Chapter 34
Singapore 2012



Journal of Trip to Singapore, June 29 – July 7, 2012

Sunday, July 1, 2012, Singapore

This is my first time to Singapore, somewhat surprisingly given its importance and the number of times I've visited other places in Asia. I've been looking forward to it ever since my former student, Pao-Li Chang, invited me a few months ago. Pao-Li is on the faculty at Singapore Management University (SMU), where she recently got tenure. I'll be one of three invited speakers for the Asia Pacific Trade Seminars 2012 (APTS), an annual conference that moves among universities in Asia. Somebody, presumably SMU, seems to have a lot of money for this, as they paid for me to travel business class to get here, and they have put me up in a very nice hotel, on the top floor -- the "Club Floor" -- which includes perks that rooms lower down don't have.

The trip here, though very comfortable, was also very long. I flew first 4 hours to Los Angeles, then 10 hours to Tokyo, and finally 6 hours to Singapore. The last two flights were in new Boeing 777s, with business class seats that are arranged at an angle so that they can lie completely flat. What's best is that each has a small, padded ledge that stays in place for your feet when the seat is flat, and that acts as an ottoman even when the seat is upright. For someone like me who likes to put their feet up when sitting, it's much more comfortable than normal seats, especially when waiting to take off. With the flat seats, I slept a good deal on both flights, though that didn't stop me from sleeping still more once I arrived here last night after midnight.

I don't suppose I expected Singapore to be very exotic, since I've heard that it is very modern and very developed. Nonetheless I was surprised when I exited customs to find a Burger King on my left, a Starbucks on my right, and a Quiznos in the distance.

Singapore was a British colony, and its multi-ethnic population speaks good English, but except for driving on the left, it seems more of an American outpost than British.

I checked the weather forecast before I traveled and saw that the temperature would be almost 90 F every day, with rain every day as well. 90 is actually cooler than in Michigan when I left, where it reached 100. And it turns out the rain does come daily, but only briefly. The humidity is high, though.

My taxi to the hotel had a driver who was eager to tell me all that I should see while I'm here. Pao-Li will be showing me around, so I may not need to plan this myself, but it was useful to hear what he had to say. There's a huge new park being constructed, the first 1/3 of which just opened a few days ago. He said it includes plants from all over the world, some of which require cooler temperatures than Singapore's, and so they have to be indoors. The idea of a partly air-conditioned park is new to me, and I suspect I will welcome it.

The road from the airport into the center of the city, where my hotel is, was a divided highway. Nothing special about that, one might think, but both the median of the highway and the outside edges had nicely trimmed hedges plus rows of large trees. The tops of the trees extend out over the highway providing what would have been shade had this not been night. Even at night, it looked rather like an Ann Arbor street. The trees were massive and appeared to be quite old. It's hard to imagine how that could be, since you'd think the highway itself couldn't be that old. Perhaps trees just grow fast here. In any case, it was a unique setting for a highway.

As we neared the city center, we were also not far from the water. My driver pointed out a huge Ferris Wheel, which he said is the largest in the world, surpassing the one in London. He also pointed out what he described as a ship high in the air. It was a structure shaped like a ship, perched across the tops of three tall buildings. He said it is the site of a garden in the sky that I will have to visit. [I've lost whatever photos I took there in 2012, but I include the photo below, including both the Ferris Wheel and the Hotel with what looks like a ship on top, from a later trip.]



City view, including "ship" atop 3 buildings, from trip 2017

My hotel, the Rendezvous Grand Hotel Singapore, is about as nice as I could imagine. From outside it looks rather old, but inside it is as new and up to date as one could want.



Rendezvous Grand Hotel Singapore, from Web 2025

There are electrical outlets placed wherever one might want them (except in the bathroom, where I'd have liked to use the hair dryer; probably to keep me from electrocuting myself), and they all have the multiple holes that will accommodate every possible style of plug. The room has both Wi-Fi and cable internet, the latter because the former doesn't always work as well as one might like, I was told. The TV has plenty of channels, including many in English (BBC, CNN, etc.), plus movies of all hues. There's a console next to the bed that controls the lights, the clock, and the air conditioning. The bathroom has a Japanese-style toilet with heated seat and nozzles to wash you, front and back (really!), and an air jet to dry you afterwards. Perhaps, for once, I'll work up the courage to try this. [I did, but I'll wait for you to ask before I tell you more, except that I liked it.]

