

St. Sometimes

WEBSITES BUILDING UP!

I have a lot of time on my hands. Even though the teaching day is 7am to 5pm daily, including the bus time to and from school, there is a lot of time to fill. I cannot help it. "A rolling stone gathers no moss" - a quote from Tom Cruise in *A Few Good Men*. Step into my shoes for a while.

Websites are a real lesson in organization and detail. Every time I sit down to update THIS site I realize my other two sites require something first. You see, this is a personal site. Only you, my readers, are waiting for an update. To tell the truth, you can wait. Selfishly, this site is for me. It is a record of my life overseas. My memories are magically set into history. This is not meant to be rude. I love the fact I have a small following of family and friends. Your interest is flattering. Keep reading and I will keep writing.

One of my friends from my years in Honduras, Brynn Freidrich, opened up a small business from her basement. She is a lot like my sister-in-law, Erin Le Moine. Both of them cannot sit still. Anyway, Brynn asked me to build a website to support her business. I couldn't decline such a challenge. The E-store is a way for customers to buy her products online. A site like that takes a lot of learning. Take a look if you like. She is based out of a small town in Iowa. I haven't tried any of her products, but she is a stickler on quality. Visit her at [CocoaMama](#)

When I first accepted the position here at AISE, I was at a loss of information. The school website was dry and uninformative! There was virtually no way to find out about the school. Right around Christmas, I approached Doug Osbo, our current Superintendent, and offered to do a discussion website for the newly hired teachers. The one I managed for my previous school had worked like a charm. A lot of new teachers have been informed for the last two years, prior to moving to Honduras. Doug liked the idea. And voila, there is a website set up for the new teachers here. The site has a few pictures, a modified discussion, and lots of information about Egypt and our school. Cross out some more of my time.

I get no payment or reward for these two sites. I don't want any. The Cocoamama website is rich in educational rewards and helps out a friend. The school website is rewarding for the school and the incoming teachers. When a new teacher arrives with a smile on their face and meets me for the first time, it is all the thanks I need. Some arrive and upon meeting me for the first time say: "Hey, you're the website guy. Thank you." Enough said. The work is worth it.

Choir? Keeping Busy! It has been said time and time again, you have to get involved in things outside of your job. No doubt about it. There is a community choir that meets once a week and puts on a big concert twice a year. How perfect. I had to join once I found out the choir was putting on Carmina Burana.

The years have passed by quietly for me. Quietly only in the sense of music. My childhood was filled with clarinet, sax, swing choir, concerts, plays, playing in bands, and winning music competitions. Real life took over and taking an active part in music faded

away.

A few weeks ago, I was at the cash machine in Maadi talking on my cell phone. I was getting cash on the way to the British Pub in the city and I didn't know how to get there. When I got off the phone, a guy with a British accent looked at me and told me not to miss the Irish night, that it was going to be a big party. We started some small talk while we waited for some lady to argue with the cash machine about her account total (yes, she was arguing with and hitting the machine).

As it turns out, I asked the guy about when he was heading to the pub. He smiled and said "Five minutes ago. We have to do a sound check!" I offered to pay for half the taxi fare if he would let me tag along. Fifteen minutes later, I was in a cab with four band members of the Irish band and all of their guitars. I sat between an Irish school teacher and the Brit. It turns out that the Brit was Gary, who happens to be the director of the community choir. (Did you think I had a fever and forgot my topic?)

One Tuesday after school, I took one of our school buses to Heliopolis (Northern Cairo) with a few other teachers. Kristen and Natalie both sing in the choir. They offered to cook dinner before choir. We sat around their apartment with Vera, a veteran teacher of over 30 years, and talked about life at AISE. Teachers tend to talk a lot about work, even when we aren't working. After a vegetarian pasta and playing with Natalie's two Siamese cats, we headed to choir practice.

Have you ever sung in Latin? I know Jeff and Lynn have. I haven't. I just sat there in the bass section and plowed my way through the first half. It felt great! Like riding a bike. The notes started to come out and blend with the other bass voices.

This choir is a lot of fun because the pressure isn't there. The range of music knowledge is unique for a choir that sings such difficult music. The old Arab that sat on my right (I have forgotten his name) doesn't know how to read music. He is not alone. The two older gentlemen to my left were helping me with the Latin. Both had had Latin back in Catholic circle. At the break, we chatted it up a bit. One of the guys is from Michigan and has been here with an oil company for 40 years! The choir is his chance to get away from work.



