



Newsletter of Jeff, Diane, Daniel & Alyssa ~ living and working in the Persian Gulf & Central Asia.

Management Administration Training ~

Diane accompanied two Nebraskan management-administration trainers to a five-day training of "Angus" men we work with, who want to learn how to better structure and run their humanitarian and ministry teams. She went along to make the connection between the trainers and the team leaders, and to make sure that the training interpreters accurately understood the English that Zach and Chris used – to translate from American English to their local second-language English as needed. She is bilingual in our English and their English.

Steve ~

We had a visit in March from a long-time church friend from Nebraska. Steve had to do all the regional travel part of the trip by himself due to our continuing visa problems in some countries. He ended up spending a longer time with us in the UAE than we had planned. It turned out, though, that we were able to have some significant cultural experiences together right here close to home.



Steve and Jeff went to the apartment where ten men from Bangladesh who Jeff knows live in one bedroom. There are five bunk beds that take up all the wall space of the room, except where the television sits next to the door, leaving a space about the size of a pool table in the middle. They all work at jobs, mostly retail, six and a half days a week, for the purpose of sending money back to their families, including their wives and children, back in Bangladesh. They work long hours, so Steve and Jeff went there at about 11pm. Every night, one of them cooks the shared meal: always with rice, always with chicken. Then they eat together (with their hands) at 1am, sitting on the floor in the space in the middle of the bedroom and watching their favorite soap opera on a Bengali-language station. Two o'clock is bed time. They get up and do it again the next day. Some of them have been here over ten years. They loved having the two American guests for dinner. Come back soon!

Steve joined Diane, Jeff, and Alyssa for a picnic (the temps were still under 100F then) in a park with some Iranian friends of ours. They are all connected to the English class Diane taught last fall at the Iranian Club. Steve was amazed that he was picnicking with people from Iran – it didn't quite fit the typical image of Iranians on the news. And a good time was had by all.

Jeff took Steve to a mosque where, every Thursday evening, thousands of Muslims of varied nationalities converge to hear teaching about their faith, to hear appeals to sign up to go around the world and spread Islam (each Thursday some do sign up), to pray, and to eat together. They break up into language groups for the teaching sessions. By far the largest group is the Urdu language section. Steve and Jeff sat in on the much smaller English language one – mostly made up of Africans or people who can understand English but speak languages that for which there was no group. After arriving, they led Steve and Jeff to a for-guests-only section where a few men talked to them about Islam and gave them snacks. Then, after the teaching session, which was basically a do-good-to-people kind of talk, they went up to the big Urdu group and watched as the appeal was made for men to travel for Islam. A number of men stood up, were identified, and were taken to the back of the big hall to get signed up. Then they went back to the for-guests-only area instead of joining in the fifth prayer time of the day, where they were given food, and where they talked more about Islam. The three men who took care of them and led them through the various activities of the evening were enjoyable, hospitable, and gracious. As Steve and Jeff left, they saw the grounds dotted with circles of men sitting and eating together around shared bowls of food. After the meal, many of them would sleep there at the mosque, get up for the first prayer time of the day at dawn, sleep some more, eat, hear the Friday mosque sermon, do the second prayer time of the day, and go back home. This scene is repeated each Thursday-Friday at a few mosques in the UAE.



Photos Above: Steve and one of the Bangladesh guys, at his carpet shop, after a successful pitch to buy one. Lower right above: A typical scene of women washing clothes in a canal in our work area, taken by Steve. Below right: Daniel (a Cornhusker this fall) off to school in the morning, wearing his class-of-2010 SEN10RS school sweatshirt (air conditioned school). Below left: Alyssa leaving home for school, running late (?), shoes in hand.

Exam Season ~

May is school exam season here, just as it is in many places. Daniel and Alyssa attend an International Baccalaureate (IB) school, which means that, for their junior and senior years of high school, students choose six courses, which they take for the entire two years. Daniel, as a senior this year, is for the next three weeks sitting for the exams, standardized for IB schools around the world, that cover his last two years of coursework. Results come in July.



Alyssa will enter her last two years in the fall. They choose one course from six areas: English, math, science, social studies, arts, and another language. (A student is allowed to take two sciences instead of arts; Daniel is taking both physics and chemistry.) For the IB Diploma, a student must take three courses at a higher level (less than three for the IB Certificate). Daniel is taking math, chemistry, and physics at the higher level, and history, Spanish, and English at the standard level. Unlike Daniel, Alyssa will not substitute a second science for the arts course. She is having a hard time choosing between music and drama. IB Diploma students also write an extended essay. Daniel wrote his in the field of history: To what extent did the USSR influence the People's Republic of China to aid the North Korean military in the Korean War?



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News from Jeff & Diane

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