

Singapore Postscript II – Vietnam and Myanmar (once Burma)

Colleagues,

Why try to re-invent the wheel? Marie keeps a journal on all our mission volunteer junkets. Here's a scaled-down version of her 15 pages on our last two weeks in SE Asia, our visits to Vietnam and Myanmar. For both countries former students, all now pastors, had invited us to come and visit so they could "show and tell." In Vietnam is Ted Engelbrecht, one time Crossings student in Hong Kong(!) and now Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod missionary in Hanoi.

In Myanmar our hosts were two students from my teaching stint (2002) at the Overseas Ministries Study Center [OMSC] in New Haven CT. Saw Noel is an Anglican priest, Mahn Sayler a Baptist pastor.

What follows is all from Marie.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

VIETNAM

Friday, June 4 – At the Hanoi airport was Ted Engelbrecht to meet us. A taxi took us the 30 km. into town, and Ted kept pointing out new buildings going up all over and saying this

was all just rice fields when they came eight years ago, and even three or four years ago it was mostly open land. Prosperity has taken hold. Motorbikes all over, weaving in and out, not going fast, just hundreds of them. He took us to the Huyen Trang Hotel on Hang Trong street. After we got settled we went for lunch and then to his office at the National Institute of Nutrition. He says he's doing "mainly Matthew 25 mission work," a wide spectrum of social ministry. He's also pastor at the only Lutheran church in Hanoi. At the NIN we met most of the team he works with and directs with Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod seed money. Dr. Tu Ngu is the physician-genius who founded the project, and he gave us a Power Point presentation of the different parts of the work. The main emphasis is to reduce the mortality rate of infants out in the villages by improving the knowledge of the mothers. They hold classes for "To Be Mothers" who actually are not yet married. The general assumption is that as soon as a girl is married she'll get pregnant. Grandparents are especially keen on that. They learn later on how to prepare good food for weaned infants from the available garden vegetables. The program has a VAC acronym, V for garden, A for fishpond, and C for animals (I think that's right). They get good vegetables from the garden, protein from the fish and the pigs and chickens, which in turn fertilize the garden. The problem in Vietnam's rice-only cuisine has always been malnourishment, they told us, but now with more prosperity it's getting to be overnourishment—much of it from junk food.

The nutrition team divides up the area around Hanoi, and Ted concentrates on villages near the mountains about 3 hours away, evaluating and helping people learn good nutrition. Other members of the team work with other villages in the same way. Another program is ESL, teaching English to villagers to help them get good jobs.

Ed offered to relieve Ted of preaching on Sunday if he wanted, and he readily consented.

Saturday, June 5 – *Ted took us to the Temple of Literature first of all. It's where men in past centuries would study all the prescribed ancient literature in order to become mandarins, the educated ones who could run the country. It has five courtyards divided by walls with different styles of gates, each with up and down steps. As Ted explained the education and the worship of the ancients he found analogies with our Christian worship here and there, most interesting.*

One larger building toward the back of the complex had chairs facing a stage, where we got in on a musical performance with old instruments. One had a single string that the performer would pluck here and there to make a melody, and the other hand wobbled a thin curved rod extending up from the end to make the vibrato. Another had a kind of dulcimer, and there were various bamboo xylophones. One instrument consisted of horizontal hollow bamboo pieces of various lengths, and the performer would clap her hands in front of them to make a tone. I sat in the front row to take photos, and at one point a couple of singers holding straw hats came down and put a hat on my head and brought me up front with them.

>From there we went past Ho Chi Minh's tomb, a sterile sort of block, and we saw a line of people, mostly children, standing to get in to see him. His wish was to be cremated, we read, but the people wouldn't stand for that. Nearby is the presidential palace, but "Uncle Ho" didn't live there. Elsewhere on the grounds he built a modest little cabin where he actually lived. Ted pointed out other government buildings, including the prime minister's house. The taxi stopped at the vestiges of the "Hanoi Hilton," the (in-)famous military prison right in the middle of town for American soldiers during the war.

For the afternoon we were at the Water Puppet Theatre for the 5:15 show. Here a little red house and pond are the stage with the musicians at the side. The people stand in the water behind a screen and manipulate the puppets with sticks underneath, making them move from one side to another and do things with their arms, etc. It's an entertainment that has its origin in farm communities to give themselves something to do when the rice was all planted and they just had to wait for it to grow. It must be very popular, since evidently they do four shows every day.

