

# Retiree sees world on a saddle

Lin Heping led team of elderly cyclists on 89-day tour of Europe

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and LI HONGYANG in Beijing

Retired police officer Lin Heping, 61, did not put his feet up after returning from an 89-day bike ride around Europe on July 23.

Instead, he finalized plans for a cycling tour of the Tibet autonomous region, setting out on Aug 12 with 13 other cyclists and returning on Aug 31.

"I wanted to experience high-altitude regions, to hone my adaptability to that kind of environment," he said. "We also enjoyed good views along the way."

Next year, he plans to form a team of at least two to cycle around Central and South America for eight months.

Lin, from Wuhan, Hubei province, has spent his retirement cycling around the world. He developed heart disease when he was 53, and in 2011, he was diagnosed with bladder cancer, which required surgery. The next year, he decided to spend the rest of his life seeing the world on his bike.

"I felt the shortness of life and the importance of a healthy body and exercise after these treatments," he said. "I chose to ride because I had problems with my knees. At first, I would feel dizzy after an hour's riding. But later I did not feel that nervous and became more confident."

In 2012, he organized a team of more than 100 cyclists, all aged between 50 and 70, in Wuhan. They rode to nearby cities, as well as cities in provinces like Anhui, Henan and Jiangxi, once a month.

His first overseas cycling trip, which covered Singapore,



Lin Heping (third from right) and four other members of his cycling team pose with a Czech man (second from right) in the man's garden during their 89-day bike ride around Europe. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Malaysia, Vietnam and India, was in 2013.

"In November last year, I started to prepare for the European journey and select my teammates," Lin said. "About 60 people applied online. A one-month journey around Hong Kong, Macao and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region was planned to test their physical strength, finances, cycling experience and living habits."

On April 25, Lin and seven fellow riders — one man and six women, all dressed in red uniforms and carrying flags — took a train from Wuhan to Beijing and then flew to Amsterdam in the Nether-

lands. The average age of the team was over 60 years old, with the oldest member 68.

Four completed the 4,500-kilometer journey, passing through 30 countries, including Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and Denmark, in 89 days before returning to China on July 23.

One of the women dropped out in Amsterdam because her bike was stolen. Other bumps in the road included being unable to find accommodations — they were reported to the police in France for sleeping in tents beside the road — and language barriers.

"The biggest challenge during the journey was language,"

Lin said. "Though I attended a few English classes, I couldn't maintain my interest. I would usually say 'Do you speak Chinese?' every time we needed to communicate with foreigners."

After completing more than half the trip, three other cyclists — a man and two women — quit one after another.

"Tu Shaolin went back home to see his mother who was in hospital; Jiang Nan felt physically exhausted because there were so many mountain roads in Italy and she had never cycled a long distance before; and Ma Li caught a severe cold and broke her

bike frame," Lin said.

Lin and the other three remaining riders kept going until they reached Copenhagen, the Danish capital, and flew back to Beijing.

"We spent 28,000 yuan (\$4,090) per person on average for this journey, which is relatively cheap," Lin said.

"Smiles, appreciation and help from tourists and police officers along the way were encouragements to us. We'd like people from the world to see the vigor and vitality of Chinese senior cyclists."

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EXPAT EXPERT

## Professor develops 'Chinese heart'

Xiamen University business professor William Brown, 62, has spent nearly half his life in southeastern China's Fujian province developing what he calls a "Chinese heart".

The fluent Mandarin speaker hails from the United States but has lived in Xiamen, one of China's five earliest special economic zones, for 30 years.

In that time, he has witnessed the country's hardships and development, with heavy investment from Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as foreign countries, helping to put Xiamen at the forefront of China's reform and opening-up.

Brown's love of the city started in the 1970s, when he was stationed in Taiwan with the US Air Force. "I was curious about what the people were like on the Chinese mainland," he said. "Xiamen is right across the Taiwan Straits."

"When I got back to the US and met my wife, we talked about China the very first time we met. We found we were both so interested in the Chinese mainland. So I like to say China was our matchmaker."

