

IACA HIKERS EXPLORED TURKEY RUN STATE PARK

by Dr. Benny Ko

A good hike with a friend in the woods is a simple but true pleasure in life. So multiply that by fifteen, as that was how many friends I went hiking with at Turkey Run State Park last Saturday, that should explain why I still have a smile while penning this 'hiker's report' three days later. That was Indiana Association of Chinese-Americans (IACA) spring hike of the year.

We try to have four such outdoor events in a given year and usually, they are very well attended. However, weather forecast leading to this hike was not so auspicious. As late as last Wednesday, various weathermen were giving us a 90% chance of rain. Rain, if not accompanied by lightning, wind and low temperature, is not a hazardous condition, but it will certainly dampen any hiker's enthusiasm. As the person entrusted by these friends to organize the hike, I felt obligated to send them a weather caution as well as a Plan B. I will get back to that plan later.

Everyone was punctual, and Hike 1 began right on time. Everyone went on it except for Vicky and Agnes, who volunteered to stay behind at the shelter, to welcome and direct any potential late-arrivals and to make sure we have a roof overhead and tables for our picnic luncheon. We owe them our gratitude.

Hike 1 is an oblong shape 2-mile circuit along both banks of the beautiful Sugar Creek. The creek is one of the last natural waterways in the Midwest, free of dams from Crawfordsville to its confluence with the Wabash River. The Hike 1 trails are dry and wide, other than a few minor undulations, basically flat. Besides the scenery, the highlight of this walk is the two bridges that we have to cross from one bank to the other, and back. One, a spectacular representation of 19th Century engineering, is the Narrows Covered Bridge. Built in 1882, it is cut and carved entirely out of native Indiana timber. The other is the steel suspension bridge built in the 20th Century during the Great Depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps. CCC as they are more familiarly known, was also responsible for putting in many of the other infrastructures in the park. The original bridge was damaged by a once-in-a-century flood a few years ago, the current replacement was completed just in time for the centennial celebration of the Indiana State Parks system, established in 1916. A good lunch after a good hike is like dessert to a sumptuous dinner, they enhance each other. On purpose, we made the lunch hour casual and unstructured so old and new friends can mix and socialize, or otherwise free to choose their own venue to dine. There were plenty of food and laughter to go around. Some chose to call it a day after lunch while others clamored for more, hence a Hike 2.

Hikers who went on Hike 2 have been cautioned that it would be a longer course at 4 miles, the terrain more strenuous and shoes are bound to get muddy and wet. That did not deter anyone. We went across the suspension bridge yet once more and headed into a steep canyon carved out of local sandstone by harder rocks, known scientifically as 'erratics', that were brought down by glacial melt-waters from Canada following the last ice-age about 20,000 years ago. The scenery of this canyon and its surrounding forest could be a backdrop for the movie "Jurassic Park," and the younger ones with us probably were expecting a T. Rex to poke its head out from behind some of the huge boulders that were strewn through the canyon. At the end of the hike, we all felt the satisfaction of being challenged but also of answering it fearlessly.

It was one fine day in more ways than one. Weather-wise, the day was cool and dry, our wet and muddy shoes were self-incurred by choice. No one could claim credit for beating the 9 to 1 odds so we should just thank the good Lord. When it comes to people, our ranks have an age spread from eight to the seventies, the latter including your humbly. What has age got to do with it?

There was not one complaint heard, everyone that went out came back on his or her own. I cannot think of a group of more positive and intrepid individuals. Indeed, I am deeply honored to have their company and friendship.

Indulge me on a few words about future hikes and our organization, the Indiana Association of Chinese-Americans. As a tradition, IACA hikes welcome members and non-members alike. It is free, echoing IACA's new free membership policy, and everyone, not exclusive to Chinese, is welcome to be one of us. No, my memory has not totally gone yet. Remember I mentioned a Plan B?

Yes, there is a Plan B. If we were to have a deluge last Saturday, the alternative Plan B would be a leisurely vehicular cruise of the Park-Vermillion County covered bridge circuit, with twenty or so historic bridges to see in all. Do you know this part of Indiana is known as the "Covered Bridge Capital of the World?" (Move over, Madison, Wisconsin). Half a million tourists come here every fall for the "Covered Bridge Festival," the largest festival in Indiana. Would you like to know why the bridges are 'covered'?

Now the secret is out, yes, IACA will organize a "Covered Bridge Day" this fall, not during the festival but around that time. Stay tuned for our communique.

QINGMING FESTIVAL

"Heaven lent you a soul, Earth will lend a grave."
~Christian NestellBovee



清明時節雨紛紛，路上行人欲斷魂。借問酒家何處有，牧童遙指杏花村。

This most illustrious poem was composed by the famed poet, Du Mu 杜牧. He articulated the melancholy ambiance and sentiment of Qingming Festival.

