

2016 Philippines



June 21, 2016

We arrived at 11 p.m. in Manila airport without incident. The flight on Korea Air was superb, they have lovely, young stewardesses, just like we did in the old days. I don't know what they do with them when they get old.

After immigration we waited at the wrong baggage carousel for our bags but then realized the one next to it had our flight, apparently two flights arrived from Seoul. Gathering our bags we went through customs without incident and down to the duty free store area to meet our driver in the area where customers whose last name begins with S meet. He was there with a smile to take us to our hotel. We arrived around midnight and showered before bedding down for the night.

June 22, 2016

I awoke around 4:30 a.m. probably to go to the bathroom but around the same time I felt a dull pain in my chest. I finished my business then returned to bed. The pain persisted so I got up and went downstairs to the lobby so Judy could sleep. There I began sweating even though it was air conditioned. I had my cell phone so I'm Googling, symptoms of heart attack. Sure enough pain in chest and sweating. I'm really feeling bad and the door man noticed it too so I asked the clerk to call for an ambulance. He reported the fee at 3,500 pesos, about \$80. No problem, please call Judy and tell her to be ready. She came down just as the ambulance was arriving and we went about 5 minutes to the Makati Medical Center. I am reminded that there was no traffic at that hour. A few hours later and the ride would take 15 minutes or more.

The people from the hotel were just great. One of the clerks picked up my cell phone for me and attended me until 9 a.m. to make sure we had everything we needed. They even brought their copies of our passports for the hospital's use.

My pain was level 8, no pressure, no jaw pain, no arm pain, just a pain the size of my fist in my sternum (breastbone).



The book of Job explains why bad things happen to good people, "Evil is present in the world." Were it not for God, it would be much worse than we see today. But God is good. He arranged for me to be five minutes from one of the best hospitals in Manila at 4:30 a.m. when the emergency room has plenty of capacity to see me. All goes well on the way to the hospital and they check me out saying it appears I had a heart attack but am not having one now. Aneurysm has similar symptoms so we went to the CT scanner to check for that. Doctor tells me that I'll be in the hospital and more than overnight so make plans. I'm hoping upon recovery, I'll be able to join our tour in Indonesia. He said, definitely no. No air travel in the near future.

So we canceled the plans we'd made here in the Philippines and canceled the Indonesia plans. We were in God's hands and at that time our plan was to stabilize and return home, no small feat because we are half way around the world looking at 26 hours of travel time.



I was referred to Dr. Ortega, the cardiologist, who admitted me to Cardiac ICU. He explained that an angiogram would tell what was going on with my heart. If the blockage was not severe, we could fix it with an angioplasty, otherwise bypass is needed for complete blockage. I asked him to identify and fix at the same time if possible. Note that we are in one of the best hospitals in the capital city of Philippines, a very advanced medical center and I'm working with a board certified cardiologist so this is not some wayward village. Had God not been on my side, I could have easily been in such a place on the side of the Taal Volcano or the terraced rice paddies when my infarction occurred, Praise the Lord.

The nephrologist, kidney doctor, is concerned that my Creatinine level is high. This measure of kidney function is important because the kidneys have to handle the radioactive die that they use for the angioplasty. I explained that it is always a little high because my right kidney is mallocated and works at 80%. I offer my urologist's number and email that they may communicate.

We move forward on Friday to find that I have three arteries partially blocked to my heart. The one that caused the pain was 99,9% blocked and the other two about 70-80%. Dr. Ortega opened the big two and installed wire mesh stints to keep them open but couldn't do the third at the same time because of the die issue. During this operation, I am awake and they do their work through a small hole in my groin. My biggest discomfort is keeping my legs flat with my knees locked during the hour or so.

All is well for now, no serious cause for concern and the third artery can be fixed on Monday or Tuesday. Monday's creatinine test was less than optimal so the final procedure was scheduled for Tuesday.

On Tuesday, I asked for my legs to be supported by a rolled blanket, no problem, I was quite comfortable. J.P. was my nurse and he said if I needed an itch scratched or anything else, just call on him.

After a while I started hurting and sweating. Level 5 pain I said, J.P., please wipe my forehead. He was there for me. How long will this continue? I asked, but got no answer. A little later I said, Level 6 pain, a little later, Level 7 pain, a little later Level 8 pain, a little later Level 9 pain. If you wondered what happens on Chicago Med when they rub the paddles together and yell, Clear. I can now tell you. I'm watching them put the grease on and at "Clear" everything goes white. Level 10 pain, I cry out but it was just for a moment. I can't imagine what execution by electrocution entails because that would be for a minute or so.

