

- In a restaurant the other night during a busy dinner hour. The piped music was really good. I've been listening a lot lately to the Café Del Mar series of lounge music. This place had some tunes playing along the same vein. After a while I asked the waitress if she could find out the name of the CD. And she disappeared into the crowd. We returned to our conversation, he liked the music too. A few minutes later, we noticed the music had stopped. There was nothing. There, deep into a closet of electrical connections, the waitress had stopped the CD player and was reading the CD label. This really is a service-oriented place! Same restaurant with the luscious wasabi oysters. Music was from a CD of miscellaneous selections called Anaconda Lounge.
- We have a nice weight room in the building. I've been working out 4 days a week, in the mornings, sometimes with Liz. Just 30 minutes, enough to wake up before heading to work. There's an air conditioner on the wall, operated by a remote control. This remote appeared to be on its last legs, so I presumed dead batteries. And thoughtfully brought a new set down. So I change the batteries, start the AC, and we get on our machines.

And then the phone rings. This phone doesn't work according to me, who had tried to use it to call Liz a different morning. There are only presets on it, no numbers for dialing anything. Only two of the presets are defined, and they don't seem to work, couldn't get the lobby when I tried earlier. So the phone is ringing. We look at each other, it is after all, 5:15 AM, and no one else is in the room. So of course I answer it. "Any problem with the aircon, Sir?" "Uh, No. Oh I was just putting new batteries in the remote." "Okay Sir, just checking, thank you Sir."

Spooky. That's when we realized there was a camera in an obscure ceiling corner. That must have provided entertainment at times. I had noticed the cameras in each elevator. We make a pact to never speak ill of the apartment or anyone in it, at least while we are inside. Never know who or where someone is watching, I feel like a resident in a casino. And wonder, is this service, or surveillance?

- Beautiful swimming pool area, but the hot tub isn't working. There are some pictures elsewhere. I've yet to swim, but will at some point. More like a lanai room than swimming pool, I'll just sit and read perhaps, with a coooool refreshing beverage. Poolside, that's it!
- Here's part of a recent rant, an answer to someone who asked me what I/my company was doing in the Philippines:

"...My Florida employer was roped into a crazy project here. Sponsored/funded by the World Bank, 2-3 years, in way over our heads, but we're giving it the "college try". Three folks are stationed here the entire project time, and several others are rotating through on 3 or 6 month assignments. I'm on a three month, Martel would have killed me for staying longer...."

"...We're working 60 hour weeks generally, the original project schedule had slipped badly. Massive unmanaged scope change, with no accompanying schedule or budgetary changes. We didn't add the rotations until it was obvious our permanent people weren't going to pull it off. Several reasons why, cultural, political (co-worker was three blocks away from the coup last month, watched parts of it from his apartment window), and systemic..."

“...Our trip here was very haphazardly planned, though we ended up staying in the ritziest part of Manila, Makati City. The several blocks around our apartment building resembles Rodeo Drive [in Los Angeles] more than anything. All within walking distance: four story shopping malls, Rolex outlets, Kate Spade, Prada and Cartier shops, designer restaurants out the yinyang. Including the Glorietta Mall, which had bombs planted in a movie theater bathroom by rebel sympathizers in May 2000, killing 1 and injuring 12. Glorietta was also the site of the coup last month, the Oakwood towers are on top of it. It's the mall and building the soldiers booby trapped with hand grenades around the doors. We walk there for grocery shopping...”

“...Yesterday, a couple miles from here we passed piles of children sleeping on the sidewalks and in roadway medians, on the way to the airline ticketing office. I can't bring myself to take pictures of things like that, it's too sad....”

“...I could go on, but there's someone cleaning the bathroom, a different person emptying out the grease trap under the kitchen sink, and I'm still waiting on someone to come by for bug spraying, the latter two courtesy of the apartment building management. A real service economy, blasted to keep it that way...”