

# **OUR TRIP TO BORNEO**

**SEPTEMBER, 2001**

**A Borneo River Trip's Many Memories**



**Require *Some* Documentation!**

# FOREWORD

When we were kids, every circus and state fair sold tickets for us to see

## **THE WILD MAN FROM BORNEO!**

So, when some years ago we twice flew over Borneo in a north-south route and watched with noses pressed to the window, it became quite clear to us that the time had come for a visit to this fabled island. We had always known it as the Land Of The Headhunters, and the bones in the hair of the wild man demonstrated all too well the exotic nature of this wondrous place.

Borneo, the third largest island in the world after Greenland and New Guinea is about 900 miles long from the northeast tip to the southwest, lies across the equator, has had about 200 millions years of uninterrupted rain forest development, and its geopolitical history, though recent, is really worthy of study.

We left Denver on September 7, flying to Los Angeles, Taipei, Kuala Lumpur (the capital of Malaysia) and Kuching, the Borneo capital of the Malaysian state of Sarawak. All of this was accomplished in continuous travel, and we spent 21.5 hours *in the air!* Naturally, our arrival in Kuching was welcome, and we were delighted with our hotel, a Hilton, and we had a great room overlooking the river. The first night was a good one, as we slept well indeed!!

The next day was spent with a good tour of the city, and there were many sights that were pretty much as imagined, and some that were truly novel. Kuching is now a modern city, but there are many vestiges of the past. Borneo is about 10% Chinese, and their long-presence on the island is visible most everywhere. The Chinese maintain their reputation as merchants and businessmen, always have colorful Chinese Temples, and fortunately provide food that Addie Leah and I like very much. So we liked what we saw, and were glad we came.

In the pages following there will be a lot of pictures, but not so much text. Those who happen to see this book—we certainly do hope you enjoy it!





Sarawak and Sabah, our home away from home



# Participants

There were twenty-five of us taking the tour of Borneo, and an outstanding group we were! There was no one who smoked, all had traveled to places all over the world, but going to Borneo was new for all of us. It was truly amazing that we all meshed so well. If every group tour could be like this one, then we would always go in a group. For we really did have a great time together. Here we are!! From left to right, there are 17 of us in the back and “middle” back, and 8 kneeling in the front. The next page



identifies each one with a number derived from this picture.

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18	19	20		21	22	23	24	25							

The travelers included:

- |                      |                         |                      |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1) Janet Jerabek     | 2) Clayton Walker       | 3) Peggy Simon       |
| 4) Edward Ellis      | 5) Kathleen Ellis       | 6) Gwendolyn Watley  |
| 7) Peggy Holley      | 8) Ruth Sickafus        | 9) Diana Link        |
| 10) Hope Solomons    | 11) Alan Athy           | 12) Charles Sickafus |
| 13) Janet Schnadt    | 14) Bob Brownlee        | 15) William Davies   |
| 16) Shirley Davies   | 17) Mitsu Wasano        | 18) Gerald Simon     |
| 19) Joyce Walker     | 20) Janice Gleason      | 21) Terry Gleason    |
| 22) Gerald Solomons  | 23) Addie Leah Brownlee | 24) Alice Kakimoto   |
| 15) Dorothy Kakimoto |                         |                      |

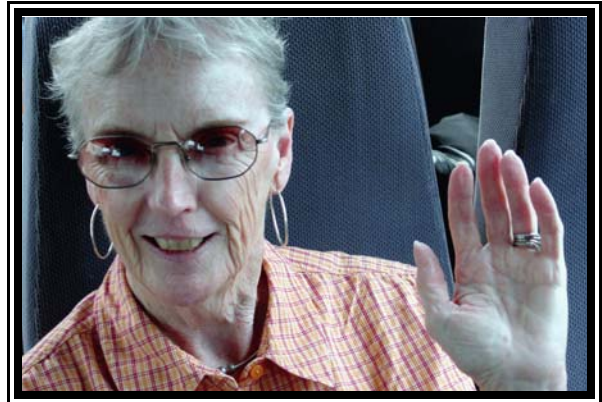
We are from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, and Michigan.

Most of us have e-mail addresses, too.

