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The Beijing Olympics and 'The New China'

Excerpts from the 2003 Graham Hovey Lecture

— By James Miles '95

In 2008, the world's attention will be focused on China probably more than at any other time since the crushing of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. In that nearly two-decade interval between Tiananmen and the Olympic Games, the country will have undergone an extraordinary transformation. Rightly in many ways, China's slogan for the Olympic Games is "a new Beijing, a new Olympics." In English this is translated as "new Beijing, great Olympics" for fear of giving the impression that China is casting aside the Olympic tradition.

A thunderous round for The Economist*'s James Miles*

But the word 'new' is crucial in China's thinking. The communist nation founded in 1949 was called a New China, one that was supposed to be very different from the weak, corrupt country of the past. After more than 50 years of communist rule, the ruling party still wants to wipe the slate clean and start again. At the Olympics, China wants to present itself as a modern, changed country—changed, not least from the China that the world saw when the tanks moved into Tiananmen Square.

For a while at least, Beijing's Olympic organizers considered making Tiananmen Square the venue for the beach volleyball competition. Tanks, troops, tattered tents—the images that are still fixed in the minds of many outside China when they think of Tiananmen —would be transformed into a display of harmless fun (though still overlooked by a huge portrait of what would no doubt be a rather skeptical Mao). At least that was the idea. Then it was impressed on the organizers that this was going a little too far. The plan has been quietly dropped.

In 2008, Beijing itself will indeed be new. Very little of the ancient city will be left after years of frantic development. This has involved the leveling of vast swaths of old courtyard homes, the relocation of hundreds of thousands of people, the construction of a forest of high-rise office buildings and shopping malls where once there were decaying apartment buildings and idle state-owned factories. A Chinese friend of mine who worked abroad for a year told me that on his return he couldn't find the way home to his own apartment. His neighborhood had changed beyond all recognition.

Except as a result of a war or earthquake or other such cataclysmic event, perhaps no other city in the world has changed so much in such a short space of time. When I drive around the city, or into the suburbs on family outings, I often have to stop to ask the way—the maps need changing so often. Where once there were residential areas, now there are expressways, wide boulevards and parks planted with flowers and trees. The former residents, meanwhile, have been moved away to new soulless developments in the suburbs.

The city I knew when I first arrived as a correspondent for *United Press International* 17 years ago—a quiet backwater, with hardly a restaurant open at night, no bars, little traffic, tightly controlled—has become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Asia. A capital city as vibrant, congested and dynamic as any capital city in the region. And with a sense that this is only the beginning, unlike Tokyo or Hong Kong, for example, where many wonder whether the best is behind them.

There are many who grumble about the heavy-handed and often corrupt methods that have been used to bring about the capital's transformation. I know of one elderly woman who was finally driven from the home where she had lived for decades after her water and electricity were switched off with no warning. She'd known for a while that she had to move out to make way for a new development, but no one had so much as thought to do her the courtesy of giving her a date when she had to leave. And she had no legal rights, or certainly none that could compete with the power and wealth of the developer and his official backers. But there are many others who accept that for all these injustices their lives are improving, or if not, there is at least some promise of a better future.

To set the scene a little more, bear in

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DISPATCHES FROM THE WAR BEAT

Knight-Wallace Fellows from The Washington Post, *"Nightline,"* The Chicago Tribune, *and* ABC News *report on their assignments from Iraq.* *See pg. 4*

Richard Leiby '02 in the southern Iraqi city of Umm Qsar

From the Head Fellow

By Charles R. Eisendrath '75

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I confess to a lifelong love affair with food markets—but it was only this fall that I recognized it as a passion that saved my life. The Fellowships were staging a national conference, "The Food Page: The Press and Public Policy." The venue was Ann Arbor's Kerrytown Market, a vibrant outdoor/indoor affair just off Main Street. The date was September 15, just four days after the day in 2001 that changed all of our lives.

But for me and only one other American journalist that I know of, plus a handful of others from elsewhere, 9/11 was our *second* Tuesday, September 11. The first was removed by 30 years and a continent.

