

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

It has been a very hot, sunny summer here. One would think that with 70 spf sun block that you could just about light yourself on fire and it wouldn't affect you but even with that on, one day at the coral reef, we came back with a bit of sunburn. Dangerous country for such light skins I'm thinking. I hope none of it comes back to haunt us later.

Mark's and my 25th anniversary was this September 1st! We both agree that in some ways our wedding day seems like just yesterday, and in some ways as though it was a few hundred years ago. Many children and many adventures later, we find ourselves (with all 9 children here) celebrating on this distant small country a few blocks from the Indian Ocean. Life brings those odd turns sometimes (as Mark remembers my reaction when he revealed long ago that his dream would be to live on a farm with animals...), and all we can do is keep following. We took a double decker bus tour in Dubai (Mark and I) a few days before the party with the children. Like any good tourist, we got lots of pictures and we remembered the days of yore, when the hallmark of a tourist was that they had a 110 instamatic in their shirt pocket...

Another Outrageous Cooking Adventure with Mark and Pam:

We should have learned from the last Chili Powder incident involving, well, Chili. The one where we had to go running for drinks of water and chapstick. But one often follows recipes without thinking and that how this little adventure began. Finding Mexican food here is sketchy at best. I try to stock up when in Abu Dhabi or Dubai and after awhile I manage to gather the right ingredients for enchiladas or burritos. Those of you who know me well are not surprised then, to read that I didn't realize I had run out of enchilada sauce, before I made all the enchiladas. So Mark came to the rescue as he so often does with things and quickly found a recipe for the sauce and started it. A common mistake here (ahem, for me anyway) is to use Indian Chili powder like North American chili powder and we did. Before too long, the air in the kitchen was slightly reminiscent of trying to stir fry one tiny chili off a chili pepper potted plant we brought back from California once (and had to crawl out of the house for air). After a few drinks of water and some cough drops, we proceeded to finish the sauce and hesitatingly put in on the enchiladas to bake.

Yeah, these were painfully hot and required we eat it with glasses of milk. Kim said it was a pretty emotional meal (as tears streamed down her face), Stephen went and quietly put peanut butter in a tortilla, and the rest of us (including the company. har) bravely ate it with jokes. The boys (who had been banished to the kitchen table) put a bottle of barbeque sauce on their small pan (which didn't help). I believe the comments were that they were so good they wanted to eat more but it just hurt too much. Leftovers were not as popular the next day as they usually are, and I'm thinking I'll make a permanent sign in my kitchen here about the chili powder conversion (1/4 cup = 1/4 tsp!).

(It should be noted that Stephen quietly slipping off to put peanut butter on some form of bread is not exclusive to this situation.)

We are now deep into the month of Ramadan, which means language lessons are suspended since our teacher must still teach her classes at the college all day without eating or drinking anything (including water). Just between you and me, this tends to

make them quite crabby and have a hard time thinking through things until they can have some water at sundown. Out of respect for them (and so we don't get arrested), we also do not eat or drink anything in public, or even at home but in possible sight of anyone. I have noticed that some of the Christians who used to be muslim , struggle at this time. Some don't. They know they have put their trust in Jesus Christ, the only one who can save them. The finisher of their faith.

We are also deep in the first full month of school. Oh we've toyed with it and worked on math, and reading. The favorite being story time :-). But now we're committed. And I will not risk again telling you the schedule of our day since it seems to bring on a spate of bad luck. Which reminds me -

The Logic Free Zone report:

~This is the land of magical tales of flying carpets, Sinbad and the Nights of Arabia. But some fantastic tales have stuck over the years with the people, and they seem to be a mixture of religious myth, and a method of control over children. There are boogeymen that may get you if you get out of bed, good demons and bad demons on your shoulder, spirits in every house, and the more innocuous wives tales of what contributes to good health and bad health. We finally discovered the mystery as to why I could never seem to get coffee *with* dessert. It turns out they believe that to have those two things together, especially if it's ice cream – rots your teeth right out of your mouth.

~ Perhaps this is my own release of logic but I was told that in order to feel like you are cool, in hot weather, you should drink hot drinks. When I tried to sort this out with another person from here, they thought maybe what was meant was that you should never drink or eat hot and cold things at the same time as that will cause illness. phew.

~ There is a bare skeleton of a shopping center about 3 km. away from here with a sign that says they will be opening soon. We came across an old "Fujairah Observer" (local news magazine) from 2003 that advertised that same shopping center and said it would be opening soon. The picture in the news magazine had a finished picture. Very nice...

I think what I miss most by being here, is that believers in Jesus Christ are so few and far between. Like scattered lights, we know when we find each other, and we make sure. I noticed it in Abu Dhabi, but there were more believers there. Here in this rather small village by comparison, it is rare. Another new one was added last year when the fellow Ben worked for became a believer in Jesus. There is no mistake – he is changed, and it never gets any less amazing to see. May we always remember the great gift we have and remain ever steadfast.

The Carl Yoder family came from Nizwa, Oman to stay a few days with us. We made very good use of our time together. They were here for our worship service which made the singing much fuller, so we had a few more hymn sings while they were here. What a difference a few more voices makes. Our whole family is very much looking forward to returning to our little white church house on the prairie.

And that's all for now from the land of mystery. This looks to be a busy year by the schedule already, and that is a good thing. Until next time,

Much Love and Fond Affection,

~Pam.

<http://mjohnsonfamily.com/GulfNews/>

“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.”

(Psalms 61:2)

(picture caption)

Lucky Baby Gecko:



Snorkelling crew at Snoopy Rock:



Underwater scene:



The Burj Dubai. Tallest building in the world (as of Sept.2008)



Burj Al Arab up close



Another beautiful sunset over the Indian Ocean



Palm Tree Trimming



Water Snake



Pufferfish spines up close



I AM smiling – hurry up



Happy 25th Anniversary to us!

