

270 April 2023

St. Some Times

Gre.....g?

Greg?

Where are you?
I cannot find you
this year.



Sans Easter

I know it's strange for my friends and family to imagine this. I worked on Easter. We work on Sundays on the island. It's the world of Islam. However, there **was** a church service. Now that is something I find hard to believe! The service was a sunrise service before school started. Hmm.

Now, don't get me wrong. A lot of families celebrate Easter on the island. Most of them celebrated on Good Friday and hid eggs, had dinners with friends over, and went to churches. The Holy Day for Muslims is Friday, so the Christians that congregate in secret switched from Sunday worship to Friday worship. That started many years ago on the island. Way before my time.

Christians in Class (Funny)

I was teaching on Easter Sunday just like any other Sunday. As per my usual, I greeted classes as they came in and made light of the special day. Since this was in the Middle of the Month of Ramadan, the Muslim holidays, I had already practiced a

routine for the classes. All I had to do was add in a blurb about Easter and that would take care of the major (current) holidays.

Me: "Good morning 1st graders. I'd just like to say Happy Easter to any Christians in our class and Ramadan Kareem to all of our Muslim classmates. Eid is almost here! We have a lot to celebrate today!"

1st Grader: "But Mr. Chicken, Christian isn't in our class. He's in a different class."

Dad

When I was a child, dad always woke up the family in his own special way for Easter Sunday. It was his way of making sure we were awake to get to church. I guess. Dad would play "Here Comes Peter Cottontail" and an entire collection of Easter music (reel to reel recordings). He wouldn't just play it. He'd BLARE it through the house.

Now, from all over the world, I try to wake him up. I blare the cottontail through the phone. But this year, he didn't answer. Poor mom took the bait.

"Happy Easter mom. Gotta go. Love you!"

Reflections on Easter

Memories of Easter still flood my brain when Easter comes along. No matter where I am in the world, I may or may not celebrate Easter at a Sunrise service. I may or may not color eggs or hide baskets with other families. But I can empathize in the joy.

Mom and Dad went all out to play up the Easter Bunny. They must have spent hours after we went to bed. Each one of us would wake up to a trail of jelly beans leading all over the house. Then we would each find our Basket, filled with chocolates and assorted candies, usually a small toy or something we never expected to get. Then we'd go to church. Then we'd head to Grandpa and Grandma's - the years we were in Wisconsin.

There were always variations on the Easter Sunday. Most notably was the year we had a brand new schnauzer, Bridget. I don't remember what led up to this. Perhaps she was kept in someone's room at night. Perhaps my parents just didn't think about the possibility. But it happened.

Bridget ate the entire bunny trail that morning. We had one sick puppy that entire Easter. Bloated from candy. Throwing up. Yuck. But funny. From then on, there were certainly baskets to be found, but no bunny trail of chocolates or jelly beans.

I also have a distinct memory of waking up in a hotel room one year for Easter. To my amazement, the Easter Bunny had found us in the hotel and left an Easter basket for each boy. Mom and dad did quite the job that year. Who knew an Easter basket would find its way into a shower stall, hotel closet, or under a hotel bed? Well played mom and dad. No wonder my dad always packed the car himself before we left on road trips. He was putting gifts in first and packing around them.

If I had kids, I'd do the same thing. Of course, I would find some way to notch up the game.

Thank you mom and dad. Those early Easters allow me to enjoy Easter memories wherever I may be in the world. Good stuff.



Gray Days are my New Lego Kit Days

Gray Days are company work days. I work for a major corporation and a school at the same time. Sometimes, when we have no school, we still have to work. So, we call them gray days.

I don't mind gray days. There is so much to do as a teacher. There is so much to do as a techie. Why not get paid to work. Other teaching positions around the world don't pay you for working when kids are gone. Oh rarely there are PD days or prep days. Not like this.

I may not have summers off, but we DO get holidays like the other company staff. I just have to make decisions about when the best gray days are. The best gray days happen when the other school staff are all gone. Why? Funny you should ask. Because that's when I can get the most tech stuff done in classrooms.

If the teachers are in their rooms, it is more difficult to check tech or install stuff. In that case, I spend my gray days as a teacher and work on classroom stuff. I spent several days going through all the Lego kits. Not only do I have to organize them, I have to know the kits, build the stuff. Be the expert.

Just a Big Kid

You wouldn't believe the looks that I get from students when they find out I build Legos on the weekend. Once they get over it, they seem to accept the fact I am just a big kid.

There may be a lot of other ways to fill time in the desert, but Legos keep me sharp and fit well with what I do in classes.



Calendly. Yeah!

The Podcast (ITP) still takes up significant chunks of time in my life. By choice. The interviewer options have started to only trickle in. In order to get guests, I've had to beg and plead. Emails have to go out. It's like insurance guys or salesmen cold calling, trolling for clients. Sick of it.

Enter the idea of automatic sign ups. Through Calendly, an appointment app and website, guests can sign up for specific times to meet with ITP. The app even solves the problems we might have with time zones. Calendly even has workflows to send out email reminders for me. Uh oh. Spending a bit more money on ITP. Oh well.

Difficult Future Ahead

Working for a major corporation has its own set of hardships. The island company has limited our school to almost skeletal status. Next year will be difficult. We will all be teaching more classes, bigger class sizes, with no increase of compensation.

That last part is OK. We make considerably more money than most teachers in the world. So, the news around the water cooler is that I won't simply be teaching maker space next year. My admin have decided to allow me to teach technology to the upper elementary again!

I am super excited for the opportunity to provide tech for the kids again. Ever since we switched to our Maker Space (Future Lab) journey, tech was no longer being taught. It fell on the homeroom teachers to teach Google Apps, digital citizenship, online safety, email etiquette, and all of the things Katherine and I would teach in tech classes. Now I get a chance to do both.

It may be a lot of teaching hours compared to past years, but I still prefer it to substitute teaching every period I have free.



LUNCH? SERVED DURING RAMADAN? SHUT THE DOOR! NO WAY!

If you had told me several years ago, that I would be eating lunch at a restaurant during Ramadan, I would have said "Yeah, right. Maybe if we leave the country and go over to Bahrain."

It was the final week of Ramadan 2023. Most of the staff was gone. I was talking to two of my bosses out in the parking lot. My principal had a sudden brain fart and said "Hey, anyone in for Chilis tomorrow for lunch?" I naturally made fun of his comment. We all laughed as he stated, "I hate it when I forget we are still in Ramadan and make a stupid comment like that." He's been here well over 20 years.

The very next day. My principal stops into my room and says we are indeed going to lunch. Not to Chilis. They are still closed. But the Urth Cafe in the park next door is serving. "I wouldn't have been more surprised if I had woken up with my face stapled to the carpet!" (-Fletch 1985). Indeed. Josh, Paul, and I had pizzas and sandwiches at the Urth Cafe during Ramadan. On the Island. We didn't even have to leave the country. So weird. So abnormal now. Crazy even.