In 1973 I was *Time*'s bureau chief for Hispanic South America and had landed in Santiago for an interview with President Salvador Allende Gossens. It was scheduled for 8:30 a.m., September 11, but instead of reporting early to the Moneda Palace, as many would have, I did my usual—a dawn detour to the Central Market for ceviche seasoned to awaken your entire being, and the chance to admire the wrought-iron structure designed by Gustave Eiffel, after his tower for the Paris exhibition of 1889 brought him literally all the work of that kind in the world.

Soup, sunrise over the Andes and local press digested, I returned to the hotel for notebook and tape recorder, then set out on foot across Constitution Square for the President's office. For me, the coup began with a burst of fire from a recoilless rifle literally at my left shoulder. A moment before, the soldier looked like just another security troop. Then, suddenly, he was at war, and I was partially deaf. It is a permanent and unpleasant reminder of that day, but nothing compared to what would have happened had I been waiting in Allende's suite.

Although shooed back into the hotel by swarming troops and ordered to the basement because of a coming "bombardment," I climbed to the rooftop deck instead. Ari Rath of *The Jerusalem Post* and I watched two Chilean Air Force Hawker-Siddley fighter-bombers rocket the office in which Allende died.

Absent a weakness for markets, the 62-year-old at the conference podium in all probability would have been a footnote fatality at 32.

Such experiences make public policy a part of one's intellectual architecture. It was a pleasure to expand the program's W.K. Kellogg Foundation conferences from previous subjects such as assisted suicide, welfare reform, "permanent war," to the food chain.

Then, too, I loved the idea of the Fellowships' staging the first University of Michigan event, ever, in Ann Arbor's Kerrytown Market. The nexus of policy issues began with nutrition but spread out into society like ingredients from a spilled mixing bowl: health, obesity, minority economics, women's roles.

Dean Paula Allen-Meares links food and Social Work

R. W. "Johnny" Apple, who as chief correspondent for *The New York Times* routinely sums up nations, political doctrines and religions in a sentence or two, set a tone of serious irreverence, before local television and a live audience of about 300 in tents rigged in the market stalls. The United States, he said, has changed from a place where a "Puritan" silence squelched experimentation to a situation in which the sheer bulk of cookbooks—"many of which are fortunately not much cooked from"—presents "an environmental hazard." Other speakers presented major themes with similar playful seriousness:

- America is all alone in its food obsessions. Where Americans see cholesterol, fat and death, the French and other cultures see pleasure. Lacking a common agricultural background based on available fresh foods going back thousands of years, Americans applied the techniques of mass production to the previous tradition of handicraft—"industrial gastronomy," in the memorable phrase of Lynn Rosetta Kasper of *Minnesota Public Radio.*

- Media discussion of food misses important points. It rarely probes what drives unhealthy school lunches (food producers' philanthropy to schools based on school purchases of their products). It ignores the importance of terminology, such as a current campaign that equates being fat with being sick, the first step in obtaining insurance coverage for a weight-loss industry already worth $32 billion annually. It fails to point out the delusional nature of the Atkins diet, which has as many adherents as Canada has residents and which has Americans thinking they can eat tons of fat without being fat, as Kim Severson of *The San Francisco Chronicle* put it. What's more, when it comes to coverage of food issues, American media obey the American taboo on discussions of race, said Harvey Levenstein, a Canadian sociologist. The upper classes do most of the fretting (thanks to upscale journalism), while the lower classes have most of the problems.

- Not much changes. Marion Nestle of New York University and author of *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition* pointed out that despite the intense interest in every new discovery, nutrition standards haven't changed much since the 1950s. "Eat less, move more and eat your fruits and vegetables." That was trumped by UM classicist Susan Alcock, who pointed out that current political correctness is child's play. The ancient world was obsessed by food, she said, because what you ate in (500 BC) Athens could make or break you, because it was thought to determine your politics and your morals.

Food for thought, all of it.

A First for KWF Gatherings:

Class of '02 Reunes in Tuscany

— By Marzio Mian '02

Perhaps it was simply the case of finding ourselves under a statue in the hot deserted square, under one of the many statues that honor liberty in Old Europe, that helped us understand what it was that had cemented a friendship begun at the University of Michigan, one of the strongholds of liberal American culture.

