

THE SPECIAL JOB FAIR 2023

From the Life and Times of Greg Lemoine, International Educator Since 2001



Stats From his Fair

## Offers

A successful fair for me includes interviews, offers, networking, helping "newbies", and maybe finding the right fit.

5

## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS THAT ATTENDED

50 "ish"

## Candidates

This was unlike ANY other fair from ISS.

&lt; 200?



# Possible NEW PLACES



MOLDOVA?



TOKYO, JAPAN?



MARRAKESH, MOROCCO?



COLOMBIA



GUANGZHOU, CHINA



ARUBA (ONLINE SCHOOL)



ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN



# WASHINGTON D.C.

## A LOOK BACK ON THIS "UNUSUAL" FAIR

The following newsletter my method of sharing and remembering a most unusual event that got even more weird this time around. After six previous international job fairs, I published my book in 2022. This is my book's one year anniversary, Valentine's Day.

This was my first job fair that I did NOT accept a new position. I went through almost everything other candidates experience at one of these international educator recruiting fairs, except for the stress. Read on to see it unfold through my eyes.

Where are all of the other Candidates? Why didn't XYZ School show up? Aren't they coming?



## THE FIRST ISS DC

HOSTED BY THE GRAND HYATT HOTEL

February 9 - 12, 2023. Educator Candidates and International Schools Met for Speed Dating (with a two year commitment)

**Arrival** - The total air flight time was 16 hours. Dammam to Dubai. Dubai to Dulles in Washington D.C. Par for the course. The worst part of the trip was the arrival. Welcome home! Welcome to the U.S.A. The BBC news caught wind of the severity. Out of fifty customs agent booths, three or four were actually open. Where were all the agents? Four international flights landed back to back. All the wheel chairs took priority of one agent. I understand. Elderly and sick people travel. But the overweight people? I simply forgot how overweight and lazy people abuse the wheelchair/disabled offerings back home in the States! It was clear as I stood in line for three hours. That was a struggle.

Things got better once I got through Customs and into a cab. Destination Grand Hyatt, downtown D.C. The concierge accepted my bags. I texted Emily. She texted back. Emily happened to be in town for a presentation. She currently works for the sworn enemy of ISS, Schrole, from Australia. We met under the Porte Cochere for a hug. "Old Ebbit Grill is a 10 minute walk, Greg. Do you like oysters?"

Emily looked amazing. I was fresh off a 20+ hour trip and feeling like a sweat stained hobo. Ebbits is a classy Washington restPortiant, so I drank my Budlight bottle out of a glass while Emily and I caught up on the past seven years. We lead parallel lives, in a way - still. It was great to see her. Time flew and soon, our taxi dropped her off at her hotel and took me back to the Grand Hyatt. Who did I see in the lobby? Old boss, Mike from Venezuela. Quick hug. "If you need a character reference, I'm here for the ISS School Leadership Conference, Greg." Whoosh. He was gone.

The fairs haven't changed much. Well, maybe.

# Helpful Information...a year ago!

The one year anniversary of my book about this! Already requires a new edition!



*No Hotel Room Interviews? Plenty of room downstairs.*



*Paperless? Everything is now done on the new Whova App.*



*I know someone else that could easily lead this presentation!*

## 2023 Changes

The two largest differences in this fair from any other in my past: app and no room interviews.

The Whova social media app replaced any hanging mailboxes. No more written messages, invitations, or thank you notes. All gone. All communications are done on a simple app. Whova.

No Hotel Room Interviews? This was one of the first post-covidcation fairs. There were so few candidates and missing schools that most of the interviews took place in the conference rooms, lobby, and the round robin table room downstairs.

Participating in this job fair was like settling into a warm bath. There were a few changes, but it is still the same. Face to face is the way to get an international teaching position. There is so much riding on any decision, the fair allows a candidate to get the real "feel" for the schools. Yes, video interviews are a large piece of the face to face fairs. They will, most likely, be a vital part of any application process in the future. Understood.

There were less than 200 candidates. Those newbies I helped out (quite a few) did not feel the full "pressure" of the 600-800 candidate fairs. The hotel wasn't full of people, crushing the elevators, long sign-up lines, chairs in hallways outside of hotel rooms, interviews in the hotel rooms. This was very strange.

