

# St. Some Times

## ABU DHABI WEEKEND

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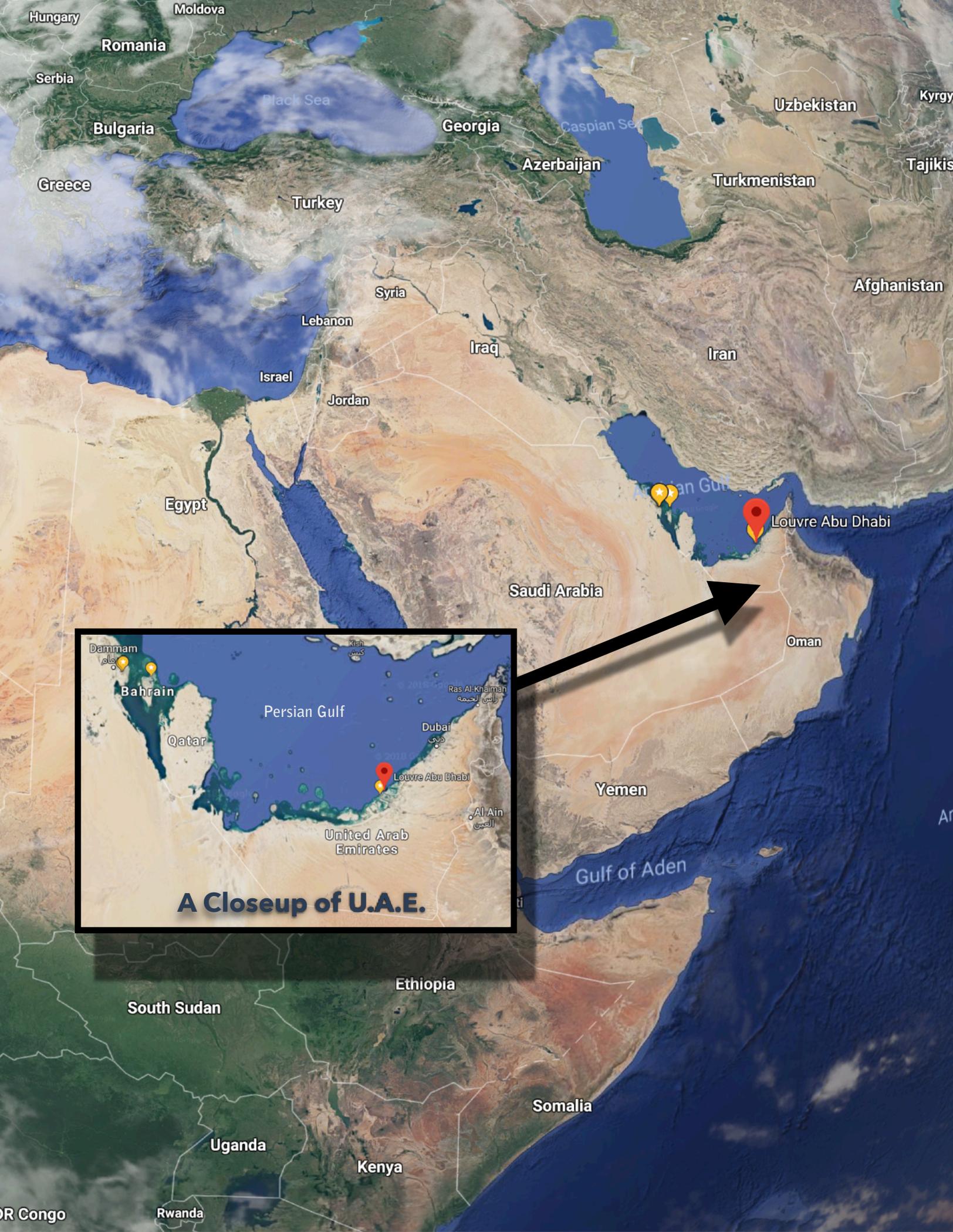
A short trip to Abu Dhabi to see the Louvre. I thought the Louvre was in Paris. Little did I know, there was another Louvre in the Middle East. Whistler, DaVinci, and more!

