



A Wonderful Weekend



Scarlette Chan – Toronto, Canada

May 12 and 13, 2007 was a wonderful weekend. Gerry and I left home at 7 a.m. for this trip. It has been many years since we have been on a long driving trip. There was excitement and eagerness in the air. The weather was sunny and clear, and the roads were wide and open -- perfect driving conditions!

First stop, we picked up Grace. With all on board, Ann Arbor, here we come! Somehow in the blink of an eye, amidst giggling, bursts of creative energy and enthusiastic chatter, we have arrived at the best Chinese Buffet restaurant in Ann Arbor -- great food, excellent prices. Then we walked into the hotel just as HeShang and his entourage pulled into the parking lot. Such perfect timing! From here on, things got even better.

It was just great to see HeShang (Venerable Haiyun Jimeng), Dai Shifu (Master Pu-Kuan) and Hai Shifu again. We got to meet our Dharma brothers and sisters from Taiwan, Sue from Ohio and our hosts for the event -- Eva and Harton. They are all such lovely people! Our lunch was excellent, but the vegetarian meals we had at Eva's home were superb: simple, tasty and fulfilling!

Back to the reason why we drove 5 hours to Ann Arbor: the 2 day seminar by HeShang. Actually, this is the reason why I am writing this article, I wanted to share my joy with you, especially those who did not have an opportunity to come.

HeShang spoke about "living life earnestly"-- how to take pride in our work, having space to live, having time for ourselves and our families, as well as our responsibility to society, and to humanity. I interpreted this to mean doing our best on the job, with people and for our society. Our performance should not depend on how we are paid or treated by others. Of course, doing our best will include consideration of others, effective communication, time for honest reflection and penance. If we can do this, we will be making a positive contribution and bring higher energy to our lives. New opportunities will become available and the quality of our life and those of others will be enhanced. Oh, how I wish you were there to hear the whole talk; there was so much that I just don't know how to tell you about it all.

HeShang also spoke about Huayen's position on global warming and the development of humanity. In the past few hundred years, Buddhism has been absent from the world forums on shaping the development and progress of humanity, but, HeShang assured us "Now, Buddhism has arrived, we will no longer be absent from the discussion and we will take the lead" to help shape development of humanity in the future! Applause, applause! It's about time! Buddhism is the only true non-violent religion in the world; how badly we need it in these troubled times.

Then HeShang spoke of nurturing our children. It is the responsibility of parents to prepare our children to become responsible and successful adults. Teach them how to be "appropriate" in their presentation such as appearance, what and when to speak, courtesy to self and others. They can start by greeting the parents' visitors, serving tea or food, being present to say goodbye when the guests leave. Something simple, yet.... my initial response was "easier said than done". However, we do not exist in isolation (except for hermits or those who are in solitary confinement). We are dependent on other people and have to deal with them everyday. Our interactions can bring us joy and success, or pain and worries. If parents do not give their children the

opportunity to learn this essential skill of living, then who will? If it has been difficult, was it because we have been using the wrong methods? My personal experience confirmed that nagging, yelling, and coercion will not bring compliance, let alone learning. What will? After much contemplation, my conclusion was: maybe lead by example with our own behavior, open discussions with support and understanding, respectful listening -- yes, even though they are children. This must be why HeShang said we need time to reflect on our own actions and behaviors; we need time to communicate with our family to show that we care, we need time to listen to and nurture our children. We need to live life earnestly, to be conscientious so we can see the truth and have the courage to admit where we can improve.

Oh, there is so much more that he taught us during this wonderful weekend. To those who were there, please share what HeShang has said that resonated with you. Maybe through this, we can share more with those who were unable to make the trip. How I hope your life can be enriched by this experience like mine was! We are deeply grateful to HeShang who traveled a long distance to inspire us. We are also extremely appreciative of Harton and Eva's efforts, generosity and friendship in providing this opportunity.

The trip home was even better, because we added Olivia to our company. With another blink of our eyes, amidst giggling and enthusiastic reflective discussions, we arrive back in Toronto. As for Gerry, a sigh of relief and a respite from all that noise!

