

Northern *news*

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

MAY 2009

David

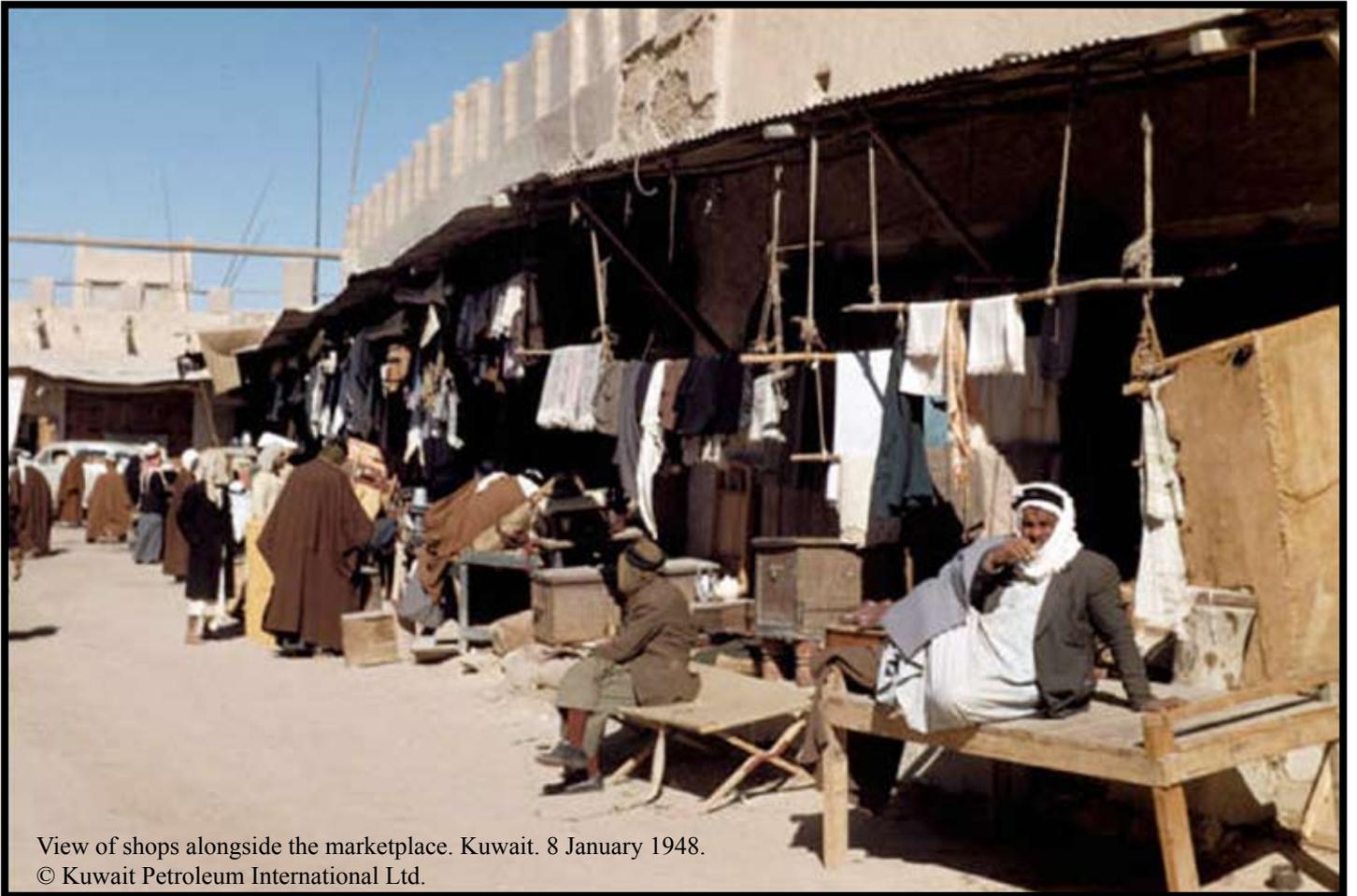
It was the morning after I'd sent out the April newsletter that I climbed out of bed to check my e-mail, as I usually do when I'm not heading for the office. I'd left the computer on overnight so I didn't have to wait for it to boot-up, merely log on to my g-mail account where the shock of my life was waiting. This is what I read: *Alan, Did you hear that David Heath passed away last week in the Philippines? He was 64 years old. I can send some pictures later of the funeral.* David was one of our closest friends. I immediately ran into our bedroom where I broke the sad news to Grace - not very gently, I have to say, being in a state of shock. Grace shot upright and almost screamed *Oh NO!*, leapt out of bed and followed me to the computer screen where she could read it for herself. We were shattered; stunned. It didn't seem real, or even possible. We'd recently spoken to David who was delighted to have received the "all clear" regarding the cancer treatment he'd been undergoing in England. And now he was gone. Why? How? We were grief stricken. Devastated. We telephoned Ruth, his wife, in the Philippines who, of course, was still stunned and distraught by what had happened. As we knew from our previous conversations with him, David was so pleased to be fit enough to be travelling back to the Philippines to see his family again (he arrived early evening of 16 March). In particular he wanted to attend a ceremony at the school that his son, Adam, attended (which he did - on 22 March). He'd had his retirement home built - just completed in fact, and was looking forward to enjoying his retirement free from the terrible worries that his cancer had caused him. Due to the weakening of his immune system by the chemotherapy he'd received he was very susceptible to infection. And so, he contracted pneumonia and his body was unable to cope with it and he died on 29 March. We ask that your prayers are directed to Ruth and Adam during their terrible bereavement. Grace and I first met David soon after our arrival in Kuwait towards the end of 2000. We were welcomed as though we were one of his family - and in fact Grace was often called Ruth's cousin when being introduced to other folk. I shared an office with David for almost all the time we were in Kuwait and he was highly respected and well liked by those with whom he worked. As a remembrance of this time, I've included some photographs of Kuwait on the following pages and would like to thank John Martin (Yang-Yang's husband) for his contribution. We frequently kept in touch even after leaving Kuwait and we received a visit from the family while we were staying in the UK before going to Qatar. We were looking forward to seeing them all again in the very near future when they returned to England for a holiday. Sadly, it wasn't to be. We have lost someone very special. Someone who has touched our lives. Someone who will remain in our hearts forever. We are sure that all of you who knew David feel the same.

