

Council

**Wednesday, 25 July 2007
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT
WAITAKERE CENTRAL, 6 HENDERSON VALLEY ROAD, HENDERSON, WAITAKERE,
ON WEDNESDAY, 25 JULY 2007, COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM**

PART B - REPORT OF THE MAYOR

6. REPORT OF THE MAYOR

MY TRIP TO CHINA

My trip to China last month was my sixth to Waitakere's sister city, Ningbo. The changes since I first went in 1994 are truly staggering - as they are in the whole of China. China is in build-up mode for the Olympic Games, which promise to be one of the most astonishing events of the 21st century. But more than that, China is going to use the games as a showcase for what and who they are and, I have a feeling, what they want to become. Indeed it's clear China is seeking to become a sustainable major power rather than a 'fast-rising then fast-declining' one. A peaceful rise, in my way of thinking, relies primarily on acknowledging the resources of non-military power in the 21st century and these include economic power, foreign trade, and diplomatic and cultural power.

It is so apparent China wants to move the image clearly away from the military and it has been so careful to avoid coming into conflict with the US. This comes through in the media - it dodges Iraq and Iran and the escalating conflicts in the Middle East and talks only of its own success. It's my thinking China has relied on its development of soft power and that's why it really wants to get involved with New Zealand. That came through in all our meetings. China respects enormously the judgement of New Zealand and our ability to manage our country well. The officials I met on this trip were the heads of departments; Beijing-appointed officials who have the power to say yes. That's because of the relationship we've built up over the past six visits. So this trip, the largest delegation from New Zealand of film and television producers seeking co-productions, was an outstanding success.

I visited three cities - Ningbo, Shanghai and Beijing. Ningbo was to ensure a link with our colleges and to sign agreements that have the potential to significantly enhance our education sector and our film sector and add enormously to the potential of the Waitakere economy. And that's what we did.

In terms of education at a secondary school level, we were introduced to three specific schools that our Ningbo hosts had nominated as sister schools for counterparts in Waitakere. From this, apart from educational and cultural benefits over time, we can expect to see the resumption of fee-paying foreign students to our City. In terms of the education at a tertiary level, we found not one university (as we first supposed) but two eager to discuss ways in which they and Unitec could work together.

In terms of film, the doors have very definitely been opened to joint ventures between the vast Chinese film industry and our own here in Waitakere, in Auckland, and to a lesser extent for New Zealand as a whole. On previous occasions we have come away from China with expressions of goodwill, however on this occasion it was made very clear by the top people in the Chinese industry that they want to deal with New Zealand, and if members of our delegation send proposals for working together, they will be sent on to the appropriate people for exploration. These are the people who decide who gets to work with the Chinese industry and who doesn't. Of course our prestige was greatly enhanced by an Auckland film - *Out of the Blue* - being accepted by the increasingly prestigious Shanghai Film Festival. As a result, producer Steven O'Meagher (Desert Road Productions), Peter Rive (chairman of Film Auckland) and I represented the delegation at the glittering, red-carpet, opening night. But more on that later.



Ningbo

Delegation membership for the first day of our visit to Ningbo comprised Council representatives, Gail Moore of Green Bay High School, Miriam Sprague of Rutherford High School and Chris Poland of Waitakere College. On the second day we were joined by Dr Tina Hong of Unitec. On the day of our arrival we were given a civic welcome by the deputy mayor of Ningbo, Mr Wang Yong, and various other officials of the city and its education sector. In Asia you can get a fair idea of how seriously they take you by the status of the people invited to receive the city's guests. The mayor of Ningbo was on official duties in another province. I believe we were very privileged that the receiving group comprised Gang Yong - deputy director, Ningbo Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation Bureau, Zhou Hai Yan - Ningbo International Exchange Service Centre, Kong Weiwei - director Foreign Affairs Office, Ningbo Municipal People's Government, and Ye Shuangmeng - deputy secretary general of the Ningbo Municipal People's Government. A very high-powered group indeed.

I told Mr Wang of the huge importance Waitakere places on education - and I have to say, China does the same. I also told Mr Wang and his delegation, it is very clear China will be the dominant player in the 21st century and the exchange of cultures that exist in Waitakere will help Chinese students to understand the world beyond China's borders and better equip her to play the role that is in front of her. Mr Wang spelled it out for us that Ningbo very much wanted to build on the existing relationship with us and the city had already nominated three schools - Zhengshi, Tongji and Zhenhai High Schools - to partner with three Waitakere schools in a sister schools' relationship.

As well as being the executive deputy mayor of Ningbo, Mr Wang is also the Chief Commander of Hangzhou Bay Bridge Project, a project that fascinates me. A staggering 22.5 miles (36 kilometres) in length, the S-shaped bridge over Hangzhou Bay will rank as the world's longest sea-crossing span. Costing a record-setting US\$1.42 billion, it has six lanes. It will provide a huge infrastructure-fuelled boost for the entire Yangtze River Delta and will open up many more opportunities for the region's overall development. The link will shorten the distance between Shanghai and Ningbo by 75 miles (120 kilometres) which will slash what is now a four-hour drive to a two-hour one. When I saw it was going to be opened with a marathon I told them I would get into training for it, however they had decided high winds and the heat of August 2008 would make such an event too dangerous.