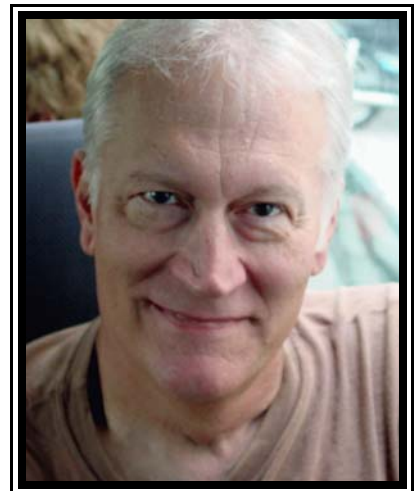
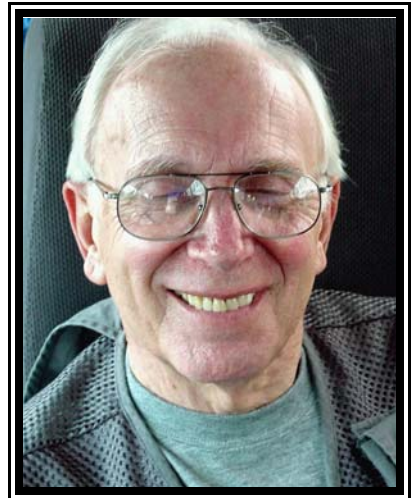
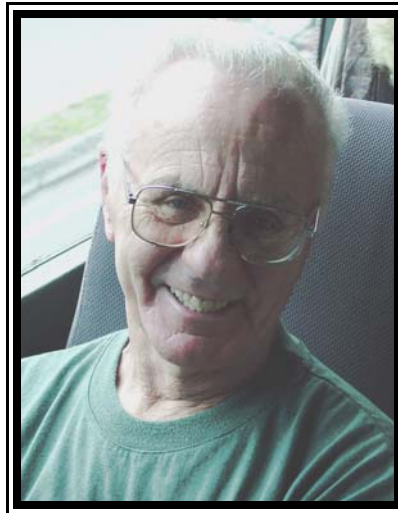
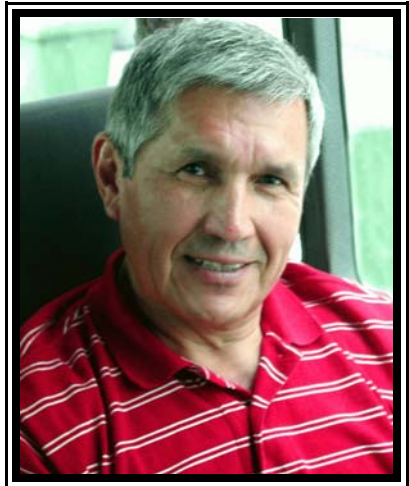


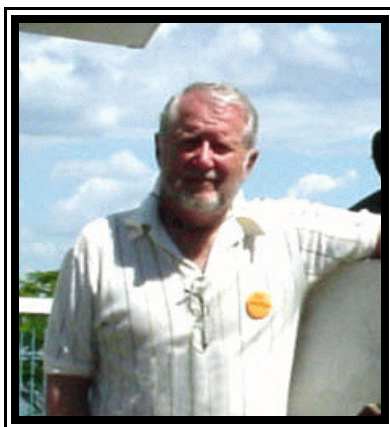
Seasoned Travelers Always like to Return to the Hotel













# Chapter 1

## Kuching, Capital of the State of Sarawak

The view to and from the Hilton Hotel is worth remembering. Located along the river's edge, the hotel was easy to see, but not all that easy to get to along the road—we seemed always to be circling it!



The river's bridges are few, though there is a fairly large community on each side. The need is met with many water taxis ferrying people across and along the river. Some go at regular intervals, but mostly a boat leaves when it is full or nearly full of paying passengers. However, the fare was very low—quite affordable! There were many boats of varying sizes and purposes, and each one seemed to be photogenic.





The gate to the principal part of the city is fairly dramatic. One finds Chinese influence everywhere rampant.

Immediately in front of this gate is a monument to the city “mascot”, for the name *Kuching* means “cat”.



It is therefore necessary for pictures to be taken, for after all, the bus did stop there!





Should Chinese Temples be this relaxing?



The complexities of Chinese Temples are such that one leaves happy, and sometimes the happiest departures coincide with the shortest stays. This is not to suggest that they are not beautiful, for the handiwork is simply magnificent. And Chinese script is beautiful, especially without translation!!



