

# Travels of a Trade Economist

## Chapter 8 India-Egypt 1995



**Sunday, Dec. 10, 11:15 AM – Frankfurt**

I'm sitting at a counter in a cafe in the transit lounge of the Frankfurt airport. I've been here already for about three hours, and it is an hour yet before I'll need to go to the gate for my flight to Delhi. This trip may involve more airport time than most, since I'm going to two countries, with connecting flights through still other countries on each leg of the journey.

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I started the trip in the airport limo yesterday, chatting with a medical student from the University of Southern California who had been interviewing for a residency at UM Hospital. He looked Asian but sounded very American, dressed in an expensive looking top coat and Levis. I learned that medical students, in their final years, may travel all over the country at their own expense interviewing for residencies. Then the students and the schools both list their choices of each other, turn these in to a central agency somewhere, and in five minutes a computer makes assignments of students to schools that determine their lives for the next several years.

This student had been misinformed about when the limo would leave for the airport and about how long it would take, so he had only a little over an hour before his flight on American Airlines, much less than the limo company says you might need because of extra stops. There was only one extra stop this time, however, for a woman returning to Texas who also was flying American. Since the normal route would take us first to the Northwest terminal to drop me off before going to American, I offered to be dropped off at American too, to save him time. Taking the limo company's advice seriously as usual, I was early enough that this would still get me to Northwest almost three hours before my flight, and the only cost to me was some extra walking.

When I checked in, I noticed that Northwest had another flight to Frankfurt before mine, leaving almost two hours earlier. I was in time to switch to it and was told I could get an aisle seat on it with an empty seat beside it, so I did.

Then I (barely) remembered my intention to buy flight insurance for this trip, since I had been reviewing my insurance and found it not as high as I'd like. For \$20 I could get the maximum of half a million dollars coverage, and I figured that would be some consolation if one of these planes went down. For that much money I almost found myself hoping it would, apparently unable to fully grasp the implications.

The flight was delayed a bit as they loaded luggage. Why that was a problem I don't know, since we were only partly full, but we took off comfortably after forty-five minutes or so. I read Newsweek, then forced myself to work on a student's dissertation chapter until we'd finished the meal and the lights were turned down. The movie was "Clueless," which I could pass on since I'd seen it twice. And the dissertation chapter didn't tempt me to stay awake, so I didn't. With an empty seat beside me it was comfortable, and I slept reasonably well for three hours or so.

They roused us an hour and a half before we'd arrive in Frankfurt by turning on the lights, making a loud announcement, and bringing us breakfast. Breakfast was just yoghurt, a banana, and a scone, and we could easily have slept another half hour, I thought.

I went back to the restroom in my stocking feet (not always a good idea at the end of a long flight) and found it occupied, with another man waiting. After a bit, the man drifted away – I guess he was just stretching his legs – and I kept waiting. Then another man came back, looked at the "occupied" sign on the restroom I'd been watching and at the "vacant" sign on another

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behind me that I'd failed to notice. He looked at me, shrugged, and went in. I kept waiting, but eventually got the chance to relieve myself.

The Frankfurt airport at 7:30 AM seemed big, new, and empty. Most of my fellow passengers headed down an escalator toward customs and their bags, and I followed them since the signs for connecting flights seemed to lead nowhere. A few minutes of reflection while standing in line at immigration convinced me that formally entering Germany would be a mistake, however, so I trudged back up the stairs next to the escalator (it only went down, of course) and followed the signs.

The signs led me through what seemed like endless empty corridors and many turns, until suddenly I rounded a corner and found a single Lufthansa check-in desk with an agent and several Indians making their way to Copenhagen. I checked in, was directed to the "sky train" to the other terminal, and waited with the Indians for the sleek, silent train that carried us maybe a half mile to the terminal I'm in now.

This one is much less new and much more crowded with travelers. I changed some money, only to find when I put it away that I already had some Deutschmarks in my bag from my last trip. And I found this coffee shop where I've been sitting ever since. I'm still working on the dissertation, which has been a struggle. But the coffee's good. And I've enjoyed listening to a group of what look like African musicians who have been playing and laughing over in one corner.

### **Tuesday, Dec. 12, 6:00 PM – Delhi**

They are keeping me busier than I'd expected here in Delhi. Aside from last night, when I just needed to sleep, this is the first chance I've had to do anything on my own. And now I just have an hour before the car takes me back to S. L. Rao's for a dinner party.

But first, back to Frankfurt. I sat for several hours in that coffee shop, occasionally glancing at a board showing the upcoming flights and their status. But I forgot to look at the board when my own flight would have finally been displayed, and instead just went down to the gate when it should have been about time to board. There I found that my flight was delayed, now to depart at 2:50 instead of the scheduled 1:25. There were few seats, but eventually someone stood up and I grabbed theirs, then settled in to wait, continuing to work through the dissertation chapter.

As I waited, I looked now and then for Shahla, Caroline Stern's friend who was supposed to be taking the same flight as me and whom I would accompany to where we were both staying, the India International Centre (IIC) in Delhi. The picture from her passport that Lucetta Stern had given me was almost useless, but I glanced at several women inquiringly without success. Then at 2:30 or so she approached me. She didn't recognize me from the picture that Lucetta had also given her, since she had forgotten to bring it. Instead, she picked me out of the crowd because I

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was the only one there who appeared to be working. Lucetta had told her I would be, that I am a workaholic. Huh!

She sat down next to me to wait, and we talked for quite a while. I learned that she is an artist who now makes her living painting walls, ceilings, and even floors to resemble various sorts of scenery. Caroline, also an artist, got to know her while working for her and now does the same thing on her own. As Shahla described her work, it did sound fascinating, and fun.

Shahla is from Iran, but she is also an American citizen, as I already knew from my copy of the page from her passport. She would be spending a month touring India, first with Caroline and Lucetta and then with Caroline alone. Then she would be going on to spend a month with her family in Iran. Like all women going to Iran, she would have to stay covered, with scarf and long gown or robe, while there. But Lucetta had insisted that she carry no more than a 22-inch-long bag on the trip, and a conventional Muslim outfit would never have fit. She told me she'd bought a dark grey plastic fireman's rain poncho to wear instead.

Eventually our flight did board and depart, though not until well after 4:00. Every seat was filled, many with elderly Indian women who understood little English. My own seatmates were small and well-behaved. But Shahla, as I learned later, sat next to a woman who was quite large and who wouldn't get up to let Shahla by. Shahla had to more or less sit in the lady's lap to get to her own seat in the middle. The woman also dumped the wrappings from her dinner on top of Shahla's dinner, which only amused Shahla. And she insisted on pouring milk into Shahla's coffee when it came, over her objections. My own experience was much less remarkable, so I won't remark on it. I slept only a couple of hours and was glad when we finally arrived in Delhi, three hours late at 4:30 AM.

Shahla and I stayed together as we passed through immigration and customs, changed our money, and booked a pre-paid taxi to the IIC. It was rather nice for me to be cast in the role of the old India hand, and I did my best to guide her through these intricacies without mishap. I enjoyed her fascination with the many locals who tried to get our attention, as well as her horror at the way our taxi negotiated the traffic, something that I found I was totally used to.

At the IIC we checked into adjacent rooms, and I noticed that we apparently shared the same ventilation shaft in the bathroom. Sure enough, she commented the next day that she could hear me talking in my room (when I ordered a bottle of water from room service – something that I've learned to do immediately when I arrive here so that I'll be able to brush my teeth without using the tap water).

I slept very briefly, then got up at 7:30 to shower and join Lucetta, Caroline, and Shahla for breakfast. They spent it talking about their travel plans, including Lucetta informing Shahla that she and Caroline had not reached an "accord" on what they were going to do. I never did figure out whether this meant that Shahla's plans disagreed with Caroline's or only with Lucetta's ideas of what Caroline's plans ought to be.

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After breakfast, Lucetta came back to my room with me to call Rajesh, our colleague at NCAER here who was also handling the arrangements for Lucetta's trip into other parts of India. She had lost his phone number and needed to get it from me. She reached him and made her arrangements. Then he sent a car to take me to NCAER. There I spent the day working with Rajesh Chadha and Sanjib Pohit on our model and preparing for today's presentation. I returned to the IIC early in the evening, intending just to crash.

Rajesh brought me back in his car, and I left him at the desk asking for Lucetta, while I went to my room to get our gift for him. As I returned, I passed Caroline talking with the concierge and then found Rajesh still at the front desk, but now with Shahla, both wondering where Lucetta and Caroline had gotten to, since they weren't in their room. I point to Caroline, who then told us that Lucetta had gotten a message from Rajesh at 5:30 that she needed to go to some government office before it closed at 6:00 to pay a fee for their trip. She had left by taxi to do that and hadn't returned. We went to Caroline and Lucetta's room to wait (a double room, much larger and nicer than my single), but Lucetta still hadn't appeared by 7:15, and we were all a bit worried.

At that point, the girls both having stepped out of the room briefly, the phone rang and I answered it. It was Lucetta, momentarily confused to have reached me. She was still at the government office, where they refused to take cash and insisted on a bank draft for the fee she was trying to pay. I turned her over to Rajesh, she turned him over to the government official, and together they somehow worked this out. Rajesh was clearly relieved that she was safe and that the arrangements were going to be OK. I saw no need to wait any longer and returned to my room to sleep.

