

Camel Tracks



March/April
2010

A world away, next door

by Deb Bard

With so many grand sights of Pyramids, the Sphinx, Alexandria, the Mediterranean, Khan Al-Khalili and endless museums and historic mosques, where should I start? Well, these sights cannot compare to what left me with the deepest and most lasting impression, the people.



Egyptian People, Lesson #1: They are a world away from us, but right next door. There are so many cultural differences, but when I look past all that, we are the same.

Keeping it Professional

by Racheal Wallace

One day past or future, you may be asked to perform in a restaurant or other venue away from the comfort of our studio. This opportunity should be treated with the utmost professionalism. Part one of our role is a fantasy. Keep in mind that you are portraying the audience's idea of a belly dancer. Show up in costume, with full makeup and hair. Dazzle the audience, interacting with them. Keep it clean and light hearted and flirt just a little. Wear a cover up after the performance. Save the costume for the show only. Then leave just as mysteriously as you came in, in your cover up. It is important for the audience to not see you in jeans and a t shirt. Make them believe this is what you do for a living.

You must always remember that it is a job. Part two of our job is to represent all "belly dancers" with integrity. This means showing up on time or early, honoring time and financial agreements and generally carrying oneself as a professional. Follow all of our studio's professional rules: no gum chewing, wear panties, have an appropriate costume, etc. I would add no smoking, drinking, swearing or other frowned upon behaviors in the establishment in which you are dancing. It is also important to tailor your performance to the audience. For example, Arab audiences may not like Turkish music and restaurant performances should be upbeat and mobile. If your dancing is fantastic, but you break the rules of professionalism, you can quickly damage your reputation as well as the reputation of the dancer community. I always try to keep these two roles in mind during performances outside the studio and use them as a baseline. So far, it has kept me out of trouble.



This was most evident our last night in Cairo. Memo, a merchant near the Pyramids of Giza, invited us to dinner at his home. He and his wife, Salwa, have 7 children. They are a more traditional Muslim family with the girls wearing headscarves and Selma wearing the niqab. The niqab is a black dress that covers everything from head to toe with just a small slit for the eyes. She wore all but the face covering in our presence.

We were met at the door of the massive old home by one of the young daughters who had a big smile, a big hello, and shook hands with each of us. We ate with Memo in a family room Arabic style at a low table and sitting on pillows. Salwa and the daughters laid out a feast before us. Salad, lamb, lentils, potatoes, vegetables, a noodle dish which translated into English as "bird tongues" for obvious reasons, and the ever present round flat bread, eish baladi. Salwa and the children ate elsewhere as is the tradition. After dinner, they all joined us again. We talked, laughed, watched the baby grandson, Yusif, entertain, and sipped helba, the best tea I've ever had.

Sara, 18, had a great curiosity about the US and us, particularly about dating and relationships. She said she learned English by watching English TV shows with Arabic subtitles. She spoke it quite well. Grey's Anatomy is her favorite and she is a big Patrick Dempsey fan. She also adores Jennifer Lopez. Sara gave Aegela a lesson on how to put on and wear the headscarf. I believe that if Aegela had room in her luggage, she would have packed Sara up and brought her back here.



Before we left, we requested a family picture. Salwa put her face covering on and with a sense of humor, did her ghost impersonation, "Ooooooo...". When goodbyes came, Salwa, in her limited English, said "I love you." to each of us. A world away, but right next door.

Aegela Centers for Middle Eastern Dance

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Publisher-Aegela ~ Editor-Racheal Wallace

www.aegela.com ~ aegela@mindspring.com ~ (517) 918-9547

Flea Agora with Carmine!



Aegela and the Mystic Lotus ladies are hard at work planning another Belly Flea Agora March 27! Carmine Guida will be here as a special guest for the event. Carmine is a renowned musician, teacher and performer based in New York. One of his many musical projects is studio favorite, Djinn. Carmine will teach a drum workshop and a class for communication between dancers and drummers and working together.

The Flea Agora will also feature dancing, wares for sale, a massage area, and a Promoting You table. Admission is \$10. Contact Aegela to reserve a table or sign up to dance.

Have You Heard?

Durant Charles Smith was born Saturday, February 13 at 2:03 p.m. to Sara and Todd Smith.



Durant weighed 6 lb 5 oz. and was 20.5 inches long. Durant joins sisters Annabelle and Layla. Congrats Smith Family!

Camel Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	2	3	4 Sandra Garrett's Birthday	5 Mare Brown's Birthday	6	7
8	9 Niki Lehmann's and Katie Suter's Birthday	10	11	12	13	14
15 Catherine Gray's Birthday	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 Missy Wilson and Ashley Smith's Birthday	25 Dawn Humphrey's Birthday	26	27 Belly Flea Agora with Carmine Guida	28
29	30	31				

March 2010

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Candace Byington's Birthday	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 Carrie Cannon's Birthday	17	18
19 Elif Erturk's Birthday	20	21 Kim Myer's Birthday	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 Deb Bard's Birthday	30		

April 2010

Mystic Lotus welcomed another dancer! Melissa Benjamin gave birth to Lilianna Marie-Rose Benjamin at 8:02a.m., on Friday, December 25th. What a great Christmas gift! At birth, Lilianna was 7 pounds 8 ounces, and 21-1/2 inches tall. Melissa reports she is thriving, a great nurser and has the sweetest facial expressions! Congrats Benjamin family!



Catherine Gray had another article published! Her second article, "Nurses and Computerized Systems: Is 'Hands-On' Most Helpful?" was featured in Nursing Management's January issue. Congrats Catherine!

Cheryl Johnson's great grandmother, Augre Coleman Wise, passed away December 12, 2009. Her grandmother, Maxine Wise Jennings, passed away December 29, 2009. Cheryl said, "Although this was a very difficult time for my family and myself, it was made... easier for me by my dance friends. Imagine my surprise, when I look up at the visitation to see my fellow dancers there for me. My text message inbox was full of sympathy notes. There were calls, and there were hugs. Lots of hugs." Our deepest sympathies go out to Cheryl and her family.