There was an uncertainty binding us—uncertainty that followed the events of September 11, an event that disseminated the unknown to the whole world. In fact, if 12 Americans and six foreigners (families included), all University of Michigan Journalism Fellows during the 2001-2002 academic year, were the first in the 30-year history of the Fellowship program to feel the need to spend an international vacation together, it was because the first time they all embraced occurred during that tragic September morning two years ago, only a week after classes had begun.

In Tuscany, a region of political factions but also free in spirit, we met again in a farmhouse for two weeks as if we were veterans returning from an international, personal, and professional big-bang event, feeling nostalgic for the intimacy that the uncertainty had given us. It was almost an experiment—an experiment to see how many would come. And most of us made it. We numbered 25, families included. And those who couldn't make it were justified absentees. Next time, probably in Patagonia!

Excerpted from Corriere della Sera, *where Mian is a special correspondent. Translated by University Translators Services.*

"We all work very hard (well, most of us anyway), and our money and vacation time is precious. Yet many of us were able to find a way to travel across the Atlantic to spend it with people we never knew existed before September 2001. We have become chosen family—with all the frustrations, joys, disputes, laughs, misunderstandings and support that come from one. I kept having that realization throughout our trip, as we lumbered en masse from city to city. How remarkable. And I can remember many a conversation that summoned the spirit of those not there. We were all there, and it was indeed ... remarkable."

Michelle Genece,
Freelance Producer, New York

"As someone who travels constantly for a living, I don't think I got excited about this trip until David Edmonds and I showed up at Rome Fiumicino airport to pick up a very jetlagged Matthew Eisley. Seeing Matthew and Margo Hernandez emerge bleary eyed from customs made me realize how much I liked being with this group of people and how much I had missed everybody. By the time we gathered for dinner around the big picnic table that first night, it seemed we had never been apart."

Bradford Wernle,
Automotive News Europe, London

"The trip to Italy brought me lots of images, feelings, flavors and meanings. First, because I could meet these great people and see that time and distance don't matter when you have a connection with people. And we do have connections. I am sure that some of them are really special. I want to meet these people again and share my life.

Second, when you go far away from your home, you have the time to remember your dreams, your goals in life. For me, it was a great time to remember all of them. Italy has gorgeous landscape, wonderful food, hot weather: a great chemistry. I really discovered a little bit of me, my family, and my past."

Dalen Jacomino,
Você S.A., São Paulo

All photos by Rafaelle Meucci

Fellows, embedded and not, report on their Iraq experiences, during and "after" the war

Dispatches From Iraq

Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images

A Snapshot Through a Soda Straw

— By Jay Weiss '04

Weiss on the job for ABC.

During the summer of 2002, I returned to the States after five years overseas. Based in London, I reported stories across Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa, which often meant covering violence of one stripe or another. By summer's end, my "Nightline" colleagues and I had begun planning ways to report on the coming war with Iraq which seemed, even then, inevitable.

At the first sign of Pentagon plans for embedding reporters, my hand shot up like some primitive Pavlovian response. Embedding had obvious advantages but, like most reporters, I had worries about the enterprise. The notion of being "stuck" within the hem of a military unit and largely unable to move freely about the country as the conflict evolved concerned me. Reservations or not, I jumped on board enthusiastically rather than risk missing a crucial chapter in the unfolding post-9/11 history.

The days leading up to my assignment were excruciating. Getting stuck with the wrong unit could be dull as dishwater, while being with the leading edge of the assault could result in new realms in modern reportage. The technology that I and so many others used was new and largely untried. Armed with digital video cameras, laptop editing systems and portable satellite phones capable of transmitting broadcast quality pictures (albeit at a painfully slow rate), provided a chance to bring home the story, and perhaps even some perspective, with bracing speed.

When I got word that I'd be going with the Army's 101st Airborne Division, I was elated. I had visions of lightning-fast maneuvers, helicopters dropping door-kicking infantrymen and their materiel into hot zones, with me recording the drama, adrenaline thick in my veins.

That's not exactly how it turned out.

There were exciting moments, for sure. When I jumped out of the Blackhawk helicopter, crammed with fresh-faced young men who'd never seen battle, onto the dusty wasteland just outside of Karbala, I did feel that unmistakable flush as one goes through the looking-glass into complete unpredictability. With Apache and Kiowa helicopters overhead

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I'd Never Seen Real War Before

— By Richard Leiby '01

The wounded Iraqi child named Yusef lay on the hospital cot, his fingers busy with a PlayStation game controller, his eyes locked on a video screen nearby. A small, battery-powered fan cooled his face. A stuffed panda sat within his reach. He shifted occasionally when the pain overcame him. He moaned and called out for his father (*baba,* in Arabic) before dozing off.