A while later Lucetta called me looking for Rajesh. Apparently he had given up waiting and had returned home, so she never did get to see him. Instead, this morning at breakfast she brought me a large shopping bag full of presents for Rajesh and his family, plus several envelopes, of money to reimburse his expenses and of instructions for still more of her travel arrangements. All this help was needed, by the way, because in India going through normal channels can be slow to impossible. It is always easier to get something done (although still, as we'd seen, not very easy) if you knew someone, and Rajesh is well connected.

As I left my room this morning to go to breakfast, I met Anne Krueger, an eminent economist from Stanford, passing my door. In surprise I looked at her and said "Anne?" She said "Alan?" and we proceeded to breakfast together, exchanging our reasons for being in India. She is here giving some lectures, including the prestigious annual "Ramaswami Lecture." I am getting used to running into people that I know here.

### **Wednesday, Dec. 13, 3:30 PM – Delhi**

I think I now know my schedule for the rest of this visit. I have an hour free right now. Then I go to NCAER to meet Rajesh, who will take me along with Dr. and Mrs. Bhide to his home for dinner. Tomorrow at 11:00 I give a talk on our modeling at the Indian Institute for Foreign

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Trade at the behest of USAID, from whom we are hoping for more funding. My old friend from graduate school, Indira Rajarman, will pick me up from there for a short visit, and then return me to NCAER to work with Rajesh for an hour and then go to dinner with him and his colleagues. On Friday all day we have the ESCAP conference, including a morning presentation by me, an afternoon session with talks by representatives of six countries chaired by me, and an evening dinner. Considering that I came here expecting only to sit in at two meetings, they are getting quite a bit of work out of me. I need to prepare for these unexpected talks at some point, but I am determined to write in my journal right now.

After breakfast yesterday, a car and driver took me to NCAER for the 10:00 meeting of the Advisory Committee to our USAID project. The plan was for Rajesh to present the model, for Sanjib to present the data and results, and for me to provide 15 minutes of “opening remarks.” I’d decided to make these remarks a background explanation of what a CGE model (like we build) really is, including what it can do and what it cannot do. This was in response to a question that Rajesh had relayed from USAID regarding “empirical validation” of the model – something that cannot be done, and I wanted to head off such questions here with my opening remarks. This worked out well, in the end, but I think that I gave Dr. Bhide heart failure when I started along these lines, since he thought that the ever-critical USAID fellow would jump down our throats. He did show concern, but he seemed happy in the end.

All of this couldn’t happen until we started, however, and our start was delayed. First, a leading economist from the Delhi School of Economics, who was supposed to attend, had been hit by a motor scooter the day before and was in the hospital with a broken ankle and a serious infection. Two more of his colleagues who were also part of our committee insisted on staying by his bedside and also didn’t attend. (In India, I’ve learned, it is expected that anyone in the hospital will have friends and relatives always in attendance to provide services that in the U.S. we would expect from nurses.) Most of the other participants did attend, but they were delayed by unusual traffic tie-ups in Delhi. Then there was the future Director of NCAER, a diminutive Dr. Somebody to whom I’d taken an instant dislike when I met him last December. He was so delayed that we started without him, and he appeared only after all the presentations were done. He stayed for lunch, then left. The good news at the meeting, in addition to the eventually agreeable response from USAID, was that a woman from the Commerce Ministry promised us detailed data on India’s nontariff barriers, something that we thought they would never part with.

After lunch, Rajesh, Sanjib, and I continued to work on the model. I returned to a problem that I had been wrestling with for some weeks – calculating welfare – but as I explained the problem to Sanjib, I realized that he had already solved it. I am developing considerable respect for him as an economist. He got their model to work more quickly than Drusilla and I ever did, and now he has solved this problem. Either he is very good, or I am not.

I was to be back at S. L. Rao’s apartment, upstairs from NCAER, at 7:30 for dinner. I asked Bhide’s advice for what to take as a gift, and he suggested I buy some flowers as I returned from the IIC. He instructed the driver where to take me, and instructed me to spend no more than R100, since that would buy a nice bouquet. At the flower vendor, I picked some red flowers in

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bundles near the front and asked their price. I was told R300 for the whole thing, \$150 for half. With my skill at bargaining, I promptly paid R150 for half, then wondered as we drove away why my purchase looked so paltry. S. L. Rao, ever kind, professed to be pleased when I gave them to him and said they were orchids. Right!

He had invited to dinner about a dozen Australian academics who had attended a large conference that day on Indian Ocean Economic Cooperation. Rao's wife was in town for a visit (she now works as a journalist in Australia, which is why he is leaving NCAER), and we renewed our acquaintance from last year. (All right, I didn't remember her at all, but I covered it well.) In fact, we had quite a long time to talk because the Australians arrived in a group 45 minutes late.

While waiting for Lucetta in the IIC with Rajesh the night before, he had spotted an Australian economist whom he knew and introduced him to me. I suspected that he might be in this group, and when they arrived I thought I recognized him. I got into conversation with him – his name was Rick Pace, I think – but he was sure we hadn't met. We talked anyway because he had some interesting, if off the wall, ideas about economics. I noticed a rather pleasant smell emanating from him, what I thought might be from something he'd had to drink. Later he asked about my work, and when Rajesh's name came up, he brightened and said he knew him. In fact, he'd just run into him the previous evening! I said, "Yes, I was with him." "So you were," he said, eyeing me blearily, apparently forgetting that he'd denied meeting me earlier. Much later in the evening I heard a crash of some glassware hitting the floor, and shortly after noticed that several of the Australians were leaving. Since it would make sense for me to ride with any of them who were also going to the IIC, I approached Rao about joining them. He herded me back into the room, saying "No, it's better you wait. One of them had some difficulty with the alcohol." The group was gone, and I now saw no sign of Mr. Pace.

I had another interesting conversation during the evening with Rick Pace's co-author. He was also Australian, he said, though he looked to be a very dark Indian, having emigrated from India twenty years before. I didn't catch his name, and he had no card to give me when I gave him mine. I'll call him the Indian Australian, IA.

IA first talked more about the peculiar brand of economics that he and Pace are promoting, but you don't want to hear about that. I'm not sure that I did, either. We talked also, though, about the importance of family, and things like that, and I realized after a time that he must be about my age. For some reason I then commented on the fact that he didn't need glasses to read – something that I'd been very aware of for myself that day as I tried to read without them all the name cards I'd been given.

No, IA said, that was one thing he had learned from his father how to avoid. When he turned 40, he began exercising his eyes each morning for twenty minutes. He would close his eyes, then move his eyes inside his eyelids, first left and right, then up and down. Now, eight years later,

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his vision has remained fine, although he just recently noticed some deterioration and will now increase the amount of time that he exercises each day.

He said that the Hindu religion includes cures and preventatives for just about all possible maladies – you just need the discipline to use them. My other Hindu friends disagree that this has anything to do with religion, and they say these are various aspects of yoga. In any case, IA told me one other preventative procedure, that I'm sure we'll all want to try. He only attempted it once, and its purpose was not clear to me. You sit down in a large tub of water, then open your anus to draw the water into your intestines. If you do this right, you can pull the water all the way up through your digestive tract, although he said he only managed about ten inches. He didn't say why he quit trying.

### **Friday, Dec. 15, 6:00 PM – Delhi**

Whew! I've now pretty much finished their agenda for me here, and I feel exhausted. It's not helped by the fact that I came down with a head cold earlier in the week, caught probably on the plane over. And until last night I didn't sleep well. But they have kept me very busy, including having me speak several times, at a seminar yesterday and at the ESCAP conference today. I've promised to return briefly to the conference dinner this evening. Then I'll come back here to the IIC – where I'm sitting now in the lounge having coffee – to sleep until I get up at 3:00 AM to catch my flight to Cairo. It said in this morning's Indian newspaper that if you are dog tired at the end of the day, perhaps it is because you growled all day. I promise you, I didn't.



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Wednesday was my day to myself until late afternoon, my chance to get out, once again, and



Connaught Place, aerial view, from Web 2023

explore Delhi. I started with a taxi to Connaught Place, a sort of large central square, though circular, built by the British. It is the main shopping area of New Delhi. An inner circle surrounds an open park, and between this and an outer circle are built identical imposing white buildings, cut by streets radiating outward. All are filled with shops of varying elegance, as are other narrower nooks and alleyways that cut into and through these buildings. The sidewalks too are filled with vendors, some with stands or carts to sell from, others just carrying their wares. Having already bought many things from India during my visit a year ago, I wasn't looking for much. I did pick up a Dick Francis novel that I hope I haven't read, since I'd hate to finish the one I'm on and have nothing but economics to read for the rest of the trip. And I was also looking to buy a money belt, since I forgot to bring mine, and I'm uncomfortable carrying my passport, ticket, and travelers checks where they can easily be snatched. In fact, I left these things in the safe at the IIC for the day, rather than carry them or leave them in the room.

I wandered in and out of streets and shops, taking an occasional picture and asking wherever it looked appropriate if they had money belts. They had only some nice leather pouches on belts, but these wouldn't fit inside my clothes, so I didn't buy them. I was constantly besieged by people, including both beggars and men selling things. I easily turned down the latter since all

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they had to show me were the very same wooden chess sets and backgammon games that I had bought a year ago.

Then another man asked me what I was looking for, and, somehow trusting him, I told him about the money belt I wanted. He said that he could take me to a shop that would have this, and I set out to walk with him to it. Almost immediately, an auto rickshaw (a three-wheeled motor scooter with a covered back seat for two) appeared and my guide suggested that we ride in it to the shop for a nominal fee. I turned distrustful and said I didn't want to go if it was far away, and that if it was close, I'd rather walk. With a shrug he dismissed the rickshaw and we continued on foot. We chatted as we went, and he told me, for example, about a doctor he'd met here the previous week who had bought many things at this store. Did I know him? he asked, showing me the doctor's card. It was a veterinary doctor from South Carolina, and I said no, I didn't know him. "I guess America is a very big place," he said.