Photograph below: A memory of happier days. I took this on 1 March 2007 in David and Ruth's flat in Kuwait. L to R: Ruth's sister, Yang-Yang with her daughter, Samantha; David, Adam, Ruth.



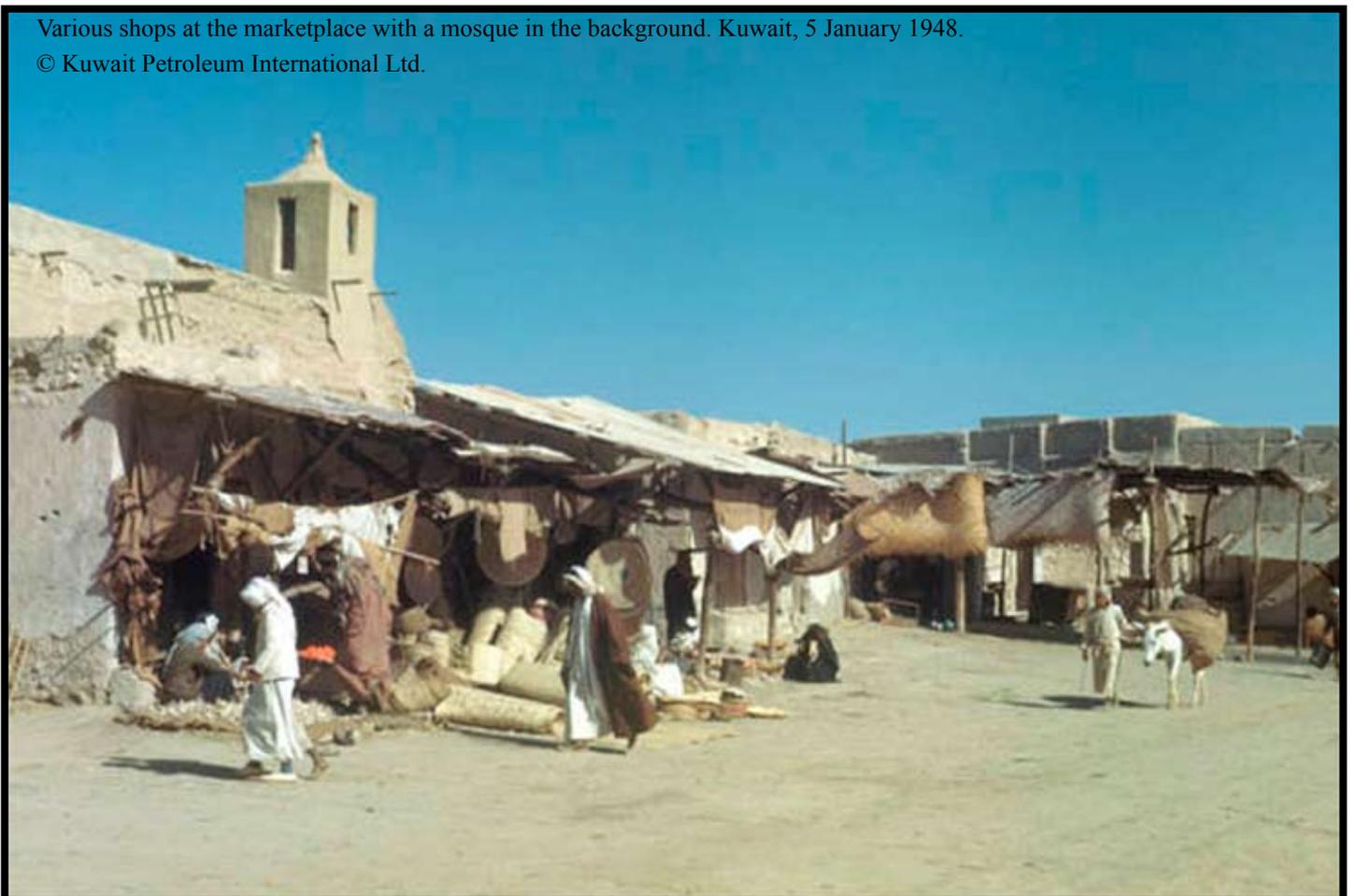
Old Kuwait

with grateful appreciation to John Martin (David's brother-in-law),
who sent us these photographs and those in the link below.



View of shops alongside the marketplace. Kuwait. 8 January 1948.

