

Wristwatches: Chen Yilin Remembers His Watches

Why do people remember when and how they acquired certain objects? Sometimes they remember stories about their possessions more than major events of the day. In this selection, one of countless such stories one can find on the web, Chen Yilin recalls the watches he owned and concludes the improvements in the value of the watches he acquired reflects well on government policies:

Translation by Karl Gerth:

'Lying in the middle [of a hierarchy of watches] was a Shanghai brand watch. My Yangcheng brand watch really made my colleagues feel envious for a while, but after some time I found that they also started to wear watches. And all of them were Shanghai brand watches. One day, a colleague, Old Zhu, patted my shoulder and said:

"Buddy, these days who wears a Yangcheng? Everyone has started to wear a Shanghai brand watch. Shanghai is an old commercial center, the place is big, the brand is solid, the quality is impeccable. See mine. This watch has not lost time since I bought it."

After listening to this, my heart felt unsettled. I felt out of date. So I clenched my teeth and bought a Shanghai watch. At that time, my salary was 58 yuan per month, and a Shanghai watch cost 52 yuan, so it was not a problem. My Shanghai watch was exactly the model Old Zhu suggested, and the quality is very good.

Later, with the deepening of Reform and Opening Up policies [after 1978], foreign products poured in, and the watches that became the most popular were made in Japan. Japanese products were not only of good quality but also beautiful. Based on this consideration, I bought a one for over 100 yuan, a Citizen brand watch. [...]

Looking at these three watches that no longer work, I have many thoughts. From being eager to buy watches to wearing them to no longer wearing watches today, do these changes suggest that our society is constantly improving? As an ordinary witness to the great process of China's Reform and Opening Up, I just want to say one thing: There is no happy life for the people without the Reform and Opening Up.'

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Three watches (san kuai shoubiao 三块手表)

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