I also learned that my guide has a wife and five children, and that he lives not far away, in Delhi. He has five kids because the first three were girls. That seemed to explain only four, but I didn't pursue it. He also said that the store he was taking me to pays him R600 (about \$20) a day to bring them customers. At the time this didn't seem like much, but on reflection it is not bad at all. My colleagues to whom I later mentioned this thought that it was way too high, that it was more than they make as PhDs. Perhaps I got the number wrong.

After a longer walk than I had expected, and some concern on my part that I would get lost, we reached the store. I was indeed able to buy the sort of money belt that I wanted, made of cloth, though decorated much more than I needed for wearing inside my underwear. There was of course an offer to show me and sell me more than this, but there was no pressure when I declined. Then, to my surprise, my guide didn't dump me, but instead led me back to Connaught Place. And when we reached it at a different point than we'd left it, where he could presumably have been better occupied recruiting another customer, instead he continued to lead me around the circle to where he had first found me.

This happened to be at a break in the circle where the buildings were interrupted by a raised grassy area with people scattered on it. Instead of leaving me even there, however, he explained something I didn't understand about shoe-shine boys and dirt on shoes, and he ushered me past all this to the building and shops on the other side. Only here was he prepared to leave me. I vaguely realized that he had done all this to save me from being accosted by some shoe-shine boys, so before he left me, I thanked him and offered him R10. He refused to accept it. This surprised me, but I am told that it shouldn't have. To have accepted it would have made him a beggar.

After he was out of sight, I was curious about the raised area that we had just passed, so in spite of his warning I promptly returned to it and climbed up. I was immediately surrounded by small boys – 8-10 years old, I'd guess – carrying wooden boxes with shoe polish and brushes. "Look at your shoes, mister," they cried, and I saw a great wet glob of mud – or worse – on my right shoe. Unwilling to give them the satisfaction, I didn't admit that I'd seen it, and from then on I

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refused to look down. As I passed through the crowd, encountering ever more groups of shoe-shine boys, all would cry, “Look at your shoes, mister. Let me shine your shoes good as new mister. Look, mister! There’s shit on your shoes, mister. Bullshit! Why won’t you look, mister?” Even after I climbed back down to the sidewalk and continued my circuit of Connaught Place, I would occasionally encounter still more shoe-shine boys who would renew the refrain. I am proud to say, more than two days later and after representing my country as an honored speaker at more than one seminar and meeting, there is still ... something ... on my shoe.

From Connaught Place I took an auto-rickshaw to Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi. I didn’t know what that was – I’d just been told by a colleague that it would be a good place to ask for in Old Delhi. It turned out to be the broadest street in Old Delhi, which made it narrower than just about any street I’d seen in New Delhi. The ride to it passed through a variety of neighborhoods, including what appeared to be some wretched slums, and we passed the usual rich assortment of beasts of burden and people of burden.

I enjoyed looking at the crowded variety of Chandni Chowk, but after a bit I turned down a narrow side street hoping for even more. It was too narrow for cars, or even auto-rickshaws. But it was full nonetheless of bicycle-rickshaws and of people pushing and pulling carts. The buildings on either side were filled with shops, but here the shops were no more than open-fronted rooms, sometimes little more than large cupboards, in which stood or sat their proprietors selling the goods with which the walls of these rooms were lined. These were a variety of things, but always very colorful.

A young man pedaling a bicycle-rickshaw appeared at my side and offered to take me through these narrow streets of Old Delhi. He quoted a price of R60 (\$2) for half an hour. This sounded appealing and, hard bargainer that I am, I agreed to his price. A woman standing nearby –



Chandni Chowk, from Web 2023

American perhaps – said with a smile, “You are paying too much.” As we pedaled away, my chauffeur asked if she was a friend. “She is now,” I replied.

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Auto rickshaw, from Wikipedia 2023



Bicycle rickshaw, India,  
from Web 2023

We spent most of the half hour in those same narrow streets, stopping occasionally to squeeze past another rickshaw or cart headed the other way, and occasionally for me to take a picture. This wasn't often, I'm afraid, because even though it was a beautiful sunny day, the street was too narrow and crowded to get much of a picture. And while the contents of the shops changed as we went along, it began to feel monotonous.

We returned to Chandni Chowk and I asked to be dropped where I could get a taxi. My ... driver? (I don't know what to call him.) ... asked where I was going, and I made the mistake of telling him. Soon we had left Chandni Chowk and were heading God knows where. I'd told him, as I'd been instructed to tell my taxi driver, that I was going to the ITO on Ring Road. This was supposed to be some building next to the NCAER that would be well known. I'd forgotten what ITO stood for. Soon I was sailing along in the bicycle-rickshaw in the center of a broad boulevard, almost a highway, that seemed to be on the outskirts of the city. I only hoped that we were going in the right direction.

I actually found the ride very enjoyable, in spite of the uncertainty and the many cars and other motorized vehicles that surrounded us on the road. Somehow, the air seemed clearer than when I'd ridden inside. And even though I complained to my driver that he had kidnapped me, I found him delightful to talk with when he wasn't too occupied with the traffic or with straining to climb a hill to pay attention to me. Of course, much of our conversation was about what, and whether, I would pay him, since he believed he should get what a real taxi would have charged, and I, after hearing from my "friend" at the start of the ride, thought that even R60 per half hour, whatever it took, would be excessive. Occasionally I said I wasn't sure I should pay him at all, given that he had kidnapped me; that I'd see where he got me to and then we'd see. At that he'd be quiet and concentrate on moving us along.

Eventually he pulled up alongside a broad street that I didn't recognize and said proudly, "Ring Road." I said I wanted the ITO on Ring Road, and he pointed down at the pavement and said this was ITO. I had no idea where we were, so I said no, ITO should be a building, and then sat

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back for him to sort this out. Eventually he asked someone nearby for help (there is *always* someone nearby), and I heard them say the words “income tax office.” I recognized that, finally, as what ITO stood for and said, “Yes! That’s what we want.” Soon we were pointed down a narrow winding path next to a gully that, fortunately, I recognized from several of my rides to NCAER. It told him this was right, and I directed him almost to the door of NCAER.

We didn’t make it quite to the door, however, because as we approached, he said that if he took his rickshaw inside the gate of the NCAER grounds, the police would give him a ticket. This seemed odd, but I didn’t question it, and eventually I paid him R250 for the whole ride. Even I thought that this was outrageous, and I commented that when I told my friends what I’d paid, they’d say I’d been robbed. That didn’t seem to concern him. When I did, later that day, tell Bhide, he just said, “You made his day.” It occurs to me now that the reason he said he couldn’t take me in through the gate was that he feared that the NCAER staff would stop me from paying more than I should. That’s exactly what did happen later when a taxi driver tried to over-charge me by only R10 at the door of NCAER.

I’ve learned something about this, by the way. To me, so many things are so cheap here, and the people are so poor, that it makes sense to be generous in paying them and tipping them. But I mentioned to Anne Krueger at breakfast that last year I had added tips to the breakfast check for several days until I was told by the waiter, please not to do that. “Of course,” she said. “This place caters to both Indians and foreigners, and if the foreigners give tips that the Indians cannot afford, it makes it very hard for them.” Now I’m not sure whether she was suggesting common courtesy, or that I take sides between the classes in India.

Wednesday evening I’d been invited to the home of Rajesh Chadha for dinner. He also invited Dr. Bhide and his wife, and the four of us took a car from NCAER at 6:00. It was a long ride in rush hour traffic, something Rajesh himself has to do every day, driving himself. He teaches at the university, which is in a different part of Delhi than NCAER, and he lives that much further beyond it.

Along the way I noticed, as I had before, tents pitched along the street in several places. This time I asked about them. They are housing for manual workers who come from outside Delhi to work on jobs such as digging ditches. With all the poverty that I thought I’d seen in Delhi, I was surprised that they needed workers from outside for these tasks. But Bhide explained that nobody who lived in Delhi would lower themselves to such menial jobs, that they are far better off than that. “What about the beggars that one sees in the streets?” I asked. “Oh, they are professional beggars,” he said. “They do very well.”

Rajesh explained that he and his family live in a flat that they own, some sort of condominium, we would say. When he married he moved with his wife into the family home, a free-standing house that was much larger. But it was not large enough for the families of both him and his two brothers, so eventually they’d had to sell it and each buy their own flat.

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The flat was in a grouping of both high-rise and smaller cement buildings. His was in one of the smaller ones, on the second floor. It included a combined living room and dining room, a small kitchen, and three bedrooms, one of which, along with the living room, opened onto a balcony. We were met at the door by his friendly black Labrador, whom I'd heard about and was expecting, and by his father, whom I'd also heard about but had forgotten. The father stood up to greet us, which clearly took some effort for him.

Rajesh had told me that his father was injured in an auto accident years ago, shortly after Rajesh and his wife married, and that they had been taking care of him ever since. I learned now that the father had lost a portion of the left side of his brain due to the accident, and now could function only with difficulty and with only dim awareness of his situation. Rajesh says that his father is very happy. He has no memory of what his life was like before, and he knows only that Rajesh and especially Rajesh's wife take very good care of him. When we entered the flat, he rose to shake my hand and say "I am pleased to meet you." Then he sat down and for the rest of the evening he sat quietly, looking on benignly, and smiling back when one looked at him.

