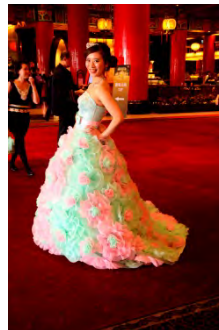


Friday, March 28, 2014 (cont)

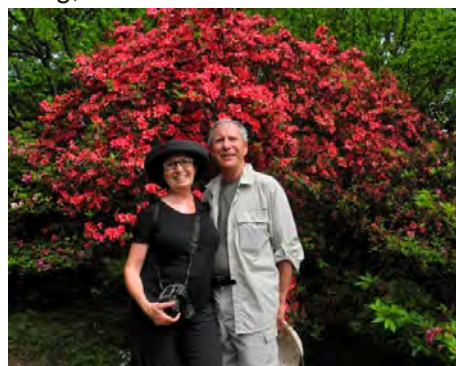
We decided to grab lunch before our afternoon adventures. We took the shuttle down towards the train station as we had noticed several little restaurants. Everything was in Chinese. But we peeked in to see what people were eating and chose one of the little tiny places serving vermicelli noodles and soup. A simple but filling lunch.

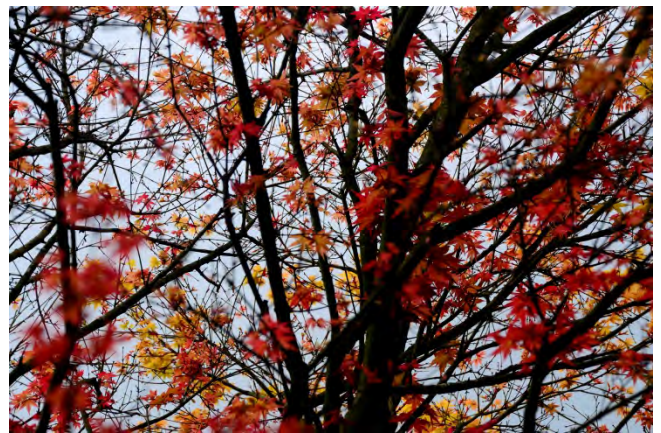
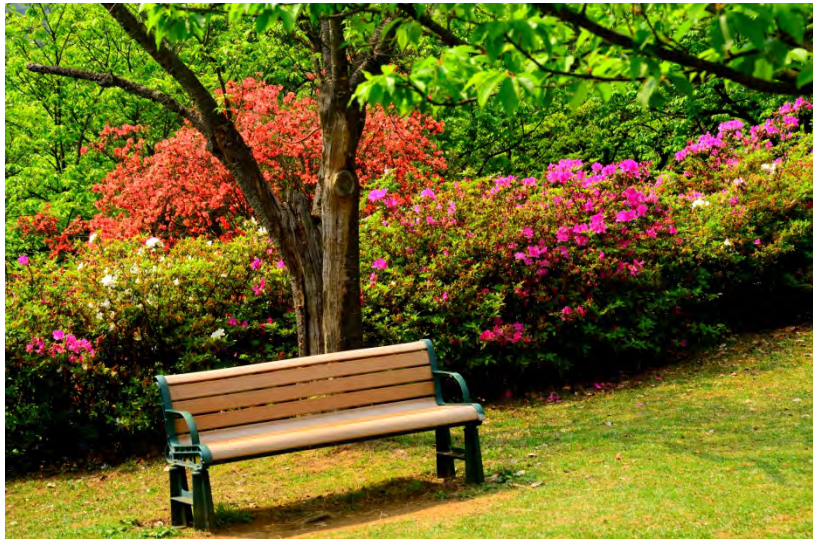


We walked around a bit checking out the neighborhood and then made our way to the shuttle back to the hotel where we ran into a bridal party. I took a few pictures and the bride asked if I'd like to have a picture with her. Given how I was dressed I said no. But she posed for me with the biggest smile.



In the afternoon, we went to first tour offered by our hosts, along with my colleague Colin Espie and one of the psychology graduate students, Jenny. It was to Yangmingshan National Park which is located in the north of Taipei and was called Grass Mountain during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan because it was covered with grass and seldom visited. It was renamed after World War II and the park was built. This is the only part in Taiwan that has volcanic geography and hot springs. It is a large park but we only managed to see a very small bit. The large clock of flowers is 22 feet wide and every hour it plays music. Nothing actually happens, but music comes out of the loudspeakers. We walked around a bit to see all the beautiful flowers and blooming trees. There's also a statue in the center of the park of Wang Yang Ming, the famous Chinese scholar from the 17th century.







From there we went to see the sulfur pit of the volcano and on to the Hot Springs. We had a choice of a private Hot Springs soak for two or the public baths which are separated for men and women. We chose the public baths as those are so much more interesting. I went in and was handed a towel and went in to remove my clothes. I first washed in the washing area as I know that one never soaks dirty. I walked stark naked, just like everyone else, out into a large area that had four or five different baths carved out of stone. One of the women there led me to one of the baths, poured water over my feet to rinse them off and invited me to step down. I was disappointed, as it wasn't particularly hot, but then realized each bath was a different temperature. There

was a large rock with the digital thermometer telling you how hot each bath was. I made my way to one of the hotter ones, being sure to rinse my feet off before stepping in. It was interesting to see the different women there, old women young women, women of every age. There was also a sauna and I was able to go in and out of the sauna and the different temperature baths. One of the baths had the equivalent of a very, very strong shower that hit your back and sore muscles. We soaked for about an hour which helped us relax. Obviously we could not take pictures, so this a picture of a picture.



That evening we had dinner with Wei-Chung and his family, his wife Irene, and his children Andrew and Amber. Wei-Chung picked us up and we met the rest of the family at the restaurant, which turned out to be in Taipei 101, the tallest building in Taiwan and for a while in the world (more on this tomorrow). The restaurant was on the ground floor of the five-story shopping mall, and was called Din Tai Fong and is famous for xiao long bao or steamed dumplings as we would call them. This was originally founded as a cooking oil retail shop in the late 1950s but then transformed to a restaurant in 1972. It has been called one of the top 10 restaurants in the world and is the only Asian restaurant on the list. It's also been awarded one Michelin star for five consecutive years. You can watch them making the dumplings behind a glass window. They are all dressed in white covered from head to toe. The dumplings are very precise each having exactly 18 folds. All the food is weighted so that each one portion is exactly the same. There are instructions how to eat them: place them on your spoon and pierce them with your chopstick to let the soup out. Then eat it. Otherwise when you bite into them, the soup spills everywhere. To say the least, they were succulent and delicious. We then took a walk around the Taipei 101 area, which is full of retail shops all high-end, high-end hotels and each building was brilliantly lit in neon colors.