Sunday, June 6 – *After a continental breakfast we took a taxi to the Hanoi International Church, which worships in a meeting room at the back of the large La Thanh Hotel. Maybe 25 people were there from several countries, including the administrative attaché from the Austrian Embassy. Ed preached. It was Trinity Sunday. He focused the lectionary texts on the Trinity as “the Gospel-way to talk about God,” not a mathematical puzzle to “just” believe, but actually Good News to trust. Communion distribution was unusual. Ted celebrated sitting down behind the altar table, and we filed up to take a piece of bread Ted had broken, either dipping it into one of the three chalices of wine, or sipping from the middle one.*

For lunch we went to the Engelbrecht house again, then a taxi back to the hotel about 3:00 and we took a nap. Another taxi came at 6:30 to take us to the Nha liang Van Tue restaurant, where Dr. Tu Ngu was hosting a party for the team and all us visitors. Tomorrow one of his staff, a woman named Quyen, will take us out in the country to see what the Ted and the NIN do.

Monday, June 7 – *There was no hot water for our showers this morning, but the breakfast was good. At 9:00 Quyen came. The “company” car with driver took us north out of the city, past the airport and through the countryside.*

We finally stopped at a village in the commune (a commune can have 5 or 6 villages) named Xuan Giang. Our first place to visit was the village clinic, where we sat down at a conference table with the director, the physician and two nurses, with Quyen interpreting for us. Soon three more men came, the president of the local Communist party whose name was Lu, the president of the people's committee whose name was Liu, and the people's committee vice president. There are 1000 households, about 5000 people, in the commune, which covers an area of about 561 hectares. Land is divided between the households equally according to need, one sau per person in the family, which is 360 sq. meters in the north part of the country, though it would be only 240 in the south (27 saus = 1 hectare = 2.5 acres). Ed asked a lot of farm questions, explaining his farm background in the states.

Ed asked about global capitalism coming around the corner, whether that is making any difference in their philosophy here. The answer: not really. In answer to another question, we learned that the people's committee manages the use of land, but the party leaders make the big decisions.

Each of the three officials is about 50 years old, and all of them were soldiers in the "American war." They acknowledged things were different then, but now they don't hold much memory of the war. Now they want to learn from the American economy and benefit from American projects that are so helpful. Ted does not have lots of funds to work with, but his dedication to the folks has made him dear to everybody we met.

We then walked to the farmyard and home of Mr. An and found it probably quite a bit bigger than places we'd walked past – all inside the village walls. That may be because he has more people to feed. The home is long, with a porch the whole length. Doors were pulled back, so in effect the whole front

was open. Shoes were left on the porch, as usual.

Shortly after we sat down the women served food. Quyen and I were the only women among all the men eating there; evidently the family's women ate in the kitchen.

Mr. An explained that usually there are two candidates for an official position like people's committee president, and he was elected for about 12 years, I think. Mr. An has three sons. The farm will go to the oldest son, and when the other sons marry they will ask the committee for land for themselves. The oldest also is expected to care for the parents. Ed mentioned that the yields on his two brothers' American farms. The men agreed that would be about three times as much yield as here.

When it was their turn for questions, they asked (as several other people have also asked us) Do you live with any of your children? No, we live by ourselves. Do the children help us? No, actually we have been able to help them. Do families come together often? Are Americans afraid to come to Vietnam? Mr. An said he was in the army six years, but now that's not important, not even the fact that the Vietnamese won against the Americans.

We left the village about 1:00 and returned to the hotel about an hour later. The staff gave us a message that Dr. Tu Ngu and his wife wanted to come as soon as we returned in order to say goodbye. So we stayed in the lobby until they arrived a few minutes later. They thanked us for coming, hoped we would remember them and their work, and gave us a present of a framed tile painted with a scene of old Hanoi buildings.

Tuesday, June 8 – The hotel ordered a taxi for us to catch our early flight back to Singapore.