I set my alarm to get me up, since I didn't want to miss breakfast, even though I thought that after all my sleeping on the planes I wouldn't need it. But I did. And the breakfast was worth it – a large buffet, with both the cold cereal and the hot coffee that I missed when I visited Beijing a month ago. While eating, I was approached by two trade economists who recognized me from prior conferences, but whom I only barely recognized myself. I should probably take a more careful look at the list of conference participants to see who else I may be meeting.

After breakfast I got a map from the concierge and went for a walk. It was hot and humid, but not unbearably so. Not far from the hotel, I found a shopping mall that had a Starbucks in it, so I took the opportunity for another large cup of coffee. By the time I finished, it was raining outside, so I explored the mall as I waited for it to stop. It did stop, and I continued my walk. I can't say that I saw all that much of interest. The hotel is at one end of Orchard Road, which is said to be the major shopping district and full of shopping malls. I think if I had walked further, I'd have seen many more, including lots of high-end brands that people come here to buy. But I didn't see the need for that just yet, so I doubled back and plan to spend the rest of the afternoon here at the hotel.

At 7:30, another of the invited speakers, Jeff Bergstrand from Notre Dame, and I will be meeting for dinner. He's been here a few days, so I expect he'll know his way around better than I do. Then tomorrow morning I give my talk, which is all I'll have to do in return for all the money they've spent on my visit. I'm glad that Singapore looks like a pretty well-off place, or I'd be feeling guilty about being treated so well.

Thursday, July 5

The conference went through Monday and Tuesday. I spent much of yesterday seeing some of the sights with Pao-Li, and today, so far, I've visited World Scientific Publishers and had lunch with them. Now I'm back in the office that they've given me at SMU, where I'll be seeing some faculty.

When I met Jeff for dinner on Sunday night, he had several suggestions for where we might eat, based on the several days that he'd already spent here. The most interesting was a Swedish restaurant that he had come across, in the Arab section of town. That appealed to me, so we took a taxi there and had dinner. It was a small restaurant, not fancy at all, and catering mainly to locals of Arab descent, or so it seemed. The food was said to be halal, the Muslim equivalent of kosher. Jeff and I both had Swedish meatballs with lingonberries and potatoes, a photo of which I then posted on Facebook. I'm glad we did it, because eating Swedish food in the Arab section of Singapore seems like a unique experience worth doing. But the meatballs were only OK, not great, and I've since learned that one can get better ones at either of the two Ikea stores that are here.



Swedish meatballs, from trip.

There's not a lot to say about the conference, which was much like many others I've attended. I was the opening speaker, after introductions by the president of SMU and then the Dean. Coffee breaks were well provided with good coffee as well as other drinks and eats. Except for the plenary sessions, at one of which I spoke and two others on the second day, the papers were presented in parallel sessions that one had to choose which to attend. I had no difficulty at all staying awake through all of them, which is a pretty good testimony to their quality. They included several by trade economists that I've known before, plus a couple by Pao-Li, one co-authored with her husband whom I met for the first time.

Lunch was provided buffet style, with most people eating while standing. But fortunately there were enough seats – couches and chairs – for those of us who preferred to sit, and I did. The food was uniformly delicious. I'm not sure exactly what cuisine I was eating, since Singapore seems to merge lots of the neighboring cuisines, including Malaysian, Indonesian, and of course Chinese since a significant fraction of the population of Singapore came here from China in earlier centuries. We had a more formal dinner that evening at a nice restaurant on the bay, and that too was buffet style. Diners were provided both knives and forks and chopsticks, and it seems that the locals use the former

as much or more than the latter. It depends on the way the food happens to be prepared and what will work most easily.

On Tuesday I took advantage of the parallel sessions to skip a few and work in my office. With parallel sessions nobody can be surprised if you are not in the room, since you may be in another. I only attended for the particular papers and people that I was interested in. That worked very well.