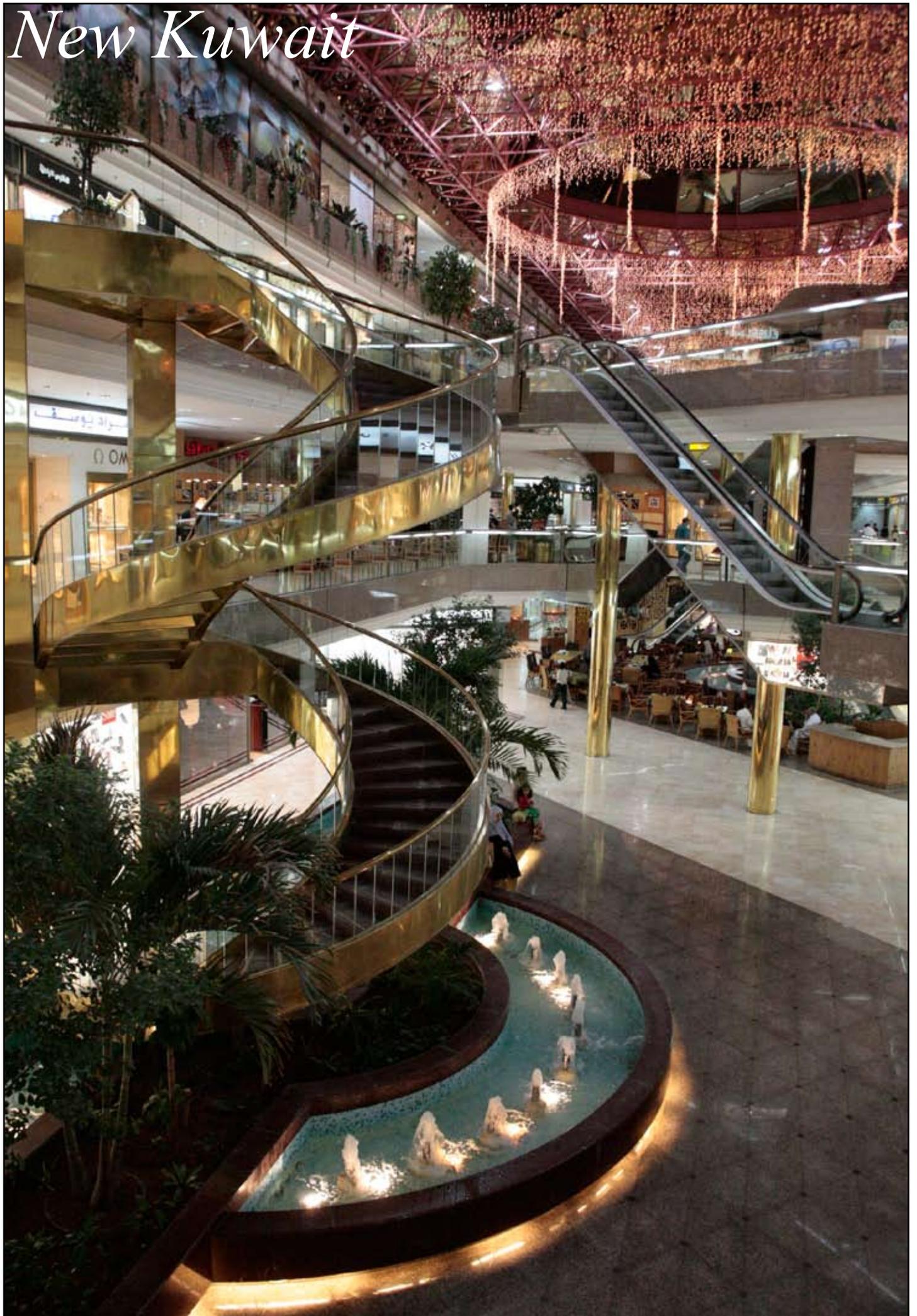
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Various shops at the marketplace with a mosque in the background. Kuwait, 5 January 1948.