YANGON, MYANMAR

Thursday, June 10 – We flew from Singapore to Yangon via Bangkok (Thailand). Arriving at our hotel after dark we contacted our friends Saw Noel and Mahn Sayler by phone. **Friday, June 11** – They joined us for breakfast at our hotel. They're happy to see us. They are both from the Karen people group (now spelled Kayin), but two different branches, so to speak, which is why the title before their name differs. Mahn is "mister" for the Pwo Kayin group, Saw for the Sgaw Kayin group. Sayler is Baptist and Noel is Anglican. What amused us when we first met them two years ago in New Haven, CT is that Baptist Sayler always wore a clerical collar, and Anglican Noel never did.

We learned that Noel is a past executive secretary of the Myanmar Council of Churches. He invited us to his church, St. Barnabas, for Sunday service at 8:00. It will be a special service, being St. Barnabas commemoration day (it's really today), and the archbishop will come to do a confirmation and preach. We agreed to do that, and Sayler indicated he might be able to join us there. Sayler is not pastoring a congregation here right now, but has been sent to a congregation in Bangkok, where he's been for the past four months. He's back in Yangon now in order to get his visa renewed. It's only because he was in Bangkok that he could contact us by e-mail. In Myanmar the internet only reaches as far as the country's borders, no further. I don't know how they can limit that, but they do. The government is very restrictive.

Both Sayler and Noel were appalled that their breakfasts cost us \$8 US each. They said there were lots of other places where a breakfast wouldn't cost so much.

We first went to see the Anglican seminary, Holy Cross Theological College. There we sat down at a table and talked with Mark Sumandu (I think), the principal and later toured

the campus. Holy Cross has 12 faculty and 54 students, about 25% of whom are from the Karen language group. The main churches in Yangon are quite ecumenical, though there are also many “paragroups” there. The Lutheran Bethlehem Church, the only Lutheran church in town, has a membership mostly Tamil Indians, from the colonial days when the British “imported” workers from India. Only 6% of the 55 million people in Myanmar are Christian, most of them Baptists living in Chin state, and also among the Karens in the delta area southwest of Yangon.

>From there we went to the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary. There we sat again at a long table and talked with Thramu Stella Min, who got her M.Th. from the Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong in 2001. She now teaches Christian education and counseling here. There are about 1000 theology students in Yangon now, most of them here at the Karen Baptist Seminary. Instruction is in English, though at other seminaries it’s in Burmese.

Saturday, June 12 – Sayler had left us directions to give to a taxi driver to get to his Baptist compound, and he had marked the location on our map. Unfortunately, as Sayler and Noel admit, people in Myanmar are never taught how to read a map, so showing him ours meant nothing to our taxi driver. And the written address didn’t help either. As we passed what we thought was the right place according to the map, a man at the side of the road waved frantically, but our driver just passed him by. So where’s he going? With gestures he assured us there’s an entrance around the corner, and it turned out he was right, as far as that goes. But the dirt road wandered a bit among houses and he obviously didn’t know where he was to go. He stopped and asked a couple times. Finally we got to Mahn Sayler’s house, close to the entrance we were supposed to go to. Quite a run-around. Since we still had no Myanmar money, Sayler’s wife paid the taxi driver. Sayler himself was at the

compound entrance waiting for us.

Well, finally everything was straightened out and we went into the Sayler home. It's a low house with dark wood walls and a dark rusty corrugated roof. Well, it may have seemed darker than it was, since the tall trees provided shade. It used to be an individual house, Sayler told us, but when the Baptists needed another home for another employee, they added a new section so that it's now a duplex. When Sayler said another family lives next to them, I looked at the dividing wall and realized it didn't even reach the ceiling (which is the roof).

We sat on cushioned wooden chairs in the front room, where the wall we faced had several photo portraits of the Sayler family in various years. Sayler talked about the Baptist history in Myanmar. The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society printed a Karen translation of the Bible as early as 1836, I think. The founding missionary was G.L. (?) Braden. In 1909 this mission compound was established for the Pwo Karen people, separated by then from the Sgaw Karen s because the language is different. It's a large compound, with two churches, some seminary buildings, a conference center, and homes. The umbrella organization is the Association of Baptist Churches in Burma (the name has to change to Myanmar). The compound is about 12 acres, but the government has taken some acres away for the railroad on one side and Ahlone Street on the other. In addition, in 1962 all mission schools were taken over by the government.

