

# Espy Foundation International Cultural Exchange

*From Polly Friedlander, President*

The China Worker's Center for International Exchange asked Shawn Wong, Espy Vice President to lead a group of writers and writing professionals to travel to Beijing, Hangzhou, and Shanghai for 10 days to meet with writers, literary organizations, publishers, and universities. I was fortunate to be included.

We met across numerous conference tables with a translator/guide who accompanied us through out the trip. Shawn introduced me as representing the Espy Foundation from Oysterville—population 40—while Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou have a combined population of 44 million. It was hard for them to comprehend the contrast in size from the peacefulness of Oysterville to the hustle and bustle of their cities.

The three cities in China were filled with construction cranes, new high-rise buildings, new sports venues for the Olympics in Beijing in 2008 and the World Expo in Shanghai in 2009. Alongside the ancient monasteries and centuries old buildings were Starbucks, various other businesses from all over the world, even a Ferrari dealership in each of the three cities.

In each of the three cities, we had lively discussions about every conceivable subject from the history of literature to banned books to the teaching of literature and to the lives of writers in China. We encouraged the writers we met to apply for a residency.

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