After our education meetings, we moved on to the formal signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two cities to explore cultural, economic and professional development through education - signed by John Wadsworth, CEO of Waitakere Enterprise and Ms WenJi Xu, deputy director of the Ningbo Education Bureau. While I think the benefits will far transcend just money - mutual understanding being the key to the future - the fact remains Ningbo will redirect fee-paying students to our schools and that will be good for their, and our, economy. Indeed, we were told Ningbo had been going to send a student to another school but with the signing of the MOU he will be redirected to Waitakere. He will be the first of many.

The next day we visited Zhengshi and Tongji High Schools. The former is on the outskirts (Ningbo is about as big in area as the Auckland region) and we passed through a very old part of town - narrow streets, pagoda-roof architecture in places, lots of Chinese-style tiled roofs - to find this school buried in the foothills of forested mountain ranges. Very reminiscent of the Waitakere Ranges only much bigger, with heavy mist sitting on the tops of the higher hills. This school was a lovely place, built over a hillside with beautiful traditional architecture and typical Chinese gardens with ponds and running water. It has a proud history of producing students who have been influential in their city and country.



Tongji High School was in the heart of Ningbo, and while it has a very long history, today it is ultra modern. Here they showed us a DVD of their school's activities and philosophy. It all sounded a bit like school did in New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s but the kids we saw were in jeans and t-shirts and they lined one of the balconies four or five floors up and gave us a big cheer that seemed spontaneous.

That afternoon I had the extraordinary privilege to be invited to speak on environmentalism and sustainability to the Foreign Languages Department of Ningbo University, the largest of Ningbo's Universities with 24,000 fulltime students, an equivalent size with Auckland. This visit was added to the agenda at the last minute and we were greeted by the university vice president, Professor Liu Jianhong, and a university director, Chen Yu Juan. I was quite blown away by the reception we received. Until we arrived we did not know Ningbo University had any interest in us at all. But it seems Waitakere's fame goes before us and we were earnestly assured Ningbo knew a lot about Waitakere and was eager to explore a relationship with Unitec. Being in a city that boasts the fourth largest port in the world, it is perhaps understandable that among this university's strengths are studies related to the sea - marine agriculture as they call it, navigation and marine logistic being some of the subjects. I was greatly encouraged by all this and given our relationship with the sea in common, I would be very surprised if Unitec and Ningbo University could not find a way to work together.

In the huge lecture theatre where I spoke, I was introduced by Professor Fan Yi, dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Professor Fan had assembled a large group of English-speaking Chinese students who, he said, were eager to hear about the eco city and what they could do in their country. I think this was one of the best forums I have had in the past few years. It was an incredibly good audience - intelligent and interested in New Zealand and our philosophy and vision for the planet. I think they saw me as the New Zealand equivalent of Al Gore! Although I was given 40 minutes, it was clearly all right to extend that and the session went to two hours. I felt I really had been able to contribute to the future of emerging young leaders and the world. I have often feted people who have come to Waitakere as international experts, but on this occasion the boot was on the other foot and it was I who was being treated as a visiting international celebrity and expert. To be placed on a pedestal alongside people like Al Gore was very flattering. I showed them our 'Naturally the West' DVD and told them about what we had done, how we had done it and what we still wanted to achieve.

Perhaps the single most important perspective to come from this was that these are youth just like our own. The ignorant western image, of a China blind to the plight of the planet, just isn't so. And that gives so much hope for the future. These young people cared: they cared deeply and they cared thoughtfully about the fate of our earth and their role - China's role - in saving it. They saw the great difficulties of the road ahead for China, balancing the still unresolved need to produce and to build, to modernise and to manufacture, with the need to do this without destroying the atmosphere above them or the soil beneath their feet. They also understood clearly that China faces an almost unimaginably huge problem in the drift of people from the countryside into the cities, already vast in some cases; Beijing 20 million. And they also got that they cannot sit around and wait for the government to find the solutions, possibly solutions they disagree with. It may surprise many people to realise today's government in China is a far cry from that under Mao. When I told them the role of people power, the need for them to tell the government what they wanted to happen, they agreed. Professor Fan Yi, himself a communist party official, welcomed the suggestion and endorsed it.

On the subject of the modern government of China, I am reminded of the four stages that have already occurred - deliberately and methodically. Mao took a nation in chaos and made it "stand up"; Deng Xia Ping inherited a nation on the rise and made it "open up". Jiang Zemin - on the 80th anniversary of the Communist Party challenged China to become a "spiritual civilisation" and current president Hu Jintao has said this is the time to "go out" - go out to the world and get the good ideas that will help China complete its journey from poverty to affluence and develop its relationship with the world.



Beijing

From Ningbo I flew to Beijing to connect with the film group from New Zealand and start the round of meetings with extremely interesting film and television companies and directors. The planning of this trade mission was a joint effort between Film Auckland and Waitakere Enterprise and it was led by Film Auckland chairman Peter Rive and me. The delegation comprised of Jim He - Pacific Culture and Arts Exchange Centre, Melissa Lee - Asia Downunder, Paul Carran - The Film Factory, Phillippa Campbell - Escapade Pictures, Anzak Rindall - JoyRide Films, Peter Mayo - Flying Start Pictures, James Hudson - Toybox, Steven O'Meagher - Desert Road Films and Television, Garry Little - Digital Post, Robin Scholes - Film Auckland / Eyeworks Touchdown, and representatives from Waitakere Enterprise and Waitakere City Council.