There was a different kind of pressure. School reps were willing to meet with almost anyone that would interview. There was just a different feeling at this fair that is difficult to describe. There was a pressure from somewhere. Not on me. On the other candidates and schools. Strange.



## MY EXPERIENCE AT THE FAIR

### Let me paint the journey. Walk with me.

Remember, my experience is just that. Mine. I went into this job fair with one big question: should I leave my current position, at one of the most sought after, top paying jobs in the world of teaching. I can accept almost any elementary homeroom position but I was looking for ed-tech, maker space, or some kind of school-wide technology director/coach/leader/team position. Not only was I already in a top position, it was secured. My four bosses knew I was looking elsewhere and had written stellar recommendations for me. My mission was work/life balance - cultural excitement for my 53.5 yr/old, he/him/his, hetero male that loves beer, women, and bacon. (not necessarily in that order)

That being said...

I arrived a full two days before the job fair actually started for candidates. I slept for most of the first day after seeing Emily and checking in. I was exhausted. The extra time allowed me to "up" my game and identify possible schools that were attending for sure and to communicate with other schools. I also had time to reach out to family and friends, since I was stateside.

The hotel was massive. I couldn't wait for the evening of the 9th, when fair officially started and the throngs of candidates would arrive. Starbucks (off the main lounge - inside) opened at 5am. The hotel breakfast Buffett opened at 7am. Mornings would start at 9am, officially for the fair. I woke late on the 8th at 6:00am instead of my intended hour earlier. No problem. I hung out in Starbucks and watched them shoo away

homeless people asking for handouts while I typed and sipped two or three Chai lattes in my favorite Yeti mug I had brought with me. It is a big change to experience the homeless situation in DC. (I currently live in a bubble.)

One of my cherished experiences is breakfast buffet - North American style. The hotel restaurant served up a fine Buffett full of bacon, eggs, and bottomless coffee. I warned my Cuban waiter that I would be a permanent fixture for the next four days of Buffett. Then I spent four straight hours keeping him company, watching the recruiters file in with their paperwork and laptops, talking in hushed tones about candidates.

I stopped by the FedEx shop to retrieve the dozen or so packages I had shipped to the hotel from Amazon. A new Lego tie, lapel mics, and thank you cards.

Time to check in. I rode the three escalators down to the depths of the hotel for the conference rooms. The last level had two escalators going down and one going up. As I rode down, I looked over at the one other person going down on the escalator parallel to me. Look. Simultaneously, the woman and I did a double take! "Greg?" "Laura?" Both of us simultaneously said "What are you doing here?" In a nutshell, I hadn't been to an ISS fair in seven years. I've been happy in Saudi. Laura is the former manager of the ISS recruiting fairs. The last fair, her team hadn't been prepared for me. Three fairs ago, her team had embarrassed me in front of 900 candidates when they screwed up presenting

## Continuing the detailed account...

my recruiting video. We have been friends ever since. She has pleasantly helped me at fairs and become an excellent, intermittent friend.

It turns out, Laura is now the manager of the ISS Leadership fairs. They are offered just before their Recruiting fairs. Laura was on her final day so we had a brief conversation and "poof" she was gone like Kaiser Soze!

I checked in with the ISS recruiting team at their table. This time they were ready with a printed name tag. Yet, there was no pamphlet. No paperwork. Just the app on my phone, which they instructed me to download. (Been there. Done that. Active on the leaderboard just trailing #1 in spot #2.)

I hoofed it around the conference area to assess where everything was set to happen. One candidate was already there as I entered the Candidate Lounge (aka the "war room"). Kim is a pleasant metro-sexual woman (can I say that and not get slapped or degraded?). I liked her immediately. My first impression was power and determination. She doesn't take any shit and she was on a mission to land her number one job! Obviously, it would happen. I'm an optimist and I was immediately rooting for her!

We sat there for almost the entire day with a handful of other candidates. Most memorable, since I'm just a simple man, was the visual arts teacher from Grand Cayman International School, beautiful Portia. Later, I would start calling her "Superstar".

At some point during that afternoon, I got an app notification that an ARUBA online school wanted to talk with me. I confirmed a time with the recruiter and met her later in

the lobby. We snuck down the escalator a floor below and sat on the couch for an hour or so.

