

## Nothing Starts Without a Sale: Learning to Sell in Cultural Revolution China

*In 1976, China was gripped by ideological fervor. John Kamm, Hong Kong representative of the National Council for US-China Trade, began attending mini-fairs in mainland China in January that same year. A journalist, researcher, and trade promoter, Kamm was in a unique position to witness China in flux, rife with contradictions and tensions -- between past and present, East and West, tradition and modernity. As a [two-part look back on those years in Guangzhou](#), this instalment of **John Kamm Remembers** focuses on those trade fairs, his China trade publications and efforts as a trade promoter.*



A photo of the Canton Trade Fair, taken in April 1977. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

Salesmanship is the art of convincing people to buy something they don't think they need, whether it's chemicals or human rights.

I learned how to sell from my father, who sold whiskey and beer for the Trenton Beverage Company in the 1950s and 1960s. He was, in his words, a purveyor of alcoholic beverages.

I would watch him ply his trade as he covered his sales route in central New Jersey. Salesmanship enabled me to embark on my journey of becoming first a journalist, then a businessman, and finally a human rights advocate.

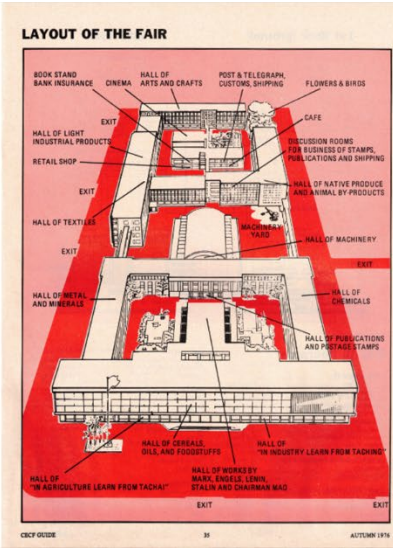
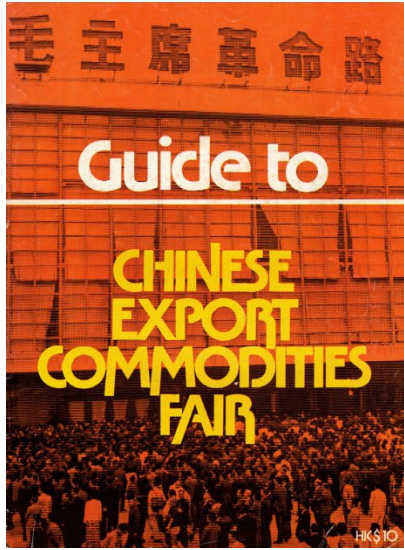
I started writing about business in China in 1975 as an assistant editor of *Asian Business and Industry*, a monthly magazine published by Far East Trade Press in Hong Kong. In 1976, after being appointed the Hong Kong representative of the

National Council for US-China Trade (“National Council”) I began promoting trade with China by attending “mini-trade fairs” in Shanghai ([Feather and Down](#)) and Beijing (Fur) in January, and Tianjin (Carpets) in February.



A photograph taken at the Tianjin carpet fair in 1976 Image credit: Dui Hua archives

Back then, trade fairs served as a rare window of opportunity for foreigners to enter China, and my work there led to many poignant and memorable moments, such as attending China’s Premier Zhou Enlai’s funeral in Beijing in January 1976 and getting caught in the devastating Tangshan Earthquake in July, while travelling to the Chemicals Trade Fair in Tianjin. In 1976 and 1977, I attended the [Spring and Autumn Export Commodities Fairs](#) in Guangzhou, also known as the Canton Trade Fair. Seizing the opportunity, my wife and I led a small team of writers to put together the *Guide to Chinese Export Commodities Fair*, a publication that would serve as a guide to the trade fair for foreigners. With the help of the Far East Trade Press, it was published in time for the 1976 autumn trade fair.



Yanhuo Korea Automobile Country (Kiaa Premia) and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, and a concert was played by the Peking Central Broadcasting Orchestra. In addition, a musical art performance and a soccer match were presented by local athletes.

Mostly on Mondays, twice daily, in the CECP's cinema hall a schedule of films, including both popular features and documentaries, is provided to the convenience of those who do not have time to go to the cinema. More comprehensive programs can be watched and view sites presented in any of the city's numerous auditoriums and outdoor cinema halls.

