

China-World Cultural Exchange Series



EMBRACING DESTINY IN CHINA

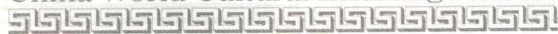


17 people from across the globe
who have found their destiny
in China



NEW WORLD PRESS

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绿杨

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藏书章

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Preface

In recent years, the word *yuan* (meaning predestined relationship or affinity) or the phrase *yuanfen* (fate or chance that brings people together), has increasingly been used among the Chinese; these words carry ideas that are rooted in fatalism and destiny. The word *yuan* is explained by fatalistic philosophy as the destinies that occur from person to person encounters. For those who do not believe in fatalism, the word *yuan* is not disagreeable; it simply refers to the possibility of special connections between people, or between people and things.

While the outcome of any fated encounter can have either good or bad consequences, in general usage, people tend to leave out the negative implications of *yuan* and it is commonly associated with positive destiny. This is perhaps due to people's optimistic expectations of a harmonious society and a world that is enabled by the positive connections between people and between people and things.

In early human history, mankind was confined within a small radius. The simplicity of their lifestyles meant that people simply worked after sunrise and rested after sunset. The difficulty in feeding themselves and their families left little energy and little curiosity to explore the world outside. During the era of self-sustained family production, small communities seldom made contact with their neighbors, even those within their vicinity. Simple commodity exchanges such as bartering were infrequent. Therefore, connections between unfamiliar peoples had a very low probability and making contact with people from foreign lands was virtually impossible. In this landscape of human history, there was little room for *yuanfen* to grow. And even in these rare crossings, connections would be extremely fragile and difficult to maintain. Actually, the most realized sense of *yuan* is not simply pre-destiny. It is a shared history and the communication between people that are fostered by a certain kind of environment and the development of social production.

When the social production of a society reaches a certain stage, people

expanded the radius of their activity and consequently had more contacts with outside world. Therefore, the possibilities for significant encounters between distant people greatly increased. If we assume pre-destiny does have a role, in these encounters, the destiny of the modern society is simply a destiny of increasing possibilities for *yuan* to occur.

Certainly, in our modern world we make frequent contacts with people of different races and nationalities, therefore, this so-called *yuanfen* is a stronger influence in our lives compared to ancient times. Unsurprisingly, many foreigners in China quickly learn about *yuan* and use it masterfully and frequently. A particular fondness towards the concept of *yuan* has been adopted by people who have deeply familiarized themselves with Chinese culture and have found acceptance by the Chinese people as brothers and sisters. People from all over the world have developed their careers in China—establishing *yuan* with China. Furthermore, many Chinese people have also emigrated and established *yuan* with local people of foreign countries. Our globalized earth resembles a village that features the blending of many peoples. To harmonize our world of increasing encounters requires all of mankind to sail together, overcome difficulties, meet challenges and share the happiness and benefits brought about by development and progress.

What a wonderful picture it would be if people of different ethnic backgrounds lived together in harmony. We can sense the special feeling of *yuanfen* at work—people from many different areas of the globe are compelled to meet each other. If all of mankind worked together in a spirit of harmony and with the positivity of *yuanfen*, then perhaps one day troubles like the financial crisis, the greenhouse effect, nuclear threat and other conflicts and disputes would be resolved.

In our modern society, we can enjoy a lifestyle that is more comfortable than the kings and emperors of ancient times. We also have the opportunity to have a richer and happier life which surpasses the wildest imaginations of those kings and emperors! These harmonious opportunities depend on the joint efforts of all of mankind. The fact that we now live in the same age and can work together towards this goal is also a kind of *yuanfen*.

One does not have to be a Buddhist to enjoy this story about *yuan*, which might be both entertaining and enlightening:

Buddha said: When two strangers face each other while passing on a road, yuan is the indescribable sensation for one of them to “turn around

and seek the other.” This moment of bliss is built with the encounters of the past 500 years. Isn’t it a wonder that I can catch sight of you, out of the myriad of people, at a significant moment?