Rajesh served us various things to nibble on, including cashews, pistachios, almonds, potato chips, raisins, and several mixtures that I could not identify but enjoyed. The dog and I became good friends quickly, although I resisted feeding him since no one else did. Rajat – Rajesh's 14-year-old son – was at the center of the conversation as we talked about various things. Rajesh explained that of the three rooms, one was his father's, one his and his wife's, and one his son's. However, Rajat seldom sleeps in his room, because he prefers to sleep near his grandfather. Rajat also showed us a recent acquisition: a harmonium. This was a keyboard mounted on a wooden case, the back of which forms a bellows that you move in and out as you play to provide the air pressure. He played it for us, but he apologized that he didn't know any English songs except Happy Birthday.

At dinner, six of us sat around the table, the father preferring to eat at his chair in the living room. The dishes were similar to what I'd had before, although I thought they were even better here. All but one were vegetarian, in deference to Bhide and his wife, who are vegetarians. Rajesh explained that the one meat dish, a chicken curry, had been brought in from outside because some vegetarians would rather their food not be prepared in the same room as meat dishes. Bhide didn't seem concerned, however.

A couple of times I thought I heard Rajesh address Bhide as "Bhide-san," as the Japanese would do. This didn't seem likely, so I asked about it. What he was saying was actually "Bhide sahab," similar to the "sahib" that I associate with the British in India. It is apparently a term of respect and friendship among equals, incongruously used with the surname, however. Now that I am aware of it, I notice it being used fairly often.

The subject of caste came up, and they explained a little of that to me. There are four main castes, the highest being the Brahmins. Castes seem to be identified primarily by family names, not by any recognizable characteristic of the person such as skin color, language, or religion. Bhide is a Brahmin. Rajesh Chadha is the next caste down – the warrior caste. They said that

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there isn't much attention paid to castes today, and it is not uncommon to marry across caste lines. People even change their names, or simply drop their family names, to obscure their castes.

### **Sunday, Dec. 17, 6:30 PM – Cairo**

I'm sitting at my desk in the luxury of the Nile Hilton, plugged into my Walkman with an Egyptian tape that I bought today and love. I've had a good day – but more on that later.

The evening (Wednesday) at Rajesh's ended with picture taking and hand shaking all around, including his father. Then Dr. and Mrs. Bhide and I settled into the car for the long ride back. (Rajesh, after we'd eaten, had taken a plate of food out to the driver, a courtesy that I gathered Bhide thought unnecessary. If I give the impression that Bhide is somehow not nice, however, that is far from true. It's just that Rajesh is unusually so.) As I thought silently about the comparative poverty in which Rajesh lives, I heard Bhide comment to his wife on how Rajesh and his family have a lot of space.

Thursday, I wasn't to be picked up until after 10, so after breakfast I took a walk in the Lodi Garden behind the IIC, as I've done on each trip to Delhi. Each time I see new things, and I enjoy the slightly unreal atmosphere of it. I also try for pictures of birds, but never succeed.

My appointment was at the Indian Institute for Foreign Trade (IIFT), where I would be "talking to" their people from 11:00 to 12:00, I'd been told. The event was later called a seminar, then a lecture. With some uncertainty about what was needed, I had prepared the night before (as I slept, really) to talk to them at length telling them the story of our Michigan modeling efforts. As I would tell it, it is a rather personal story of how Bob Stern, Ed Leamer, myself, and later

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Lodi Garden, from Wikipedia 2023

Drusilla Brown have interacted over the years. I wasn't sure it would be appropriate for the audience, since I didn't know what they expected or what they knew about me, but it serves several purposes, and I hoped it would work out.

On arrival at the IIFT, I was immediately (it was already 11:00) ushered into the office of the Institute's Director, introduced to four or five others with whom he had apparently already been talking, and asked to sit with them there for tea. They continued a conversation about funding for a project that I knew nothing about, and I sat there smiling from one to another, rather as Rajesh's father had done the evening before. I wondered if they would suddenly turn to me expecting me to speak, and if so, about what. Meanwhile I enjoyed the coffee that they'd brought me.

Time marched on, and about 11:30 the group broke up, but fortunately not without a clue to me of what was coming. The Director said he had to get me to my lecture. I tried to shift mentally from head-injury mode to distinguished economist mode, while saying my goodbyes to these gentlemen who evidently had little interest in me in either mode.

The Director took me into a seminar room that was crowded with people around the table and against the walls, only one of whom I recognized – an Indian woman with a friendly face from USAID. Seated at the table, and with the crutch of only a few sheets of tables that I'd asked



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them to copy and distribute, I launched into my story of the Michigan Model. Fortunately, they seemed interested, and I warmed to my topic. At 12:15 I realized I'd gone on long, but I still wasn't done, so I asked the Director if I needed to stop. He gave that totally uninformative head-tilt that Indians sometimes do and said "No problem." I continued, thinking of Indira who was supposed to pick me up here at 12:00. At 12:30 I finally finished and was sure they would call it quits.

But no, the Director now asked for comments, and it became clear that he expected thoughtful comments and questions from *all* of them around the table. And they delivered, to his satisfaction if not to mine. Just when I'd come to have such respect for Rajesh and Sanjib and their abilities because of the work they'd done, this group of faculty from a teaching institute of a major Indian university proceeded to ask the longest sequence of stupid questions I'd ever heard. I think I'm pretty good at handling such questions without letting on how I feel (though I'm not known for my poker face), and I think I answered them with the appearance of respect. But nonetheless I was astonished.

We ended at 1:00, and when I looked around, there was Indira, who had arrived at 12:00, seen that the seminar was posted to last until 1:00, and had joined the group. That was fortunate.

She took me first to her own institute, where a lunch had been provided that she felt she shouldn't skip, and then to her apartment where her servant had also prepared lunch. I ate well.

The IIFT had been in one of the nicest buildings I'd been in, in India. Indira commented on that as she showed me her own, which she said was more normal for India – shabby. Actually, I was just thinking that her building was quite nice, when we rounded a corner to see a water dispenser in front of us. Like others I'd seen in India, this was a tall narrow rectangular affair made of metal, looking beat up and bent, and dripping water onto the floor. "Like that!" she said. "You wouldn't have that in the U.S." She's right. Somehow there is standard of appearance and cleanliness (or at least the appearance of cleanliness) that is just missing in India. Walls that are blotched with mildew, floor tiles that are broken and not all that attractive to start with, lights with bare bulbs, often fluorescent giving a cold light, paint jobs that seem to serve neither esthetic nor protective purposes, and furniture with more Formica than fashion – all these things give India an air of having no pride in its appearance, nor even any understanding of what that would mean. I'm in Egypt now, which isn't that much better off economically. And from the very little I've seen, Egypt does have that sense of pride.

At my second lunch, in Indira's apartment, her daughter appeared, just getting home from school. I don't know if she expected me, but she welcomed me with a bright enthusiasm that made me feel very special. She is only 13, I learned, but I'd remembered her as much older, and I saw now that she was vastly more mature than, say, Rajesh's 14-year-old son. I wish I remembered her name so that I could show her the respect of using it here. [Her name was Kaveri.] I was so impressed that I commented to both Indira and her daughter that I'd have taken her for 17, which was true.

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Indira wanted to talk mostly about research we might do together and about ways that I might raise money to bring her to Michigan, so I didn't get much into learning more about India from her and her daughter. They did feed me some guava (a fruit) that I liked, and some home-made yogurt. This wasn't bad after I overcame the knowledge that it was simple milk that they'd left to sit at room temperature to ferment after adding the appropriate bacteria. They're probably right that it tastes better than Dannon. But I guess I like knowing that Dannon's milk has gone bad in the controlled conditions of an antiseptic factory, rather than in some corner of an Indian apartment.

As I had to be back at NCAER by 4:00 or so, Indira drove me to a taxi stand on her way back to work. This was a collection of about six taxis by the side of a road, the drivers sprawled on the ground (or in one case, on a cot) nearby resting. Indira arranged with their leader for one to take me, and we then watched as the selected taxi was pushed about 50 feet down the road trying to start it. It eventually did, and it returned to pick me up. The drivers assured Indira that, once started, the taxi wouldn't stop, and it turned out they were right. I assume that the other five taxis had even more serious problems.

Back at NCAER, Rajesh, Bhide, and I made final preparations for Friday's conference, and I then returned to the IIC for dinner and early bed. My cold had been at its worst, and I was headachy and tired. I found I'd had my fill of Indian food for the time, so I ate delicious Chinese at the IIC for dinner.

The conference Friday needs little comment here. We had experts from China, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand in attendance. One from Indonesia hadn't made it. Neither had either representative from USAID, whom we'd hoped to impress. But the funders of this exercise – a United Nations agency called ESCAP – were present and did seem very pleased. I reprised my story of the Michigan Model from the day before, to enthusiastic (and much more intelligent and critical) response; Rajesh presented the work to date; and the country experts each spoke appropriately. We all ended the day with optimism that this work would somehow continue, and with grandiose hopes to send people from all these countries to Michigan to learn our modelling techniques. I'll leave it to Bob to see if this can be worth doing and to work out the details.

Between the end of the conference and the conference dinner, I had a couple of hours, which I mostly used relaxing at the IIC. A package that Pat had tried to send me for delivery Thursday had apparently not arrived, and I inquired after it. The desk clerk, after first trying to track it down himself, then tried to send a man to a storage room in the basement to look for it. Unfortunately, as he reported, the IIC's elevator was broken and there was no other way to get to the basement. I am still working at believing that. Eventually they did reach the room but found no package. Rajesh will pick it up when it arrives, then send it with Sanjib to Ann Arbor for me in January when he comes. It still seems the surest way to get something to and from India is to carry it.

