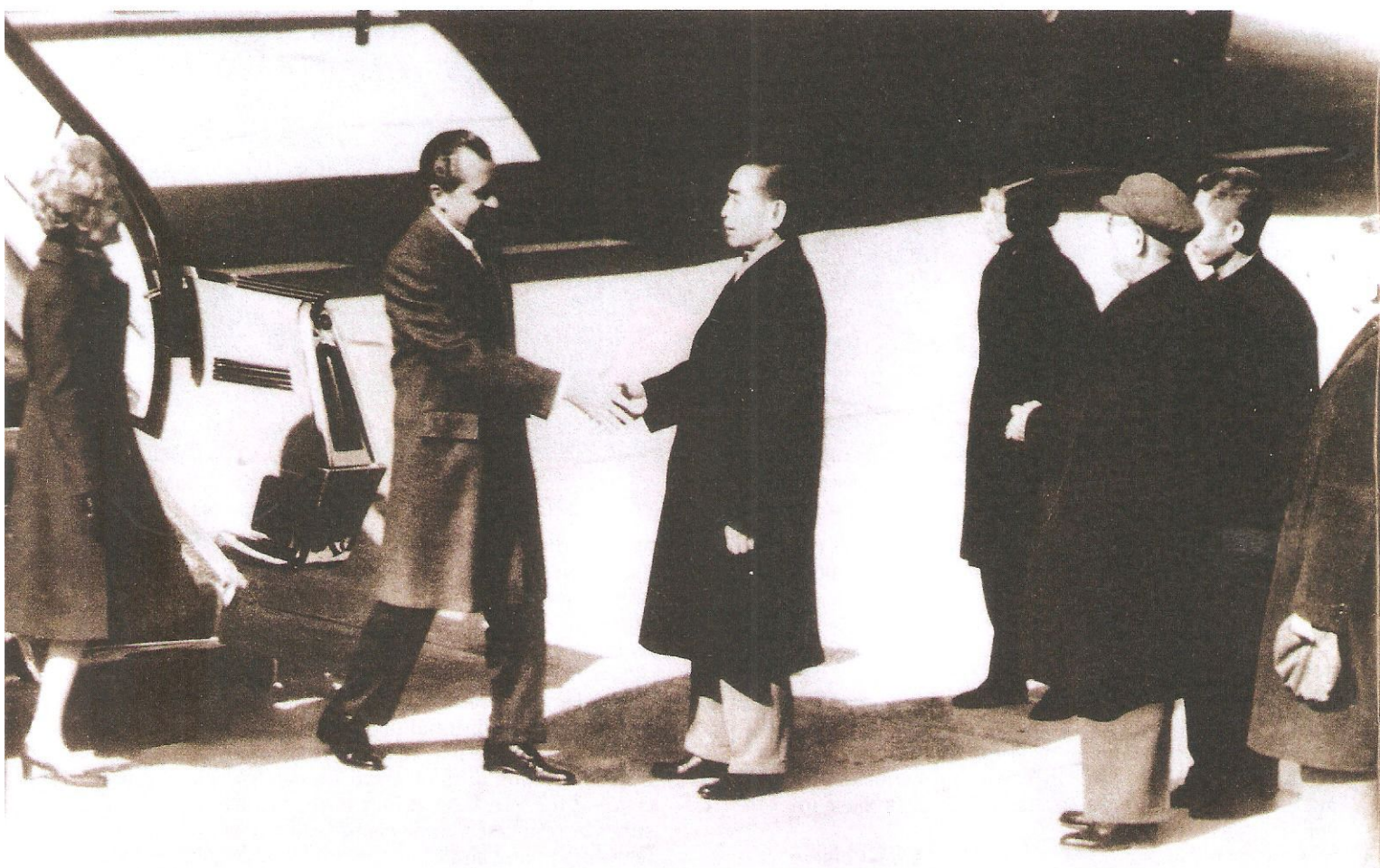


On the 35th Anniversary of China-U.S. Diplomatic Relations



Premier Zhou Enlai and other Chinese leaders greet visiting U.S. President Richard Nixon at Beijing airport on February 21, 1972.

By ZHANG YAN

THE year 2014 marks the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. Its significance, from a global perspective, goes without saying. The past 35 years have witnessed enormous changes, both in China-U.S. ties and globally. I was appointed the first resident *People's Daily* correspondent in the U.S. in 1979. Commenting on international

issues is not my field of expertise. I would, however, like to discuss my feelings in this regard, based on my experiences in the U.S.

Closer ties with the States were established shortly after I began working there. I interviewed a good number of Americans, gave lectures in universities and spent a lot of time with everyday people. This gave me a deep understanding of the country and its people, and made me realize that China and the U.S. had much to learn from one another.

