

SHANGHAI REVISITED: 61 YEARS LATER

by Steven Low (formerly Werner Loewy)

After the tour of China with Elderhostel ended, Esther and I had an incredible additional 3 days (from June 1st to the 4th, 2008) in Shanghai, and we were sorry to leave. First we visited the French Concession, the first place my parents and I lived in from when we arrived in May 1940. I was two years old and we lived there until 1943 when we had to move to Hongkew. We lived in Hongkew (Shanghai Ghetto) until June, 1947, when we immigrated to the U.S.



Coincidentally, the place where my parents and I first lived when we arrived in Shanghai, was only about five or six blocks from the hotel we stayed at, the Equatorial International Hotel. It is still a very nice looking neighborhood with lots of trees, many small apartment homes, and nice little shops.

My Former Residence in the French Concession

Our guide/interpreter (Henry Hong) had a list of street names with the old names of the 30's and 40's and the new names now, so it made it easy for him to find the street. When we lived there, the street was called Mareska. Today, that same street is called Wuyuan Road.

65 Wuyuan Road (formerly Mareska)



The neighbors in the building told Henry that there is an elderly lady who lives on the first floor, who has been living there since the time my family had arrived. Unfortunately, she was not home that Sunday. We decided to go back there on our own at a later day.



Then Henry took us to Hongkew. The area was in poor condition in the early 40's because it was in a poor neighborhood of Shanghai, so you can imagine what it looked like after 61 years. As we got closer to where I had lived, (Kumping Road is now called Gongping Road), I told him not to show us, but that I would try to find the place myself. Lo and behold, I was able to locate our old apartment, on 305/Apartment 36, on the third floor of the building.

Lane Facing Right from Entrance



My Apartment was located on the far left

Henry knocked on the door and I saw that two young girls were living there now. They were very excited to hear my story and thrilled that we had come to visit. I remembered my old partment very well because we had lived there from when I was 5 to 9 years old (1943 to 1947).



Esther & Me at my former residence with their current residents

The building is very dilapidated now and the stairs to the third floor were narrow and not well kept.

There is only one toilet for the whole building on the second floor to be shared by all three floors (same as it was then). Also, the kitchen on the first floor was shared.

Henry Hong in my former residence





I had vivid memories of the kitchen table which is where we ran down to, to crawl under, whenever the air raid sirens would go off during the war (mostly at night). Sure enough, there was a table in the kitchen in the exact spot that I remembered, but of course I'm not sure if it was the same one. It sure looked like it! This was a very emotional moment for everything seemed so

small to me now.

It brought back a lot of memories. We took many pictures and stayed for a little while, while I looked around, emotionally re-living what it was like 61 years ago! Of course,

When we left the apartment house, we walked around to the other buildings in that area, trying to remember where all my playmates and

school buddies had lived (particularly Sylvia Berg and Freddy Nothman).

People living there now were curious and suddenly everybody seemed to come out of their homes to find out who we were and learn why we had come. They were all very, very friendly and allowed us to take pictures of them, and even more excited when we showed them their pictures on our camera!



We also noticed a few changes: The old leaky windows had been replaced by more modern ones and everyone had an air conditioning unit in their room!



After spending some time in the “neighborhood,” walking around the different lanes, I wanted to retrace the way I used to walk to the Kadoorie School.

My apartment was on the top floor

As we started walking, Henry tried to convince me that I was going the wrong way, but I remembered the path very vividly, and sure enough, my memory served me right! When we got there, I was disappointed to see that only the front gate and the outside wall of the school remain. →

Inside, right in the middle of what used to be the playing field where I frequently played soccer is a high-rise apartment building. We walked around the former school grounds and then strolled around the very busy neighborhood to take in all the sights.

Our next stop was the Hou Shan Park where we saw a plaque explaining the plight of the ‘stateless refugees’







Synagogue's Court Yard

From there Henry took us to the former Ohel Moshe Synagogue. There were a few workers trying to put the finishing touches to the building, which is now going to be a museum.

The interns volunteering there were very excited to hear my story. They requested to make copies of documents I happened to have with me related to my living in Shanghai during the war. They wanted to add it to the collection of documents and other material they are gathering for the creation of a data base of all the refugees that lived in the Shanghai Ghetto during the war.