Kwangchow Issues a large exhibition centre - the Kwangchow Provincial Exhibition Hall - which formerly served as the CECP's exhibition and negotiation complex. In August 1976, three exhibitions were being held: the Kwangchow Province "In Industry Learn from Tachai" Exhibition, the Kwangchow Province "In Agriculture Learn from Tachai" Exhibition, and the Kwangchow Municipality Technological Exhibition. Foreigners interested in viewing exhibitions held in this complex should consult their local consulates or the tourist office of the Kwangchow Municipality for more information.

Kwangchow's centers for mass culture and entertainment is the Kwangchow Cultural Park, a 1.3 hectare complex built in 1972. The Cultural Park can be entered from the main gate on Hsiao Shing Road, or the west gate on Renze Road. The complex consists of an auditorium, seven exhibition halls, five theaters, a roller-skating rink, a tea house and facilities for table tennis, shooting and chess.

### Major Restaurants & Tea Houses in Kwangchow

NAME	LOCATION	TEL.	SPECIALITY
Ching Sheng Hoi Restaurant	Chang Ti	25259	Cantonese dishes
Economical Restaurant	Sha Mien	88784	Western & Cantonese dishes
Hua Chiao Mansion	Hsiao Square	61112	Cantonese & Chaochow dishes
Huij Restaurant	Chungshan Rd. V	32704	Cantonese dishes
Kianghai Restaurant	Shihao Hang St.	25760	Cantonese dishes
Kwangchow Villa	Sun Yui Li	32540	Western & Cantonese dishes
Kwangchow Guest House	Hsiao Square	61556	Western & Cantonese dishes
Kwangchow Restaurant	Corner of Wanchang St.	87136	Cantonese dishes
Kwangchow Restaurant	Chang Ti Road	25604	Western & Cantonese dishes
Luhua Guest House	Hsuein Rd. (North)	68800	Western & Cantonese dishes
Lwian Restaurant	Hsiangyang Rd. II	85707	Cantonese dishes
Modern Restaurant	Chungshan Rd. VI	88414	Modern dishes
Nan Yuan Restaurant	Chiangching Rd.	50632	Chaochow & Cantonese dishes
North China Restaurant	Chungshan Rd. V	23837	Northern Chinese dishes
Pan Hsi Restaurant	Hsiangyang Rd. I	85555	Cantonese dishes
Peihou Restaurant	Ta Pei St.	31154	Cantonese dishes
Pei Yuan Restaurant	Tingfeng Rd. (North)	32471	Cantonese dishes
Peking Restaurant	Hsiao Kou	85690	Northern Chinese dishes
Peopel's Mansion	Yuan Kiang Rd.	61486	Cantonese dishes
Peopel's Restaurant	Chungshan Rd. IV	33343	Cantonese dishes
Sanju Restaurant	Nanhai Rd. (East)	50844	Cantonese dishes
Shaho Restaurant	Shaho Boulevard	70566	Sho Ho Noodles
Shangli Guest House	Sha Mien	61223	Western & Cantonese dishes
Shenli Restaurant	Jungling Rd.	24879	Snack dishes
Taijiao House	Peking Rd. (North)	25599	Western & Cantonese dishes
Taijiao Restaurant	Hsiao Kou, Chang Ti	88997	Cantonese dishes
Taijiao Restaurant	Peking Rd. (West)	69000	Western & Cantonese dishes
Tungfang House	Hsiao Rd. II	87501	Cantonese dishes
Tung Kung Restaurant	Chungshan Rd. IV	22483	Kaohia dishes
Tungshan Restaurant	Tungshan Kueikan	70566	Cantonese dishes
Vegetarian Restaurant of Fingonan	Chungshan Rd. VI	88335	Vegetarian dishes
Yehweehsing	Peking Rd.	30997	Wild flavour dishes
Yu Yuan Restaurant	Lwian St. (South)	88336	Cantonese dishes

(Left to right) From the Guide to Chinese Export Commodities Fair, issued 1976: the cover of the publication; a map of the Canton Trade Fair; dining recommendations for fair attendees. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

This was followed by *Guide to Canton* for the spring 1977 fair and, subsequently by *Canton Companion* for the next six biannual fairs. I also started working on in depth business and trade reports including the *China Trade Quarterly* and the *China Economic Times*.