China is still a place where the final decision is made, at a very high level, by organisations that are part of the overall government apparatus. Beijing therefore is where the power lies to decide whether or not we do business with China. I had good credentials. I had been a television producer a bit in my advertising days, mainly documentaries, but they did know I had a history in the business, and of course 12 years on the New Zealand Film Commission hadn't hurt. *Whale Rider* and *World's Fastest Indian* had done reasonably well in China and the people we were talking to knew of our success at Cannes and Sundance, with both features and shorts.

The people we met knew our local film industry and New Zealand's reputation on the international stage. They had notes on all of us and were seemingly satisfied we passed their stringent test of friendship and loyalty. Nationally, they clearly value very highly New Zealand's long diplomatic friendship, and it is no accident they are seeking to reward it with their first-ever free trade agreement with a foreign country. Because they tend not to distinguish between one form of government and another, they are also impressed and reassured that I, as the Mayor of a major city, will take the trouble to visit them and add the mana of my role to that of the film producers.

Before I left on this mission I spoke at length with the Prime Minister Helen Clark about its purpose. Therefore our hand was further strengthened in China by the fact I was able to bring her greetings as Prime Minister and as Minister of Culture, and to convey her support for, and close and deep interest in, the success of the mission. I have also reported back to the Prime Minister directly and to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. I also had a chance to brief Minister of Trade and Trade Negotiations, Phil Goff, on my return on the success of the mission, and the delegation will meet with Ruth Harley, of the New Zealand Film Commission, to advance the concept of co-production.

Film happens to be a particularly appropriate field of endeavour to be exploring with China. There aren't many areas where we can meet China on equal terms in terms of productivity, but film is definitely one. They have a very high regard for our technical expertise, and provided the deal stacks up, they have money to put into co-operative ventures. These might be co-productions, simple investment, or the hiring of our people and facilities to assist in their productions. One aim will be to develop their capacity to make films for a world audience. We cannot underestimate the value they place on this. Art and culture is the starting place - the very foundation - of friendship and understanding. Nothing can progress without that foundation. They rate the role of film very highly as a means for developing their relationships with the world. They have traditionally poured very large resources into the film industry; every premier has made a point of touring the main film studios and the studios' directors are hand-picked under the supervision of the central committee.

We spent our time in Beijing meeting different decision-making sectors of the industry, steadily working our way up to the most important decision maker of all - Mr Li Qian Kuan, President of the China Film Federation, Vice President of the China Film Association, Film Director in Chief of the Chang Chun Film Studio, and Executive Member of the Central Committee of the China Association for Promoting Democracy.



This is a man who is seriously powerful, seriously talented and seriously good fun. He has made more than 100 movies himself, and at lunch he sat and painted line portraits on restaurant plates. One was of me, one of *Out of the Blue* producer Steve O'Meagher and one of our invaluable mentor on the China trip, Mr Yan. You receive many gifts in this job but so far none has been as unusual, personal or welcome as the plate Mr Li presented to me.

Before meeting Mr Li, we had met with the China Film Company. This organisation has 16 sound stages. It is trying to be the best in Asia and a competitor for Hollywood. Such a facility has one purpose above all and that is to make movies for the world. Certainly that can mean making other people's movies - such as *Kill Bill 2*, which will be made here, and they made it clear that they are open to any co-production proposals the New Zealand industry may send them. It also means opportunities for New Zealand film makers to assist with Chinese productions.

We also met with China Film Import and Export Corporation, the sole importer of foreign films into China. This is the doorway through which we will export New Zealand-made film product to the Chinese market. It may even be that the industry can reciprocate by fostering Chinese movies in New Zealand and to the rest of the world. We also visited the Beijing Film Academy, an establishment with 1,000 students and 20,000 applicants.

Finally we went to CCTV6 - a giant television company in anyone's language, anywhere in the world. With a potential audience of 700 million at any given time, this organisation made, co-produced, funded or joint-ventured 333 movies last year. Of these, 120 were made in CCTV6's own studios. This does not include their 100-plus television productions. As they tell it, they don't have many films from New Zealand because the right relationships have not existed up until now. After our visit, there is no excuse for that situation to continue.

And so, after a brief visit to the Great Wall, we left for Shanghai, where the jewel in the crown was undoubtedly the acceptance of Steven O'Meagher's film, *Out of the Blue*, for the Shanghai International Film Festival. This was an interesting film to have in such a festival, as it is a grizzly tale of the Aramoana massacre. It has a fantastic sense of place; you really feel you understand the small New Zealand Bach community and what drives people to go on a killing spree. After 20 years it still evokes awful memories. I just don't know how the Chinese audiences respond. Maybe they think it is just a small version of Tiananmen Square.

Steven, Peter and I were the official delegates to the festival's opening, a glittering red carpet affair. Unfortunately while we were apparently quite popular, we were perhaps overshadowed by the illustrious Ms Sharon Stone and sundry other leading names from around the world. This event was held in the stunning Shanghai Grand Opera House, an ultra-modern glass and marble palace that soars upward to a graceful curved roof. Like so much of Shanghai's architecture, it is contemporary, beautiful and would grace any of the world's great cities.

A not-insignificant crowd had gathered for this, the 10th Shanghai International Film Festival. This year the directors hoped to develop bigger forums for international directors to meet and discuss new ideas, and to try and break through the barrier of the Chinese government allowing only 20 foreign films to be screened each year, which mostly end up being limited to blockbusters. One of the big problems, of course, is fake DVDs and downloads, which are sold on many street corners for NZ\$2 and packaged like the real thing.

