

Chapter 10 New Zealand 1997



Sunday, August 17, 9:00 PM, Auckland

I've now finished one week of this three-week trip, and I've very much enjoyed it so far. I spent all the weekdays almost full time talking with people at the University of Auckland, leading seminars, and workshops, and going to dinner and various social events. Then yesterday and today I've spent sightseeing. It was a very full week. Everything went very well, and I learned a lot, met people I enjoyed, and got to know a portion of New Zealand well.

I left home mid-day on Saturday, August 9, flying first to Chicago, then to Los Angeles, and finally to Auckland on a twelve-hour flight. During the first two flights, time moved

10. New Zealand 1997

backwards as I moved forwards, so that when I took off from L.A. it was still Saturday evening, even though it would have been Sunday at home. Then time jumped way ahead at some point, and we landed in Auckland at 5:30 AM Monday morning. Sunday never happened.

I was met at the airport by Rob Scollay, one of the faculty here and one of the two organizers, with Mia Mikic, of my visit to Auckland. It turned out that I had met Rob in Ann Arbor at our Uruguay Round conference, although I did not remember him. He drove me to my hotel, Parnell's Village Motor Lodge, where a sign over a telephone said to call a number to rouse the innkeeper. Rob dialed several times but got no response, so we went instead into the city to a hotel for breakfast. During all this Rob told me quite a bit about the city and the university. Also, since he does his research on the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) trade arrangement, he also told me a lot about that, which was to prove helpful for me later in the week. Returning to the hotel after 8:00 AM, we found the office open, and I checked in.

I'd slept well on the flight, but I still thought I could sleep more, so we left the plans for the rest of that day open, and I went to bed. I set my alarm for noon but was awakened before that by a knock on the door and a voice saying I'd gotten a fax. They slid it under the door, which they could have done without knocking. It was from Mia about arrangements for the next day, and I went back to sleep. A little later the phone rang, and it too was a message that I'd gotten a fax. It was the same one, for some reason. Still, I managed to sleep soundly until noon, when I got up and started my day, and my visit to Auckland.

As soon as I'd showered and so forth, I went out for coffee and to pick up supplies. It turned out that Parnell is a very nice neighborhood, with a street of trendy shops and restaurants sloping down toward the harbor. I soon found a café and had a fine latte and an incredibly big and tasty bowl of soup. They also had a pasta with chicken livers on their menu that I thought I might come back for, but never did. Across the street from my hotel was a convenience store, where I bought supplies: orange juice, bananas, Kleenex (not really, some other brand), and instant coffee. The room has a fridge and a coffee pot, so I wanted to be ready.

I called Mia for advice on getting to campus, and she suggested that I call a cab, since it is kind of a long walk, and I wouldn't know the way. I was to take the cab to the clock tower, which I have now learned to use as an easy landmark from a distance, and she gave me directions from there. The campus is pretty compact, I found, with most of the buildings I ever needed in a fenced-in block behind this clock tower. Rob had explained that they've built another section of the campus further away, much like our North Campus, but nobody wants to use it, and they are having difficulty making a go of it.

Economics has a building to itself, the first floor with classrooms, the second with offices, a small library, and a big, airy "common room" that serves as a lounge. I met Mia again. (I'd met her a year before when she visited Ann Arbor, also funded by the United States Information Service that is paying for my own visit.) She introduced me to others, and then installed me in the office I would be using. I was sharing it, as it turned out, with Ed

Travels of a Trade Economist

Tower, an old friend and trade economist from Duke, who had been visiting and teaching a course here for a couple of months. Both of us, in turn, were using the regular office of one of their most eminent faculty, who was on leave. I was given a key and told, as Ed had been, not to touch that faculty member's computer. Everyone I met was friendly and helpful, and I quickly felt right at home.

I did a little work in that office that afternoon, as I would each day after that. But most of the work I did involved preparing for the various presentations that they had scheduled for me later in the week. I never got very much else done.

Later that afternoon, Ed and I and several others went next door to the Senior Common Room – essentially a faculty club – for a drink. At that point I also renewed an acquaintance with Tim Hazeldine, an industrial-organization economist, I think, whom I'd met when he was on the faculty at University of British Columbia. He is evidently one of Auckland's stars, along with the fellow whose computer I was not to use. Tim seemed nice enough, although he startled me at a one point by asking how I'd managed to be at Michigan for over twenty years before they made me department chair [which I was at the time of this visit]. I don't think he meant that to be insulting, but somehow I felt that it was. He's that sort of person. I answered by recalling my invisibility in the department, as documented one year by my complete absence on one of George Johnson's "power charts" of who influences whom in the Economics Department.

After our drinks, Ed and I decided to go for dinner, and Tim drove us to Parnell to a small Italian restaurant he recommended. I had pasta, of course, that was good but a little dry, and Ed had a pasta that he said was not very well seasoned. I thought he was being picky, but then I had a café latte that was so bad I couldn't drink it. All this was made up for, in part, by an attractive waitress who exuded her Italianness (Tim told us later she was middle eastern) and who managed to lean against Ed every time she came to our table. So we did manage to enjoy the meal.

On Tuesday, Mia picked me up and got me to the office in time for a series of appointments with faculty and one grad student that she had scheduled for me through the day. Mostly we talked about general things, like comparing universities, although with the graduate student we did talk more usefully about his research and other plans. A group of us also had lunch at the Senior Common Room. It offered only one hot meal, which this time was ... actually, I can't remember, except that there was a lot of it.



Clock Tower Building, U of Auckland
from Wikipedia 2023

10. New Zealand 1997

After my last meeting of the day, I headed out to explore Auckland a little bit on foot, and to work my way back to my hotel. Unfortunately, it was raining lightly, so it was not all that pleasant. I walked out the front of the campus and into a park that took me downhill toward the main business district. This was Queen Street, full of large buildings (this is a city of over one million people). I walked its length down toward the harbor. There I worked my way along the harbor until I thought I was at the base of the Parnell neighborhood, since I'd reached a street called Parnell Rise.

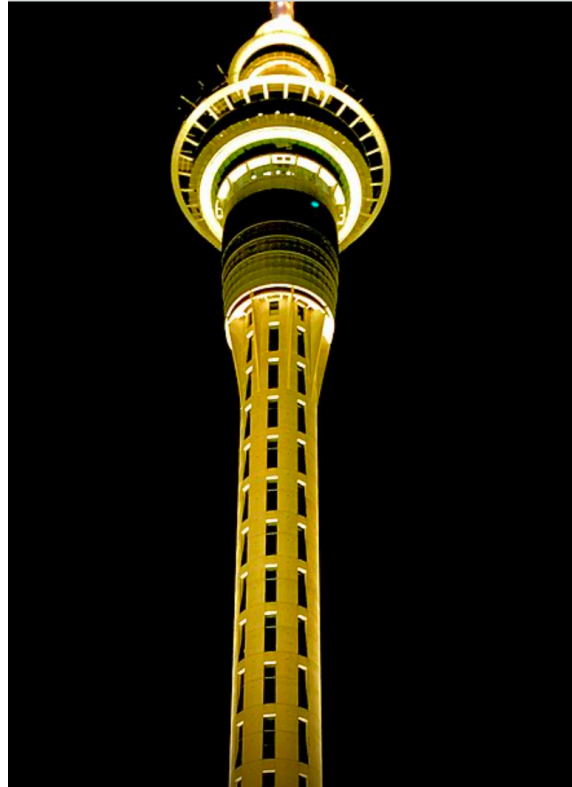
Before heading up it, I asked a woman who was waiting at the light if this would indeed take me to Parnell, which she said it would. When the light permitted, we both crossed and started climbing the hill. I knew immediately that this climb was going to wear me out, so when I saw her up ahead of me get into a car parked at the curb, I thought how nice it would be if she would offer me a ride up the hill. She didn't, of course, and I trudged the rest of the way to the top of Parnell Rise. This took me, I now found, only to the bottom of Parnell Street, at the top of which was my hotel. I rested a while before finishing the climb.