Then I asked Buddha: According to the saying, if the yuan built with the prayers and practices of 100 years can bring two people to the same ferry-boat, and if the yuan built with those of 1,000 years can make them a couple, how many times must one feel the sensation to “turn around and seek the other” in order to amount to a single significant encounter today?

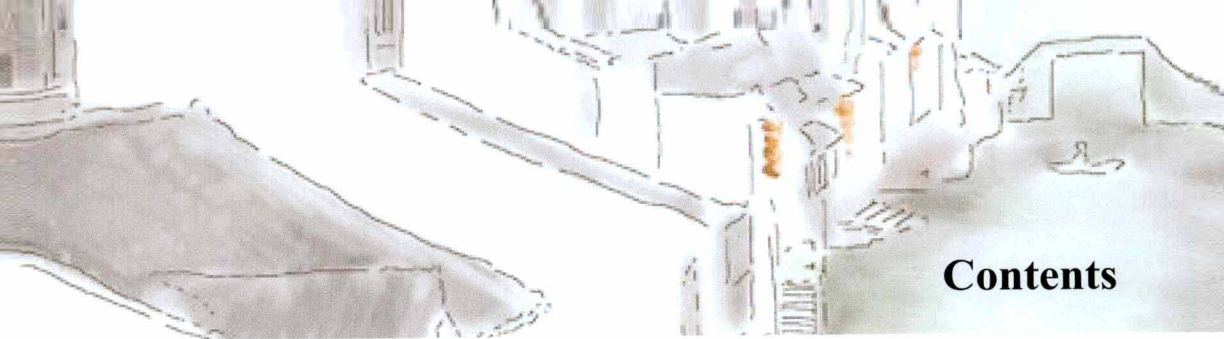
Buddha smiled and didn’t reply.

Buddha did not answer because *yuan* is something too wonderful to be explained in words. Despite its subtlety, it can still be found in each of our lives. Also, while the many crossings of paths can bring a significant encounter, not every encounter is made through *yuan*. Buddha told us to cherish the chances we have to meet others. However, if we focus on the quantification of *yuan*, such as tallying the number encounters, we are being too rigid and have misunderstood its meaning. The Zen of *yuan* lies in bringing enlightenment beyond language, and awkward explanations are no better than keeping its definition silent.

Following our publications *Living in China* and *Dreaming Big in China*, we interviewed some more of our international friends with life stories that are similar to those interviewed in our previous two books. All of these people cherish their *yuan* with China. Whether it is coincidence, signs of a current trend or simply a preference—many of the people we interviewed mentioned *yuan* and *yuanfen*. Regardless of their Chinese fluency, people of all language levels told us about their stories with China and the Chinese people. These stories are the most direct and concrete explanations on the ancient phenomenon of *yuan*. Some people have permanently remained in China, some have simply lived in China for many years, and others for only a temporary amount of time. Regardless, their connections are deeply rooted to the Chinese people and they consider China their second homeland. Because their experiences and thoughts give us a deeper understanding and feeling about *yuan*, it may be said that they bring us the title of this book.