The boy's father, Rasheed, was a man of some means—a well-dressed Ministry of Health official who told me he could afford whatever it would take to save his son's life. Yusef was shot on April 9—"the day my beloved Baghdad fell," the father said—caught in a crossfire between U.S. and Iraqi forces. A bullet—and most certainly it was an American bullet, Rasheed believed—had entered near the boy's hip, torn through his intestines and exited through his back.

Leiby, flanked by Royal British Marines, at the port of Umm Qsar

Yusef, who just turned nine, had already undergone one colostomy operation and needed another. But this hospital had run out of antiseptics, and had no fuel to even boil water, so its surgeons could not safely operate. An infection was spreading, but they couldn't even sterilize instruments.

"The sepsis has reached his blood," Yusef's doctor explained. His face was grim: Unless medical supplies arrived soon—or an airlift could be arranged—the boy would surely die. In other Baghdad hospitals, the story was the same: shortages of critically needed medicines, sporadic electricity, no clean water, and many children dying from easily treatable conditions, such as diarrhea.

I met this father and son on Saturday, May 10, a month after the Iraqi army walked away from the fight and the Saddam statue was toppled. Everywhere I went that day, Iraqis railed against the conquering Americans for failing to provide humanitarian supplies, basic services and security in the war's aftermath. They were losing patience. Rasheed, 52, a Baathist functionary now out of work, was the angriest of all: "All I hear are hollow promises."

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— Weiss/ABC continued

providing cover, I marched with Bravo Company into the thicket of potential conflict.

The Third Infantry Division had swept through this town, like so many others, in their dash to decapitate Saddam's military machine in Baghdad. Left behind in their wake were Fedayeen and foreign fighters as well as irregulars that had been interdicting supply lines and potentially setting up for a rear guard attack. The 101st was looking for them.

But strangely, Karbala, like Najaf before and the other towns we passed through on our way to Baghdad, barely revealed a sniff of antipathy to the Americans. Quite to the contrary, the open warmth of the people and their obvious relief that Saddam was gone was remarkable.

The Iraqis had done exactly what we had asked of them, more or less. They laid down for the American military juggernaut. Not that they had much of a choice, of course. But seeing the enormous stockpiles of weapons and ammunition stored in every school, in every military base—and even in some mosques—led me to believe that things could have been a lot worse for the American interlopers, had the Iraqis really wanted to fight.

When I was in Najaf with the 101st, soldiers called in a pinpoint hit on a suspected sniper. We then crossed over a mine-laden bridge and into the center of town. I could immediately sense that the traumatized Iraqis were no threat. As I approached and began filming the crowds gathering on the streets, they started to cheer and chant, "Bush! Good! Good!" Later that evening, I was dressed down by a top non-commissioned officer in my battalion for getting between his men and the Iraqi crowd. I had jeopardized his men, he said, coming between them and any potential enemies in the crowd, eclipsing their line of fire, as it were. Militarily speaking, he was right.

The instincts that drove me to get closer to the Iraqi people ran contrary to the military authority I was essentially under. With hostilities coming to an end, the 101st's role in Najaf, Karbala and elsewhere had quickly become eminently *un-newsworthy.* It wouldn't have taken much work to discover the reservoir of doubt and suspicion that lay just beneath the patina of the initial warm Iraqi welcome.

General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, dismissed front-line U.S. commanders' complaints of the battle plan at one point during the war, saying they were looking at a "snapshot through a soda straw." My view was equally limited by the constraints of the embed. If I had decided to get off the 101st's train and pursue other stories, I wouldn't have been allowed to get back on.

The primary story available to embedded reporters was the superb job and character of

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The Chaos of Post-War Iraq

Elaine Widner '98, a broadcast freelancer, has been to Baghdad three times this year—in April, July, and October—doing work for ABC's "Good Morning America," "World News Tonight," and "Nightline."