This tower is found in a city park, across from a Chinese cemetery, and one has great views of the entire area from its observation deck.



When one looks to the Northwest, one sees the distant city hall building of North Kuching, which is located, naturally, on the other side of the river.



The nearby cemetery is noteworthy for its wonderful tiles



Many homes of the “Malays”, as opposed to the Chinese, looked like this one, and we were always charmed by the children. Note the washing on the left corner.



Markets are markets, most any place in the world, and are always fun to visit. Inside the building just to the left of the bus, one looks down a long narrow corridor, the location of many shops.







An evening show at a cultural village was very well done, quite enjoyable.

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It was while we were in Kuching that we saw the events at the New York Trade Center. Kuching time is 12 hours different from New York City. We had returned from a good day of sightseeing, and dinner, and had the international news channel on the TV, when I saw the one tower burning. While we had pictures, they were often without commentary, so the first thing I had to do was identify the burning building. Deciding it was New York and assuming an accident (I remembered when the B-25 flew into the Empire State Building during the war), I was thunderstruck when I saw the second plane fly into the other building. Shortly afterward, of course, we heard of the Pentagon hit, and the crash in Pennsylvania.

I was white knuckled for awhile, as I have long believed that at least one atom bomb was missing, and I kept hoping that the next news would NOT be that there was a nuclear explosion over Chicago. When that did not happen after an hour or so, I began to relax. If the attackers had that capability, they would have used it.

My long-time experience with “events that change things forever” is that the result of each event is a better country—a better world. We do our best when challenged, as that is when our creativity is unleashed, and when the taxpayers are willing to pay for good old solid scientific research. So I felt reasonably confident that not only would we meet this crisis, but that we would take great strides in reacting in competent ways.

From this moment on I checked with cyber-cafes to get my e-mail, and each day the guys from Los Alamos sent me lots of information that we could not get in Borneo. I was able to print out the appropriate information and share it with our traveling colleagues. We spent a good many hours (it was already the 12<sup>th</sup> in Kuching) trying to learn more from the TV on that first night.

We were able to return to the US as planned, but there were many changes from when we went to Borneo. The security checks were better (but chaotic), particularly in Taiwan. We were truly shocked when we arrived at the international terminal in Los Angeles to find almost no one, in contrast to the many of hundreds of people usually seen there. Addie Leah and I were late to emerge from customs (we could not find our checked bag), and when we did so, there was no one in that huge lobby except US and employees who seemed to be still trying to figure out what all had happened! Our plane from LAX to Denver had only about 20 passengers.

We still feel quite positive about these events, but whatever, US must triumph.



## Chapter 2

# Visiting Batang Ai Resort and Liking Boats!

Southeast of Kuching—it took us about four hours to get there by bus—is a big reservoir used to generate hydroelectric power. The dam has made possible a huge lake, backing up water in a river basin for many many miles. Hilton has built a resort on the shores of this lake, and one is ferried there from the “arrival hall” built close to the dam. The hotel is a good one, the food is wonderful, and the scenic vistas give all photographers pause. From the hotel we took an “all day” boat trip to visit a traditional longhouse. The longhouse is a communal structure, wherein live all the members of a village. Individual “apartments” sit side by side, but there is a large adjoining area shared by everyone. It is said that living together in this way gave some security against the traditional headhunters, and that sounds plausible. The longhouses are disappearing, we understand, so we were surprised to see so many of them as we journeyed to the reservoir and along the lake. Small or large, they are certainly picturesque, as some photographs following will show.





The Batang Ai Resort is Built as a Longhouse, Naturally!



Almost Every Distant Vista Has a Canoe in it Somewhere!



