

## Sak Dai Wai, Adventurer

### *On Adventure*

I am not by nature an adventurer. In kindergarten, I remember eagerly listening to a classmate tell me of his family's exciting trip to Hawaii, while inwardly lamenting that I would never have the courage to go there myself, since I had heard there were volcanoes. When, after watching the Indiana Jones films many years ago, I told my mom I wanted to be an archaeologist and explorer, she pointed out that that might not be the ideal vocation for someone with a fear of flying as acute as mine, so I contented myself with going as the famous professor for Halloween. Looking back, it is fair to say that I have generally been content to sit at home with a book, simulating adventure by reading about other lives in faraway places.

It might have been this eagerness to sit down with a book that got me into college. But it was going to college, and meeting so many people from all regions of the world with different experiences and hobbies and cultures, that began to make me want to look beyond the pages of my books, and to try new things. Central among the activities that began to pique my interest were these: I wanted to try sailing again, which I hadn't done since I was 12; I wanted to travel and learn new languages, after hearing so many of my friends' far-flung experiences; I wanted to do community service helping children, after learning about the Make-a-Wish Foundation and other charities; I wanted, finally, to learn how to cook. I even sat down and made a to-do list along these lines sometime in the spring.

A few months later, I stopped to examine where I had come to be and what I was doing. I was on a sailing junk off the coast of Hong Kong Island, headed towards Victoria Harbour to pick up a group of disabled students for a day of adventure training, stuffing the pork dumplings we were having for lunch, while learning my Chinese name from one of the crew members. I would have thought it impossible to achieve so many goals at once, and to have so suddenly been transformed from the armchair-bound David Zax to Sak Dai Wai, adventurer.

One day on the *Huan* I met Peter, an expatriate Scotsman supervising the construction of the new *Jockey Club Huan*. As we watched a group of students, many of whom had never swum before, drop from a trapeze into the water, he said to me with his lilting Scottish accent: "Can you imagine that though, never having been in the water before, not knowing for sure that you're going to float, and gathering up the courage for jumping in? Remarkable if you think about it." I looked at the water again, and Peter's comment suddenly illuminated for me (a longtime swimmer) how frightening and challenging Adventure-Ship's activities are—and how successful, since with the help of Adventure-Ship's crew every student on board swam confidently the following day to a nearby beach.

While I wasn't afraid of the water, I empathized with the fear of leaping into something unknown. When I first learned of the internship in early spring, I glanced at the website

out of curiosity, but couldn't imagine myself traveling to the other end of the globe. But it was harmless to poke around a website—it was just reading—and then it couldn't hurt to apply, on a whim—I'd never get the internship, anyway, or if by some fluke I did, I wouldn't actually be brave enough to go.

But just as the Adventure-Ship's wonderful crew offers the support that enables non-swimmers to leap into the ocean, so did many wonderful people enable me to feel comfortable embarking upon my Chinese adventure. At the Yale-China Association, Ingrid Jensen in the New Haven office helped prepare me for my visit, and Mark Sheldon at the Hong Kong office made me feel welcome once I arrived. The Hong Kong Jockey Club's generous funding allowed me to live in the exciting and conveniently located Wan Chai district. Rita Wong, my partner intern and a student at the New Asia College of Chinese University here, showed me around the New Territories and taught me more Cantonese than I could retain. Last but not most, Mimi Yeung lived up to her reputation, extolled in previous Yale-China intern reports, of immense generosity and care. These people helped me to jump in, and showed me that the water was fine.

### *On Ships*

My summer in China was spent on ships. First there was an old, beautiful junk named *Huan*. My project for the summer was to research and write the English version of an operations and safety manual for the *Huan*. I'm particularly grateful to have had this assignment because it put me on the ship every week, never allowing the work that Adventure-Ship does for Hong Kong youth become an abstraction imagined from the administrative office. (It also allowed me the more selfish pleasures of enjoying for myself exactly what these youth enjoy—the warm South China Sea, the company of a friendly crew, the fresh meals cooked in the galley, the splendid view of the stars.)

Then there were the other Chinese ships. There was the visit to the mainland to climb inside the immense bare hull of the *Jockey Club Huan*, under construction, a several-hundred ton indication of Adventure-Ship's long future. There was the hydrofoil that shuttled Mimi, Jana, Rita, and me for our day of touring Macau, enjoying its Portuguese-influenced food, and losing our money to its casinos. There was the cruise boat that I rode on the Pearl River with a number of new Chinese and American friends I met at a conference in Guangzhou, that Mark Sheldon and his colleagues at the New Asia College were kind enough to invite me to.

And there was the Star Ferry, and there were other vessels, too, ones that didn't go in the water. There was the MTR, the KCR, there were the taxis, the buses and trams that took me all over this city, so that ultimately the memory I will take home of Hong Kong is of constant, excited flux and transit.

Finally, in Adventure-Ship's spirit of punning, there was friendship, the most important ship, and I look forward to staying in close touch with the friends I have made here through Adventure-Ship and Yale-China during this most stimulating and rewarding—this most adventurous—summer I have ever had.