Sayler has a son and two daughters that he's supporting. The 29-year-old son and the 27-year-old daughter work for Youth Christian Endeavor, but they get no salary. The 24-year-old stays home and helps her mother.

Sayler's younger brother sat next to him opposite us, and we

turned our attention to him. His name is Rev. Saw Thein Aung Htay. He's pastor of the Baptist congregation in Tanggyi, their home village, quite a distance west of Yangon. Sayler's brother is also one of about 90 missionaries the Baptists have sent to Kayin state, close to the Thailand border, and he goes there some months at a time. There are insurgents there who once put him on their hit list, but he went to them and explained what he was doing, thus kept his life intact. Four workers have been killed, though. They give at least four years of education to the children in these remote areas and run orphanages as well. Many have been converted. Peace talks are taking place now, so the situation is cool, he told us. The Chin state used to be peaceful, but now insurgents are operating there.

Their grandfather was a missionary to the Lahu people in the southern state of Shan. Mahn Sayler came from their home town, 4712 feet above sea level, down to Yangon to do his B.Th. at MIT. Back home he became the youth pastor in the mother church for five years. He was chosen to be the state youth director for three years, then youth director for the southern Shan state, and since 2001 he's been here.

There are about 600,000 Baptists in Myanmar, and if you include the non-baptized (remember they have believers' baptism, not for infants) it's 700,000. They are quite ecumenical, exchanging seminary facilities with other denominations, for instance. They have seven Baptist seminaries in Yangon, 35 in the whole country. No European missionaries are left, although some come as visiting professors for short terms.

All this time that we were sitting in the front room the weather outside was sunny and pleasant. Now as we rose to start touring the compound it started to rain. At the seminary building we looked at the library and some classrooms. By then it was raining very hard, so we sat on some classroom chairs on

the open corridor upstairs to wait it out and watch. From there we had a good view of the historic church across the way. It's over 100 years old, built of black wood with a corrugated roof (not original). After a while of watching others brave the weather, we left too, to walk over to the church. The sanctuary was on the second floor, and behind the altar was a banner with words in Karen, English, and Burmese. While we were there the choir members came in to start their practice with a student leader. Sayler asked them to sing something for us, and they did, with their loud, clear voices. Ed spoke a couple minutes to tell them about us and why we were there, and then we two sang "Now may he who from the dead."

The rain continued. This was monsoon rain for sure. Downstairs in a meeting room we met the pastor of the church. He told us there were about 6-700 church members, with a Sunday attendance of about 400-500. Right now there is a Youth for Christ leadership training program going on. A woman pastor from upper Burma, widowed about three years, talked with us a while too. She was here with her church's young people for the Singapore-led program. She's been the interpreter, and commented that it's hard to understand the Singapore English sometimes. Don't we know! Her salary is not the usual 5000 Kyat [= US\$5! yes five!] per month, but between 1500 and 2000 per month. Her three children work at jobs, she said, and her sister in Australia sends money, so they manage.

We had a spiffy lunch with the Saylers. Way too much. After eating we toured the house. Down five wooden steps was a room with two woven mats and a TV set, and a kitchen with a one-burner tabletop stove and three or four electric crock pots. So little equipment made such a feast! Outside, protected from the rain by a big sheet of the ubiquitous woven nylon in red, white and blue, were clotheslines and a new latrine. There are three bedrooms, one for the daughters, a middle one for the parents,

and a third for the son. In the hallway between stood a dresser and some other shelves, and a small refrigerator. Sayler explained that the grace of God and OMSC made possible both the fridge and the TV. He had mentioned when we were talking about salaries what a shock it was at OMSC to receive a monthly stipend of \$550 US. He'd never seen so much money. At first he thought it was terrible to have so much, so he gave half of it away. Evidently he either thought better of that or managed to save a lot even with the half he had left.

We finally learned Sayler's wife's name, too, namely, Nancy, "like Reagan's wife," he said. She was a year ahead of Sayler at MIT, and is now in charge of Christian education, especially for children. She's very quiet, but looks completely competent. She certainly cooks well.

It was time to go back to the hotel, but by now the area in front of the house was really flooded and deep. They called a taxi, and when it came it backed up almost to the front doorstep. Still, in order to get into the back seat, we had to step in the flood up to our ankles. My black shoes of course got completely soaked. Na ja.