And Some Canoes (All Were Long!) Had US in Them





This the Entrance to the Village/Longhouse we Visited

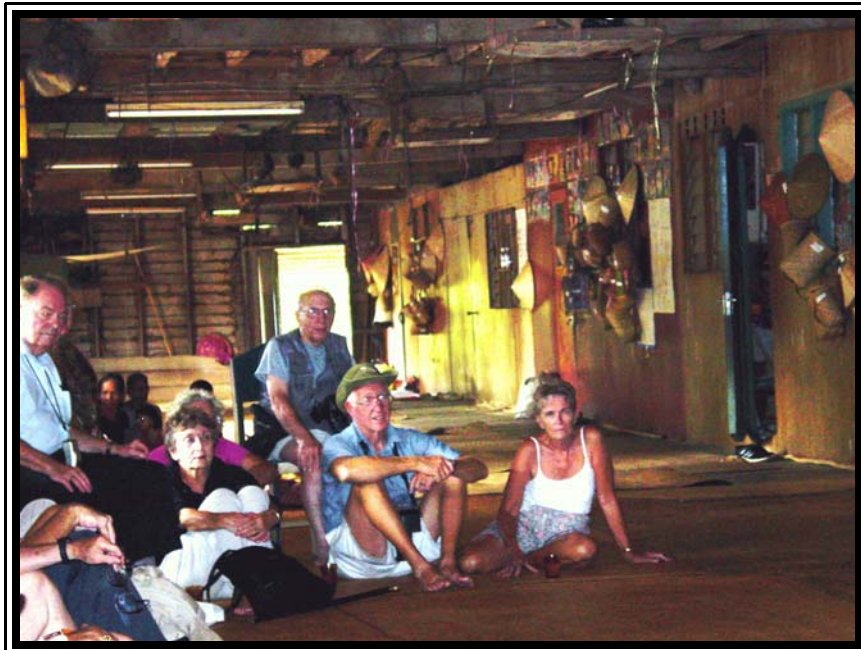


As we arrived we were greeted with musicians and what seemed to be a bit of trepidation. This was probably due to the fact that we were only the second (or third, it was never clear) group to visit this particular longhouse. The travel agency is attempting to prolong the traditional behaviors by paying the villagers to dress in native costumes and perform the old dances. This seems to us to be a good idea. And it was obvious to us that the Children were just as fascinated with the dancing as we were. So we believed that we were “early” visitors.