Widner, right, listens up

I've never felt more threatened in Baghdad than I have since the war. In my opinion it is now more dangerous than at any other time, including during the war. I fear the chaos and consequences of a post-war Iraq will be with us for a long time to come.

I spent the buildup and the actual "shock and awe" of the war itself embedded in the Kuwait City Sheraton. I was doing sound and editing for *ABC* when I was asked if I'd be willing to go into Baghdad. It was only a week after Saddam's statue had come tumbling down in Firdos Square, and after spending the entire war in the relative safety of Kuwait City, I was curious to see how Baghdad looked after "liberation". I also wanted to see for myself the mood of the Iraqi people and I was hoping to reconnect with old Iraqi colleagues.

I had been lucky on my last two trips in and out of Baghdad. Other than a blown tire that was fairly quickly repaired by four or five Iraqi drivers, I came and went without incident. In the past the biggest concern driving the Amman-Baghdad road was whether or not your Jordanian driver would stay awake. And it was never a big deal to be a lone car on the highway. Nowadays, there are stretches of road where, if you're prudent, you make sure to have your flak jacket on and that you are part of a convoy.

In the past when my colleague and I were out shooting, we would naturally draw a crowd. After all, in their eyes we were something akin to a circus sideshow. What else could one make of two Western women, one blonde and wielding a microphone on a long pole, the other barely five feet tall and carrying around a 30-pound television camera and neither of us wearing the traditional *abaya*? They'd never seen anything quite like it, yet I never felt threatened in any way. Nowadays I am always vigilant when I am on the streets and particularly when I am around the U.S. military. Rather than having a sense of

— Leiby/Washington Post continued

As we spoke, he handed a cigarette to an elderly nurse's aide, clad in a black *abaya* and standing in the hallway. There was no smoking in the ward. "Go smoke this one for me," he told the old woman. "I'm boiling like a volcano inside."

Then Rasheed turned to me and made a promise I'll never forget. "If I have to watch my son die tonight, I swear to you that in the morning I will go out and kill one American. I will kill a soldier or a civilian. I hope it would be a general.

"You've heard of the Hammurabi code? An eye for an eye, a life for a life. Don't you know that we Iraqis invented it?"

I thought of how I'd feel if it were my own nine-year-old son lying there, dying. I told Rasheed I could not endorse his plan for revenge, but, as a father, I understood his rage.

Now I see that day was a turning point for me, journalistically. I'd gone to cover war without thinking much about its horrible consequences. How naive—but then, I'd never seen real war before.

In late February I set out for Kuwait as gung-ho as any freshly minted Marine. I had my gas mask with custom-made lens inserts. I had my chem-bio suit and supply of decontamination powder. I had a military-spec helmet. I'd been trained at a Pentagon-sponsored "media boot camp" at Fort Dix, a crash course in group-think, Army-speak and first aid.

I'd never been a soldier, but now I was ready to accept an embed with deploying troops. For months I'd been spun up with promises from Pentagon hawks and conservative think-tankers about how Iraqis would welcome their liberation. They said it would be over in a couple of weeks, a cakewalk. They said Hussein was planning to nuke us, so we had to act. I thought we were doing the Right Thing with a pre-emptive invasion.

At the last minute my bosses decided not to embed me; *The Post* already had several reporters locked into field positions. My editors wanted a roving free agent. I'm glad they made that decision. Operating as a unilateral—a credentialed reporter unattached to any unit—I think I gained a broader view of the war than my embedded colleagues, who saw the action as if "through a soda straw."

I believe the embed program was good for journalism overall—it helped bring two utterly disparate cultures closer together. Hundreds of journalists now understand the military better. And it allowed reporters to bear direct witness to war.

Still, I regard it as largely a propaganda coup for the Department of Defense. The TV reporters, especially, focused on the push to Baghdad—ever onward, *CNN, MSNBC* and

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— Weiss/ABC continued

the men and women of the U.S. military as they rolled across (in my case at least, an uncontested) Iraq. The Pentagon's embedding plan was brilliant.

Of course, I'd do it again in a heartbeat and therein lies part of the problem. The chance to cover war, especially an American one, is perhaps the most dramatic story imaginable. The stampede of reporters and news organizations eager for access to the spectacle creates an unequal and uncomfortable relationship with the Pentagon.

