

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

A Very Happy Mother's Day to all you mothers and especially to my own. Our willingness to carry life and protect it with our own life, is death's opposition. To raise our children the best we can to love God is the best way I know, as a woman, to join in the struggle against evil. As we pour out ourselves for our families, teaching and training our children, playing and laughing with them, we are joining in a unique form of spiritual warfare. We have yielded to heaven and we join in pushing back the hand of darkness. No one but a woman, can carry this call in this way.

We are glad to have Jonathan back here with us now, but the Icelandic volcano did affect his flight by a few hours as the route had to be changed midflight. Ben's flight back to his home a couple of days later was also affected by a few hours. Not too big a deal but an extra few hours on an already 17 hour flight seems like it at the time.

Another cross-ocean internet cable was damaged so most of this past month was spent with slow bandwidth as the "internet powers" had to keep shifting to the most needy (I suppose businesses trump webkins and foxnews headlines)

Our neighbors brought us three good sized (good in this case meaning largish) fresh ocean caught tuna. We are very grateful to neighbors who bring us food now and then. I'm not anywhere near as formidable as my great grandma Sadie (stories abound), so it's never a comfortable thing for me to be washing and cooking something that is looking at me. And I certainly wasn't in the mood to be hurt by dinner (things from the ocean seem to be overly poky). But it was good in the end and I solved part of the problem by taking the head off once it was cooked.

And dare I give the "entomological report" before the last issue? You know I do. But if you were hoping for a brief study on word origins you will be sorely disappointed. If you came to this section in the hopes of hearing about bugs this is your place:

I had an argument (just a minor one) with Bushra in the grocery store over the cockroach that ran across her sandal. When I asked her why she didn't jump or scream or at least try to kick at it, she said that she was just glad it wasn't a lizard. She hates lizards with a fair amount of intensity. I will take a lizard over my foot way over a cockroach! But then I'll take a lizard over even some *people* so perhaps that isn't a very meaningful statement. I would like to report a repeated answer to prayer though: Every time Bushra has come to stay at my house the ubiquitous "house geckos" that tend to inhabit especially the guest room bathroom, kitchen and... well most places really, haven't shown themselves. It might just be they just don't so much show themselves to strangers :-D . But I digress. This is supposed to be about the bugs.

When you are in a foreign country that is warm to hotter than blazes, you will have bugs. These range from ants (which I consider to be generally benign) to cockroaches (which I consider to be the scourge of the earth). Spiders don't count so much because they are working for our good. Anyway a good, sensible, nontoxic yet high protein way to deal with these ants and weevil type of bugs, is to disguise them by adding nutmeg to your desserts and lots of herbs to your soups and sauces. This is only after I give a good fight to wrest the moving flour back from these critters. In really extreme cases, you may buy a box of cheerios only to find that there is probably no nutritional value left in the hollowed out partial "O" shapes left so it's better to throw it out. sigh.

Cockroaches are **not** in the "edible" category, and if you have ever squished a cricket only partway, you will see why. Parasites are rampant in these kinds of bugs so I do whatever I can to eradicate these pests. Well, except to use poison. I might succumb to poison though, given the right conditions. But my first and fairly effective line of defense is to chase the offender with whatever mug or glass bowl I have in immediate reach. I don't even have to wash the glassware afterward since it never makes it through the assault. I don't really mean to be reckless and wasteful, I just tend to use what I have in my hand. It's probably good we're going home soon...

And that is enough bug stories for now. I may need the rest in the course of life in the future.

The Logic-Free Zone report:

~ all problems with air-conditioners are handled by adding Freon until they "jump" (rather than figuring out why, in a supposedly closed system, one would lose any).

~a new wrinkle in the speed prevention category - a car with a radar camera (if you don't recall the fixed radar cameras, they assess your speed and take a picture of your car if you are above the limit). The radar/camera car in question was discovered by an Emirati man. Wanting to warn his people behind him, he tried to flash his lights (a common warning here). Apparently not getting the results he wanted he then pulled in front of this car-with-camera and allowed his people to all pass before carrying on. If this flies in the face of what you think to be legal, then you are catching on. But his nationality protects from many things.

There are a few children in these ranks who are trying to learn to whistle loudly with their fingers. Only a few of you know of what supreme value this is in life. The learning of this has a certain "zen" to it :-)) but they are actually getting it, so when they are "in the zone" I send them **outside** to practice :-0

I finally gave "Laban-up" an honest try. It's an almost fizzy salty fermented milk drink. I actually like it. Too bad I only discovered it now that we're leaving soon. I also realized why

sometimes I really like stuffed grape leaves, and sometimes I really don't. The mystery was cleared up at a neighborhood "engagement party" where I was complimenting the stuffed grape leave. Turns out they were stuffed /reamed out zucchini. Yeah, those are good. Not so much the grape leaves.

I have proof that these letters aren't read by even those I love :-D . But I blame myself. So if you find these have become too filled with pedantry, perhaps you would prefer to read the letters from when we first arrived. Those have much more of a "Wow! I look around and find I'm the village idiot here too." feel to them. www.mjohnsonfamily.com/gulfnews/

On to Story time here.

Again, have a Very Happy Mother's Day!

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

p.s. As of the sending of this letter we have 52 Days, 7 Hours, 17 Minutes, 19 Seconds until we depart for home

Lilly and the feral cat. These are ordinarily very wild. Lilly makes friend easily.



Another gecko (I must say, we'll miss these)



Sharp poky tunas. (yes same stuff as in the can. Only....not in a can)



Jake and the fishing truck ☺



Mark and Ben making Sushi (my only involvement is taking a few pictures)



The finished product (though it doesn't have the objectionable raw fish and roe, it does have seaweed rolled around the vinegar rice. Is this sounding good yet? (I submit that it is not)



The Vintage picture for this month. This was 2006. Not long after arriving. Lilly, Lauryl and Stephen looking out the window at the ocean (Arabian Gulf).

