

| From the Life and Times of Greg Lemoine, International educator since 2001. |

THE SAME
APARTMENT
FOR SIX
YEARS.

May was a quite uneventful month here in the desert. Not much to report from life outside of

school. The biggest event was moving out of my company provided apartment and moving into the

exact same model apartment in the next building across the parking lot. This issue explains.



The 220v Conversion Disruption

Life on this island is centered around the company. Everything is owned by the company. Everyone works for the company. If the company makes changes, we either suffer or benefit from those changes. So is life.

When the company first created this “island”, it was an American Oasis. Everything was American, like an army base. The roads, signs, parks, houses with vinyl siding, stoplights, sidewalks with uniform height curbs. It was an island of 1950’s American small town in the middle of the desert. That was how the company would get Americans to come out into this desert wasteland to live and work. Housing. Schools. Everything. Even the voltage.

The world uses 220v.
Americans use 110v and 220v.

Americans have small 110v plugs for small electronics and 220v for larger appliances.

When I arrived on this island, I was moved into temporary housing for the first year. Sure enough, all of the wall plugs were 110v except one 220v in the kitchen and 220v in the external laundry room.

The company moved me to a permanent apartment the following year (2017). Again, all of the wall plugs were the same. Depending on where I bought new electrical devices, I had to play a game of wall plugs or extension cords. My huge TV was purchased here so I had to either use one of the 220v wall plugs, use a 220v extension cord running from the wall socket in the kitchen, or find a 110v universal power cord that would fit into the TV. The same went for any device.

Saudi-ization of the Island

Along the way, whether due to government decree or by company decision (or both), the decision was made to convert the entire island to 220v. The company is in this country. If the entire country outside of the island is using 220v then it makes sense. Especially if more and more local hires are moving onto the island to Saudi-ize the island.

This is a huge company. There are almost 10,000 residents on the island. This conversion decision would not affect me anytime soon. The process would happen in phases. Slowly, everyone in my apartment complex moved to

other temporary apartments, left the company, or moved to other permanent apartments.

At the beginning of summer 2022, there were maybe four people living in the 200 apartments of my area. I was one of them.

Going against my personal policy of not interfering with company process, I took some private initiative and went, in person, to the housing department. Keep in mind, I abhor, detest, hate dealing with the department of housing AND the local internet company. Dealing with them strains my sanity.

So, I took it upon myself to go into the department and find out if and when I would be moving. The worst case scenario would be getting the proverbial “nod” while I was on summer vacation in the USA. The second worst, in my mind, would be to find out I was moving two days before my moving date and be forced to run around like the Mad Hatter to pack.

“Where would you like to move, Mr. Greg?” The housing lady was very pleasant. I told her I really don’t care, don’t want to move, and work for the schools so I cannot just leave my office to deal with this when it is convenient for someone else.

On the “Lists”

The pleasant housing lady smiled and asked me if I was moving temporary or permanent. The idea is, for 220v, the company moves everyone out of their dwelling, modifies the building, and

I HAVE A BETTER ODDS AT GETTING HIT BY LIGHTNING THAN WINNING A DESIRABLE APARTMENT THROUGH THE BIDDING SYSTEM. I HAVE BID ON AN OPEN APARTMENT SEVERAL TIMES. I’VE BEEN LOSING BIDS FOR SIX YEARS.





moves them back into their original dwelling. She also pointed out that I was number 41 on some list of people waiting to move for 220v conversion. I have never seen a list for 220v. When I replied “is that 41 out of 40?” she either didn’t get the joke or didn’t like the sarcasm. Either way, I was surprised to be on yet another list.

I have heard of lists before. During your work tenure at this company, you can bid for open dwellings any time they are announced. Someone once told me how to sign up and bid for a house, but the losing bidders never get notice they have lost. Only the winning bid is notified at some point after the closing date of the bid. I’ve never seen the bid list. I don’t know what place I hold on this so-called list. Not only that, there are multiple lists. Families, bachelors without their families, single men, and single women. Each list is posted somewhere. I’ve heard the lists don’t really matter anyway. Certain people are always at the top of the list, especially since they have opened up the island to locals.

More and more locals want to have their own little slice of the American style island paradise rather than live under their own rules off the island. Very interesting. Bottom line...if I have to move, it is permanent.

Some Time Before the 29th

All of that was months ago. When I left housing, the nice lady had told me to look for an email closer to the end of May 2023. Done.

I received that email the second week of May. Once again, I took time away from school to go talk to the nice lady face to face and find out what exactly was required. It was up to me to go get the boxes and packing materials (provided) and the inspectors would arrive on the 29th at 9am.

I asked her for the phone number of the furniture place because I only have a scooter. She assured me the company would drop off the packing stuff for me.

“Ok, Ok. No problem. We will drop off the boxes sometime before the 29th”, said the furniture guy. I called a week before. The rest of the conversation went like this:

Me: “When will the boxes get here? I need time to pack.”

Guy: “No problem. Before the 29th.”

Me: “When exactly?”

Guy: “No problem. Before the 29th.”



I called three more times throughout the week. The same guy answered. The same conversation happened each time. On the morning of the 28th, I called yet again. I literally threaten to come to the warehouse, find him, and kick his ass if I didn't receive the boxes by lunch.

Imagine that. The 5 small and 5 large boxes arrived at lunch on my porch at my old apartment. I spent the night throwing out most of my belongings, taking apart my IKEA bed, and sorting through my few belongings.

School granted me one paid day for moving, so I didn't have to teach on the 29th. Five guys showed up in a massive truck to pack and move my apartment. They were surprised when they arrived to find my belongings already packed in boxes. The two inspectors came and went. The movers showed up an hour early. I watched them load and unload my belongings into the truck and into my new apartment across the parking lot from my old apartment. The movers weren't supposed to move my personal washer/dryer, but I tipped them heavily and fed them a steady supply of water. The washer/dryer have to sit outside a week.

LABOR IS STILL THE
CHEAPEST PART OF
ANY BUSINESS
HERE.

I WATCHED FIVE
GUYS AND A TRUCK
MOVE MY LITTLE
APARTMENT FROM
DOOR TO DOOR IN
AN HOUR.

THEY NEVER
TOUCHED THE
DOLLY, EVEN
THOUGH IT WAS
ONE OF THOSE
FULLY LOADED
DOLLIES WITH
WRAP STRAPS.

