

Traveling in the Yucatan Peninsula with Lily, a Japanese-American

Kyoko Saito

When I took the psycholinguistics course taught by Dr. Sara Smith at California State University at Long Beach in the spring semester of 1989 there were around eight students in the course. One of the students was Lily Nerio, a second-generation Japanese-American who looked to be in her 60s. She always spoke with a soft voice. She looked as if she lived in society quietly and tried not to bother anybody.

Even though Lily was an American citizen, she was put in an internment camp like other Japanese-Americans during World War II. She told me about her life in the camp. "I remember many, many things. We made many friends. At the same time, there were barbed wire fences surrounding us and soldiers all around with guns and we couldn't leave camp. We had to stay in. Otherwise people were shot. We had a big farm on camp. We had a whole bunch of the mess halls where we ate. In the barracks, people lived in small rooms. A whole family lived in a small room." As soon as she and her family were released from the camp, her mother ordered her children not to use the Japanese language any more and to use only English even though her mother could speak little English. Then I understood why Lily struggled to speak Japanese, because she had been refusing to use Japanese for many years; however, most of the second-generation Japanese-Americans could speak Japanese as their mother tongue because their parents couldn't speak English at all. In general, second-generation Japanese-Americans used Japanese in their homes and English in public.

Lily received a bachelor's degree in education from the University of California, Los Angeles, a master's degree in educational psychology from the University of Southern California, and was pursuing a master's degree in linguistics at California State University, Long Beach. She taught English, mathematics, and social studies at a junior high school. She had three brilliant daughters and a son. One of her daughters has a Ph.D. in chemistry, another daughter works for NASA, and the other daughter is a successful realtor. Lily didn't mention her son very much; however, she told me that she would leave her son little inheritance because she guessed many women would be interested only in his money.

When Lily and I studied together, one of the faculty members who taught the Japanese language told Lily, "Recently I was driving in Huntington Beach and I was amazed how rich you are!" I found that Lily was very rich from what the faculty member said. Lily told

me that the Nerio family owned an airport in Huntington Beach, Meadowlark Airport. She also told me, "People try to avoid me because I am Japanese-American but as soon as they knew who I am from TV or newspapers, they become very friendly and invite me to golf." I never dreamed that Lily belonged to a famous and rich family. She never wore expensive clothes and shoes, and never carried an expensive purse. She drove a shabby-looking old Datsun which was what Nissan was previously called. I never envied her fortune but I did envy her three degrees very much.

As I was living in the U.S.A., I really wanted to visit the Yucatan Peninsula to see the pyramids but Mr. Bernhardt, with whom I lived, was always against it. He said, "It is very dangerous to go to Mexico. You will be sold or killed in Mexico. Margaret and I are responsible for you instead of your parents so I will not permit you to go to Mexico."

Sometimes I told Lily that I really loved going on trips alone. I also told her that I was interested in Mayan culture and wanted to visit the Yucatan Peninsula while I was in the U.S.A. A little while before the spring semester ended, Lily gave me a brochure about staying in a hotel for two weeks in Cancun in the Yucatan Peninsula. I really appreciated her kindness but I couldn't accept it because Mr. Bernhardt would be against my going to Mexico by myself. Lily understood my situation and we decided to go together.

As I had often heard that the water was bad in Mexico and it gave tourists diarrhea, I decided not to eat any fresh salad and not to drink any water except bottled water and canned soft drinks. Of course, I decided to avoid using any ice cubes in my drinks. While the airplane flew over the land, I saw a lot of smoke coming from the land. From the smoke, I realized that slash-and-burn agriculture was still popular in Mexico. At the airport in Cancun, I changed one hundred dollars worth of traveler's checks to pesos. I received a bunch of paper money and I couldn't put all of it in my wallet so I wrapped most of the money in my handkerchief and put it in my purse. From the bunch of paper money, I guessed that the Mexican peso didn't have very much value.

It was hot and humid in Cancun. The sky was clear and the sun was shining. We stayed at a suite room at the Royal Caribbean which was located on the beach. According to Lily, only members of the hotel could stay and she paid my hotel charges. I could see the beautiful Caribbean Sea from the room. The beach was whitish yellow-ochre, and bubbling white waves washed onto the beach. The ocean close to the beach was cerulean blue and the ocean close to the sky was navy blue.