Lu Yang

October 1, 2009



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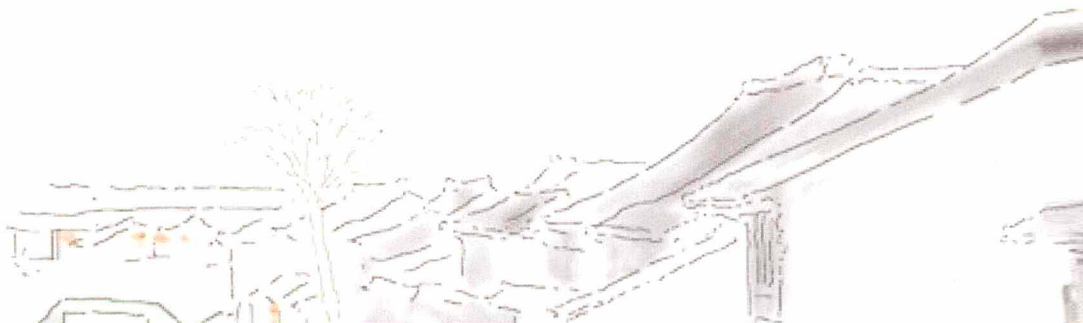
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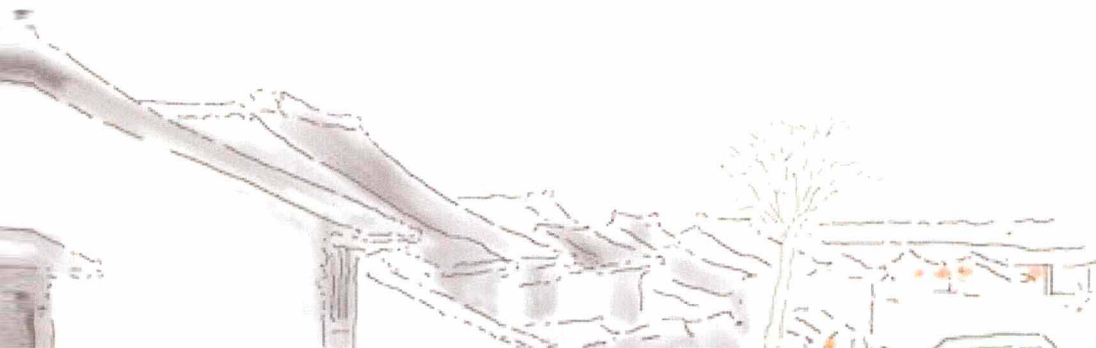
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Personal File

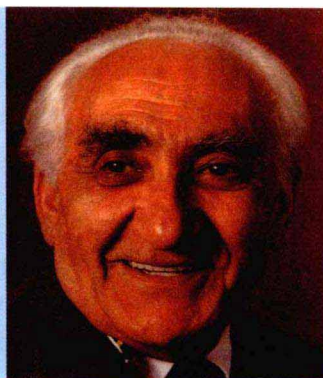
Name: George Hatem

Chinese Name: Ma Haide

Nationality: American (origin)

