

A Balance of East Meets West



Can you believe it? No? That makes two of us at least. This part of the world is amazing! Imagine being in a city of 20 million people. Now imagine most of them speak a different language that uses a completely different alphabet. (written from right to left) Now continue with your imagination trip and picture a vastly different religion that dictates the life of most of those 20 million people. At least five times a day there is a call to prayer from every mosque in the city. The mosques have loudspeakers to spread the word.

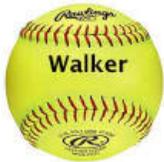
Before you start *ooing* and *awe-ing* you need to know about the influences of the West that offset the shock of the above paragraph. Many of us live in a small part of Cairo called Maadi. (pronounced MAH AH DEE) Maadi is a suburb filled with expatriates of Europe, Canada, and the States. English is widely spoken here, more than any other part of Cairo. I am sitting in a cafe' called **The Green Mill**. Next door is a European Bakery where I buy my fresh, German rye bread. Menus are in Arabic and English. Many of the Western restaurants are found here in Cairo. (TGI Fridays is right along the Nile. Applebees is on a Nile riverboat. And I am sure there is a KFC right in the middle of the desert.)

There are American, Irish, French, Canadian, Japanese, and just about any other nationality Schools around Cairo. Most of them are smaller, but they attract foreigners. Most of the expats I have met from the States are over here for government or oil business. I seem to have met more Canadians than Americans though!



Safety Here ?

I know I have friends and family that are worried about me here. After all, I am living in the Middle East! What most of the worried people DO NOT KNOW is the atmosphere in Cairo, and Egypt overall. Egypt is considered by most expats and residents as the safest country in the area. There is a large military/police presence right now due to the strained relationship with Israel at the moment. I certainly feel safer here than I ever did in Central America. Even though there are a lot of visible guns held by building sentries, there is still less barbed wire, barred windows, posted warnings, fear on the faces of tourists, and fewer verbal warnings from the local staff about where NOT to go alone.



Softball League

The last time I ever played catch was with Dad when I was in Little League. My bones can feel it! AIS has a team in the local Maadi league. We play against teams like the "Apache", who build tanks, and CAC (Cairo American College) and OMC. I still don't know what OMC stands for and I really don't care. Just picture me playing outfield or first base. Hah.

We usually play once a week, sometimes two, at the local field in Maadi. There are two fields set up as quality as any local ball field in the states. It is better than most of

them though. Why? Because the food shack is owned and operated by some Germans that cook bratwurst and sell beer!

We played yesterday. It was a special game for me because I have NEVER played first base before. I am certainly the man for it. I catch with my right hand. That is desirable for a first baseman. However, I had a more interesting game than most others on the field. During my first in-field warm-up, Graydon threw a rocket from third base. The most important thing to remember at first base is keep your foot on the base! So I stretched my legs way out and Ripppppppppppppppppp! There go my shorts. They ripped right from the knee to the crotch. I lasted for three innings, batted twice, and was taken out of the game due to uniform damage. It was a very funny time. We had the biggest group of fans that game. All women!



Thai Food!

The Taxi Top 10

10.	Know where you are going before you get in.
9.	A taxi driver will say YES anytime you ask him if he knows where something is, even though he doesn't know. Usually he doesn't know.
8.	Keep your arms and legs in the taxi at all times. You will be traveling at Mach 8.
7.	Know exactly where you are going before you get in.
6.	Don't pay the taxi driver until you get out of the car.
5.	Do not get into a taxi in front of touristy places or you will pay tourist prices.
4.	Most taxis do not have seatbelts, child seats, airbags, or anything to save you in the unlikely event of a crash.
3.	Taxis do not use their lights at night. Most Egyptians believe using the lights will run down the battery. (there must not be a word for Alternator in Arabic)
2.	Know the rates of getting to and fro in Cairo.
	and the number one thing to remember about Taxis...
1.	Do not negotiate price. Follow #2 and throw the money into the window to the driver, then walk away while he yells at you!
1. runner-up	When getting out of the taxi, watch out for cars, trucks, bicycles, donkeys, or large tourist buses. They will not swerve if you get out of the taxi and happen to be in their way!



Oh Canada! The Monthly Embassy Party

It is a good thing Ed and Judy, Graydon, Grant and Susan, Grant and Paula, and a host of other teachers from our school are Canadian. I was invited, along with all of the other American expats, to attend the end-of-the-month party at the Embassy. The Germans were there cooking brats. The place was filled to capacity with Canadians. The beer was flowing, EH. I

I brushed up on my Canadian cocktail knowledge in the cab on the way to the party. Grant Walker quizzed me on the different provinces, government positions, and general celebrity knowledge. I met a lot of people in the short time I was there. A lot of them were teachers at

other schools. We had great discussions about bilingual education in French Canada, Girl Scouts (Sue and Grant have two girls with them), where to eat, where not to eat, and the fact that 99 percent of all Canadians live right along the U.S. border!



Here are the Fluters and Foxs at the Canadian night. They kept quizzing me on the provinces! I just blamed my teachers from elementary school for not teaching me those Oh so important facts about Canada.

This picture was taken just prior to the scariest, most exciting taxi ride I have ever experienced.

Ahmed, the driver, doesn't like bad drivers. A mini-bus cut us off on the way back from the Canadian party. He took it upon himself to teach the guy in the mini-bus a lesson. We sped up, made our own lane between four other lanes going 70 miles an hour, and passed the mini-bus. Then Ahmed jammed the breaks right in front of the bus a few times at random, while cussing in Arabic out the window and waving gestures.

"I wish this Taxi came with subtitles!" - Grant Walker, during the death ride.



My kids keep asking me what my favorite Egyptian food is. I cannot answer them. I have been eating mostly Thai food. Not only is there a great Thai restaurant that DELIVERS (all of the restaurants in Cairo deliver-as well as grocery stores) but Nu Nu has come to visit us several times. Nu Nu is from Bangkok but she is a cabin crew member for Emirates Airlines in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. She is a great cook! There is always an abundance of Thai dishes when she leaves. (She also claims to have a lot of single friends in Dubai.