We went downtown by taxi to buy fresh food. We picked up eggs, bananas, pineapples, and a loaf of bread at the supermarket. There was no frozen food at the store. Meat was displayed on a table without a cooling system. Several elementary school children were working at the store. When we paid for the food, a cashier lifted the plastic bag which had several eggs in it and asked us something. We couldn't understand what the cashier was talking about. One of the children asked me by gesture to come with him. He brought me to the middle of the store where two children were sitting at a table where there was a scale. The child who brought me to the table handed the plastic bag with eggs to one of

the children. They weighed the bag with eggs and wrote its price.

The next morning I saw only frosted glass sliding doors. It took only a night for the clear glass to become dirty from the ocean spray.

The taxi drove through a street of which one side was occupied by many luxurious hotels. There were many stores which sold expensive designer clothes and purses such as Gucci's downtown. They also sold very expensive jewelry.

At a different shopping center, many stores handled souvenirs such as sombreros, Mayan clay dolls, silver bracelets, turquoise necklaces, printed T-shirts, turquoise earrings, etc. I found unique necklaces which were made of clay, fish-bone, and corn. The clay necklaces consisted of very thin slightly orange clay rings. Corn and fish vertebrae were dyed orange, blue, yellow or green, and they were tied together for necklaces. I loved the clay necklace but it looked like it might get broken easily so that I wondered for a while what to do. Since it was made of clay and it was not painted, \$18 seemed pretty expensive; however, it was simply designed, unique and lovely. I couldn't resist buying it. I also found several stone carvings. Each stone was around 7.5 cm and 10 cm in height. A figure of a Mayan was carved on a whitish cream-yellow flat stone. The figure on the stone was kneeling down and carrying something on his head. I was interested in the stone carving and bought it.

A different souvenir store sold many different sizes of stone carvings. Various Mayan Indians wearing Mayan costumes were carved delicately in relief on the whitish cream-yellow flat stones. They had required a lot of skill to design and to carve and it must have been time-consuming to carve. I wanted to buy one of the stone carvings on which a Mayan Indian with long feather decorations on his head was carved. I could even see the individual feather lines on the carving. I asked the owner of the store if I could buy it for a reduced price. He reduced the price from \$280 to \$260 but I couldn't judge if it was still expensive or not expensive. Anyway I asked the owner of the store again to reduce the price even more. He said, "It took a month to carve the stone. Two hundred sixty dollars is the lowest price." An Indian man who looked around 25 years old was carving a stone in front of the store. He used a special stone-cutting knife and a hammer and carved the stone little by little. At that time he was carving almost the same as the size of the stone carving which I wanted to buy. I realized that the stone carving was very precious and I didn't want to miss it. I bought it and asked the Indian to carve his name on the stone. He looked very happy to carve his name on the stone surface. I showed him the other small stone carving which I had bought at a different store. I asked him if he would carve his name on that small stone carving, too. He couldn't understand what I asked him. A younger Indian man appeared and started talking in Spanish. They looked like they were discussing the small stone carving. I could judge from their facial expressions that the Indian man was saying that he hadn't carved the small stone even though I couldn't understand Spanish. The younger man asked me, "Name?" I said, "Yes." The Indian man carved his name on the small stone carving. It was obvious that the Indian man hadn't

carved the small stone carving because the small one was a very simple design and the large stone carving was a very complicated and gorgeous design.

As soon as we opened the room door, the view of the beautiful ocean caught my eye. The maid had washed the glass doors. I saw the two dollars on the table. The maid hadn't taken the money which we left for tip. Lily left a message to the maid in Spanish. I had not known that Lily could read and write Spanish. Some Americans around me were proud of themselves that they could speak French, Italian, or German but none of them ever mentioned that they could speak Spanish.

Lily and I got on the tour bus for Xel-Ha and Tulum. As I was sitting in the first row in the bus, a plump Mexican man told me not to sit in the first row because that seat was for a guide. Before the bus started, the guide, the plump man, told the tourists to ask him to stop the bus anytime for "Montezuma's revenge," which meant diarrhea. Before the bus stopped at the restroom, the bus had to stop twice at the roadside. At the first stop, a tourist had "Montezuma's revenge" and at the second stop, the bus broke down.