Her pitch was wanting me for my "geek" status. ISS was sponsoring a pilot online school for 23-24. The founder of the school, sitting in front of me, was certainly not a tech savvy director. She seemed more like an above average tech accepting teacher with a lot of teaching experience. Currently, she started this year with only 3 students based out of Aruba, with a total of 14 students next year and hopes for 30-40 or 60 the following year. The catch? It's an offering for only one year. I like to keep an open mind and this was a potentially keen "fit" which would be a lot of fun to put together. However, many of the pieces were not in place. There was no curriculum. I would have the freedom to teach whatever I wanted, how I wanted. Something just didn't seem right, but I let it go for the time being. We agreed to keep in touch as the fair went along. I was missing something. Some detail was "off". It would become clear later in the presentations.

Later in the afternoon, I found a Walmart superstore on google maps. It was only about 15 blocks away, but I cabbled it over anyway. What a dump. What an experience I didn't expect.

I'm from the midwest. Walmarts in the Midwest are massive. I usually walk down the underwear aisle and load up on basic Fruit of the Loom boxers and basic white T's. This downtown store had no inventory. Just a bunch of empty shelves behind locked glass cabinets. It seemed like everything worth more than \$2.00 was locked up to avoid the five finger discounts. Strange.



## Continuing the detailed account...

My most important item was a fresh pair of loafers. I had left my old beat-up, too small to wear loafers back in Saudi. All I could find was a pair of cheap laced, black loafers three sizes too large. Into the cart. Then went looking for shoes. Even though I make good money, I didn't want to spend the time or effort going around Washington DC looking for dress clothes. I'm not a designer clothes kind of guy.

When I finally paid and left the store, I found out what it means to be in the wrong part of the city. Cabs didn't even stop in this area. Oh well. If someone held me up for my twenty dollar shoes, so be it. I began walking. How could it be 65F degrees in February? I was sweating bullets by the time I rolled back into my hotel room, peeled off my clothes, and took a long cold shower.

February 9th. Day 1 of the official fair. I woke up early. Showered. Donned my power tie and a suit coat (fresh off the dry-cleaning presses). I hung out in Starbucks with a few Chai Lattes as the baristas chased away vagrants until 7am. First to the breakfast buffet, I loaded a plate with eggs and a heap of bacon. God, I love my country. Bacon, bacon, and more bacon. I spread it out into several trips to the buffet so I didn't look like a complete heathen.

Looking around, there were a few school leaders prepping for the day. Interviews would start later in the evening but the presentations would start around 9am.

I entered the candidate lounge after checking the FedEx counter for any more packages I had sent myself from Amazon. Only a few

candidates were around. Weird. There were a few hundred name tags still on the ISS table that hadn't been claimed. Where was everyone? Waiting until the evening to join? Working on this fine Friday? Skipping the presentations?

I said hello to some of my new friends in the lounge. Kim was there. Portia whispered to me, "I got Vietnam. I just signed on." Holy moly! Portia had just pulled off a perfect job fair, like I had had when I signed on the night before the 2016 fair in Atlanta.

Portia had come from Grand Cayman with her head of school and a few other teachers. Her number one school, this time, was in Vietnam. They were at the fair. She had already video interviewed two or three times. This morning she had signed a contract! From then on, I called her the "Superstar". I mentioned to her how impressed I was with her demeanor. I explained how years back, in a job fair just like this, I had been sitting at the hotel bar going over options with a distraught woman named Daphne. It was her first fair and she was waiting and waiting to finally hear from her number one school. She had declined number two. Total mess. All of a sudden, the door burst open and this guy

Time was nigh, we headed out to the presentations. I had a list of schools and countries to investigate: BASIS schools, in China; the online school in Aruba; Columbia; Taiwan; Dominican Republic, the Carol Morgan School; Casablanca and Marrakesh, in Morocco; Singapore (not SAS, some other school); Kazakhstan; EIS, my former school in Honduras wanted me to attend and offer support); and the QSI schools. But first, I went to the introduction.

## Continuing the detailed account...

What was once a massive auditorium introduction to 900 candidates by Laura Light (manager) and a panel of School Leaders, was whittled down to a short presentation for 30 people in a small room by the recruiting fair manager and another ISS rep. Instead of 1 1/2 hours or 2, was wrapped up in one slide and one hour, including audience questions. Weird.

The rest of the morning and afternoon flew by in a blur of listening. I distinctly remember the Taiwan presentation. Some day, I HAVE to live in Taiwan. It looks quite awesome.

