

Linda's Beijing Journal: Day 12

By Charles F. Gardner

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Editor's note: Linda McDonald is writing a daily journal for JSOnline, tracking the progress of West Allis gymnast Chellsie Memmel and commenting on the Olympic scene in Beijing. Linda is a nationally rated gymnastics judge, clinician and choreographer and close friend of the Memmel family. Originally from Green Bay, Linda now lives in Aurora, Ill.

Beijing - Today our sightseeing adventure took us to the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square.

The Forbidden City served as the imperial palace during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Common folk like myself were not allowed inside!

The Forbidden City is huge. The grounds go on forever, and it is easy to lose yourself inside. The buildings look very similar, traditional Chinese red buildings with gold tile roofs.

Surrounded by a moat, the Forbidden City gives you a sense of what it was like back in the day when emperors ruled.

Tiananmen Square marks the spot of the founding of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949, but its history goes back for centuries. The Tiananmen Gate was first built in the 1420s during the Ming Dynasty.

The square is huge and was decorated festively for the Olympics. In the middle was a huge 2008 Olympic logo, surrounded by beautiful flowers.

The sides of the square paid tribute to the Olympic venues. There was a replica of the Bird's Nest National Stadium, all done in flowers. The torch was done in a separate area with the Beijing Olympics motto: "One World, One Dream." The flower arrangements were so creative and amazing. My only complaint was there were too many people and the heat today was unbearable.

This evening marked the final gymnastics events of the Games. Jonathan Horton won a silver medal on the high bar, and Shawn Johnson and Nastia Liukin won gold and silver, respectively, on the balance beam. It was a great way to end the competition for the U.S. team.