# The most useful series of business reports on China ever published

中國貿易

## The first publication that tells you everything you ought to know about trade with China.

"China Trade Quarterly" would be an invaluable source of reference even if it merely answered some of the questions on trade with the People's Republic.

But it answers all the questions, even those you may not know to ask. And there are many. For in China you are dealing with a centrally-planned economy where overseas demand and foreign trade are influenced by political ideology and domestic priorities.

"China Trade Quarterly" is the first authoritative in-depth study that explains the complexities, regulations and procedures which must be understood before a sound, long-term trade relationship with China can be established.

If you are, or intend to be engaged in trade with China, the information contained in every chapter of "China Trade Quarterly" could save you many times the cost of its purchase price.

### The author and publishers.

"China Trade Quarterly" is researched and written by Primary Sources, a business research organization headed by John Thomas Kamm.

John Kamm is a graduate of Princeton University (BA, Magna cum Laude) where he majored in anthropology and Chinese studies. He has been a Copy Editor with Business International and a tutor at the Chinese University of Hongkong. He returned to the U.S. in 1974 for a Masters Programme in Regional Studies and completed the requirements for an M.A. degree in one year.

Currently on leave from Harvard University's PhD Programme in History and East Asian Literature, he is a Contributing Editor to Asian Business & Industry, as well as the Hong Kong representative for the National Council for US-China Trade in which capacity he has visited the People's Republic on several occasions. He is an accomplished student of the Chinese language (Mandarin and Cantonese) both written and spoken.

Far East Publications is a publishing and book distribution company based in Hong Kong and owned by the Straits Times Group, the largest publishing organisation in Asia.

A spread from *China Trade Quarterly*, researched and written by Kamm's business research organization Primary Sources. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

We had to haul hundreds of copies of these magazines and equipment across the border from Hong Kong, passing through the border town Shenzhen where the crates, more than 40, were opened and inspected by Chinese Customs. Upon arrival in Guangzhou, we settled into the National Council's office on the seventh floor of the Dongfang Hotel, which would serve as our residence for five-week stays. We then unpacked the boxes and set up the office in time for the opening of the fairs, which ran from April 15 – May 15 and October 15 – November 15, respectively.

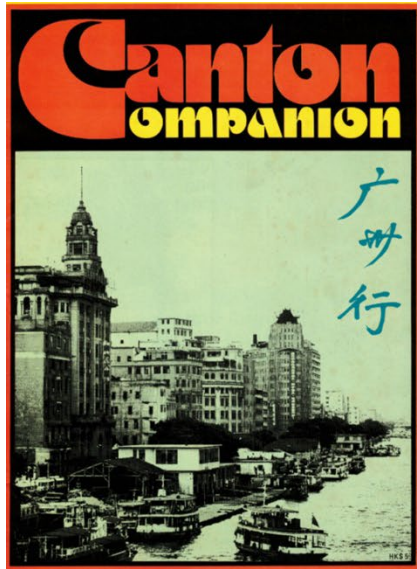


Kamm showing the Chinese trade fair officials his *Canton Companion* magazines in an office in the Dongfang Hotel. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

On the eighth floor of the hotel was the storied “Top of the Fang,” a brightly lit place with tables covered by white cloths. It served soft drinks and cold beer, notably Tsingtao beer, and offered peanuts. Tipping was not allowed (and was considered insulting to the staff who viewed their work there as service to the people). A jar full of Chinese coins and bank notes was placed at the entrance for errant tippers to reclaim their money.

The Council's office was equipped with an IBM electric typewriter, a Xerox 660 copier, and a telex tape-punching machine. The office was well-stocked with soft drinks, beer, and spirits. To send a telex, we would go to the ground floor, punch a tape, and wait in line until a telex machine became available. Occasionally, we visited offices of foreign trade corporations in downtown Guangzhou. Most were dark, cold, and damp.

# Canton Companion



## Guangdong by Road – Pitfalls and Potholes

John Katten

**B**Y Chinese standards, Guangdong province has a relatively well-developed air transport system. International scheduled flights connect Guangzhou with Hong Kong, Macao and Hanoi, while domestically, the city's Baiyun Airport is the gateway for foreign travelers from Beijing, Shanghai and a dozen other cities.

