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MALAYSIA: FOUR DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Arthur P. Lloyd

Malaysia is a fantastic country filled with a diversity of cultures. Some of these cultures have maintained their separateness for hundreds of years while sharing the same compact amount of "real estate". Therefore, I should not have been surprised when I realized that the Fulbright experience for my family is really four separate stories. My activities and the activities of my wife, daughter and son are so different that one might wonder if we are viewing the same country.

Arthur Jr's Story

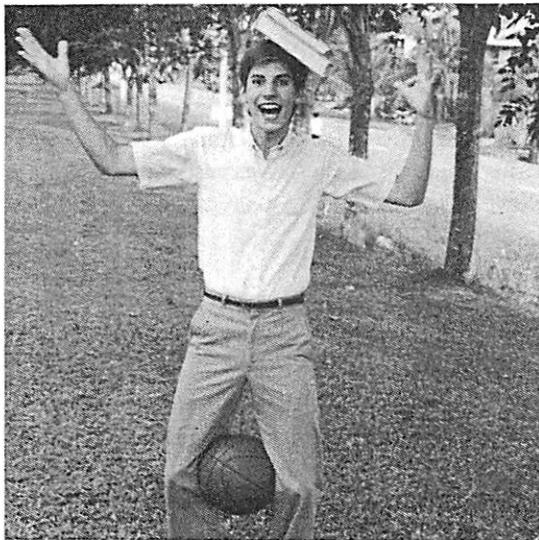
My son, Arthur, is 16 and attends the International School of Kuala Lumpur. Approximately half of the students at ISKL are Americans. The other half are a selection of Europeans, Australians, Chinese, Japanese and a variety of the other nationalities one would expect to be represented by employees in the foreign embassies and international corporations established in Malaysia. The school is organized with an American structure and curriculum and most of the teachers are Americans. Therefore, from his very rigorous science program to refereeing Little League Basketball, Arthur is living the life similar to that of many American expatriates in any number of foreign capitals.

Arthur is definitely having an experience in a foreign country, but his daytime activities do not

distinguish exactly which foreign country it might be. Consequently, I do not believe that Arthur has received an imprint from his experiences that is uniquely Malaysian. Even Arthur's forays into the city seem to be designed to maintain his American tastes. He shops for rock music cassettes, Walkman-style stereos, brand name clothes and sports equipment, and he eats American fast food. Although Arthur has had other experiences living much closer to the "people" in our previous foreign travels, this time he seems to be leading the more insulated life of the international "jet set". He speaks American, studies American, associates with Americans and shops American — all in a Southeast Asian capital. He is studying diligently and is very active but his uniquely Malaysian experiences thus far have been mainly limited to family side trips.

Lisa's Story

My daughter is having a more basic contact with Malaysia. Lisa is 18 and was planning to be a university freshman this year. Her plans were to major in zoology, seek admission to a veterinary school, and eventually become a zoo veterinarian. The opportunity to live in Malaysia, however, postponed the beginning of her freshman year, but at the same time it created a chance to accelerate the timetable to sample her ultimate goal of being a zoo veterinarian.



Arthur Jr.



Lisa

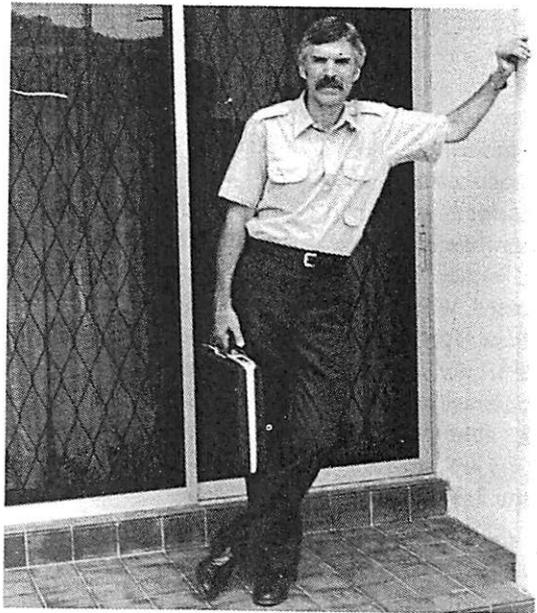
Through the help of several persons, Lisa was able to secure an assignment as the veterinary intern at Zoo Negara outside of Kuala Lumpur. Her duties include virtually everything performed by a zoo veterinarian. Each day she "makes the rounds" at the zoo and administers vitamins and medicines, performs antiseptic treatments, and gathers information on the general health of the animals. In the clinic she performs selected autopsies and cares for those baby animals which are confined there for their early rearing (such as two very active Orangutans).