In the evening, we were on our own for dinner, but the organizer, Davin Chor, coordinated for a large group of us all to go to a reasonably priced restaurant, where he ordered for us, and we all split the bill. When I mentioned this to somebody later and showed them a photo of the place, they said that it was a "chicken rice" restaurant. Apparently chicken rice is a standard food in Singapore. I gather that it is rice that has been cooked in chicken broth, then mixed with some bits of vegetable. It is mainly rice, and tastes better than just plain rice.

It was at this dinner that the person next to me explained that he was not one of the conference participants but rather a friend of Davin's from graduate school in the US, Harvard, I think. I asked what he did, and he said he's in the Singapore air force. I was surprised to learn that Singapore even has an air force, but I've since learned that it has quite a large set of armed forces, with compulsory service for at least the men. Their objective is to remain prepared to resist an invasion from their neighbors, Malaysia and Indonesia.



Raffles Hotel, from trip.

After dinner on Tuesday, several of us went to the Long Bar at the Raffles Hotel. Raffles seems to be the oldest and most famous name in Singapore, Raffles himself having been a British guy who founded the city of Singapore back in the early 1800's. The hotel named after him is from near the end of that century, and it is very famous, not least for the introduction of the drink Singapore Sling. The five of us each ordered one of these. It's a pink drink, the recipe for which online has grenadine, gin, sweet and sour mix, club soda, and cherry brandy. The recipe on the bar's menu was much longer than this, but perhaps it listed the ingredients for sweet and sour mix separately. It was very tasty, somewhat sweet, and not noticeably alcoholic. We each might have been tempted to drink more than one, but each one



Singapore Slings, from trip.

cost more than twice what we'd each paid for dinner, so we didn't. I'm sure the price is due to location, and it would be much cheaper elsewhere.

Yesterday, I came over early to my office in SMU, just across the street from my hotel, and used my office, where I am now. Pao-Li met me here at 10:30, along with her husband, Tomoki. The three of us then went to the Peranakan Museum. It was raining a bit when we started out, so we took umbrellas. But that we walked most of the way there underground. The elevator from near my office, in the 5th floor site of the School of Economics, went down to an underground concourse that extends under all the group of buildings of the university, so by winding our way through it we got to the other end of campus which was just a block or so from the museum. By then the rain had stopped. Along the way, this concourse was lined with places to study and other facilities for students, and there were groups of students engaged in various activities. All was well lit and, of course, air conditioned.



With Pao Li and her family, from 2017 trip

The Peranakan Museum was recommended to me by Linda Lim, a Michigan colleague from Singapore. She said that it would be uniquely about Singapore, rather than more generically Asian as other museums. She was right. It turns out that Peranakan is the name given to the portion of the population who are descended from traders that settled here without any wives and therefore married local Malay women. They are therefore part Malay and part Chinese, Indian, or some other culture whose traders visited. Most were Chinese, but there were a fair number of both Hindu Indians and Muslim Indians as well, so the Peranakan are a very mixed group, without a single religion. But they seem

to have developed a distinct culture here, and that was what was on display at the museum.



Peranakan Museum, from Wikipedia 2025

I asked Pao-Li if they'd been to this museum before, and she said yes. But they'd only been here with their small children, who became impatient if they read too much of the explanatory signage, so they were looking forward to doing that now. Because of this, I tried to read more signs than I might have otherwise, as I too can be impatient in museums.

The signs were always in three languages, English, Chinese, and Malay. I noticed that, while I read an English sign, Pao-Li would read the one in Chinese, and she always seemed to finish before me. As a native Chinese speaker, though fluent in English, she finds the Chinese easier. But she also insists that Chinese is just an easier language to read, and I suspect that may be true. Instead of looking at whole words, as we do, they just look at single characters. And I suppose that, once you've learned the characters, they are as easy to recognize as the faces of your friends.

Almost a whole floor was devoted to the costumes and rituals of marriage, which was a two-week affair with lots of symbolic gifts. Peranakan brides were expected to be virgins, and the marriage bed included a white cloth that was examined each morning to test that. Apparently if a bride flunked the test, the marriage could be invalidated. I have some doubts about the accuracy of that test.