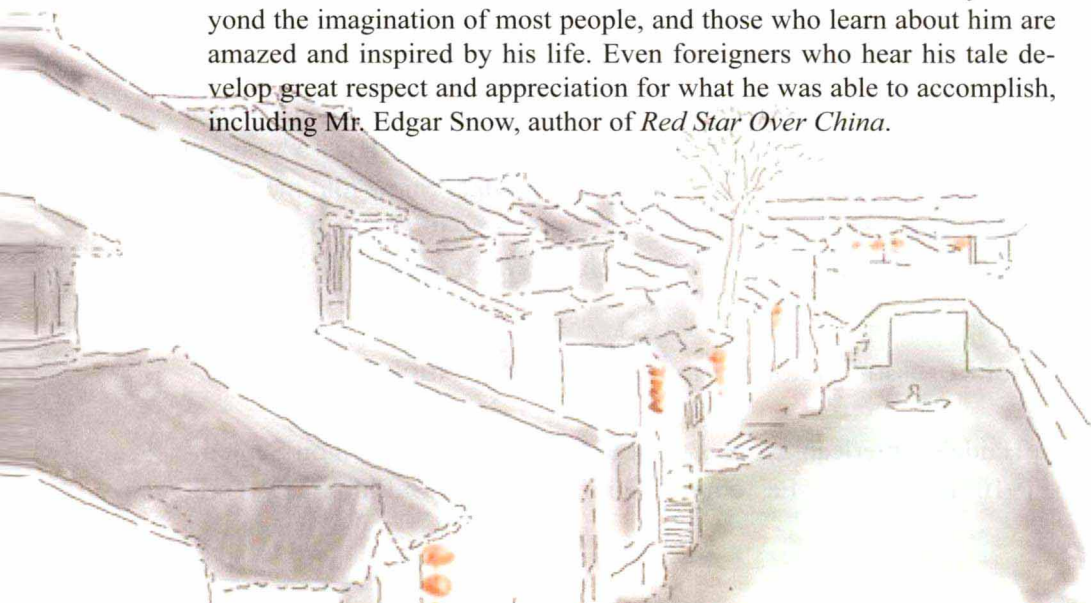
Occupation: Doctor

Time in China: 55 years



Remembering Ma Haide

He is the only non-Chinese to witness firsthand the modern evolution of China: from the Agricultural Revolution, the War of Resistance against Japan, the War of Liberation, the founding of the new China, the Cultural Revolution, and the reform and opening-up periods. He was there in person, participating in the events as they unfolded. Having lived in China for over 50 years, he has seen firsthand what others can only read about. He has fought alongside the revolutionaries and made every sacrifice imaginable to help bring liberation to the Chinese people. He has revolutionized the medical industry in China and with his own hands has restored the health of tens of thousands of Chinese. His story is beyond the imagination of most people, and those who learn about him are amazed and inspired by his life. Even foreigners who hear his tale develop great respect and appreciation for what he was able to accomplish, including Mr. Edgar Snow, author of *Red Star Over China*.



Having interviewed many foreign friends whose lives were closely connected with China, I began to wonder who was the first to arrive? Who was able to connect his or her life with the people, the culture, and the country before anyone else did?

In ancient times, people came to China either from the West by way of the Silk Road or from the East by crossing the Pacific Ocean. Merchants, missionaries, ambassadors and adventure seekers all passed through these vast lands. Later, notable explorers such as Marco Polo and Matteo Ricci came to China, too, enriching the communication between China and the rest of the world. The mark they made on history still lives on today; they were real pioneers.

But in modern history, who is the successor of these pioneers? On the eve of the 60th anniversary of new China, we couldn't help but think about the international friends who went through the ups and downs of China alongside the native Chinese. Their stories will live forever in Chinese history. Their persona will be held in high esteem for all posterity, and of course, they are the forefathers of the foreigners who are in China today.

Going through the list of remarkable people, I hit upon that of Ma Haide, for he is the only foreigner to have witnessed and participated in the changes and transformations that have shaped new China. His 55 years in China are precious and historical. "My old friend Edgar Snow told me on his deathbed that he envied my life track," he said. "Yes, it's enviable to sacrifice myself to such great people and for such a great cause."

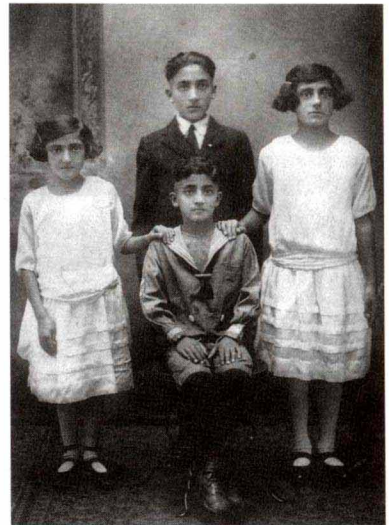
| The First Foreign Doctor in the Revolutionary Rank

Ma Haide's American name is George Hatem. He was born on September 26, 1910, to a Middle Eastern immigrant family in Buffalo, New York.

His father, a Lebanese immigrant, worked in a Buffalo iron plant. When George Hatem came to the world, his family was burdened financially and things became even worse when the Great Depression hit. In the 1920s, his father was out of work and couldn't quite earn enough to support the family through the odd jobs he managed to secure. The children suffered from malnourishment and their mother couldn't scrape together enough money even to buy coal to cook. In order to lessen the family's burden, George had to join the other kids who worked in the fields to pick cinder.