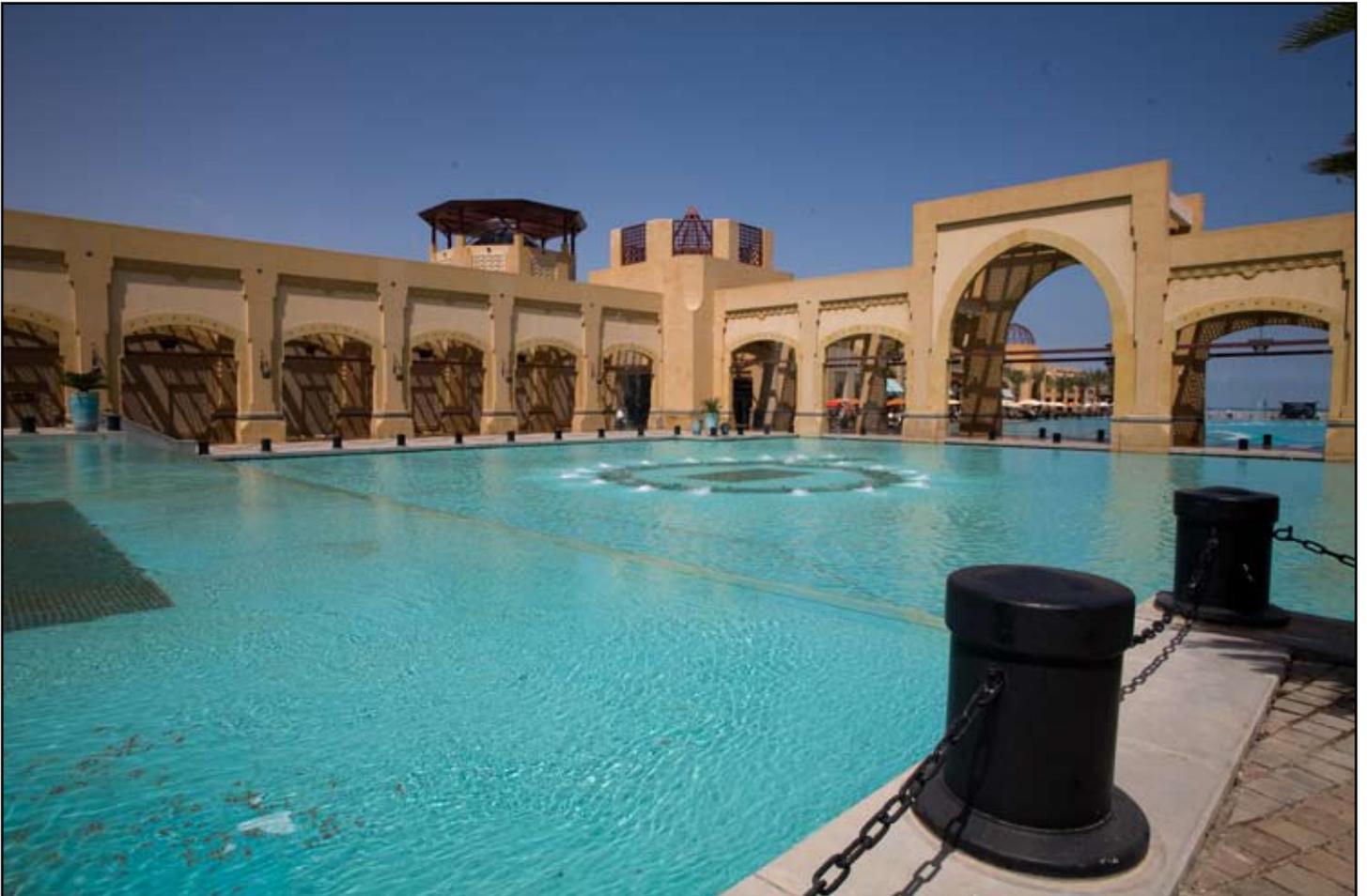
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New Kuwait





Previous page: Inside one of the many spectacular shopping malls in modern Kuwait.
Above: Marina Mall, Kuwait.
Below: A Mall in Fahaheel, a short journey from Kuwait City Kuwait.
(I took these photographs in 2007).



Typhoon ‘Emong’ hits our family home

On 7 May, we received word that our family home in the Philippines had been hit by Typhoon ‘Emong’. The typhoon ripped the roof from the house and a great deal of damage was caused by the subsequent torrent of rain that could then sweep inside. We can thank God that no one in the family was hurt, although over 30 people were killed in total - and many more injured. The typhoon has caused an immense number of people to be displaced from their homes. Our family is sleeping inside the local church - one of the few properly constructed buildings in the area. We received the photographs below from Grace’s cousin, Maribel, on 13 May 2009. Your prayers for the family would be very much appreciated.



Photograph above: Grace’s brother, Romel, and his family live in the building on the left, whilst the main family home where her parents live is in the background on the right. As you can see, there isn’t much left of the roof on either building. More photographs of the family home below.



Note: The shining light in the photograph above is a reflection of the sunset glinting on the glass of the window. There is no electricity in the area as all the power lines are down and will be for some time to come. Water is available from the well.

Left: Another view of Romel’s home.

(All photographs by Maribel (Avelino) Sosa, Grace’s cousin)



Editorial Ramblings

I have found this newsletter extremely difficult to put together. I didn't know what to include or exclude. Please forgive me if you think I've got it wrong.