Other rooms displayed the typical furniture of the Peranakan, a kitchen and other rooms, and the rituals used when someone died. I think I understood that the widow or widower was expected to wear what looked rather like a Ku Klux Klan robe and hood, but tan-colored, for several years.

After the Peranakan Museum the three of us went to the nearby National Museum, where we met several others from the conference for lunch in a museum restaurant. While we waited for others to arrive, Pao-Li, Tomoki and I had coffee and chatted. I learned a good deal more about them and their family, which includes two small children [the photo above is from 5 years later]. Tomoki is from Japan and Pao-Li from Taiwan. I gather that Singapore is a very welcoming place for families of mixed heritage, and they seem very happy here.

There were four others joining us for lunch, including the conference organizer, Davin, plus the dean and associate dean of the School of Economics, and one of the other plenary speakers, Wolfgang Keller from University of Colorado. I'm afraid our conversation dealt a good deal with comparisons of the way universities are run, so I

won't go into that here. The food, as always, was excellent. Some was served in the Chinese manner on a central Lazy Susan, while servers brought other individual dishes to our places.



Cloud Forest and Flower Dome, from Wikimedia 2025

After lunch Pao-Li and I alone went to Gardens by the Bay. That's the new park that my taxi driver had mentioned and that had opened just last week. It's a remarkable undertaking. I gather that it is intended to be the home for representative plants from all over the world, including from environments very unlike Singapore. For that purpose, it has, so far, two huge conservatories that maintain climates appropriate for certain plants. Both are glass domes, but not dome-shaped. The first we entered was the Cloud Forest, which captures the climate that exists high up on mountains where they extend into the clouds. The plants are in a constant mist, as were we to some extent, as we made our way down a winding aerial path from the top of a mountain reached by an elevator. All was pleasantly cool. We learned that as global warming continues, these clouds are being pushed higher and higher on the mountains, many of which will eventually cease to have them at all. The result will be that plants endemic to this climate will become extinct.

More striking in its variety of plants was the Flower Dome. Much of it contained plants from desert climates, including many cacti, some of them gigantic. Seeing the cacti, we were surprised at how cool it was, but we then realized that cacti are not really about heat. They are about the absence of water, which was why they needed to be indoors here, where the climate is so humid. That was only part of the theme of this conservatory, which as its name suggested was full of flowers of many sorts. They were not very well labeled, so I often had little idea what I was seeing, but Pao-Li at least knew how to recognize an orchid (by its leaves), so I learned that there were a huge variety of orchids mixed among the many other species here.

Another feature of the Gardens by the Bay, in the park outside the conservatories, were the Supertrees. These are man-made structures in the shape, roughly, of trees, made of pipes and tubes that extend upward from the ground in a trunk shape and then fan out like giant curved funnels. They range in height from 25 to 50 meters (I just learned that from Wikipedia), so they're big. Two of them have elevators in their trunks, so we rode up in one, then traversed a hanging walkway to another, where we rode down. I'm not sure that these Supertrees have much purpose, except to look at, but the small forest of them is certainly a sight you won't see anywhere else. They have plants growing on them, all the way up, and I expect that in a few more years when those plants have grown further and covered more of the Supertrees, they will look a bit more like trees and less like some industrial installation.

In fairness to the Gardens by the Bay, I should mention that the park also includes lots of more conventional park, with outdoor areas of grass, trees, and other plants. We were not tempted to spend too much time in those parts, since the conservatories offered alternatives to the heat and humidity. But if you just want a nice conventional park, there was plenty of that as well.



Supertrees, in Gardens by the Bay, from Wikipedia 2025

The Gardens by the Bay are just across a road from the Marina Bay Sands Hotel, and there was a walkway over the road to reach it. The Sands is known for its casino in Las Vegas, and it has a casino here as well. But the Sands Hotel, near the casino, is the structure I'd seen on the drive from the airport, three towers with the boat-shaped thing across the top. We paid for tickets to take the elevator up to one end of this and enjoyed looking out at Singapore in almost all directions from it. We were not allowed to go up onto the very top, where the garden and swimming pool were, since those are reserved for guests.

