

We had a very adventurous March gathering at Carla's. We were transported to Mongolia! Our first clue that we were somewhere else was the "ger" (home on the Mongolian steppe) that had replaced Carla's living room.

First of all, the book. We read Chasing Courage: Coming of Age in the Mongolian Steppe by Karin Jensen. Twelve-year old Nergui returns for the summer to his family home on the steppe from the monastery school in Kharkorin to find his father very ill. Racing against the clock he must travel to a nearby town on horseback to ask the local doctor to drive to his family's ger to save his father. The steppe sets the stage. Wolves and malicious spirits are on the prowl, and trials await in the unknown town, adding to the dangers on a quest that will test the limits of Nergui's courage. We all enjoyed this glimpse into Mongolian life and compared how children in our society would have handled such a challenge. Our two cultures are so very different.

Karin Jensen, the author, travels to remote places all over the world and writes young adult fiction about how people there live. Carla also recommended a book, The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt. The author investigates the collapse of youth mental health in the era of smartphones, social media, and big Tech and suggests a plan for a healthier, freer childhood.

Now to the adventure. We began with snacking on yummy appetizers, chatting, and meeting Carla's three friends who were joining us. After a champagne toast to us in honor of Women's History Month, Carla explained the game the Mongolian children play with animal bones and talked about the importance of horses to the herders. We even got to pick our own little Mongolian leather horse to take home. Lunch was then served at a table beautifully-decorated with mementos from Carla and Glenn's trip to Mongolia last year and special sayings from the book. Our main course was a freeze-dried meal. It tied right into the book because the Mongolians have to dry or dehydrate the food they accumulate during the three summer months so it will last them through the other nine months of the year since they don't have refrigerators or freezers. That was accompanied by a fresh fruit cup, bread and butter, and a varied selection of pastries and sweets. Each table place also had several smaller Mongolian gifts like a post card, some currency, and a copied excerpt from a book about Genghis Khan that Glenn read. The final event was the excellent slide show and narration that Carla and Glenn put together to teach us all about Mongolia. It was held inside their "home" (ger). What a special afternoon! A big thank you to Carla and Glenn for all their hard work!

Our next gathering is still a work in progress. Stay tuned.

Happy reading wherever you are!

Hugs,

*Donna*