



Heritage Trip: Grace Ke Ying

written by Ana Southern

When we pulled up to the Shang Rao orphanage, there was a large red banner hanging across the entrance to welcome our daughter, Grace Ke Ying (formerly Rao Ke Ying), back, as well as her family (my husband, her 12-year-old sister from Chaohu, and me).

We adopted Grace in late June of 2000 at 10 months old, so she was almost 15 when we visited on July 4. Ironically, July 4 was the day we had left Jiangxi with her 14 years earlier. A large crowd of people gathered out front to greet us, and the director hugged Grace and said, in English, "Welcome home." There was a little boy about 5 years old who took a fancy to Grace after she gave him some candy, so she carried him into the orphanage and he called her "sister."

The staff was so warm and friendly, despite the language challenges. We saw some of the young children there, mostly special needs, and looked at Grace's file. While there was nothing new in it, we were pleased to see several of the Christmas cards and photos we had sent over the years. The staff took us to a local restaurant for a delicious meal—the best of the entire trip—that had about 20 dishes!!



An added bonus was that in addition to our travel guide, we had an extra "translator" with us, because Emma was back from her year in the States. (Emma is one of the Shangrao orphans that Altrusa brought to the US as a high school exchange student in 2013-14). We loved meeting her and her foster dad, who joined us for lunch. She and my girls talked about life in the US compared to China. We were so impressed with how intelligent, sweet, and responsible Emma is. What a delight it was to get to know her!

After lunch, some of the staff went with us to Grace's finding place—the ruins of the old gate of the old orphanage. We met a few locals there and then went to a park and monument. It was a very hot day, so they took us back to the orphanage to their relatively cool conference room to wait for our train to Nanchang, which wasn't for a few hours.

We couldn't get over how gracious and friendly everyone was. They asked Grace to come back to visit, and hoped her Chinese would be better by then so that she wouldn't need a translator. When we traveled on to our other daughter's province, and met our new local guide, she asked how Grace's visit to ShangRao went. Grace summed it up by saying she "felt loved."