

Director's Corner

25 March 2010



Nick Walker

Here's to Beijing, the Great Wall, and windowless seminar rooms

Today's issue features a Director's Corner from Nick Walker, Project Manager for the Global Design Effort.

As this copy of *ILC NewsLine* "hits the streets" most of us will already be in Beijing for the start of [ILC2010](#) (held jointly with the Physics and Detector community's workshop LCWS2010). As I actually write this article I find myself once again preparing to travel. Globetrotting is 'part of the job' for most senior Global Design Effort members (and believe me I do less than most!). Most people I talk to find this rather 'exotic' — that is until I tell them the truth: we sit on aeroplanes for tens of hours, only to sit in often windowless seminar rooms for days on end, until it's time to fly back again.

Physicists can be a bit strange that way.

This time however, I am determined to visit the Great Wall of China, which I have never seen although I have visited Beijing twice before (those windowless seminar rooms!). Due to the wonders of time zones I arrive almost a day early. At last, an opportunity to do some sightseeing — providing of course I have finished that presentation I am due to give on the first day of the workshop!

The Wall must be one of mankind's most enduring civil engineering projects. Beginning in 7th century BC, the Wall has been under various stages of construction for thousands of years. The part actually referred to as the 'Great Wall' was constructed by the Ming Dynasty from 1368-1644 and is over 6,000 kilometres long. But if you include all the 'walls' you can easily arrive at a number exceeding 50,000 kilometres. I can't help wonder what modern-day construction project might leave such a legacy for future generations, hundreds of years from now.

Of course, we are all hoping that the ILC will be at least a part of that future legacy. At a mere 30 kilometres long, it certainly cannot be physically compared to the Wall — and most of it will be underground. And the ILC construction will never endure the centuries as the Wall has done. (And hopefully it will not take centuries to build either!) Nonetheless, the ILC will certainly be a shining example to the state-of-the-art of our technology — much in the same way the construction of the Wall was all those thousands of years before. And of course, the real legacy will be measured in the wonderful physics and knowledge that it will produce.

The Wall was constructed to divide people. More specifically, to defend the Chinese Empire from the Mongolian invaders (to name but a few). By contrast fundamental science goes out of its way to break down barriers. As a truly global project, the ILC remains the dream of hundreds of physicists around the globe. Many of them will be joining me in Beijing for the workshop, to discuss the impressive technical progress we are making across the board — both for the accelerator and the detectors — with the goal of making that dream and reality.

It is after all the dream that keeps the physicists — myself included — in those windowless seminar rooms for days on end. I just have this one window of opportunity to see the Wall — so I'd better make good use of it before I return to planning one of the legacies of the future.

-- Nick Walker



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