

April 2006

A Monthly Newsletter from the life of Greg LeMoine

Volume 55

Special points of interest:

- MBO - the call sign for a Black Moving Object
- There is a long bridge from Saudi to Bahrain-long enough for a Saudi to question being a Muslim
- The BD- 1 Bahraini Dinar equals 2.4 US Dollars!
- The most popular restaurant in Q8 is McDonalds!
- Gas is still cheaper than water!

Inside this issue:

Bahrain Trip	1
David Wools	2
Time to Focus	2
Cell Phones and more, while Driving	2
The Grand Mosque in Kuwait	3
Gen Mills Product Watch, for Jeff	5
The Nasser and Nasserisms	6

Hanging out with a Smuggler?



While most countries have customs looking out for drugs, bombs, international terrorists, and anything sharp that could be used to hold a captain hostage, Kuwait spends its resources trying to stop pork terrorism! Yes, it is illegal to import or try to bring in PORK products or alcohol. It's a good thing that Mario and I don't smuggle ille-

gal substances into the country. We could be fined, locked up, or murdered and buried in the desert without anyone ever knowing it.

So, Mario and I just picked up the bacon and took pictures. Mario did NOT put any of this into his suitcase. That would have been illegal, and he is NOT

a pork smuggler. Of course, if he WERE to smuggle it, he would probably just put it in his carryon luggage or wrap it around his waste before we got to the airport.

I wonder how many people actually DO smuggle in bacon. Boy, a bacon lettuce and tomato sandwich would taste good right about now. But that is against the rules and beliefs of Islam.

So why is it that we saw Muslims at the Bahrain bars slamming down beers and ordering stiff drinks? Hah. I bet that woman just forgot her head covering in her hotel room. There is no way she would have taken it off in Bahrain as opposed to wearing it in Kuwait. Maybe she just needed a vacation from Islam. Who knows? I hear Bahrain is full of Saudis on vacation from Islam! As soon as they get over that bridge...Party it UP!

Bahrain is NOT all that!

Kathleen planned a trip to Cairo so Mario and I decided to take a short vacation in Bahrain. Why? Mario is happy enough to see the pyramids on the discovery channel and I have been to the pyramids.

It was a cheap ticket (\$300 3days, 2nights, air) and they have alcohol. We hadn't had a drink since Christmas in Thailand. But, even a taxi ride will tell you Bahrain is

not all that. There is a special price for Americans and a regular price for Arabs. The city is small but spread out! It is clean but disorganized. What is it with this little country? Oh well. Just another country stamp in the passport. We didn't do much besides sit in the country western bar, drink Budlight, and eat some chicken nachos.

The adventure was a welcome distraction from Ku-



The Bahraini Airport- our shuttle never made it to pick us up.

wait, even though we didn't do very much.

Bahrain seems to be a little cleaner than Q8. Whatever!

Meet David Woolls

David Woolls is an investor friend of mine. His business is offshore accounts for International teachers, insurance packages for schools, and a whole slue of other financial topics. I first met David when he invited a bunch of teachers to his house in Cairo. All of my friends had set up retirement accounts with him, so I decided to go over and eat all of his food.

David is one hell of a guy! He has joked about me writing his life story. And what a story it is! The man has done everything from investing to lumberjacking.

David invests a lot of time in his clients and goes to visit them (in whatever country) when he can. Not only does he touch base but he also extends his client base by networking with friends of his clients.

When David called and said he was coming to Kuwait I planned out some meetings with my friends and set up some dinners for them. Mario set David up in the hotel right across from school. He set up office and spent a week with his white driver taking him around little Kuwait. I have no problem introducing David to my friends. If they can save

some money and make a new friend in David, it is a win/win situation for all of us.

There are few people that I know that have as much energy as David Woolls. If you can get him off of his phone, he can tell you stories that knock your socks off. Ask him about felling a tree over a three lane road, the prince in Oman, or any of his many gadgets



David Woolls and I have a shisha and Turkish coffee.

Plenty of Time to Focus on Learning or Play

Q8 is one of those places that allows for a lot of personal time. Added to the fact that I don't have a girlfriend, there just isn't anything here to keep my attention. It leaves me with a lot of extra time.

I spend a lot of time with the laptop computer experimenting with software. I have learned shortcuts with Photoshop, animation tricks with Swift 3D, Microsoft Moviemaker, some HTML,

and I will soon venture into the foray of Macromedia's FlashMX, Dreamweaver, and Fireworks.

I have an ongoing discussion with Nasser about "Talent". He doesn't think I have any talents at all. I have just over a year to learn an Arabic song with my travel guitar. When I announced that I have a guitar, Nasser said I am too old to learn new things. I scoff at such a comment. It infuriates me, even though it comes

from the one person in the world that millionaires wish they could be. He does absolutely nothing during the day. (I'll feature an article on Nasser later.)

Anyway, that poses some issues. I have to learn Arabic and guitar by the end of my contract next school year. It is at that time that all of you are invited to see my premier, 2 Arabic song concert at the Astra Lounge! See you all there. (I'm sure!)

Cell Phones and now Video in Kuwaiti Cars

I dread driving in this city. It is unavoidable however. Taxis charge a premium and I need to get around! Is there no common sense in people?

The fast lanes on highways here are fast. You must be going a minimum of 120km/hr just to get into the lanes. Drivers in sports cars will appear instantly behind you blinking their lights, going 150km/hr. It's dangerous to say

the least. Fast cars will weave in and out of three lanes or cross four lanes to make an exit.