The festival promised to show a new line-up of Chinese masterpiece screenings; some films dating back to the 1950s. In fact the Chinese cinema goes back to 1905, a film from the Beijing cinema of a Peking Opera conquering June Mountain, but then also leaping forward to the new generation of Chinese and Japanese animation, some to be projected in 3D.



The Shanghai festival is shaping up to be one of the major film festivals of the world and it was great to be there with New Zealand productions. It had a great line-up of international films, shown in 21 venues following the glittering opening night held to honour some of China's great movie stars. The most famous Chinese actress was the 90 year-old film star, Zhang Roofing, who received the highest honour with a standing ovation for a lifetime achievement. Down the red carpet came 300 domestic and foreign celebrities, including the aforementioned Hollywood sexpot Sharon Stone, actor Reggie Lee, the acclaimed Japanese director Joni Yamada, and South Korean icon Lee Jun-ki. We thought the night belonged to the dazzling Michelle Rodriguez, who we couldn't get enough attention from. She told us she was on her way to Wellington to work for James Cameron, of *Titanic* fame, in a new production called *Avatar*. We invited her to Waitakere and she's promised to come. Her fame really comes out of television series *Lost*, but she was in a super surfing-chick flick called *Blue Crush*. I think she has a great future.

Shanghai

While Beijing might be where the political decisions are made, Shanghai is where a lot of the work gets done and so our time in China concluded with a visit to Professor Wang Titanium, vice-president of the Shanghai Film Corporation.

The message we got from Mr Wang was quite blunt, although stated in polite language. It was in effect - the door to co-productions with China is wide open, stop talking business and let's get down to doing business. Mr Wang noted Shanghai will be host to the World Expo in 2010, which is expected to attract 70 million visitors. It was, he said, a golden opportunity to showcase co-produced films. Indeed, in effect, he challenged the New Zealand film industry to come up with at least one co-production feature film to be premiered at the Expo. Later in the conversation, he tightened the screw, perhaps as a joke, by suggesting we might premiere that co-production next year at the Beijing Olympics. There's no reason we can't make it to the Expo - the Olympics might be asking too much.

We were invited to tour the Shanghai Film and TV shooting base, an extraordinary massive 45 acre shooting lot, set aside on the outskirts of the city and rivalling anything the Hollywood studios have. These days movie makers use special effects to create buildings, however the Chinese actually build them bottom up. The lot, really a massive set, has European-style houses, a mini skyscraper, German-style buildings, French chateaus, a glorious European brick church, plus a river and various bridges. All built of steel, brick and fully 3D. Inside these massive houses are the shooting studios and I felt that our own studios, which have no lot, could well use one.

The pride of the Shanghai Film Studios is the old Nanjing Road. It seems about a kilometre long and is set totally in the 1930s, with banners, grand building facades two storeys high, and wired and set for trams. The road is lined with old Model As, trucks and rickshaws. This is one of the most famous roads in Chinese history and has been used in literally hundreds of films - Japanese invasions, Kung Fu, comedies and tragedies. It's extraordinarily well detailed. They shoot around 400 movies a year and they are making ready for *Mummy 3*, which will be shot from November 2007 to March 2008. In various side sets are hundreds of vintage cars, trucks, military vehicles and on the second, third and fourth floors are the costumes, again a heavy influence of war. The Chinese love battle movies, riots, and epics involving thousands of extras. It seems like in every second Chinese movie they burn the place down. Clearly they don't, but I've seen the street bombed and littered with bodies many times. They also have the luxury of being able to use this for massive civic functions, weddings, etc, so they get an extra revenue from the old Shanghai set.



There are 20 million people in Shanghai (same as Beijing), but with the number of high-rise buildings Shanghai doesn't sprawl as much. It is bisected by elevated highways - arteries that run through the city about one floor up, with other roads beneath them - it makes it very efficient to get around. They have a tunnel under the river and a beautiful suspension bridge which is accessed by an enormous spiral on-ramp that is so big it can probably be seen from space. It winds up in a great soaring spiral, from ground level to perhaps as much as 100 feet above the city. At the centre the buildings aren't architecture, they're sculpture.

When I parted company with the film group, I made my way separately to the airport by that wonder of modern science and technology - the maglev train. Maglev stands for magnetic levitation. The train and its track use magnetism to repel each other and so the train hovers. It covers the 30 km to the airport in just over seven minutes and hits 431 kilometres an hour. Could we have one, do you think, for the western line? For all its speed it gives a terrible shudder when it passes the other train returning from the airport.

Like the train, this was an incredibly fast trip. I think we did nearly 20 meetings in eight days, and I was delighted to get onto the direct flight from Shanghai to Auckland. And what did I do on the flight home? I sat back and watched movies. I'll go back to China in 2008 for the opening of the great Hangzhou Bridge and I also wouldn't mind going to the Olympics in August of that year.

I'd like to acknowledge the generosity and support of Air New Zealand who made this trip possible. The company has asked me to write a few articles for it about the trip and I will deliver these in the next couple of weeks. Seems like it's a reasonable deal - fly me to China any day and I'll tell a good story - like these two below I wrote for *Inspire Magazine*.

SHANGHAI SURPRISE

One of my favourite movies has always been *Empire of the Sun* and the opening sequence of the young boy, who lives in English country house splendour on the outskirts of Shanghai, being driven home from a children's party in a limousine. It's the day before the Japanese invasion and through the window of the vehicle you glimpse the mansions for the English and French delegations, which are just so un-Chinese. Rather they are transplanted class and colonial pomp. In real life the suburbs of Shanghai have now been engulfed by the megatropolis that is Shanghai, and while many of these houses have been retained, many have sadly been lost.