Within Guangdong, CAAC, China's national carrier, has established four air routes, a number unsurpassed by any other province of the People's Republic. A collection of old and mostly craft, mostly Russian vintage of the fifties and sixties, ply three routes to Hainan (the Hainan Islands), Zhanjiang (on the Leiqiong Peninsula), Shantou (on the border with Fujian province) and, most recently, Xingping (the northeastern Mexican prefecture).

As Guangdong province opens up and foreign merchants travel in increasing numbers to coastal and prefecture trading centers, more and more businessmen are making use of the system. It would be a great mistake, however, to place much reliance on travel by air in the province. Visit areas, including Foshan, Shaoguan and Xingping prefectures — Guangdong's richest natural resources reserves — are not serviced by air, and flights to cities accessible by air can wait until frequently cancelled on a moment's notice. If the plane takes off, the passenger flies at the grace of God and the good eye-sight of the pilot.

Thus it comes to pass that the enterprising merchant seeks land or water routes to his target factory, mine or consumer. Fortune-hunt Guangdong, with scores of daily entrepreneurs, has a traveler, having witnessed the chaotic overloading of these vessels — and

the treacherous and shallow course of the crowded Pearl — are liable to travel by water. Rarely developed a healthy fear for the ferries. In the last three years, two riverboat sinkings have resulted, each time, in the loss of hundreds of lives — including large numbers of Hong Kong Chinese.

The most reliable and safe means of transport within Guangdong is the jeep, minibus, bus, rickshaw or passenger car. Travel by road offers unique opportunities to glimpse sights hidden to Western eyes for decades. This being said, crowded travel can be an expensive and arduous ordeal — hours of waiting and standing and often along dusty and often dangerous roads, slow breakdowns and the occasional bare of horns.

To enable the traveler to organize his mind and body for this adventure, the author has assembled these notes on motoring in Guangdong, a collection of observations drawn from the experience of being driven some 2,000 miles around the province over the six months prior to the publication of this Canton Companion.

**The Road System**  
Neither national nor provincial highways, per se, exist in China. (The provincial authorities, it would seem, limit their interest in highways to imposing taxes on overland traffic.) In Guangdong, all roads are constructed and maintained by county road bureaus and subordinate corporations and work teams. The result is that the quality — or lack thereof — of Guangdong's roads is a



A typical street scene, through which a car must maneuver

direct result of the emphasis which the local government places on transport infrastructure.

The backward state of highway development comes into sharp focus at county borders when the highways of one county are far inferior to those of the other. Loading country whose administrative seat sits on the banks of a shallow but swift tributary close on the border with Guangxi province, possesses a road network proudly called by the central five-star ribbon (People's Daily) "the best in China." More than 100 km of macadam roads, four-lane in many places, crisscross the county. Other routes of the Loading system are the attention to detail, electric lines, side barriers and well-lit traffic warning, directional signs and speed traps) and the constant care devoted to upkeep by scores of workteams.

Irretrievably before entering Loading from Guangdong, the traveler must first pass through the hills of Chaoqing in neighboring Yunnan county. Little more than dirt tracks, the Yunnan roads remain in places primordial and rutted tracks bound to wreak havoc with the most working of both vehicle and passenger. There is no hope to what most loosely be called Guangdong's "road network." The worst road in the province is probably the vital Guangzhou to Hong Kong link, particularly that

section immediately north of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. Fees are high, ranging from RMB10.00 per km for sedans and minibus wagons to RMB5.00 for minibuses (so-called "bread cars" in Chinese due to their shape, which approximates a breadroll). The fee includes gas and oil, as well as driver's time, but does not include any charge for meals or accommodation, all of which charges, including those of the driver, are to be borne by the foreign traveler. Although instances of shuffling have been noted in Guangdong in recent months, the drivers on long, overland hauls — who take, like their counterparts in other countries, special pride in their work — have so far declined to accept gratuities. An attractive incentive scheme has recently been applied to these drivers, and it is now possible for them to earn upwards of RMB150 a trip for work to freeway cities like Guangzhou and Shantou.

