

April, 2007

Dear Sweet Ladies,

This has been a wonderfully busy month, with Mark's folks here for most of March. The early part of the month was spent trying to get over some pretty deep coughs that started with blowing dust (again). *I* didn't succumb until we were driving through the desert and had to stop and get out (a couple of us) – all in one of the worst sandstorms I've seen so far (not that I have seen many, but a few). The anatomy of a sand storm goes like this: Larger heavier particles blow around low and collect in drifts in the road. Smaller, lighter (yet still very silicon based) blow high and filter out light, sight, and are breathed in. I am currently missing the B and high E notes to my register, which limits song choices significantly.

We were actually trying to go to Al Ain when the sandstorm got suddenly worse. So we changed our plans and went to someplace indoors. The Ibn Battuta (son of Battuta) Mall is an amazing place and we spent much of the day breathing in there. One of the Starbuck's (there are 3 in there) is under an amazingly beautiful stained glass domed ceiling.

A few of the children went with Grandma and Grandpa to "Ski Dubai" for a birthday gift. The children opted to snowboard rather than use skis. I prefer *not* to tie my feet together for anything, but whatever. They appeared to have a lot of fun together. Mark and I have a half price pass now so I may yet get my chance. 📺👉🕒

Ski Dubai is an actual indoor ski hill within the Mall of the Emirates. From the outside, it looks like a vacuum thermos sticking up into the air at a slant. The inside looks like winter. Our whole family actually went there in Feb. but just to play at the "play park" where there is bob-sledding (small scale), tubing, sleds, igloos and ice-maze, etc... to just play in the snow. It was wonderful to have rosy cheeks from the cold again.

There is a place we have found, that is fairly deserted during the week, and has a coral reef to snorkel over. It's a beautiful place on the eastern coast and if you look on a map, you would see a smallish town called Dibba, just down the coast from Fujairah and it is there. I never knew firsthand before, how very beautiful the underwater world of a coral reef is. Yellow and blue tangs, orange clown fish hiding in their anemones, translucent pink, blue and purple jellyfish (that pack a wallop sting and that's no lie), the iridescent Parrotfish: 1 type – green body with pink fishnet lines and bright turquoise fins and tail. Another type - huge (about 3 or 4 feet long) with green/blue/and purple body with bright orange fins and gills and brilliant marine blue tail. Brownish red smaller puffer fish and the larger tan speckled ones. Spiny sea urchins we are warned to not step on at low tide, with 12" spines. Reef sharks, sea turtles, eels & sea cucumbers.

"These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep." (Psalm 107:24)

Surely He has done all things well.

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The "Zone" report:

- 1) When an item rings up less than the price tag in the checkout lane of the grocery store, you will \*not\* get it for the lesser price, you will pay what is on the price tag. No bargaining here. Neither is there any shadow of Walmart.
- 2) This isn't a major deal in the scheme of things. But if you get a salad at a restaurant, there may not be any dressing to be had. It works ok to go to the nearby store and buy some to put on it. Just leave someone to guard your salad.
- 3) Continuing the shopping theme here: When you walk into one of the smaller stores at the mall, you will usually find the aisles are all blocked by workers. They will gladly move for you but it is disconcerting. But not as disconcerting as having someone stand less than 1 foot away from you and watch you closely. I believe this to be less that they worry about you stealing anything, than it is just that this is their way of serving you. They will look at your shoes, and the color of your dress and find a type and color they think will suit you. I know this seems logical...however I don't know quite how to tell them this \*way\* invades my space.
- 4) On a few occasions, I have detected what is clearly American English swear words, said by people who equally clearly do \*not\* speak English very well. They manage to say these with no accent whatsoever. I thought about asking the most recent perpetrator why she doesn't just swear in her own language but her English wasn't good enough that I thought she'd understand me. And I don't speak anything close to Tagalog (from the Phillipines). It also occurred to me that it wasn't probably the real issue here either. But it did cause me to wonder – does America have the best swear words or what?

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We are on a Marathon to finish up school before we pack to come home for the summer. Mark will be flying with us home, but must return here before 35 days are up. This means end of June. Other activities and visits with the neighbors fill the spare cracks of time. I even fit in an occasional drawing lesson for the neighbor girls.

If anyone will have a kitten to loan us while we are home, Lilly would be most grateful. We would return it at the end. :-)

Very much love and fond affection,

~Pam.

"Psa 61:2 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."