We have had a very difficult few weeks. In chronological order, I've been quite unwell since Good Friday and have remained away from work for more than five weeks. This included a brief spell in hospital with bronchitis. The doctor tells me I'm likely to remain unwell for some weeks to come, although he's said I can return to work, part-time, from 18 May. Then, we received the news about David, which was a terrible shock, as you will have already read. Following this, our family home in the Philippines was hit by the typhoon and we are doing what little we can to get the repairs carried out as quickly as material and labour become available - bearing in mind that thousands of other homes need similar repairs. The main factor was that no one in our family was injured. We've lost many of our possessions - but most of these can be replaced.

In a few weeks time (on 25 June), it will be my 60th birthday. I was going to have a party and include some of our family from the Philippines and Qatar, as well as friends and family from other far away places as guests. Sadly, I have decided that this will not now happen. Too many sad events have occurred that are not conducive to partying. We are just trying to do our best for those who have been most affected by these events. We did throw a little party for Little Lad who was 4 years old on 10 May (*below*), but this was already planned and arranged before our lives were thrown into disarray.

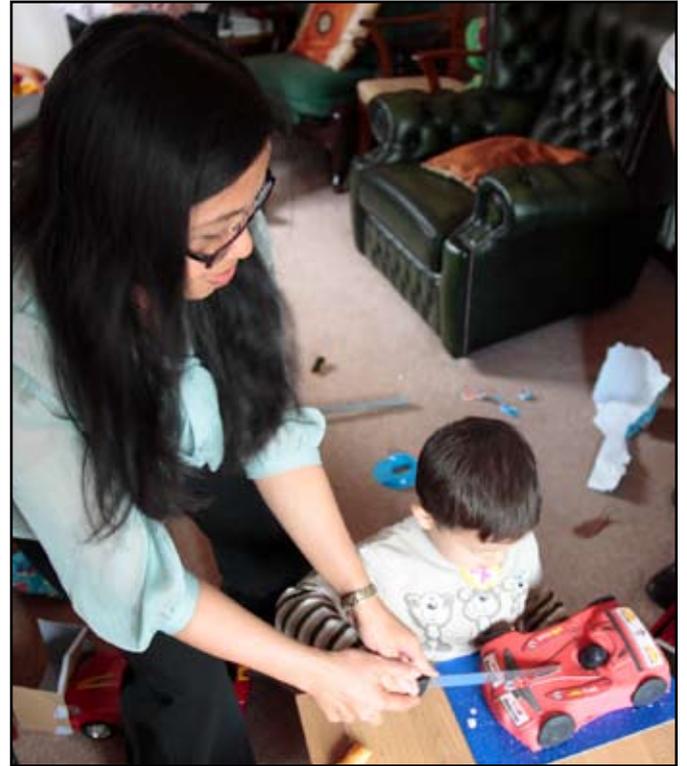
As I conclude these ramblings at the end of the month, I am delighted, and very relieved, to be able to report that I'm feeling much better and the few rays of sunshine we've had have contributed to my well-being. So much so that (on 24th) we ventured out for a day by the beach and in the mountains in the southern part of the Snowdonia National Park. How nice it would have been to have had a caravan on the tow-hook! Anyway, we really enjoyed our day out in an area that none of us had ever been to before.

However, all is still not well, as now (30th) Little Lad is very unwell and seems to be suffering from the same affliction as I've been enduring all this time. Let's pray that he recovers quickly. Today, 30 May, would have been my mother's birthday. How she would have loved the Spring flowers. Spring was her favourite season.

Photograph (by Grace) during John's birthday party (below): L to R Back row: Peter, John, Christina, Alan, Shirley, Wilma. Front row: Lawrence, Jocelyn, John (JP).



