

**Special points of interest:**

- Phone time is free but internet is extremely expensive
- The average highway speed here is 130Km/h which translates to 80mi/h
- It is still hard to believe the currency here is 1KD= 3.5 US
- Some parents actually take their kids out of school because of the solar eclipse. What an excuse!
- Gas is cheaper than water!

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## Americans are *TAKING OVER THE WORLD!*



You got it. We are taking over. It is time the world bowed down to Greg a.k.a. “Napoleon”. Yeh right! Like that would happen. If it weren’t for Kathleen, I would have experienced world domination around 4:30am on a Thursday night.

I have finally found something to

do on the weekends in Kuwait, more social than reading, writing this journal, and moping around my apartment. There is a small group of friends led by Khaled and his wife Reina. (forgive any misspellings of their names) This small group gets together at the Marina Mall every weekend for a leisurely lunch or at some res-

taurant for dinner. The last two weekends have been Thursday Night dinner and games. Dinner usually starts around 9 or 10pm and lasts until about midnight. Then the game begins. Six of us play Risk and the others have long discussions in the family room while they watch a movie.

These game nights usually end during the wee hours of the morning. Mario and Kathleen have a couch and pillows set aside for just such occasions. Thursday night is like Saturday night in the West. We can sleep in on Friday (the Muslim holy day).

What a great group of people. These Kuwaitis have shown Mario, Kathleen, and I the utmost respect and friendship. It is a welcome change from the “closed” houses of the Kuwaitis I have been in contact with so far. Shukran ya Khalid.

## Teaching is What I Do!

I still love my job like always. There is nothing I would rather do. My students have proven to be much more respectful and willing to learn this year. We have good relationships all around. It just remains a challenge to individualize their learning. That is the key frustration and art form of this position.

I have introduced blogging and powerpoint to each of

my classes this year. What a challenge for them. The novelty of using the computers in the library has long washed thin. Now the students are adding a lot more to their blogs and presentations using PowerPoint. We are lucky to use the library. Small classes can easily



Helping Omar with his online assignment.

move in and out, using the nine machines in the library. I am proud of them all.

### Water Trucks Everywhere!

I know I keep harping on this subject, but imagine the noise in a New York apartment. I mean one of those downtown ones. Instead of the subway sounds that come once every fifteen minutes, imagine straight through the night and into the day.

The problem is money. The companies that built the apartments figured it would cost too much to pipe water to the buildings. They figured it would be cheaper to pay an army of drivers to pump water from trucks into the tanks on top of the buildings. This may have worked

for an average building. But, the area I live in is the low cost housing. The petroleum companies, security companies, and just about every other company that uses import labor houses their workers in Mahbula. There

are 4-5 workers for every room of every apartment. That is a lot of water for showers and toilets! I am the only one in my apartment and I feel very fortunate. Just imagine 6 buildings,

with 6 floors, 10 apartments on each floor, 6 workers in each apartment, and only three small tanks on each rooftop. That means water trucks pumping water into those tanks 24/7. Help!



Two trucks going for refills—again.



24/7 this water truck fills up the little water tanks on top of this apartment complex.

### If You Sneeze...Nothing Happens!

“God Bless You!” “Gesundheit” and more. Westerners are accustomed to the ritual of the sneeze. Up until today, I thought the Arab world just got sick of the ritual and decided not to join into the world consortium of sneeze etiquette.

I keep thinking of the scene in the movie *Dogma*. Matt Damon plays an Angel. In this scene, he sneezes but no one says any-

thing. He ends up killing a whole room of people. The only one is an innocent. The scene ends when he just about shoots the so-called innocent woman because she was one of those in the room that did not bless him when he sneezed.

Enough. You get the picture. Anyway, the Arabs DO have a sneeze etiquette. It starts with the SNEEZER gracing Allah, and

someone as a witness comes back with a reply. I have never witnessed this ceremony, so I don't truly believe it happens. My assistant and a student spent five minutes explaining the whole thing to me. That's it. But if you ask me, you will most likely hear silence when sneezing around Arabs. I agree with Seinfeld. Why bless someone for sneezing anyway. Instead we should say “You're so0000 good looking!”

### The Idiot on the Motorcycle

Mario and I are driving over to Khaled's house for a bit of dinner and I look in the rearview mirror of the loaner car. There is a black motorcycle in the middle lane cruising at top speed... on it's back wheel. The idiot thinks he is Evil Knieval!

The bike goes flying by us in the center lane and just about clips the driver's side of the rear

bumper. I mean inches. And this guy is riding his bike about 70 miles/hr.

The guy scared himself silly. He barely pulled to the left of the car before he dropped his front wheel. The driver of the car would have never known what hit them if that bike had collided. The biker then almost ran into another car in front of him

while looking down to see if he had snagged the bumper of the other car.

Mario and I just couldn't believe it. We were both surprised the biker hadn't died right there!

This was not an isolated incident. It happens every night while driving along the cornice. But, this was truly amazing.

“I use the hose.  
Don't you use it?  
Come on Greg!  
Everybody uses  
the hose. What  
do you do, carry  
paper  
everywhere?”

-Mario referring  
to the butthose in  
Kuwaiti



### No Escaping the West - Good, Bad, or a Little of Both?

I am sitting in a Starbucks with a venti coffee and my computer linked to a wireless network. This Starbucks is one of the many found in the Middle East.

