

Beijing Becomes Latest Literary Focus for Chicago Author

BEIJING, China (Sep. 6, 2009) – Chicago-based author A.C. Frieden headed to Beijing, China, for his ongoing research for two novels and several short stories. He arrived yesterday at Beijing's mammoth, swanky International Terminal 3 and quickly began exploring some of the city's newest neighborhoods, including the area featuring many of the 2008 Olympic venues as well as the Central Business District, which includes numerous new landmarks, including the skyscraper Park Hyatt hotel, where Frieden stayed. While in the capital, his focus was to find unique settings for one of his novels and for another book gather as much research materials as possible on China's military-political activities during the early years of the Cold War.



Photo above: Author A.C. Frieden stands near the Olympic stadium, often called the Bird's Nest because of its architectural design.

"For an author, researching the past in Beijing is tricky," says Frieden. "Much of the city's older infrastructure has been rebuilt to suit its bustling modern needs." For this reason, Frieden scoured the city for books, photographs and maps showing the city in the 1950s and '60s, as well as toured a number of older streets around the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square and areas just west of there.

He also visited some of the few remaining centrally-located old neighborhoods, again to collect an ideal historical perspective for his novel. "My focus is historical, but the new areas will certainly find their place in other manuscripts I am writing," he added. "Modern Beijing offers a plethora of uniquely modern, posh settings to spice up any thriller or mystery novel."



Photo above: A.C. Frieden visits the Forbidden City in the heart of Beijing.

Frieden visited Tiananmen Square, the largest city square in the world and the site of numerous events in China's long history, including the pro-democracy riots in 1989. The square was originally designed and built in 1651 and was enlarged to its present size and cemented over in 1958. The mausoleum of Mao Zedong, completed in 1977, is located in the square, and Frieden joined the thousands of mostly Chinese visitors who waited in line for hours to view the body of the founder of communist China. "Having seen the embalmed bodies of Lenin, Ho Chi Minh, and Kim Il-sung," said Frieden, "I was eager to see one more, this time the founder of the most populous nation on earth."



Photo above: A.C. Frieden visited the mausoleum where Chairman Mao Zedong lies embalmed for public viewing.

Chairman Mao was a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China from 1943 and the chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China from 1945 until his death in 1976. Although Mao had wished to be cremated, the government decided to embalm his body. However, at the time of Mao's death, China did not have the embalming technology needed to preserve his body for public display. Given the tensions between China and the USSR at that time, China instead received assistance from Vietnam, which had learned the trade from the Soviets when Ho Chi Minh's body was preserved for display.



Photo above: View of central Beijing from the top of the Park Hyatt hotel in Beijing's Central Business District.

Cold War Research

“One of the key objectives of my trip to Beijing,” Frieden said, “is to investigate historical and Cold War related content for two upcoming novels.” As part of his research, Frieden visited the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution, located next to the current Ministry of National Defense. The museum houses a vast collection of restored military equipment of the People's Liberation Army, up to and including modern-day equipment. The displayed hardware include antique weapons, small arms, artillery pieces, trucks, tanks, armored personnel carriers, anti-aircraft weaponry, propeller planes, jet fighters, rockets, launchers, military boats, and cruise missiles. A large assortment of captured foreign weapons and aircraft are also on display, including from the former Soviet Union, the U.S. and Imperial Japan. Of particular interest to Frieden was the wreckage of an American-built U-2 spy plane used by the Republic of China Air Force (Taiwan) that were shot down over mainland China in the 1960s.



Photo above: Chicago-based author A.C. Frieden stands by a DF-2 surface-so-surface missile on display at the entrance of the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution in Beijing.



Photo above: View of the central exhibit gallery of the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution, where a large collection of Cold War era military equipment is on display.



Photo above: A.C. Frieden stands next to the partly-reassembled wreckage of a U.S.-built U-2 aerial reconnaissance aircraft shot down in the 1960s. This aircraft was one of five Republic of China Air Force (Taiwanese) spy planes furnished by the Americans that were brought down by SA-2 missiles over mainland China. The aircraft was also used for reconnaissance over North Korea and northern Indochina.

About the author: A.C. Frieden is a novelist and lawyer living in Chicago. He is currently working on several novels and thrillers, including one set in Asia. For details visit www.acfrieden.com.

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