That evening, several of us met for dinner at another restaurant in Parnell that Tim had also picked. This one was an oddly named (Ozuçe, or something like that) and very trendy place that was more expensive and very good. I had crayfish (which is what they call lobster in New Zealand), expecting the very large kind that Bill and Joanne had served us from New Zealand. This one wasn't large, but it was excellent, in part because of a sauce that it was served with.

Wednesday I was on my own to get to campus, and since it was raining and I didn't feel like walking much distance anyway with all the hills, I took a cab. This time Mia had filled part of my day with meetings with graduate students. Most of them, however, did not show up. Mia says they are shy. Early in the afternoon I had my first presentation. It was a seminar on the kind of computer modeling that I do with Bob and Drusilla, and I gave a spiel similar to stuff I've done before. I prepared a bit more, however, and it went very well. Later, several of us went to yet another very nice restaurant for dinner. This time it was a place we had to drive quite a distance to, and I saw more of the city at night. I had a venison dish that was superb.

From my first day, I had seen a very tall tower in the center of the city, looking like a cross between the space needle in Seattle and a minaret. Rob Scollay had explained that this tower was built recently on top of a casino, and it was very controversial since people differed on whether it was an attractive addition to the city skyline or not. I thought it was quite pretty, especially at night, and it certainly does dominate the view of the city from all directions. They'd better get used to it.

During dinner at the restaurant, which was across some water (there's lots of water here) from downtown Auckland, we had a good view out the window of the city and the tower. As usual, it was brightly lit, but this time it was lit in red floodlights, not white. Mia explained (to the others as well as to me, since they had missed this in the news) that it was lit this way just for three days for the Red Nose Campaign. This is a fundraising campaign for children in need. It seemed to be rather like the Galens Tag Day in Ann Arbor; those who contribute get something to wear to show that they have contributed. But instead of a tag, what they get here is a red plastic nose to wear on their faces. The next day, Mia gave me one of these. It was good to see that the nose had an elastic string attached, so that you could wear it around your neck rather than necessarily on your nose.



Auckland Sky Tower
from Wikipedia 2023

Thursday my only scheduled event during the day was a 1:00 workshop on economic geography. I spent the morning preparing for that, then ate alone at the Senior Common Room, where the hot dish was Beef Olive. That turned out to be thin slices of beef wrapped around some sort of stuffing, presumably involving olives, and looking like a sausage. With potatoes, vegetables, and gravy, it was good.

The workshop went fine, the most interesting feature of it, though, being the remarks of an economic geographer who had decided to attend. I've run across the work of these folks occasionally before, and despite their name it is clear that they are not trained as economists. This one had a lot to say (as I had invited him to tell us his views), and the rest of us, all economists, found it all amazing. To us, at least, all that he said seemed either nonsense or wrong.

Later in the week I met him again at another event, and he gave me a list of papers to read, so I will have a chance to learn more clearly what he was talking about.

Monday, August 18, 8:30 PM, Christchurch

I didn't finish writing about Auckland last night, and I'll continue in a moment. But first, before I forget, I must tell about the meal I just had. I'm in my new hotel in Christchurch, and I went to the lesser of their two restaurants. As the hostess seated me, I noticed a man eating a large bowl of pasta that looked good, so I asked her about it, and she identified it as one of the "entrees" on the menu. An entree, here, is an appetizer (what we call an

10. New Zealand 1997

entree, they call a “main,” much more logically), but this one could be ordered in two sizes, and I thought surely that I would have it.

But then the waitress brought the list of specials. This list was on a blackboard about two and a half feet tall, written in colorful markers on the black background, and placed on the floor next to my table for me to look at. I’d squeezed around another of these on my way to my table a few minutes before. The list included the soup of the day, a cream of potato and watercress. The final item was ostrich, pan fried and served over risotto. I had to have that, with the soup, and I did. The pasta will have to wait. Both the ostrich and the soup were incredibly good. The pieces of ostrich were very much like slices of beef steak, and I had to specify how I wanted it cooked. I had it medium rare, not yet sure that I could handle rare ostrich. I am really impressed with the cooking here.

Now, back to Auckland. On Thursday evening I was invited to an “at home” by the woman who would be chairing our roundtable the next afternoon. She, I learned, was a woman of numerous distinctions in business and government, and when I met her, she reminded me a great deal of Marina Whitman. She was very outgoing and greeted me as though I was both a close friend and a most honored guest. I knew I wasn’t the former, and I soon learned that, if I was an honored guest, so were many others. I met only a few of the guests at this affair, and they were clearly the cream of Auckland society. I found myself in a conversation with one who turned out to be the provost of the university, and then with another who was in the timber business. I talked to this second one for quite a while before I asked what he did for his company. “Chief executive,” he answered. “Oh.” I learned a great deal about a type of pine tree that they farm here in New Zealand, “radiata pine.” This turned out to be more useful than you’d think, as I later got involved in research on New Zealand trade.

The “at home,” by the way, was mainly a cocktail party – a house full of guests standing drinking and talking to one another, with waitstaff circulating among us with an unending supply of diverse hors d’oeuvres. Towards the end we were herded into the dining room for a slightly more substantial spread, mostly a large ham with bread to put it on.

Rob Scollay had driven me and several others to this affair, and he drove us back afterwards. Somehow, when he dropped me off at my hotel, I managed to forget that I had carried my backpack with my laptop earlier, and so I left it in the back of his van. I realized this when he was out of sight, and he realized it when he got home. He phoned and offered to bring it over, but I assured him it would be plenty if he would bring it to the office in the morning. Since it was heavy, I think I got the better deal.

Friday I was to give a seminar on one of my papers at 11:15, but I set out early to see if I could find a sweater. I had been looking for most of the time in Auckland, and Christchurch was supposed to be even colder. I hadn’t gone far in Parnell before I found a small shop specializing in wool clothing, and soon I had both the woman proprietor and her retired husband helping me to pick something out. My first selection had rather an odd collar, they agreed, and they found another that suited me better. I bought it, and

Travels of a Trade Economist

when I said I'd wear it, they kindly snipped off the tags for me. I walked to the campus that day for the first time, and I was comfortably warm, also for the first time.

My seminar went better than I could have hoped, and I got some very positive feedback after it. It is one of those papers that I enjoy presenting, and I'm also learning each time I present it how to do it better.

From the seminar we went immediately to lunch at the Senior Common Room again, this time eating fish and chips. I had prepared my remarks for the roundtable that was scheduled for 2:00, but I hadn't yet had a chance to print them out, so I rushed back after lunch to do that before we left for the roundtable. My first couple of tries to print it didn't work, but I finally got it, using Ed Tower's account and password, which fortunately he had told me earlier in the week. So I was ready for the roundtable when it began (around a square table, of course) on the top floor of a downtown hotel overlooking the harbor. Of my four presentations during the week, this was both the shortest and the least successful, but it was no worse, I'm pretty sure, than any of the other speakers, and it was made up for by the audience's surprising interest in the subject (regional trade arrangements involving New Zealand).

By far the worst speaker was a woman professor from Malaysia whom I had met the day before when she came in late to our workshop. She came in near the end of it and asked a couple of questions that were far removed from our topic. Her surname is Mohamed, and she wore Muslim dress, covering her hair, but without a veil. As one of five speakers for the roundtable, she apparently had learned only when she arrived in Auckland the day before (primarily for another event) that she would be speaking. As a result, she skipped my seminar in order to prepare, and even then showed up late for the roundtable. At that point she discovered, listening to another speaker, that much of what she had prepared had already been said. When they got to her, as the fourth speaker, she apologized all over the place, for being late and for having little to say. Then she read only pieces of her prepared remarks. When she stopped, she apologized again, and then got up and left during the next and final speaker. I felt sorry for her. She seemed to me to be completely out of her depth. But then the next evening, at another event, she was one of three speakers, and there she spoke eloquently and with confidence.

Incidentally, I was the only speaker, and perhaps the only one present, from the United States. To me this meant nothing, but others seemed to take that as reason to hold me symbolically responsible for U.S. policies. Prof. Mohamed, for example, was seated next to me as she spoke, and every time she mentioned the U.S. she would look pointedly at me. Other speakers further away seemed to do the same.