By this time, it was 7:00 PM, much later than I'm sure Pao-Li had planned to be with me. Nonetheless, she was game to do the last thing we had planned, which was a river cruise. I declined that, however, and we caught a taxi back to SMU and I returned to my hotel.

I was tired and didn't want to do anything major for dinner. But I needed to eat something. I was going to walk over to Orchard Road to look for some simple place to eat, but on my way to the elevator from my room, I noticed the Club Lounge that is available for my use. I thought there might be something to eat there, and indeed there was: several different hot snacks, plus fruit and other deserts. That was perfect for my needs, so I didn't need to go out. I went to bed earlier than might have been wise, as I awoke early as well.

This morning, I was to be picked up by Max Phua, the owner of World Scientific Publishing, which published my glossary and the Festschrift volume. I'd met him in Ann Arbor when he visited this spring, and when I mentioned that I'd be visiting Singapore, he asked me to visit the headquarters of his company. I hoped to meet Julia, the woman who did all the editing on my glossary and had done such a good job.



World Scientific, from Web 2025

Max did pick me up, but he told me immediately that Julia was ill and so I wouldn't get to meet her. Too bad. He drove me to his building, told me some things about his

company, gave me a tour of the place, and then took me to lunch together with his wife and one of the people who work for him.

His company publishes about 500 books a year, plus quite a few journals. These days he gets typesetting done in India, where it's cheaper, but otherwise all the work is done in his building here. It's five stories tall and not particularly large. The top two stories are offices with many copy editors, designers, and others working at computers. One floor is a warehouse. And one has all the printers. Some of these are essentially large laser printers, I gathered, which they use for small print runs. The big jobs are done on an offset printer, which I saw. The whole place is stacked high with paper and books in various stages of completion, including ones that have errors that will have to be corrected. It was all very interesting.

Max drives a Porsche. No, not the little sports car that you are picturing, presumably, but a very large SUV that I didn't even know Porsche made. He had two infant seats in the back, since he and his wife have two small children. It was a very nice car, as you can imagine. But I struggled not to hit my head each time I got in. Even though it's a big car, high off the ground, the curvature of the roof apparently reduces the space for the door opening. Perhaps the designers figure that anyone who owns a Porsche would be disappointed if it were too easy to get in and out.

Saturday, July 7

It's just after midnight, and I'll be taking a taxi at 3:30 AM to the airport for my flights home. I've decided not to sleep before that and just catch up on sleep on the flights. I had a good ten hours of sleep last night, as it happened.

Thursday afternoon Max dropped me back at the hotel, and from there I went over to the office where I met with several faculty, interspersed with time to work. It was after 7:00 by the time the last discussion finished, so I didn't do much else that evening. I again ate snacks in the Club Lounge, rather than a full dinner. And I walked over to Orchard Road to see if I could find postcards. I've since learned that most of the malls on Orchard Road are far too upscale to be selling postcards, but I stumbled on one that looked a bit disreputable (it had a condom store, for example, and several massage shops), and in it I found two small shops with miscellany that included postcards. I was able to buy enough for my needs. Then I went back to the hotel and went to bed.

On Friday – what still feels like today – I spent the morning in the Club Lounge writing the postcards. Then late morning I went over to my SMU office and met with Davin for a while before a noon brown-bag seminar that a conference participant from the Netherlands was giving. Pao-Li provided meatball sandwiches from Subway for many of us.

There were two things left that I wanted to do in Singapore. One was the Night Safari, which had been universally recommended. In the hotel I booked a reservation for a tour that would take me there in the evening. The other was to explore Orchard Road and its

shopping malls more fully. I didn't particularly want to shop, especially in the high-end malls that it is known for, but since shopping on Orchard Road seems to be one of the main reasons that people come to Singapore, I felt I should see it.

After I took my leave of SMU, I used the metro ticket that I'd acquired on Wednesday to take the train to the far end of Orchard Road, where the malls begin. Then I worked my way back to the hotel, walking through many floors of several of the malls. It seems that I saw just about every well-known brand in the world, each with its own store, and many with more than one. There were plenty of brands that I'd never heard of as well.

One thing that surprised me was a couple of stores selling Apple products. They had the Apple logo, but they identified themselves as Apple Resellers. The name seems to suggest used products, but they certainly displayed their wares as though everything was new. I didn't, and don't, know what to make of it.

