

Desert

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
AROUND THE WORLD

news

APRIL 2007



Editorial Ramblings



Alan will be returning to the Philippines! After just over two months in Kuwait without the family, he has decided to return to be with them in the Philippines. It proved to be impossible to get the family to Kuwait in a reasonable time period, so he has decided to leave the civilised world and return to the stone age, so, at last, we can all be together again.

The return to the Philippines is one that Alan certainly doesn't welcome. He has expressed his feelings about the Philippines often enough in these pages, but family comes first. As we said in our last editorial; Little Lad needs his Pappa and his

Pappa needs him too. Not to mention that the same goes for our feelings about each other too. Our love for each other is too great a bond for us to wish to endure a lengthy separation. It's now back to finding somewhere to live, buying furniture and appliances and returning to job searching once more. That said, going to Kuwait had it's positive side too. Firstly, it's given Alan some additional teaching experience in electrical engineering; it's paid us some money (always useful - it paid for a new lap-top computer!); it's given Alan the chance to renew friendships; and we've made friends with some new folks now based in Kuwait. We also hope that Alan's employer will come up with another position for him in a country (or even return to Kuwait with a 'proper' working visa) where we can all live together sometime in the future. As we write this, Alan has his flight to the Philippines booked for 6 May 2007. Grace has just found a place for us all to live - a four-bedroomed bungalow and, would you believe, it's on the same housing estate as Alan was living in when we first met - in Sta. Monica, between Olongapo and Subic. This is only about 10 - 15 minutes walk from Baloy Beach, so it will be great area for Little Lad. We will all enjoy the beach and the country walks in the area.

Alan has been experimenting recently (so anything can happen!). This time, you can decide for yourselves whether or not he's had some measure of success, as some of the results are published in this edition of our magazine. As you will see there is a double page spread, below and overleaf, showing that he's been taking some panoramic photographs of places in Kuwait. There is also a giant size spread over four pages (6 - 9), which we hope you will like.

Alan is very sad to be leaving Kuwait, where (as mentioned above) he has renewed old friendships and made new ones too. In particular, he has a good friend in Ray, who is shown in the photograph below at Krispy Kreme Doughnuts in the Marina Mall; a venue they sometimes used to drop into when out on their evening walks.



Above: Alan with his new company car.

Cover photograph: Taken in the new Al-Kout Mall in Fahaheel

Below (double page spread) photograph: Taken in the Marina Mall, Salmiya

Note: There is a FOUR page spread covering pages 6 to 9 of this issue.

Alan & Grace

Ray



Emily Daisy Cook

born 25 April 2007



Congratulations to Paul and Julie



Hello Dad

Well you may be pleased to know that you are now the Grandfather of a beautiful baby girl, Emily Daisy Cook.

She was born at 0440hrs weighing in a 6lbs. Everything went perfectly!!

Will mail again soon, but am back off to hospital!

With Love to Grace and John

Paul



*Photographs
by Grace in the
Philippines.*

Top 3 pics in Baguio
at Mines View.

Btm. pics. at Centro
Toma Elementary
School. Grace is
with Elorde Balan
Jnr. at graduation
ceremony.





Sharq Souq and Marina - Kuwait

Alan's Reflections

Alan's Reflections

This is proving to be the hardest part of our little magazine to write this month. This is fairly unusual as I normally have plenty of things to reflect upon, as one does as one gets older. But I'm finding it very difficult today. I suppose my mind is cluttered with so many things that my poor old brain is having a hard time. The magazine was well on the way to publication when I received the great news about being a granddad. I just wish I was with Paul and Julie to offer what help I could and, of course, to see my one and only grandchild. Grandparents are very special people to most children. I know mine were to me. When a child, people seem to live for ever and one never thinks that grandparents, let alone parents, are ever going to pass away. When I was a child we lived near one set of grandparents and the others were visited every year, so I had a close relationship with all of them. That is something I will always treasure. It is so different in this modern world where families are often separated by huge distances. It seems as though the world, whilst seeming to become smaller in so many ways, has split families and communities apart and taken away the intimacy of all the family living near to each other as was the case not so many years ago. I look at my own family as an example. We live in various, quite distant locations in the UK as well as being spread out to other countries. I wonder what effect this will have on little Emily as she starts to grow up. For me, my grandparents provided a huge amount of stability and kept the family together in so many ways. This task then passed on to my parents who did a great job in providing the same stability and kept the family together. For them it was much more difficult than it was for my grandparents as the family (me!) started to move away to places where I could find work. Even when I had a base I continued to work away (at sea) in order to provide for my family. My parents lived in the same home for almost 50 years. Since leaving my parents home, I've had so many homes I've practically lost count (I think it is 21). Since marrying Grace in November 2000, we've been travelling the world and have had 10 homes in 4 countries (in 6.5 years). We are going to be moving into home number 11 on my return to the Philippines. That is a different home every 7 months (on average) - I've had one more, having lived in Kuwait for the last 2+ months!

There are reasons for this. Despite what you read to the contrary, the skills shortage in the UK is a myth. How could it be otherwise when so many manufacturing and engineering companies have disappeared during the last 43 years - since I started work. Virtually no shipbuilding, engineering, motor manufacturing, steel, coal and other industries - and their support industries - exist on any scale

now and even many of the other industries such as ports, chemical works and many others have slimmed down to almost non-existent proportions.

Another reason is my age. I will be 58 in a few weeks. I have spent several years trying to get a job in the UK and have only got as far as going to two interviews after applying for many dozens (probably hundreds) of jobs. Despite Blair urging us to stay at work until we're 70, how can we if companies won't employ us? Despite what the law may say, there are many companies in the UK that have a policy of not recruiting anyone over 40 years of age. Some have the same for those of over 50. This means there are many people working overseas simply because they can't find jobs at home and refuse to give up and live on the state handouts for the unemployed. The men I work with in Kuwait are almost all men in my age group. Some are over 60. ALL of us are highly experienced, qualified engineering personnel. None of us can find jobs at home and the high cost of living puts the blocks on retiring (in the UK at least).

The global migration doesn't just affect us old westerners either. Until recently, most Filipino families had many generations (often including uncles/aunts/cousins etc.) living together, all supporting each other and assisting each other in the bringing up of all the children. Now, most families have some of their members working abroad in order to send money home to all the others. There is so much of this, that the whole economy is supported by this 'false economy' of cash flowing into the country to keep it afloat on foreign earned dollars. And so we see, even there, the break up of families and the spread of workers around the world. The same has been happening in India for a long time and is now happening in China - the two countries of the world with the highest populations. Of course, the big corporations love it as it keeps their labour costs low - even in the UK where immigrants will work (double shifts) for almost nothing compared to what the going rate should be (don't be fooled by the minimum wage figures either) and are often put into sub-standard accommodation too - several people in a room; conditions in which westerners wouldn't be prepared to live.

So, my dear grand-daughter, Emily Daisy, I'm so sorry that I can't offer you the stability a good granddad should. The world is a different place now than when I was a boy. We may be better off in material things, but families around the world have been broken apart in order that we survive and support them. I suggest that we have lost more than we have gained and I hope your generation, which includes my own son, John, will go some way towards bringing the families of the world back together again before they are forever broken apart.

Alan



The Kuwait Towers