

St. SomeTimes

From the Life and Covid Times of Greg Lemoine

V232 July 2020



TRYING TO ENGAGE THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF COVID

Hanging out with friends and families during the social distancing, since we are so far behind

DOMESTIC PROBLEMS ALL AT ONE TIME

Washer, Garbage Disposal, DishWasher - kaput, entomutigend, aussichtslos, frustrierend

BETTY JUST TURNED A COVID 28, OOPS, 82 YEARS OLD. TIME TO BBQ AND CELEBRATE!



82

ROSEANNA AND HER MOM

Once again, I was invited to the Haigler's desert domicile for a bountiful BBQ. This one was in honor of Betty's 82 birthday. Betty has been living here on the island with their family for health reasons for a few years now. Good thing Roseana is a nurse. She's our school nurse and a great friend.

David wakes up early on BBQ days and cooks enough food on the grill for a small army. It works out to send guests up for "seconds" and "thirds". Even then, there is enough grilled yumminess to keep the family fed for the following week.

This isn't just some ordinary BBQ though. David doesn't even make baked potatoes unless he's added one of his own original recipes. (I haven't asked, but he probably has a special marinade for hotdogs! It wouldn't surprise me.)

I know Betty liked the flowers and her birthday hat. What else can you get someone that is 82 years old during COVIDCATION? It's not like I can successfully order amazon here and I'm not a fan of leaving the island to go shopping in the overly expensive stores. That's just not my style.

So I took a page out of the book of "old" Greg and made a present for Betty. She wore it for about 10 minutes just to take pictures, blow out her candles, and serve cake. What a great sport!

Hopefully, Betty will have many more great years ahead of her. She's got a grand sense of humor.

Once again, I have the pleasure of thanking the Haiglers for making me feel welcome. I've promised David that I will always help him eat his BBQ feasts and not to share his recipes. Or was it not to cook? I'll go with that one.

“SEE YA’LL LATER”

Brent and Sarah have been here for 18 years to the day. Brent and I became close friends through Mike Olsen about 3^{1/2} years ago and Sarah has been a sub for that time. Now they are packing up and heading back to the wilds in the great state of Washington.

Imagine. They were hired on mere months after 9/11. Brent started in the elementary classroom, went on to student support, and ended up going into a company position to train adults that are re-entering the company.

Sarah was a teacher for years before coming to the island and working on and off as a sub at our school. In between subbing, she had both Alison and Isaac. We saw a lot of each other at school during my first three years because Sarah was ALWAYS subbing.

Alison grew up here and went through our elementary school. Two years ago, the family decided to keep Alison in Washington for the end of middle school. She has been living with her grandparents, only seeing her parents and brother during repat times.

Isaac went through our elementary school but he wasn't in my homeroom. We did run into each other a lot at school during his 3rd and 4th grade years, but he never graced my homeroom.

Their family has been a lot of fun to be around. Before COVIDCATION, we regularly met on Friday and Saturday mornings for long breakfasts at the hobby farm. Brent and I abused the bottomless coffee deal!

This will be another family that I keep track of in the future. We've invested a lot of time in stories,



favors, and advice over the years. We won't say goodbye. We'll just say "see you again". Great friends. Great family.

Now what am I going to do for school gossip? Even though Brent has been a company man and Sarah has subbed on and off since I've been here, whenever I hear something about a teacher, it's old news for Sarah and Brent. I guess 18 years in the same Company/School adds up. Although, I know it's mainly because Brent is such a social butterfly.

I know they are headed for a huge change back in the USA. This has been a long run overseas in one place. They got to travel a lot, experience a lot, and save a lot. Brent's famous saying is...**"It's not how much money you make, but what you do with it."**



SHADOW - THE DRY TONGUED WONDER

Man oh man, this dog was a riot. In the past four years, Shadow's tongue has NEVER been in his mouth. It's always hanging out, drying in the desert heat like a red shoe he found and brought back to his masters.

Shadow seems to be part of the glue that kept the family together. If you talk to Brent (or any family member for that matter) for more than ten minutes, the conversation will inevitably veer towards Shadow stories and laughter. He doesn't have to be present. This little critter has been living in Washington with his Grandpa and Grandma for the past six months.

Covidcation has been a chance for self improvement projects. I'm definitely not apt at the Ukulele, but it's a work in progress. A few chords. A pair of songs.



939 - HOW CAN WE SCREW UP FOR YOU?

My last working dishwasher was named Mariella. It wasn't until I arrived on this island that I have been overseas and done my own laundry or wash dishes, or make my own bed. It's been one of the greatest perks. However, like other places in the world, when you rent from the school or company you are working for, they maintain the domestic devices you rent.

The problem here? 939 is a call service with an army of contractors that will come out to repair rental devices, plumbing, air-con, and anything you didn't buy on your own or install yourself. If you call your own, more dependable repair person, or try to fix it yourself, you put yourself at risk for replacing the rentals at a high cost.

I think my current dishwasher was sold in 90's. The first repair man appeared hours early while I was at work. Now I have called a second 939 appointment. Wish me luck. It's more of a rinsing machine anyway. Perhaps the dude can actually "fix" it to wash. I might have to try hiring someone else's maid, part time.



THE BUCKETS THEORY



"When your SH*T bucket fills up and outweighs your money bucket, it's time to leave this place."

I heard this phrase for the first time last week. Depending on whom you ask, you will either get "everyone knows that one" or "what? you've never heard that?"

It makes total sense. I just hadn't heard it put that way before. We earn a handsome salary with lots of benefits, but there is a ton of SH*T we go through to live in this country and work on the island.

COVID has now come along and added to the SH*T bucket for a lot of people. Even someone like me, that has toughed out some very difficult countries and travels, has his bucket filling up quick.