After the Roundtable, we walked to another downtown building, a law office, where was scheduled the opening session of something called the Consultation. This was some sort of conference on trade and culture that would continue through the weekend. This started with another cocktail party, followed by several speeches. It was here that Prof. Mohamed redeemed herself, but the hit of the evening was definitely someone else. This was a man of Maori (New Zealand's aborigines) extraction who apparently has a history of being both a government official and a businessman, as well as a leader and negotiator

10. New Zealand 1997

on behalf of the Maori people. When he was introduced at the start of the proceedings, it was done partly in the Maori language. He responded then and occasionally later with loud grunts.

I wasn't sure what to expect from him as a speaker, but I certainly didn't expect what I got. After first speaking at some length in Maori, he suddenly switched to the most clear yet colorful English I've ever heard. And he was also extremely funny, although I cannot reproduce his humor here. He was just a great joy to listen to. I felt bad for the final speaker of the evening, a scholarly but quiet Indonesian who had spoken at the Roundtable, and who could only be a let-down.

This had already been a very long day, but it was not over. I had agreed to go to dinner after the Consultation, and Mia drove us to yet another fancy restaurant where Rob was hosting us as well as three others. One, clearly the guest of honor, was the New Zealand Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, although I didn't know that until he gave me his card near the end of the evening. It had been pretty clear from things he had said, though, that he was pretty important, or thought he was.

Mia was eager to get home to her daughter, whom she had left with another woman faculty member to baby-sit, and I was glad to get away too, so we left as soon as we comfortably could. She dropped me off at my hotel, and then was delayed further, she told me later, by the queue at a police checkpoint doing breathalyzer tests on drivers. They didn't test her, though. She thinks the look on her face told them they didn't dare.

Saturday I was picked up at 7:00 AM by a small bus to take me on a tour to Rotorua and Waitomo. The driver reminded me immediately of our dentist, Dr. Giltrow, and I liked him immediately for the patience with which he struggled to sort out his other passengers, most of whom were young Japanese women.

There were eleven of us, altogether, including a very tall young man (six five, at least) who seemed to know the driver. At first, I thought he might be working with the driver as perhaps an apprentice, since he sat in the front seat next to him. It turned out that he was just another tourist though, from Belgium, but he had taken another tour previously with this same driver. At one point he moved to the empty seat behind the one he'd been in so that he could drape his legs over the back of the seat in front of him. The bus, a Toyota, was not very roomy for someone his size.

The driver used a microphone to talk to us every now and then, telling us about things we were seeing and where we were going. His name was David, and by the end of the day I got to know him pretty well, since I sat right behind him, and we talked through most of the trip. I learned, for example, that he gave up smoking and drinking some years back, strongly believing that at his age (57) he needs to do all he can to keep his body from deteriorating. I agreed, of course.

I also learned a good deal about New Zealand, about farming, and about how the government treats its workers, like him. Most of the land we saw was pasture, of course, with sheep, cows, or deer grazing. He explained that the best farmers carefully manage

Travels of a Trade Economist

where their stock graze, having them graze one field pretty much down to the dirt before moving to another, so that the grass will then grow fresh from the roots and be the best for the animals. The grass in New Zealand is about the best in the world, which is why the country is so successful in farming and why the land is called “God’s Own.” (A colleague at Lincoln University today disagreed, however, saying that it is really the expertise of the New Zealand farmers and the things they do to improve the land that make them successful.)

Even though it is still winter here, the land was almost all very green. I can see it could be even greener in summer, but it was far different from winter in the Midwest. However, at one point I noticed that suddenly a whole section of the land looked brown, and I asked about it. That’s when I learned about gorse. It seems that gorse, a prickly weed, was imported from England to use as hedgerows. Unfortunately, in the mild climate of New Zealand the gorse grew wild, and now it is just a weed that everyone tries to get rid of. In fact, they are so serious about this that the government requires farmers to spray the gorse to kill it, and that was the reason for the brown field that I had seen. The program is not very effective, however, since the gorse also grows at the sides of roads, and the same government that requires farmers to spray does not do a very good job of spraying it beside the roads. So the seeds continue to spread. (I confirmed a lot of this in a later conversation with someone else, by the way, and then learned also that spraying of gorse has also damaged many other more valuable species of plant in New Zealand.)

David drove us about three hours to Rotorua, with a stop for coffee along the way. Rotorua is a Maori center, and also the site of lots of hot springs including pools of boiling mud. Before we reached Rotorua, however, we stopped at Rainbow Farm, for a show of sheep herding, shearing, etc. and other farm activities like milking a cow. Across the road, too, was Rainbow Springs, which was a short nature walk that mostly featured pools of rainbow trout. This was not the best tourist attraction I’ve seen.

But Rotorua, when we got there, was very interesting. We went into a small village of neat frame houses built around the hot springs. The village has only about nine families, all Maori, and they have structured their lives around these springs. An older woman spoke to us and led us through the village, telling us as we went about the life that she herself had led there. The first house she showed us, for example, was where she had been born, and her family had taken pains over the years to keep the house in good repair, because if it ever became dilapidated it would be torn down and not replaced due to the danger of its location so close to a hot spring.

She recalled how every morning as a child she would put her eggs and bread into a special basket, take it out to one of the springs where she would leave it in the water, then go on to take her morning bath in another spring. On her way back she would pick up her breakfast, the eggs cooked perfectly. Later, as an adult, it took her a long time to learn to cook eggs properly on a stove.

10. New Zealand 1997

Some of the springs looked unappealing, just gray mud oozing at the bottom of a deep depression in the ground. But in other places the water was guided by cement slabs and troughs into neat rectangular pools which apparently were of different temperatures for bathing. I gather that by mixing the water from the hottest springs, which is boiling, with cooler water from a stream that passes through, they can control it well.

We ate hot lunch in the village, of veal, lamb, cabbage, and sweet corn, all of which was cooked in the hot springs after our arrival. It was tasty. After that we had just a few minutes before our bus was to leave, and we didn't get to see as much of the village as I'd have liked. There was a geyser, for example, that we'd seen from a distance, but we never got close to it or saw it erupt as much as I think it would have. I had booked only a one-day tour. All the Japanese on our bus had booked for two days, and they would be staying the night in Rotorua, so perhaps they would get to see much more.