If you haven't been to this kind of fair, the format has been similar for years. Each school gets a presentation slot. For a half an hour, school reps can "sell" their school with a presentation. The speakers confirm what positions they are offering, what their school is like, what it's like to live in their country, daily life of their teachers, housing, travel, and much more. Most speakers leave minutes at the end to field questions from the audience of candidates and even hang out afterwards to talk with individuals or confirm interview times. It's pretty awesome. I consider this the next best thing to actually visiting the school (which is impossible for most of us candidates, since the schools are from all over the globe.)

The fact so few candidates had not shown up required the ISS team to move presentation times and rooms around. The list of "no-show" schools was also posted. We had to keep checking the WhoVa app to see what changes had been made in the updated list of presentations. I almost

missed the Aruba online school. I ducked out of the Kuwait school presentation just as it was starting and found the correct room for the online school just as she was starting. Heck, there were only two of us in the audience, the presenter (that had interviewed me already), and David (the ISS board member).

The presentation was informative and well done. She didn't provide any new information for me. We had already gone over everything in the earlier interview. When she got to the last slide and asked if either of us had any questions...I just laughed. I actually belly laughed out loud. I couldn't believe it had not dawned on me. Impossible! Crazy!

I raised my hand and asked my question, "Where am I supposed to live?" She smiled and simply said, "Greg, you can live anywhere. This is an online school. As long as you are available to students from 7-4 Eastern Standard Time (USA), you can be anywhere in the world. That's the joy of this position."

I asked again, "but WHERE am I going to live? I'm 53 1/2 years old. Do I go live with my parents in Florida? I've had school housing overseas for over 20 years. Can't the Aruba school provide housing like they do for you? That's where you are based."

That got me nowhere. There was no housing or travel offered. And it got worse! This was a position offered under ISS, based out of Pennsylvania (?). The \$40K salary would be taxed since it is in the USA, officially. Ugh. I left the room a bit miffed, but there were other schools and countries to learn about.



## And so continues the never-ending story...

I would periodically check in at the “war room” (candidate lounge) to see how the others were fairing. There were so few of us that I mingled with a range of candidates from different backgrounds. Few if any, had been overseas already, but each of them were experiencing the fair in different ways. Each have different situations and “deal breaker” situations. Here are just a few examples. I made up pseudonyms.

Bill and Mary are an exciting couple I checked in with regularly. Peter is either 60 or approaching, so he and Mary were in a bit of a pickle with most schools. (Age 60 is a cutoff point for many governments - work visa). But Peter is a techie at heart and by trade. We exchanged a few stories here and there. Mary was fun to talk to. She and Peter had been overseas back in the late 80’s and early 90’s, returned to the USA for kids, and now were looking into the possibility of returning overseas again. But the savings potentials of many schools don’t present enough incentive to leave their current positions.

“Kenny G” and Darci are a wonderful couple that were interviewing with a lot of schools. They have an infant and a “bun in the oven”, which presented a different set of “deal breakers” for them in interviews. Jane started her first job fair apprehensive with her trailing non-certified spouse. Pam, an early years/kinder teacher with experiences in Doha and London international schools was a lot of fun to commiserate with. She was interviewing a lot. Cosby was there looking

at schools, hoping to find “the right fit” for his family of six. Not only did he have four kids, but his wife was also trailing. Not an easy predicament! Everyone of us had different stories.

### **The Round Robin**

The initial sign up session was set up in the main conference room. There was a divider down the center of the room so it was arranged as two horseshoes from the entrance. Around the perimeters of the horseshoe design were tables with chairs behind them. Each table had a sign on it. Each school was set up alphabetical by country and school name respectively.

Some schools adorned their table with knick knacks or pamphlets from their school/country culture. Some just had small signs listing their openings. Other schools had large flip-chart papers posted on the wall, behind their chairs, listing the positions they wanted to fill. Some tables were simply empty because the school hadn’t bothered to show.

My strategy is to hit any school that had previously contacted me via the app and asked me to sign up for an interview. There were no lines so there were no line jumpers. (During this phase at larger events, anyone with a school invitation could jump the line and sign up immediately. Others in line were just interested in initiating a conversation and, hopefully, getting an interview. I set up 10 interviews.

