

Linda's Beijing Journal: Day Nine

By Charles F. Gardner

Saturday, Aug 16 2008, 01:49 PM

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 we went to the Great Wall of China. USA Gymnastics set up a tour for the athletes and their families and friends.

As we approached the entrance, we could see the wall up on the mountain. The wall is about 3,000 miles long and they say you can see it from space. The wall was magnificent.

To get to the wall we took chair lifts, the same as you would on a ski hill. Once you arrive on the mountain, you choose which way you want to walk.

The wall was wider than I expected, about 10 to 12 feet wide. We walked and took some amazing pictures. It truly is a wonder, as in you wonder how in the world they built it!

To get back down the mountain we took toboggans. There was what looked like a slide, and each person had his or her own toboggan and could control the speed by using a brake. The slide had plenty of twists and turns all the way down, and we went as fast as we could. It was so much fun.

After visiting the Great Wall, we were taken to a Chinese Garden for lunch. The gardens were very beautiful and traditional. They were full of flowers, ponds, bridges and pathways.

Lunch was an interesting experience. They had rooms for different food. There was a dumpling room, a dim sum room, a noodle room and a Peking duck room. Each room had a bar with placemats. You sat at the bar and told a chef how you would like your dumpling or noodles. It was a unique experience.

There was one more room with a buffet of all different foods, American and Chinese. Everyone left fat and happy.

We were told today that the people living around Beijing can only drive their cars every other day. If the last number on your license plate is even, you are allowed to drive only on even-numbered days. Odd numbers go on odd days. The intent is to cut down on their pollution problem. I can't imagine not being able to drive my car.

I also learned today that you never cut your noodles. Long noodles mean long life, and if you cut your noodles, you trim your life span. So never cut your noodles.