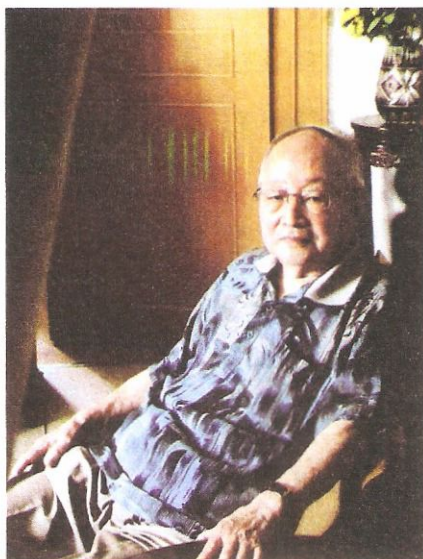
American people impressed me with their kindness and sincerity. When I first arrived, I would always carry a map in case I got lost. But whenever I unfolded it on the street to find my way, someone would approach me and ask, "Do you need any help?" That person could be anyone from an elderly lady to a young student.

My son, who was studying in the U.S., once drove me to visit a friend. On our way we asked a woman passer-by for directions. When we told her where we were headed she immediately got into her car, motioning us to follow her. After driving a few blocks, she signaled to let us know we had arrived at our destination. Unfortunately she drove off before we had the chance to ask her name. She seemed to me like Lei Feng, the Chinese role model who wholeheartedly served the people. She may never have heard of Lei Feng, and how he would often do good works without telling anyone his name. The help she gave us was purely a matter of instinct!

My wife and I lived in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, for nearly two years, having been invited to give lectures on the Johnstown Campus of the University of Pittsburgh. As neither of us drove, we would go shopping on foot. On our first trip to buy provisions we asked a woman we met on the street how to get to the nearest supermarket. Instead of answering, she told us to get into her car. She then drove us to the supermarket, which was some distance away. To our surprise, when we walked out she was there waiting to drive us back home. My wife and I were deeply touched. The three of us became good friends and would often visit one another. She was fascinated with China and its people, and we would often tell her stories about our home and the country in general. Later that year, she invited us to celebrate Christmas in a nearby church. During his sermon the priest mentioned a number of local Christians, commending them for their good deeds. Our friend was among them, and received warm applause for her voluntary help to others. Her response was to murmur, "It is God's will."

The town where we lived had a population of a few hundred thousand, many of whom were impoverished. Relief organizations provided shelter for the homeless and gave sanctuary to victims of domestic violence, among other services. Although there were many social problems, people were generally willing to do what they could to resolve them. But good deeds also require cash, and my wife and I were curious about sources of fund-

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ing for these good works. We later learnt that well-off citizens and profitable enterprises in the U.S. often made donations to national charitable foundations. The less fortunate, upon providing verification of their financial distress, could apply to them for subsidies. In a society where there is a broad divide between rich and poor, this is one way of resolving social conflicts.

As a journalist, I traveled extensively throughout the States. I seldom needed to find my own accommodation as old friends would invite me to stay with them, urging me to make myself at home. Some were former members of the U.S. 14th Air Force, also known as the Flying Tigers, whose mission was to defend China against Japanese invasions. My association with them began in Kunming, where the crew was stationed during World War II while I was still an undergraduate.

When I visited Edward Bell, one of my Flying Tiger friends in New York, he even gave me the keys to his house, telling me, "This is your house now, so feel free to come and go as you please." Edward also proudly introduced me to his neighbors, saying, "This is my lifelong friend from China!" One afternoon I went to visit another friend who unexpectedly invited me to go to a movie and have dinner afterwards. I did not get back to Edward's house until 11.00 p.m. When I opened the door he asked me angrily, "Where have you been? I've been so worried!" Afraid there had been an emergency, Edward had called several hospitals and even a few police precincts in case I had met with a car accident. On hearing this, I felt ashamed at having caused him anxiety, but at the same time was greatly moved at this expression of brotherly affection beyond borders.

Dick Pastor, another friend from the Flying Tigers, had devoted himself to improving U.S.-China friendship. Although of advanced years, Dick yearned to revisit China someday. But his physicians advised him, in view of his age and physical frailty, not to take this long journey. Determined to go, however, Dick underwent recuperative care. Six months later he and his 90-year-old wife returned to Kunming. I was among the Chinese friends that came to meet the couple. We had a wonderful time recalling the good times of 60 years earlier. Dick is well-known throughout Kunming, and our children and grandchildren all take pride in maintaining this friendship.