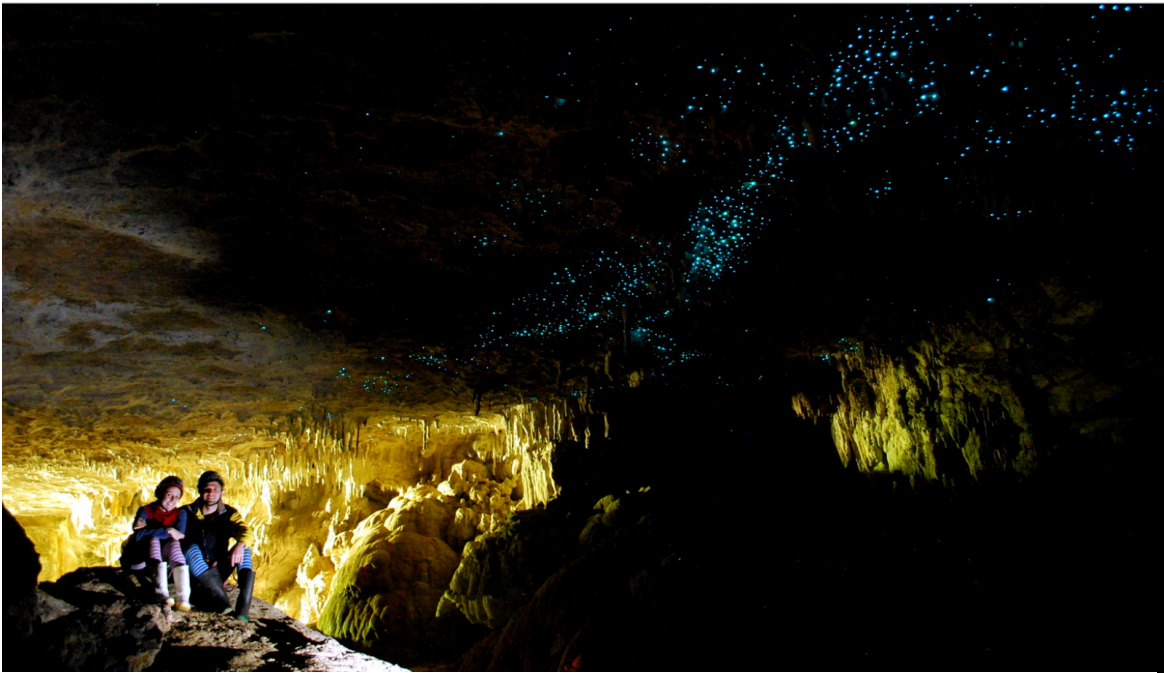
Mud pool in Rotorua
from Wikipedia 2023

In Rotorua the driver picked up his five-year-old granddaughter, named Page, who would go with us to Waitomo and then back to Auckland to spend the night with him. I enjoyed meeting her, and while David was off doing something else, she and I chatted about her brother and five sisters who all lived in Australia, and whom she wished could live with her and her mother. She asked me to guess her sisters' names, and I was pleased with myself when I got one of them, Rachel, on the second try. After that I couldn't get another, however, until Page gave me a hint: she whispered "Jessica." I never did get another, and our fun was spoiled slightly when David came back and said with surprise that she didn't have any sisters. That was incorrect, however. They were stepsisters, presumably not related to David, so he had forgotten them. "A long sad story," he said, but he never told me more.

When we started up, the first time David did one of his spiels on the microphone for us, I saw Page watching him with awe. I asked him later, while she was asleep, if this was the first she'd seen him work, and he said it was. I think he was pleased at the reaction she had had to him.

Travels of a Trade Economist

Our next (and last) stop was the Waitomo Caves. These are also called the Glowworm Caves. As was explained to us, the glowworms live on the ceilings of the caves, over the river that flows through the cave's lowest chambers. They dangle sticky threads of mucus down a few inches into the air to catch insects. The insects have been washed into the cave by the river, then see the light of the glowworms and fly toward it thinking to get out of the cave. They are caught instead and eaten, helping the glowworm to mature to the next stage of its existence as a pupa – in a cocoon, I guess. It finally leaves the cocoon as a mosquito-like fly, which breeds and lays eggs on the cave ceiling to start the process again. The flies have no mouths, and they starve to death after three days of pure procreation.



Glow worms in the Waitomo Caves from Wikipedia 2023

The tour of the caves was twenty minutes of walking through some very beautiful and impressive chambers that might have been worth the trip by themselves.

Then, at the bottom level, we stepped into a flat-bottomed boat that floated us in the dark through the rest of the caves, lit only by the glowworms. They were tiny points of bluish-white light on the ceiling, like a star-filled sky except that their relative positions would change as we moved beneath the uneven ceiling and its many stalactites. It was a stunning experience. It reminded me of the scene in the movie *Immortal Beloved* where the boy floats under the stars to the music of Beethoven's Ninth. I learned later that another way to see these caves is by "black water rafting." Here you rent a black inner tube and float individually through the cave on your back. It must be wonderful.

Page, incidentally, had second thoughts about this experience when we were in the first chamber of the cave, and David thought for a minute that he would have to take her back out. But she came around and hung in there, and apparently did enjoy the experience after it was over.

10. New Zealand 1997

After Waitomo we had another two-and-a-half-hour drive to get back to Auckland, and Page and I both were pretty quiet toward the end of that. David would pipe up every now and then with something to say, and I would come around briefly to talk to him. But I was pretty talked out and ridden out by that point, and I just wanted to get back to my room.

Unfortunately, when I got there I couldn't stay. The battery in my camera had gone dead just before Waitomo (where I couldn't have taken pictures anyway), and I needed to replace it before our trip the next day. I went out to the convenience store across the street. They didn't have the right thing, but suggested I try the Urgent Chemist. On my way to where they had directed me, I came to another plausible store with batteries, but they too didn't have the right one, and suggested the Urgent Chemist. Good advice. I found the Urgent Chemist a few blocks further on, and sure enough, he had what I needed. The Urgent Chemist, it turns out, is a pharmacy that opens only after other stores are closed, and it stays open, with a pharmacist, all night. A great idea, except perhaps for the chemist. He looked a little wistful when I said that in the U.S., we have drug stores that stay open 24 hours, but the pharmacist leaves at 10:00.

Sunday, I spent the day with Mia, Ed, and a graduate student, John Gilbert, and his wife Eisuku. After dropping Mia's daughter at her ex's, we drove to the coast northwest of Auckland. We first visited a Gannet Colony.

Gannets are birds about twice the size of sea gulls. They have yellow heads and a very graceful, curved body when they fly, their tails angled slightly down like the Concorde. Their colonies are on several large rock ledges over a very rough stretch of the Tasman Sea between New Zealand and Australia. The ledges are thick with their nests, which are small mounds that they've built of vegetation and guano about a foot apart. When we visited, most of the birds were there, although I gather that at other times most would be out to sea fishing for food.

As we watched, they courted one another by touching beaks and by intertwining their long necks and rubbing them together. Apparently, they mate for life and then produce one egg each year, taking turns fishing and incubating the egg with their feet. The young birds grow up there on the rock, and when they are full size, they fly off to Australia where they stay for a couple of years. Then they come back to these same rocks in New Zealand, where they mate and finish out their lives raising a series of young. I had the impression that this is the only place in the world where they live, but I'm not sure of that.

We watched them for a while, and I was mesmerized by seeing them fly. It was so incredibly graceful and effortless, apparently because of the way they were able to take advantage of the updrafts near the rocks. I didn't see them fish, unfortunately, since I gather that too is impressive. They spot fish from way up, then dive into the surf, several feet under water, to catch them.



Gannet breeding colony at Muriwai, New Zealand from Wikipedia 2023

Near the gannets was a beach that we walked down to. All the beaches along here are of a “black” sand. It isn’t entirely black, but it is certainly gray and much darker than normal sand. The reason apparently is that there is lots of iron in it, and it is also heavier than normal sand if you pick it up.

This first beach was nice, but the real payoff for our trip was the next beach we visited, Karekare, where the movie “The Piano” was filmed. Here the vast expanse of black sand was uninterrupted, just like in the movie. I’ve never seen a beach with no rocks, shells, seaweed, or litter on it, but that is how this one was. There were people, of course, but surprisingly few, perhaps because the road we took to get there wasn’t very good. Anyhow, it was a memorable experience.

From there, we went swimming. No, not in the ocean – this is winter after all. We went to a water park where the pools were fed by hot springs so that there was one pool about 85 degrees and another 104. There was a water slide too, which Ed and John did once, but the rest of us weren’t interested in the cold walk to the top of it. After we were well heated by the pools, we ate a picnic lunch that the others had brought along, including sushi that Eisuku had made. We were lucky, too, that the sun was out through most of this, far different from the rest of the week.

Our final stop for the day was a nature walk. I didn’t expect much from it, but I was surprised. I had noticed all week that Auckland looked pretty like the U.S. in many ways, including, I thought, both architecture and vegetation. It seemed a lot like California or Florida, with palm trees and lots of other plants that stay green all year. But I hadn’t looked closely. In this nature walk I learned that most of the plants in New Zealand are not like anything we have at home, not once you look closely. First, many of what I

10. New Zealand 1997

thought were palms were not. They were fern trees. That is, they have trunks much like palms, but the leaves fanning out at the top are lacy ferns, not the broad leaves of palms. There are many kinds, plus many huge ferns that grow lower to the ground as well. Once you become aware of it, it's like a prehistoric forest.

There are also many other unusual plants and trees, including the New Zealand national tree, the Kauri. It is a slow growing tree that has good hard wood and can grow to be very large. It is a protected species now, because so much of it was cut earlier on. It is traditional to hug the Kauri, which I did.

Wednesday, August 20, 5:30 PM

I've had three days at Lincoln University now, and there is very little to report. Lincoln is a former agricultural school that has grown in recent years into a more general university, but it is small, especially in traditional disciplines like economics. The economists are in the school of commerce, and the department is called Economics and Marketing. My main contact here is a professor who does trade, Ralph Lattimore.

