

David A. Williams

Struggling in the U.S. ?

MOVE TO CHINA !

Making the successful move to China.

What it's like to live in China.

How to quickly become like the Chinese.

How to learn Chinese on your own.



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS



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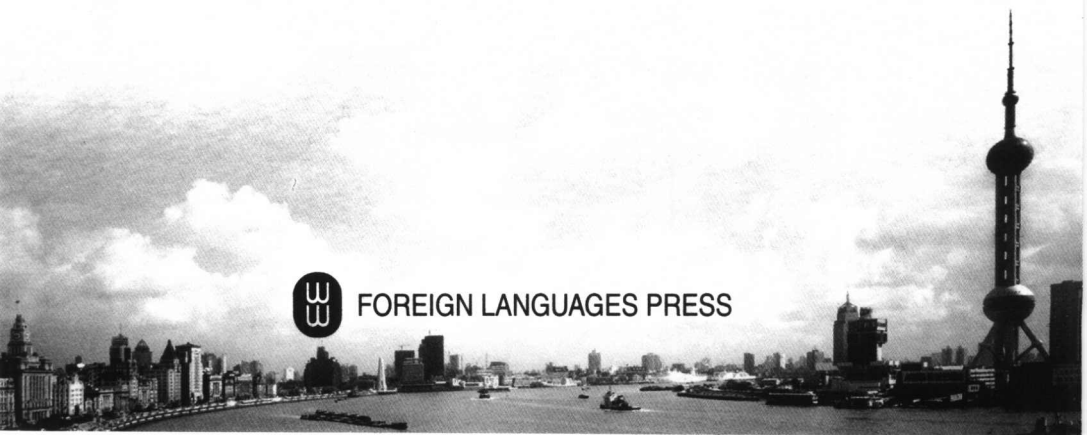
MOVE TO CHINA !

Making friends, finding a job, and more...
What it's like to live in China.
How to quickly become like the Chinese.
How to learn Chinese on your own.

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Introduction

—Why China?

“**M**ove to China!” These words, typed during an MSN messenger conversation by my new friend Daisy in Beijing, echoed in my mind as I reclined my Asiana Airlines 747 coach-class seat. The day was March 13, 2006. I was bound from LAX to Seoul and then on to Beijing to start my new life and return to the new land of my dreams, China. The big tan and grey-colored jumbo jet quietly eased into the clouds on that fateful day, and I prepared myself for a new adventure.

Daisy had recently nudged me “off the fence” and into action in my long-delayed move to the world’s fastest growing, most exciting country. I had been dreaming about going to China for six months, but I didn’t have much money saved up, and didn’t have a job waiting for me in China. I also wasn’t sure if I should just take a vacation and check it out or make a complete, life-changing move there. Finally, in early March, 2006, my boss let me go and I took what little money I had and hopped on a plane bound for the Orient.

China had captured my imagination ever since I took an impromptu trip to Shanghai with my girlfriend at the time, in 2004. The idea of actually returning to China and living there went from a fleeting idea in my mind during the February 2004 trip to a full-blown obsession nearly two years later. At first, I just enjoyed my memories of the eight-day trip that we planned at the last minute. But as time passed, I became more and more convinced that the peaceful, yet

progressive and exciting lifestyle that I could live in China was my future, my destiny. Those eight days in Shanghai turned out to be the turning point in my life..., a life that had been up to that point, free from adventure, success and excitement.

I want to encourage every foreigner out there reading this book, especially Americans, that they should consider moving to China. China has many great attributes. China is a wonderful place to pursue your dreams and have a fulfilling life. I personally have been able to live my dream of being a moneymaking actor in China, as well as working as a model and actor's agent, a pastor, an English teacher, a host of TV commercials, a host of a nightly musical review at a restaurant, an interpreter, and many other fun and fulfilling jobs.

This book tells about my dream of going to China and how I achieved that dream. I also talk about my life in China—stories of the events that have occurred since I got here. What's more, I go over what prompted me to want to come here in the first place—what are some of the advantages to living in China, and why I had become disenchanted with some of the aspects of living in the U.S.

I will also tell how becoming like the Chinese, or becoming an “old China hand,” can help a foreigner gain ground and have more chances for success here. By becoming an “old China hand,” or a foreigner that has become like the local Chinese in customs and speech, I have received many fun and fulfilling job and work opportunities, and have met many powerful and influential friends. Learning Chinese quickly was essential, and I will explain how I learned it so fast, without the aid of a teacher or tutor.

Family and friends back home often ask me why I chose China, and why I like China so much. After all, they say, many Chinese people are trying to go to America to study, and here I am leaving America and coming to China. I have many reasons, I tell them.

Some examples are, when I walk down the street, people smile at me. Looking up at the skyline, hundreds of new projects are under construction: new bridges, cool looking skyscrapers, stadiums, and apartment buildings. Underground, there is nonstop work on new subway lines. It is exciting.