**Documentation**  
In order to travel outside Guangdong's city limits, foreigners must possess a valid Traveler's Permit, issued in Guangdong by the Provincial Public Security Bureau (PSB) around the corner from the Dong Fang Great House. The PSB requires a completed application form and supporting documents from the Chinese host, giving details of the mission's purpose. The PSB usually approves the applica-

**Arranging for Cars and Buses**  
Unless the foreigner's host has arranged transport — which is usually the case — it is necessary to procure a car and driver. This is accomplished rather simply by contacting one of the car rental agencies in the Guangzhou area to all to the principal guest houses (see Guangdong Directory).



Almost 20-30 minutes per crossing, but by ferry, the Zhongshan ferry costs RMB10.00 per crossing, half of which is borne by the passenger.

A cover and a feature story from a 1977 issue of *Canton Companion*. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

Publications released by Far East Trade Press for the trade fairs turned out to be hits: not only were they the only English-language publications covering the trade fair, they were also one of the few English-language publications distributed, on a limited basis, in China. Back then, we were in the waning days of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution\*, a period of turmoil that damaged many facets of life in China including the economy and the conduct of foreign trade. To the lucky few businesspeople able to make it into China for the trade fairs, the twice-yearly magazine was a lifesaver, not only for its advice on accessing essentials like making phone calls, finding food, etc., but also for offering insights into the oddities of Cultural Revolution-era culture.

Besides services on offer in Guangzhou, *Canton Companion* featured articles on topics like Cantonese opera and dissent in Guangzhou where the “counterrevolutionary Li Yizhe group” was based. The group consisted of a few dozen local dissidents led by Li Zhengtian.” It was “struggled” in sessions at a theater near the train station, served long sentences in prison, and were nearly executed for their 1974 big character poster calling for democracy and rule of law.

Mao Zedong is said to have intervened. He famously said “We should not fear criticism. The sky won’t fall.”

## The process of negotiation

Business hours of the CECF exhibition and discussion halls are 8:30 – 11:30 AM and 2:30 – 5:30 PM, Mondays through Saturdays. With the occasional exception of May Day (May 1), business negotiations take place every day, barring Sundays, while the fair is in session.

Prior to initiating discussions with a foreign trade corporation at the fair, it is usually necessary for the foreign firm to make an appointment. Because of the great number of businessmen attending the fair, appointments should be made well in advance of anticipated discussions. Appointments can be made either in person or through a third party.

Negotiations are held both in individual discussion rooms and in the wide-open atmosphere of the exhibition halls. Orientation maps, with explanatory keys, are provided in a special section beginning on page 35.

Negotiations are handled, on the Chinese side, by teams of state traders drawn from the FTC delegation responsible for the commodity under discussion. The team, as a team, arrives at collective decisions. Major points are rarely decided immediately as they arise; rather, the Chinese negotiators arrive at a joint position during adjournment.

Other features of the negotiation process include:

**Pricing:** A fundamental characteristic which arises from the nature of the Chinese economic system is that the domestic cost of production bears no necessary relationship

### hints

- Whenever possible, secure the *full* names of the Chinese traders with whom you are negotiating, together with the name of their branch corporations and specifics of their product responsibilities. Remember: Chan, Wong and Chang are common names often shared by scores of people in the same delegation.

- Learn to make effective use of your translator. Talk slowly, enunciate clearly and avoid sarcasm. Use the time employed by the translator in interpreting your remarks to carefully prepare your thoughts. Be concise, and give your counterpart time to speak.

- Avoid shows of anger, and be flexible whenever possible. Do not hesitate to take firm stands however; the Chinese expect you to be as tough a brand of negotiator as themselves.

- Remember: In the pursuit of any given deal, strict adherence to the contract is the expected norm. But in the building of a long-term business relationship with an FTC, it is the “extra-contractual” personal ties which form between personnel on both sides that are most important.



Hectic activity on the floor of the Minmetals Hall.

to the international prices charged by the state (through the FTCs). The determination of a Chinese export's price is based largely on world market prices, or more correctly, the state corporation's perception of world market prices.

This being the case, foreign buyers should come well prepared, and should feel no hesitancy in conveying detailed information on the nature of the world market.

The FTCs usually sell CIF or CF; in cases where shipment requires the use of specialized vessels (e.g. oil and frozen shrimp), FOB prices are frequently given. As for Chinese purchases, FOB is usually required, though there have been numerous exceptions.