The most interesting sign up was for QSI. They weren’t expecting me, so I lined up

## Speed Dating for a Two Year Contract!

between two other people in front of the table. A man was sitting at the table. A woman was talking to the people in line and handing out papers.

She got to me and introduced herself. After admitting I was in line without an invitation, she handed me a paper and instructed me: "Take a look at our list of schools and openings. If we have an open position at a school you are interested in, we'd love to talk to you. If the country you want isn't on the list or your position isn't offered, please feel free to go to our website and set up an interview for another time. We need to interview for the positions listed on the sheet. Take a moment and read through our list and I'll come back to talk with you."

"Oh. A menu. Cool..." I said with a surprised smile. "I've never interviewed with QSI before. But, while I'm here, I'll take one of your Kazakhstan, a Moldova, and throw in a Belarus grade 6 for good measure." Smile.

This totally got her rolling. She just laughed at the word "menu". Done. We agreed to meet in two hours.

Morocco, Marrakesh, Dominican Republic, another China school, and one or two others I don't even remember all filled up my "dance card".

As it happened. I saw Portia walking around. I said, "What are you doing here?" She is the superstar with a job in Vietnam already.

"I don't know. I figured I'd come walk around and talk to some other schools. But I feel so weird," she whispered.

I empathized with her. I had done the exact same thing in 2016 after signing my current contract the night before the sign up event. For this reason, I advised her to go get a beer and skip this part. Reason? I found out the hard way, last time, the recruiters are ultra focused on the opportunity to hire for their positions. None of them want to talk with a candidate that was no longer "on the market" so to speak. The candidates don't have time because they are in the middle of a mental puzzle of what to do. It's best just to leave this situation.

I wasn't trying to tell her what to do. She seemed to take the advice in stride. By Portia. She disappeared and I headed to the "war room" to prep for my interviews and check in with my app.

That was it for the first day. I'd had one interview and set up several first interviews for the morning. I would have the afternoon to meet for possible second interviews or set up other first interviews.

I went up to the bar for a few beers and time to research the schools. Dinner was basic. The beers were fantastic. Mmm. Budlights and a Bacon Cheeseburger.

I awoke to the first day of interviews with a fresh set of clothes, well rested, and ready for the buffet breakfast. My first interview



## The Real Interview Process Begins

wasn't until 9am. I spent 5:30 to 7:00 in Starbucks with chai latte and 7:00-8:30 at the hotel restPortiant breakfast buffet. Well, not really. I had a plate of bacon with a few scrambled eggs and coffee. Hah. Too bad I couldn't have a beer. There were too many school heads at the buffet prepping for interviews. I got to the "war room" a half hour before my first interview and settled down at the power table with some of my new candidate friends.

The format of interviews at this fair was vastly different than previous fairs. In the past, with 800 candidates, the hotels were a frenzy. Elevators were constantly packed as candidates and school reps used the hotel rooms for interviews. Yes, interviews were held in the school representative rooms!

This fair was completely different. The two sub floors of the hotel are conference rooms. Less than 200 candidates allowed the schools to interview downstairs. My first interview was with China, the BASIS consortium of schools. A "for-profit" outfit. I sidled up to the same table in the round robin sign up room, where the candidates had all set up initial interviews. I found my self sitting opposite four questioners.

"For Profit". Before I even sat down, I had my guard up. I began very apprehensive. Back in 2004-5, my Egypt school experience with the ESOL schools was the worst year of my career, professionally. Yuck. Memories were flooding me. We started off what should have

been a quick interview. An hour later, I shook hands all around and left with intrigue. The woman that led the interview was amazing. Her smile melted me. I could have signed up right then and there! I'm only a man! She could've sold me a house, car and anything else. I've been alone in the desert that long. A beautiful woman with a smile and a tiny bit of charisma has that much power over me now. This young, 30 something, led the interview. Enough!

QSI was next. I sat down with Keith. He had obviously looked over my profile and resumé. It was a casual discussion about what I was looking for and a little bit about the QSI schools. What a small world. Keith knows about 10 people I currently work with. He knows the Goths really well and wanted me to say hello, among others.

The only positions they had open were for homeroom elementary positions. About 40 minutes into the interview, we agreed he would set up an interview with Kazakhstan for me. Since Keith represented all the QSI schools, he and Sherry were at the fair to negotiate on behalf of the individual schools, but I would have to video with specific school leaders. He ended with a comment about this not being a quick "at the fair" process. I reassured him I was in no hurry nor any pressure.

