

To all my Sweet Ladies,

I have written some emails to some of you, and quickly realized that I would need to do it this way. They tell us it takes the same number of hours time difference, in days, to get over jet lag. So we are officially over that now. But good news from a previously unexplored cupboard – I found a juice extractor- and it works! With the unbelievably bright orange carrots here, it seemed a real shame to not be able to juice them. This girl is gonna rise again!

Since I am immensely interested in your everyday lives, I will let you in on mine a bit:

We start everyday with breakfast, cleaning up the house, and are at the school table by 9:00. Now my goal was to go out early for a walk with them all, but I haven't mustered up the initiative for that yet (and I very well may not ever).

Once we are done with all the "at the table" things, they start their individual work, and I...am supposed to helping the younger ones with their lessons...only today I'm doing this while I have Lauryl do phonics flash cards with Stephen and Lilly. I do hope I haven't made a grave error, but I thought "what could one day hurt".....

Lunch at 11:30, then storytime, and we are currently reading: "Freddy and the Poppinjay". I am finally getting to the point where I can easily read 2 chapters (if I have a mind to), rather than slurring my words through the one chapter after the 1st page, so that I have to walk around the room to stay awake through it. Coffee helps either way.

Then Lilly and Stephen go to bed for their naps (which they sometimes take, and sometimes just play on their beds), while the others get back at their schoolwork and reading. It's ladies time at the upstairs "health club" until 2:00, so Kim and I go up there. My mom joins us while she is here too. I even pulled a hamstring the other day to make it official.

When I get back, I pretty much find that most of them hadn't really been doing school at all. But in the scheme of things, I figure if everyone is still alive and safe, that is good enough for that ½ hour of time (you didn't actually think I took longer in the workout room did you?)

After school lets out for the nearby American and British Schools, I allow them to stop (phew), and the older boys go to what is called the "Corniche" road with their rollerblades (and proper padding-no worries). Corniche is a French word that means "edge". And it certainly is the very edge before the blue ocean. There is a very beautiful walkway there, with a special path for bikes/rollerblades. And it's all done in tiles and cleaned everyday or it would soon get very dirty from the dusty sand blowing. It extends all across the Island of Abu Dhabi. The danger is to get across the busy (!) road to get there. Meanwhile, I stay here for catching up (or a nap) and then I take the younger children and Kim and my Mom and I go to either the "women's park" which costs one durham for each person over 10, and boys over 10 cannot get in. This is only a park for

women and young children and it feels very safe and is very beautiful, and is very worth that durham (which = about 27 cents).

The other option for parks is the "Family Park". That is also nearby, and there is another one further down the Corniche. This also costs one durham for each person over 10, but everyone is allowed so that is a nice place to have afternoon picnics with biscuits (cookies) and water or pop (ok coke or soda for you ladies in the south). And a word about pop: As many of you know, I have an affinity for Diet Coke. Here, it is called "Coke Light". It tastes a little different but it still ranks up there as favorite ☺. Proof that a diet coke by any other name still tastes as sweet.

But you know....yesterday the boys didn't feel like rollerblading (rather hot and humid), and I didn't at all feel like going to the park again (that hamstring I told you about). And I desperately (well ok, maybe not desperately) needed to get to the store, with Mark (decisions again), but after the day he had, I didn't have the heart to ask (and mine had gone much the same, only different). So we all stayed home, and the children ran out into the hall in their socks and slid on the marble floors (quietly). Jon very kindly offered to take a taxi to a nearby store (it really is so hot though, that for safety reasons you can't just walk), to get me some of the groceries I needed, and he took a taxi back (no easy feat I must say). This same fellow went before school to the closer (yet not as well stocked) store just across the alley downstairs for milk and bread. He's getting good at this. But the great thing for Jon is, that because of language differences, he has no idea that he is probably (like all new westerners here), making constant social gaffes.

Then I fix dinner. And those have been ranking everywhere from getting rave reviews to very skeptical looks.... Let's just say I don't have all my cooking tools, combined with I don't always even know what it is that I buy at the store.

Then Mark gets home and everything is all right again and we all have an evening. But I really hope he has had a great day at work so I'll feel free to ask him to take me to the store ☺.

A few oddities to add to the adventure:

I secretly and lovingly, call this the Logic Free Zone. There are a few reasons for this.

- street signs don't correspond with maps and neither do they necessarily stay the same.
- the rules for getting an international drivers license, change daily. Yesterday we found they can't be gotten in Abu Dhabi, you must go to Dubai. Today the word is that you cannot get them in Dubai.
- the outlets are wired for 240 volts. The adaptors have many different odd shaped spots that evidently are needed depending on what appliance you use. Rarely can you just use the outlet itself (except for the adaptors). (but this voltage also mean water boils FAST)
- politeness mean different things depending upon which country you are from. For example: Westerners, when asked directions to someplace they know not where, simply

say something like “I have no idea, sorry”. Whereas here, in many variations, whether they really know or not, out of sheer politeness people from other cultures will give very explicit and detailed directions, when asked. Questioned why they did that later (when you still haven’t found the place (because it isn’t where they said at all), the reason is that they “just wanted to make us happy”.

But look at me drone on and on.

As my senses slowly come back, I will attempt to relay something of actual interest. But for now – I am well, the children are well, Mark is well, and I’m very grateful that my Dad and Mom are here with me for awhile.

And you know I would write each of you separately if I could. But I can’t.

Very much love and fond affection,

~Pam.

“From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” Psalm 61:2

