

# Midland Daily News

## Midlanders reflect on trip to Mongolia



These Mongolian women are at the Gandan Monastery in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. It is the central and most important site of Mongolian Buddhism. They are wearing what was described as "the best of traditional Mongolian dress" because of the monastery's importance.

The Mongolian herdsman family's ger -- a felt-covering dwelling with beautiful, wall-mounted rugs -- was spacious and surprisingly cool on a hot day.

It contained a television and VCR.

Visiting the ger and tasting the national drink airag (fermented horse milk) are among the memories Helen Overton, Kendra Shrode and think tank president Lawrence W. Reed recently brought back to Midland.

They liked what they saw during their week's stay more than they enjoyed the mare's milk.

The travelers saw a parade,

horse racing, archery and wrestling during the national three-day Naadam festival.

And they returned with colorful invitations to the state dinner they attended at the Mongolian president's home. They also met with Prime Minister Elbegdorj Tsakhia. Known as E.B., he studied at the Midland-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy, where Reed is president.

Shrode is Reed's assistant at the research and education center, which has a free-enterprise orientation. Overton is the widow of Joseph Overton, Mackinac Center senior vice president who died in an ultra-

light plane crash in 2003,

Seventeen hours in airplanes -- plus 19 hours of layovers -- were needed to reach the nation of about 2 1/2 million people on July 9.

The Midlanders returned home days before the scheduled destruction of a mausoleum in front of the parliament building. The mausoleum held remains of two Mongolian communist leaders. Its razing -- after the prime minister pushed a law through -- has huge symbolic significance and closes a chapter in Mongolian history, Reed said.

The prime minister told the Midlanders some of the results of his privatization and tax-cutting efforts, thanked the Mackinac Center for its work to advance liberty and sound policy, and gave the visitors tickets to "a fantastic concert," Reed said.

Reed gave his "Seven Principles of Sound Public Policy" talk to an audience of about 40, with a Mongolian translator.

"It went over exceptionally well, and the Individual Initiative Institute that sponsored the talk honored me with a beautiful plaque as its first foreign speaker," Reed said.

The institute's founder, Orgodol ("Orly") Sanjaasuren, credited the Mackinac Center and his attendance at its October 2003 leadership conference in Midland for inspiring him to create the organization, Reed said.

Mongolian radio recorded Reed's speech, and he was interviewed by Mongolia Today, the daily newspaper in the capital, Ulan Bator.

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## Reed offers observations of life in Mongolia

Lawrence W. Reed, president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, and two other Midlanders recently returned from Mongolia. Here are some of Reed's observations.

### Bottle of scent part of greeting

After visiting a herdsman and his family in the countryside near the capital, Ulan Bator, Reed recalled:

"The traditional Mongolian greeting involves a bottle of scent that the host produces. He opens the bottle and using the applicator in the cap (much like a bottle of fin-

milk a horse, at which point we were glad that the airag had been served first. After a brief ride on one of the horses, we departed."

### Dust storm shortens visit to stadium

During the second day of the national Naadam celebration, "we watched archery and wrestling, but our visit to the stadium was cut short by a horrendous dust storm -- one of those legendary weather phenomena that are not uncommon in these parts of the Asian steppes.

Reed wrote, "in part because we learned that our friend E.B., the prime minister, was instrumental in its creation a few years ago. He clearly feels it is important to remember the atrocities of the socialist period, and its many unfortunate victims. The museum reminded me of my 1989 visit to Cambodia and the sights from the murderous Khmer Rouge years: Displays included photos of some of those tortured and killed and a number of human skulls with bullet holes very apparent."

### Livestock population larger after privatization

The prime minister told American visitors that a communist leader of Mongolia decades ago boasted when Mongolia had 20 million yaks, cows, sheep and goats that his central plan called for the nation to eventually produce 250 million, so as to feed much of the Soviet bloc with meat.

Reed added, "That was an unbelievably unrealistic goal for a nation of barely 2 1/2 million people, but the most interesting thing the PM told us was that in all the years of socialism, the number never even grew to as much as 25 million. But just since he privatized (the livestock) during his first prime ministership in 1997, the number has grown to more than 30 million. Proof once again of two of the 'Seven Principles' (of Sound Public Policy) I like to talk about: What everybody owns, nobody takes care of; and if you encourage something, you get more of it but if you discourage something, you get less of it."



This ger, the dwelling of a herdsman and his family, is roughly 10 miles from Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

gernail polish), he applies a little of the liquid scent on his finger, then hands the bottle to the first guest within a handshake." The bottle is passed on to the other guests.

"Then the herdsman served us Mongolian tea, which is good but salty to the taste. Then came the main treat, the national drink known as airag, which is fermented mare's milk. Later, when the herdsman showed us his cows and horses, we watched a member of his family

Within an hour, what had been a cloudless day turned into very windy, brown fog. Visibility fell to perhaps 50 yards at best. Then one of the sharpest thunder and lightning storms hit, quite a sight to see," Reed wrote in an e-mail message.

### Museum of victims reminds Reed of Cambodia

"We visited the Museum of the Victims of Political Repression,"