

## THE BIG BLACK-OUT of 2017 by Benny Ko



Vicky, my wife, and I drove down to western Kentucky for the Big Black-out on Aug 21, 21017.No, it was not a second honeymoon but solar eclipse viewing. For company and chaperon, we have also invited her brother and sister-in-law along.The two modest motel rooms have been booked six months ahead, right before the price went up by two and a half folds (but 'the day', August 21, was still a sold-out, according to the manager, a happy fellow).

It was a six hour, one-way drive from Indianapolis, but looking back, it was worth every bit the effort.

The full solar eclipse was simply one of the most remarkable natural phenomena that I had witnessed in my life. We were lucky to have seen it on a cloudless day and from an open field near the "Land Between the Lakes," a huge National Recreational Area that straddles between Kentucky and Tennessee.But first, a few words on getting there, it was as much of an adventure.

The traffic enroute from Indianapolis went from somewhat congested on the southbound Interstate 69, to a complete stand-still when I-69 terminates into U.S. 41, just north of the Ohio River. Sitting in the stalled traffic that stretched back a couple of miles, suddenly it dawned on me the bridge ahead has become the bottleneck; like a funnel, it receives traffic fed from multiple roadways in the surrounding area. Instinctively, I made a U-turn to go back north then turned left onto the first sizable road that goes west. I know once we are in the next state and meets the Illinois Highway 1, a north-south, two-lane road, it will take us down towards the Ohio River and into northern Kentucky.

Well, my intuition was only half right. At the southern terminal of Illinois Hwy 1 is the tiny town of Cave in Rock, but where is the bridge? There isn't one. The clock was ticking towards the predicted eclipse time and we were still a couple hours away from our destination. Then, I spotted a slow-moving vessel coming our way from the opposite, Kentuckian shore. Lady-Luck was still with us, it was a river-crossing ferry, something that I thought had gone extinct in America along with the woolly mammoths. The ride was steady, the breeze was refreshing and the opened panoramic view of the river was a true delight; after all, how many people could claim they have crossed the Ohio in a slow boat? Not only that, it was a free service jointly operated by the two state governments (saving them from having to build a much more expensive bridge). I consider that a bonus to our adventure.

During the full eclipse, the sky turned so dark that I actually saw Venus (one of our planetary neighbors) situated to the north of the darkened sun's corona, thus it resembled a small diamond

set on top of a ring. This occurred around 1:20 pm local time. It had been a very hot day up to that point but the temperature dropped noticeably while the sun was 'taking a break'. During the progression of the eclipse, the birds at first chirped incessantly, they must be thinking dusk was approaching. Then they fell silent when the sun was completely shadowed over. At the same time, insects bumbled and buzzed madly about, apparently confounded by this strange procession of the ambient light. As for the people, we may not be disoriented but certainly awed and mesmerized. The full eclipse lasted just less than three minutes but what three magical minutes they were.

Back in Indianapolis, some friends asked me what was the big deal about a full eclipse as versus, say, our 90% one here; while others would say watching it on TV is as good and safer than craning one's neck to look at the sky. Yes, safety viewing glasses is a must but other than that, there is no comparison between a total body and spiritual experience to a partial one. To watch it on TV or the internet is convenient, as long as one remembers it is a virtual experience and not an actual one. Even when the sun is 90% shadowed, the light and heat it emanates remain so formidable that unless a person looks up, he would not be aware an eclipse is taking place. On the other hand, a full eclipse in mid-day is something that no one can overlook or ignore. It is a total experience of the human senses: visual, audial, somato-sensory (temperature); and the spiritual sense too. How often does our mind come into awareness of the universe's workings, and for that matter, our place in it?

Seeing Venus alongside a blackened sun, I could find no words to describe what went through my body and soul.

Therefore, I will borrow Rutger Hauer's eternal line from the "Blade Runner" - "All those moments will be lost in time....like tears in rain."

The next full solar eclipse will take place over Argentina in 2019. I am looking into that. Then, it will come back to the United States in 2024, this time right over Indianapolis!Vicky and I are saving our eclipse-viewing safety glasses.

**Postscript: My small hand-held camera was incapable of capturing this event. Fortunately, a good friend and professional-level photographer, Dr. Kenneth Chan, has allowed me to share the spectacular photographs that he took. He drove 12 hours one way from California to Oregon, dragging with him all the special photographic equipment. I like to thank him for his generosity.**

## TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY ELAINE CHAO IN INDIANA

Federal, state and local officials have cut the ribbon on a \$220 million project designed to improve more than 70 miles of the Indiana Toll Road, including over 50 bridges throughout seven counties. Completion of the 80/90 Push Project, which also involves redevelopment of eight travel plazas and installation of fiber optic cables for an Intelligent Travel System, attracted a bi-partisan group of leaders including U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao.



Gov. Holcomb, President and General Manager for the South Shore Line Mike Noland, Sen. Young, Sec. Chao and President and CEO of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority Bill Hanna.



Flag of the United States Department of Transportation.



Seal of the United States Department of Transportation.



Sec. Chao addresses the group in Granger before cutting the ribbon on the 80/90 PUSH Project.