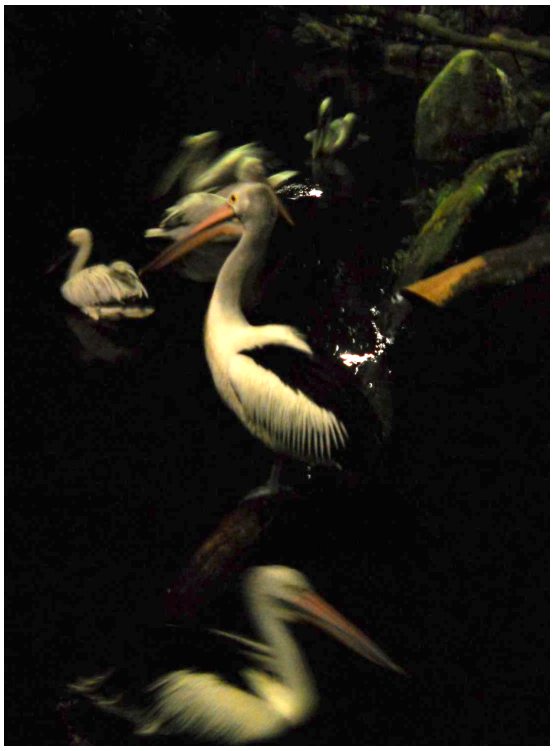
Another store that caught my interest was Yamaha. I noticed it across an atrium in one of the malls and could see that it had pianos, which didn't surprise me (my first piano as an adult was a Yamaha), but it made me want to look more closely. It turned out that there were six or eight more or less connected stores, all selling the Yamaha brand, but with different types of instruments. There was one store of drums, one of guitars, one of keyboards, one of pianos, one of brass and woodwind instruments, and one of violins. There was even a good deal of sheet music in the piano store. I had no idea that Yamaha made all these things. As a former oboe player, I looked for one of those, and found it displayed in a window. It was a "Durable plastic oboe designed for the beginning student" and its price was S$3,300, which is well over US $2,000. Astonishing! How does a kid ever get started in music these days?

Toward the end of my walk, as I neared the hotel, I stopped at the same Starbucks that I'd visited on Sunday. This time I had an iced latte with sugar free vanilla. Just like home.

This evening, then, I went to the Night Safari. This is related to, but separate from, the Singapore Zoo. It takes advantage of the country's location, which provides both a constant climate over the year and a nearly uniform 7:30 PM sunset all year round. A large area some distance from the city has been carved out of the rain forest to be homes for thousands of animals of hundreds of species, focusing especially on ones that will be active after dark. The animals are not caged, but where necessary they are kept away from the people by moats and/or hidden electric fences – or so I was told; I never saw the fences. There are trams that take us through the park on about a 40-minute ride. One can also walk through paved trails. Both take you reasonably close to all sorts of animals. I could have learned a lot, as the tram had a guide explaining things over a sound system. But so many of the people on the tram were talking, many very loudly, that I heard only a small part of what she said.

What's most interesting about this is that so many of the animals were ones I'd never heard of and never seen anything like. Unfortunately, I couldn't see most of them very clearly and could only get a sense of them. I took lots of photos, and I was pleased that

my camera (which I'd just bought before this trip) was able to capture scenes without a flash far better than I'd have thought possible. We were repeatedly told not to use flash, as it would hurt the animals' eyes. However, the animals themselves hardly ever show clearly in my photos, so they aren't worth much.



Night Safari, from trip.

The most memorable part was the bat house. It was enclosed, and to get in and out you passed not only through doors but through several curtains of thin hanging chains. Once inside, some of the bats are flying around, coming close to people's heads but never hitting them. Other bats are just hanging from branches, the way they do, but you could approach them within a foot or two. And some of them were big. I tried to take a photo of one that was hanging there right in front of me, seeming to stare at me (but aren't they blind?). He or she was at least ten inches tall, with wings wrapped around its body. It was clearly awake, since it shifted positions now and then.