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Dinner was on the lawn of NCAER, where a festive red and white tent had been erected for the purpose. Several charcoal fires burned in the center of the tent for warmth, chairs were along two sides, and all was well lit. The usual silver chafing dishes of Indian foods were arranged along a long table for serving, but before that the waiters brought us cheese and chicken appetizers to eat as we stood talking.

Thinking ahead to my Air India flight to Rome that would be leaving a few hours later, I must have made some mention of it. Because S. L. Rao began telling me how good security is on Air India. It is much better now, he said, than it was in 1985, when a bomb brought down an Air India flight over the Atlantic west of Ireland. His mentioning this at this moment and his reassurances might have been amusing, if it hadn't turned out that S. L. lost two nieces and their father in that crash.

He went on to recall how he and the nieces' mother – his wife's sister – had gone to Ireland to identify the bodies. The Irish handled this much better than Indians would have, he said. After a crash in India, he explained as he munched on a chicken leg, the bodies are left outside and decompose badly before the next of kin can arrive and be taken down the rows of uncovered bodies, in the growing stench, to look for ones they recognize. In Ireland the bodies were kept covered, next of kin were questioned for possible identifying marks or jewelry, and other people search for these. With luck you only have to look at two or three bodies before you find the right one. Even this was bad though, he said, since the bodies were blue from the fall and all their bones were broken. S. L. told all this with equanimity, and I could tell he'd told it many times before.

### **Wednesday, Dec. 20, 3:45 AM – Cairo**

I am in the VIP lounge at the Cairo airport, courtesy of my membership in the Northwest World Club. With a wait until 5:00 AM before the flight, I was glad this was available. It is the skimpiest such club I've ever seen, however, in some ways. The walls and floor of this single room are marble, and there are attractive black leather couches and dark-wood-and-white-marble coffee tables. But the couches are amazingly uncomfortable. And in a country where surplus population usually provides two or three workers for every job and one worker even where there is no job at all, the service here is provided by a thermos of hot water, a jar of Nescafe, and a spoon.

But this is a misleading way for me to start on Egypt, which overall I've found a very pleasant surprise. It is a bright, cheerful, friendly country, and I've enjoyed every minute of my stay. I'll get to that.

Back in Delhi, after the reception at the NCAER, I returned to the IIC, packed, and slept for a few hours before catching my 3:00 AM taxi for the 5:00 AM flight. There was plenty of time to have coffee there, of course, and I did (Nescafe, apparently) and wrote in this journal until time to leave. The Air India flight was jammed with people, including a heavy woman next to me

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who monopolized the armrest between us. It was interesting that the Air India plane, even though it was an Airbus, had its own distinctly Indian feel to it. This was true not just in the decor and the dress of the flight attendants (also, one of the pilots wore a turban above his otherwise conventional dark blue uniform), but also in the worn upholstery of the seats and the slight shabbiness of the fittings. None of this stopped me from giving up consciousness, however, and I slept through breakfast and a movie, through most of the 9-hour flight to Rome.

In Rome we descended stairs from the plane and walked a few steps through light rain to a bus that took us to the terminal. At an airport the size of Rome's, I was surprised there was no jetway, and I thought that this too might reflect the poverty of Air India, since there clearly were jetways for other planes no larger than ours. But the same sort of bus was used later that day to take me to my Alitalia flight, so I guess the problem is just more flights than they can handle.

I had a five-hour wait in Rome, as expected. For most of it I alternated between an uncushioned bench near the gate and a small coffee shop where I drank several cappuccinos. I'd have spent more time in the coffee shop, but it was crowded and I felt uncomfortable using a table once I was done drinking.

After one long stint on a bench near the gate, a young woman who had been sitting for some time across from me apparently decided I could be trusted and asked me to watch her backpack and bag while she went to the bathroom. She said it would be no more than ten minutes. I agreed, of course, then suddenly felt the need to go myself and hoped that she wouldn't be that long. She wasn't, fortunately, and I took my own things along as I went to the restroom myself, then back to the coffee shop. After that, with only a half hour or so until departure, I returned to the gate area. My own bench was now taken, and the only empty seat was next to the same young woman, who was writing postcards. I sat next to her without interrupting, but when she finished her cards, I asked where she was heading. Home to Berlin, she said, and as we talked I learned that she had just come from Cairo. She'd liked it a great deal, and she gave me some pointers that I later found useful. Suddenly an announcement on the PA got her abrupt attention and she gasped, "Oh, my flight is boarding." She grabbed her things, looked around in confusion, handed me her stack of post cards, and asked if I would please mail them for her. "Yes, of course," I said, then watched her disappear as I realized that my own flight was boarding too. I walked away from my gate looking for a mailbox and found one, to my relief, before my gate was out of sight.

My flight to Cairo boarded by bus, as I've said, and I thought at first that it would have lots of empty seats. A second bus arrived, however, and filled it up. My seat mate was an Egyptian by birth (from Alexandria), an American by citizenship (he'd lived in Buffalo), and he lives now in Geneva, Switzerland, where he works as a translator into Arabic for the World Health Organization. He was wistful when the pilot said we were passing over Alexandria, since he would still have a two-hour drive to get there after we landed. He was returning to his home for the holiday. He too gave me some pointers on getting around in Cairo. I felt well prepared.

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He had told me, for example, that a taxi from the airport should cost about \$15. Before I reached immigration, I passed a row of booths, and one of them, labelled Gem Travel, had a small sign that said \$4 to downtown Cairo. That sounded like a good deal, so I signed up, paid, and got a ticket. After immigration, I confronted a mass of people waiting to clear customs with no lines or apparent order. As I approached, a man motioned me to walk around the crowd. Then he simultaneously tried to sell me on tours of Cairo for the next day and somehow moved me forward through and past the crowd. I told him I would not commit that night to anything he had to sell, but he said it would be enough to give me brochures. Soon he had me through customs without the customs officer ever asking me anything.

As I stepped outside the airport, I was met by the man from Gem Travel, from whom I'd bought my ticket. Before my helper through customs could say anything more, or give me anything, I had been put into Gem Travel's minivan. I now learned why the price was so good. I rode all the way into Cairo with a salesman from Gem Travel telling me about the tours they could provide. He illustrated it all with a large photo album he carried that showed the attractions. This was an easy way to learn what there was to see, and I continued to refuse any commitments. At the hotel, this salesman gave me his card, and I did think it likely that I would call him later for one of the smaller tours. I did, as it turned out, on Monday evening, but at that time there was nobody at his office who spoke enough English to help me, and I ended up making other arrangements.

As soon as I entered the Nile Hilton, I felt that I had returned to the modern world, as well as to a place where I would be taken care of. My reservation was in order, the elevator took me smoothly to my room on the sixth floor, and the room itself had all the comforts I could want. I phoned home easily, read a bit in the comfortable bed, and slept soundly, planning to awake at seven and set off to see the sights.

I awoke after 9:00. No matter. I had a leisurely continental breakfast in the Ibis Cafe of the hotel, and read enough of the Egypt guide book to have an idea what there was. I had bought that money belt to use here, but first I asked if there was a safe in the hotel. There was, indeed, a whole room of safe deposit boxes behind the reception desk, and I was quickly issued a key at no charge, and I put my documents packet with passport, air ticket, credit cards, and travelers checks into it. So when I set out into the city on foot, my wallet had no more cash than I'd have minded losing if my pocket were picked. This was also a handy constraint if I should be tempted to buy a bridge or something.

I left on the Nile side of the hotel and followed the street to the intersection and major bridge just south of the hotel. Over just this short distance, I was accosted by men and boys offering taxis, papyruses ("pap pee risses"), and any other help they could give. Several asked where I was from and responded enthusiastically, "America! Well Come!" One of these also said he had a friend in Pasadena, then held out his hand with three American quarters, asking, "How much is this in Egyptian pounds?" Well, I'd done my homework on this, learning that an Egyptian pound (E.L. or P.E., it seems; don't ask me why) is about thirty cents. So I told him his quarters were

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worth about two and a half pounds, and he asked if I could buy them from him, since the quarters were of no use to him. I thought, why not? But when I pulled out my wallet, I found only one-pound notes, and pretty soon he had his fingers in my wallet looking for ways to make change. Suddenly I felt I was losing control, so I grabbed whatever notes he had pulled from my wallet and stuffed them back in, said "This isn't going to work," and walked on.

This took me around to the front of the hotel (I hadn't gotten far yet, as you can see) where the street from the bridge lost itself in a giant square. Part of the square had rows of bus stops, but the rest had traffic moving every direction through it. Across it all, I could see an arc of large buildings filled with shops and covered with signs, split by narrower busy streets radiating off from the square. I could see no way to get there, however, since there were no crosswalks or obvious traffic lights. Then I noticed nearby a sign for the Metro, Cairo's subway line that I'd read about in the guidebook, and stairs leading down into it. I figured the metro station would extend under the square and that I could use it to get to the other side, so I headed down.

The tunnels below were modern and clean, leading to a central platform for the trains. I could have continued by tunnel to the other side of the square, but I decided instead to take the train south to what I'd seen marked on my map as Old Cairo. I bought two tickets to get me there and back. I knew the direction I wanted to go, and getting through the turnstile was easy after I watched others insert their tickets into slots and retrieve them on the other side. But now I realized I didn't know how far to take the train. I studied my map of Cairo and the wall map of the Metro, but I couldn't match them up. I missed one train and asked three passersby before I found one who told me where to go, the fourth stop.