We'd came to Yangon with logistical help from long-time friend Jim Rimbach, LCMS missionary prof at the Luth. Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. In a sense we tagged along with Jim, who was making his annual visit to LTS alumni in Myanmar. He made local arrangements for us even though we had our own agenda with Sayler and Noel. At evening we went down to the lobby to join the rest of Jim's crew to go out to dinner, Jim's treat. Finally about 8:00 everyone had gathered from hither and yon and we crowded into two taxis, which took us rather far out to a White Elephant Hotel. We found out when we got there that it's just a hotel, with a dining room for its own guests, but they would fix up a dinner for us. We got drinks right away,

but then waited a long time for the food. Once it came we were glad we were there, good and tasty as it was: crispy fried pork balls, sweet and sour chicken that was just right, crispy prawn balls, a dish of mushrooms and baby corn, rice and maybe more that I've forgotten.

With so many gathered there, most of Jim's friends who were LTS grads, plus our guests Sayler and his wife, Jim had asked Ed to give a 10-minute talk on Lutheran hermeneutics, sort of to "sing for his supper." Which he did, standing at one end of the long table. It was quite winsome, and several expressed appreciation for the good insights.

Sunday, June 13 – *We ate breakfast early, and at 7:30 Sayler was at the desk waiting for us. With him we taxied to St. Barnabas Church, where Noel is pastor. He sat us down in the front row, right in front of the pulpit. It's a small brick church, just a simple rectangle with the altar up a couple steps from the floor. The archbishop, whose name was Samuel San Sichtey, was there in his red cope and miter to celebrate the congregation's namesake day—St. Barnabas Day having been on Friday. His robes reached the floor, but when he later knelt we could see he was barefoot, as was everyone else of the robed clergy.*

Noel translated the basic thoughts of the sermon to Ed and he passed them on to me in whispers. But the real star of the service, we sensed, was the archdeacon, who was imported for this special service. He did the chanting and all the gestures in what must have been the perfectly practiced way for their tradition and language.

Following the eucharist we had lunch with the congregation in the church hall. Most people ate on the floor at a big low table, but for the primate and us visitors they set up a

regular table and chairs, thank goodness. We met Noel's wife and his two daughters.

Afterwards Noel took us sight-seeing to the National Races Village, an acreage where the seven principal races represented in Myanmar had built typical houses (well, typical for the wealthy, evidently) on stilts, with shops underneath each one selling representative crafts from that people group. Myanmar has seven states which are predominantly one people group, and seven divisions where the peoples are mixed. Since Noel is Karen, we spent extra time at the Karen house, and he bought a Karen cloth bag for me.

It turned out to be a hot sunny day, so the black shoes that had gotten soaked in Sayler's flooded compound dried out nicely. But by 3:00 when we got back to the hotel we were plenty tired. We were on our own for the rest of the day, had dinner at the hotel and played a game of Scrabble. Ed still had the Z at the end, so I won!

Monday, June 14 – Noel came for us at 8:00 with a taxi and driver. We went first to see the Lutheran Bethlehem Church. A dark-skinned Tamil man was sweeping the courtyard when we came, and he found the pastor's son Luke for us. His father, parish priest Jenson Andrews, was out of town, but Luke could at least open the church for us. It's a real Swedish-looking church, and the list of all the pastors on the back wall had European names till 1886, then Indian names, and finally in 1961 came a "local ordained priest." The sign out front says they have services in Burmese, Tamil, Telugu and English. Almost all the parishioners are Indian, so some of Jim's friends we've met actually used to think "Lutheran" automatically meant "Indian."

Secondly we went to the most prominent structure in town, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. Built on a hill, its golden shaft rises high

above the surrounding trees and it's lit up at night to emphasize it even more. It's impressive.

Noel instructed the taxi to park close to one of the elevator entrances. The way up for real devotees is by numerous steps, but for the less able they now have four elevators to bring people to the top, one on each side of the square enclosure. We left our shoes at a little stand at street level, then rode the elevator up. Once there, Noel realized I still had hose on and said I had to take them off. Everyone must be barefoot. Thus down to the basics, we entered the sacred precincts and walked around.