After a bathroom break, checking into my app for messages or emails, and refilling my

# The Interview Process Continues

Chai tea from Starbucks, I sat down to research Marrakesh.

I felt a little bad because I didn't want to overstep the interview process for Kim. She was sitting at the table and kept mentioning Marrakesh as her number two and (I think) Taiwan as number one. Just by interviewing with Marrakesh, I was stepping into her world, but I also knew this would have to be an utterly AMAZING interview to even remotely interest me. The position was elementary homeroom. A step back in my career if I so chose.

I didn't bring it up. She'd probably see me talking to the guy because all of the interviews were happening in that big room or upstairs on couches. I tried to do a little research on the school, but I kept getting sidetracked by new candidates asking questions. At one point, I had three people waiting to talk to me. I ended up going into the interview cold, without any knowledge of the school or what I might be "in for". No problem, I'd done this before.

I immediately liked Freddy. He appeared to be in his late 40's. Originally from Hawaii, this was his first overseas stint and he'd been at Marrakesh for the past two school years following COVIDcation. He was telling me this as he reviewed my profile on his computer. The next thing out of his mouth was "Wow, Aramco? You know I can't compete with **that** salary!" Smile. I was expecting such a response.

"I wouldn't be sitting here if this was only about money," I kindly replied. And we moved on.

Freddy portrayed a school leader that was very proud of his school. He talked up his school with a passion and sincerity that drew me into his stories. He turned his laptop around and walked me through a series of pictures of their new outdoor elementary area that had been donated by one of their alums. He dropped credit where credit was due! Freddy smile from ear to ear as he described how the "high roller" donator led the construction crew through the entire process and worked tirelessly into the night, hands on, to ensure the project was exactly the way they wanted it. According to Freddy, the benefactor had had put way more financial backing into the project than he/she had unofficially reported to the school.

All in all, Freddy's presentation of himself as a leader and of his school trapped me in. I was hooked on another possibility. We didn't set a time for a second interview. Instead, he said he would contact me after he held a few more interviews that were lined up.

I had heard a lot of candidates talking about interviews with Freddy, so I understood he had his dance card full. He'd need time for the initial interviews before he set up his second round. He might need to research me a little more or check with my references later in the evening. It's also possible I was in



## Day One Ends without Success

line after a few teaching couples. So goes the recruiting game.

I sat down with Carol Morgan of the Dominican Republic. The school has a reputation as a fantastic opportunity. Several of my bosses and colleagues had taught there, including Marc (one of my three references) and my "work-wife" Katherine. I had a great interview, but I left the table with a "whatever" feeling. It just didn't seem the right timing.

And so the day went. In and out of a few more interviews not worth mentioning. Most of my time was spent talking with the other candidates. There are a lot of questions that pop up during the this process. It is an emotional roller coaster. Candidates stopped at my table time and again at different stages.

No specific stories pop to mind, positive or negative. I ended the day in the afternoon waiting to hear from schools for second interviews.

I hadn't noticed it was raining. I dumped my stuff into my room and headed out the hotel entrance for a taxi ride to the nearest Apple Store. I decided to upgrade my iPad 3 workhorse to an iPad 6. Five years is a long time in technology.

Three minutes later, the taxi dropped me off in front of what looked like the US Library of Congress. Nope. It was the Apple Store

alright. They had bought an old public library and set up shop on the ground floor.

Three minutes later, I was back on the street in the rain with a new iPad in my satchel. The rain was just a drizzle. Since I only see rain once a year in Saudi, I decided to hoof it back to the hotel.

I spent the rest of the evening at the bar in the hotel talking to locals and swigging Budlight. I got an email from Freddy with an offer to teach in Marrakesh. Another email came from QSI arranging an interview on Sunday night (during the Super Bowl) for Kazakhstan. BASIS, the Chinese consortium schools, sent me an email to set up an interview in the next week. The position was for a makerspace elementary position. Since it was for next week, I moved that down the priority list.

The evening "Social" was an open bar and a Taco Bar. This is the first ISS open bar. Past fairs have offered two drinks before cash only. I probably had six Caronas over the two hours. Take that ISS! The conversations were mainly upbeat. I whirled around the event in and out of conversations with as many school heads as possible and ducked out just as the bar was closing - officially.