**Apportionment:** The Chinese FTCs employ an apportionment system whereby the quantities of various goods procurable by specific buyers are determined. This system is probably based on at least three factors: (1) the nationality of the buyer, (2) the market to which the commodities are destined, and (3) the length (and warmth) of the business relationship enjoyed by the buyer.

**Contracting:** Sales and purchases are typically effected through standard contracts. Terms and conditions of these contracts vary from corporation to corporation, and from commodity to commodity. A basic unanimity with regard to major points (import and export documentation, letter of credit terms, claims settlement, arbitration, etc.) emerges from a study of these various contracts, however, and foreign merchants can expect wordage similar to the two sample contracts provided on pages 40, 41 and 42.

For CIF sales, insurance coverage is per the Ocean Marine Cargo and Ocean Marine Cargo War Clauses of the People's Insurance Company of China, reprinted on pages 43 and 44.

If the foreign merchant requires his own specifications and/or terms and conditions, he should have these included, in writing, on the contract form. The Chinese have a saying, “Honour the contract” and they have acquired a good reputation in the pursuance of this principle.

## Radio and Television

There is a People's Broadcasting Station in Kwangchow which broadcasts on 1060 kilocycles Mondays through Sundays from 05.00 to 00.05 hours. Programmes on this station are in the Cantonese dialect of the Chinese language. Broadcasts in the national language can be heard on another unit of the Kwangtung People's Broadcasting Station.

There is a great variety of cultural programmes, featuring modern Chinese orchestral work and revolutionary operas,

as is evident from the programme of the Cantonese Station which is printed below. AM and FM broadcasts originating in Hong Kong, as well as overseas services of the BBC and Voice of America can be received in Kwangchow.

There is a television station in Kwangchow and arrangements can be made to view programmes by consulting with the service desk of the hotel floor on which you are staying.

5.00	"The East Is Red" followed by Programme Announcement	11.50	News	19.30	Broadcast to Members of the People's Communes
5.15	Cultural Programme	12.00	Provincial News	19.50	Weekly Music (Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, Sundays)
5.25	Weather Forecast	12.30	Broadcast to Members of the People's Communes		Cultural Programme (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays)
5.40	Cultural Programme	13.00	Cultural Programme		Report from the Central People's Broadcasting Station (Peking) and the People's Broadcasting Stations of Other Areas.
6.10	Broadcast to Members of the People's Communes	13.30	News	20.00	Village Cultural Centre Broadcast to Youth (except Saturdays)
6.30	Cultural Programme	14.00	Cultural Programme		Cultural Programme (Saturdays only, to 16.45)
7.00	News and Newspaper Headlines from the Central People's Broadcasting Station (Peking)	14.10	Broadcast to Weather Stations		
7.30	Cultural Programme	14.30	Cultural Programme (Sundays only)		
8.00	Theory Study (Mondays through Saturdays)	16.45	Second Broadcast		
8.30	Cultural Programme (Sundays only)	17.00	"The East Is Red" followed by Programme Announcement		
9.00	Literary Criticism	17.00	International News		
9.30	News	17.30	Provincial News	21.30	Cultural Programme
10.00	Singing Class and Cultural Programme	17.50	Weather Forecast	22.00	News (except Saturdays)
11.00	Village Cultural Centre	18.00	Liberation Army and Militia Programme (except Mondays)	22.30	Cultural Programme
11.30	Broadcast to the Proletariat	18.30	Cultural Programme (Mondays only)	23.00	Weather Forecast
			Reading of Novels (in serials)	23.15	Cultural Programme
				0.00	"Internationale"
				0.05	End of Broadcast

## Sports for the Fairgoer

Businessmen wishing to stay in shape during the fair can avail themselves of Kwangchow's numerous sporting facilities.

Most hotels are equipped with athletic facilities. At the Tung Fang, for instance, the fairgoer can enjoy ping pong, badminton, billiards and volleyball.

Two Olympic-size swimming pools and a championship diving pool are located in Yuehsai Park. These pools may be used by foreign guests during early morning hours.

Kwangchow's spacious parks afford ample opportunities to joggers, and at least one recent fairgoer has taken to long bicycle trips on his Kwangchow-made vehicle. Canoeing and other forms of boating are available on Pei Hsu Lake.

