

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

Since there were no severe wind/sandstorms this early spring, the yard and garden have remained largely intact this year, so I didn't feel my usual anxiety about whether it would all recover. I suppose there is the usual seasonal growth lag, which perhaps explains the lack of magnolia flowers for some time now. This tree is finally sprouting new leaves and flower clusters but we aren't sure if its recovery is due to extra fertilizer and water lately or just slightly longer days and the return of extreme heat/humidity. Maybe we're over thinking it because it seems this particular April feels much later in the year and closer to summer than previous Aprils spent here – and we really didn't want to miss one more profusion of magnolia flowers before leaving it. The front yard has finally become a truly green and flower colored delight. With banana trees, lemon trees, papaya plants and date palms, someone will have only to procure a camel to have everything they could need :-).

The Papayas have never born fruit, but they do have flowers. I don't much care that we won't be able to eat any fruit from them before we leave since the flower part is my favorite (the fruit seeming to me to be intolerable even once dissected and its repulsive egg-like seeds removed). Give me a regular apple any day. But the fun is in the growing and it will be fun to return to the growing zone I am most familiar with. And our hearts say that our children will grow best there as well.

Bushra came to see me recently from Abu Dhabi. She knows I love her cooking (she is from Iraq) and so she cooks for us whenever she comes.

As usual it was well worth overeating. I do believe we would still be repelling vampires though (if there were such things) with all the garlic that was in the yogurt. She and I had another wonderful visit.

We made a few trips back to a couple of different Wadis in the last few weeks. A Wadi is sort of a valley that functions as a watercourse for rain or in some cases, an oasis or natural spring. So it's like a riverbed that is usually dry and rocky, but can fill very quickly during rains. Anyway, the first trip was to help clean up trash left by careless visitors. The second trip was a tour of a local farm (farms tend to be near these water sources), which was fascinating as we got to visit with these local farmers and get a feel for their philosophy, which differs greatly from the younger/city generation. These dear people fed us a morning meal before showing us around, and then once the tours were over, they wouldn't let us leave until we had eaten again.

The Logic-Free Zone report:

~There is a flight school in this town. They provide you with a certificate upon completion, which upon further investigation, is not valid in any other country but here.

~A recent "news" article warned that any cars that do not have up to date registrations will be confiscated...

A few more Australian words to add to your lexicon:

-“Whinge”(hard “g”sound, as in “Gerald”) means to complain peevishly, but it differs from “Whine” in that it usually would lack the high pitched sound we associate with whining.

-“Zebra crossing” (the ě is short) is what the Aussies and Brits call what “we” call a crosswalk.

It's been a long time since my last "Appliance Report" so here goes :

*The dishwasher (that is not in the actual kitchen) doesn't work any longer - and it's not from overuse. Since it isn't in the kitchen and the instructions are in about 6 different languages, none english, we don't use it much so (especially at this point) we won't be doing anything about that (except donating it to one of Mark's Indian friends so they can repair it and sell it themselves).

*Another hot water heater has burst. This creates a lot of very hot water all over the floor in the room it happens.

*The air-conditioners are breaking one by one (they are older types and haven't enough capacity for the house).

For those unfamiliar with how we get these things fixed – we try to find parts (the "hardware" stores are unbelievable though) or we call the local fix-it crew, who comes with a plastic bag of used parts and borrows a screw driver or worse, one of my kitchen knives. This may explain why these "repairs" don't last.

Our oldest son, Ben, is visiting us, so we are catching up on things (as he struggles with jet lag). He has also been catching up with a few friends from here as well. Tonight he is visiting with a fellow who became a believer and was baptized, while they worked together and they have kept in touch. This is an early evening visit so he just left at 6 pm for dinner. You can tell, on the other hand, when he is visiting with a local (native) friend, because he doesn't have to leave until around 10:30 at night. Phew. It's a cultural thing – all the visiting is done late (presumably when it is cooler, though nowadays most places are now air-conditioned).

As I mentioned earlier, we feel as though it is much later in the year in the sense that our leave-taking seems eminent. And though it won't be until late June, it will be much more permanent, which must be the explanation. Either that or it just seems way hotter, about a month earlier this year. Either way, it's coming up fast in the scheme of life, and we're so looking forward to being back, for many reasons. For one thing, we inadvertently left our TinTin books in a box in our garage. ;-)

Happy 50th Anniversary Arnie and Leona, and may you have many more. We're so sad to have to miss the party, but we'll try to make up for it with years of future carpetball tournaments.

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." Psalm 61:2

Camel Saddle equipment



Offshore cruise ship at sunrise



early morning fishermen



Wadi Bashing earns its name



This month's vintage picture – lunch in the Wadi, 2007



Wadi Racer. A mildly poisonous snake



Telperion. In our yard. Lovely no?



Early meal, courtesy of some local farmers who gave us a tour



afternoon dinner on the farm (they made us stay for it. Very nice). The wadi racer was nearby (wishing it could have been more sociable)



Late sun on Dubai Hwy



Goat Head



A Very altered Suburban driven by our new friend Mohammad Ali.