Most of the time, the bus passed through the jungle and sometimes it passed beside fields. There were a lot of rocks in the fields. Once in a while, I saw burning fields. I asked the guide if farmers around there still used sticks for planting corn. He replied that they still used sticks because it was impossible to use iron hoes due to rocks. I asked the guide why they didn't remove the rocks from the fields. He said that there were too many rocks in the fields so it was impossible to remove them all.

Xel-Ha was a bay which was surrounded by bright green hills. The ocean was emerald green and I could see many blue, gray, and gray and blue-striped fish in the green ocean. Many people were snorkeling in the ocean. There were no waves in the bay and it looked very peaceful and quiet.

In Tulum, there were several rock buildings in a field which was covered with light yellow-ochre grass. There were also several short palm trees here and there in the field. A pale gray rhombic pyramid stood on the edge of the field. The height of the pyramid was around 15 m. The pyramid was built on a cliff and there was pale green and blue ocean beneath the cliff. One side of the pyramid had stairs around 10 m wide and 12 m high in the center and they made it easy to climb the pyramid. From the top of the stairs, I could see the entire area of Tulum which was separated from a jungle by rock walls; however, the rock walls had fallen to pieces. Some buildings' rock surfaces were carved with Mayan designs and small amounts of orange and green color remained here and there on them. There were cylinder-shaped standing rock columns around 2.4 m high. Some of the columns were standing on the edge of the buildings' floors and some of them were standing in the center of the buildings. One center column was in a building. I asked the guide why there was a column in the center of the floor. The guide said, "It was the sun." I wondered how the Mayan Indians carved the rocks to cylinder shapes, cube shapes, and carved the reliefs on the rock surfaces without using iron tools. I wanted to know how the Mayan Indians reacted when they saw an eclipse of the sun. I couldn't get

an answer from the guide about it. I didn't hear about any bloody sacrificial offerings in Tulum. I remembered the beautiful ocean and the peaceful and quiet Mayan ruins about Tulum.

I looked out through the sliding glass doors in the hotel room. The ocean was the most beautiful color I had seen yet in these four days. The white bubbling waves washed up on the whitish yellow-ochre beach and the ocean was clearly divided into two colors. The ocean which touched the white waves was bright cerulean blue and the ocean which touched the slightly blue-gray sky was deep navy blue. I realized that the maid had to wash the four sliding glass doors every day. The two dollars on the table had disappeared. The maid had read the message and received the money for her service. I felt relieved.

Lily and I had a reservation to go to Chichen Itza. The guide told the tourists to ask him to stop the bus whenever we needed help. The road was a paved two-lane and it ran straight through the jungle and disappeared into the sky. It was rare to see cars on the road. Most of the buildings in Chichen Itza remained in better condition than those in Tulum. There was a possibility that the buildings had been restored. One of the buildings was an observatory. There was a cylindrical building on top of a rectangular parallelepiped building. I could imagine that the cylinder-shaped building might have had a dome shaped roof from the half roof which remained. One side of the rectangular parallelepiped building had stairs around 10.5 m wide and 9 m high in the center so I could easily reach the cylinder-shaped building. Some buildings had carved patterns on their rock surfaces. The patterns looked like human or gods' faces, square-shaped whorls, and crosses. Elephant trunk-shaped rocks were sticking out from the buildings. The guide told us that the elephant trunks were the god Chac's masks.

A short walk from the building which had elephant trunk-shaped rocks, a huge pale gray pyramid appeared in front of us. The pyramid stood on a pale yellow-ochre grass field. The guide said, "Pyramid of Kukulcan." There was a rectangular, parallelepiped building on top of the frustum of the pyramid so that the top of the pyramid was not shaped like those in Egypt. There was something that looked like broken stairs on one side of the pyramid. When I walked to the other side, I saw stairs which reached to the top of the pyramid. There was a chain from the top to the bottom of the pyramid. Some people were climbing the stairs. When I walked in a different direction, I saw other stairs on the side of the pyramid. The edge of the pyramid had huge steps. It showed that the Mayan Indians had built the pyramid as if they had piled up small boxes on top of large boxes one by one like a step pyramid. I wanted to climb the pyramid immediately but I was stopped from doing so by the guide. The guide told me that he had to introduce the Ball Court to the tourists. The court was rectangular and it was surrounded by rock walls. The center parts of the side walls were 7.5m high and a rock hoop stuck out on the top of both side walls. The other walls were around 1.8 m high. There was a two-story building beside the 7.5 m high wall. The guide introduced the building as the Temple of

the Jaguars. The lower part of the side wall was carved and I could see its relief clearly. The relief was of a man whose head had been cut off and blood gushed out from his neck like a small geyser and another man held the head from which blood was running out. The guide explained that the man in the relief who had lost his head might be the leader of the ball game's winning team and he was sacrificed to the god. I asked the guide why the leader of the winning team was killed instead of the losing team. The guide told me that the Maya Indians gave the best things to their god and that's why the leader of the winning team was given to their god. It was an honor to the dead man who was given to the god.