The university is about a half hour drive from my hotel in Christchurch, in some other town, I guess, or just in the country – I can't tell. Since my hotel is on Ralph's route to and from work, he picks me up each morning and returns me each evening. I've spent my days completely on campus, either in the Commerce building or in a few other buildings nearby. I've seen none of the town, if there is one, and since it is dark by the time I get back to my hotel, I've not seen much around here either.



Karekare Beach from Wikipedia 2023



Kauri Tree, very lovable.

Travels of a Trade Economist

My days, then, have been spent working, entirely. I'm working with Ralph on a research project to measure the factor content of New Zealand trade, and several other faculty are working with us. We've met twice, and between times I wrote the beginnings of a theoretical section to provide the basis for the work. I need to finish that by our next meeting tomorrow. I also gave a seminar here, this afternoon, but the audience was not all economists, let alone trade specialists, so I had to prepare something much more non-technical than I'd done last week or will do next week. I didn't expect much, either from myself or from them, and I put together a lecture on technology, trade, and inequality that I hope will provide the basis for other work I need to do this fall. Anyway, with low expectations I wasn't disappointed in the seminar, and it went fairly well.

The first night, as I mentioned above, I had an incredibly good meal here at the hotel, which by the way is extremely luxurious. I couldn't be more comfortable. Last night I wanted to pick up some things for breakfast at a convenience store, so I walked over to a street a couple of blocks away where I was told I'd find something. It was quite a contrast to Parnell street in Auckland, which clearly catered to tourists and was full of quaint shops. This is just a conventional shopping strip, catering to local needs and with the personality of a strip mall. I did find a convenience store, but I looked also without any luck for a laundry. The laundry service in the hotel is convenient, but very pricey, as they say here.

I found many places to eat on this strip, though they were ordinary. There was one African restaurant, however, that seemed interesting, since I'd never eaten in one. The menu outside mentioned a soup of avocado, asparagus, and prawns, and a main course of goat-meat meatballs, rice, sour cream, and gravy. Both sounded good to me, so I went in. It was a tiny place, with no customers at all. The proprietor, I presume, was a black man in African dress, seated at a table near the kitchen talking to a blond woman.

Perhaps I should have been leery of a restaurant with no customers at 6:30 in the evening, but it was Tuesday after all, and what can you expect on a cold winter night? I ordered the two dishes and waited a good while, sipping a coke. The soup, when it arrived, was thin and pale green, with no signs of solids from the avocado or asparagus. One prawn was present, however, in its entirety, on the bottom of the bowl. I ate the soup, but not the prawn, since I didn't know how to deal with the head. The goat meatballs (there were two) sat on rice and sour cream as advertised, but if there was gravy, I couldn't spot it. There were steamed vegetables, however, fresh looking broccoli and cauliflower, and aside from being rather dry the dish was pretty good. I won't go back, however (dashing my dreams of leading other conference participants next week to what I'd found), and when Ralph drove me past it today, I noticed it was closed. I may have been its last customer. My intestines, today, have not been happy, but I'm sure that's due to the seminar I was worried about, not the meal.

I got a taste of the new information age as I prepared for my seminar yesterday and today. I wanted to get some graphs and tables from an article I remembered in the *Brookings Papers* from 1994, so I asked where I might find that journal. I was directed to the campus library, right next door to the department. There I found the usual electronic catalog, a computer terminal that was not hard to figure out. *Brookings Papers*, I found,

10. New Zealand 1997

were here (only) in two different collections on CDROM, one business and once social science. At the information desk I was shown to the computers that accessed these collections, each with a drawer of CDROMs and a printer. To use the printer, I merely needed a plastic card with an embedded computer chip that they issued to me, and onto which I put some money. Then I went to the social science machine, since the other one was occupied, and soon found a listing of the available issues of the journal. Articles were listed by title, not author, and I wasn't sure of the date, so it took me a while to search for what I wanted. I couldn't find it. As I went back and forth through the CDROMs, I found many interesting things, some of which I even made copies of, but I couldn't find the one I wanted. Finally, in frustration, I asked about it at the information desk, and they used their access to the system to learn that the issue I wanted was in the business collection, but for some reason it was missing from the social science collection.

Great, I thought, until I found that not only was someone else using the business machine, but the machine was also booked up for the rest of that day and the next. Each machine has a little notebook next to it where you could sign up for its use in half-hour increments, and all these seemed to be taken. I was dismayed, since I needed this for my seminar today. I asked again at the desk, and they tried persuading the student who was using the machine to let me use it, but he was clearly under pressure too, and I said not to push it. Fortunately, they found an opening in the book at 8:30 this morning, and I took it. I was there promptly this morning, and I had no difficulty getting what I wanted. It's a good system, really, since it gives you quick access and even quicker copying (just print the pages you want) as long as you can get the machine. But having the whole collection of business journals available only on one machine is a real bottleneck. It's like having the whole business-school library but letting only one person in at a time.

I've been eating lunch each day with Ralph and sometimes others at a nearby building that has a snack bar, I guess you'd call it. The name over it is Scoff, and I asked today what that means. It's a verb, Ralph said, meaning to eat food quickly. Like scarf, I guess. It offers various wrapped sandwiches, plus one hot meal each day. So far, it's always been the hot meal that I've wanted, as you'll understand when I say what they were. The hot meals are served in square Styrofoam containers about the size to hold a good-sized hamburger. The first day was bangers and mash (sausage over mashed potatoes), the second lasagna, and the third beef stroganoff over rice. The price each day has been NZ\$3 (about \$2 US). Not bad. I drank coke the first two days, but I followed Ralph's example today with a banana milk.

On the way to lunch today, Ralph mentioned that there was a classical music concert scheduled for 12:40 nearby. My seminar was to be at 1:40, so I couldn't stay long, but after lunch while Ralph went back to work, I stopped in for part of the concert. It was the New Zealand String Quartet, and I listened to half an hour of Schubert. A nice break.

Both the department in Auckland and the department here have had nice common rooms, where faculty gather for tea and coffee. There isn't always coffee made, but in addition to a sink, the rooms have had a hot water heater on the wall above the sink. It dispenses boiling water at all times and is handy for tea and instant coffee.

Travels of a Trade Economist

I've figured out the advantage of New Zealand's electrical plugs and outlets. I don't know whether their system is unique, but it's new to me, as I recall. Their plugs have either two or three prongs, with one optional as a ground, like ours. All three are flat, like ours, but instead of being parallel, the two operational prongs form an angle, the optional third prong below them. So what, you ask? With just the two prongs, as I have on the adapter for my laptop, I can easily tell which way it plugs in, because of the angle. With American ungrounded plugs, where one prong is wider than the other, I am forever trying to insert the wide prong into the narrow slot, and I can't see the difference without putting on my glasses. Here that is not a problem, and there is no need to have one prong wider than the other since the angle will always get it right. I think I'll lobby for this system to take over the world.

I have finally, on this trip to the southern hemisphere, remembered to pay attention to which way the water swirls down a sink. The answer is clockwise, at least in my bathroom sink. I've tried it several times, starting from water standing reasonably still. I also tried in the men's room at the university, but there I can't stop the drain, and the answer depends on which tap I use to fill it. (No, no. I'm not bored. Not at all.)

Thursday, August 28, 9:00 PM

The pace picked up shortly after I wrote that last, so that I haven't had a chance to write again until now, and now it is the evening before my return home. I hope to catch up on events.

On Wednesday evening I ate alone here again at the hotel and had the pasta dish I'd passed on before. It was good, but so rich I couldn't finish it (which hardly ever happens to me, especially with pasta). Thursday was another whole day at Lincoln, spent almost entirely working on our project, for which I finished drafting my theoretical contribution.

As the day progressed, it got colder and wetter outside. Early in the day I chatted with a woman in a neighboring office about the weather, and when she wondered if it might turn to snow, I said I'd like that, just to see real winter in August. She disagreed, saying it would be bad for the lambing. When she explained what she meant, that many of the newborn lambs would die in the snow, I changed my tune. But as it turned out it did in fact snow, and by evening the place was looking even more like winter at home.

