

Behind the Scenes of the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference: Nora Spurgin's Personal Anecdotes

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Ladies at the Conference

Mrs. Nora Spurgin, former President of WFWP USA; Ms. Maureen Reagan, first child of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan; and I arrived in China on August 29, 1995. Arriving after dark, we were driven to Huairou (pronounced Y-row) and were ushered up three flights of stairs to the top apartments. Huairou China was a little community the Chinese government had built just outside of Beijing specifically for the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference where women from all around the world came to address their issues and share with one another. We were told that these apartments had been especially built for the

participants of the conference.

The staircase up to the apartment was narrow and had been freshly painted white. It was so narrow that we could not help brushing up against the walls. Once we were inside the apartment, we noticed that our clothes and suitcases were covered in a white chalk-like substance.



In Our Room

We entered an empty living room. All the walls were white. There were three bedrooms and a bath. The bed was a twin size with a board across it and a light cover and a table with a fan and lamp on it. We were so exhausted, so we quickly went to bed, only to be promptly jolted awake by a passing train. It sounded so close to our building and we were awakened repeatedly during the night as trains passed.

As a result, the next morning we were exhausted and our bodies ached all over. Ms. Nora left early because of her duties as WFWP USA President. Ms. Maureen complained to me about how she was feeling. I suggested a Reiki treatment. After explaining what it was, she readily agreed. After about 15-20 minutes, she was so refreshed and

told me what she had experienced while I had my hands on her shoulders.



Ms. Maureen & Ms. Nora

She said that a dear friend who had been her roommate in boarding school came to her during the session and told her to stop grieving, that she was very happy where she was. This friend had become ill later in life and had died in Ms. Maureen's arms. She was so relieved by this experience that it left her refreshed and happy.

From that point on, Ms. Maureen asked me to walk 10 feet in front of her and spread the Reiki energies. She would say to me, "Do that thing you do." So I became her companion, confidant, and good friend as she told me many personal stories about her life.

For the conference, the area was set up in a big U-shape of tables outside. Each organization was given a card table to display their brochures, signs, or posters. There was a sidewalk in front of the tables in the same U-shape. Ms. Maureen and I went table to table talking to ladies, exchanging business cards, and networking. I still have a stack of cards two inches thick from this occasion. We also walked on the grounds meeting women and accepting their flyers as

groups gave presentation in tents or buildings. Each meeting I went to was attended by less than 10 people.

Ms. Maureen Reagan—who had been introduced to WFWP and had felt very close to WFWP's founders, Father and Mother Moon, and to the vision and members—had accompanied Ms. Nora and me to the conference in order to be the keynote speaker for the WFWP event. The day of the meeting was a scorching hot day. WFWP ladies went all over the grounds passing out our flyer publicizing the event. Five hundred people attended. Ms. Maureen spoke mainly about family.



Children in Tianamin Square

The day of the WFWP event when Ms. Maureen spoke was very hot. We were in a big room with a stage. I went to get water for everyone on the stage. It was a harder task than you can imagine. By the time I got back, the session was close to finishing.

Once news spread that Ms. Maureen Reagan was at the conference, the organizers moved her to a hotel on the grounds and gave her a suite which she immediately made into the WFWP headquarters. We met there each morning to plan our day and would regroup as we ate lunch together in the cafeteria on the grounds.

One day as I walked 10 feet in front of her, I came to the top of the steps in the hotel. Below was the Chinese hotel staff. They began to clap and cheer with the rest of the guests. It was such a happy moment to walk down those steps in front of Ms. Maureen. I stepped aside as she

greeted everyone and watched in amazement as she lovingly greeted each person.

On a very rainy day Ms. Nora asked me to go back to our original apartment and get the makeup case she had left in a desk drawer. I managed to get someone to write the address of the apartment and what I needed to get in Chinese. It took hours to retrieve that small item and I was soaked and exhausted when I got back.

On another occasion, I was in a huge media center typing a report to send to WFWP headquarters when a group of women suddenly entered the back of the room. They came in banging on drums and other instruments, sang a song, and spoke about their concerns. Everyone in the media center stopped what they were doing, listened, and gave a standing ovation when the group was done.



McDonalds in Beijing

The day before leaving, several friends and I went to see the old and new Beijing. We found a cab driver who understood a little English and agreed on a fee for a few hours. Old Beijing had rows and rows of very low, flat-roofed, brown homes. New Beijing looked like a small version of New York City. The cab driver agreed to let us take him to a McDonald's in Beijing. When his burger and fries came, he told us he could not eat the fries because he was too accustomed to eating rice.

How I wish I could find the report I had typed about the Beijing Women's Conference 20 years ago. I stayed in Beijing until September 5th. Mrs. Hillary Clinton was scheduled to arrive and speak to the participants, but I had to leave earlier that day, so I missed it. All in all, it was a memorable experience for me to learn firsthand that women's issues around the world are basically the same. When women get together to heal their differences and make a difference in society, there is a lot of hope for the future.