

Dave's Egyptian Tour

My wife, Sandra, likes surprises.

She likes to be surprised.

And, she likes to surprise others.

Last October, I got an email from her while at work. The subject line was "Daily Cryptogram" and the message said:

24 21 12 5 16 12 26 22 10 1 10 24 26 16 25 23 10 18 23 22

24 12 19 1 6 12 15 15 24 15 3 12 1 12 10 13 18

Hmmm, it looked like a substitution cipher. A couple minutes later I had it figured out:

I have a surprise for you.

I am planning a party.

Being as my 50th birthday was coming up in a few months, I can't say I was terribly surprised.



A mile from Cairo, no chiropractors in sight

Over the coming days and weeks I received a number of additional cryptograms. She wouldn't say what exactly she was planning, or where, but she let me know that I should schedule two weeks of vacation in February. Luckily, I had a couple weeks in the bank and didn't have any schedule conflicts in the timeframe she requested. She was taking care of the planning. All I had to do was sit back, relax, and wait for the surprise. And what a surprise it turned out to be!

We left Dallas on Saturday afternoon and walked off the plane at the airport in Cairo, Egypt, almost 24 hours later. I've been very interested in Egypt for years, and had just completed reading a rather large book (chock full of great photos!) on ancient Egyptian history. I'm guessing Sandra got the idea for the surprise trip because for months, while she was falling asleep, I was staying up reading about the amazing society and culture of the Egyptian dynasties. I would turn to her to marvel with me about something I had just read. So, the trip to Egypt was a great surprise from her, and a fabulous way to celebrate my birthday.



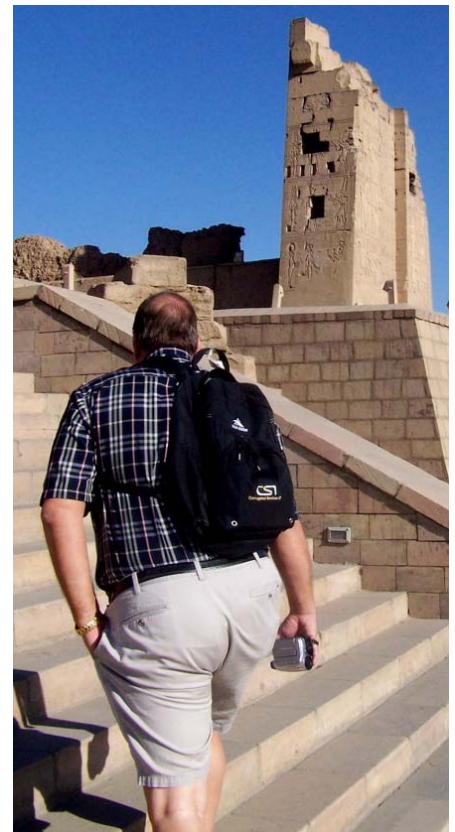
Chillin' on the Nile



Surrounded by beauty at Hatshepsut's Palace

We spent ten days in Egypt, starting with a couple days in Cairo, followed by a flight to extreme southern Egypt, then a cruise down the Nile on board a ship that docked each day, allowing us to visit many, many ancient Egyptian temples. We walked through temples at Abu Simbel, Edfu, Kom-Ombo, and Luxor.

We went deep underground in several tombs in the Valley of the Kings; walked the painted halls of Hatshepsut's Palace; and felt very small in the Great Hypostyle Hall of Karnak, with its massive 80-foot tall columns. Our guide explained that 100 people could stand on each column, and that it takes twelve people holding hands to surround one. We returned to Cairo for a few more days, including a drive down to Alexandria, where we went scuba diving on the ruins of the Pharos lighthouse, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. We got to climb up inside the interior passages of Khufu's (Cheop's) pyramid at Giza, where we saw his burial chamber and red granite sarcophagus. His sarcophagus is still in the chamber because it is too big to fit through the door – which means that it was put into the burial chamber as the pyramid was being built, years



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before it would be needed. For a final fling, Sandra and I played a round of golf at the base of the Giza pyramids. To be honest, it wasn't much of a golf course ~ hard to grow decent grass in the desert- but oh, what a view!

This was truly the trip of a lifetime, one I know I will remember forever. While there, we took over 1,200 photos and six hours of video. I've put the best of the photos on a website ~ you're welcome to view them at

<http://gallery.mac.com/dnelson58#gallery>.

The Quick Tour slideshow will take about four minutes, the other three slideshows take about twenty minutes each.



Floating over Pharos Lighthouse building blocks

Sandra gave me the best surprise birthday present I've ever had. Now, I'm left contemplating how to top that for her 50th. The good news is that I have a couple years to plan...