Next, the guide took us to a rectangular, parallelepiped building, which looked like a platform or a stage. Many rocks were piled up and each rock was carved with the relief of a human skull. The guide said, "Every time they sacrificed a man, they carved a skull on a rock and put the rock on the pile and they buried the man's head in the platform." I guessed that the rectangular, parallelepiped platform or stage consisted of several hundred rocks carved in the shape of human skulls. I asked the guide where they buried their bodies. He replied that they dropped the dead bodies into a well. The guide took us to the sacred well which was surrounded by a cliff around 9 m high. The water was deep green. I imagined that there was a huge amount of human bones in the well.

I stood at the bottom of the pyramid and looked up at it. The pyramid was very steep. The individual steps were very narrow and I couldn't fit my entire foot on the step. The heels of my shoes stuck out from the steps. I didn't want to fall from the steps so I held on to the chain to climb up. I could see the Ball Court and the Temple of the Warriors clearly from the top of the pyramid. It was windy at the top of the pyramid so I couldn't stand at the edge of the platform. Chichen Itza was surrounded by deep green jungle. It was impossible to go down the stairs of the pyramid the normal way. I had to face toward the stairs and hold the chain and go backwards down the stairs. When I reached the bottom of the pyramid, I saw an entrance in one side of the pyramid. A couple of people came out. I had a great curiosity about the entrance so I entered it. There was a weak electric light in it. I saw many people were lined up and the line moved little by little to the stairs. The aisle was very narrow and when someone came from the opposite direction, I had to stand sideways. The stairs were very steep so I had to touch the wall beside the stairs. The wall was very sticky and it felt like the depth of oil was around 5mm. I realized that all the people in the aisle were touching the wall so that the oil might have come from many people's fingers. It was extremely hot and humid inside the pyramid. I couldn't guess what was at the end of the stairs. I climbed up a step and waited for at least two minutes and then climbed up a step again. I felt as if it would take forever to reach the top of the stairs. There was a small room at the end of the stairs and a faded green rock statue of Chac Mool was in the room. Chac Mool was in a semi-reclining position with knees bent and head turned to his side but facing us. The stairs were very steep and it was impossible to go down them without touching the oily filthy wall. As soon as I came out from the pyramid, I appreciated the bright sunlight and clean air.

The Temple of the Warriors was near the pyramid. I guessed many people were sacrificed at this temple. The temple was around 12 m high and the bottom of the temple was around 30 m wide. It looked like the temple was made by piling up four different sizes of boxes. The largest box was on the bottom and the smallest box was on the top. There were stairs at the center of the temple. Many rock pillars were arranged in orderly fashion in front of the temple and on the side of the temple which faced the pyramid. The pillars were cylindrical or rectangular, parallelepiped shaped and all of them were around 3 meters high. The pillars were not made of one solid rock. Around 30 cm high cubic rocks or log-shaped rocks were piled up and made the pillar. Each pillar was carved like a Mayan Indian and the reliefs showed their special costumes at that time. In particular, the relief showed clearly that the Mayan Indians used a hat or a crown which was made of many long feathers.

I climbed up the stairs and stood on the terrace. I saw a statue of Chac Mool. The statue looked like it was made of the same kind of rock as the temple and pillars. Chac Mool on the temple was in the same semi-reclining position as the Chac Mool in the pyramid. The Chac Mool was sitting with his knees bent and turning his face toward the pyramid. The side of the pyramid which Chac Mool looked at had broken stairs. The pyramid had four stairways, one on each of its four sides. The Mayan Indians pulled out a human heart and put the moving heart on Chac Mool's belly and sacrificed the heart to their god. According to the guide, they gave their god not only human hearts but also various things such as beans and corn. As it was bright sunshine and the air was clean, I couldn't imagine that bloody scene around Chac Mool. I sat on Chac Mool as if he were a chair. It might have been an insult to the Mayan people but at that time I didn't think about it.