Shanghai is a city that we have seen in so many movies we feel we know it. From the 1930s through to last year's blockbuster, *Mission Impossible 3*, Shanghai has been a great film destination. It's a teeming, stylish, brilliant city, and to be honest you wouldn't want to break your leg here. The ribbons of light and colour flash and flow down every boulevard. And that's what they are. The streets are wide. A city created for commerce and an economic boom that's lasted 100 years. And there is more to come.

Not since the Victorians got to work cleaning out the slums has a nation embarked on obliterating its inner-city past. In all Chinese cities acres of houses have been bulldozed and replaced by parks, walkways, galleries, shops and high rises. Without guilt or regret, Shanghai has gone up, up, up. Towers of glass and steel are replacing, at a rapid rate, the garden gems of the 20th century; those gabled mansions of brick with their manicured lawns, shaped trees and sweeping drives.

Shanghai is still a city of drama, light and 'film noir' tension. It exudes a pace and excitement that's very edgy. Unlike any other Chinese city, Shanghai refuses to conform. It's still covertly kept its French and British foreignness. It's a city with an accent, a wink and a nod to the past, present and yes, an interesting future. This is a town that's not giving anything away lightly.



The French Concession houses that have survived and are still standing have an unreal atmosphere of suspended grace and glamour. Set behind walled gardens, their sweeping drives lead to dwellings that housed English families and delegations - foreigners who were watched, feared, and captivated by the mystery of China.

Photographers are doing their best, through exhibitions, to demonstrate the beauty of the old houses and remind Shanghai residents of what will be lost if the destruction continues. A new documentary, *City of Darkness*, also riles against the demolition and the wrecking ball. The film maker, Greg Girard, pays homage to the people who lived in these once-spectacular houses that were cleaned out following the purges and the communist victory of 1949. Behind these walls went on the hedonistic lifestyle of the middle class merchants.

These were also the houses of gangsters, whose Saturday night entertainment was transsexual opera singers and dancers. Their parties are somewhat legendary in Shanghai. In fact one of the most beautiful old mansions is now the restored Mansion Hotel in Xin Le Rd, owned in the 1930s by a powerful gangster warlord whose dark side included a love of opium, prostitutes and mysterious death. Now this glamorous five-storeyed hotel is probably one of the best in the Orient, with a rooftop restaurant and lounge called Magnolia. Each floor takes its theme from a different part or quarter of Shanghai - photographs, maps, deeds of trade and the like are framed on the walls and the light filters through stain-glassed windows. The hallways still seem to echo jazz, laughter and other perfumes of the past.

As I wandered along the two grand mansion-lined roads of the merchant princes - Huaihai and Xinhua - I was invited in, as westerners are, to have a close look. The inhabitants didn't mind photography, but seemed to not know the full history of the houses following the Cultural Revolution. Looking inside, the houses are time capsules of the 1920s, intricate wooden-carved staircases float on carved leaves, cherubs and devils.

Massive marbled fireplaces drenched in gargoyles warmed these houses, and out through the back, just as in Spielberg's epic, would have been the great mowed lawns where afternoon tea parties and diplomatic delegations would soiree. These houses were staffed by hoards of servants who lived in the outside quarters, which were not much more than washhouses or stables.

The houses had to have up to 40 rooms, some with pagodas on the roof, because the previous owners - if they were Chinese people - would often have six wives and the business of the day that built these houses was often warehousing, trading, opium and crime.

Like Girard, I stuck my lens into the laundries and bedrooms. I wanted to capture the feeling of these houses before the age of the computer and the refrigerator. Old chandeliers, dusty and cobwebbed, give the rooms and the foyers a sense of stagnation and impending doom. But others gleam with flash carpets and bad art.

The future for many of these houses is not great, so I advise when you are next in Shanghai, maybe on the way to the Beijing Olympics, you give yourself a couple of days to return to the past with a walk through the French and English Concessions of Shanghai. Stroll leisurely with your camera and stop at the noodle bars and the ever-increasing and encroaching Gucci and Versace boutiques. Watch the new women of China walk their poodles and the men in Boss and Armani calmly order their lattes, waiting for their next film role. And watch out for the old and bent from the houses and the past, who have seen China and the houses move from one age to the next. At least some of these houses must remain as a mirror and a memory of a past that isn't over yet.

I flew to Shanghai courtesy of Air New Zealand.



THE BRIDGE TO SOMEWHERE

Just when you thought China had taken a rest, paused for breath before it unleashes on the world what promises to be the greatest Olympic Games ever, it has created an overture of engineering excellence and elegance. In just two months China has unveiled two astonishing bridge projects, the world's longest cable-stayed bridge - the 1,088m Sutong across the Yangtze River - and the world's longest sea spanning bridge - across Hangzhou Bay.

China's history is locked in the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors, but modern China is just so much more than that. It really wants to showcase its contemporary design excellence and pathway into the future. They are doing this by redesigning their new cities, not with history but with new business development, including structures that are awe-inspiring in their size and splendour. Not since the Roman Empire has a country embarked on such ground-breaking and glorious structures and architecture.

