



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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## A Chicagoan in Hong Kong

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On October 3, I traveled to Hong Kong to attend the International Actuarial Association's meeting as well as the East Asian Actuarial Conference, or EAAC. This trip also gave me the opportunity to meet so many of the Society of Actuaries volunteers with whom I share e-mails and late-night conference calls. Sixteen flight hours, 7000+ miles, four movies, a book and a day later, I arrived at Hong Kong's international airport. The airport itself is a tribute to high-tech efficiency, and after quickly clearing customs, I found myself en route to the Kowloon side of Hong Kong, my home for the next seven days.

Following the advice of the travel experts, I knew that I had to remain awake until what would normally be my bedtime. Fortunately, the Society's China Region Committee assisted me by kindly hosting a dinner for me and the other SOA members in town for the two meetings. Chairperson Shu-yen Liu outdid herself by ordering a tremendous feast of every Chinese delicacy from eel to shark fin soup to beggar's chicken to Peking duck. Unfortunately, my appetite was larger than my ability to handle chopsticks, so my dining companions, Pat Kum (our Hong Kong office coordinator) and Estella Chiu (China Region Committee member), helped me out and made sure that I had the chance to try everything. The only negative is that I am now no longer impressed with my favorite Chicago Chinese restaurant!

The next two days were devoted to meetings during the day and the warm hospitality of the Actuarial Society of Hong Kong (ASHK) during the evening. One evening's reception was at the Hong Kong Jockey Club, an enormous arena

where horse racing plays second string to a unique view of central Hong Kong. A formal dinner at the Hong Kong club, complete with live entertainment rounded out the weekend. Sunday afternoon brought the first real chance to see the sights. A short walk from my hotel was the famed Star Ferry

Terminal. The descriptions provided to me from friends were perfect. It is impossible to board the wrong ferry because the hoards of people loading and unloading keep everyone, including tourists, looking every-way but forward in line. The seven-minute ferry for HK\$2.20 or approximately 30 U.S. cents gives you the best view of the city's impressive skyline. Despite being born in the city that plays host to the world's tallest office building, I felt tiny amidst the skyscrapers of central Hong Kong. Even on Sunday, this city reverberates with activity and commerce. A casual glance reveals a cell phone in every pocket and the appearance that no one stands still in this city. In an afternoon, which included a trip to Victoria Peak and the Hong Kong Art Museum, I soaked up this city's intoxicating ambience.

The EAAC was an impressive event, not only for the attendance it generated (over 500 actuaries from the region), but for the support given to the event by the region's major employers. Again, the ASHK, as well as the staff from the joint actuaries office, gave more than 110% to ensure a successful meeting. The opening



session included a colorful dragon dance. During EAAC meeting sessions, I met some of the SOA Ambassadors from the region, as well as leaders of the local actuarial groups, like the Philippine Actuarial Society. The days that followed gave me a few chances to try my bargaining abilities at the local markets and jewelry shops. I also visited the giant Buddha bronze sculpture on Lantau Island; sailed on a sampan out in the Aberdeen fishing villages, and stepped out onto the warm sand of a beach on the South China Sea. What started as a seemingly long business trip ended remarkably quickly and has left me with an even longer list of things to see on my next visit. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who had a hand in making this trip so enjoyable for me including Pat Kum, Sarah Hui, Shu-yen Liu, KC Chan, the SOA China Region Committee and Norm Crowder for suggesting the trip.

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