

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

You will be glad to know this is your Sept *and* October issues of this Ladies Letter (i.e. you won't get another until Nov). Along with a few of us suffering from profound jet lag this time, I managed to succumb to the current "Worldwide Popular Virus" and have been working my way through all of its symptoms. Somewhere in there school began and the mornings are taken up with that.

The skies, sunsets and landscape in Minnesota seemed so much more consistently beautiful this summer than I remember them being. I kept thinking how I must have taken it so for granted when we were living there fulltime all those years. I want to be sure not to do that anywhere we end up for there is still much beauty left in this fallen world.

"My God, I thank thee, who hast made
the earth so bright,
so full of splendor and of joy,
beauty and light;
so many glorious things are here,
noble and right." *

It was also a bit cooler in MN this summer than it's been for many summers, so when we got here, we found it to be the very inferno you might imagine at about 104 °F. That was in the night. But the upshot is that the geckos like the warmth so they visit regularly, and the intense heat causes the Magnolia flowers to perfume the whole yard. Now there are some signs of it beginning to moderate and the evenings can be fairly pleasant outside (if you like it pretty warm). The Neem tree, which volunteered out there and thrives on neglect, has become quite overgrown but when I went out to trim it, I found Stephen and Lilly so happily up in its branches I decided to leave it that way. Some neighbors were very happy to see us return, while others were clearly not. Ah well.

"I thank thee, too, that thou hast made
joy to abound;
so many gentle thoughts and deeds
circling us round,
that in the darkest spot of earth
some love is found. " *

But our summer in Minnesota was amazingly wonderful and busy. We are all left with warm memories of relatives and friends, kept simmering with the plans of future visits and final return to our farm. Our Ben now lives in Texas, where he works for College Plus! <http://www.collegeplus.org/whoweare> Robyn now lives in Virginia with her new husband, Greg Troyer. They will be visiting us again this winter here. (...!)

"I thank Thee more that all our joy
is touched with pain,
that shadows fall on brightest hours
that thorns remain,

So that earth's bliss may be our guide
and not our chain."

* (Adelaide Anne Proctor. 1858 – "My God, I thank Thee" vs.1,2,3)

So we have 7 of the children here with us currently making as much noise as 9 ever did. I am feeling quite uninspired as I write this, coughing and contemplating starting dinner. I do hope to be back to normal by next month's letter since I'm ordinarily quite normal and I miss myself.

The Logic-Free Zone:

~There is quite a bit of new construction in this village. It's mostly stuff that was started when we left, but is still being worked on. Some things are close to done, some are completed, and others are in the usual "eternal construction" state. But those things that are done and almost done will not be used for some time. You see, there isn't enough electricity to go around. Not enough on the grid. ...I wonder when this should have been thought through...

~The roads actually *did* get paved this summer while we were in MN. But there is a swath of sand from the narrow pavement to each wall (all yards are walled). It is apparently up to the dweller of each home to in some way pave that swath of sand along the length of their wall. This causes the "sidewalk" to be very varied along any given road, and much more so in the case of those who don't plan on the expense of paving their little bit of walk (such as ourselves).

~

We are excitedly looking forward to my sister and brother in law's visit – with 9 of their 14 children, in 6 ½ weeks! I've got the activity calendar filled in and Mark gets some days off then for "Eid" (which is the second of two of these Islamic holidays, and the more interesting of the 2 for reasons I'll get back to you on at that time). I mention this to say that those who want to come visit us in the Middle East, are most welcome!

The lengthy bout this coastal region has had with Red Tide is officially over now, so I hope to be able to report about an improved condition of beaches and coral reefs at some point. Fishing (for fun) was nonexistent during that time so it will be nice for our fisherpeople to be able to go fishing again. The things you catch and see in this ocean can be so weird. Oh, that reminds me of some recipes in the local newspaper the other day:

- Warm Octopus Salad (I can't even enjoy these things cold!)
- Steamed Whole Baby Red Snapper (yes I know Red Snapper is good, but it's not so easy to eat when it's looking up at you so pitifully)
- Trio of Scallops (absolutely not enough for me)
- Cuttlefish with Ink (er...)

I guess my gastronomic journeys will only take me so far.

And that's the news from our end of the earth. May God Bless each of you as you serve Him where you are.

Much Love and Fond Affection,

~Pam.

www.mjohnsonfamily.com/gulfnews

The Bride, Robyn.



Bridal Party (photo by Arioso Studio)



An early Janesville Morning



One of many fishing mornings



Stephen and Lilly in the Neem Tree (back in Fujairah)



The Old windmill housing (and more importantly, the ivy is now to the top)

