

# Seat Sale: Cat's Crazy Adventure to China

By Catherine WILLCOCK

"China is on disaster alert after a week of heavy rains, landslides and flash floods, which have killed more than 200 people and have closed parts of the massive Yangtze River...."

When you wake up 12 time zones away in Shanghai, China the last thing you want to hear is that! On my first stop in Asia, one of 4 stops in China also including Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou as well as Manila, Philippines, it was an amazing thing to witness. Not only was I in China eating with chopsticks, I was in the midst of a Chinese typhoon that caused flooding all over! Not that I'm pro flooding or anything, don't get me wrong, you know you'd be boasting too. It was scary to think that I had just spent 33.5 hours getting to China with an 8 hour stop-over in the Philippines only to hear that a typhoon was taking over the city! What did I do you ask, well that is exactly where the journey began.....

In late June of 2002 I was selected as the PEI Delegate for Junior Team Canada's Economic Trade Mission to China and the Philippines. I know that just sounds cool and a lot of you are wondering what exactly I did, but just so you know, I was completely stoked to get this opportunity. When I got the phone call saying I was picked, my summer plans took an elated back seat and what would become the most exhilarating experience of my life started rolling.

**I was anxious to see people's impression of my height of 5'1 and size five feet... I was ready for, "Hey, who's that huge girl with the huge feet?"**

This came as a complete shock to me, as I was a newly-gradu-



**Wild typhoon brews like bad gas over Hong Kong**

ated high school kid with dreams of the future that seemed so far away. I was apprehensive to hear if I had gotten the spot, but at the same time was secretly preparing myself for the call that I thought would say, "Sorry we picked the other guy that knew everything." Immediately I called my business buff friend to tell him the news, his comment of, "I knew you'd get it" helped to ease my fear that I may not have the skills to execute the tasks that were ahead of me. C'mon....it was scary knowing I was the only representative from PEI, and on top of that would be a Canadian Ambassador in China/Philippines for the agriculture sector! Anyone who wouldn't be crapping their pants should tell me their secret.

\*\*Global Vision's Junior Team Canada focuses on fostering a trading culture, developing talent, and instilling national pride in Canada's youth. The program brands Canadian industry by equipping businesses and communities at large with knowledge, technology, and opportunities in the international marketplace. For ages 16-25, it provides Canadian youth with skills, experience, and knowl-

edge necessary to become the business leaders of tomorrow. The economic trade missions to other countries provides unique experience in international trade and development and the performance of Canada's key growth sectors in these international marketplaces.\*\*

So like I said, there I was in Shanghai, China with 34 other delegates and this T-2 typhoon comes rolling in. Well, we just bought some umbrellas and lathered up on waterproof mascara because one's first night in China calls for an excursion around town to explore the nightlife!! Though Shanghai is one of the world's largest cities, with well over 14 million people, there was a tremendous lack of any sort of night life, and after a couple hours of battling the Mandarin/English language barrier we decided to head to the internet café and nerd it up. Funny this, but we noticed there were 20+ barber shops around the café. It was crazy to assume that Chinese people like to get their hair cut late at night, but if that was the case, why 20 shops on one street?? We didn't quite get our metacarpals on the keyboards when

the neon lit barber shops began pouring out ladies in fish net stockings shouting, "For you special price! Discount price!!" Seemed they took a fancy to our Canadian guys. You guessed it.....not your regular "Downtown Charlottetown Bob's Barber Shop" kind of place. We put in a good run that night, and the guys practised their Mandarin shouting to ladies we'd left on the street, "Ni Hao! Xie Xie" (Hello, Thank you)

So here I am on an economic trade mission in China. As hard as that was to comprehend, the meetings with Chinese business men sped up the process, as we were thrown into quite intense meetings with some very prominent business leaders. Basically each day started with a 6:30am wake up and an 9:00am meeting. Because I was on Team Ag I was lucky to get out of the city for a few hours and venture into the Chinese country side. It was on these 2 hour taxi rides that I got to see what in my imagination was the "real" China. I have to admit that it took me actually a couple of days to adjust to the fact that I was no longer in tourism season on PEI, but actually in China itself! I visited some really cool hydroponics farms, as well as some of China's leading distributors of fruit, vegetables, and seafood.

**With temperatures reaching over 40 degrees and the humidity percentage in my hotel room being 60%, it was hard to attend a meeting anything but naked!!**

The focus of the Agriculture market report was the pet food sector, so at least once a day I got to visit huge pet markets in each of the cities we visited. As far as the pet markets went it was hard to handle. There is a huge difference in the conditions that