My anesthesiologist introduces himself and I don't remember much of the rest of the procedure until I'm wheel to the recovery area. It was probably just some morphine or something, I never had general anesthesia.

I'm glad that I had the paddles on the second procedure or I'd have been much more scared. God is good.

My brother, Ken, is a doctor of pharmacy so he is really interested in all the medical details. Judy just couldn't answer him completely. Believe it or not, my cardiologist spent 10 minutes on the phone with him, answering his every question. International calling is so easy on cell phones.

After a week, I'm looking pretty shabby. Pete gave me a shave.



Before



After

All of the ICU nurses were so very helpful, Pete, Shan, Joy and countless other's whose names escape me. I was there nine days before being transferred to "telemetry" for the last two days.



There was a welcome party at the hotel upon my arrival. They had tried while I was in ICU but no outside goods are allowed due to infection concerns.

I cannot say enough good things about their care for Judy and me both the hospital and the hotel. If you could plan a heart attack, do it right here.



Hotel arrival



July 1, 2016 We begin cardiac rehab for the last three days in the hospital then for four days the next week. We do warm ups, treadmill, bike and stretches. I'm surprised how inflexible my neck is.



July 5, 2016 After rehab our hotel manager's husband has offered us a complimentary tour of the City of Manila, actually a metropolitan area comprised of 16 cities. A quarter of the country's population lives here. They all seem to drive their cars at the same time. Traffic is incredible. They have some rapid transit but the car or jitney seems to be the most popular means of travel.

We saw the American embassy and the old town of Manila including a typical Spanish house of the 1890s. The bayside area has the Philippines Navy and statues of the founding fathers. The country was named after King Philip of Spain and his statue is there also.



July 6, 2016: Today is the last day of Ramadan so it is a national holiday and the hospital rehab clinic is closed. Instead Judy and I took a walk around our hotel. We stopped in a wood craft store and bought a nativity set for Judy's collection and a Christmas tree ornament. We left our purchase there while we continued our walk and stopped for it and tea on

the way back. After a refresher in our hotel room, we explored the area to the left of the front door, stopping to pray at the St. Juan Bosco chapel. We then explored the gated residential neighborhood behind our hotel and returned home for a shower. Compliments to Judy for the photos.

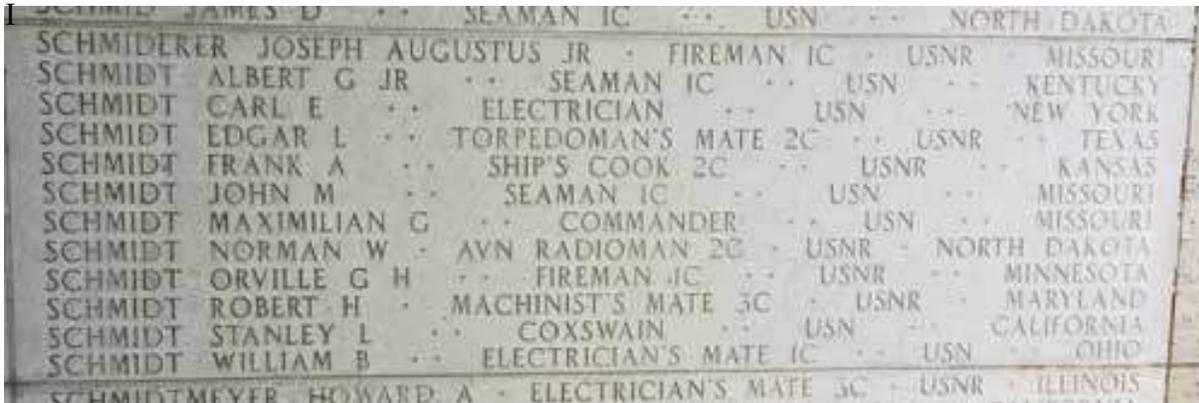


July 7, 2016: Judy was not feeling well so I went on the City Tour myself and promised to bring back photos. Our first stop was the American World War II cemetery. It was perfectly manicured with the 36,000 traditional



white crosses and a tomb to the missing in action.

The names of the missing are noted, our family was in Germany so none are listed.