Rear View of Ohel Moshe Synagogue

We also found out that Man Li Ho was going to be visiting the Synagogue the following week to participate in the placing of a plaque honoring her father, Feng Ho. He had been the Consul General for China in Vienna in the late 1930's, having issued thousands of exit visas (mostly to Austrians) for them to travel to China. We had had the opportunity to meet Man Li during the Rickshaw Reunion cruise earlier in April 2008. She was our keynote guest speaker during the cruise, where we learned about the unheralded accomplishments of her father. Fortunately this

ceremony in Shanghai and many other recent tributes (including at Yad Vashem in Israel) are making amends posthumously for his unselfish acts. Unfortunately we no longer were in China to witness this ceremony.



Plaque at the entrance of the Synagogue

On the last full day of our stay in Shanghai, we decided to go back to my first apartment in the French Concession, to see if we could meet the elderly lady who lived in that building. This time Henry did not come with us. When she opened the door, she had no idea who we were, so I showed her one of my pictures from when I was a very young child and gestured to her that I had lived upstairs. She must have understood my sign language, so she immediately motioned for us to come in. We continued communicating by sign language, and she indicated that she was a little hard of hearing. Then, using her fingers, she showed us that she was 97 years old!

But that was the extent of our communication. So we pointed to her phone and proceeded to call Henry. Fortunately he was available, so we had a three-way “conversation” for about 15-20 minutes. She would say things to him and he in turn would speak to me. She understood that I had lived in the building 61 years ago. She told him that she remembered a Jewish family with a young child living in one of the apartments above hers (couldn’t remember whether it was the second or third floor). That was very exciting news for me.

We learned that she was born in Shanghai in 1912 and has lived in that same apartment since the early 40’s. Later we were able to learn her name, Xuan Cai Wei.



Mrs. Xuan Cai Wei

Henry Hong highly recommended that while we were in Shanghai, we visit the Museum of Urban Planning, which is located directly across from the Shanghai Museum.

Museum of Urban Planning



The point of this is that we couldn't have visited Hongkew a moment too soon: According to the plans for the very near and foreseeable future, the whole area of Hongkew will no longer exist

as we remember it in the next five to ten years, if not sooner. Here is a site from Frommer's about this museum: <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/shanghai/A25938.html> It is a very modern building and all exhibits are incredibly interesting. Next time you plan a visit to Shanghai, make sure you devote at least one hour to see this museum.

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Our whole visit to Shanghai as well as to other cities of China made this trip undisputedly one of the most interesting one we have ever taken! We will definitely make an effort to go back to Shanghai in a very near future. We really hated to leave, but after three-and-a-half weeks, we were also ready to go home.

When we arrived in Shanghai in May 1940



Werner auf der Reise
nach Shanghai.
zu Bord des Conte Rosso
April 1940



When we left Shanghai in June 1947

Werner Jr.

姓名 *Loewy* 年齡 *9* 性別 *Male*
Name: Age: Sex:

國籍或籍貫 *former German*
Nationality or Province:

通訊處 *305 Kumping Rd*
Home Address:

各病，業經全部接種預防疫苗，注射日期，
列如下：並經本所加蓋印章，以資慎重。

This is to certify that the above-mentioned person whose
Signature appears below, has been Vaccinated and Inoculated
against the following diseases.

Diseases	注射日期 Date of Inoculation	次數 No. of Times
黃熱病 Yellow Fever		
鼠疫 Plague		
霍亂 Cholera	<i>16.5.47 22.5.47</i>	<i>2</i>
斑疹傷寒 Typhus Fever		
天花 Smallpox	<i>9.11.47</i>	<i>1</i>

JULY 2, 1947

Refugee Jews Due Tomorrow

475 Who Fled Nazis
Aboard General Meigs

Four hundred and seventy-five Jews who fled Nazi persecution in 1933, only to be interned by the Japanese in Shanghai in 1941, will arrive here tomorrow.

The refugees are on a passenger list of 1,350 of American President Lines' SS General M. C. Meigs, which is scheduled to dock at Pier 44 about 8 a. m.

Among those who will live here are Max Beiner, Mr. and Mrs. Erick Gruenberg and son, Mr. and Mrs. Berthold Herpe, Egon Katz, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Loewy, and a Mr. Grabowski.