After we left Chichen Itza, the buses stopped at a small Mayan Indian village. Most of the houses were made of sticks and grass. They used the sticks for walls and the grass for roofs. The sticks were not dense and I could see inside the house through the spaces between the sticks. The floor in the house was dirt and a couple of hammocks were hanging in the house. The Mayan Indian ladies wore white dresses with colorful flower embroidery. They were not rich but they looked very happy and peaceful.

We flew from Cancun to Merida by propeller-driven plane to visit Uxmal. At Merida Airport, a man around 40 years old picked us up. I expected that many tourists would go to Uxmal but only five people joined the tour: a couple from Spain, a black lady from the U.S.A., Lily, and I. The van drove through the city, which had a lot of trees full of bright orange-colored flowers. The van passed through a part of the city of Merida and started driving outside of the city. Sometimes the van passed by fields. As there were a lot of rocks in the fields, they looked like wasteland. I thought that it must have been impossible to use iron hoes in these rocky fields. It seemed that the fields were not fertile. I asked the guide what they raised in these fields. He replied that they raised various things. I expected that the guide would tell me the names of products but he

didn't.

At Uxmal, we walked deeper into the park and we saw a huge pyramid among the trees. Its color was a mixture of light gray, cream yellow, and yellow ochre. The pyramid in Uxmal was funnel-shaped with an oval base. It looked like it was a stack of three different sizes of funnel-shaped buildings. The largest funnel-shaped section at the bottom made up two-thirds of the pyramid and the other one-third of the pyramid was made up of two lower funnel-shaped buildings. The larger of the two buildings was twice as thick as the smaller one. The three different funnel-shaped buildings were stacked up from the largest one to the smallest one. There was a rectangular solid building on top of the pyramid. The stairs covered half of the pyramid's center. There was a triangle-shaped hole, 1.5 m high and one meter wide, at almost the top of the stairs. The guide told us that the pyramid had been reconstructed. The pyramid was built of a lot of rocks whose size was as big as my two fists and the rocks had no sharp corners. It looked like all the rocks were glued with cement; however, the pyramid's stairway and the rectangular, parallelepiped building were made of squared blocks. I started climbing the stairway. It was as steep as the stairway at Chichen Itza. The height and the depth of the individual steps were the same as in Chichen Itza. As only I climbed the pyramid, I had to climb in a hurry holding the chain.

The rectangular, parallelepiped building on the top of the pyramid had an entrance. Several rock carvings of masks of Chac surrounded the entrance. Cross-hatched patterns were carved on both sides of the entrance next to the Chac mask carvings.

From the terrace on top of the funnel-shaped part of the pyramid, I could see that Uxmal was surrounded by very dark-green jungle. I also saw several buildings, including four rectangular, parallelepiped buildings, which had many entrances and walls whose upper parts were decorated with carved rocks, and the four buildings were built as if they surrounded a rectangular-shaped yard. I also saw a hill, one side of which had a huge stairway. There was a rectangular, parallelepiped building with an entrance at the top of the stairway. The hill might have been formed by a ruined building. I could see only a couple of people around the pyramid and only I was on the pyramid. It seemed that Uxmal was not as popular as Chichen Itza. I used the chain again and started going down the stairs. The stairs behind the pyramid (actually those stairs were on the front of the pyramid) were two-thirds of the width of the other side's stairs. I faced toward the stairs and held the chain and went backwards down the stairs. I never heard from the guide what the pyramid might have been used for by the Mayans.

The tour guide drove through Merida and took us to a museum. They had displays of the Mayan clay statues, clay masks, rock carvings, and pottery. They also showed how to force a baby's head to grow triangular-shaped and with a flat forehead. They used two wooden boards or used a wooden board and a strip of leather and tied the baby's head between the two wooden boards or between the wooden board and the strip of leather. The guide told us that only high society babies had triangular-shaped heads and flat

foreheads to wear a crown and a hat easily.

As the airplane from Merida to Cancun had been cancelled due to a storm, we had to stay in Merida one night. Next morning while we were eating breakfast at Merida airport, the black lady and the Spanish couple were interested in Lily but Lily did not say anything. The black lady told Lily, "I felt sorry for Japanese who stayed in a camp." I told the black lady, "They were not Japanese. They were Americans. Many Americans told Japanese-Americans 'Sorry' without meaning it. When Japanese-Americans were sent to camps, nobody tried to help them. It wasn't fair." Lily didn't say anything. The black lady stopped talking.