Longhouse Musicians Needed NO Practice



And Neither Did the Onlookers







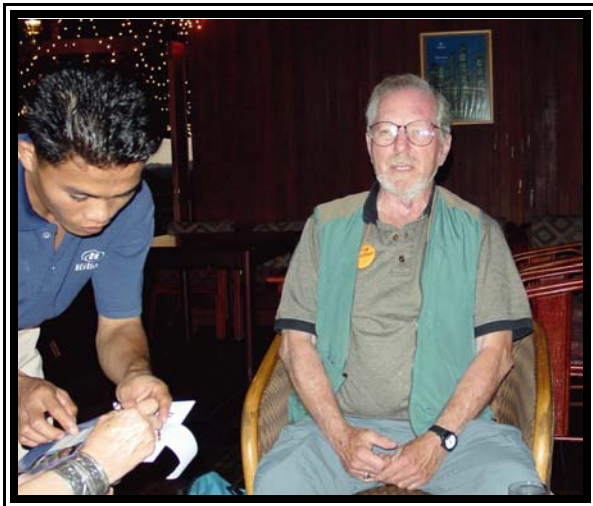




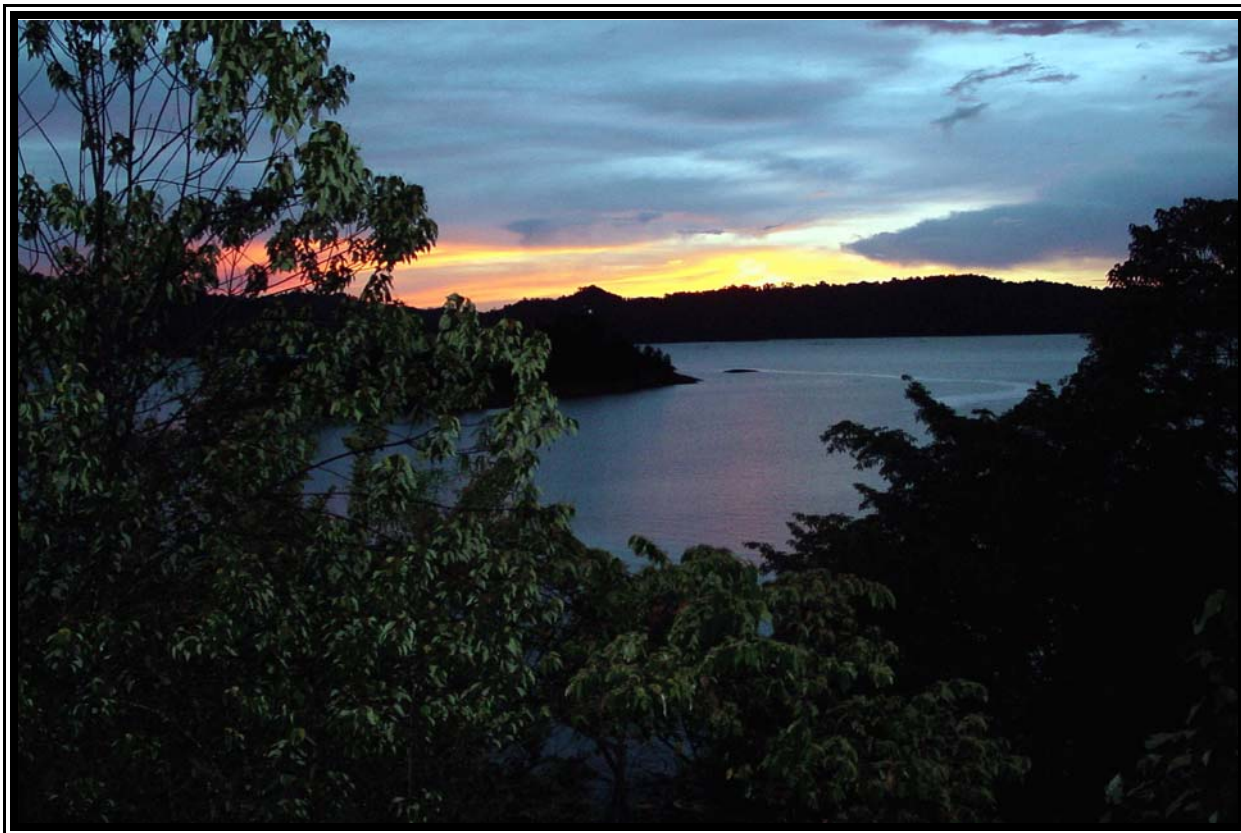


Canoe Trips proved to be memorable, also. Just look at those faces!!





Dinner at Batang Ai was really to our liking.



Sunset at Batang Ai was a Moment to Remember



The road between the Reservoir and Kuching was long, but had some spots worth remembering, like the tire repair shop, and the market.



Bananas always look good, but sometimes other items are a bit questionable!





A Park in the Rainforest is Location, Location, Location.





## CHAPTER 3

### FLOWERS

Borneo's flowers were worth the trip. While there were many gardens, most of these pictures were taken where we happened to find them.























