

The Trip of a Lifetime: Robotics Team Travels to Competition in Shanghai

BY CODY TORCZON

Just before Thanksgiving break began, the robotics team had the unique opportunity to travel to Shanghai, China, to compete in a world robotics competition, and to see the wonderful sights offered in China.

A total of ten travelers from Mount Michael made the trip. But this was no easy feat. Mr. Mike Williams, who leads the robotics teams, said, “It takes a lot of money to send 10 people to China.” However, generous alumni and sponsors’ donations made their journey possible.

But the Knights were not the only team from the area making the journey to Shanghai. Students from Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa, joined the Knights on their trek across the globe to compete in the competition as well. “The 16-hour flight was long, cramped, and difficult,” said Connor Chen ‘26 regarding the 6,800-mile-long trip.

“All who went on the trip gained something invaluable.”
- Robotics Coach Mr. Mike Williams

Preparation for the tournament began long before the team set off for China. Since the first day of school, the students were hard at work, building, tearing down, and rebuilding their robots to create the most perfect version of them that they could.

Finally, the time came to set out on their journey. The team set out in the early morning hours on the Friday before Thanksgiving. In order to bring their robots and other equipment with them, the majority of what they travelled with was stowed below the plane.

As competition time came around in Shanghai, the Knights were split up into two different teams. Team 1970X consisted of Harry Vondrak ‘25, Ethan Bell ‘25, and Clemens Pavlish ‘25. Team 1970P included Blase Bosilevac ‘25, Connor Chen ‘26 and Michael Freilich ‘27. The first day of competition was a day of qualification matches.

Vondrak said that the qualification system worked very similar to how it does in tournaments in Omaha. Following their day of qualification matches, the two teams then had a day of competition.

Vondrak felt outgunned when his team began competing. He worried about how his team’s robot would fare against the robots of their Chinese competition, which he said hired professional engineering firms to build their robots. Nevertheless, the robot which he and his team spent all year building would go on to be crowned as champion of the competition, which he said is a testament to their “creativity and relentless passion” that was poured into their robot.

Additionally, Team 1970X took home the Design Award. Team 1970P also received honors at the Shanghai competition, winning the Innovate Award. Williams said that he was “very proud of the accomplishments of the teams in China.”

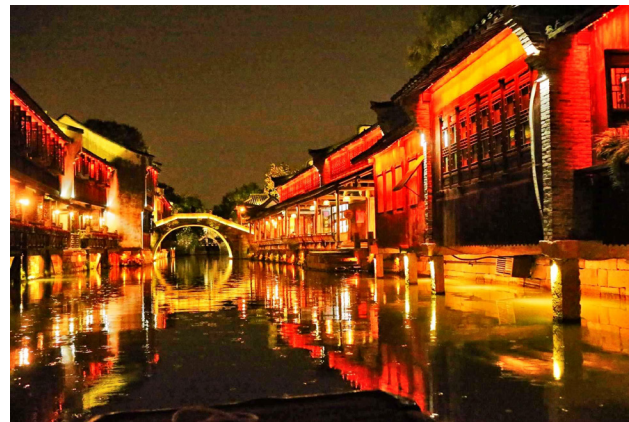
But their trip was filled with more than just robotics. “We spent more time going around than doing actual robotics,” Bosilevac said. One activity that the team did was visit a high school in the Shanghai area, where they crafted traditional hand fans, constructed a bamboo house, and practiced indigo tie-dye, which is a traditional practice in the region.

Additionally, the team dove into the local Chinese cuisine, trying foods such as bamboo and bull frog. While in Shanghai, the team ascended the Shanghai Tower, the tallest building in Shanghai, to take in the amazing view that it offers.

The team ventured beyond Shanghai, travelling to the neighboring city of Wu Zhen to do some more sightseeing. Williams compared this city to Venice, Italy, as both cities are traditionally styled canal-cities. “We went on a boat tour during the night through the canals. It was breathtaking. Absolutely something that you have to see,” Williams said. “I was blown away by the beauty of the city and all the lights in the canals at night,” added Bosilevac.

“All who went on the trip gained something invaluable,” Williams said as he reflected on the team’s journey to Shanghai. “It was tiring, but rewarding in all sorts of ways,” he added.

“It was different, but super fun and something that I’ll never forget,” Vondrak said.



On the Water: The robotics team visited the traditional canal city of Wu Zhen. Many of the students said that this was their favorite stop on the trip.



Competition Day: Connor Chen ‘26 and Blase Bosilevac ‘25, members of team 1970P, stand together next to two competitors. Their team would go on to win the Innovate Award for the competition.



Excellence Across the World: Team 1970X and 1970P pose with their banners and awards following the competition in Shanghai. The teams also have several competitions in the U.S. where they plan to showcase their learned skills.

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