Both his father and mother were illiterate and wanted their children to be well-educated. At the age of six George entered elementary school. In 1918, a terrible influenza epidemic hit the country and his entire family suffered greatly as they could not afford to see a doctor. By a stroke of good fortune an old doctor treated them for free. Although the doctor himself was in dire straits, he refused to accept their money. He often brought candies and nuts to the children on his visits. The noble doctor became George's hero, and from that point on he decided that one day he would become a doctor and cure people of their ailments.

George finished elementary school in 1923, at which point his family could no longer afford to support their children, not to mention send them to school. They sent the young George to the home of a Lebanese merchant who lived in Greenville, North Carolina. The merchant covered his tuition, and, in return, George Hatem did chores at the merchant's department store on the weekends and in his spare time. George Hatem had nothing in life but his school lessons and chores. Of course, this was no fun for a kid George's age. If he was found to be lazy he'd be punished. Living in Greenville, George saw black kids being bullied in the street, and at school suffered from the discrimination that was held against immigrant children. Early in his life, George gained a profound understanding of the unfairness and coldness of



Pictured with his younger brother and sisters (left to right): Freda, George, Joseph (front row) and Shafia, 1922

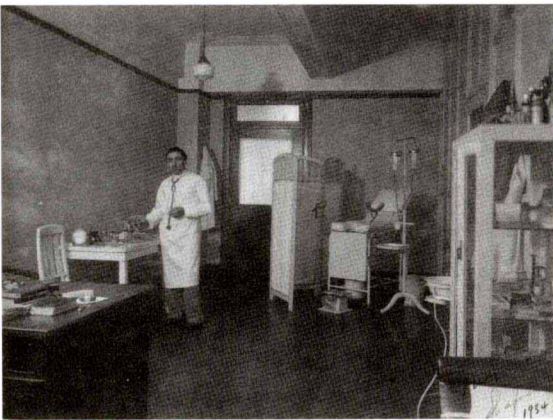
the world.

In 1924, his parents moved to Greenville. This time, though still in poverty, the family was much more stable. When George graduated at the head of his class, he was chosen as the student representative for the graduation ceremony. The family begrudged buying George a good pair of pants, so in the end he had to borrow a pair for the ceremony. Despite his humiliation of not having new pants like his peers, George still felt a strong sense of pride in giving his speech before his well-dressed schoolmates. “Your beautiful pants belong to you guys, but the speech belongs to me!” he thought to himself. He swore that one day he would make more money than all of them.

He first learned about China during his schooling in Greenville. He found that China was suffering from the devastation of war and poverty, and his church was even collecting donations to send to the people who were starving there. George sympathized with the Chinese people, but did not foresee himself going to China, or that he would spend the majority of his life there.

In 1927, George took some premed classes at North Carolina State University while doing part-time jobs to support himself. However, while pursuing his dream, George had to contend with the discriminatory practices of the time. Though George completed his premed courses a year early and won a scholarship in 1929, American medical schools had an undisclosed limit on the number of Jewish, black, and immigrant applicants they were willing to admit. As a result, only Beirut University, an American school in Lebanon,

was willing to accept him for further education. This set of circumstances, though very unfair, brought liberation to George. His parents were very excited because he would be able to visit their homeland and become a learned person and he would be able to enjoy his life as a student in an environment free from racial and religious prejudice.



Hatem, Levinson and Katz, classmates from Geneva University opened a clinic in Shanghai, 1934

In 1931, he transferred to Geneva University in Switzerland to complete his clinical diagnosis diploma and received his M.D. in 1933.