I've been fortunate to see and experience some of this growth and transformation because of Waitakere's long-term sister city relationship with Ningbo, which has allowed me to regularly visit and see firsthand the progress made. Ningbo has become one of those phenomenal growth cities of China. When I first went to Ningbo, an emerging city in the Zhejiang Province, it was at the beginning of the reconstruction of this country. They were fascinated by our green agenda and our cleaning up of the waterways and when the delegations came to visit us they sure did like the Waitakere Ranges. A decade later Ningbo is a stunning example of rebirth and a vision for the rest of the century.

The shacks and shanties have been removed, not with everyone's approval, and the people re-housed in high-rise apartment blocks. The banks of the river, the great winding Ningbo, have been extensively planted and landscaped. It's a great pleasure to see walkers, runners and strollers enjoying this new revitalised city space, featuring one of the largest opera houses in China, and with sweeping glass skyscrapers that would put American cities to shame with their presence and sheer soaring elegance. Some look like sky pencils, others have concaved sides and yet others have vast 'holes' or spaces in their middles that you could fly a plane through - if you wanted to!

But Ningbo's newest and biggest pride is its 20-year bridge project to span the Hangzhou Bay and link with Shanghai in the distant horizon. Last year on a sister city visit, the Chinese were so proud of this project they invited me to watch one of the great span struts being slid into place. And they promised that if returned this year it would be completed, somehow on time and budget, and it was.

I consider this bridge to be one of the great wonders of the 21st century. It has to get its place on the list if they make up another one. Stretching 36 kilometres in length, the S-shaped bridge was finished in June 2007 for official opening next year and is the world's longest sea crossing span. At a cost of US\$1.42 billion, the bridge will cut the trip from Shanghai to Ningbo by two hours and 120 kilometres.

"It is the greatest construction project the Chinese government has attempted", said my host at a dinner, the affable vice mayor of Ningbo, Mr Wang Yong, who seems to double not only as the vice mayor but the bridge's project manager. Last year they were promising a marathon to open it to coincide, of course, with the Olympic Games, the one event that has galvanised China into a celebration of its history, present and future. But Mr Yong this year told me, over the duck and lychees, it's been decided the high winds would make it probably too dangerous. A pity, as I intended to get back in my running shoes and train for the event.

According to Mr Wang, this enterprise is without precedent in China and it took the powerful China State Council to give it the green light and bring the investment needed to complete the project. Like much of China's rapid progress, it's all about economic development. It links the private investment economy with state funding and partially rewrites China's development rule book.



The sometimes dangerous waters of the province's Hangzhou Bay, which experience two high and two low tides a day, meant an enormous amount of preparation for the construction of the bridge. It was one of the most complicated bridge building exercises ever undertaken on the planet. Already the bridge is being touted as one of the great tourism destinations of the world.

The Chinese people are fascinated by watching tides and their accompanying swirling whirlpools and currents, and the local seascape offers some stunning examples of that. Visitors won't be disappointed. The Hangzhou Bay tides create huge deafening waves reaching as high as 7.5 metres and moving at up to 29 km/h - serious sea action. And visitors will be able to enjoy the hotel, restaurants and a massive viewing platform and tower which are part of the bridge's infrastructure.

The bridge's six lanes are expected to carry around 52,000 vehicles a day when it opens next year. China now is promising to rethink its environmental agenda, and just how the nation is going to address its growing dependency on cars is yet to be resolved. These bridges - as stupendous as they may be - are also in danger of being trapped in the motorised past, which every nation on this planet must surely realise cannot be a sustainable future. These problems seem almost unsolvable in the vastly populated and complex country that is China, yet I do believe there is a will to change and to take responsibility to ensure future generations are not left with a legacy of environmental destruction.

I've got an invite to go back next year for the bridge's August opening, which promises to be a celebration of smart thinking. Yes it will be fantastic event. Air New Zealand flies direct to Shanghai and it's a mere short taxi ride to the start of the new wonder of the world.

M1-M2 I have attached at pages M1-M2 the media release that was distributed following our ground breaking agreement on film cooperation with Korea.

MUL SHIFT

M3 It is important we all keep pushing the message out that shifting the Metropolitan Urban Limit in the north is of the highest importance for the future sustainability of this City and for the Auckland region. As the map attached at page M3 shows, the new State Highway 18 is a powerful piece of transport infrastructure that will unite the transport and social systems of North Shore, Rodney, and Waitakere together as never before. It's about jobs and it's about a cohesive society.

A massive amount of work has been devoted to this effort and it includes projects Council has pursued for the past 10 years - the Hobsonville Maritime Village, the Hobsonville housing development with Housing New Zealand, and the new Westgate town centre. Collectively, these are a comprehensive organisation of our future and the moves that are made right now will chart the course of Waitakere for decades to come. Separately, they are whole new towns being designed from scratch on our northern metropolitan border.

I want to offer a huge bouquet of thanks to Councillor Carolynne Stone for sitting on the Hearings Panel that ground its way through piles of evidence at the Auckland Regional Council. Thank you for devoting so many months of effort to it, and thank you for the rigour you have brought to bear on this work. While no final announcements are expected from the Auckland Regional Council until early August 2007, let's keep our message clear: shift that Metropolitan Urban Limit, pronto.

The trouble with governing for sustainability is that it can take quite a while for people to come around to your way of thinking. But in the end, it works. It was Waitakere's demonstrated commitment to integrating public transport and town centre development that pushed the funding for New Lynn rail undergrounding into the "yes" category, rather than central government going for the cheap and regrettable option. We can see Waitakere's logic of sustainability within the Local Government Auckland Amendment Act that set this whole MUL shift rolling in the first place.