The map shows the South Pacific activity:





We moved on to the park commemorating the national hero of the Philippines, José Rizal, (June 19, 1861 – December 30, 1896) who was a Filipino nationalist during the end of the Spanish colonial period of the Philippines. An ophthalmologist by profession, Rizal became a writer and a key member of the Filipino Propaganda Movement which advocated political reforms for the colony under Spain. He was executed by the Spanish colonial government for the crime of rebellion after an anti-colonial revolution, inspired in part by his writings, broke out. Though he was not actively involved in its planning or conduct, he ultimately approved of its goals which eventually led to Philippine independence. He is widely considered one of the greatest heroes of the Philippines.¹



This slightly larger than life-size statuary depicts the execution. He asked to not be blindfolded so he was turned away from the firing squad.



At the fort, a bombed out barracks. The fort was surrounded by walls and a mote.

¹Wikipedia, recounts the story that I heard as we visited his museum.

This statue of Rizal shows him with one of the two books that got him in trouble with Spain.



Besides being a writer and an ophthalmologist, Rizal was also a sculptor. I thought this work particularly intriguing. It is called, "Mother's Revenge." You see the gator ate the pup and the dog bites the gator.



July 11, 2016
Today is my final day of rehab in the Philippines. Dr. Dela Fuerte on the left and Kate on the right were my trainers



in this cardiac recovery. I attained MET level 6 so I can lay bricks, saw wood and square dance. Not only that, I can ride horseback and hike. We saw Dr. Ortega for his follow-up visit. He took an EKG, completed the various airline papers and sent me home with a smile.



July 12, 2016: Taal Volcano – one of the world's smallest, active volcanos. Our tour took us South from Manila on the expressway to Tagaytay where you descend down the side of the mountain to the lake where the Taal volcano comes right up from the middle. We took this boat across to the island where we rode horses up to the top of the volcano. The view is incredible. One sees a lake within a volcano within a lake. We returned the same

way and stopped along the road to buy some little bananas.



July 13, 2016: We were all day in the car going north from Manila to Banaue in the mountains of the Philippines. We stopped for a lovely dinner en route and had taco salad, lasagna and cheesecake.



July 14, 2016:
Sagada – This town in the Mountain Province is about burials. We first visited a cave in which various pine coffins were placed, one on top of each other, not buried at all.

The most unique cemetery is this “hanging coffins.” The coffins are attached to the steep mountain with cables. Those buried as such believe that their souls will reach their resting place faster this way.





Today the most popular way is above the ground in vaults like these.



July 15, 2016: Terraced rice paddies: Our area, Banaue and surrounds is known for the special terraced rice paddies. This beautiful mountain area is made productive by this leveling and water cascading technique. The work involved must have been incredible.

Even growing all of this rice, the town and the country import rice as it is not sufficient for their three-servings per day needs.



Here you can see the village next to the terraces.



One sees the harvested rice tied in bundles, drying in the street. Following this first drying, the rice is separated from its stalk and the rice continues to dry while being raked with wooden rakes.



As we leave the mountains of the Philippines, we head to Seoul, South Korea tomorrow.



July 16, 2016 – Seoul, South Korea: As we had a long lay-over today, I arranged for a guided tour. Mr. Lee our guide was knowledgeable and spoke English well. As we rode into Seoul from the airport, we saw the largest church in the world, Yoido Full Gospel Church has attendance of 480,000 each week.

As you enter Seoul, you can drive by the president's house.





We visited a Buddhist temple where people walk in circles meditating and hanging lanterns with prayer requests.



This stream, once used by women for laundry has been restructured as a park.

Kings have used this (reconstructed) palace for centuries.



We watched the changing of the guard.



One can rent traditional costumes.

After the King's palace, we ate a typical Korean lunch.



We then strolled the streets gazing at shops and saw this typical Korean fast food.



As the palace shown above was destroyed in 1911, the king lived in this second palace until the end of the dynasty, in the mid 1990s when the king died without any sons and his brother also had no sons. Though Korea has been a democracy since the Korean war, they retained the figurehead king, much like England, until his death.



This unusual 5 story home caught my attention in the neighborhood where traditional house styles have been refurbished.

My heart has been working okay, but I don't have the stamina that I had on June 1 and without much sleep that short night, we were ready to return for our ongoing flight to San Francisco.

What an unusual vacation we had.