Unless news organizations stand together to address the lessons learned, the next time around could be much the same: terrific pictures and dramatic copy, seen through a largely military lens, occluding the obvious and perhaps the essence of the story. Once inside the military envelope, there's virtually no way to get out and see the bigger picture which was a heartbreakingly short step away when the bang-bang ended.

Jay Weiss is a Washington, D.C.-based producer for "Nightline."

— Leiby/Washington Post continued

Fox News soldiers!—leaving few cameras behind to cover the instability and power vacuum left in the invasion's wake. Unilaterals like me had to venture into Iraq at our own peril to chronicle the chaos left behind. (I wasn't brave at all: I took two trips into the southern port of Umm Qsar under protection of the British Royal Marines.)

Truth be told, I didn't cover much of George W. Bush's splendid little war. I didn't see anybody killed. I decided to leave the Middle East on April 6. I returned for my second tour on April 27. This time I caught a taxi cab from Basra to Baghdad. To me this was a much better way to see Iraq than from inside a U.S. military transport.

On May 1 my Department of Defense credential expired. Coincidentally, that was the same day that Bush declared an end to major combat—and I realized that I was covering the better story. The aftermath.

While gunfire blazed in the streets and blackouts descended, I bore witness to what the administration has yet to admit: We had no plan for the post-war occupation. Sadly, I never found out what happened to young Yusef. It was just one day of many, one tragedy of many.

When I made it home in mid-May, some friends and neighbors wondered why I'd stayed so long. Wasn't the war over?

No, I assured them, it was only beginning.

Richard Leiby is a staff writer for The Washington Post.

protection around the soldiers, I feel more vulnerable. It makes me nervous to get pinned within or alongside one of their convoys, and I never want to be on the streets after dark for fear that some nervous, trigger-happy young soldier may make a mistake.

Deborah Horan '02 arrived in Iraq September 11, on assignment for The Chicago Tribune. *She sent her report from Baghdad:*

To avoid being hit by a rocket-propelled grenade on the flight into Baghdad, the pilot spiralled our little 20-seat plane downward like a corkscrew. For four minutes, I focused on the desert below as the plane appeared to pivot around the left wing and descend to the airport runway.

Since then, Jordan's Royal Wings have started flying to and from Baghdad in a 40-seat plane too large to accomplish such a feat of aerodynamics, so I guess that means the security situation has improved. In Baghdad, it's hard to tell. In upscale Mansour, you can buy Nestle hot chocolate, Starbucks coffee and Ocean Spray cranberry juice. The streets are clogged with people, the shops are open.

But the threat of violence always lingers, and the pockets of normality seem unreal. One week, Iraqi ex-police rioted, a bomb exploded in front of the foreign ministry building, and thousands of angry Shiite Muslims faced U.S. troops after the Americans arrested their imam—then pulled out their prayer rugs and knelt down to pray on a four-lane highway in front of a mosque.

Yesterday, my Iraqi translators and drivers were wondering how they had ever managed under Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. One lived in Baghdad for six years and never learned all the streets; too many people, he said, had disappeared after accidentally driving some place that had suddenly been declared off-limits. Another, a former Republican Guard, was banished to southern Iraq for five years—along with everyone in the Guard from his tribe—because one of their tribesmen had attempted to assassinate Hussein.

There is more freedom now, no more banishments or random executions. But there is also much more chaos, and much less security.

— Miles continued

mind that 2008 will mark the end of the first term in office of China's new president Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, who were appointed in March this year. It is likely that between now and then, Hu and Wen will continue to operate under the shadow of the former president and party chief Jiang Zemin. But Jiang will be 82 in 2008. If he hasn't retired by then he certainly will in that year. If all goes smoothly Hu and Wen will oversee the Olympics at the start of their second terms in office, only this time they will be truly in charge. It will be their coming-out party.