Everyday, I am learning more and more of the oral and written language. In addition, life is cheaper here. I can go out to dinner and get full on less than two dollars. I recently bought a bouquet with 99 red roses for my girlfriend. It only cost me 180 RMB, or \$24. I also like the warm-hearted Chinese people. It seems like every person I meet wants to be my friend. Finding jobs is easier. I have an opportunity to work on CCTV as a Chinese-speaking host, and I have been in several commercials and a movie. I never see or hear of any violence. I also feel very safe in my new home, China. My life in China is easier and more fun than it was in America.

If you are thinking about coming here, I hope my book will show you that there is no reason to delay, just MOVE TO CHINA! It is what I did, and I would not change it for anything. I have lived in Beijing since March 2006. I have no plans of moving back to America. I love it here.

Millions of Americans are dissatisfied, wishing they could have a business, or be an actor or model..., but it is just too hard to fulfill their dreams in today's downsizing, over-competitive America. Many others are sick of reading about violence and wondering if their child will be the next victim. America is an expensive, turbulent place. China is not. This book is a way for Americans, especially, to find a better life: where: in China!

Many Americans wrongly assume that the only way to work in China is to be an English teacher or be lucky enough to have their job transferred to the China office of a foreign company. That is

wrong. I made it happen in China by befriending many Chinese people, learning the language, and finding many job opportunities through the *guanxi* (connections) that I developed. All it took was a foreign face, a friendly attitude and a love of the Chinese people and their culture.

Living in China is also a great idea for Americans or other foreigners with families. Every city in China has several international schools with the same curriculum as schools in developed countries, and the added benefit of teaching you Chinese. In addition, school in China is also much safer than in America. Violent crimes are extremely rare, even in the largest cities like Beijing (with a population of 13 million plus a few millions from other parts of the country seeking temporary jobs).

In the short time that I was in Shanghai in 2004, I realized that Shanghai has it all... construction was going on everywhere I looked, with cool designs not found in America, and such a grand scale! I also realized that the Chinese people were generally nicer than Americans. They treated me so warmly and made me feel so welcome that I decided I had to return soon.

When I watched TV in China, I saw no violence... no COPS (famous American reality show), no murder mystery shows... everything on television was just good wholesome entertainment... and I liked that.

Everything about China is exciting. You go to the Forbidden City or the Great Wall and see thousands of tourists. You see structures that have been around for over 500 years. The food in China is unique and explodes your taste buds. People treat foreigners like royalty. Things in China (food, DVDs, clothes) are a fraction of what we pay in America. Transportation is also cheaper, with taxis starting at 80 cents to \$1.20, and bus rides costing about five cents.

While still in America, I wanted to find a place where I could fulfill my dreams: dreams of making enough money, as an actor, to support myself, dreams of dating a beautiful model, and dreams of not being financially dependent on an institution or an individual. I have found out that that place is China. In 2004, I had a glimpse of just how new and exciting China is. At that time, I was still confident that I could fulfill my dreams in America. Within a year and a half after that though, I was very disillusioned. I realized I had to get out and see the world... find opportunity elsewhere. I was not going anywhere with my career, and had not fulfilled any of my dreams. Since I was already very impressed with the attitude and friendliness of Chinese people I had met in America, and was so impressed when I visited Shanghai, I became convinced that China not only would be a fun place to visit again, it would also be a viable alternative to living in America.

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Part I

My Dream of Going to China

*“Unless you take change by the
hand, it will take you by the throat.”*

—Winston S. Churchill

Seven Years of Frustration

Before I came to China, my life in America was a bit disappointing. I graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in civil engineering. Civil engineering is a good field, but my heart was not in it. I wanted to be an actor or work in the entertainment industry... living a creative life. My parents really wanted me to get a college degree in a field that would support me and make me happy. My choice to choose civil engineering as my major was a mistake I realized too late. As soon as I graduated, I moved straight to Los Angeles... the home of the film and television industry!

For three years, I tried to get a job in the entertainment industry. I would often work as an extra in movies and TV shows... standing in the background while the main actors are in the foreground. This was fun for a while, but I wanted a real acting job, where I was speaking! Sadly, in Los Angeles, there is too much competition. Every race and age is represented: old, young, black, white, Asian, and thousands of blondish-red haired Midwestern types like me. I did not have

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much chance to break into acting in Los Angeles. Being an extra was not lucrative enough to be able to live in Los Angeles. I had to do something else for money.

After three years of trying, I gave up my dream of being an actor and started a different career. I then tried network-marketing, but in the end, that failed. Seven years after graduating from college, I was still in debt, still searching for a fulfilling life. I decided to go back to civil engineering.

