

望鄉亭

Dental School Staffer Builds

At the entrance to the pagoda he built on a mountaintop in Beijing are Rui-Feng Wang and his wife, Chu-Chiang Ling Wang, following dedication ceremonies last fall. Above them is a sign with the name of the pagoda, *The View of My Home Village*. The column on the right reads: On the mountaintop, under the clear moon and in a calm wind. The column on the left reads: From the place far away, sincerely missing my home village in my dream.



Photo courtesy of Rui-Feng Wang

Academy of China where he conducted genetic research. He returns to China every year to visit friends.

“A Very Special Place”

When he was teaching in Beijing, Wang said he often sat at the foot of the mountains. “It’s always been a very special place for me,” he said. “But it looks much different now than it did back in the 1960s when I taught at the university. Then, there were no trees because they were destroyed during the war between China and Japan. But after the war, trees were planted. Now it’s a beautiful park.”

The war’s devastation made a lasting impression on Wang.

It was built by hand...literally, from the ground up.

No nails or screws were used.

Materials and supplies, including blocks of granite for the foundation, were carried 1,000 feet up a mountain by workers in Beijing, China.

Work on Rui-Feng Wang’s pagoda began April 8, 2005. Six months later, on October 12, he returned to Beijing to help celebrate its dedication and the realization of a life-long dream.

How the pagoda was built...and why...is something Wang is more than happy to discuss with anyone inside or outside the School of Dentistry. Of course, he’s also delighted to show you his pictures.

A research lab specialist in the Department of Biologic and Materials Sciences, Wang came to Ann Arbor in 1979 from the Natural Science



Pagoda in China

“One of my dreams was to build a pagoda there, as a symbol for world peace,” he said.

He often mentioned his dream to family and friends. Encouraged by their response, Wang returned the money he earned at U-M to Beijing to hire an engineer to design the pagoda. “I wanted it to be very small, for a couple of people. But the engineer, architect, and workers were so enthusiastic that it turned out to be much larger than I planned,” he said with a smile.

The craftsmanship and the traditional paintings that decorate the pagoda are remarkable. Pictures on these pages show the pagoda during various phases of construction. The structure, nearly 25 feet high and 21 feet wide, was formally dedicated on October 12, 2005.

Photo courtesy of Rui-Feng Wang



More than 200 people attended the dedication ceremony at the top of the mountain, four times the number Wang expected.

Since then thousands have visited the pagoda and enjoyed a view of the Chinese capital. A map embedded in stone helps visitors locate their neighborhood.

Wang won't say what he spent to build the pagoda. “It's not about the money, it's about making people happy,” he insisted. He also resisted the temptation to name the pagoda after himself, as one of his colleagues in Beijing suggested. Instead, he named it, “The View of My Home Village.” The Chinese script for the name of the structure is at the top of the previous page. ■

Although nails, bolts, or screws were not used to build the pagoda, workers did use some modern tools to cut wood.



Photo courtesy of Rui-Feng Wang

Workers carried everything to the top of the mountain by hand, including some of the granite blocks that were used as the foundation.

This close-up picture shows some of the pagoda's ornate woodwork.