But will it be a confident China, at ease with the outside world and rightly proud of its achievements that greets the Olympics in 2008? And will it be one that its neighbors feel at ease with? In the book I wrote while I was in Ann Arbor as a fellow in 1994-95 (called *The Legacy of Tiananmen: China in Disarray*), I described a country being torn apart by the economic changes unleashed in 1992 as a result of Deng Xiaoping's call for renewed reform. Deng's reform drive was motivated by a belief that only economic wealth could save China from the fate suffered by communist countries elsewhere. I argued that the economic changes themselves were storing up long-term problems: corruption, a growing gap between rich and poor, the breakdown of subsidized healthcare and education, soaring unemployment as state-owned enterprises collapsed, the weakening of the party's grip as private enterprise boomed—all of these could be contained if the party itself evolved, but a sclerotic party inept at handling crises and prone to factional strife might fail to keep up with the pace of change and eventually be overwhelmed by it. This process in turn could be chaotic and traumatic, not just for China but for its neighbors and even the world beyond.

So was the book wrong to dwell on potential political instability in China when the real story of the years since Tiananmen has been one of relatively stable growth and change? After all, the leadership succession that took place earlier this year was reported as the smoothest in Communist China's history. The answer to that question is that I think China's political system is as fragile as the people running it are factious. In other words, as long as the people leading China are generally in agreement with one another about the way the country should be going and what it should be doing, the chances of a political meltdown such as almost occurred in 1989 are not that great. And China's leaders are well aware of that. Tiananmen may be history to many ordinary Chinese, but the political elite is still acutely aware of its lessons.

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Our Great Geniuses

Richard Lee Colvin

Richard Lee Colvin '01, formerly an education writer with *The Los Angeles Times,* has been named the new director of the Hechinger Institute on Education and Media at Teachers' College in New York. The institute organizes seminars for journalists that feature policymakers and researchers speaking on timely issues in education. Colvin said his priorities include expanding the institute's involvement with broadcast journalists, helping journalists handle the often conflicting and confusing claims of education research, and continuing to assist journalists in their coverage of the No Child Left Behind Act.

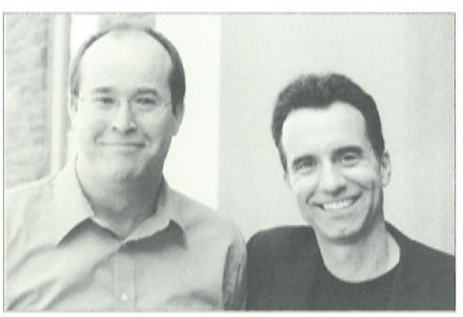
Nadine Epstein

Nadine Epstein '90 recently became managing editor of *Moment,* a magazine of Jewish politics, culture and religion, based in Washington, D.C. She has a new book coming out this fall, with Rosita Arvigo, titled *Spiritual Bathing: Rituals and Traditions from Around the World,* from Celestial Arts.

Scott Huler

During his fellowship year, **Scott Huler** '03, a Raleigh-based freelance writer and producer, won several awards. From Public Radio News Directors Incorporated, he received a second place citation, division B, for a "soft feature" on "electric football" (he received a similar award from PRNDI in 2002). From the Tennessee AP/Broadcasters Association, he received an award for news excellence and writing, and another for sound excellence. "While working my ass off for 20 years I won exactly zero awards. Then I got the Michigan Fellowship," he says. "About a month after getting the Fellowship I was awarded the 2002 PRNDI award, and while on the Fellowship I won three more things. Thus, the less I work the more awards. I believe if I stop working entirely they will award me the Pulitzer Prize. Just how do you suppose I should take that?"

Michael Knisley '98 has moved from Colorado to Connecticut to become senior editor at ESPN.com. "That's where *ESPN*'s dot-com concentrates its attempts at humor, satire, and off-the-wall looks at the world of sports," Knisley says. "It's where *ESPN* comes closest to marrying sports to popular culture, so the job opens up a whole set of new horizons and challenges for me."



Tom Stanton and Tim Wendel

Fellows **Tom Stanton** and **Tim Wendel,** '96, were both touring with new books when their paths crossed in late July at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. They each gave presentations the same day at the museum's atrium. Stanton's new book is *The Road to Cooperstown: A Father, Two Sons and the Journey of a Lifetime* (Thomas Dunne Books), while Wendel's latest is *The New Face of Baseball: The 100-Year Rise and Triumph of Latinos in America's Favorite Sport* (Rayo).

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After defeating three primary candidates, **Tom Grant** '98 lost his bid to become mayor of Spokane, Wash., taking 47 percent of the vote to Jim West's 53 percent.

