



June 29, 2007

TO CHINA WITH ALOHA

I recently returned from my first visit to China, a memorable trip to Shanghai. Shanghai is China's largest city with over 20 million residents, and I was impressed with the modern, international feel the city evokes. The primary purpose of the visit was to join the Hawaii International Film Festival (HIFF) delegation which attended the Shanghai International Film Festival in mid-June. Film makers and industry people from around the world transcended on Shanghai to share their films and promote their film festivals, something the Hawaii delegation did as well. With HIFF executive director Chuck Boller taking the lead, Hawaii was well represented along with students from the University of Hawaii Academy of Creative Media led by Chairman Tom Brislin and Associate Professor Anne Misawa, an accomplished film maker in her own right. Film production is a clean industry that not only shares one's creative abilities, but also helps promote Hawaii to the world. The relationships Mr. Boller has established in Shanghai were apparent, and the marketing of HIFF is another way to promote Hawaii tourism and bring more visitors to our state.

Our delegation also had the opportunity to visit with Chinese educational officials, and the future collaborations and partnerships discussed involving students and professors bode well for future relations with China. With a population of approximately 1.2 billion residents, I believe China is a country with whom we want to build a strong relationship and forge a lasting friendship. Peace and prosperity for both countries must be a common goal we work and strive for.

The architecture of Shanghai was fabulous with a mix of the old and the very new. I was very impressed by the shapes, originality and creativity in many of Shanghai's skyscrapers, and the lighted Shanghai is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

We had a chance to meet with Hawaii Tourism Authority staff stationed in Shanghai, the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai President, a commercial officer with the United States Consulate General, an international business attorney, and many Chinese business persons and the feeling is China is on the right path and can be a strong economic partner with Hawaii and the rest of the United States.

My meeting with Wu Xinyi and Ge Shiping of the Shanghai Shentong Metro Group responsible for the rail transit system was informative and educational. Shanghai's system is affordable, efficient, safe, clean, and accommodates 2 million riders a day. My use of the rail line was positive, pleasing and highlighted by being able to ride from downtown to the airport on the only commercial magnetic levitation rail system in the world. It was remarkable, amazing, and fast.

I left China yearning to experience more of the culture and history of this great ancient civilization. Shanghai is a dynamic metropolitan city with international influences and is currently preparing to host the 2010 World Expo. With 70 million visitors expected to attend Expo, Hawaii should consider a pavilion or exhibition. In the future, Hawaii can truly benefit from China, and China can definitely benefit from Hawaii in areas such as healthcare, education, tourism, consumerism, and environmental issues.

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