Did you know there is a large gas station on the highway to Iraq that boasts a Burger King? It is the only thing besides sheep and Armed Forces for quite some time along that highway. Craig and Sandy saw it on their little trek celebrating the rental car they got.

You may remember me telling you about the Pizza Hut/ KFC that greets the tourists when they finish touring the Giza Pyramids? No? Well there is.

I am no longer amazed by any Western fast food or retail shops. There is no lack in Kuwait (Q8). It is a mixed blessing. After a year in Cairo, I was ready to make a deal with the devil and trade my soul for one hour in a Target, Walmart, or Menards. It's not nearly that bad in Q8. We don't have those three biggies

but we do have the following:

Starbucks, Virgin Records, Hardees, McDonalds, Baskin Robbins, KFC, Pizza Hut, Timberland, Athletes Foot, Popeyes, TGI's, Ruby Tuesdays, Applebees, Harley Davidson, Sunglasses Hut, Fed Ex, Kinkos(only1), Birkenstock, IKEA, Boss, Century21, Ethan Allen, Hertz, Hilton, Fuddruckers, Subway, Hush Puppy, Sears, Wendy's, Xerox, Radisson, Hyatt, Chili's, BK, Florsheim, Cinnabon, 3M, Evinrude, and every Expensive Car known.

**“Why should I go to work? I will go when I want to go.”**

**-Nasser the modern-day, Kuwaiti Kramer**

### Driving Changes a Man!

It is amazing to have friends in the car business! My friend Roberto took me aside one day and said “Greg, you don't look happy. You need to get some wheels so you have some freedom.” Roberto takes makes some phone calls and takes me down to the Peugeot dealer for a rental car. I had all my paperwork but my credit card (which I never use here). It would just have to wait.

Later that evening, I was sitting with my friends Khalid, Alah, Mario, and Nasser. Khalid's father happens to own Suzuki here in Kuwait. I didn't know! But he told me to forget everything about the rental. He would set me up. I told him I don't like to ask for favors. His reply was “This is no favor. You are paying for it!”

But I see it as a great favor. It turns out to be much more of a vehicle than I could normally afford to rent, or even own. Khalid made it so easy. All I did

was go to the dealership and sign a few papers. In five minutes I was driving away in a loaner until the new Suzuki came in for me. I am still stunned. It was like I was borrowing dad's car for the weekend.

The first major change is getting to school early again. I am one of the first there. There is very little traffic in the early morning because Kuwaitis hate to wake up. I can usually get to school in 15 minutes if I am going about 140. Not only that, but I can stay late or leave right with the bell. It is now up to me. Freedom. No more waiting for the bus and no more fights with other teachers on the bus.

Sidebar—The last time I was on the bus I had to witness a very obnoxious, fat, rude woman (not a teacher mind you, but an anonymous administrator) verbally attack and embarrass four other teachers. Everyone was too stunned to say anything. I ended

up getting into a spat with her in defense of the other teachers she had beaten down! Unbelievable that she could outwardly attack multiple other people on the way to school. The worst part of the scenario is that this evil person is in a leadership position.

Anyway, the car has changed my mobility. Now I can move about as I please and save some money in the meantime. It is difficult to describe just how much I have paid in Taxi fees over the past six months.



**A Monthly Newsletter from  
the life of Greg LeMoine**

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I took this for my brother Jeff and his family of women. Their household is driven by the fruits (pun intended) of Jeff's Labor at General Mills Co. Yes, Jeff. We have some of your products here. I have to pay the equivalent of \$7.00 for each of these boxes. Unfortunately, since I don't make THAT much edible income, I treat myself to these boxes only once a month. My regular fare is Corn Flakes from different local brand names. I think Corn Flakes are a world staple food. That and Coke.

### *Heading off to Iraq!*

Having a vehicle opens up new horizons. I just cannot sit here in Kuwait without making a few road trips. So I put Mario in the copilot seat, filled up the tank, and headed for Iraq.

It just isn't too often that a civilian can say that he has been close to a war zone. I have been cooped up in this city for so long just about anywhere sounds like a picnic.

No, I don't mean to make light of the war. Rather, I am living here in its shadow and I have such limited movements that I felt the need to at least explore what there is around me.

Unlike so many of our troops that are based in Kuwait, Mario and I were able to turn

the car around at the border and head home.



A camel on the way to Iraq.

We got out of the car long enough to sit on a crapper (right) and I hung my head out the window long enough to interview the camel (above shot).

You would not believe the vast stretches of desert. The Kuwaitis come out into their desert with tents, water trucks, full bars, dance floors, armies

of servants, rugs, generators, and even the kitchen sink. That is their weekend. I guess they just pick a spot in the desert, invite all their friends, and call it their own little oasis.

Whatever happens out here in the desert, it is definitely unnerving. I admire our troops out here that are committing to this heat and sand. It isn't even hot yet and I could feel that hot, desolate feeling one gets in the desert.

I have now been to the border. So be it. That is as close to war as I ever plan to be.



On the way to Iraq, Mario and I pulled off the road into the desert. What did we find? -Lizards, tents, Camels, and a crapper here. The Kuwaitis dig a hole, get a crapper, and buy a few bags of lime. Ta daa.