Ralph and I were invited to Caroline Saunders's home for dinner, and by the time we got there it was even a bit slippery. Caroline's home is in the country, where she breeds horses that I unfortunately did not get to see. Her home, with her husband and three kids, was a stark, rather modern structure with only very little furniture. Before dinner we sat on the floor in front of the wood-burning stove (again, no central heating) playing with her two dogs, one of whom was very friendly and rambunctious. Caroline did have a table for us to sit at for dinner, however, and we enjoyed a home-cooked dinner of many different dishes that were good but undistinguished. Dessert was some small fruit pies that Ralph had picked up at a shop in Lincoln, and they were very good. Caroline served them with our choice of cream or custard. I chose custard, which she poured over it generously. Caroline, by the way, is English, but her husband, who mostly takes care of

10. New Zealand 1997

the kids while she works at the university, is a kiwi. (New Zealanders routinely call themselves and each other kiwis. A kiwi, they say, is either a bird or a person, never a fruit. If you mean the fruit, say kiwi fruit.)

By the time we left, the snow had accumulated to a half inch or so, and it was still coming down. I couldn't tell whether Ralph had difficulty driving or not, but we made it back without incident, me thinking sadly about the lambs.

In the morning on Friday, everything was white, but the sky was blue and it was sunny. I got a couple of pictures of the hotel, which looked especially good in the snow. Ralph showed up at 8:00 as usual, but rather than go to the university right away, we went instead to the flying club at the airport where Ralph rented a small plane and took us up. We had planned to do this all week if the weather permitted. Since the snow had stopped and the sky was clear, it was perfect for flying. We circled above Christchurch for a while, so that I got a much better look at it than I'd had before. Then we first went east over snow-covered hills to the bay and the town of Littleton, which serves as the harbor for Christchurch.

Then we went west across the plain to the New Zealand Alps. There we only crossed one ridge, so as to see a valley, and we didn't go to any of the very biggest mountains. But it was impressive enough as it was, and very beautiful.



Southern Alps in winter from Wikipedia 2023

Travels of a Trade Economist

During the flight (and before and after) Ralph told me a lot about flying. He easily convinced me that it is very safe, far safer than I had believed, even in small planes. There are many safeguards against problems, and even if there are problems, they should not be dangerous if handled properly. What's needed is for a pilot to be very careful not to get in a situation that he cannot get out of, but unless he's foolish that isn't hard. Even the loss of the one engine just means that you have to land, but that is perfectly possible without power. In fact, when you do land you really are doing it without power, since the engine isn't doing anything for you at that point. I must say, I could feel the air supporting us as we landed, and I could finally understand why all this is possible. There are, of course, far more accidents and fatalities with small planes than with large planes, but that is because people take foolish unnecessary risks.

I was impressed, too, when I watched Ralph carefully inspect the plane before we took off. He appeared to check every part to make sure it was working, including crawling under the plane. He explained the various controls to me, which turned out to be much simpler than they looked at first. Most surprising was a wooden stick that I noticed next to my seat. This, he explained, was a dipstick for checking the gas. He said that you never trust the gas gauge.

Back on the ground we drove on to Lincoln for another routine day. On the way, though, we passed a field of sheep, and I looked with concern for the lambs, such as I'd seen many of on other days. There were none in the field I looked at, and I said so to Ralph. He glanced over at the field and said, "Those are castrated males." So the lambs were fine, perhaps. I don't know about the males.

Friday evening, I was taken to dinner by Liliana and Rainer Winkelmann. Liliana is the organizer of the conference I would be attending this week, and she had called me earlier in the week to set this up. To my surprise, since I had assumed she was a New Zealander, she had an east-European accent. I asked my colleagues at Lincoln about her. She's from Yugoslavia, they said. They call her the Barbie Doll economist, because of her looks. Quite different from what I had pictured from my e-mail contact with her.

They were to pick me up at 6:45, and I was in the lobby by then watching for a Barbie Doll. Instead, a young man approached me and identified himself as Rainer. Liliana was parking the car, but soon she too appeared. She is a thin woman of about 30, attractive, and with mid-length straight blond hair, almost white. She is full of very nervous energy, always moving, always talking, and very much the center of attention and activity.

We drove quite a distance to a restaurant, Rainer driving their sport utility vehicle with me beside him and Liliana in the back. Through most of the ride she was on the edge of her seat with her face up between us chattering away. Rainer, a nice-looking clean-cut German, was quieter, usually with a small smile on his face. In the conversation I learned some bits about their life and history, including her origins in Belgrade and his in northern Germany. We ate at an impressive and rather expensive restaurant on top of the hill between Christchurch and Littleton, reached from below by a gondola (a car suspended from a cable). I've forgotten now what I ate, but I'm sure it was good – all my meals in New Zealand have been, except perhaps the African one.

10. New Zealand 1997

I spent Saturday walking around Christchurch, which I now finally saw up close. The hotel is on the edge of a large park. The center of town is on the other side of the park, and it is a fair walk away. Saturday was a nice day, so I set off with my camera across the park, and paused along the way to watch the rugby games that were going on. Like soccer in the U.S., rugby seems to occupy lots of families and their kids, both boys and girls, on Saturdays in New Zealand. I got a little bit better sense of the game by watching, but only a little.

As I finally walked on toward town, I passed three girls of about 12 years old, I'd guess. They said hello and I said hello back, then saw that they turned around and started to follow me. So I stopped and talked with them for a bit. Their parents and brothers were playing rugby, they said, and they were tired of watching. I told them where I was from, got a picture of them, and walked on. Of course it was all harmless, but it crossed my mind that I was a stranger talking with young girls (and dressed in a trench coat, no less), which in the U.S. might be suspicious. Indeed, what if they got the idea of claiming something awful about me, just for fun? An unsettling thought, although I didn't really take it seriously. Later I learned that this is the city where that movie about the girls who killed one of their mothers took place, based on a true story. A very pleasant place to look at, but underneath...?

The downtown, when I reached it, was very attractive. There was a mix of old and new buildings, much of it very nicely done. I wandered in several directions, stopping in shops, stopping for coffee, and so forth. During the afternoon I did quite a bit of shopping.

I had decided to try to get a haircut, because Ralph had told me that haircuts were quite cheap here, and because my hair had gotten much longer than I like. I asked someone where I might find a barbershop and was directed to an alley off the main square. There I did find a shop, but it was closed, and I thought I was out of luck. There wasn't likely to be another one nearby, I supposed, but a few yards further down the alley I found I was wrong. There was a very small shop with a single barber working away, four chairs along the wall almost filled with three men waiting. I stepped in and took the remaining seat.

The barber, whose name turned out to be John, kept up a steady patter of talk with his customers, most of whom he clearly knew. They were all younger than me and seemed to be working-class. Certainly, their hair was far shorter than mine. I wondered how John would handle me, and I felt decidedly out of place. When it got to be my turn, though, he was just as friendly with me as with the others, and he seemed to have no difficulty adjusting to my hair style. I enjoyed talking with him, and I liked the haircut he gave me. I learned that he had given up drinking and smoking a few years ago, and he strongly recommended that others do the same. The haircut was only NZ\$6, which would be \$4 U.S. As a trade economist, I enjoyed importing the ultimate nontraded good.

I accumulated several bags as I shopped, and after a visit to a shop that was clearly geared to tourists, I stepped out with even more and found a taxi conveniently at the curb.

Travels of a Trade Economist

I took it back to the hotel, dropped my things, and set out again. This time I crossed the park through a different part that took me through a botanical garden. Since it was still winter, this was not all it could be, but there were some trees that I liked and took pictures of.



Central Rose Garden of Christchurch Botanical Garden from Wikipedia 2023

Across the park I stepped into one of the courtyards of a wonderful old gothic style complex of buildings. I'd seen it before but not gone in. This, it turned out, was the site of the University of Canterbury before it moved to a new location twenty years ago. The old site had been turned into an arts center, which I may yet visit. What interested me then, though, were the buildings, and I explored happily for an hour or so. At one point a couple dozen small children came out a door and were led across a courtyard, all of them in makeup and costume. They had just finished putting on a play.