## GRANDPARENTS DAY

"The history of our grandparents is remembered not with rose petals but in the laughter and tears of their children and their children's children. It is into us that the lives of grandparents have gone. It is in us that their history becomes a future."  
~Charles and Ann Morse



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.

My wife and I became grandparents for the first time last March. We have been ecstatic ever since. We have brand new titles, 爺爺 and 嫲嫲 that stand for paternal grandfather and grandmother respectively in Cantonese. As a tradition in the Lau family, 爺爺 has the honor to pick a Chinese name for the newborn. Our grandbaby's name is 劉佳美 (Callie May). She is, as her Chinese name implies, a beautiful little girl with charming blue eyes and a captivating smile which is infectious.

We can celebrate Grandparents Day this year; it falls on September 10. It serves as a day to honor grandparents, to offer an opportunity to express love for their grandchildren and to teach children the guidance, information and strength elderly can provide. It is a day to convey gratitude to older adults who have a special place in your life.

The origin of Grandparents Day is attributed to Mrs. Marian McQuade, a housewife with 15 children and 40 grandchildren in Fayette County, West Virginia. In 1970, she instigated a grassroots champagne to institute a special day for grandparents. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed into law that National Grandparents Day to be observed in September annually on the first Sunday after Labor Day (September signifying the "autumn years" of life).

On Grandparents Day, people honor and express their love and appreciation to their grandparents by offering gifts, sending cards, making telephone calls, dinner invitations and spending the day with them, chatting and reminiscing their nostalgic happy memories together. Meanwhile, grandparents are given an opportunity to show their love, caring and support to their grandchildren.

A study found that grandparents spend a substantial amount of money and time in their grandchildren; babysitting them while the parents are working. They provide them with unconditional love, emotional, material and financial supports, reassurance

and contributing to their sense of belonging, stability, safety and security.

Nowadays, the perception of family, values and religious beliefs and principles are seemingly lacking in many children's lives. Grandparents can act as role models to inspire and instill the grandchildren with values, attitude, ethics, morality, ethnic heritage, tradition, cultures, religion, belief (spiritual guidance) of their family, hard work and family loyalty; raising them to be respectful and appreciative of life; offering them advice, wisdom and knowledge as well as life experiences and teaching them specific skills and talents. They can pass on the family history, anecdotes, and legacy of the generations from before. Grandparents and their stories can act to hold the family together and promote the identity of the family.

A survey involving university students who were asked to complete the Grandparents Meaning Scale. The top significances of grandparents were: (1) Reliable alliance, (2) Affection and emotional support, (3) Reassurance of, (4) Practical and financial support, (5) Link with the past, (6) Acquaintance with aging, (7) Mentor and role-model, (8) Innkeeper, (9) Mediator between children and parents, and (10) Substitute caregiver, and (11) Distant figure.

The grandparent-grandchild relationship can extensively influence the children's academic, psychological and social development. When grandparents furnish more love and affection, children attain a higher level of self-confidence with long-lasting positive impacts. Research at Boston College shows that close grandparent-grandchild relationships are associated with less depressive symptoms for both parties. Having grandchildren can enhance the meaning and purpose of grandparents' life, empowering them with a sense of usefulness and value. Mary H. Waldrup once said, "Grandchildren are God's way of compensating us for growing old."

## INDIANA RENEWS CHINESE SISTER- STATE PARTNERSHIP, STRENGTHENING GLOBAL TIES

INDIANAPOLIS (Aug. 24, 2017) – Governor Eric J. Holcomb joined economic and cultural stakeholders from Indiana and China's Zhejiang Province today to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Indiana-Zhejiang sister-state relationship, celebrating economic, cultural and educational efforts shared between the two states.

"We are thrilled to celebrate our 30 years of friendship with Zhejiang Province and reaffirm our cultural and economic ties," Gov. Holcomb said. "It's partnerships like this that help propel Indiana and Zhejiang to new levels, creating new business opportunities and enhancing international trade. As our future unfolds, I look forward to seeing the benefits that come from our global partnership."

During the celebration, Gov. Holcomb and Zhejiang Party Secretary Che Jun, the highest-ranking official in the province and a member of the Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress, renewed the Indiana-Zhejiang sister-state agreement that dates back to 1987. The agreement reaffirms the Indiana-Zhejiang sister-state relationship to further enhance economic relations, encourage industrial

innovation and foster cultural, educational and healthcare exchanges.

After the ceremony, government, educational and business leaders participated in a business matchmaking seminar, allowing China-based firms and Indiana companies with operations in China to strengthen trade opportunities. Guests also had the opportunity to visit a tourism exhibition, which highlighted Zhejiang's culture and tourist destinations.

Since 2010, China-based companies have announced plans to invest \$217.4 million and create more than 929 new jobs in Indiana. Earlier this year, BeijingWest Industries, Co. Ltd announced plans to locate its first U.S. production facility in Indiana, creating up to 440 new, high-wage jobs by 2021.

Indiana is home to approximately 800 foreign-owned business that provide more than 170,000 quality jobs for Indiana residents. In 2016, more than \$1.7 billion in exports were sent to Chinese markets from Indiana, making the country Indiana's fourth largest-export location in the world.

Source: The Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC).



Gov. Holcomb and Zhejiang Party Secretary Che Jun standing to his left along with other economic and cultural stakeholders from Indiana and China's Zhejiang Province