Apart from old friends, new acquaintances also often lent me a hand. The U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association (USCPFA) is a nationwide organization formed before the two countries established diplomatic relations. It has branches across the country, and its members have a deep interest in China. When I went on business

INTERNATIONAL INTERACTION



The author and his wife with students of the University of Pittsburgh.

trips, those living locally would often pick me up at airports and accommodate me in their homes. They became my close friends and local guides, and also enriched my understanding of the U.S. and its culture.

On one occasion right before the Christmas holiday I needed to do an interview in a suburban district a hundred miles away. The sole person on duty that day at the USCPFA branch took my call. I apologized for asking for help during the holiday season, but she seemed not to mind, and immediately promised to give me a ride. The following morning, Tese Wintz, the lovely 24-year-old woman I had spoken to, appeared at my door. She first drove me to interview the chairman of the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA), who lived deep in a forest. We then went to visit some farm owners who were opposed to the UFWA. Tese and I had plenty of time to chat on a wide range of topics on the way, and we became good friends after that trip. Years later, she became an expert in Chinese and Asian studies, and taught in a university. She came to China to work as a language consultant on *China Pictorial* at my invitation, and later taught English in Peking University. Tese has since been a close family friend, and always stays with us whenever she visits Beijing.

There are countless new friends like Tese in my life. Another good friend of mine was Jordan Phillips, a doctor of obstetrics. He and his wife came to China in the 1970s, right after the "cultural revolution." Dr. Phillips found that China was suffering a critical shortage of medical textbooks and equipment. Also that healthcare at that time was lamentably backward. In addition to sharing his ideas and professional experience with the Chinese medi-

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Dick Pastor (middle) revisits Kunming 60 years after he was deployed in the city as one of the Flying Tigers.

cal community, Dr. Phillips called on U.S. medical education institutions to donate textbooks and equipment to Chinese medical schools and libraries. A committee was set up specifically to organize this activity. For more than a decade, the couple annually traveled between the two countries at their own expense to oversee the operation. Upon arriving in Beijing, their first phone call was always to me. In 1991 Dr. Phillips received the China Health Award in recognition of his significant contributions. During WWII, Canadian doctor Norman Bethune came to China to tend the wounded on the frontline. The Chinese people refer to my friend Dr. Phillips as "the American Dr. Bethune."

On the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S., as we review the strategic significance of ties between the two countries under current global conditions, we can only marvel at the far-reaching influence of this event. The drastic changes that took place in China after the launch of the reform and opening-up policy have transformed the world. Today, the U.S. and China are respectively the world's first and second largest economies. Mutually dependent, the two countries' relations feature both competitiveness and cooperation. Despite their many ups and downs, the two countries have always formulated workable solutions. During their meetings at the Annenberg Estate, Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Barack Obama agreed that the two countries would work together to build a new model of major-country relationship, and a correct direction towards fostering the two countries' ties. Xi summarized such a new model as one of non conflict and non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. This is not only meaningful for China-U.S. relations, but also a firm guarantee of world peace.

China has witnessed in its modern history both hu-

miliation and oppression from foreign powers. Nevertheless, over the past 200 years, China and the U.S. have maintained relatively good relations. During the war against Japanese aggression the U.S. gave invaluable help to the Chinese people. More than 2,000 American pilots sacrificed their lives for China. When the country entered its most critical stage of strategic stalemate, American journalists traveled to Yan'an to interview Communist Party leaders and report to the world on China's anti-Japanese position. Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China* exerted considerable influence in this respect. The profound wisdom of leaders and scholars from both sides has moreover made substantial contributions to development of the intricate China-U.S. relationship. On October 1 National Day 1970, Mao Zedong invited Edgar Snow to join him on the Tian'anmen Rostrum, so signifying the intention to promote bilateral relations. It paved the way for President Richard Nixon's visit to China. The world political situation has since transformed.

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new millennium. To accommodate them, new attitudes must be adopted to deal with relationships between nations, especially by major countries like China and the U.S. Growing numbers of issues need to be solved through human solidarity. For example, policy makers in all countries have the obligation to combat severe environmental pollution. Each country has its historical conditions and rules of development. A nation can and ought to learn from the merits of its counterparts, rather than impose its will on others. Disaster will otherwise result. Considering today's weapons of mass destruction, warfare among superpowers can only bring about world devastation. All countries of the world face the same test. Only by adopting correct thinking can we ensure world peace. As two major powers that wield decisive influence in the world, China and the U.S. shoulder heavy responsibilities.

People-to-people friendship is always a solid foundation for China-U.S. relations. Cementing bilateral relations requires people's participation and strong support. The development of people-to-people friendship will undoubtedly maintain the vitality of China-U.S. relations. ■

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