not knowing what to do next.

Before the Long March, Mao Zedong had been marginalized by rivals in the Party leadership. After the Xiang River, Mao took advantage of the disarray to stamp his authority on both Party and Army. He advocated a new objective – cross the Yangtze River and head north to unite with yet another Communist force, the Red Fourth Front Army, rumored to control an area of northern Sichuan Province. Having lost their radio equipment, the Reds were really acting on a hunch. Nobody knew where this area was or if it even existed. Nothing could prepare them for the journey ahead.

For the next nine months, the First Front Army lived constantly on the brink of destruction, saved only by an extraordinary combination of courage, good judgment and luck. Although they succeeded in finding the Fourth Front Army, the union was not a happy one. Instead of comrades, the armies became rivals, and the First Front Army fled once again. With Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces always at their heels, they marched another 1,000



Controversy arose over our choice of starting point for the New Long March. The people of Ruijin insisted we should begin from their area, which served as the capital of the "Chinese Soviet Republic". But we chose Yudu, where the Red forces gathered from throughout the Soviet region in the first half of October 1934. The coordinated movement to break out of Guomindang encirclement began on October 16, when the first units moved across the river south of Yudu County Town.

October 12, 2002
Yunshi Shan, Ruijin
County, Jiangxi Province



The government of the "Chinese Soviet Republic" was headquartered here before it packed its attaché case for the Long March.

October 12, 2002
Shazhouba, Ruijin County,
Jiangxi Province

Mao Zedong began the Long March here, one of seven points where the Red Army crossed the Yudu River at the start of its epic journey.

October 15, 2002
"First Ferry of the Long March", Yudu County Town, Jiangxi Province



Friends accompanied us to Yudu: Sarah Bai, New Long March Coordinator Jia Ji, Xu Hong (a journalist from *Nanchang City Daily*, who covered the New Long March's progress through Jiangxi Province), Andy, Jiao Pei at the "First Ferry of the Long March".

October 15, 2002
Yudu County Town, Jiangxi Province



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kilometers into a remote corner of northwest China. Here, after 369 days on the move, they finally found safe harbor.

Of the 86,000 estimated to have started the Long March, no more than 10,000 were left. But Chiang Kai-shek had failed. The First Front Army and the Communist Party were intact, half-starved but fit to fight another day. Fourteen years later, the survivors of the Long March would lead an army of millions to overthrow Chiang and conquer China.

It took us 384 days to reach the end of the road at Wuqi County Town in Shaanxi Province. We calculated we had walked 6,294 kilometers. We had marched through four seasons from the fertile farming country of southern Jiangxi to the semi-desert of northwest China. The Long Marchers, wrote Mao, had crossed “ten thousand rivers and a thousand mountains”. When we set out, we assumed that Mao had indulged in poetic exaggeration. But by the time we arrived, we weren’t so sure.

The Long Marchers pursued only the most unlikely paths to avoid directly engaging the enemy’s superior forces. We tracked the Red Army from the lushly wooded hills of south China to the barren passes of the Great Snow Mountains in northern Sichuan. We crossed and re-crossed the twisting tributaries of great rivers like the Golden Sands and the Dadu. The flooded Bayang River threatened to sweep Ed away until four local teenagers intervened.

As the Red Army sought sanctuary, it was driven to the farthest reaches of China, places that today are still among the least developed in the country. While only five percent of the national population is made up of ethnic minority peoples, at least 30 percent of the Long March trail is inhabited by 10 ethnic minorities. Most of them eke out a living on poor, mountainous land.

Some of those peoples did not salute the Red Army’s arrival. At best, they buried their food and hid in fear; at worst, they robbed and shot the weary marchers. We were

luckier with our welcome. We often depended on locals for food, water and lodging, as well as directions. Because the route couldn’t be traced on the map with any precision, instead of marching point-to-point, we walked person-to-person, asking, “Do you know which way the Long Marchers went?”

We had to walk. Many of the ancient footpaths followed by the Reds remain in use today. They pass through villages beyond the reach of any vehicle. Throughout this obscure territory, we found memories of the Long March. Our aim was to recover as much of this living history as possible. We met dozens of witnesses and veterans, and heard tell of many more. We interviewed all we could. We photographed every step of the route, and every person who agreed to face our cameras. In the following pages you will meet people for whom our New Long March was their first – and perhaps last – photo opportunity.

It was a fascinating, but exhausting process. On days when we marched 40 kilometers and more, one or other of us was likely to be overheard praying, “Please let nothing interesting happen today.” The demands of the journey kept us almost constantly on the move, and so many interviews were left unfinished. Many more remain to be done. Perhaps others can follow us and fill in the gaps. We hope so.

But they should hurry. The Long March as living history will soon be no more. Even the youngest witnesses are in their 70s; the youngest veteran we met was 80. These people and their memories are important because they are part of a legend, the founding myth of New China.

But the Long March is not just about China. It’s a universal story of struggle against overwhelming odds. It’s a journey to the outer limits of human suffering. It’s an adventure which changed the course of 20th century world history. The true stories of the men and women who took part deserve to be recorded and remembered. This album is our small contribution to that task.

Ed Jocelyn
Andrew McEwen
Beijing, June 30, 2004

Day 1

October 16, 2002

Jiangxi Province...



Day 1

October 16, 2002

Friends join us for the first day's march, a flat, 14-kilometer stroll that told us nothing about the trials ahead. Pictured are Jia Ji, Jiao Pei, Wan Xin, Andy, Ed, Sarah Bai and Li Mingxia.

"First Ferry of the Long March", Yudu County Town, Jiangxi Province

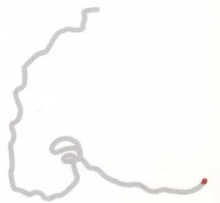
(photo courtesy of Li Mingxia)

0 km



The first rest stop of the New Long March. The sign reads, "The army loves the people, the people love the army."

On the road from Yudu County Town to Licun Xiang, Yudu County, Jiangxi Province



Day 2

October 17, 2002

We hoped to find witnesses and veterans of the Long March still alive along the route, but had no idea if this was really possible. We'd have been happy to find one. In the end, we found dozens. Chen Yingchun, 89, joined the Red Army on the second day of the Long March, October 17, 1934. His rearguard unit was cut off in the battle for Xinfeng one week later, and Chen was unable to rejoin his comrades. While they marched on to death or glory, Chen went home to a life of labor in the fields.

**Weitian Cun, Licun
Xiang, Yudu County,
Jiangxi Province**



14 km





Day 3

October 18, 2002

We set out believing October was the dry season in Jiangxi. It rained 11 out of the first 14 days.

**Xiaoxi Xiang, Yudu County,
Jiangxi Province**





Qiu Luhua, Qiu Xiaohua, Qiu Dixiang, Qiu Madi.

**Luokeng Zu, Qilushan Zhen,
Yudu County, Jiangxi Province**



42 km