This relationship between transport investment and land development is even larger across the north-west. Waitakere responded with speed and smarts to the notice of withdrawal of the New Zealand Defence Force, a major economic loss with a strong response at Hobsonville and Whenuapai. Without the new jobs and transport links in the north-west, Waitakere will be less sustainable in transport energy, wasted time, jobs, and social cohesion. We can turn cities around to sustainability, and we should.

The future of sustainability is clearly on our side. Perhaps only five years ago we could still hear people wanting to develop right up to the ridge of the Waitakere Ranges. But with floods and storms increasing in force, and everyone from the Prime Minister down saying we have to look very hard at the viability of some coastal and floodplain areas, protecting that catchment forest is just total common sense now. I have just come from the Local Government New Zealand Conference and this message about local government, climate change and avoidable destruction is loud and clear. It is the future of sustainability that we have been preparing for that is happening right here, right now. And the best way to predict the future is to make it happen.

MILESTONES

Hamiora Mangakahia Waiti

It was with immense sadness we heard about the death of 77 year old Hamiora (Sam) Mangakahia Waiti, known to his many friends and whanau as Nanny-pa, Manga or Sam. Sam was a man who definitely walked the talk. Born in 1929, Sam spent his childhood in the small Maori community of Waipiro Bay on the East Coast. He headed for the big smoke in his early 20s to find work - starting in the freezing works and later finding his place as a wharfie, retiring after 40-odd years. Sam married Mercia McMahon, selling his much-loved Norton motorbike to fund their first home in Te Atatu North where they lived for nearly 50 years. Mercia died after a short illness two years ago. The couple had eight children, the first son dying soon after birth, but Sam is survived by six daughters and one son.

Sam was well known as a co-founder and elder for the Te Whanau o Waipareira Trust, Kaumatua Roopu and his involvement with Tamaki Makaurau and Aotearoa Maori Netball. He had a long and committed relationship with Rutherford College's kapa haka group - Kotuku, and more recently Rangeview Intermediate School. His passion was following his grandchildren on the netball courts and he was well known at the many netball fixtures around the country. His work with Maori Mental Health was widely regarded. He was Kaumatua for Kotuku Ki Te Rangi Maori Mental Health and the Auckland District Health Board, and he was very committed to the Tangata Whaiora (the clients). Sam and his sister Taanu were well known as a dynamic Christian duo, often working in support of one another for the community. Sam is also remembered for the love and generosity he showed his 21 grand-children and 13 great-grandchildren and our thoughts are with all his whānau at this sad time.

Ningbo Visit

No sooner had I got back to Waitakere from my trip to China the mayor of Ningbo, Mao Guanglie, and his delegation arrived for their visit. I was particularly proud to have them enter the building from Rainside Avenue so that they could see the magnificent lions they gave us. I think they too were impressed. They certainly were impressed by the Maori welcome and our new building. Members of the delegation were fortunate enough to be in Waitakere to coincide with the Taumata Runanga Awards and what a treat it turned out for them. The Chinese people love the Maori world. They are both dragon culture; there is an ease between Maori and Chinese, and so it wasn't long before Mayor Mau and the delegation were up on stage singing and really enjoying being part of the whole splendid night.



The next day at Freyberg Community School the delegation observed a mentoring programme between older pupils from Massey and young difficult boys from Freyberg. Again a stunning experience, as the pupils questioned the delegation on what it was like being young in China and even asking the mayor what it was like to be mayor of millions of people. It was a great meeting and what wonderful guests they are. This was a very high-powered group and led by one of China's most important mayors. To western eyes this doesn't seem to have clout, but in fact in emerging economic cultures like China a delegation with such strength is surprising and to be taken seriously. We did, and it's to our credit. The delegation was as follows: Mayor of Ningbo City, Mr Mao Guanglie; Chief of Ningbo Customs, Mr Wang Quanguo; Vice President of Ningbo Port Group, Mr Wen Jianyao; Director of Ningbo Finance Bureau, Mr Song Yeushun; Director of Ningbo Development and Reform Commission, Mr Wang Renzhou; Director of Ningbo Foreign Affairs Office, Mr Kong Weiwei; Vice Division Chief of Ningbo Foreign Affairs Office, Mr Lin Liming; Vice Division Chief of General Office of Ningbo Municipality Government, Mr Yang Xiaoping; and Business Section Chief of Ningbo Port Group, Mr Han Weining.

M4-M7 My thanks to Sharon Simiona and her team for the organisation of the visit and the event, and I have attached some photos of the visit at pages M4-M6. I was very proud to receive a set of Beijing Olympic Games commemorative medals. I have also attached at page M7 the thank-you letter from Mao Guanglie.

Simply the Best

It was with enormous pride Naomi McCleary and I accepted our Premier Creative Places Award at the Local Government New Zealand Conference in Dunedin last week. The accolade acknowledges this City's commitment to ensuring vibrant public spaces and an arts-rich city. Our entry encompassed the new civic centre in Henderson Valley Road and the new library in Ratanui Street, Henderson. The annual award recognises local government's vital investment in the arts of New Zealand and the awards showcase exciting, innovative arts projects happening in communities throughout New Zealand, with local government support. We can all be rightly proud of the premier award, which truly is an acknowledgement of just how far this city has come. It's not just about roads, rates and rubbish. It's about creating a modern 21st century City and we are well on track.