Foreign merchants traditionally organize themselves into teams for friendly soccer competition during each fair. The competition climaxes with the finals of the "Canton League" being held in the Kwangchow Municipality People's Football Stadium.

Athletes performing Wushu, traditional martial arts.



Guide to business negotiation (*left*) and information on radio, television, and sports for fairgoers (*right*) featured in *Guide to Chinese Export Commodities Fair*, issued 1976. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

Sourcing basic information for *Canton Companion* was a daunting task: many publications were deemed to include state secrets. Local newspapers could not be read by foreigners; photographing locals reading them was forbidden. (I once heard of an Australian couple detained in Shanghai in 1976 for photographing locals reading a newspaper on a small glass-enclosed billboard).

The contents of the Guangzhou phone book – the phone numbers – were also considered state secrets. Every floor of the hotel had a copy of the phone book at the reception desk in a locked drawer that was often kept open. I stole furtive glances and memorized the numbers of foreign trade corporations. There were no private phones in Guangzhou in those days and the numbers for state enterprises, including for branches of foreign trade corporations, consisted of five digits.

While *Canton Companion* was distributed free of charge, it was supported by advertisements of companies doing business at the trade fair. This was yet another





Kamm getting a lift on a ferry during one of his road trips in Guangdong Province in 1979. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

I experienced both humorous and terrifying events on these travels. On one trip to a commune in Zhanjiang, I came across an elderly man early one morning. My colleagues and I needed to call the commune management to let them know we'd arrived and to get directions. The fellow would dial a number and immediately hang up the phone. On another trip to the hinterlands, we found out why driving at night on Guangdong roads was so hazardous. Many drivers, who got their licenses by merely passing a vision test, would turn their headlights on high beams and then suddenly turn them off. Back and forth, from blinding lights to total darkness.

After my company, Primary Sources, secured the agency for Diamond Shamrock in 1979, I began travelling to remote corners of Guangdong Province to find raw materials for Diamond's products. The company produced a herbicide based on arsenic trioxide. In Guangdong, two counties – Yunfu and Yangshan – had large reserves of arsenic, mined and roasted in traditional dragon kilns. Primary Sources colleagues made three trips to these counties, during which there were several humorous adventures.





Kamm meets with local farmers in Zhanjiang in 1980. Image credit: Dui Hua archives

On my visit to Zhongshan, I worked with a Swiss vaccine manufacturer to quell an epidemic of pigeon flu. The trial was a success and resulted in the first-known sale of a foreign product to a sub-provincial foreign trade corporation.

In addition to trips to Yunfu and Yangshan, I visited communes, state farms, ports, and factories in Jiangmen, Zhanjiang, Hainan (then part of Guangdong Province, now a separate province), Zhongshan, Zhuhai, Dongguan, Luoding, Yunfu (said to have the best roads in China – “in building roads, learn from Yunfu!”), Whampoa, and Baoan (now Shenzhen). These places were rarely visited by foreigners.



Kamm with officials of Luoding County during a 1979 trip. Image credit: Dui Hua Archive.

Although the trade fairs were primarily venues for cutting export contracts, two commodities were purchased in large quantities: plastic resins and industrial chemicals. I met representatives of American chemical firms and in 1979 when the United States and China reestablished relations, I took on the agencies of several companies, most importantly Diamond Shamrock, based in Cleveland, Ohio.



Kamm (*left-most*) and Consul General Richard Williams (*third from the left*) at the opening of the US Embassy in Canton in 1980. Image credit: [Dui Hua archives](#)

I opened the first foreign office in Guangzhou, well before regulations governing the establishment of foreign offices were promulgated. Beijing was often unaware of what was happening in the southern city. As the saying goes, “The mountains are high, the emperor is far away.”

I finally got to use what my father taught me: I became a salesman.

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Note: While there is general agreement that the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, there is no general agreement on when it ended. A leading authority on the Cultural Revolution in the West, Professor Fred Teiwes, has laid out four possible dates in the 1968-1978 period. Professor Teiwes and other experts date the end of the Cultural Revolution to 1966-1968, when the worst excesses took place. For this episode of *John Kamm Remembers*, I take the end of 1977, when Deng Xiaoping was rehabilitated, as the culmination of the Cultural Revolution.