The golden giant sits in the middle of the square, a huge inverted bell shape that has nothing inside, just a solid block of stone. Around the bottom are numerous white marble covered Buddha statues and altars, maybe 15 feet high. Interspersed with them are even higher and more elaborate house-shaped structures covering bigger statues, all covered with gold. Noel assured us that it's all real gold, not just yellow paint. The gold mines are in northern Myanmar. People congregated in front of different altars, often the simpler places where there's an open marble statue. We saw several people at some of these places draping flower leis around the statues' necks and pouring water over the statues with hands dipped into a marble basin in front of them. I would guess that each of these actions would improve their karma.

The whole place is immense. Besides the structures at the base of the main inverted bell, there are other large pavilions with other Buddhas at one end where people can worship. We figure each such pavilion was donated by some family or organization. Some were empty, some had people gathered to worship, in some a few people would be sitting and chatting. At one such building a man was sitting and holding a string of large beads in

outstretched hands, most of the string in a coil on the marble floor, a sort of enlarged rosary. It took us an hour just to walk around the central structure. We did pause at one point when Noel mentioned that his whole family is Buddhist, and several of his relatives are monks. When he goes home to visit, he said, he wears his white alb to show that he's just as much a Christian monk as they are Buddhist monks. There's no problem in his family that he's Christian, but he knows many for whom it is a problem. Ed and Noel spent some time discussing how one can approach Buddhists with the offer of the Gospel. Noel says he knows theoretically all the good things to say, but it's terribly hard when it's your family you're talking to.

Back down and in our proper hose and shoes, we took the taxi to the Anglican headquarters compound, where we visited the former archbishop.

Next we went to the Myanmar Council of Churches building, where we visited the office where Noel used to sit as executive secretary. The person we talked to for quite a while was Timothy Pa Hrang. He's the director of mission and evangelism, and eagerly talked about a coming conference where 150 people will be coming together from 13 denominations and 9 cooperating bodies. There are more denominations in Myanmar, and there's hope that some more will join the MCC at some point. But they already cooperate in special programs. As for missions within Myanmar, he told us that the Rakhine people seemed to have the most difficulty in becoming Christian, fearing they will lose their beloved culture if they do. The 52 different kinds of Chin have difficulty too, but there are six church bodies among them anyway. In October Timothy will have a program aimed at denominational mission secretaries, to help them have good relationships at that level in the hope that no one will steal the sheep of another.

Timothy himself had been pastor in the Burmese Division for three years, and now there are nine Baptist congregations there. Then he became mission director for the Chin diaspora, Chin people dispersed in other states. Now he's been in the MCC for 7 years. We get the impression that Christians of all sorts here know other Christians no matter what their denomination.

At evening Noel took us for a really big farewell dinner to the Karaweik Palace Restaurant. It's on the same lake as our hotel, but actually out on the lake. It's built as if the restaurant sits on the backs of two water birds that look to me somewhat like huge ducks.

As we parted we handed him two of the Christian Art tapestries that Jim Rimbach had brought from Hong Kong for us—the work of China's #1 Christian artist, He Qi—one for Noel or his church, and one for Sayler and/or his church. One was the Lord's Supper and the other was the Good Samaritan. Noel began wondering out loud which should go to whom. His Anglican church celebrates the Lord's Supper often and the Baptists only once a month, so maybe the Lord's Supper one should go to Sayler as encouragement. On the other hand, while the Anglicans are so taken up with proper liturgy, they often neglect the good deeds of compassion, so maybe the Good Samaritan should go to his Anglican church.

We also gave Noel all the rest of the Myanmar money that we had, about \$20 US. That was such a small amount for us, but for him it was about three months' salary.

Tuesday, June 15 – Departure day. With the purchases Ed had made we knew we would probably have trouble getting everything stuffed into our two roll-ons. So as planned we piled the clothes that would no longer fit into our bags on the bed—simply to leave them there. One of the young cleaning women

came to check if everything was OK, so Ed explained that the pile was hers if she wanted it. Her eyes lit up and she ran to get a piece of paper and a pen. Apparently to verify that she hadn't stolen them, she said: "Please write your name on this and your room number," and pointing to the badge on her blouse "here's my name." So Ed wrote that the clothes we had left belonged to her, and he signed it with his name and room number. We could only deduce that her exhuberance signalled her patent poverty. The hotel van came at 8:30 and took us to the airport. Thai Air took us to Bangkok and then back to Singapore.