In August 2005, I found employment as a civil engineer. However, I was starting to get frustrated with my life. Why is life not what I had expected? I thought that my life would turn out to be more fun and fulfilling after college. I expected to have made a lot of money, gotten married, with a house and nice cars, kids, time freedom, etc. Millions of people lead lives with their dreams shelved, existing but not really living. I wanted my life to be different, more fulfilling, more alive. I wanted to be an actor, or my own boss. I did not want to work in an engineering job for 40 years, then retire and die. I did not want to be in debt and discouraged. I wanted to live a fulfilling life! America was not providing that for me...

In addition, America was too expensive... always worrying about money was nerve-racking. I wanted a life filled with adventure, romance, friendships, successes, and dreams fulfilled...but I was stuck in an unfulfilling job everyday, lacking enough money to buy a house, get out of debt, or even go out to dinner.

Then I Found Out about China

During that frustrating time in August 2005, when I was once again soul-searching and looking for a new job, I thought back to the fun I had in Shanghai with my girlfriend, Joanna. We had only been together for a month when she asked, “Do you want to go to China with me?” I immediately said “Yes,” even though I had no idea about China other than the fact that almost everything I buy says, “Made in China”, and its capital was Beijing. Joanna had grown up in Shanghai until 14 or 15 when she and her mom moved to California.

We left on Saturday, February 21, 2004, for eight days in Shanghai. Joanna’s grandmother was ill and only had a few months to live, so she and her mom had to go and pay a visit. We stayed with her aunt in the old section of the city called Puxi. I will never forget the ride we took driving from Shanghai’s Pudong International Airport to her aunt’s house. It was like a dream. After driving for half an hour with little signs of life, suddenly the colossal lights of the Pudong district’s skyscrapers came into view. Hundreds of newly completed and

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still-being-constructed skyscrapers flanked the well-lit thoroughfare.

Gradually, I started to see the signature structure: the Oriental Pearl Tower. It is a beautiful 1535-foot tower made from concrete, steel and glass. It looks like a giant tripod with five brightly lit glass spheres stacked one on top of the other, decreasing in size as they go up. It sits on the bank of the mighty Huangpu River. It was futuristic, like a giant remote-controlled rocket, about to launch China's first manned space probe. I did not blink for several minutes, as the amazing behemoth passed before me. On both sides of the expressway, I saw big cranes and half-built skyscrapers dimly lit, waiting for the morning light to show off their latest new height. It was overwhelming.

Never in my life had I seen so many buildings under construction at one time in one city. In all directions, there were tall apartment buildings under construction. Newly built edifices were well lit with showy exterior lighting and red, blinking lights on the roof.

I was amazed that I had not heard more about this metropolis in the states. It was like seeing a sleeping giant about to wake up. Shanghai had millions of people, going about their lives, oblivious to the world outside. Everyday of that fleeting trip to Shanghai, I noticed things that were new and different from my experience in America. In Los Angeles, I noticed only one new skyscraper built in the six years that I had lived there. Life was stagnant and boring, I felt. In Shanghai, everything was unusual, tantalizing, and out of the ordinary. My world-view would never be the same again. Shanghai showed me that there are places in the world that are more cutting-edge than American cities, places that are moving faster and are more exciting. It meant a lot to me to be in a city where so much was possible. The awesome vistas, the odors and smells, the personalities

of people I met, everything clashed with my humdrum existence in Los Angeles. The sound of Chinese people talking at machine gun speed, appearing to yell at each other in every conversation, in a language that I could not yet follow. The colorful tapestry of the food market I visited, in a big green tent, with its wild colored produce, and live and freshly killed animals of all varieties (some looking like they would make better pets than meals).

At six o'clock every morning, elderly townsfolk would converge on city parks to do their morning stretching and Taichi exercises. Streets filled from curb to curb with bicycle and motor scooter riders, challenging buses and taxis for road space. Tasting my first *xiaolongbao*, a famous Shanghai food with hard, white rice bread on the outside and a sizzling stuffing of pork or vegetables. Tasting the first-rate Chinese cuisine prepared by Joanna's uncle, who was an aspiring chef. Going for a ride under the half-mile-wide Huangpu River aboard the Bund district's Disney-like Huangpu tunnel ride reminded me of my seventh-grade trip to Epcot Center in Florida. The view of Shanghai from 1,200 feet about the ground from the rotating Oriental Pearl observation deck was humbling. The Oriental Pearl Tower, at 1,535 feet, is the highest tower in Asia, and the third highest in the world. Below on the muddy Huangpu River, vessels carrying coal and other wares strutted next to tour boats laden with gawking day-trippers. Wooden junks and low barges carrying concrete, coal, rice and lumber plied the water. Container ships steamed along, loaded with toys, textiles and household appliances, the products of 200 million people living in towns and working in factories far up the Yangtze River, sweatshops to the world. Less than 200 meters away, a still-under-construction skyscraper huffed and puffed to earn the respect of its cocky neighbors, the Oriental Pearl (which I was standing in), and the Jinmao Tower (at 1,379 feet