Birthday Boy - 4 years of age



*Above left: Our Birthday Boy, John (JP).
Above right: Grace and John cutting the cake.
Right: John and Shirley behind Lawrence and John.
Below: Jordon and John (JP).*



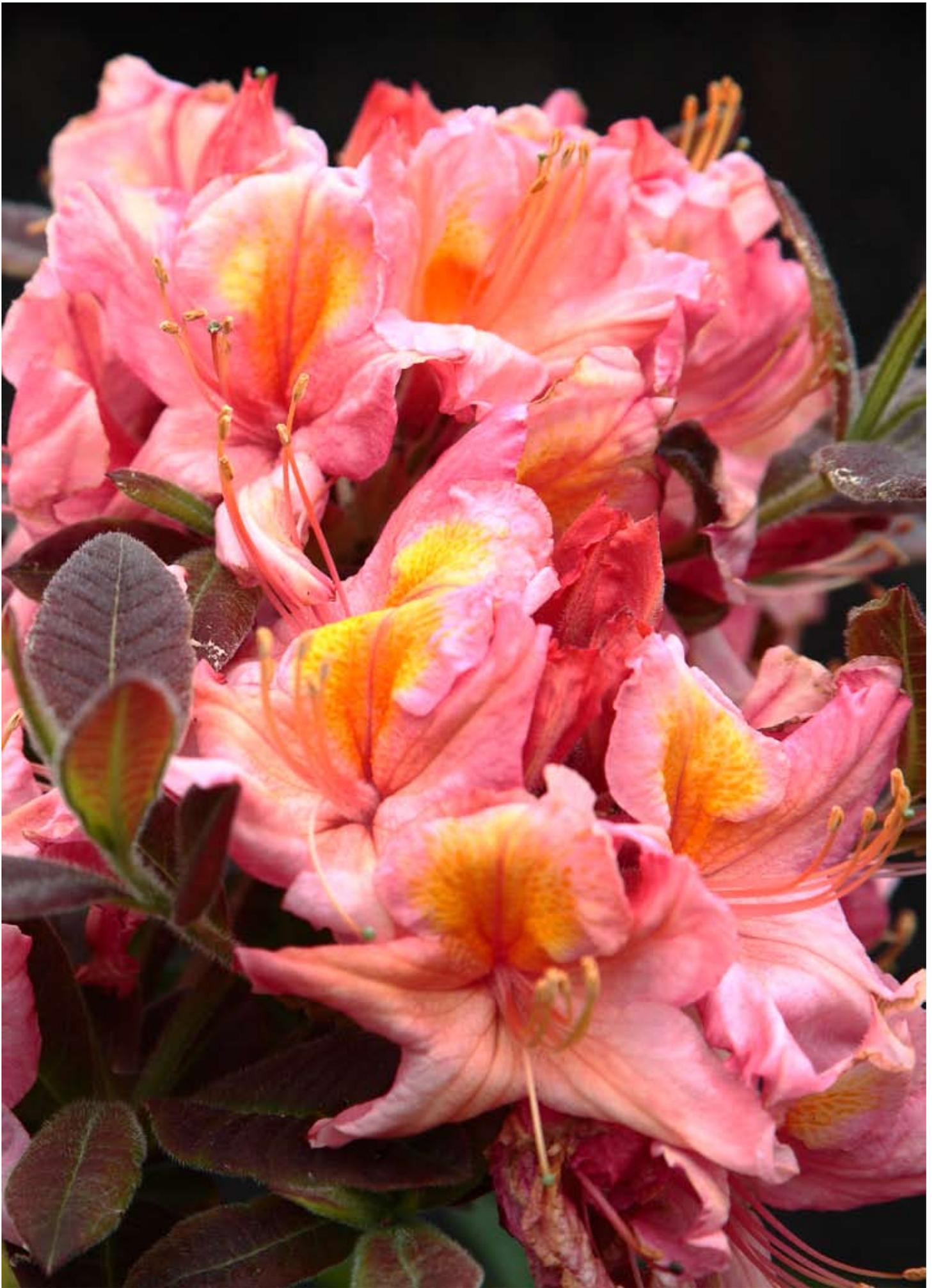
What is a picture worth?