The next train arrived soon. The car in front of me looked very crowded, and I noticed that the car to its left seemed to have much more room, so I stepped quickly to it and hopped on. I was met by a woman in Muslim clothing shaking her head and telling me something in Arabic. I had no idea what, of course, but when I saw that the car held only women, most of them looking at me reproachfully, I got the point and hopped off. I made it back to the more crowded car before the train started and got on. It held mostly men, almost all standing, but there were some women too.

At the fourth stop I got off and exited from the Metro, which here was above ground, into a narrow street. Just opposite was an old domed building and an entry into a courtyard labelled Coptic Museum. The Coptic Church, I had learned, is Egypt's variety of Christianity. I bought a ticket and went in. It was permitted to take pictures in the courtyard but not inside, so I took what pictures I could, then checked my camera and went in. The museum covered two floors, and a self-appointed guide showed me the lower floor, full of stone crosses in various materials and statues of saints. I learned that Mary and Joseph had fled to this neighborhood after Jesus was born, to escape from Herod, but I don't think anything I saw had anything to do with that event. What I saw that I liked best were beautiful carved wooden ceilings in several of the rooms.

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Coptic Museum Cairo, from Wikipedia 2023

Outside the museum, I first walked north, looking at the people, the shops, and the animals, and taking an occasional picture. Except very near the museum, the people were living for themselves, not for tourists, although it was not always obvious what they were doing. They were friendly without expectations. One fellow, for example, stood in front of the mostly empty room that he said was his workshop, and I learned that he fixed electrical appliances. He didn't seem to have much equipment to do that.

The street I was following led to a more open area where some sort of manufacturing was going on, and I wasn't interested in that, so I turned around and returned to where I'd started. Taking another direction, I soon was in a large Catholic Cemetery, which I explored for some time. Bodies are apparently kept in vaults above ground, and most of these were not particularly attractive. There were some interesting structures here and there, however.

Taking the last of the obvious directions from the metro station, I soon was walking dirt streets among very poor homes and businesses, with people and animals again everywhere about. The children especially liked to say "Hallo" to me, and the smaller ones asked for "baksheesh" (payment), but no one tried to sell me anything or to con me.

I followed these streets for short distances in several directions, turning around when I ran into barriers or it got too muddy. I don't know why I cared, since I still had the Indian mud on my

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shoe. But especially when the mud led steeply downhill, I avoided it. At one point the children I had met in one street met me again after I took another route to the bottom of such a hill. I took a picture of one group of kids who had gathered around me, then gave a pound note to one of them with instructions to share. I didn't have anything smaller to give out.

These children, by the way, didn't seem to be nearly as poor as the ones I'd seen in India a year ago, although of course that is hard to judge. Several girls were dressed in school uniforms and carrying what I supposed were book bags.

Eventually I backtracked to the Metro station again and rode it back to the big square outside the hotel. I never did cross to the other side of the metro tracks in Old Cairo, which I could have done by a pedestrian overpass. It looked like that side of the tracks was all apartment buildings, and I found that less interesting.

Back at the square I emerged from the Metro through a different entrance, but I still hadn't managed to cross to the other side of the traffic. I made it across anyway, though, by just dodging the traffic as everyone else seemed to be doing. That, as I learned later, is how it is done.

This part of the city held mostly modern shops, plus offices of just about every airline I've ever heard of. I looked into some of the shops but didn't find much that interested me. At one point, though, a man got my attention and lured me half a block away to his shop that sold flower extracts.

I can't now recall how he lured me, but soon he had me sitting in the second floor of his shop, reached from below by a very narrow wrought-iron circular stair. The room was lined with shelves of tiny colorful glass bottles in decorative shapes. I was offered a seat and a choice of things to drink. This was said to be "Egyptian hospitality," and I "must choose but not refuse," he said – a line I was to hear more than once in Egypt. He then explained to me how his company grows flowers further north, in land on the Nile delta, then presses them to remove their essence in a liquid extract. This is then sold to France where it is combined with alcohol to make perfume and toilet water. I, of course, could buy it here by the gram and do that myself, or simply give it to a beautiful woman to dab on herself directly, for my pleasure. They had three kinds – lotus, another single flower that I can't now remember, and a mixture called Arabian Nights. He dabbed each of these on a different spot on the backs of my hands and wrists. I liked the Arabian Nights best, and I bought some. I don't remember now what I paid. But I bargained successfully, over quantity rather than price, getting the smallest quantity I could get away with. I added the small box to a bag of other purchases that I had gotten at the Coptic Museum giftshop and that I was now told had been excellent buys. I have no doubt that I am the cleverest shopper that they have come across in Cairo.

Continuing my walk but now heading back toward the Hilton, I heard an old man, crouched at my feet, offer me a shoeshine. Feeling far enough from the shoeshine boys of Delhi not to hold him responsible for the mud that was now dried hard as a rock on my shoe, I asked the price. In



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another response that I've now heard irritatingly often, he answered, "Whatever you like, sir." I asked if one pound would be OK, and he said it would. I put one foot, then the other, on the foot stand of his box, and steadied myself with my hand against a building as I watched him chip away at the hardened mud. He worked hard, did a fine job, and I gave him two pounds.

Returning to the square and again darting through the traffic, I made my way to the front of the famous Egyptian Museum, which was next door to the Hilton. I had expected to be met by freelance museum guides offering their services. The guides were there, in fact, but only to tell me that since it was after 4:00 and the museum closed at 5:00, there wasn't time to do it. I put that off for another day.



Egyptian Museum Cairo, from Wikipedia 2023

Back in the hotel, I began to make plans for Tuesday, since Monday would be filled with the conference, and I now realized I'd left all the high points of Cairo – the pyramids and the museum – to be done in that one day. I didn't mind, since I had really enjoyed my unstructured wandering, but I thought that some planning might be in order for my last day. At the American Express travel bureau in the hotel, I learned of trips that I could take with them in the morning and the afternoon to Giza and Saqqara that I thought would fill my needs, though they would also fill the day. There was also an evening trip back to Giza for a sound and light show that I had heard good things about. I made no commitments, however, since it seemed unnecessary.

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For dinner I ate again at the Ibis cafe, ordering lentil soup and kebab. The lentils had been pureed, so that the soup had the consistency of tomato soup, but it tasted good. The kebab included three pieces of two different meats – lamb and beef – plus two elongated meatballs that were fantastic. They tasted just like the "Persian kebabs" that some friends taught us to make years ago but that we'd forgotten.

Monday was the conference. This was perhaps the littlest conference I've ever attended. There were five papers, given by myself, a Brit, and three Middle Easterners (all Egyptians, I think). The audience was us plus five Japanese and one extra Egyptian. The room was small enough to just barely fit the eleven of us around the table, with space at the end for one to stand while speaking. It became clear that the sole purpose of the meeting was to inform the Japanese, although I think we all learned quite a bit from each other, too. Two of the five papers were written in Arabic, and one of the speakers spoke only Arabic. The arranged-for translator didn't show up, so the extra Egyptian was pressed into service. (I never caught her name, although I talked with her quite a lot. She was from something called the Research Forum in Cairo, and had faxed me before the trip asking permission to publish my paper in a volume.)

We presented and discussed papers through the morning (I was first, thankfully, getting it out of the way), ate lunch together from the hotel buffet, then finished the papers and discussion during the afternoon. We finished at about 4:30 and arranged to meet in the lobby to go elsewhere for dinner at 7:15. When we then reconvened, the Cairo natives in the group led us all through the traffic across the square, and we ate in a reserved corner of a good restaurant, the Arabesque.

I had a wonderful soup, made of a green leafy vegetable called molokhia (not available in the U.S., said the extra Egyptian, whose sister lives in St. Paul) with dollops of rice, raw onion, and tomato sauce added at the table. For the main course I had both pigeon and kebab. Pigeon is a very popular dish in Egypt, and when served it looked a bit like a small order of baby back ribs, since it had been flattened out and grilled. It was tasty, but there was so little meat on the bones that I was glad we had ordered kebab too. The kebab was similar to what I'd had the night before. Desert was Om Ali (which means mother of Ali), a sort of baked custard that was sweet and fruity down inside. Delicious.

Now let me think what I learned that day and evening, besides economics. About the Arab script, I was told two things that now seem conflicting. One was that in addition to their alphabet, they also use a great many extra little marks, like the diacritics in French. This makes it an unusually difficult written language, both to learn and to write on a computer. I say Arab script, by the way, because the letters are always connected, and I have no idea what individual letters look like.



Om Ali, from Wikipedia 2023

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Their numbers are a different matter. We all know about both Arabic and Roman numerals, right? In English, we use Arabic numerals, so at least reading their numbers should pose no problem, one would think. Wrong: They *don't* use Arabic numerals, but Indian ones. I'd paid no attention to either numbers or letters in India, since it was all Hindi, and Greek to me. But now I saw these Hindi numbers everywhere, on the money, on hotel-room doors, by elevator buttons, on price tags, etc., and naturally I'd been struggling to figure them out. Enough were familiar that I thought I should be able to do it (before I learned that they weren't even Arabic). One is १, for example, and nine is ९. But many are completely different, such as २ (two), ७ (seven), and ८ (eight). Then there is ४, which looks like it should be three, but is instead four (३ is three), and ० which looks like zero but is five. Worst is their zero, which is just a heavy dot, ०. Fortunately for the practical needs of tourists, while these numerals do appear everywhere I've mentioned, so do our Western (Arabic, sigh) numerals in most places.

