

Luggage Loops and Lumps

Watching the suitcases go by on the airport carousel is interesting. You see all sorts of bags, boxes, pet cages, pouches, strollers, car seats for babies, golf clubs, and musical instruments. All are evidences of our material wealth in the USA or Europe. In Asia you see some of these but also a variety of others. Boxes of melted fish, cookies, donuts for the family at home, cardboard boxes with crowing gamecocks trying to outdo the others, broken bottles of rum or whiskey soaking the poorly packaged box and just about anything else that can be tied with a string or taped.

As Ole Elephant said in Dumbo, “I done seen about everything when I see an elephant fly.” Even our suitcases might raise a query. We carry Bibles, tracts, medications, Medical and surgical instruments, books, and a few clothes and shoes.

Having an apartment in the Philippines allows us to leave our “work” clothes there. We then have room for vitamins, antibiotics, ointments, creams, stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, thermometers, betadine, and a large assortment of bandages, bandaids, tapes and wraps.

Our old green hard-shell suitcases bear numerous cuts and scratches, marks of many adventures. As we checked in for an international flight to the Philippines, the airline ticket agent (glancing at all the inspection and security stickers from hundreds of trips) said, “It isn’t fair to buy bags we can’t destroy.” It must have been a prophecy. On the last trip, Sue’s bag threw a wheel, causing it to “wobble on the axle,” so to speak.

Everywhere we go, our luggage is put through the fire. We’ve watched from the airplane window and seen it thrown, tossed, pushed and dropped 8 feet to the ground. It has been on rice trucks, jeeps, tied to taxis, in rain and snow, jungle and city. In this day of disposables, our suitcase is not. Only replaceable! Before Sue’s next adventure she must get a new one or brown bag it, or pull old wobbly along behind her. Her crippled suitcase now takes its place among strange sights on airport carousels.

Of course even seeing “Old Wobbly” on the right carousel is a blessing, considering the alternative. There is an indescribable letdown when, after traveling 20 hours, the last bag is pushed up and yours is no where in sight. Checking in on an Air China flight from Harbin to Beijing, the agent asked, “Would you like to purchase insurance for your bag?” “Why?” He beamed proudly, “To make sure it arrives!” We paid and it arrived.