## SAXUAL FEELINGS

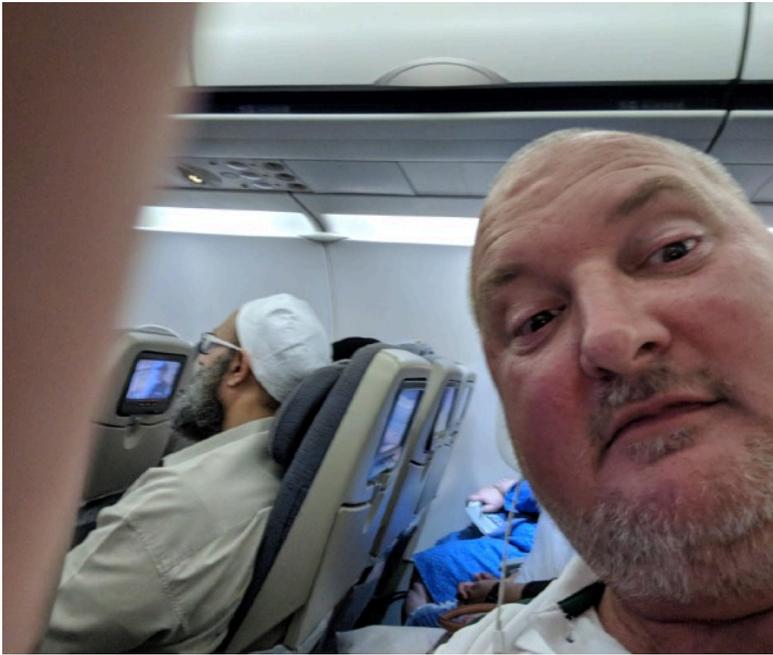
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Of the few Christmas presents I bought myself this year, a 1925 Martin alto sax was the main one. When the Big Band reconvened, there was an opening for a tenor. What did I do?





**A Closeup of U.A.E.**



## Time to Travel Again

It wasn't my idea to travel via Saudi Airlines, but we did. I was tagging along on a planned trip. Two of the Galway Girls, Betsy and Kari, had planned a trip with Sara. I just happened to be there when Kari was buying the plane tickets. Just twist my rubber arm. Add another new country to the list, as long as beer and pig are available. No offense to Islam. I love pigs and alcohol. Since I don't get to enjoy it in Kingdom, I'll take it whenever I'm out traveling.

### "How was the flight Greg?"

Short. We drove to Bahrain (1hr) without hassle. Boarding was actually on time. We only flew for 45minutes air time. All in all, we were in Abu Dhabi by 6am and checked into the Intercontinental by 7am.

### Is Abu Dhabi different than KSA?

It's greener, more organized, and offers Christian goodies like nightlife, alcohol, and pork products. The plan was to shop, eat at a Friday brunch, have a few drinks, hit some spas (for the ladies) and see the Louvre. A simple plan for the weekend.

## Friday Brunch? Explain!

### Ixnay on Sunday

Friday is the Holy Day of Islam. In most Muslim majority countries that I have been to, the hotels and restaurants have their big brunches on Fridays.

### St.Regis' Brunch

Ok, here's the skinny. Betsy was going to meet a friend for lunch. We had a large breakfast at the Interconn and agreed Betsy would meet the three of us at 2pm at the Louvre.

Sara was dying for a delicious coffee. Kari, Sara, and I decided to taxi early before meeting Betsy. We asked our Bengali driver where we should stop for coffee. The St.Regis Hotel was

on the way. Perfect. We had him drop us off at the St.Regis. However, we had to go through



a few hoops to get a simple coffee. They were in the middle of preparing for their massive Friday Brunch. We sat on a balcony and weighed our options. It was decided that we

absolutely could NOT miss out on live music and a brunch that rivaled even the Four Seasons brunch.

The three of us grabbed a table and loaded up on Champagne, Mojitos, and trips back and forth to the brunch buffet. Words fail to describe this brunch experience. I really cannot paint the picture. It was too awesome. I drew the short straw and had to taxi 15 minutes over to the Louvre and retrieve Betsy because she didn't have her phone on the trip. Upon returning, we outlasted the majority of the other patrons and abused the buffet.



