

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

A new year isn't such a big deal. A new \*day\*, now that's a big deal. Another day to change, start over, try again, etc..., that seems manageable. But a new year, looming with its hugeness neither impresses me nor scares me. We can talk resolutely of all we intend to do differently in this new year, but in the end – we have to do it minute by minute, day by day. A fairly famous character once said “There is no try, either do or do not”. I must say that much of my life has been spent trying – sometime succeeding, sometimes not. I don't know any other way and it seems arrogant to me to tell myself I will do this or that, when I know I can only try. Perhaps it's in the sincerity or lack thereof. I'm not sure why any of this is in this letter except that it's what I'm thinking about now that I'm turning from the wonderful company we just had, to the new year and getting back to the daily routine, and pushing myself to do those things that don't come easily. Happy New Year. :-)

I have been asked a number of times now, if I am from Iceland. I don't think fast enough to ask them why they would wonder that but I'm beginning to think it's the SPF 70 I put on every morning. Perhaps a little bit of sun wouldn't hurt after all.

Christmas was a Merry time with a number of different related activities. None of them, of course, as wonderful as Christmas caroling in a large orange school bus around Blooming Prairie in the snow, but it kept us busy anyway. We made more than the requisite gingerbread people this year. And I used a red and silver apron I found at a local store. That was this year's attempt at ridding myself of my inner Grinch. I think I successfully fooled everybody.

Some of you know of the huge world map on our dining room/schoolroom wall. It occurred to me the other day that since I teach right in front of it at my place at the table, I must look pretty authentic. Perhaps I should have a school picture taken. Anyway, I have found it necessary to set up a desk right near French Polynesia. This was a result of a few things not the least of which was the fan that quit working in my laptop. Then the touch pad failed and so now this set up begs the question: “is the plural of mouse (computer mouse) mice?”. I now stare off into places like Starbuck Island, Vostok Island, Malden Island, Jarvis Island. There are many more I will become familiar with, but hopefully not at the expense of the laundry not getting folded and put away.

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### **Logic Free Zone Report:**

~ The protocol for Ambulances on their way to the hospital in an emergency = speed very fast cutting in and out with lights and sirens, then stopping to wait at a red light until it turns green.

~ This bit of illogic was pointed out to me by a capitalist – stores are grouped into one location by type. So you have the fabric district in one area, the hardware (loosely

defined) district in another, etc... There can be many tiny grocery type shops all next to each other – each with the exact same thing, and if you want something they ran out of, a guy will quickly run next store and bring it.

~ The fabric buyers have discovered that many westerners like cotton. So all cotton is more expensive (at least when they give you the first price) than other kinds. They reverently tell you it's cotton and say it's very very good quality (it usually isn't).

~ Assuming you all know or can find out what a roundabout is, I'll attempt this one: The Sheik's son is getting married soon so the road and roundabouts leading to the palace have all been under construction so there will be no bumps in the road. This severely hinders getting through the city at times, and for a few days there was a certain store that was blocked from all sides (i.e. no "legal" way in). I don't know how much they sold for that little while but when we got there, it seemed to be business as usual. \*We\* got in via a detour leading to nowhere, and a jaunt between a few huge pavement roller trucks (which probably have a better name than the one I just made up).

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We are very much missing Ben, who finished his degree and his work here and returned to life in the States. We are also really missing Jon who is for the next 6 weeks at Maranatha Bible School. Both boys are quite good at haggling prices. An example of shopping for a leather jacket with Jon:

**Jon:** (looking at the row of jackets) "are these real leather?"

**Shop guy:** " Yes! Very high quality"

**Jon:** (pulling out a lighter and lighting it near the jacket, poised to put it to the supposed leather) "really? Because they look kind of thin"

**Shop guy:** (seeing with alarm the lighter and flame get nearer the jacket) "No! not real leather! (motioning Jon to not melt the vinyl jacket)

**Jon:** "ok, thank you." (as he moves on to the next jacket shop)

I believe I've mentioned the supply problem here. It's actually only a problem if you depend upon certain products, such as cheerios or frosted mini-wheats. For many months now they have been very scarce in every Emirate we've been to check. We stopped at "Spinneys", the store with the British products, in Dubai on the way home from the airport, and found "Multigrain Hoops" that will work as a close second to cheerios. Product names crack me up.

And now I believe I'm beginning to prattle. On with the New Year.

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)

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