In 1988, Brown sold his company and moved to Xiamen with his wife and two sons.

"I chose Xiamen University because it was the only university that allowed foreigners to bring their families with them to learn Chinese at that time," Brown said.

The trip to Xiamen was difficult, he recalled. After a long flight from Los Angeles to Hong Kong, his family took an 18-hour overnight boat trip up the coast to Xiamen.

There were a lot of inconveniences in daily life. Electricity was sometimes out for days, and so was the tap water. There were only three bus routes in the whole city. "The floors of the buses were made of wood, and the bus exhaust fumes came into the carriage," he said.

Despite all that, Brown foresaw the country was changing rapidly and working on all-around improvements from economics to social regulations.

When Brown became the first foreigner to obtain permanent residence in Fujian in 1992, many people were amazed and asked him why, since many Chinese were eager to go abroad at that time. Brown told them opportunities of the future were not overseas but in China.

A year later, Brown bought a van. He and his family spent three months driving over 40,000 kilometers around China in 1994.

On a trip from the Gobi Desert to the Tibet autonomous region, the Brown family saw that every corner of China was changing. Newly built roads led to inland places like Gansu province and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, where schools and hospitals were being built in rural areas.

"It may seem strange to foreigners that the government 'wasted' so much money on infrastructure in such poor places, but I saw that

the government had a very long-term perspective," Brown said.

"As the saying goes, 'Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day; teach him to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime.' Because of the world-class infrastructure, China gradually lifted the poor out of poverty."

In 2002, Brown spent eight months preparing a presentation to help Xiamen's bid to win the title of International Garden City.

As the city's spokesman, Brown told the judges in Stuttgart, Germany, that in the 14 years since he had arrived in the city he had seen Xiamen transform into one of the most livable cities in the world, with a unique balance of growth and greening. Xiamen later won the honor.

Besides teaching, Brown is now committed to developing English-language websites and has published more than 10 books about Xiamen and Fujian.

Once, when he walked into a bookstore, he found young students reading his books with dictionaries in their hands. "The young people love their city and wanted to know a foreigner's perspective on it," Brown said.

He then started publishing his books bilingually, in Chinese and English, starting with *Discover Gulangyu*. The small island in Xiamen, known as "the richest square mile on earth" 100 years ago, was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in July last year for its cultural history and historic buildings.

He said China has achieved great changes thanks to the reform and opening-up policies implemented since 1978. The country has learned much from the world but, today, the world also has much to learn from China, such as its bullet trains.

"The first time I took a bullet train was from Xiamen to Fuzhou (Fujian's provincial capital) with my wife and sons," Brown said. "It was so fast and so smooth that we did not feel like we were traveling at all. It's amazing that China now has one of the best highway and rail systems in the world."

Brown is also an avid Alipay user. "It's so convenient; I'm amazed the rest of the world has not learned from Alipay and WeChat and developed similar applications," he said. "It just shows that China has not only caught up with the rest of the world but surpassed it."

Every time someone says Xiamen is Brown's second hometown, he corrects them immediately. "Xiamen is my first hometown because, in the US, the longest I lived in one place was seven years — but I've lived in Xiamen for 30 years," he said.

When asked about his future, Brown smiled and said, "I'm staying in Xiamen." "China is so charming, and with continued reform and opening-up, I cannot even imagine what it will be like in another 40 years," he said. "I want to stay and be a part of it."

XINHUA



William Brown signs and sells his book about Xiamen University at the university in Xiamen, Fujian province, in April 2006. ZHANG XIANGYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## 'Toilet revolution' brings healthy lifestyle to western China

Lantian county in northwestern China's Shaanxi province has recently launched a project to help rebuild and upgrade household toilets in rural areas.

The poor sanitary conditions of toilets in the region have been greatly improved thanks to the program, an extension of a nationwide "toilet revolution" that began in 2015.

Xu Enqiang, a 68-year-old villager, volunteered to be a part of the project.

"The idea was not widely accepted at the beginning, but after my neighbors saw my new toilet, they wanted to have their own, too," Xu said.

