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What We Do When We’re Not Blogging (for China Beat) …

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There’s a virtual version of the game tag, in which bloggers who get a cyber-tap on the shoulder have to reveal five things people don’t know about them on their blog, and then can call on five people to do the same. We enjoy it when bloggers we enjoy reading, such as Rebecca MacKinnon, get tagged and we get to learn things like, in her case, which Disney cartoon she was “obsessed” with as a child. Despite the title of this post, though, you won’t get those sorts of personal revelations here. So, I’m afraid you’ll end up frustrated if you are wondering which person who has contributed to China Beat once recorded an album called “Here Comes the Elephants” and which of us has done concerts as part of the band the Black Spoons (hint: they are different China Beatniks, just both have musical backgrounds), as we won’t be naming names. And when it comes to the various Irvine-based bloggers involved with this site, we won’t tell you which spends the most time at the lovely beaches that lie a 15 minute drive or so from campus in one direction, nor which has an annual pass to the world’s most famous theme park that’s located about a 20 minute drive (up to 40+ in rush hour) from campus in the other direction. What we’ll be focusing on instead are the things we do, outside of writing for this blog, that relate to its mission of trying to make sense of and share ideas about China’s past and present.

For example, when not blogging for China Beat, many contributors write for online and print periodicals. For instance, the special issue of National Geographic discussed in an earlier posting had articles by Peter Hessler and Leslie T. Chang, while Angilee Shah recently had a piece in Asian Geographic. Several of us who have reviewed books for China Beat have recently done the same for magazines. Kate Merkel-Hess recently had a review of a Zhou Enlai biography appear in the Times Literary Supplement (or TLS, for short), while Jeff Wasserstrom just told readers of Newsweek International what he liked about Michael Meyer’s account of Beijing hutong life, and Nicole Barnes has been contributing assessments of various China books to Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries, which ran her take on a new book about the Rape of Nanjing in May. And several China Beatniks, including Pierre Fuller, have written pieces for newspapers, probably none more frequently than recent guest post contributor Graham Earnshaw, whose 1980s Daily Telegraph reports are getting a second lease on life just now in a great Danwei series.

In addition, some of us plan conferences. The large-scale one on Han ethnicity that Tom Mullaney convened in April, for example, and the series of interconnected workshops on Olympics held in various locales (most recently the International Olympic Academy in Ancient Olympia) that Susan Brownell co-organized with colleagues based in China and Greece. And the upcoming September 2008 meeting in Boulder of the Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies that Tim Weston is involved in pulling together.

Other China Beatniks travel to these and other symposia—or just go different places to give solo talks. Ken Pomeranz has been racking up frequent flyer miles speaking in different locales—he could be spotted in D.C. in January, at USC in February (all right, he just drove there) as well as Warwick, Lisbon and Hawaii in March, Boston in April, and at the London School of Economics last
week. If we were a more tech-savvy site, we’d have a map that would let visitors keep track of his progress via a “Where in the World is KLP Now” animated game. (When this appears, we think he’ll be in London about to head to Bristol, where he’ll be giving a talk on June 23 that fittingly addresses the global topic “Chinese Development and World History”).

Other things we do when not blogging for China Beat include doing interviews for radio shows, magazine stories, and newspaper reports. Yong Chen, for example, is regularly consulted by journalists at the Los Angeles Times writing about everything from Chinese-American views on politics to the Sichuanese community in the U.S. We also contribute articles to academic journals and finish up books on topics ranging from women’s experiences in a changing China, to Shanghai’s past and present status as a global city, to similarities and differences between popular participation in the Chinese and Russian revolutions, to Chinese legal culture.

And some of us, when not blogging for China Beat just, well, blog around, contributing to our own solo sites or collective online ventures. Jeremiah Jenne is particularly noteworthy in this regard, maintaining a very active and much-commented on Beijing-based solo blog, Jottings from the Granite Studio. We also sometimes take things we’ve done for China Beat and expand upon them for other English-language venues or have them translated into Chinese and reposted, in original or updated form.

Well, enough about our regulars and contributors of guest posts, even for a Self-Promotion Saturday feature. But we are an active crowd, so the above really just scratches the surface. And, before closing, we do want to do something for those who were left curious by the opening teasers concerning hidden musical talents and Disneyland. While we meant it when we said we wouldn’t name names where those things were involved, we didn’t say we wouldn’t provide links that would make it pretty easy to guess which of us recorded “Here Comes the Elephants” (as well as “The Peking Tapes,” volumes 1 and 2), which of us was half of the “Black Spoons,” and which of us is a regular visitor to the Magic Kingdom.