Above is depicted a “Pitcher Plant”, a true wonder







Above is depicted a “Pitcher Plant”, a true wonder





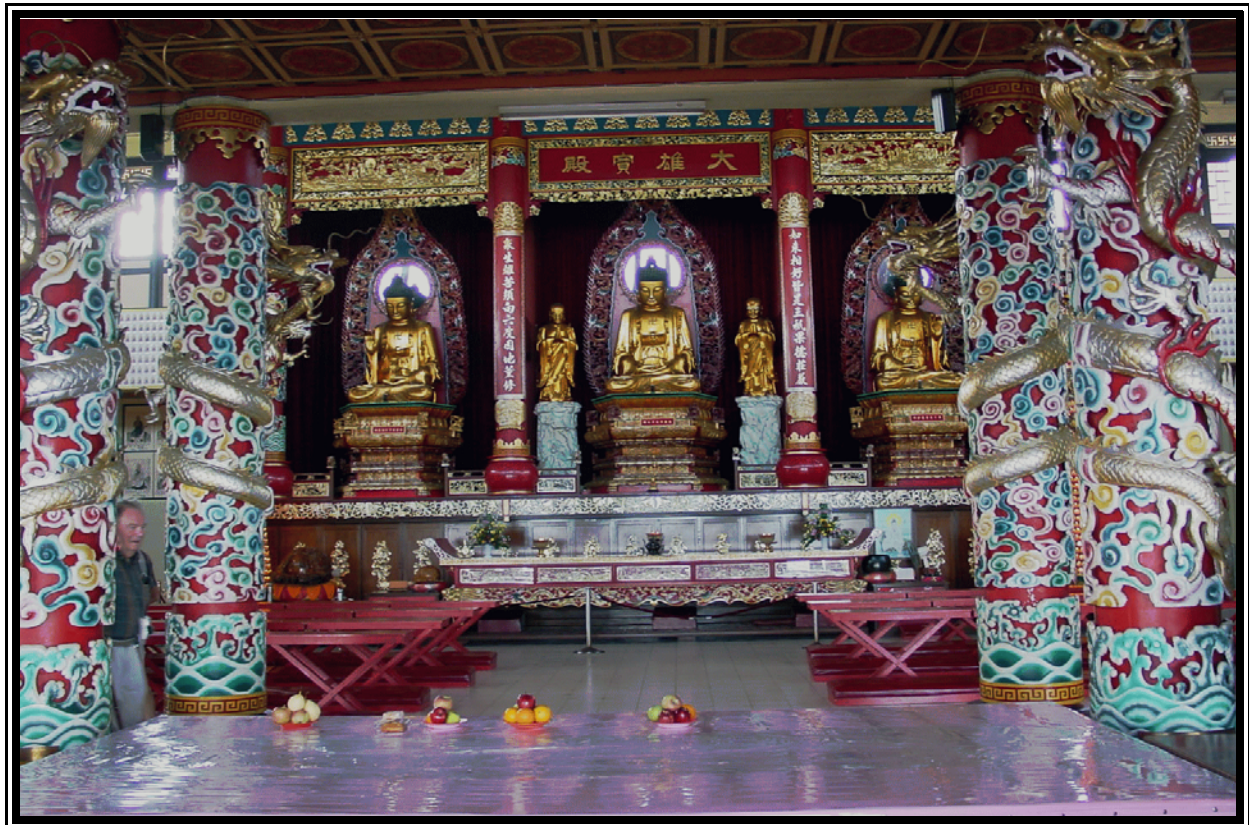


Sandakan is on the Sulu Sea





Another View of the Sulu Sea and Islands



Chinese temples always have the prospect of stone lions, of which RRB approves. (He was a long-time member of the Kirkwood Stone Lion and Idler's Association.)





This area is famous for its Orang Utans, and although they are “endangered”, we learned to our surprise that there are about 70,000 of them in the Malay portion of Borneo. We really did enjoy seeing them in their Sandakan Sanctuary.



A Mother Loves This Face





The rangers take care not to make the Orang Utan totally dependent upon them—they are in effect just trying to make sure that babies or the injured have sufficient food. They feed them enough, but with a boring diet, encouraging them to take care of themselves as soon as possible. And so it is not surprising that these critters looked bored!







Most every nice day is washday, yet here Peggy Holley searches for surprises.



AND, here is one.



From Sandakan we flew to Kota Kinabalu. There is a pretty good mountain range going from the northeast to southwest across Borneo, and the highest mountain in the range is Mt. Kinabalu. It is over 12,000 feet high—the highest mountain between the Himalayas and New Guinea. We flew just to the north of the peak, and had some very good views.



We liked Kota Kinabalu very much, and were especially pleased with our hotel, the Magellan. To our surprise the Sultan of Brunei, the richest man in the world next to Bill Gates, checked in with his entire entourage, and that included 4 wives, bodyguards, ships at sea, etc. This was fun to watch.



Once again there were Chinese temples to see, and it was at one of these that I was able to get an important picture. In particular, what can you conclude about this picture? *(It was taken at noon, with the sun directly in the zenith!! You can't do this every day!!)*



We visited a colorful cultural village, seeing at last evidence of headhunters!



A Row of Skulls Evidences All Legends





This was “our” wing of the 5 Star Magellan Hotel, and we pretended that we deserved it all. It was here that we had our only real rain storm, and it rained at a rate of inches per hour. What a fine place to watch the storm!





The Sultan has great looking limos, and lots of guards. Here they await his exit.



Meanwhile, two “guard” ships stand off the hotel, and we noted that they were exceedingly well lighted at night. The comfort index seemed to be pretty high!







