

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

This month's important topic is breakfast cereal. The choices are different than at home. I know it seems an obvious thing, but it still took me by surprise. Last year we lived in Abu Dhabi, where the only cereal choices were highly sugared and expensive so I retrieved my recipes for coffee cake and baked oatmeal and donuts. You'll probably notice here that I solved the expensive issue, but not the highly sugared one :-)... Anyway, it helped. But for those in between days (those ones when I couldn't quite hit the ground running) there were the Apple Zoomers and Fruit Rings (and the persisent burnt toast). We don't find those same cereals here on the other side of the country. Thankfully I'm finding bran flakes, corn flakes, and a dubious number called weetabix.

Weetabix looks a bit like a cross between compressed sawdust, and baled chopped hay. Don't make the mistake I did and think it would be as wonderful as plain shredded wheat. :-/ For one thing, there is nothing as large, in a weetabix briquette, as the shreds in shredded wheat, and I think this is what makes it go immediately soggy. I'm used to high fiber foods requiring a bit of chewing so this claim of it being high fiber is very suspect. Plus...I tend not to trust things that are purposely not spelled quite right. Like...donettes, crème eggs, kwality (a brand of "ice cream" here), the word "luv", etc... It does seem like if they are going out of their way to intentionally misspell the product there might be a reason for it.

Last year, at Jon's insistence, we tried a product called "Vegemite". Now it *seems* like black spreadable yeast paste would taste great...but it was not something anybody tried again. It *is* curious to me that both these items are British. No wonder they have such a good sense of humor.

We do try to get out and do things around here. But some days I must admit to feeling like the guys in the space shuttle (going a long ways from home, but not venturing out much -not the weightlessness). It is a bit easier on the children to be here with a yard so that helps. I like staying home, but I can't allow myself to get too reclusive.

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The Logic-free Zone report:

* the really large pot hole out front in our dirt road, got filled.
...by taking dirt from other places in the road...so now there are other smaller pot holes nearby.

* traffic speed on the pavement is controlled by the use of lots of speed bumps. Most cars are out of alignment.

* stop signs evidently don't actually mean you to stop, and few people do. If you do (like I do) you will most likely get honked at (or possibly rear ended). I'm still trying to get used to the fact that honks by cars don't mean the same here (just "letting you know"), as they do in the U.S. (they're mad at you).

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It seems hard to make time for anything extra, but I have actually met a neighbor now. And the next door one smiles and waves. You are probably wondering how I know this, but not all of the shaylas cover the whole face :-). The smile and wave was pretty welcome too since a couple of neighbor boys keep lighting small bits of trash to try to burn the outside of our wall (the yard is surrounded by a wall and gate). Don't worry though – it's 12 inches thick and made of cement – it will take them quite awhile to get all the way through.

I mentioned in a recent letter there are also people here from other countries. One in particular seems to want to talk about spiritual things (she is actually mormon) with me. Please pray for wisdom and energy for me. It's a long way to come to witness to Americans but at least I'm used to that one. And it seems to happen more often than other scenarios lately.

Our first visitor of this year just left, and my Uncle Gerry is in the country and will appear any day now. Our next group (my sister, brother in law and ten of their children) will be coming the same flight as Jon and Robyn just before Thanksgiving(!) Then we get a few families from Abu Dhabi for National Day weekend (Dec 2), which is an interesting holiday here but we don't expect nearly the amount of reckless driving (for celebratory reasons) and fireworks out here as we did there in Abu Dhabi. At any rate, we are enjoying having all the company.

Other items of interest: (pick two)

- When you move into a house that hasn't been lived in for 3 years, you cause all kinds of problems for the poor thing. The water tank on the roof overflowed when the valve didn't know to shut off one day (creating a wall of water for awhile juuuust beyond the clothes hanging). The air conditioning unit needs coaxing quite a bit (thankfully I like it warm), and the pipe leaks in the house have all been fixed quickly and with drains in the floors and large squeegees,

difficulty has been minimal. Soon the house should start cooperating we think.

- There is an ice cream bicycle that comes by pretty often. For one durham (27.188689 cents) you can get an ice cream bar or a small plastic cup of ice cream with one of those cool wooden spoons. :-) A cheap diversion.

- The yard is definitely shaping up. The magnolia tree gets the most visits (it smells good). The basil is a close second (same reason).

- The roads around our house elicit various reactions. A few of us laugh at all the bumping around, another gets annoyed, another marvels at the dust and holes, while another gets a little carsick.

- it's much more common to see roadside goats, donkeys, or a passing camel around these parts.

Well that's all from the Middle East (at least from us...) this month. Just a reminder that I actually do think of all of you. And wish I could sit and talk and have coffee with each one of you. For one thing...it might then be enough coffee to keep me awake for story time... But I do appreciate your interest. In the interest of holding all good things loosely though, let me know if you need to unsubscribe. It's not a problem.

Much Love and fond affection,
~Pam.

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"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