"A few months ago, we were using a dirty and shabby latrine in the corner of our courtyard. During the summer, the toilet became a breeding ground for flies and mosquitoes."

Xu's old toilet was an example of the majority of rural household toilets in western China.



A rural public toilet in Shaanxi province has been upgraded under the country's "toilet revolution". LIU BAOCHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

The project aims to replace old toilets with new ones, hoping to cover 85 percent of the rural areas in midwestern China, a less-developed part of the country.

"The government will help

each household build or renovate their outhouse, which will consist of a flushing toilet, a sink, and a self-contained sewage system," said Sun Chongbo, deputy head of Lantian county.

"The outhouse will be around 2 to 3 square meters.

"New toilets will prevent the spread of diseases and villagers will enjoy the convenience of a clean toilet. Moreover, the sewage system of the outhouse

will allow the waste to be used as fertilizer for their crops."

After the treatment process, farmers can use a portable device to pump the fermented fertilizer, which Sun said was easier and more convenient than using sanitation trucks.

Shaanxi already had over 2 million such toilets with waste treatment facilities up to national standards by the end of last year, accounting for nearly a third of the provincial total.

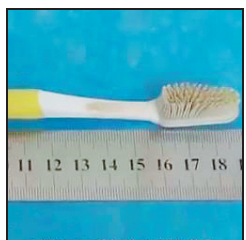
"These new facilities will also help improve the living standards of villagers and bring changes to their lifestyles," said Xue Yizheng, a local official in charge of sanitation work.

The Chinese government launched its "toilet revolution" across the country in 2015 with the aim of making the most notorious public facilities cleaner and more regulated.

XINHUA

### Around China

#### JIANGSU Woman swallowed toothbrush



Doctors used a special medical tool to gradually drag a toothbrush from the stomach of a woman in Siyang county recently. The woman was sent to hospital in extreme pain, with family members telling doctors she had choked while eating pancakes at breakfast, and had swallowed the 19-centimeter-long toothbrush while trying to dislodge the pancake from her throat.

GUANGZHOU DAILY

#### GUIZHOU Amorous robber detained on date

An amorous fugitive, surnamed Wang, was detained when he turned up for a date with a female "net friend" in Guiyang recently. Wang, 30, fled to Guiyang after committing a robbery in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in early September. A female police officer added Wang as a friend on WeChat and asked him out for a date. He was detained by police when he met the police-woman posing as his "net friend".

GUIZHOU TV

#### GUANGXI Driver fined for opening umbrella

A man, surnamed Lu, who opened an umbrella while driving his convertible in the rain in Nanning was recently

fined 100 yuan (\$15) and lost two points from his driver's license. Police said Lu had violated traffic rules and posed a danger to other drivers. Lu was stopped while driving his Mercedes-Benz convertible on a busy street in the afternoon. He said he had been trying to attract people's attention.

GUANGXI DAILY

#### HENAN Abusive couple lose 6 children

Six children have been placed in foster care after it was discovered their parents would tie them up and beat them, as well as "loan" them to criminals. Police were called to the home of Liu Mingju and his girlfriend, surnamed Li, in Shangcheng county on Aug 2. Officers found six children — four boys and two girls, including two of kindergarten

BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

#### SHAANXI Takeout food kills migrant worker

Police and the food and drug authorities are investigating a case in which a 22-year-old woman, surnamed Tian, died after eating takeout ordered via a mobile app in Xi'an. Tian was found dead at home while her boyfriend, surnamed Li,

was in critical condition after eating a portion of fried beans and eggplant on Oct 2. Doctors said Tian and Li had suffered serious food poisoning. The pair, both migrant workers, began vomiting soon after eating the takeout. Li is now stable after treatment, doctors said.

HUASHANG DAILY

#### Boiler mishap causes gas outage

Dozens of residents in Xi'an lost their gas supply for more than two days after a family accidentally connected a water pipe to its gas line while installing a boiler on the morning of Oct 6. The outage affected about 70 households in two buildings. Supplies were restored on the night of Oct 8 after repairs by gas company employees.

HUASHANG DAILY