I visited Isla Mujeres and Cozumel alone. They are islands and famous for beautiful ocean. Especially in Cozumel, there was the most beautiful scenery I had ever seen in my life. White-bubbled waves crashed on the rocks and the waves rose at least 2 m higher than the rocky area. Behind the waves, I could see green and navy blue-colored ocean and blue sky with white cumulus clouds which looked like cotton. When I walked along the rocky area, I saw different scenery. I saw a cliff around 5 m high with a rock 1.5m high and 1.9 m wide at the foot of the cliff. The white-bubbled waves surrounded the rock and the waves were surrounded by green ocean. There was bright turquoise-blue ocean beyond the green ocean and then bright blue ocean lay out beyond the turquoise blue ocean. The bright navy blue ocean touched the pale gray and blue sky with its white cumulus clouds.

I heard that opals and silver products were extremely low priced in Mexico because they were produced there. One of the TV programs in Japan had showed that in Mexico they used opals as stones in a goldfish bowl. They also had showed that Europeans, Americans, and Mexicans didn't like opals and opals didn't have any value. In spite of what I had heard, opal rings were very expensive at many luxurious jewelry stores. In Cozumel I saw a beautiful opal necklace which had around 20 opals and each opal was at least 1.5 cm in diameter. The opals had at least six colors; pink, yellow, orange, green, blue, and white. It was only \$300. Even if I bought it, I wouldn't have a chance to wear it so I decided not to buy it. I found a pair of earrings which were \$20. They were made of the same kind and size of opal as the necklace. The earrings were too large for me but I could use them as pins. They were extremely low priced so I decided to buy them. .

I stopped at a different jewelry store. They sold many opal rings but the opal stones were different from my opal earrings. The opal stones were almost brown with a little orange. The ring, which had an opal the size of my little fingernail was \$300. I pulled out my opal earrings from my purse and showed them to a salesman. I was proud of myself that I could buy the most beautiful opals in the world. As soon as the salesman looked at my earrings, he said, "Fake." I couldn't understand what else the man said; however, I could hear that word clearly. I kept silent for a while. He took out a couple of opal rings from the show case and explained to me that those were Mexican opals. They were brown with a few orange spots or lines. When he heard the price of the earrings, he didn't

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say anything but his face told me how in the world could we buy such gorgeous opal stones for only \$20? I rushed back to the jewelry store where I had bought the pair of opal earrings. When I arrived at the store, I was short of breath and could hardly speak. I told the salesman that I wanted to return the pair of opal earrings because they were fake. The salesman returned my traveler's check without saying anything. When I had bought the pair of earrings, the salesman only told me their price. He never mentioned whether they were real opals or fake. I had judged myself that they were real opals. Even though opals were produced in Mexico and were very low-priced, \$20 for the pair of opal earrings was extremely cheap. Normal people could understand that they were fake by the price. I laughed at myself for my stupidity.

I also visited Coba which was the least excavated of the Mayan ruins and the tallest pyramid in the Yucatan Peninsula. The pyramid looked as if it were a rocky hill. I saw only stairs on the pyramid but there was no chain on the stairs. Even though the pyramid was the highest in the Yucatan Peninsula, it was the easiest to climb without chain. This was because the individual steps were wide enough to put my whole feet on the steps. The building on top of the pyramid was made of various shapes and sizes of rocks. It looked like they had piled up large rocks first and then put small rocks into the spaces between the large rocks. Faded red, blue, and black still remained on part of the wall of the building. I could see only jungle around the pyramid and there was a lake in the jungle. The edge of the jungle touched the sky. Trees grew from part of the pyramid as if the pyramid were being eaten by the trees.

When I was walking toward the parking lot, I saw a line of moving leaves on the road. I saw an ant under each leaf carrying it. The size of the leaf was 100 times larger than that of the ant. I never expected that I could see ants that each carried a giant sized leaf. It was fascinating.

I really enjoyed studying, talking, and traveling with Lily. I could learn so much about the Japanese-Americans' social situation in the U.S.A. from her memories. The Nerios closed Meadowlark Airport and they developed it into a shopping center and a residential area in 1990s. It was extremely sad that Lily passed away in May 2011.