After graduation, he went to Shanghai along with two schoolmates to do research on VD and certain tropical diseases that were rampant in eastern countries at the time. Originally the trio only planned to stay in China for a year, but George was immediately shocked by the misery afflicting the Chinese people at the hands of the old corrupted Chinese government. During his investigation of tropical diseases and malnutrition amongst laborers, George found that some child laborers of no more than 14 years old had badly burned hands due to their tireless work in production factories. He treated the poor at a very low price, but he found that one doctor could only treat less than 100 patients per day, while the corrupt social system was producing thousands of new patients and beggars every day. He hated this darkness and corruption in society, especially after witnessing policemen killing young revolutionaries at Hongqiao Airport. He believed that only an overall reform of the social structure could change the fate of the oppressed Chinese. His two schoolmates returned to America disappointed in China, but George just had to stay in China longer. He was determined to tide his anger and find the root of the Chinese social afflictions.

He had the fortune of coming into contact with prominent and influential members of Chinese society. He had contacts with Sun Yat-sen's wife Soong Ching-ling, and such progressive foreigners as Agnes Smedley, Rewi Alley, M. Granich and H. Shippe, under whose influence he began to study Marxism and Chinese revolutionary history. Through them, he saw China in a new light, that is, needing the force of revolution to overcome its social ills, and forces that had been shaped under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). George became a supporter of the revolution, actively fighting for the changes he believed China needed. His clinic became a meeting place for the CPC's underground agents. It was not until many years later that it became known that it was he who aided Chen Yun, a leader of the CPC, to attend a meeting in the Soviet Union despite the dangers of doing so. In order to introduce the Red Army and expose the dark and corrupt society created under the present leadership of the Kuomintang (KMT), George published articles in American newspapers and progressive periodicals, such as the *Workers' Daily* and *The Voice of China*.

In the late spring of 1936, the CPC planed to invite an objective foreign

journalist and a well-trained doctor to Northern Shaanxi Province to examine and report on the CPC's Soviet Area (established in China during the Second Revolutionary Civil War, 1927-1937)—to gain an understanding of their resistance to the Japanese invasion and to help local soldiers and residents finish the construction of their newly founded medical industry. Soong Ching-ling recommended Edgar Snow and George Hatem.

She gave George half of a five-pound bill and told him that the person holding the other half would take him to Xi'an. Carrying two wooden cases of medicine with important documents inside, George and Edgar Snow together made the journey to Xi'an. As the CPC had been cut off from the outside world by the KMT, the journey from Xi'an to Yan'an was secretive and thrilling. In June, they arrived in Bao'an, the temporary base of the Central Red Army. The first person to receive them was a handsome young man with flawless English, sharp eyes and a beard. This man, Zhou Enlai, later went on to become a world-famous statesman and diplomat. From that moment on, the life of Edgar Snow and George Hatem underwent a series of radical changes.

In a cave-house in Bao'an, George had the privilege of participating in an interview Mao Zedong gave Edgar Snow. Mao Zedong, over several days, narrated his life experiences and discussed the past and future of China. At one point, when Edgar Snow was taking a picture of Mao, George took off Edgar Snow's service cap and put it on Mao's head, producing a classic picture that is famous to this day. This picture and Edgar Snow's masterpiece, *Red Star Over China*, informed the world of the Chinese army that was fighting for the freedom of Chinese society and against Japanese aggression.

During this period, they spent each day with Zhou Enlai, leaders of the CPC and generals of the Red Army, witnessing firsthand the charisma of the leadership and the power behind their revolutionary drive. They believed that the Red Army's cause was righteous and that the future of China would be decided by these CPC guardians who were vigorous in spite of their hunger, coldness and lack of adequate arms. Psychologically, they felt like bandits cursed by the KMT. Dozens of years later, in 1972, the two friends met again. When Edgar Snow fell terminally ill, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai sent George with a Chinese medical team to Switzerland and entrusted him with the task of saving Edgar Snow's life. Lying on his bed Edgar Snow forced out a few words with his last bit of energy: "Again we red bandits are together."