Saying he would be the voice of everyday people, Grant announced his campaign in a column in *The Local Planet,* where he has been editor since 2001. Over his 22 years of journalism, Grant said he "helped a dozen or so innocent people get out from behind bars. I helped put one murderer in prison. And I like to think I've stood up for the powerless and the afflicted, even though it wasn't always the politically correct thing to do."

— *Miles continued*

China's handling of the SARS crisis is often cited as symptomatic of leadership disputes. At least at the time, many also saw it as an event that would force China to change the way it's governed. I disagree with both analyses. SARS came to Beijing. A new disease that had already hit Guangdong and Hong Kong, leaving dozens dead, spread around the capital, infecting hundreds and eventually thousands of people. The leadership's first response was to keep quiet. One common interpretation is that Hu and Wen wanted a more open approach, while Jiang wanted to keep on covering up the extent of the epidemic, fearing that more openness would cause panic and economic damage. But I think the leadership was generally of one mind about how to handle this. I think the decision in late April to come clean about SARS was caused not by any conversion to the merits of open government, but by events—the knowledge that the World Health Organization already had overwhelming evidence that the situation was much worse than the authorities had declared, and indeed that it was on the verge of issuing a caution against travel to Beijing. The instinct of all China's leaders, whether Hu, Wen or Jiang, was to cover up unless circumstances forced them to do otherwise.

Luckily for China's leaders, SARS did not produce the kind of debilitating schisms seen during Tiananmen. But if it had gone on longer and had a bigger economic impact, it might have. China's political stability in the next few years is by no means assured.

The Olympics will be an orgy of celebration in a country that is not just fanatical about sport but is craving assurance that the world admires and respects it. My newspaper published an editorial in 2001 arguing that China should not be awarded the Olympics because its motives for hosting them were largely political. It said that China's leaders aimed to "show China's authoritarian philosophy, as well as its sporting prowess, at its finest, and help the country on its way towards their dream of Great Powerdom." Luckily at *The Economist* we don't subscribe to what China euphemistically calls democratic centralism, so I'm free to disagree. Personally, I was in favor of giving China the games, not because China best represented the Olympic spirit, whatever that may be, but mainly for pragmatic reasons. The country had been rejected before, in 1993, and that had soured the views of many Chinese towards the western world. The Olympics, I would cynically suggest, are political enough anyway. Why not give China—or rather the Chinese people—the recognition they crave and see if it helps the country emerge as a more confident, more responsible power instead of one nursing grievances against imaginary enemies? And if China's fears of disrupting the Olympics lead to a more accommodating stance toward Taiwan and the handling of other regional problems, then that would be a welcome dividend.

I agree that China will use the Olympics to demonstrate the country's emergence as an important power. But I would go further and suggest that China's dream of great powerdom will probably remain just a dream well beyond the Games. China in five years time will still be only at the starting block in the journey to great powerdom. It will be acting more confidently on the world stage. We have seen it in recent weeks trying with unusual vigor to resolve the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula. In June we saw Hu Jintao meeting G8 leaders in France, the G8 having in the past been scorned as a rich man's club. I wonder how different the mood might be if China had not got the Games? Recently Colin Powell described relations between China and America as being at their best since Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972. That's a remarkable change in tone from 2001, after the collision of an American surveillance plane with a Chinese fighter jet.

There are still many who argue that this situation is only temporary—that China's growing military capability and its resentment of American power will inevitably bring about conflict. I think that's quite wrong. China is a country preoccupied with managing traumatic internal changes that, if mishandled, could topple the party. The party uses the rhetoric of nationalism to try to maintain cohesion and shore up its legitimacy, but in carefully rationed doses. The party needs to dream of taking over Taiwan, of keeping Japan in its place, of keeping American power at bay because it feels these dreams brought it to power in the first place. Just as Chinese leaders pay lip service to Marxism, so do they to these nationalist aspirations. Lip service it will remain, and particularly so as long as China remains engaged with its potential enemies and appreciates the benefits of this engagement. The Olympics will reinforce China's position as a normal status quo power. They will not be a reenactment of the Berlin games in 1936.

James Miles is the Beijing correspondent for The Economist. *This essay is excerpted from the 2003 Graham Hovey Lecture.*

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