

News From The Homefront

December 11, 2019

A tall man, documentaries, and a newborn baby. That sums up what my brain-fogged mind can remember of the long travel to get to Port Hedland from New Mexico. On the 15-hour flight from Los Angeles to Sydney, I sat by a man who was quite tall. It came in handy because I was tired and kept dozing and he was able to step over me to get to the aisle when he needed to. I noticed it once and dozed again and was happy that I didn't have to move being in the aisle seat. On the second leg or flight, I felt blessed to find a few documentaries to watch and pass the time. On the last flight, Frank and I sat by a couple who had two girls and a newborn baby. We heard the stewardess ask her if she had gone to Perth to deliver her and she said, yes. She was days old and quite tiny. Newborns are amazing to watch. Her sisters were proud of her, and on landing one said, "She never cried even one time." 😊

As we started to land, I noticed what Frank said about the area and how it was both a desert and slightly tropical along the ocean. It is scrub brush just meters away from water. My first glimpse of the town was at the airport and I felt I was back in Port Moresby. It was dilapidated and small, although it is designated as an international airport.

There were quite a few workers there that are called, FIFO, that stands for "fly in and fly out." But there were also families because a lot of the ones who have jobs here don't want to be separated for the two weeks while on the job in Port Hedland.

There are two main industries that we have found out about so far. The main one is a huge iron ore production from quite a few mines, and the other one is a salt production. Frank loves to spot a ship coming into the port and look at its flag and then see what country is loading one of these two exports. Here lately, he found a website that tells about all the ships in the world. He now tells me if they are from Hong Kong or wherever and how much cargo they can hold, whether I want to know or not. 😊

The iron ore is reddish in color and quite dusty. We cannot walk from our vehicle in the underground parking area to our front door without the bottom of our shoes being dirty. Frank even bought an outside broom to sweep the walkway, but it doesn't help that much. It is something we are adjusting to. Re: removing our outside shoes as we walk in and putting on different shoes. I used to tease and think that Frank didn't know what a closet was for such as for shoes, but now we have quite a few shoes, including mine, by our front door.

We are starting to learn the history of Port Hedland and this area of Australia. As I mentioned concerning the airport, the town is the same. It is an older town that is somewhat dilapidated and needs a little attention, but it is okay. We feel safe and that is a blessing. The main store here is one K-Mart.

Our new living quarters is a furnished apartment that is about 350 square feet. I think this is the smallest place that we have ever lived. But I love organizing, and it is working out and it feels satisfying to figure out how to arrange things to make it feel roomier and not as cluttered. The only thing that made me smile is Frank found toilet paper on sale and he stashed the big package on an open shelf above the refrigerator. A nice decoration.



An odd thing is our bedroom door has a glass windowpane almost the size of the door. It made us wonder who would put a door like that on a bedroom or anywhere inside a housing unit. Perhaps it was on sale as they were building.

Frank is looking for meeting places and we hope to get services up and going as soon as possible. God has given us several opportunities already to talk to people and Frank has been able to say he is a Baptist missionary/pastor. So far, no one was offended, and some even became talkative. One man named Abdul wanted to hear and then tell about his life in Australia and his family in Pakistan. Another Australian, who was about our age, wanted to tell us about his dad who served in WW-II. He was captured by the Germans two months before the war ended. He said his dad was from the USA but married an Australian lady. He came back here to reside, and because of the war trauma he experienced he never wanted to leave this country. However, in his older age, he was talked into going back to the USA to visit his family. When he came back home, his family were shocked that he came off the plane wearing a cowboy hat and designer jeans. I wanted to ask if he had visited Texas. 😊

December 21, 2019

On organizing our closet, I gasped and noticed that Frank did not have any church shoes. He brought church clothes from our storage shed, but not shoes. I did a quick Google search of Port Hedland for shoe stores and the first thing that popped up was K-Mart and then a thrift store. I told Frank that I didn't realize that K-Mart was going to be our "go to" store. He found some that will work for a time. God is gracious in these matters.

After arriving, Frank asked if I wanted to go down the elevator. We live on the first floor. (The ground floor has several businesses.) I hadn't been on it before and wondered what it was like. The first thing I noticed was that stuff had spilled on the floor, and then the red iron ore dust had stuck to it. It needed washed out, but then tomorrow it could

be the same. I guess that is why few wash their vehicles or clean off their balconies. After riding in the elevator a few times, I noticed the music is the same stanza of *Fur Elise* by Beethoven. I now start humming it as I step in. 😊

The main garage door to the complex has been broken for over a week now. It looks as though someone tried to fix it as it is now $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way down. Although again, this area doesn't feel as dangerous as it did in Port Moresby. What bothered me more was huge signs down by the port where we take our walk that said, "Beware of what you are breathing! The iron ore is killing us. Stop the trade." It made Frank and me stop and then wonder if we should look up this fact.

Frank tried to contact the town council to enquire about more meeting places for rent. He found out that the council was suspended by the Western Australian government due to in-fighting. A new election will be held after the new year.

December 25, 2019

Now we know why this area resembles an arid desert in some ways. The temperature got up to 116.6 degrees. I read the record high for this area was 120 degrees.

There is a small beach across the road from our apartment complex. Before, we have enjoyed wading in the ocean from time to time and went down to inspect the area. We noticed a sandy spot where the tide comes in beyond the mangrove trees. As we walked farther along, we saw a huge replica of a crocodile and thought it was odd that it was there for decoration. Then we saw a sign that said no wading or swimming as there are crocodiles in the water. Then it dawned us that they like to hang around mangrove trees. Another sign asked people to fill out a paper and deposit it in the box below if they saw any wildlife in the area, as they were keeping track of it. I wondered how many crocodiles had been spotted in our area.

Last but not least. Frank asked me if I had given away the Singapore money that we had in a Ziplock bag in the back of our file cabinet. I said no. Thus, the only thing that we were robbed of in our storage shed was the Singapore money. It wasn't enough to go to the bank and exchange because most of it would be taken up by fees. Thus, we were waiting to find friends heading that way. Now the problem is solved, and we don't have to be concerned about what to do with it anymore. Someone else can exchange it. 😊

Blessings to each one.

A friend in Christ, Cyd James