Add to that cell phones. I saw a driver go from 140km to 100km because they were having troubles dialing their cell phone. It is common practice to punch out a text message (SMS is much more common outside of the states) while merging onto the highway! Why don't they just put the damn

phones away? No wonder why there are so many traffic deaths here.

Just when it can't get any worse, the in-car monitors have made their way into the rich and famous lives of Kuwaiti kids. These idiots have LCD monitors on their dashes to watch videos while driving. I am not kidding! I thought it was idiotic when a woman put on make-up! Next?

"Sitting back to back in a restaurant, ignoring each other, and text messaging back and forth. The fine art of Kuwaiti seduction!"

-Mario referring to Nasser and the woman Nasser is interested in

Car Crashes in Kuwait?

<http://www.crazyshit.org/Crash>

**Try going to the above link. It is blocked by the conservative filters of Kuwaiti internet. It claims to be a copy of the article written in the Arab Times Newspaper describing the problem of traffic deaths in Q8. Let me know if it is a quality link.
greg.lemoine@gmail.com
Thank you. Enjoy.**

A Visit to the Grand Mosque of Kuwait



I was fortunate enough to be invited on the field trip to the Grand Mosque. What a wonderful experience, for me. Most of the kids enjoyed the mall more. Not me! Here is a lot of what I learned.

The mosque is about 45,000 square meters. Just on the inside it can hold up to 10,000 praying Muslim men and another 950 women.

The mosque is for the ruling branch of the Sunni Muslims. There are two branches: Sunni and Shia. (If you watch the international news, you will see a lot of mosques are being bombed by other Muslim terrorists.)

The fundamental difference, as I understand, comes down to politics rather than religious beliefs. The Arabic word Sunni comes from an Arabic word that means “one who follows the traditions of the Prophet”. That means any person capable of leading the faith can lead.

The Shia branch of Islam believes that only direct descendants of the Prophet can lead the members of the faith.

Only two of my eight students on the trip were Shia. But the Arabic teacher, also a Shia, told them to keep this fact to themselves while we entered

the Mosque. They had no problems getting in. Nor did I. Kuwait wants everyone to behold their greatest Mosque.

The compound is immense. It can probably contain another 10,000 in the outer courtyards.



The inside is basic, comfortable, and cavernous. What a carpet!

A mosque is built to be simple and massive so a maximum amount of people can pray together. Everything is symmetric.



No shoes inside!

The entire tour only lasted two hours but it was entirely in Arabic. They have English tours but this was set up by

our Arabic department. I listened to my assistant translate as the tour guide explained the details.

- the carpet is blue (water) and tan (land)

- the upper dome has the 99 beautiful names of

Allah inscribed around it

- There is a dome at the top to open up the way to the heavens for worshippers.

- Sunni Mosques believe it is Idolic to have pictures of the Prophet, or any pictures at all, so

the Arabic language is written in many beautiful scripts all over the mosque.

- One of the most common Koranic phrases around the doors and walls is “There is only one God and Mohamed is his Prophet”
- Only a Muslim that has properly washed their hands can hold a Koran

Overall, I had an educational experience in my first Mosque. Shia Mosques are a little different. Perhaps I will get a chance to enter one of those in the future. While certainly not my kind of faith, there is a real sense of awe and power in Islam. This mosque attests to that!

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

-Nasser the modern-day, Kuwaiti Kramer



The Dome with the 99 Names of Allah



Here I am preaching the Gospel of Buffett to a deaf crowd.

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the life of Greg LeMoine**

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Are you wondering why I take pictures of cereal overseas? My brother Jeff Knows. He is the eyes and ears of General Mills in Minnesota. So Jeff, I guess Gen Mills is not doing much business in Bahrain. I had a hankering for some Cheerios but I couldn't find any. They even had bacon here. What's with that? Oh well. Just so you know I am keeping an eye out for your products!

The Nasser

You will never meet someone like my friend Nasser! The more I get to know him the more I am amazed.

Basically, he leads the life that millionaires dream of. He doesn't work, he sleeps until the afternoon, eats free meals, stays up all night watching movies, and smokes expensive cigars. And...he gets two salaries: one from the Kuwaiti ministry and one from Khaled.

Get this! The Nasser shows up to work maybe once a month. He only stays for a half hour or so. Since he has no desk, the Nasser sits at his friend's desk long enough to have a glass of tea. Then he leaves, not to return again for another month or more.

Kahled is a high end watch retailer. The Nasser gets paid to run watches and jewelry between Kuwait and other major cities like London or Geneva. I don't know how often he does this, but he once couried a million dollars worth of merchandise for Khaled. Wow!

The Nasser lives at his parents home but he eats dinner every night at Khaled's. If he doesn't like what they are serving, he just calls ahead and asks them to prepare his favorite pasta.

All that aside, Nasser is immediately loved by all. He loves to have conversations about nuking Africa and Dan Brown's books.

One of my favorite stories about Nasser is just an ordinary day for him. He spent the entire night at a shisha bar with a few other friends. He got home around 4am,

watched TV, and went to sleep. At about 3pm he woke up and DECIDED TO TAKE A NAP.....(get this) His nap lasted for four hours. At 7:30pm he went to the mall for his latte and a cigar. Then he met us at the Astra Lounge for dinner and a smoke. I am sure he went to Khaled's for dinner after all that.

Nasserisms

"Why should I go to work? There is nothing to do. I will go when I want to go."

Stay tuned for more Nasserisms!