

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

Our first Arabic language teacher was a very kind, Native Hindi Speaker. Now if that makes you laugh, you are getting the idea. When we came home after a few lessons, my Aunt (who speaks fluent Arabic and was visiting at the time) asked us how it went. When we told her, she laughed, in a loving auntish sort of way 😊. She said we must have someone from India as our teacher. So though we learned a lot of the basics, it was back to the drawing board for pronunciation. This dear Christian teacher man prayed so sweetly though (and I don't mean that in a condescending way at all). He prayed to "The Great God". Which, if you think about how very many, very non-great false gods are in India, this way of praying makes perfect sense from him. He was very grateful to know the One Great God. Our warfare is definitely not of flesh and blood.

A few very good Arabic teachers later, is our memorable neighbor "Ameenah" She and I have a mutual unspoken agreement that I tell her she looks beautiful today and in return I get told I am a good Arabic student. Believe me, my compliment is far far more truthful but it is a nice exchange of pleasantries.

While the children were going through their things to get rid of "anything they don't love" (as I instructed), in not too very long (certainly not long enough) I noticed a bunch of them were skating around the house in roller blades replete with knee and elbow pads and helmets. It turns out they each gave away the roller blades (etc...) they grew out of, to the next child down. Technically they got rid of some things.....but it seems we're still taking them home.

Much sorting and boxing up later, in a few days we'll put it all into a container for home. Mainly our school things, books, clothes, and special things from here. We've had a garage sale, put up flyers at the college, and will give away what is left. It seems strange to think this won't be our "home" much longer, but we are anxious to get to the farm to stay.

"Take everything you like seriously, except yourselves."
- Rudyard Kipling

You know how hard it is to get everyone happy about a family picture, especially with 11 of us in a photo. You hear the usual complaints about zits, fat, bad hair, etc... before we can agree on it. So once I stop fussing and just give in (or win), we settle on one. Darin and Shirleen did a beautiful job on Robyn and Greg's wedding photos so while this one is almost a year old, we mostly look the same. Since I failed to send out holiday greetings this year in the winter - please print it out and consider it a summer holiday photo. There aren't enough holidays in the summer anyway.

I realize that Hurricanes, Typhoons, and Cyclones can be devastating. I've even witnessed just how much so on a couple occasions. Here in the Indian Ocean, these tropical Cyclones are called, yeah, "Cyclones". They name them too only they don't sound like "Hugo, Rita, Katrina or Agatha. This current one is named "Phet". Anyway, the fallout in our particular neighborhood was very minimal. In fact it's been fun to keep checking the waves at the beach and the corniche (the beach with a sidewalk and funny sculptures). It's ordinarily pretty mild to swim in these waters, so to see 10 – 15 foot whitecaps from blocks away, and waves 5 deep rolling over on themselves was incredible. But even more

remarkable was the sound. It was definitely the sound of waves crashing on each other and the shore, only it was **non-stop** crashing. As if it's stuck on "continuous". To go and just listen and watch has been our favorite activity the past few days. ...and evidently to many others in town as well. The nearby beach was definitely the most "happening place" a few evenings ago. Much to the consternation of the local police and CDC, who were afraid someone would be washed away. ("just one more picture" I kept saying)

"No man is exempt from saying silly things; the mischief is to say them deliberately."

- Michel de Montaigne

I started this "zone" of the letter as a way of coping with what I saw as some fairly extreme and oftentimes hilarious lapses in (what I think of as) logic. I even did one once, where I admitted that the perception of logic can be very much in the eye of the beholder so I made of list of my own lapses in logic. I believe this one can safely be termed – all around logic free. In that it very well may be me, or maybe not. That said, here it is.

The last of the "Logic-Free-Zone"

*Sea food in MN – shrimp (with cocktail sauce), scallops, maybe boneless skinless fish or cleaned sunfish/crappies with no heads.

Sea food here – maybe shrimp (no cocktail sauce unless you make your own), mostly octopus, squid, cuttlefish, other odd and nameless species, spiny fish with only the guts removed – eyes are delicacies.

*During the Cyclone Phet warnings, the folks in Al Ain were warned to stay away from the coastal areas. (Al Ain is 200 km from the coast in question)

*Mark signed a community award to a place called "Future Baby Day Care Center". Perhaps once the babies are actually born they are too much trouble.

*fyi. The Mc Donald's that has been "all ready to open" with even equipment on the front step (for many months now) still shows no sign of actually...bringing the cooking equipment indoors and setting it all up.

*Statistically, a door will have a 50/50 chance of opening either towards you, or away from you. Those are the odds I face at every door. But I am willing to go on record as getting it right only about 20% of the time. Marked or not. In addition, the side of the double door that *does* open, is usually marked with "open this door". This usually causes me to open the other one. It does get more confusing yet when a picture window says "pull".

I'll be wrapping up my Bible Study the Thursday before flying home. We will by then have gone through the entire Bible, which was one of my goals. We'll also be leaving some different business cards for those we leave, to get a hold of us if they wish, or to go visit my "Coffee with Pam" site once we're gone.

"Coming home from very lonely places, all of us go a little mad:
whether from great personal success, or just an all-night drive,
we are the sole survivors of a world no one else has ever seen."
- John le Carre

This is the last issue of my ladies letters. Its purpose was well served. You kept me company through my whining and fussing and helped me see the lighter side. Since in the future I will not likely be called upon to write things, when I get full of myself again I will do what I used to and write my occasional thoughts in private word documents. This way only an occasional hacker and myself visit them. But this has been an amazing experience and I thank you for sticking with me and allowing me to unload on you each month. I'm hoping life will take on a certain pastoral quality from now on where I can live out my introvertedness in peace.

Many thanks to this fascinating country and its hospitable people. God's handiwork is evident everywhere.

Please come visit us in MN. The deal (as previously) is: Just stop in if you want to visit with us and have coffee ; conversely, give us two weeks notice if you are just coming to check out my housekeeping, etc...
☺

Much Love and Fond Affection always,

~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



My favorite sign every (superimposed upon my current favorite animal ever)



Cyclone Phet waves



Family photo 2006



Family photo Robyn and Greg's wedding Aug. 2009 (courtesy of Darin and Shirleen)



The dates are getting ripe





Kim's most excellent photo of Jon