The advantage of using an organized tour to visit the Night Safari was that I didn't have to figure out how to get there or what to do. The disadvantage was that we didn't have as much time there as it deserved. There were four trails that I could have walked, but I only had time for two, and that was walking faster than I'd have liked. There were two shows that I could have watched, but I only got a short glimpse of one of them before our bus was to leave. A large part of our time was spent waiting in line for the tram, because the place was really crowded, perhaps because it's Friday night. For me it would have been better if we'd arrived somewhat earlier and stayed longer, but I suppose the tour company has found that most people don't want to commit that much time.

The show that I saw just part of was several men, said to be from Borneo, dressed in loincloths and doing tricks with fire accompanied by music and their own yelling. Much of it was twirling flaming torches, occasionally causing them to explode in much bigger bursts of flame. Most impressive was when they would apparently fill their mouths with some flammable liquid, then squirt it out into the flame so that it appeared that their mouths were giant blowtorches. One of them just tilted his head back and had about two feet of flame shooting up from his mouth. Really something to watch.

On the ride back to the hotel, I had time to look more at Singapore and to think more about what sort of place it is. The overriding theme is that it is well organized. All the roads and streets that I saw were well designed, and in good repair. There's a huge

amount of traffic, even late at night, but it is well regulated by signs and traffic signals. People seldom cross against the light, even when it looks like it would be safe. And everything is very clean.

Regarding the traffic, Pao-Li explained to me that every car must have a license that often costs much more than the car itself, to keep their numbers down and reduce traffic. In addition, each car must have a device on its dashboard that communicates with gantries over the busiest streets and collects money from all cars that pass under them. Drivers must have a form of debit card inserted in that device to make the payment. If they don't, the system is able to identify them and send them a bill, presumably for a larger amount. The debit card is also used for other purposes, such as to enter and exit parking lots and structures and to pay for parking.

Also to reduce traffic, Singapore has a good and growing system of underground metros. I'd call them subways, but having mentioned the Subway restaurant by that name, I'm trying to avoid confusion. They don't call them either of these names, but instead they use an acronym: MRT for Mass Rapid Transit. As I did in Beijing last month, I bought a card onto which I added money to use for entry into and exit from the metro, and I gather it would work on the buses as well. There are lots of buses.

Despite all this, there are lots of cars, and it being a big city, you might wonder where they park. I don't know the answer to that, but there are signs scattered along the major roads listing parking facilities and the number of open spaces. I don't know if that means that all the parking lots are owned and managed by the government, or if the government merely coordinates this communication. I've never seen anything like it elsewhere, and I doubt that any city in the US could pull it off.

It's now 1:30 AM and I have two hours to fill before my taxi. Not sure what I'll do, but it probably won't be on this computer. They left a note in my room yesterday informing us of an annual bit of testing of the hotel's equipment that they would be doing between midnight and 5:00 AM today, which is now. And sure enough, even though one light in my room is still on, thank goodness, the wall outlets don't have power. And the Wi-Fi is down. I'll need to find another way to fill the time. I hope the elevator is working when I'm ready to leave.

Still Saturday, July 7

I'm now on the second of my three flights home, this one from Tokyo to Los Angeles. I got some sleep on the first flight and will get more on this one, after they serve the meal.

After I stopped writing this morning, I went to take a shower, as I had planned to do. The emergency lighting provided just a little illumination in the bathroom, but it would have been enough. I realized that I wouldn't be able to use the hair dryer, so I'd skip washing my hair. But then I found that the outage had apparently stopped the water heater as well, because I couldn't get water that was more the lukewarm. I skipped the shower entirely. By the time I finished packing, I'd worked up quite a sweat, since the air

conditioning had also stopped. It seemed pointless to remain in the room, so with an hour left before my taxi, I went downstairs to wait in the hotel lobby. That was better, but only a little. I read the Economist on my iPhone until it was time to leave. The taxi, fortunately, was nicely cool, and the ride to the airport was smooth.

One last thing to report from Tokyo. I needed to test by blood sugar and inject insulin, as I do each morning, and I went to the men's room to do that. As I did, another man there asked if I was diabetic, and I said yes, expecting him to say that he was too. Instead, he said that he had lung cancer, and has to carry his oxygen with him. Made me glad I'm only diabetic.