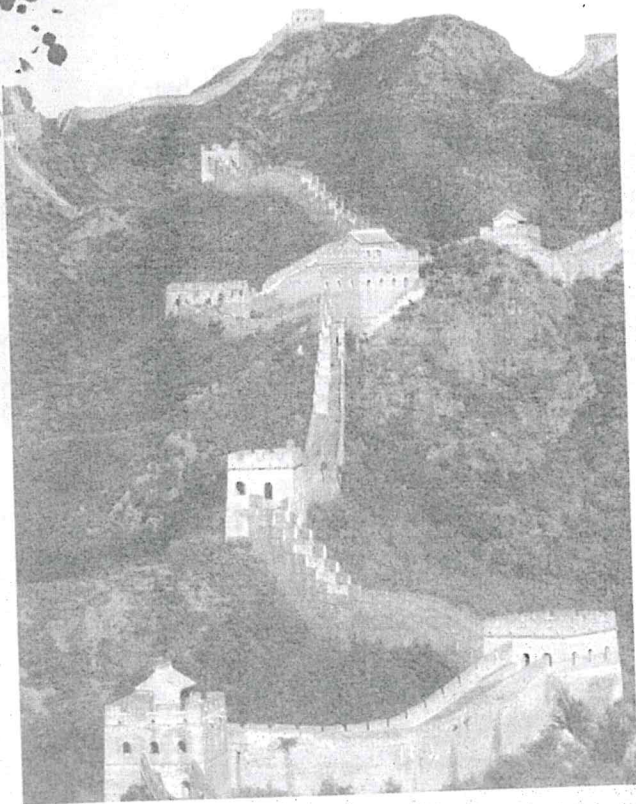


OH, YIKES!



All fenced in. If the Great Wall were in America it would reach from Washington, D.C., to the California border.

WALL OF FAME, WALL OF SHAME

Let's say your neighbors are loud and noisy. They keep having wild parties and coming over and stealing your lawn furniture. They're always tossing empty soda bottles and chicken bones into your yard and their dog keeps doing his business on your front walk. You're so tired of coming out in the morning and stepping in you-know-what. Building a big, high fence seems like a splendid idea.

The same thing happened on a really gigunda scale in China beginning in the seventh century B.C.E. when the Zhou dynasty started to build a bunch of small walls to keep out invaders. By the third century B.C.E., things had gotten worse. China's neighbors were always fighting and those brawls were spilling over into Chinese lands, with innocent folks getting caught in the crossfire. In 221 B.C.E. a new dynasty, the Qin, came to power, led by a ruthless emperor, Qin Shi Huang Di. He decided to make the wall even bigger and longer. So he began rounding up enemies of the state—peasants, convicts, scholars, and writers with whom he disagreed—and put them all to work

building the Wan Li Chang Cheng—the Great Wall of 10,000 Li (a *li* is a unit of measure similar to a mile). More than 800,000 people began the backbreaking work of making a wall that stretched across most of an entire country—and a huge country at that.

At least the workers laboring in Egypt knew that they had rocks to build with. But as the wall started to grow across China, finding stuff to build it with was often a problem. So what do you build a big, high, strong wall with if you have no rocks? Dirt!

When there were no rocks, workers built huge wooden, rectangular frames and filled them with shovelfuls of dirt. Then they climbed into the frames and start jumping up and down until each layer of dirt was tamped down to exactly four inches thick. It took hours just to do *that*.

Fill, tamp, fill, tamp, fill, tamp, until the wall was tall enough—a wall 16 feet high and built four inches at a time. Chinese stories say that for every block placed in the wall, a worker died. More than a million people perished—from disease, injuries, and the terrible working conditions—during the building of the Great Wall.

Dynasties come and go. After the Qin came the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–8 C.E.). The Han added tall watchtowers to the wall, each spaced within sight range of the next. On the top level of the towers, fires burned 24 hours a day.

But they weren't wood-fueled.

MYTH-
CONCEPTION

WALLS OF BODIES

You may have heard that the Great Wall is full of the bodies of dead laborers. But using dead bodies to fill the space would have made the wall weaker, since a decomposing body takes up less and less space as flesh-eating critters nibble away at it. And many people believe that the Great Wall is the only man-made structure visible from outer space. But you can tell them that's absolute rubbish. Lies! All lies.