Valentines at AISE

So what about Valentines? They actually celebrate it in Cairo? Is it the same in the states? No, there are a few differences. The Day of Hearts is an import for this country. The average

Arab on the streets could care less. Stores don't stock up candy. The mainline residents do not go all out at the local flower shops. The flower shops don't hire a special staff to fill the rose orders.

Valentines Day has made snuck in over the years. Some of the stores carry balloons and candy in hopes of snagging some expat sales. The local TV stations throw up a few hearts. But all in all, the only pink, white, and red were found at school. Generally, American international schools honor the American holidays as well as the local holidays. My kids had a day out of uniform. The high school student council sold flowers, balloons, and candy. I even had my class make some Valentine cards for their favorite teachers. That was it. I showed some spirit, but I'm not a fan!

Want to read more? I was extra winded and composed some more random thoughts.



Zahra's B-Day at Fridays

Yep. You can sit in TGI Fridays and look out over the Nile. This particular event was for Zahra's birthday dinner. The chain restaurant is identical to those in the states. Trust me. I used to work for Fridays way back when. The wait staff even sang an annoying birthday chant. How absurd.

MEMORY TIME: I never liked interrupting the other tables by chanting for a birthday. Back

in Ohio, when I waited tables for Fridays, a friend of mine and I would take the helium balloons out to our birthday tables. After a few inhalations, the two of us would proceed to sing two part harmony with helium voices. Many times it resulted in standing ovations and generous tips. We were called into the manager office one night and reprimanded for our birthday spiel. According to the assistant manager-nazi, helium is considered to be a drug and we were indulging.!!! *#*&\$#\$*U*#*&#&\$&! What a crock!)

Fridays is Fridays, even if it IS by the Nile. Zahra had a fun birthday. We all had fun.



A Grand Field Trip!

Lyn the Egyptologist

The sixth-grade class takes an annual field trip to see the Valley of the Kings down the Nile in Luxor. Like any field trip, there are kids staying behind. I was asked to be the teacher that stayed behind this year. It was a pleasure. I didn't want any part of an

overnight trip involving 60 kids, airplanes, hotels, and the pains associated with all of it. Instead, I got to see the pyramids from the view of an Egyptologist.

Lyn is a friend of mine that is taking Egyptology courses at AUC (American University of Cairo). She is a former sixth-grade teacher of AISE. She offered to be the tour guide through the different pyramids. What a gem to have along.

Only twelve kids stayed behind from the big field trip to Luxor. That made a nice, manageable group for Lyn and myself. I learned so much from Lyn. Over two days we went to three pyramid spots: Dashur, Sakara, and Giza.

Sakara is a small town about an hour south of Cairo. It is the site of the only preserved step pyramid in Egypt. Built out of limestone, the Pyramid sits away from most of the tourist buses for a quiet tour. Lyn led us through the site while explaining the details you might find hidden in Egyptologist books. She explained how the pyramid was built and added on to later because the Pharaoh wasn't content with the size. She pointed out the first circular wall successfully built by the Egyptian architects. The kids were overloaded, while I was left for want of more details.

About 20 minutes from Sakara is Dashur. Dashur is famous for its Red pyramid. Have you ever been inside of a real pyramid? I hadn't. According to Lyn, all pyramids have an entrance that faces North. The entrance to the tomb. You climb the steps to the entrance, which is a crawl space leading downward, underneath tons of earthen cubes. What an experience. It wasn't easy for a man of my height, but it was a worthwhile effort. Lyn waited outside while I crawled down to the center of the structure with 10 scared students. One or two had a real attack of claustrophobia once we got to the center. Imagine crouching down and shuffling downward into a central room with a twenty foot beveled ceiling. It was truly amazing. My kids were laughing because a few tourists were meditating near the sarcophagus. I had to chuckle a bit at the westerners too. What a morbid place to think about life!



Dijana's Dance Party

The smallest BIG DANCE PARTY in all of Egypt.

What do we do for fun? Dance and party. Dijana is a high school teacher at AISE with a passion for dancing the night away. Someone broke out the disco ball, brought over some shisha pipes, and everyone brought over bottles of whatever. The fridge was packed, the music blared from the stereo, and bodies started to move to the disco/house beat. Thanks for the party Dijana. What a way to break in the apartment!

Shelby's Picture Party

One of the best theme party's so far. Shelby invited the staff over to Trevor's apartment for a picture contest. The winners for several categories were placed in the hallway for full viewing. I didn't enter any pictures. I would have been outdone by the competition.