## So What's With the Excitement about a Grocery Store?

### Rockin' In Kingdom?

I took the opportunity to go shopping on my own while the ladies were all at their Spa treatments.

Yes, I've owned several guitars while overseas. Roberto should still have the traveling Martin that was gifted to me back in the Cairo Airport in 2005. Then I bought a cheap crappy guitar from another teacher in Switzerland a few years ago.

This time, I bought another relatively inexpensive classical guitar. There were perhaps 30 guitars of all kinds in this Abu Dhabi store. The best one was a 12 string. Not the best choice to learn guitar on.

Instead, I chose this beauty with nylon strings, a cutaway blonde body. (Electric too!)

You just cannot - absolutely CANNOT - understand the lure of a fully stocked grocery store until you have lived overseas, or maybe rural Ohio - hah!

Do you see all that bacon? I didn't buy any. It was exciting none the less. Yes, we can buy bacon in Bahrain. Some people pull the G-Rated version of *Midnight Express* (remember that movie about smuggling drugs out of Turkey) with bacon, but I choose the proverbial road less traveled and leave the bacon behind. I simply enjoy it *in situ* when I travel.

The excitement is not simply the "haram", "verboden", illegal food and alcohol. It depends on the country and what their stores carry. The stores in Abu Dhabi are filled with Western products. It felt like I was in a Festival Foods in Green Bay (sans the top notch customer service).

The excitement was not about necessarily buying the stuff, it was the choice whether to buy it. That's enough for me. I just sat and stared at the cereal aisle. I reveled in the Swiss chocolate section. The pork section required about 10 minutes of just hanging out. Life is good in Saudi, on camp, but a grocery store full of Western choices is even better.

## \$450 Million ?

The Abu Dhabi Louvre has been in the news this year even before its opening. Why? Because this Louvre acquired the most expensive piece of art from Leonardo da Vinci for a mere \$450 million. No, the piece to the right is the current piece I had the chance to view. **La belle feronnière** is a portrait of a lady, which is also known as **Portrait of an Unknown Woman** (1490)



## Cezanne, and even a Leonardo daVinci!



**The Louvre Abu Dhabi** is said to have cost over a \$Billion (that's with a capital B). It

This is the first time in many years that I have been able to enjoy so many great artists at one time. I almost reached Art Saturation. This Louvre has a lot of paintings on loan from the original Louvre which I have never seen in person.

## Lemoine or Lemoyne - that is the question.



**Hercules and Cacus** (1718) by François Lemoyne. His name is also spelled François Le Moine (1688 - 4 June 1737)

Much to my surprise, I came upon a new artist - at least new to me. Lemoine was a Rococo artist.

## A Cloak of Secrecy

This miniature statue is from the early dawn of man. Made from the ivory of a mastodon, Ug and Oog spent hours with a primitive 3D printer designing this statuette. We were lucky to view this piece as it makes its way around the world to museums, art festivals, private parties, and kindergarten classrooms. Not featured in any Robert Langdon novels, this piece was a centerpiece for the Ivorists, a clandestine group of midget clerics predating Christianity. The modern Ivorist midgets cast doubt on their existence by adopting a blue skin tone. They were first uncovered by Dan Brown in 2001 in his yet-unpublished book called the *Smurf Codex*.

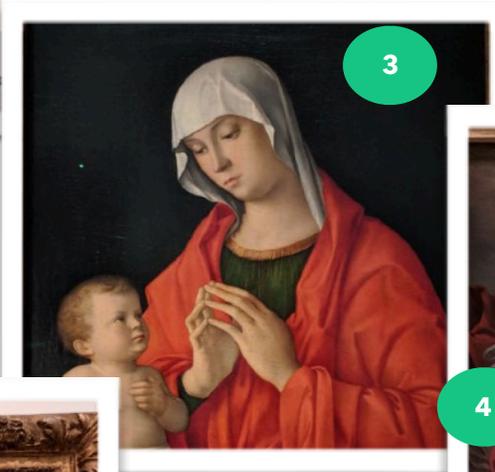
Source~ Bill (age 13)





Do you know any of the artists?  
Don't worry about this top  
modern artist.