Several candidates updated me on their fair experiences. Portia was there. Everyone wanted to talk with her. Duh. Beautiful, successful, "Superstar" going to Vietnam from Grand Cayman, smiley, delightful. Kim got her

## The Final Day (*Super Bowl LVII*)

number one. Peter and Mary were staying put in their US school until Mary retires, but look forward to trying again in a few years. Kenny G and Delaney were scheduled to continue interviews with maybe three more schools in the morning. Cosby was taking his family of six to Guyana. (God, I hope he is ready for that hardship. I warned him it is a place with absolutely no infrastructure.) Jim Hensen, the guy with the purple stuffed animal in his backpack, wasn't there. He had left earlier in the day, quirky, fed up, resigned to staying in the Bronx. Franklin, like me, older, still in the process. Pam, pickier like me, still in process. (Little did we all know, that Freddy - HOS Marrakesh - would hire Kenny G and Delaney just before Super Bowl the next evening.)

I went to my room with one secured offer, several second interviews set up for the next day, sushi and beer in my tummy, and a new iPad. I still had no idea what my future would bring in the next few years.

*The story continues. Sorry, I've gone way off the deep end with details of the job fair.*

*Remember, this newsletter serves as a kind of diary for me. 200 years from now, this will live on.*

Once again, I enjoyed my early morning routine. But this morning, I stayed at the buffet until 10:00 am. It took me practically an hour to confirm that my flight out on

Emirates the next morning was indeed 9 am and not 9 pm.

*Sidebar complaint: Why, why, why, doesn't everyone use the 24hour clock? Why does the USA have to be so stubborn? Our military uses 24hr time to maximize clarity. Why don't we all? Ugggh. For some reason, my computer, which is always set to 24 switched locally to 12 and I couldn't tweak it back. Arggg. Not only that, the Emirates site and my Emirates app on my phone both were unclear as to 12 or 24.*

I abused the bottomless cup of coffee and depleted their stores of bacon! I had finally figured out my flight required me to check out of the hotel at 5am (in case the Dulles Airport computers crashed again).

By 10am, the candidate lounge had been moved to yet a smaller room, not conducive to our needs. Simply cast offs! The room was set up for a Monday morning seminar with rows of tables and chairs rather than circular tables and a coffee service. Ugggh. Only a handful of us were left.

I had dreamed about far off places like China, Kazakhstan, Casablanca, and small islands in the Caribbean, but I had made a decision over bacon to stay in Saudi. I still had two interviews during the second half of the Super Bowl (initial with Japan and a second with Kazakhstan). Maybe those would sway me, but it was time to talk in

person to the other school leaders and end my journey with them, for now.

Freddy was first. I texted him and we met in the main hotel lounge. I spotted him on a couch with another candidate so I checked my app and emails while I waited.

He wasn't surprised I was turning down his position. In fact, he smiled and confided in me that he would be leaving in another year. It would round off three years as school head for him.

Freddy and I talked for another hour. He asked me to elaborate about my experiences overseas and the notorious Aramco. When I brought up retirement age and the fact it was on my radar, his smile disappeared as realization hit. He was going on 51 and it had just now dawned on him he might only have two more "jumps" left. Strange.

We ended with an agreement to meet in the hotel bar for drinks and SuperBowl. We exchanged what's app numbers because his aim was to see a bit of DC for the first time. Nice guy. I looked forward to him joining a few of us later.

The BASIS team had already left. I ended up sending them a nice thank you email. I found and met with Taiwan, the online ISS school rep, and about four other school heads to let them all know I was returning

to my current school. It felt great to make the semi-final decision. I'd wait until after the evening video interviews before I emailed my three bosses back home to let them know I was recommitting to my current position.

I spent the rest of the morning hanging out and talking with the few candidates left. Franklin and I were sitting there talking while Kenny G went in and out of more interviews. Franklin is an African American about my age, with experience overseas, but teaching in New York. He wasn't finding a fit. I had even set him up with EIS in Honduras, but she had passed him up. We parted ways a bit later and agreed to keep in touch.

I noticed as I left the official "fair" area, there were some more far East schools that had arrived with small armies of recruiters. They were all sitting in small circles discussion strategies (I can only guess) in the Recruiters lounge.