Another feature of their writing is that they do it from right to left. Not knowing what it means anyway, this isn't obvious until you see them do it, at which point it feels like you are looking at them in a mirror. It was also noticeable in the two Arabic papers distributed at the conference, since they were stapled in the upper right-hand corners, not upper left. On the other hand, the digits of their numbers go the same direction as ours, so that १९ is nineteen, not ninety one.

Arabs are mostly Moslem, of course, although the Copts, who are Christian and are a few percent of the population of Egypt, are considered Arabs too. However, since the Copts have tended to marry only among themselves since ancient times, they've kept the look of the ancient Egyptians much more than have the Muslims who have more the look of the Arab invaders. Or so I was told (by the extra Egyptian, at dinner). If I saw people who looked like ancient Egyptians, I didn't realize it. Perhaps they didn't have their heads and feet pointing off to the side.

Well, I guess that's all I learned, that day at least. I hope I did better with the economics. To finish the day, I should mention that during the break before dinner I had gone looking for a confectioner's shop, Groppi, that Helene McCarren remembered from her childhood in Cairo and had told Pat about. It was easy to find, once I asked, requiring only another crossing of the traffic in the square. I must have come very close to it the day before. It looked like it may not have changed much since the 50's, and I guessed that it caters now more to locals than to tourists. The employees certainly seemed surprised and pleased when I wanted to take all sorts of pictures of them and their establishment. I bought some candy to bring home, and I hope it survives the trip.

I also settled on how I would spend Tuesday. I decided that I preferred the flexibility of my own guide and transport to the rigid schedule of the American Express tour, and that I wanted to see the museum on my own, which there wouldn't be time for if I did the formal tour. I called Gem Travel to see if I could book them to my schedule, but as I mentioned before, I got nobody who could help me at that hour. So I asked the hotel's concierge if he could help me arrange

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something. In five minutes, he had me on the phone with one Mohammed Pony, who sounded friendly and articulate over the phone. He agreed to pick me up at 11:00 AM, giving me time for the museum, take me to both Giza and Saqqara (which together would have taken the whole day with American Express) and also to the sound and light show. For all of this he would charge PE100, which was a good deal less than either of the other possibilities I had heard about. And I figured the Hilton would be careful with their recommendations.

They were. I'd say that Mohammed was the highlight of my trip. I had a great time with him. He picked me up at 11:00 as arranged (I did go to the museum, as I'd planned, but there's not much to say about that. Lots of mummies, sarcophagi, and statues. Most interesting, to me, was the mummy of a dog, propped in a standing position and recognizably real.) Mohammed was a tall handsome Arab wearing a black and white ski sweater (I've seen a lot of sweaters on this trip in both India and Egypt, where the natives all think it is cold). He picked me out of the crowd in the hotel lobby, saying I looked just like he expected me to look from my voice on the phone.

Now as I tell you about him, you are not going to like him, I know. As you'll see, his views on many things that we talked about were not exactly politically correct. Also, as a guide he did lead me to a couple of places where I spent more than I should have, and you'll think he got a commission. And you'll think that the only reason I liked him so much was that he estimated my age as 36 or 37. [I was 50.] But none of that matters. He was fun to talk and listen to, he did his job really, really well, and I truly believe I got my money's worth.

First, about Mohammed himself. He mentioned early on that he had spent a year in Los Angeles, eight years ago, working as an engineer. He was married there, but just for a year, and he showed me a picture of himself and his wife. I didn't learn why he'd returned to Cairo, but the fact that he also had a wife and three sons here – four now, one born since his return – may have had something to do with it. Muslim men are allowed up to four wives simultaneously, he explained, and he could never make love to a woman outside of marriage. He is not terribly religious, he said (he won't eat pork, but he'll have a drink now and then), but he feels strongly about that. A year of celibacy in the U.S. was unthinkable, so he married. Both wives knew about the other and apparently had no problem with it.

He works, obviously, as a driver in Cairo, not as an engineer, because it is hard to find work as an engineer. I asked, late in the day, if he enjoyed his work, because he certainly seemed to. Instead of saying yes, though, he said that he thought it was better to do well what you do, than to do poorly what you are trained for. He explained that in thinking this, he was unusual. Most Egyptians attach great importance to the prestige of their training and would never take a job "below them." (This matched well with what I'd learned the day before at our conference about the high unemployment among educated workers in Egypt.) He was astonished when I told him with pride about my daughter who is married to a chef, for in Egypt no professor would ever accept that.

He mentioned, as I said, that he has four sons. This prompted me to ask if there is a preference in Arab countries for sons over daughters. He said no, but he also said that he could never have a

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daughter himself. It would drive him crazy, he said, since he would be so protective. He takes it as a great favor from God that He gave him only sons.

It seems also important to him that he have a clear blood relationship to his children. When we talked about polygamy, and the fact that only men could have multiple mates, not women, he took it as obvious that it could be no other way. After all, if a woman had more than one husband, how would you know the father of any child? He was also surprised when I mentioned that we had adopted a daughter. At first he didn't seem to understand the concept, then said incredulously, "Do you mean that you have a child who is not related to either one of you?"

On blacks: Before he went to America, like many Arabs he believed that America had terribly mistreated its black population. In America he learned that this was wrong. After observing blacks close up, he now believes they are stupid, lazy, and unclean. And he thinks it is genetic.

On Jews: They are very smart, of course. Aside from that prejudice, he seemed to have no special positive or negative feelings about Jews, although he did tell a couple of awful jokes about them.

What Mohammed really does seem to hate are fundamentalists. He blames equally the fundamentalist Jews and the fundamentalist Muslims for the mess in the Middle East, and he just cannot understand how they can be so closed minded and vicious. Feeling we'd found another common thread, I chimed in with my own complaints about fundamentalist Christians. He couldn't see what harm they do, however, and I'm afraid that the example I came up with was their intolerance of gays.

Oops – that set him off! He cannot *stand* homosexuals. He cannot comprehend what they do; he thinks they're sick; and he thinks they're evil. He never went to San Francisco the whole time he was in America because he'd heard that gays there are so common. I objected that what they do only concerns them, not him, so why be so concerned? He said, "What if one of them sat next to my son in movie theater and started to molest him?" I agreed that would be bad, but no more likely than a heterosexual doing the same thing. "What if a heterosexual man sat next to your daughter, if you had one, in a movie theater and molested her?" "I'd kill him!" he exploded.

On Arabs: Mohammed refuses to drive Arab tourists, from Saudi Arabia, for example. All they want is hashish and women, and Mohammed wouldn't feel right making his living helping them with that. Apparently his contacts at the Hilton know who he'll work for and who not. He also mentioned, later, that Saudis are known for their homosexuality, although he hadn't mentioned that as a reason not to drive them. In fact, I'm not sure that Mohammed has ever actually met a man whom he knew was gay.

Perhaps that's enough about Mohammed. As you can tell, I found him more interesting than the pyramids he showed me. He started the tour by driving me to them, of course. Along the way, he explained that until the late 19th century, nobody lived on the west side of the Nile, which

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because of the setting sun was reserved for the dead. Thus, the cities of the Pharaohs were on the east bank and they went across to the west bank for their tombs, the pyramids. This continued to be true until a visit from the French queen around 120 years ago, for which the Egyptians built a road to the pyramids to take her along. Once the road was built, the city spread along it, and today Cairo fills the valley on both sides of the river.

Speaking of the queen of France, Mohammed also explained that, in gratitude to Egypt, she commissioned a large metal statue, and even sent the artist to Egypt to model it after Egyptian women. By the time the statue was complete, however, the politics had changed (I didn't catch the details), so France gave the statue to the United States instead. It is the Statue of Liberty. [Helene and others now tell me that this isn't true, but I will believe what I like.]

He drove us around behind the pyramids, stopping for pictures and to tell me about them. He said there are over two hundred theories of how they were built, and nobody really knows the answer. The last theory, and his own choice, is that the blocks were poured into place as some sort of mud, like cement, set one by one in wooden forms. He pointed to certain angles, where the sides of adjacent blocks are parallel but not vertical, which would make no sense if they'd been cut elsewhere.

Before we reached the pyramids, he coached me on how to handle the camel and the camel driver whom we would meet. The camel was easy: just be sure to lean back. Since the camel gets to his back feet first, you need to do that to stay on.

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Regarding the camel driver, pay him only PE10. He'll ask for more – no matter how much I pay, he'll ask for more – but I'm not to pay it. And above all, I'm not to involve Mohammed in the



On camel in front of pyramid, from trip

discussion, or to say that he has told me what to pay. Mohammed's livelihood depends on staying friends with the camel driver. He even insisted, implausibly, that I should claim to live here in Cairo and that that is how I know the price. He never told me what he thought of the intelligence of this camel driver.

So when we reached the camel, who was being led by a rope across the empty sand to the empty road behind the largest pyramid, Mohammed took my camera and I, wearing turban and robe put on me by the camel driver, mounted the camel. I got to do this twice, because my camera ran out of film and they wouldn't let me reload from the saddle. The camel growled a good deal when the driver asked it to do anything, but it was placid enough toward me. Still, I wasn't sure it was a good idea when the driver gave me the rope to hold, and he let go of it himself. I rationalized, though, that the camel's inertia would keep it in one place. Then Mohammed, to improve the shot, told me to turn the camel to the right. That also didn't seem like a great idea, but the camel responded perfectly when I pulled the rope to the right. Don't get me wrong: I wasn't worried

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about the camel running off with me like Lawrence of Arabia across the desert. Two steps and I'm sure I'd have been on my butt in the sand. Or on my head.