When Edgar Snow was writing *Red Star Over China*, he and George decided to keep George's true identity a secret in order to protect George's family in America as well as his foreign and Chinese friends in Shanghai. In 1970, Edgar Snow made special supplements in the reprinted edition of the book.

The First Westerner to Join the CPC

When Edgar Snow, unwillingly, had to leave China in order to tell the world about the Soviet Area, George decided to stay and joined the Red Army as a doctor. George could see clearly from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai the dawning of a beautiful new China. In southern Gansu Province, as a soldier in the First Front Army, George met with the Second and Fourth Front Armies who were in the midst of the Long March. In October, 1936, after the three front armies held meetings, George stayed with the Second Front Army and then the Fourth Front Army. What he saw in the Long March was a mass of tattered soldiers who were emaciated by disease and hunger, but the belief in their eyes remained. George did everything in his power to treat them. When they needed blood transfusions, he rolled up his sleeves; when some of them went into shock, he gave them CPR.

In January 1937, he followed the Red Army to Yan'an in Northern Shaanxi. With great passion he poured himself into the much needed medical work and related research. He inspected all medical units in the region, got a great deal of information about their operations and needs. He published a research report where he proposed suggestions for medical reform in the region. Mao Zedong appreciated his honest report and appointed him as health consultant of the Revolutionary Committee. He asked to join the CPC when the Chinese revolution was in trouble and the white terror was rampant, thereby winning the admiration of his Chinese comrades. Thus, he became the first foreign doctor in the Soviet Area and the first foreigner joined in the CPC. "From then on, I could participate in the great liberation cause as a host, rather than a guest, which was a great pleasure."

That year George was given his Chinese name. He accompanied a delegation led by Zhou Enlai to Ningxia Province to win support from local Muslims. Originally, he was there for medical purposes, but he had such a long beard that he looked like a respected Imam and the natives took him

for an Arabian scholar. At a party gala, Zhou Enlai and George Hatem were asked to be present. Though George was not able to speak Arabic well, he remembered how to write his name, which won the Muslims' admiration and made him the most popular person at the party. The hosts strongly urged him to take on a Muslim name. Zhou Enlai suggested that he take the family name Ma, which was a common Muslim name. To which the transliteration, Haide, of his English name, Hatem, was added. Thus he became Ma Haide.

From then on, his patients called him Doctor Ma; his friends and colleagues called him Ma and old Ma when he got older. His foreign acquaintances jokingly called him Horse (the Chinese pronunciation of horse is Ma) or Veterinary. Doctor Ma Haide became well known all over Yan'an and other liberated areas, and after 1949 throughout China.

In Yan'an, Ma Haide assisted the CPC's Central Foreign Affairs Section and Xinhua News Agency with their international communications. In November, 1938, he helped the Xinhua News Agency set up their English Department and began to broadcast English news to foreign countries. Also, he occasionally contributed articles to *Report from China*, the international publication of the Central Committee of the CPC. Having familiarity with foreign psychology and culture, Ma's articles and speeches to foreign friends were effective in framing, in a justified light, the views of CPC's resistance against Japan and policies of their united front.

In 1938 Soong Ching-ling established the Chinese Compatriots' Alliance in Hong Kong. Entrusted by Soong, Ma Haide reported on the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. Through the Alliance, he appealed to foreign countries in order to garner international support for the region. As a result of his efforts, the region got many badly needed medical supplies. In 1942, he was transferred to Yan'an International Peace Hospital. During the war against Japan, he received Norman Bethune and D.S. Kotnis, B.K. Basu and other foreign doctors and helped them with the medical assistance they provided to the different bases fighting in the war. He himself treated more than 40,000 patients. His work brought him numerous awards from the government of the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region.

He had fine medical skills and morals, and a good temper, he spoke Mandarin well and even had a Northern Shaanxi accent—all of which made him extremely popular in the region. In the eyes of local people and army men, he was almighty and it was believed that he could tell the sex of a baby