Qingming Festival 清明節 is a significant holiday in China. It is on the 15th day from the Spring Equinox. It falls on April 4th this year. After Qingming, the weather starts getting warmer, rainfall increases, the sun shines brightly, the trees and grass turn green, and flowers begin to bloom. In ancient agricultural society, it was the time for spring plowing and sowing. It is also the time for people to enjoy the greenery of spring outside 踏青, and tend to the graves of departed family members and ancestors.

According to the legend, Qingming Festival is in memory of Jie Zitui 介子推 who lived in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476BC) in the Jin Kingdom. Chong Er 重耳 was the prince who was falsely accused of rebellion by the emperor's concubine; her conspiracy was to make her own son to be the crown prince. Chong Er exiled to the mountainous region, suffering hunger. One of his officials, Jie Zitui, cut some flesh from his thigh to make soup to save Chong Er from dying of hunger. Chong Er eventually became Duke Wen, 晉文公.

Jie Zitui resigned and moved to live in the mountain with his ageing mother. Duke Wen richly rewarded the officials who stayed with him during the trying time. He kept sending messages to Jie Zitui inviting him back to the kingdom; but he declined. Ill-advised by his official, he set fire to the three sides of the mountain to force Jie Zitui to exist. Complied with his individual principles, Jie Zitui did not escape. Tragically, heard his mother perished in the fire. Duke Wen, feeling extremely remorseful, ordered that no fire should be lit, and only cold food be eaten on that day, initiating the "Hanshi Festival 寒食節" (Cold Food Festival). Eventually, during the Qing Dynasty, Hanshi was replaced by Qingming.

Qingming is also known as 'Tomb Sweeping Day'.



Dr. Patrick Lau was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to the U.S. after high school. He retired from the VA Northern Indiana Health Care System where he served as Chief Radiologist and moved to Florida with his wife in 2011. He was an active member & contributor of IACA and ICMA while in Indiana. Dr. Lau is also a scholar of art and literature and a prolific writer, he has been a dedicated columnist for Indy Asian American Times since 2010.

This is a holiday to honor and pay respect to one's deceased family members and ancestors. The festival promotes the ethic of filial piety and the expression of gratefulness to one's ancestors. Furthermore, Qingming brings the family together annually, like a family reunion.

There are many Qingming rituals including pulling out weeds, and sweeping dirt away around the grave site as well as cleaning the headstone. Foods such as roast pork, steamed chicken, rice, fruits and wine are traditionally offered. Non-food offerings such as flowers, candles, incense, joss paper, paper money and paper replicas of cars, clothing, shoes, computers, cell phones, etc. are presumably dispatched to the spirit world via burning for the deceased to use in the afterlife. It is traditionally believed that those sacrifices could please the ancestors who would bless their descendants. Family members take turns to bow before the grave. After the worship is concluded, the family consumes the food, signifying family reunion with the ancestors.

The most legendary work of art pertaining to the festival is 'Qing Ming Shanghai River' along the River at Qing Ming' 清明上河圖, a master piece by the renowned painter, Zhang Zeduan 張擇端. The painting measures 5.28 meters in length. It portrays the scene of Kaifeng city during the Qingming period, capturing the festivities, villages and cities congested with all kinds of people including scholars, merchants, officials and soldiers.

Qingming celebrations have long been extended to those countries and cities with large Chinese immigrant populations. The overseas Chinese generally regard this festival as a time to commemorate and express gratitude to their ancestors.

孟浩然：帝裡重清明，人心自愁思。車聲上路合，柳色東城翠。



Members of the hiking group



Mary Lau and family



Hikers enjoying nature

ECO-SCIENCE FAIR SEEKING STUDENT PROJECTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Indiana State Museum has extended the entry deadline for students looking to participate in the Eco-Science Fair. Students now have until Wednesday, April 12 to submit an entry. The Eco-Science Fair will take place at the museum on Friday, April 21.

"We've seen great interest from students wanting to participate," said Katelyn Coyne, gallery and public programs developer for the museum. "Because of that, we wanted to give other interested students more time to submit their work."

Students in grades K-12 will present their solutions to global climate issues through projects on a wide range of topics including: aquaculture, vermiculture, composting, social awareness, urban farming, alternative fuel and recycling initiatives in their school.

Interested students should visit <http://www.indianamuseum.org/field-trips> to fill out an application. Completed applications may be sent to Katelyn Coyne, Kcoyne@indianamuseum.org. The new deadline to apply is Wednesday, April 12.

Winners in each category will receive scholarships from presenting sponsor, Subaru of Indiana Automotive, Inc.

The Eco Science Fair is on Friday, April 21 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Indiana State Museum 650 W. Washington St. in downtown Indianapolis. Cost is included with museum admission.

Eco-Science Fair is presented by Subaru of Indiana Automotive, Inc. and supported by Earth Charter Indiana and Dow AgroSciences with additional contributions from Keramida, Inc.

Taiwan's Seasonal Wonders

A Dance Show by
Department of Dance, National Taiwan University of Arts

FREE ADMISSION
Monday, May 8, 2017
7:00 – 9:00 p.m. (Doors open at 6:30 p.m.)
Marian University Theatre
RSVP at Eventbrite or Contact: taaiindy1@gmail.com