As far as I can recall, it is exactly 40 years since I started taking photographs seriously. I'd probably have done so before, but money was always very short. As a youngster I'd been fascinated with photography, using my father's cheap plastic box to take photographs whenever I got the opportunity. I'd even had a toy camera whilst still a school boy in shorts that took something resembling a recognisable image. As an apprentice I wanted to do something other than work and bought a second-hand 35 mm adjustable camera for, I think, £9:00. It was a Halina 35x Super. I'd had to pay for it with a hire-purchase agreement that cost me 4/6d (22.5p) per week. My first roll of film was a major expense 29/11d - the equivalent of almost £1.50. This was a 36 exposure roll of Agfa CT18 transparency film with the processing pre-paid. Throughout that first weekend of ownership I read all I could get my hands on to find out how to use this new instrument and about photography in general. It was so basic. Not even a light meter with which to set the exposure. I used the paper that came with the film that told me what settings to use in various lighting conditions and that was it. Most of those first photographs turned out OK. I was so pleased. My mother suggested that I went to evening classes to study more. I attended the classes taught by Mary Allen for two years - one or two evenings per week. Mary was a well known portrait photographer who wrote at least two books on the subject. She almost never worked in colour, but her monochrome portraits were very special. She was with me in the darkroom when I processed my first roll of black and white film (Ilford FP3) and her enthusiasm was touching - she was just as excited by my film turning out well as I was - and this was a late-middle aged lady who'd been working as a photographer for most of her life. She taught me how to make black and white prints and was just as enthusiastic as the image came through on the paper in the developing tray. She was an inspiration to everyone in the class. I, with my cheap camera right through to a wealthy man with a Hassleblad - something I didn't even know existed at that time - and way into the land of fantasy as far as my budget was concerned. But Mary didn't care that I'd only got a cheap camera. It was the photograph that counted. She was no camera snob. To this day, I have no idea of what equipment she used for her photography. It wasn't important. Only the results were what counted. The classes were, in the main, very informal with most people doing whatever they chose under Mary's guidance. We all had a great time and it became an enduring passion for me. Sad to say, perhaps, but I'm not a very good photographer, but that doesn't really matter. The great thing is that

I really enjoy doing what I can with my camera. To me, it is great FUN! Of course, it would be nice to be another Ansel Adams, but it isn't really important. It is the sheer enjoyment that I get from photography that makes it my passion - and makes it all worthwhile.

Of course, photography is so much cheaper for me now (in real terms - proportional to my income) than it used to be. I used to spend almost every penny of my income on my photography and still didn't have anything that was top of the line. I sometimes got near to reasonable equipment by buying second-hand at about half the cost it would be when new, but it was many years before I could buy good equipment - although still not top of the pile. The advent of digital photography made the purchase cost of cameras soar through the roof. A really good film camera could be bought for a few hundred pounds not so long ago, certainly less than £1000, whereas a good digital camera costs several thousands of pounds - and still does. The main problem with going digital is that expensive equipment becomes obsolete very quickly and is worth almost nothing on the second-hand market. When film was the only medium, good cameras never really became obsolete and would always command sensible prices even when getting on a bit. The only good thing is that the running costs of a digital camera are so much less than film cameras.

The real problem associated with digital photography is storing your images. There is NOTHING that can be used to reliably store your digital images! Isn't that shocking? But it is true. Negatives will keep for well over a century if they've been processed properly and stored sensibly. The mediums used to store digital images are all unreliable in even the fairly short term of a few years. CD/DVD/Blu-Ray/Hard drives are ALL unreliable - increasingly so as manufacturers bring down prices and increase storage capacities. So what are we going to do with all our precious digital photographs? I have no idea - beyond keep making many back-ups on as many mediums as possible (at least every year) and keeping as many as you can on TWO hard drives (preferably in a RAID 1 configuration). What a chore that is. But how many photographs have been lost already? What are our photographs really worth? How much effort must we exert to keep those we haven't lost already? Digital photography could cost the world a record of it's history. I've taken over 26,000 digital photographs in less than three years. I wonder how many I can still see - let alone keep for my grandchildren and our family history.



Photograph by Grace - taken in our garden.



taken in our garden.