

# Letter From Abu Dhabi

By Pam Mandich

So, if you are ever in Abu Dhabi, please come and have coffee with me in my flat. I live behind the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) petrol station in Al Manaseer.

If you are driving east on Hazaa Bin Zayed Street, also known as 11th Street, turn right immediately past the petrol station. Keep going straight and then turn right just past the speed bump. Take a left past the second building into the court yard. Turn right in the courtyard and I am the four storey, white building with the tall blue windows on the left. I am Apartment 7 on the third floor.

Now if you are driving west on Hazaa Bin Zayed Street, you will need to turn left on Al Khaleej Al Arabi Road, also known as 28th Street. Then take the second right, just past

the empty school. Take the first left into the courtyard and then right.

It may sound as if I am giving you driving directions because you are new to the city and may not know your way around. But what I am giving you is my address. Since there is no formal system of street numbers and addresses in Abu Dhabi, this is the only way you will ever be able to find my flat.

This makes getting around difficult, especially if you are new. So how do you find places? Well, truth be told, with great difficulty. First of all, even though there is no formal number and street name system, there are street names for all the major arteries.

The problem is that many of these have two names – usually a street name and a number name. For instance, Sheikh Zayed 1st Street is also known as 7th Street. And these names are usually marked with signage, so that's good. Problem is you can never be sure what name people will use. Since we have no car, I have to

rely on taxis. Which name the taxi driver will know the road by has become a guessing game I play daily, which is bit frustrating but eventually I get my destination across.

The real problems start when you get those pesky streets that seem to have acquired nicknames that all the locals know but are not written on any maps, so newbies like me haven't a clue. If you are not from here, you wouldn't know that Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed al Maktoum St, also known as 2nd St. is affectionately known as Airport Road.

This means you spend a lot of time trying to figure out where you are going. If you want to go some place you have never been to before, you have to call first to get directions. If you buy anything that needs to be delivered, like a stove or a fridge, the part of the form where you put your address is a large blank box big enough for you to draw a map of your location.

If you are having something delivered to your house, whether it is a pizza or a couch, you have to keep your phone free so when

the driver is on his way, he can call and you can talk him through the directions. This is much more difficult than it sounds as the driver will have limited English and you will not speak his native tongue.

I have watched my husband spend 45 minutes on the phone trying to get the pizza delivery guy to our flat. Yellow Pages lists businesses and phone numbers, but you have no idea where they are located unless you call them. And there is no home mail delivery system – all mail goes to your place of employment. I guess it's because large office buildings are easier to find than flats and villas spread across the city.

Finally, it also means that once you train a delivery guy to get to your house—whether it is the curry guy, the water guy, or the taxi guy, you never, never change companies. And you pray every day that your driver never goes to work for someone else.



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Ramblin' Ruth

## The Best Things In Life

By Ruth LeBlanc

My late husband Rick had a wooden plaque with the words "The most important things in life aren't things."

Many people equate success and happiness with the material things they acquire; we never did. We both felt rich in life, not from money but from love. When Rick died I truly believed that I could never be happy again. I looked at my life and saw nothing but emptiness, with despair colouring my future. It was the optimism of youth that made me realize I was wrong.

People ask if I have children and I must answer no. As a proud, immature, semi-adult, I love the free spirit and the yet-to-be-tainted mind that young people possess. They are often wise beyond their years, and I have been blessed by knowing many local youths who have added so much joy to my life, as I hope I have to theirs.

A year ago, during the most painful times dealing with the loss of Rick, I had the good fortune to meet up with a special little girl aged nine, named Caeleigh. Every Wednesday we meet after school is out and hang out together until bedtime. We have developed a ritual of sitting quietly in my living room chatting when we first meet, and then heading out on an adventure which always includes food.

Shopping for clothes, laughing and discussing life in general fill those all too short hours, along with trying new hairdos and giggling as we dance in my kitchen to the latest Miley Cyrus tune.

Not long ago my little best friend noticed I was not my usual perky self and questioned me about it. I confessed that it was difficult not being loved. Shocked, her brown eyes looked at me as she told me that she loved me. These words and her youthful devotion impacted me and reminded me of all I have instead of all I had lost.

Another angel in my life is Kasandra, aged 17, who has been a source of strength and inspiration with her gentle but tough friendship. This budding friendship has blossomed into mutual admiration and is a special and touching part of my life.

Kasy visits my office daily for lunch and phone calls are not uncommon as problems arise that need discussing. What a joy this youthful and vivacious young lady is.

Where others could not reach me, these two special young people have reminded me that my life is rich and that I am loved. How blessed am I to have these remarkable girls as a part of my life? A gentle giant and funnyman named Johnny, who I call "The Hammer", has also brought a smile to my face as together these exceptionally kind individuals have led me back to the light.

The lesson I have learnt this past year is that life continues but in a different form. Pain turns into a sadness that becomes a part of the private you and memories are the precious treasures tucked away in a special part of your heart. Life does go on and what a discredit to all those gone before us not to live it to the fullest.

So yes, the most important things in life are not things, but the people who care for you most.

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### Spring lambs born at Willowgrove

On April 11, four lambs -- two black and two white -- were born to one sheep at Willowgrove. One lamb died, but the other three, seen here with their mother, were thriving the following week. Willowgrove Primary School, at 11737 McCowan Rd., is holding an open house and tree planting on May 3 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wagon rides, a visit to the farm and face painting will be part of the fun.