For the first time in the past four years, I had a

moment of longing to be a new teacher in a new country again. It was a fleeting feeling brought on by reading a book about a teaching couple that went to teach in the Congo for the 2005-06 school year. As I read through their account of landing in Congo and experiencing their new school, I couldn't help but escape to my past similar experiences in seven different countries.

After a moment, it disappeared like Keyser Söze. This is still the best school I've worked at. Even after 7 months of being locked into this kingdom, I am up for an extended stay. If the buckets don't tip wrong, 10-13 total years. Then somewhere else.

ST.SOMETIMES



WASHER WOES - CALL 939?

I recently bought my first (ever) W/D set. So domesticated. I know, right? The set works fine, if the plumbing is working. Renting a piece of crap without any working sensors was easy. Just start and stop. But this washer has working electrical sensors and requires a bit more, like the cold water coming out of the faucet? Not just hot.

When I called 939 - the island fixit people, the plumber came out. He turned off the water main for the apartment. Then he unplugged the hoses from the wall. According to him (he probably speaks five forms of Urdu and Hindi but very little English), it was a problem with the valve on the wall. He goes out to the truck and replaces the valve. Plugs the hoses back. Starts the washer. Done!

Whatever. The washer started to fill. I was completely clueless so I tipped him and went back to work. Two days later, I decided to wash again. The washer gave me an error again. Do you know what it is like to sit with a washer for 40 minutes to see when the cycle error happens? In 120F weather? My W/D closet is outside.

I researched and downloaded the manuals. Pored over them. Even watched a few YouTube videos on washer repair. Armed with a bit of knowledge, I unplugged both hoses from the washer and checked the bivalve. Clear. Put both hose ends into the washer bin lid and turned on both the hot and cold. Hot worked fine. The cold water, even with the "new" shiny facet, produced a drip. Huh. New washer is fine. Water problem. I switched out the hoses to see if it was the hose filters. Nope. Both hoses worked on hot. Both failed on cold. I knew enough not to send myself to the hospital by opening the hot faucet without a hose, but the cold? I tried it without a hose. Drip.....drip.....drip. Now I have a bigger plumbing problem. Call 939 during work again!

ALL THAT & THE KITCHEN SINK

This apartment has been home for the past 3 years. The first day, I tried the garbage disposal. It was on for 30 seconds before blowing a circuit. Oh well. I eat out or order in. As long as the sink drains, little food ever goes down. No need for the disposal to work.

Little did anyone know COVID would force me to start cooking in my apartment. I'm still careful about what goes down the drains. My methods lasted until the last week of July. The stars aligned. Even drain cleaner wouldn't clear these drains. Time to call 939. It's a rental. I don't own the plumbing nor pay for

repairs. I just have to go through the effort of making an appointment and not waisting 5 hours waiting for the guy to show up for a specific time. Note the sarcasm.

This was a fruitful call. For once. 939 sent out a plumber. The guy actually stuck his had into the garbage disposal. That is something I have never and will never do. This was after he reset the breaker! Uggh. He pulled out several pieces of metal and with scolding eyes, explained in broken English that metal pieces should not go into a disposal. Rather than paint the story of 3 years ago, I



acted incompetent and agreed not to grind any more metal. At least it's working, for now. Give it a week. Time to stop cooking again.

AND THE COVIDCATION CONTINUES

Enough. Enough. Please let us go. This country is still locked down for travel, meaning international. There is no end in sight.

Sure, I paid a lot of money for my Christmas diving Live-a-board in Indonesia for Dec24-Dec30 but I certainly didn't buy tickets yet. I asked for time off. I have learned to plan well ahead in the past few years. The dive trip has a 2year window in case there is any COVID-related travel restriction so I plopped down the money to reserve my place. However,

I didn't get tickets yet or pay for an earlier dive trip. (I was originally signed up for back to back trips but months ago it seemed even more unlikely we might get out by December 10.) Plans A,B,C through Z.

We better be set free by at least December 10 or all of us will go absolutely crazy! It's already been since March 9, six months and counting. Ughh. Rage! Help! Please.

All I have to look forward to is December! Our island restaurants still have no seating open. Delivery or PU.



Too bad most of our signs are in Arabic. I'd love to see some stores that can make signs both funny and with correct English. This was the funniest online, so far.



SHITAMATO! CRACKED FLAT TIRE!

On top of everything else, I got a flat tire halfway between my apartment and the gas station (air). I decided walking the bike either way for 20 minutes in 120 degree heat, I'd risk ruining the rim or tire and ride it 20kpm to the gas station. C-R-A-C-K-!!! The back tire whitewall cracked completely as I crept into the dipped driveway of the station. Little guy made me park it in a nearby parking lot. Called a friend for a ride. Called my scooter guy on Eid Holiday to come and fix it in a few days. No more transport on my days off. Hope it is fixed before school starts Sunday! Real icing on the cake of my week.

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(Left to Right) Sarah, Brent, Greg, Darryl, (Ben was getting Doritos)

At the end of each school year overseas, friends and colleagues leave for different reasons. This year it was due to COVID layoffs, retirements, and other factors in play. Everyone has their story. Here on the island, small get togethers to see friends off are called “ma’salama parties”. Ma’salama means goodbye in Arabic. I’ll see Darryl and his family either in Minnie or Milwaukee. The Eakers? Well, now I have a reason to visit Washington state for the first time. overseas.

Imagine this: Darryl is wrapping up 30 years overseas. The last time he lived in Minnesota was 30 years ago. That is impressive!
Korea, Malaysia, Russia, Saudi
Hats off to you and safe travels Darryl. Over and out from Saudi. We’ll see each other again.