After I'd seen quite a lot, I turned down a narrow passage and found myself just outside this complex, surrounded by food stalls selling various ethnic foods. The one I came to first had food from the Czech Republic, and I ended up having dinner from there: a freshly made potato pancake topped with cooked meat, salad, and sour cream. I asked if this was a special occasion but was told that these stalls are here every Saturday and Sunday throughout the year. There were also, just around the corner I later realized, many other stalls with arts and crafts, a permanent weekly art fair.

10. New Zealand 1997



Old University of Canterbury, now Christchurch Arts Center from Wikipedia 2023

I returned to the hotel, back across the park and now going more directly since I knew the way. I was ready to turn in for the day, I think, but I met Jim Levinsohn in the hotel lobby. He was waiting for Ed Leamer to go to dinner, so I joined them. We walked yet again across the park to a restaurant they'd heard recommended, called Dux Lux. Having already eaten, I just had soup, and we got up to date on what we'd all been doing. Jim and Ed had also spent the afternoon in the city, but we hadn't run across each other.

I learned from them, I think for the first time, that Liliana was counting on our going on a day trip with her and Rainer the next day. Jim wasn't going to go, because he'd brought his bike from the U.S. and wanted to go out cycling, but Ed was planning to go, and I decided it sounded interesting. On Sunday Liliana and Rainer picked us up and drove us to Akaroa, a French fishing village about an hour away, east of here on a volcanic peninsula. The drive was beautiful, and we were met at the village by Mike Carter, one of their colleagues who lives out there and has a couple of boats. He took us out on the bay in his motorboat, and we saw still more of the scenery. It was very cold, but they had prepared for this by bringing winter coats and hats for us, and we were quite comfortable.

The sights were mostly the green hills and rocky cliffs that came down to the water. There were sheep scattered all over the hills, and Mike mentioned one that used to be seen living at the base of a cliff, from which it had apparently fallen. It was gone now, probably dead. He also took us to see a salmon farm, which was a collection of nets hanging in the water from buoys, each one containing salmon at different stages of development. We approached the nets in the boat, but because of an earlier storm the water was too murky for us to see any fish. The farmer for this arrangement lived in a tiny house that we could see on the hillside above, and Mike said he was a student-age fellow whom he'd seen collecting his harvest.

Travels of a Trade Economist



Me, dressed for sea



Ed Leamer, at sea

After our boat trip, Liliana walked with Ed and me through the village, which was quaint but not, as you might picture it, at all old. The only sign of it being French was that some of the streets were called “Rue.” I don’t know what the French ever had to do with it, since I’d seen no signs of French influence anywhere else in New Zealand. We walked to Mike’s house, where he and Rainer met us after they’d stowed the boat. We then spent several hours chatting and having a lunch that Liliana cooked for us in Mike’s kitchen.

After we were all done with the main course, she brought us a desert that was some sort of fruit tart and a scoop of ice cream. She brought plates of it to each of us, then went back to the kitchen area, where I think we all assumed she was going to get some for herself. We went on talking, none of us eating, waiting for her. But even though she continued to participate in the conversation from the kitchen, she didn’t come back. Instead, she was busying herself in the kitchen, and soon she was at the sink doing dishes. Still, none of us ate, and of course the ice cream was melting. I felt that I should be waiting for one of our hosts before I started eating, if not Liliana then Mike or Rainer. But eventually I decided that wasn’t going to happen, and I picked up my spoon and started eating. The others followed my lead, and only then did Mike ask Liliana “Are you boycotting us?” I can’t recall (or perhaps didn’t understand) her answer.

Before we left, Mike wanted to show us his “park.” His house was surrounded by dense vegetation. It turned out that he owned a half acre or so of the hillside, and he had planted a lot of this himself. He’d also built a pathway through it, with steps and wooden platforms where necessary to walk on. There was no place really to stop, though; it was just a place to walk through.

When we returned to Christchurch, Liliana gave me the choice of going to the hotel or going to join a group at Dux Lux. I felt the need to do some work, so I opted for the hotel. But then as I worked, I began to feel left out. I tried to call Jim Levinsohn, who had been out biking and might not have known to go to Dux Lux, but he didn’t answer. Then a bit later he called me, and the two of us set off to see if we could catch the group. By taking a taxi to the restaurant, we did, but just as they were in front of it starting to go somewhere else. We joined in, and the whole group went to a Thai restaurant.

10. New Zealand 1997

We were led by Julian, a young professor here who also knew one of the young women who worked at this restaurant. She was a very attractive Thai (is there any other kind?) with a New Zealand accent. Julian entered the empty restaurant with a couple of us and told her there'd be a group of eleven. Instead of being pleased, as I'd expected, she gave him a dirty look for making her work so hard on an evening when she'd expected to take it easy. I commented to him that she must not be the owner, and he said no, the owner is her aunt. Her reaction became even clearer when she told him that the aunt had sold the place to another family member, and that she herself was going to move, first to Sydney and then to London. Nonetheless, we had good food and good service. My Pad Thai, which was available with several different meats, was good but short on noodles.

Monday the conference began. Liliana had not made it very clear how we were to get to the campus, apparently thinking we'd be happy with the half hour walk. She needed to be there herself early to set things up, so she offered to pick up anyone who wanted to go at 7:30. For a conference starting at 9:45 that seemed early. It was true, as I found later that day, that each of us was provided with our own well-equipped office in the same building as the conference, so going early to work might have made sense. But I didn't do it. Instead, I learned at breakfast, where I found Jim, that she'd be sending Rainer for another pickup at 8:45, and I went with that.

The campus, which I now finally saw up close, was full of buildings that were modern and nondescript. There also seemed to be no order to their placement relative to one another, so while I think the campus is probably practical, it has no particular charm.

The Commerce Building itself, where the Economics Department is located and where the conference was being held, is perhaps an exception, but it depends on how you like far out architecture. It was just recently built – in fact parts are still under construction. It is mostly cement, glass, and metal, with occasional touches of wood and tile, and it has been given a very deliberate industrial feel.

There are steel beams, for example, exposed around the elevators, with apparently no intent to ever cover them or paint them. The doors have panels of bare metal that also seem unfinished. There are little windows in various odd places, looking into rooms and such. On the first floor, the center of the building is wide open down to the basement, and there is a curved metal ramp extending across it, giving handicap access, I guess. It reminds me of the erector set from my childhood. Few of the walls seem to be either parallel or perpendicular to others, although if there was any sense to the angles that they made instead, I didn't get it. In short, some architect had a great deal of fun.

The conference that day was what you'd expect, although apparently not entirely what Liliana had expected. She had funded it with donations from several ministries of the New Zealand government, and by charging admission (at what locals said was twice the normal rate) to the few economists from government who attended. The topic for the conference was Responses to Economic Liberalization, which my non-kiwi friends and I had reasonably interpreted as being about the academic debate on measuring the effects of trade on the economies of the world. But locals may equally reasonably have interpreted it as being about the results of a massive policy liberalization that New Zealand has

Travels of a Trade Economist

undertaken over the last fifteen years. So, it was clear from the first few papers and the reactions to them that we speakers were on a different wavelength than Liliana's paying guests. She therefore encouraged (no, ordered) us to put more policy content in our presentations for the next two days, and she announced that she had done so. Meanwhile, she had fortunately mixed in several local presentations on the New Zealand reforms amongst our academic papers, so that there was at least a little policy content to the day. The local papers also served the useful purpose of teaching us, if we listened, what the reforms were all about.

Still, I was dismayed late in the day when the last two speakers, both locals, finished and Liliana opened it up for discussion. Every one of my academic colleagues trooped out, and I was the only one who stayed to participate in the discussion. I think that may be part of the reason that she later thanked me profusely for my role in the conference, although I'm sure she was making equally fervent approaches to the others as well, knowing her.

I should mention how my own paper went that day, since the format was unusual. Discussants presented the papers, rather than only commenting on them. As a result, Ed Leamer was presenting mine, which happened to be a response to a very critical paper that he had written last year about a paper of mine. He did not disappoint, giving us a very funny and sometimes devastating critique of my paper (except for the most interesting section, in my view, which he said he agreed with and then didn't really present). I was able to respond, and we played a bit of verbal Ping-Pong in front of the audience with bits of economic theory. In content, I'm sure that I won. In appearance, though, probably not. Anyhow, this left no doubt that I would have to prepare carefully for my own presentation of his paper on Wednesday (since I was his discussant, as he had been mine).