A panel of five judges with arts and local government expertise assessed the 2007 entries and said Waitakere's belief in the importance of artists in creating a vibrant, arts-rich landscape for its citizens is commendable. The judges also described our arts' design collaboration policy and its integration into the development of the new City Centre, as a best practice model. They also acknowledge the scale of the project, the high level of consultation and the involvement of many local artists. Our prize is a \$10,000 contribution from Creative New Zealand towards the commissioning of a new public artwork and we are already working on what we will do. My sincerest congratulations and thanks to Naomi and her team for their vision, dedication and hard work.

Just a week or so before this award was announced we won an excellence award at the Property Council of New Zealand's 2007 awards for our Civic Centre. The judges in that 'competition' said of the facility, comprising a council chamber, councillors' facilities, the directorate, the administrative wing and the link bridge over the railway line to the new Waitakere Central / Unitec Library: "the building was completed on budget and represents exceptionally good value for the expenditure of public funds".



But wait, there's more! At around the same time as the Property Council announced our win, we were named a finalist in the prestigious AUD\$300,000 International Thiess Riverprize for our ground-breaking Twin Streams project. The winners aren't announced until September 2007, but just being a finalist is pretty outstanding. Riversymposium Chair, Professor Paul Greenfield, said the Waitakere project exemplified the spirit of the International Thiess Riverprize. He also said that everyone involved in the Twin Streams Project should feel proud their efforts have been recognised this way. Three other government and community groups from Austria, China and Canada are also finalists for the Australian prize for their work in tracking pollution, water quality, erosion and flooding.

Henderson Community Board Win

Henderson Community Board chair, Elizabeth Grimmer, was rightly proud of her Board's scoop of the Best Practice Award - Safety, at the New Zealand Community Board Conference last month. The award formally acknowledged the Board's commitment to engaging the community on local projects, and relates to the extensive traffic-calming measures carried out in Te Atatu South's Vodanovich Road. The win is Waitakere's first community board award and, as Elizabeth says, it highlights the successful partnership between the Council and the community. From the beginning it was the Council working with the residents in the area, listening to what they wanted and working with them to try and deliver it. As well as improved signage, raised entrance thresholds were introduced at either end of the street and traffic islands installed at critical points to narrow it. A review of the changes is underway and residents will again be encouraged to discuss their thoughts. Congratulations Elizabeth and the rest of the board.

Pat Carey

Family and friends gathered at the Henderson Valley Film Studios on July 2 to pay tribute to the studios' first caretaker, Pat Carey, who died in September last year. Those who attended were very happy to share their memories of Pat, including his wife Lyn, and we unveiled a plaque which names one of the studios in his honour. Pat clearly took his job and this City very seriously and kept potentially-troublesome teenagers in the area of the buildings out of trouble. He was also particularly alert and managed to stamp out several fires before they did any serious damage. Everyone associated with the studios will always remember Pat and it was a pleasure to be able to commemorate him in style.

Studio Opening

And speaking of film studios. Our gigantic new sound studio is all but complete and plans are underway to celebrate its opening in the near future. We are hoping to have the Prime Minister Helen Clark with us on the occasion and I will keep you abreast of arrangements. While in China we extended warm invitations to Chinese production people to come to the opening of this and Robin Scholes, the producer of the new New Zealand film *The Tattooist* added an invitation to the premiere which will be on the night of Wednesday, August 29 and therefore will coincide with our opening earlier that day. Would councillors please diary this.

Land Wars Out West

M8-M9

Reaction to my suggestion that Waitakere take over parts of Rodney was mixed, but I think it was weighted in my, and Waitakere's, favour. Indeed The Gannet newsletter dedicated its whole front page to the issue. I have attached the article at page M8 for your enjoyment. In the Rodney Times, the former MP Brian Neeson was not so effusive in welcoming such a suggestion. He is promising to bring harmony to Rodney if he becomes the mayor, in what looks like a very crowded bunch. As always, Brian tends to blame the Labour Government for cheering on the cut up of Rodney, where nothing could be further from the truth. It's called common sense, which sometimes the Labour Government is accused of not having a great deal of. I have attached that article at page M9. I am more than prepared to continue advocating for some change while I wait the dismal response from government to Auckland's wet bus ticket of a One Plan.



Happy Birthday Jack

The fantastic Jack Adam, the dreamer and builder of the splendid Redwood Park Golf Club and founding principal of Massey High School, has turned the grand old age of 80. You wouldn't know it, apart from some creaky joints which he has had for years, the former councillor (two terms) put on a great night for his friends and family at the club. The stories were as always outrageous, funny and deeply touching. Jack has committed a great deal of his life to projects wherever he has been posted. This City is proud to have received much of his nurture and kindness. A truly remarkable man. As a way of celebrating his life and to thank him, I presented him with the plaque of the city and an honorary knighthood.

Positive Sideswipe

Once again Waitakere is shown to lead the way in terms of the environment. Inspired by the Live Earth concert, Luke from Kerikeri mooted in the Herald's very popular Sideswipe column that LED traffic lights should be introduced throughout New Zealand. The following day another reader advised Luke and Herald readers that Waitakere was already well advanced with the conversion of ordinary traffic light bulbs to LEDs. Not only do they use a lot less power, they last a lot longer, are brighter, and using LEDs cuts down on the labour required to replace the old style bulb. So there you go.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Report of the Mayor be received.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP
MAYOR OF WAITAKERE