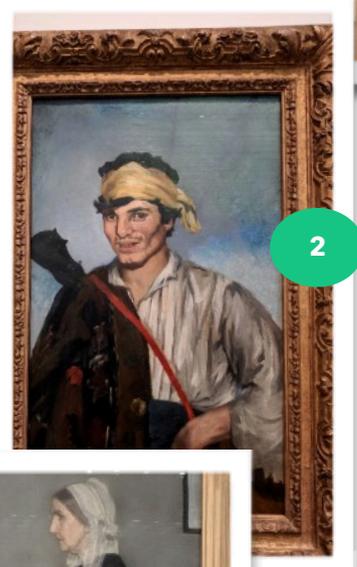
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Do you know any of the artists?  
See the back page for answers.



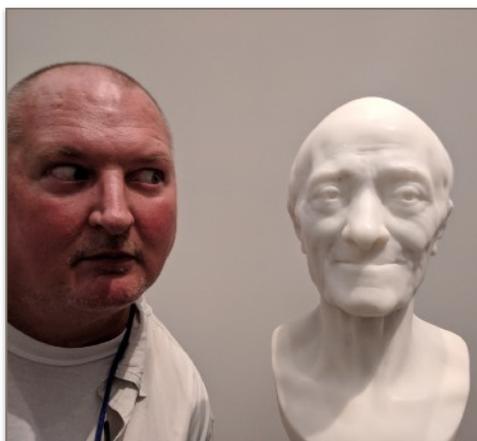
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# Fun in the Museum

Mom always complains that I am not in the pictures of my collections. Well, this was fun. I posed with a small amount of sculptures throughout the Louvre over the two hours we were there.

One glaring difference in cultures of East and West is SPACE. I was standing about a foot away from a small Chinese figurine. A man holding a child and wandering around stood directly in front of me, between me and the sculpture.

The museum had no problem with cameras or cell phones, but the docents would almost attack you if you use a flash. That's fine by me. At least I could take pictures. Besides, a flash fades artwork and annoys other patrons.



## The Bathroom Incident

I had to go to the bathroom really bad. Just before we entered the museum, inside the ticket entry, there was a sign with arrows pointing down. I went through an unmarked stainless steel door, descended the stairs surrounded by sterile white walls and exited into an unmarked hallway. There were perhaps five people sitting behind a long desk. Each one of them was head down, fumbling with their cell phones - probably Facebook or some game moving fruits. I asked one of them where the WC-Liu-bathroom was. One of them looked up from his phone and pointed all the way down the hallway. Once again, no signs pointing the way. The bathroom was huge, with barren white walls. I set my phone, wallet and museum ticket in the small

singular sink and walked about four feet to the lone toilet. (At least it was a Western-styled sit down toilet rather than the stand-up version so popular in the Middle East and Eastward.) While I was taking care of business, the sink mysteriously started working. Water was pouring all over my important items!

## Two Hours is Enough

Don't forget to wander into the larger semi-outdoor area of the museum so you can see the dome. There is also a great little coffee shop with a balcony that opens onto the waterside. Go there for a coffee or expensive sandwich so you don't get art overload.



### “Little-Uns On Ice”

Brooks and Walker are determined little skaters, in between fits of tearful tantrums. However, Matt Judd comes from the school of Hard Knocks and knows the only way to get up off the ice is to get up off the ice by yourself! Matt and Stacy took turns going around the tiny half-rink with the twins while Carew joined in on a quick skating lesson.

I was the designated family photographer while the family was skating.

### Cry, Skate, Repeat

It's amazing to watch Matt and Stacy in action. Twin 3yr olds and a 5yr old. We didn't even have Crosby (the infant) along.

## Matt, what's it like having four boys?

His standard reply? “There’s always one crying!”

As planned, Matt and the family rolled up around 7am for a day trip to Bahrain. We made it over the Causeway (bridge between KSA and Bahrain) without any hassle. We were eating breakfast at Rik’s by 8:30am.