Perhaps the most interesting thing of the day had nothing to do with the conference, however. I called the elevator to take me from the second floor to the fifth, and when it arrived there was a boy, perhaps 15 years old, standing uncomfortably and stiffly inside. I got on, and he backed up a step, drew himself to attention, and stared fixedly at the door. Before it could close, however, a group of three or four New Zealanders appeared and got on with us, talking and laughing among themselves. The boy inched further backwards and then gradually turned to face the wall of the elevator. He stood there with his face to the wall as we rose to 4, dropped off the oblivious group, then to 5 where I got off myself. He was still facing the wall as the door closed. Sick puppy.

Friday, August 29, 8:00 PM, Chicago

I'm on my way home, clearly, and had an hour delay in my flight from Chicago to Detroit. I found what may well be the only electrical outlet in O'Hare Airport, just on the other side of a wall next to a seat in the departure lounge at the gate. Since I had run my battery down on the flight from Auckland, I'm plugged in and writing away. Perhaps I can finish this before the flight.

10. New Zealand 1997

Monday evening, we were invited to the home of Robin Harrison for dinner. Robin was the organizer for the meetings of the New Zealand Economists Association that would begin Thursday, and at which several of us would be speaking. He is also a member of the Canterbury Economics Department, but he is not a trade economist and hadn't played much role in Liliana's conference.

He had a very nice house, so nice that we were invited to remove our shoes in the entryway before walking on his white carpets. He also had a good deal of art. The dinner he and his wife put on was wonderful, although when I complimented her on it, she credited a caterer. Most interesting about their house was that it was set back from the street, reachable by way of a long driveway that lay between two street-front properties. This, we were told, is a standard way of laying out houses here, and as I walked around later, I frequently noticed such driveways leading back from the street and apparently not associated with the houses on either side.

Tuesday was more of the same for half a day. Two papers were presented, neither involving me, and my biggest effort of the day was walking to the campus, a half hour walk that broke my sweat threshold after about 20 minutes. Of course, I was wearing the sweater I bought here, as well as my jacket and trench coat, since I've learned to be ready for it turning cold at any time.

Tuesday afternoon we had a few hours off, with the option of taking a tour with Liliana. I declined, since it sounded like it would repeat much of what I'd already seen. In any case I needed to work on my attack on Leamer for Wednesday. I did work for a couple of hours, most notably finding a good clip-art cartoon that I could use to represent Ed on a transparency. Then I was lured away by Matthew Slaughter to play pool with him, Ed, and Mike Knetter at the faculty club. The club had Guinness on draft, so I drank one while Ed and I took on the younger guys at 8-ball. They won two games, but we won the third and declared ourselves champions.

Liliana took the foreigners to dinner that evening at a nice restaurant called Beachcomber, on the beach near Christchurch. We pool players took a taxi and arrived there after dark, so I really didn't get to see much of the beach or the restaurant from outside. Inside we all talked economics and other things over good seafood, then returned early to the hotel. I was up until after midnight preparing. Sadly, by now I knew that I really liked Ed's paper, so I couldn't really trash it. Instead, I prepared an introduction that would claim credit for all of his ideas based on a paper that Frank Stafford and I published in 1976. That wasn't too farfetched – our paper was related, and Ed had cited it. And of course, after my introduction I would admit that we really hadn't done what Ed had, only that we wished we had. I figured that would work.

Wednesday morning, I taxied early into the office so that I could finish preparing my slides. I then sat through the morning papers with some interest but slightly distracted. After lunch I made my presentation, and I could tell it was going well. Most of it, after the introduction, consisted of my enthusiastically explaining Ed's results, since I really did like what he'd done. Apparently, my enthusiasm came across well. After the session, Liliana asked all the conference participants and attendees to vote for best presentation

Travels of a Trade Economist

and best paper in the conference. I won the former, Ed the latter. We realized that being last before the vote had helped, but it still felt very good to get this recognition. Ed's gift for having won was a carved wooden bowl, mine a box of New Zealand souvenirs, like playing cards, a key chain, etc.

That evening was yet another dinner. This was the scheduled conference dinner (the others had been more casual and apparently spontaneous), and it was held at a castle on the hill overlooking Christchurch. It was a surprising place, with tapestries, paintings, and heraldic shields hanging on the walls. We ate in a hall that felt medieval, although of course it couldn't have been, in a country as young as New Zealand. 20 or so of us sat around a long table illuminated with two large 10-candle candelabras. A crew of tuxedoed waiters milled around, bringing us course after course, elegantly served. The soup, for example, was served in a bowl placed on a white cloth napkin shaped into a sort of nest. Mine was tilted toward me, however, and I thought the soup was going to spill into my lap as the waiter ladled it into the bowl. It didn't, though. We had a choice of three desserts, and I chose the only one that wasn't served flaming. The flaming ones were not drenched in brandy and then lit, as I've seen before. Instead, one waiter went around the table with a bowl of brandy that was already flaming. Then he ladled it, still flaming, onto the deserts, scoop after scoop, the flames running down onto the plates and looking more out of control than I'm sure they were.

I sat between Mia (remember her, from Auckland? She'd come down for the conference) and Jim Tybout, one of the U.S. academics. I had pleasant conversations with both, switching my attention back and forth. Then, toward the end of the evening, a man straight across from me engaged me in conversation. I'd met him earlier; he was from the ministry of foreign affairs, and I didn't mind talking to him, but he was kind of far away. The table must have been ten feet across, and of course there were other conversations going on around both of us. But we talked anyway, and at some point even had Mia and Jim involved.

That evening after we returned from the dinner, I still had to prepare for one more presentation, the paper I would give Thursday afternoon at the New Zealand Association of Economists. I'd only have a half hour, with no discussant, so I wasn't too concerned about it. But I was dismayed when I began to read the paper that evening to find that my graduate-student co-author, Simeon, had completely changed the empirical work from what I remembered. I'd been in too much of a hurry to read what he'd sent me just before my trip, so I had to adapt what I'd planned to say to the new tables that he'd given me.

On Thursday I continued that process while I also attended the opening sessions of the conference. Ed gave a wonderful opening address on econometrics, the highlight of which was the graph of the data of a Haitian consumption function that he claimed to have had his research assistant estimate. When he asked for a scatter of the data, the data points spelled out HELP. "I think the data are trying to tell us something," he said.

After so many good meals in New Zealand, I had learned to look forward to them. This day's conference lunch, however, had a drawback: there wasn't enough food. I queued

10. New Zealand 1997

with others, but most things were gone when I reached the table. And there were still quite a few people behind me. I don't know what happened.

My paper went OK, although I don't think I impressed anybody. It was followed, in any case, by John McMillan (a top applied theorist with New Zealand roots) giving a paper on rugby economics, so I don't think anyone remembered mine after his performance. They are nuts about rugby over here, as I'd already learned.

There was a conference dinner planned as well, but I'd had enough of this group even if I thought there would be enough food. I took the opportunity of the next "tea break" to seek out and say goodbye to many of the folks who had taken such good care of me over the last three weeks. I didn't find Liliana, unfortunately, but I found almost everyone else. Then I went up and checked out of my office, returning to the hotel with Jim.

Several of us went out for dinner one last time that evening, to a seafood restaurant that one of them had discovered earlier. It was wonderful, and I wish I could remember the name of the fish that I had, poached, and served over beans, chili, bacon, and mashed potatoes. It was delicious.

Which brings me to today, which will have been 40 hours long by midnight tonight in Detroit. I spent the morning wandering downtown Christchurch again and doing a bit more shopping. I saw a few things I'd missed before, and again found food stalls and other things going on in the Cathedral square, where I ate a baked potato for lunch from one of the stalls. Two friendly cab drivers took me first to the hotel, then to the airport, and I've been flying and waiting ever since.

They've just announced the arrival of the plane that will take us to Detroit, so it's time to unplug and be on my way.