All in all, the fair was pleasant for me and "worth it". I had interviewed, gotten a few offers I didn't even look at, helped out a ton of newbie situations, helped a few schools match up interviews, and developed a sense of renewal to my commitment in my current position. I had far from failed by walking away from my 7th international teacher recruiting fair without a new country. (Oh. Two more video interviews.)





My DC photo has 250K hits on google maps.



SuperBowl 2023



My interview with a Japan school was terrrrrrrrible.



My Kazakhstan interview went really well, considering I had had a few Budlights during the Bowl.



I was very responsible during the Super Bowl. I only had a few lingering beers.

## Final Celebrations

I went ultra early, to get a seat for Super Bowl. The restaurant had a few TV's set up in little nooks with comfortable sofas and coffee tables, so I grabbed one. Freddy texted me to say he was worn out and wouldn't meet up. Portia came walking in with a big grin on her face. Kenny G joined us just before the game started. He had left his wife and infant at their hotel.

"Kenny G" had great news. They had finally decided on a school after deciding between several offers. They had just signed on with Marrakesh (with Freddy!). So cool. I didn't mention to him that I had turned down that position. Didn't matter anymore. I am very happy for them to go. Freddy will be a great leader for them.

I tried to sneak out after paying for their food and drinks. After I said my goodbyes, they came running across the lobby to say thank you. I guess the nice waitress liked her tip and let it slip that I had paid their tabs. It warmed my heart that they were so grateful. All the more reason to pay off their tabs. I DO make a lot more money than either of them. I can't wait to follow their journeys across the world. Maybe I will get them onto ITP for interviews next year! So cool. I retired to my room and booted up my laptop for back to back hour-long interviews with Japan and Kazakhstan.



## *The Sign Says it All...*

I've returned to the "island". This place is really a bubble. Why do I call it the "island"? Mainly, when I moved here six and a half years ago, it was drilled into us as new hires, that we work for a massive company. No social media was tolerated. No mentioning of the company name. One could easily be fired just for posting or even mentioning the company name without going through specific channels - the media lockdown.

There were many solid reasons back then. Times have changed. The company is readily seen on social media and print. But I'm not going to be the one to see how far the leash extends. To me, it will always be an island, a bubble of existence. Like no other. Explaining it is way beyond words. In order to understand the depth of living in this bubble, you have to experience it. I'm a "born again A\_ \_ \_ con". I still cannot say it. There is a Chilis restaurant on our island. I call it "Not-So-Chilis". The sign on the wall, shown above, says it all. I just have to change the initial date to 2016.

The plan. MY plan: stay here for another three and a half years to get my health insurance package for life and continue to build the future labs to success. All I have to do is change my attitude about living here. Oh, and stockpile more money!

Wish me luck. I can hold out and enjoy it, if the Company schools hold out. My crystal ball is a bit unclear. Things are changing here at light speed. No one really knows what to expect. Something weird could happen at any time. I work for a huge island company. Only time will tell.

Did I mention my interview with Japan was horrible? The guy in charge was on his way out and asked questions like a robot. Uggh. An email came a week later. "Dear Greg, unfortu...."





## *Home Again in the Desert (epilogue)*

Matt and Stacey are glad I'm staying. They are too, for a while. We went to Bahrain for the weekend and saw Kevin Heart, a comedian, at a new concert venue. Before going to the venue, I had a great time re-connecting with Stacey while Matt went for a massage. They had left the four boys at home so we could have a more peaceful weekend. I filled them in on the entire job fair. After all, they are the reason I had such a great job fair back in 2016 in Atlanta, when I was the Superstar and landed this job.

Yes, I'm staying put. There is a lot to do and a lot of money to save up. We earned a huge bonus that is rewarded in March. I won't divulge how much. Portia would literally crap her pants if she found out. Suffice it to say, staying here will be financially worth every penny of grief and desert hardship.

The job fair allowed me to re-center myself. I now have a life plan until August 2027. Now I have to change apartments, plan my Easter and Summer short breaks, and start attending the Friday church services. I promised a colleague I'd join him and his wife for Christian services that may or may not be held in secret on the island. I'll have to find out where. Smile.

Included in my life plan are: PauSheng, the "healthy, new, Greg", banjo, more non-diving travel to new countries, a new commitment to my investments in Missouri, going back to minimalist Greg, and about a thousand other small commitments I have let slide.

If you stuck with me through this volume of StSomeTimes, I have only one question: Why? Smile. See you next volume.