Hotel's Olympic-sized Pool with one Japanese Swimmer



Hotel's Lobby Dining room (There were Others)



The Sultan had guards, the State of Sabah had some too, and so did the Hotel, and also the city Police showed up. As we are always exceedingly friendly with all such types, it was only natural that I would ask if I could take their picture. They were quite pleased to oblige, especially as Addie Leah was pleased to join them!



When the Sultan is on the Move, so is Everybody Else!



As we left Kota Kinabalu for Kuala Lumpur, we had a good last look at the Hotel.



We also saw three more water villages!





# CHAPTER 5

## Kuala Lumpur, Capital City of Malaysia

En route to Kuala Lumpur from Kota Kinabalu, we flew over the South China Sea again, and I was pleased to see a number of islands rather distantly placed from any real land masses. Because these islands are located so close to the equator, there is insufficient coriolis force to cause big rotating storms such as typhoons, so their weather is really quite benign. Altogether, a great place for easy living except for such things as pirates, greed, a thirst for power, and the opportunity to hide from the law!

We had visited Kuala Lumpur before, many years ago, and were eager to see the changes. We were impressed with the many new and beautiful buildings, and with the successful effort to leave the “jungle” visible throughout the city. The famous icon for the city is the tallest building in the world, and there is visible pride in having it. Because we were there so very shortly after the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City, the obvious vulnerability of such constructions was a moderating emotion. Nevertheless we very much enjoyed our visit to the building, and also our trip to the communications tower, from where many magnificent views of the city were possible. Particularly noteworthy were the large number of open areas and parks, filled with beautiful flora of all types.





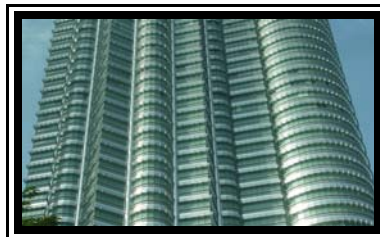
Malaysia is a Muslim country, and has been so for a long time. The country has a King and Queen, and 9 Sultans take turns doing these duties, each one for 5 years. Once Addie Leah and I saw one of these royal pairs as they made a state visit to England. We have some fine photos of that event. But when one goes to Malaysia, the likelihood of seeing them is vanishingly small. However, the horse guards at the royal palace look very much like one would expect, so we documented that.



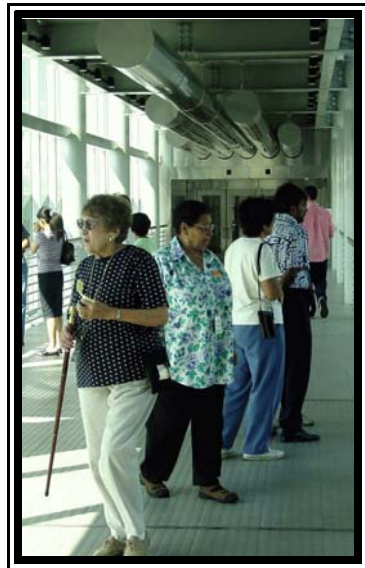
As mentioned, they have the tallest building(s) in the world (452 meters). The two towers are connected with a bridge about a third of the way up, and one can visit there. We enjoyed the views of the city so much from there that we also visited the observation deck on the almost as tall communications tower (421 Meters). I visited the towers at night in an attempt to get a dramatic night shot, but discovered that was pretty difficult.















Getting the Lowdown





In the very center of the above picture can be seen a “white” building with a “black” penthouse. This is our hotel, the Muriata. Awaking the first morning, I discovered I had just been bitten by something causing two small blood blisters separated in such a way that it looked like a snake bite, though it obviously was some kind of insect bite. The bites developed rather interestingly for about 3 hours, after which time I felt that I should report it to the front desk, as we might have imported something from Borneo. So I did that—panic in the lobby!! The concierge could not identify the bites,

but was quite concerned about my health (and that of the hotel). There followed a lot of action. Our room was stripped of bedding, completely cleaned, and given a real going over. THEN, we began receiving gifts of fruit, hors d’oeuvres, chocolates, notes of apologies from whomever, etc. Our conclusion: When you check into a 5-star hotel, bring a bug with you. If you play it just right, you may not only get food, but maybe even a free room!!





Finally, we had a pretty good tour of the environs, had some fine entertainment, and then headed for the airport, and home. While expecting most anything, all went very well.



Malaysians are a handsome people, we all agreed!