Although Lisa's work is supervised by two veterinarians at the zoo, she has been given considerable freedom to assume responsibility for almost any procedure she thinks that she is capable of performing (and maybe a few more). The experience has been very valuable but the relationship is definitely a symbiotic one, since the zoo is very large and can use the services Lisa has to offer.

At the zoo the professional personnel in the clinic speak English even though their backgrounds are from Malaysia, India, etc. The majority of the keepers and other persons at the zoo, however, do not speak English and their lifestyles, eating habits, and interests are closely tied to rural Malaysia. Consequently, Lisa has had the opportunity to visit homes, share meals, and "get to know" a cross section of Malaysians whose lives have not been touched by extensive foreign influences — except Lisa.

My Story

My experiences as a Fulbright Professor in Malaysia have combined the familiarity of being in a university structure (which has many similarities with its counterparts around the world) with the new experience of being able to view that system from the vantage point of Malaysians. Most of my days are distributed between Universiti Pertanian Malaysia and Universiti Malaya. Although these two universities are very different in many respects, they are similar in that all of my colleagues are Malaysians and yet, these persons all tend to have academic backgrounds from the United States, or Britain, Australia and Canada. Further my colleagues command of English is excellent and many of the students can converse in English, therefore, although I am the only person speaking with an American accent, language is no more of a



Arthur P. Lloyd

barrier in my work setting here than it was in my stays in Great Britain.

In some ways I am experiencing a combination of the experiences of my children. Although almost all of my on-the-job associations are with Malaysians, I am nevertheless working with an educated, cosmopolitan, English-speaking group — a group very knowledgeable about the United States.

My teaching, individual counseling, group counseling, public speaking, research, and consulting have all been influenced by the Malaysian culture, but the experience has been filtered through a select group of Malaysians. Whereas my son is primarily an Expat student and my daughter spend her days primarily as a Malaysian zoo veterinarian, my days are a blend of sharing common experiences related to western universities with some colleagues and sharing uniquely Malaysian experiences with other colleagues and students.

My Wife's Story

My wife's story rounds out the varied Lloyd experience in Malaysia. Marcia did not receive a sabbatical leave and was not able to be with us for the full year in Malaysia. Consequently, she was not part of our house-hunting, car-buying, grocery-shopping, bill-paying, trial-and-error adjustment to Malaysia. While she continued her teaching and doctoral research in the United States, we settled into a routine of establishing a home here.

Marcia's experiences in Malaysia will be limited to two, separate, month-long visits. Even though her visits will be arranged by us, they may be more similar to those of a visitor on a guided tour. Rather than being involved in all of our somewhat repetitive, day-to-day work activities, her planned visits consist of special highlights of Malaysia and the "good times", just like any tourist.

My wife's experience in Malaysia will in some ways seem even more hectic than ours, however, because she will not be able to "waste" any time acclimating. Her job will be to see Malaysia as thoroughly as possible in the time available. To some extent we have also saved our touring of Malaysia for the times that she is here, but we have also identified a long list of our pre-tested highlights to repeat together with her.

Marcia's view of Malaysia should be somewhat more personal than the view frequently held by

most tourists, however, because she "knows some people" in Malaysia (us) and "they" will be able to provide her with an "insiders view". But she will still not be able to receive the depth of the experiences already held by her husband and children.

Summary

Although the Lloyd family members will have four distinctly different experiences in Malaysia; since we are a family, we should be able to continually exchange these experiences with each other. Therefore, over the years we should grow to have a more common set of memories. As we learn more about Malaysia from each other, our family members should accumulate four different experiences with Malaysia for the "price of one".

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