Rik’s is the only place to go for American breakfast in Bahrain (or KSA for that matter). The owner must have set up shop years ago. Fluffy pancakes, Mexican omlettes, breakfast burritos, eggs any way you want them, Texas toast, Texas French Toast, eggs benedict, steaming bottomless cups of coffee, and a whole lot more is served in a timely fashion. Rik’s rocks! There are also a few Indians selling DVD’s at the entrance if you need a new movie.

Once the monsters were fed and we couldn’t drink any more coffee, we loaded into the Suburban and headed for the ice rink/bowling alley. Actually, a mini-rink would better describe the experience. The ice wasn’t well groomed, probably because they don’t have a mini-zambonie. Who knows? I didn’t see one. But hey, we are in the middle of the desert! Beggars and choosers and all that!

The water park is indoor. It’s attached to the massive mall. It didn’t open for a while so we headed to the arcade. Big mistake. Even after Matt and Stacy paid for all three of the boys to play an array of games, we had two out of three completely sobbing. That was a deal breaker. We walked around the mall and did a wee bit of shopping, but the boys wouldn’t have any of it. Time to leave. We called it a day.

Carew and I played video games on the iPad while Matt and Stacy stopped for groceries. The twins slept in the back and all the way home. All in all, it was a great family day.

# I Have to Travel To Another Country to See a Movie

It's so true. As of now, there are no movie theaters in Kingdom. We have to travel to Bahrain. On the other hand, since the ladies and I were back in Bahrain by 8am (from our trip to Abu Dhabi), Kari and I stayed behind in Bahrain for the day. We bought our movie tickets and hung out by the Westin Hotel pool for a few drinks while we waited for the start time. It was 5 o'clock somewhere! The movie has been out for quite a while, so the theatre was empty. Too bad it wasn't playing in the OmniMax!



## The Joy of Sax

This is my brand new sax. New to me. This Martin Alto was made in 1925, bought in an online deal, and brought back to the Island by a band friend of mine, Paul, that refurbishes clarinets. When Paul passed this off in "great condition", I decided to buy it.

During the first Big Band practice after the winter holiday, I was told our sax section is changing and there was no one to play 2<sup>nd</sup> tenor. I jumped at the chance to play tenor. Now, I have a rental tenor from school and an \$850 almost one-hundred year old alto in my living



## My New Guitar!

I have owned several guitars over the last 48.8 years. This is the first one that I have ever picked out personally at a store after playing it.

Now I spend just a few minutes a day building the correct guitarist calluses with two goals: Hotel California and Individuality. The first needs no explanation. The latter is an elementary school song for my students.

I love this little low-quality guitar. Some day I might invest in a higher quality companion. For now, it's all about learning the chords and fingerings.

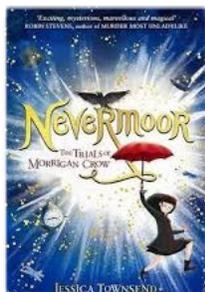


## Greg found a new Robot Kit!

I am addicted to technology. More specifically, I am addicted to educational technology. Legos keep making more robot kits for kids. I keep buying them. The most recent on the store isles is the Lego Boost robot kit. Hours of fun! Lego has built a kit that fits right between the Mindstorms and the WeDo starter kits. It is run from a mobile device app and has no paper instructions. Once you download the app, there is no longer a need for internet. Great! I already built the included robot instructions. Now it's time to invent my own.



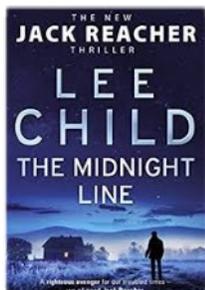
## When is the last time you got lost in a great book?



### [Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow](#)

by [Jessica Townsend](#)

One of my students started reading this and asked for me to read it out loud for our class. Pending my completion, I just might. This is a fantastic book so far. I recommend it.



### [The Midnight Line: A Jack Reacher Novel](#)

by [Lee Child](#)

This is Lee's 22<sup>nd</sup> book about Jack Reacher. Read it. Read them all. I am addicted. I've read them all ten times at least.

See you in the next St.SomeTimes issue at the end of February 2018.