

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

I celebrated the end of the month of Ramadan by having a cup of coffee outside again this year. If you recall, this Islamic holy month's rigor is to fast all through daylight hours, from food and water, etc..., resuming eating and drinking at sundown (and often on through the night). Those of us who are not Muslim are required to respect it by not eating or drinking anything in public, or anywhere you could be seen. They celebrate the successful completion of the month, with another holiday called "Eid". This ensured life still was not back to normal in our neighborhood. Fireworks in the street (it's ok, it's a dirt road), noise all night long (we had gotten used to our usually pretty quiet area here). We're looking forward to it all getting back to normal for here, which there really hasn't been since we've returned in the summer.

According to the U.S. State Department, the driving in this country is "primitive". I guess many fast and expensive cars, way overly large trucks on the same roads, failure to obey any or all signs and a general lack of concern for others has some pretty severe consequences. We have seen more lethal accidents (oddly, they more often involve only 1 car) since we've been here, than I have in my whole (fairly long) life in MN.

You may have visions of us being the only Americans in a sea of Abaya and dishdash wearing Arabs, and in some places that seems the case. But this country is actually only 20 % Emirati. That means the rest are Arabs from another country, and non-arabs. Employees at the College Mark works for are even more diverse. There are people from: Afghanistan, Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Guyana, India, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States and probably a few I missed. So many accents make life interesting, and sometimes confusing, even among the native English speakers. Some folks are "completely knackered", while another "bloke" may disdainfully call something "a dog's dinner", unless he's from Australia, in which case he'd call it "a dingo's breakfast". After a [cricket game](#), the bowler from the fielding team might toss their wicket, bat and ball into the boot of their Ute. You would be "chirping" at someone if you crab at them during a game. To hear someone exclaim "Crikey" is common, and on rare occasion a very proper English person will tell you "Cheerio" upon taking his leave.

Ben is finishing his work at the Men's college with the final editing of a magazine to be published for the college. His job last year was as an English tutor for the students. Jon is helping to referee and coach the sports teams at the same college (soccer(which they call "football" here, table tennis, volleyball). Robyn is enjoying her full time job, tutoring English classes at the Women's college. And Kim and Jeremiah are teaching English to a small class of Emirati children at a nearby continuing ed. Center. It's been difficult sometimes, to keep our children (esp. the middle ones) constructively busy while we live here so this is good. But please pray with me for our middle and younger children to choose to be diligent in their work and life.

Visits from friends in Abu Dhabi, and from the U.S., not to mention family, very much encourage us. It can get very lonely here, especially in crowds. I think I find it less so out on the open desert but not if I was by myself (and the mome raths outgrabe).

Our neighbor, Ameina, stopped by to give us “sweets” and to introduce us to her visiting mother. She really wanted to see the younger children but they were all in their pajamas. Visiting hours in this culture are very late. But the point I was thinking about is that Ameina’s mother has been trying to find a husband for Ameina in their native Bagdad (which Ameina wants her to do). She has a few eligible cousins but Ameina wants to talk to them before committing to anything. In her mother’s generation, that is not permitted. I am watching a generation gap of the matrimonial kind and it’s currently at an impasse. Further developments (if any) in future issues. Our neighbors are very interesting to us and apparently we are very interesting to them (though none have asked for tours of the house lately). We are glad to be getting back to “normal” now after their holidays. Hosinah had a baby boy that I have not met yet. Hosinah laughs at my Arabic, and I laugh at her funny sense of humor.

The “Logic-Free” Zone report:

- While we were in the states, there was a new law passed that one had to have their small motorscooters licensed now. We had 2 just for recreational use and for running small errands, for the boys. Before we could get them licensed. They were stolen, on 2 separate occasions from inside our walled yard. One of our neighbors (Adel) was so incensed that he talked to the police on our behalf. This was the verdict – we didn’t have them licensed yet, so the police would probably just take them away from us anyway so they won’t even come talk to us (or come to see the black marks made when it was dragged out of our yard). Sigh.

- Each of the years we have been here (I think in terms of *schoolyear*), we have had 2 water heaters go bad (that is 6 altogether...). Water heaters are in the ceiling, and serve only a specific area such as one bathroom each, or the laundry area. When they go bad, they either leak moderately and inconveniently all over the ceiling and floor, or they explode a hole and dump many gallons of hot water, suddenly, all over the ceiling and floor. Since this summer, we have already had 2 water heater incidents. I hope this means we’re good for the year now on that.

This motley collection of rather uninspiring events is the result of too much time spent helping children with their math. I now have a very thorough understanding of all things fractional. As the weather gets more and more reasonable (and my little sister comes to visit and help out soon), I hope to not feel so slash dotted.

Until then-

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.”

(Psalms 61:2)

Scarecrow guarding corn field ; below, Jacob and Stephen after soccer



Inside the famous Palace Hotel



Lethal accident





Above: This one's for you Delphia Ann :-)
; lower: lobsters from the fish market