Anyhow, it all was fine. We finished the photo shoot with the pyramids in the background, and I stayed leaning back until the camel had fully knelt and I could get off. Now the hard part: paying. This was complicated by the sudden presence of a boy, assistant to the camel driver, who was giving me the "gift" of a turban and rope thing. As instructed by Mohammed, I insisted on paying ten pounds only. I also tried to refuse the "gifts." In the end I paid PE15 and they gave me only the rope thing. Mohammed said I had done well.

Next he used my money to buy a ticket to enter one of the pyramids, the smallest of the three main ones at Giza. The three large pyramids here were built as tombs for the Pharaohs, the largest and most famous for Cheops, the next largest for his son Chephren, and the smallest for Chephren's son, Mycerinus. There are also several much smaller pyramids next to these, built for the Pharaoh's wives. All were intended to house their mummified bodies as well as their possessions until the time would come when their souls would be reunited with their bodies, and they would leave these tombs into a better world.

The pyramids were not built with visitors in mind. The entry passage, built by the Pharaohs, was a tunnel through the rock less than four feet high and angling sharply down from ground level into the center of the space below the pyramid. Modern Egyptians had laid wooden planks lengthwise along the bottom of this tunnel, with metal cross-pieces to serve roughly as steps. Hunched over, I crept to the bottom, squeezing past other tourists climbing back out. Mohammed had instructed me to ignore anyone who tried to serve as my guide, but that wasn't hard – nobody tried. He also had said to just go to the end and come back. That wasn't hard either, as there was very little to see, and climbing out was much easier than climbing in.

From there we went to Saqqara, site of the first pyramid, which was built in steps unlike the later ones. To get there we went through the countryside. We passed through villages where the poorest people still live in mud houses. Farmers live in the villages, then go out into their fields



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Saqqara pyramid, from Wikipedia 2023

outside the villages to farm. Their wives bring their lunches to them in the fields, and they eat there. I couldn't tell what crops they were raising, except for lots of clover that Mohammed pointed out, some huge cabbages, and millions of date palms.

The palm trees are everywhere and very pretty. Mohammed said that when he worked in L.A. his boss one time took him on a trip and promised him something very special. It turned out to be Palm Springs, all palm trees and desert. Mohammed was disgusted and went to the beach.

At Saqqara we drove out of the palm trees onto the sandy elevation where the pyramid was placed. Even in the haze, we could see clearly all the way across the Nile valley to the elevated desert on the other side. The contrast between desert and fertile valley is incredible. Between the sandy ridges, the land is flat, green, and lush, full of palm trees and other vegetation. All of this is due to millennia of flooding of the Nile, which brought water and deposited nutrient-filled silt many feet deep in the valley. But the ridges at the edge contained the flooding, and there everything stops abruptly. No more green, no more people, just sandy dirt. The line between life and death is perfectly clear, and all the life of Egypt is concentrated in this narrow strip of land on either side of the Nile. On the map, Egypt is quite a large country. But all but the sliver along the river is completely barren. And the sliver is narrow enough to see easily across, at least at this location, without even being very high.

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The Pharaohs had the good sense to put their tombs in the desert, just outside the fertile valley. Here the dry heat helped to preserve their bodies, which they thought they would later need. It also kept the pyramids from using up the precious fertile farmland, a lesson that modern Egypt completely ignores. The growing population and "progress" are replacing the fertile land with industry and apartment buildings, both of which could as easily be built in the desert. Or so says Mohammed.

Along the road to Saqqara, there were a dozen or more newly built and very modern "carpet schools." As I understand this from Mohammed, these are private sector institutions encouraged by the government to provide both income and education to the rural children. They work in these schools, making carpets, but they also go to class. The buildings are attractively designed and cater to tourists, who I suppose buy the carpets. Mohammed offered to stop at one, but he didn't seem very enthusiastic, and I declined.

We did stop at a "Papyrus Institute" back in Cairo (actually on our way out, but I forgot to mention it above). Mohammed made it clear that this was a regular stop for him, that he brought them customers. I planned to buy little, and I told him so. I bought more than I'd planned, as I'm sure he knew I would. And I learned about the making of papyrus. Ask me and I'll be glad to tell you. And perhaps to sell you one.

This completes what I remember of the afternoon. I'll finish with what Mohammed told me about driving in Egypt. The only rule is that there are no rules, he says. The important thing is to read the other drivers and to understand what they are going to do. He pointed out a Mercedes driven by a coward, a truck driven by a crazy person, and so on. He explained all this speaking animatedly, gesticulating with both hands often off the steering wheel. It didn't matter, because he always knew where he was and what to expect from the other drivers. He never even came close to an accident – staying always, I'd say, at least half an inch from other traffic. He's only had one accident in his life. That was in L.A. where he didn't know the rules and didn't know what to expect. Amen to that!

### **Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2:00 PM – Chicago!**

Not on my itinerary, but call it a bonus: Chicago. My flight from Cairo was delayed due to fog. The way the pilot described it, this shouldn't have been a problem, but Cairo didn't have the right equipment. After an hour and a half, an Air France plane went out, and we apparently elected to follow. I got the feeling we were flying against the will of the Cairo control tower, although I suppose that can't be true. Anyhow, we were just minutes too late into Amsterdam to catch my flight to Detroit, so KLM put me on a flight that was just leaving for Chicago, with a promise that Northwest in Chicago would take me to Detroit. At the Northwest counter just now, they said, "Didn't they give you something in writing?" They hadn't, in the rush, but fortunately they'd told a computer somewhere, and that was enough to send me home free – literally. Now I just have to wait two hours for this last unexpected leg of the journey.

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Continuing my Tuesday, Mohammed dropped me at the hotel at 3:00 or so and said he would pick me up at 5:30 for the sound and light show. I then set out on foot alone, back across the bridge to the west where I'd just noticed that the light looked good for pictures. That never amounted to much, as it turned out, but I kept walking across first the bridge, then an island, and then another bridge. I was partly looking for a good place to have coffee and some lunch, and partly curious about how far a shadow I had picked up would follow me.

The shadow was a boy of maybe 12 years old. He had said "Hallo," as so many do, when I'd just entered the bridge, then trailed along twenty feet behind me as I walked. When I stopped to take a picture, he stopped. He never said another word to me, and I never learned what he had in mind.

Across the second bridge, on the west bank of the Nile, I still didn't see any place interesting to stop. So I went into the Sheraton Hotel there and had a memorably bad sandwich. My shadow didn't follow me in, and I never saw him again.

Walking back across the bridge I saw a small accident, a fender bender with drivers yelling at each other and a policeman making peace. So accidents do happen in Cairo, even among drivers who are aware of each other. Or maybe one of them was from L.A.

As I was nearing the end of the bridge near the Hilton, a man came up and asked where I was from. When I told him, he said he had a friend in Pasadena. Then he held out a hand with three U.S. quarters and asked how much it was in Egyptian pounds. I laughed and said we'd already done this. He looked startled and didn't pursue it.

Mohammed was there for me as planned, and we reached Giza a half hour before the show was to begin. That gave me time to buy some postcards and still get a very good seat at the front of the outdoor cafe on the second floor of a viewing stand, where I ordered a coke and waited. The tables were arranged for four, so as they filled up, I invited a young American couple with their daughter to join me, and we chatted until the show started.

They were on vacation from their home in Kuwait, where he is an engineer for one of the oil companies. Their daughter was about four, I'd say, and they all looked very young. The picture they gave of Kuwait will not draw me there as a tourist, since everything there has been built in the last fifty years. They live in a "villa" there, which means a single-family house. It looks very nice on the outside, they said, but nothing on the inside is designed to work. Their bathroom, for example, is all marble, but all water flows under the floor to a single central drain, and this has an access door right where you want to stand to brush your teeth. When the plumbing stops up, as it does frequently, there is no question of fixing anything. You just dump a bucket of water at this access door and wait for the mess to clear.

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Great Sphinx of Giza, from Wikipedia 2023

The show started and was far better than the only other sound and light show I'd seen – during my undocumented trip to Delhi in May. The idea of a sound and light show is that a recorded voice accompanied by music and sound effects tells the story of the place you are looking at, while colored lights on the scene illuminate different parts to match the story. In Delhi the show had been at the Red Fort, and the soundtrack told the history of Delhi's many invasions by thundering hoards (including the British). It was informative, but rather amateurish in execution. And one quickly tired of seeing the same few buildings lit up repeatedly.

I gather that the Giza show has always been better done, with better actors doing the speaking for example. But it also was greatly improved earlier this year when some Japanese paid to add lasers to the show (as well as a Japanese soundtrack). The pyramids, sphinx, and miscellaneous ruins are still lit by floodlights, as before. But this is now intermixed with lasers that sometimes outline the pyramids, sometimes draw pictures and hieroglyphics on them to illustrate the story, and even trace out the path in the sand that a Pharaoh followed up to one of the pyramids. The story also isn't just history, but also includes some mythology, some poetry, and the ruminations of the sphinx itself as it contemplates all that goes on around it over the thousands of years. It was quite a show.

Mohammed, by the way, says that the Sphinx was carved after the second pyramid was built, when they noticed that a big rock blocked the view of it. So they carved it into the Sphinx. This fact, if it is one, was not mentioned in the show. The Sphinx itself mentioned another interesting

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fact, however, during the show. Sometime in the last century or so, a general didn't like its smile, and had it fired upon by machine guns. I never got close enough to see whether the effects of that are visible.

That is perhaps a fitting note on which to end this journal. Mohammed and I talked more after we left the show, but I've already told most of that. The rest of the trip has just been waiting, flying, and waiting again.

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