

Weather Reports... January 22, 2006



*View from my office window.
fog was starting to wear on me.*

Worse, it closed the airport. Everyone heading anywhere from here – and most ex-pats do head somewhere during the holidays – either had to re-ticket for the trip, drive about three hours north to Gyumri (site of the 1988 earthquake that killed 25,000 and from which people are still trying to recover) or drive seven hours north to Tbilisi, Georgia.

In all that fog, there was an occasional “snow fall.” You’d wake up, see all that grey but also see some snow. Or at least crystals on the branches.

Probably the worst part of the whole weather scene and grounded airplanes is that there was no mail.

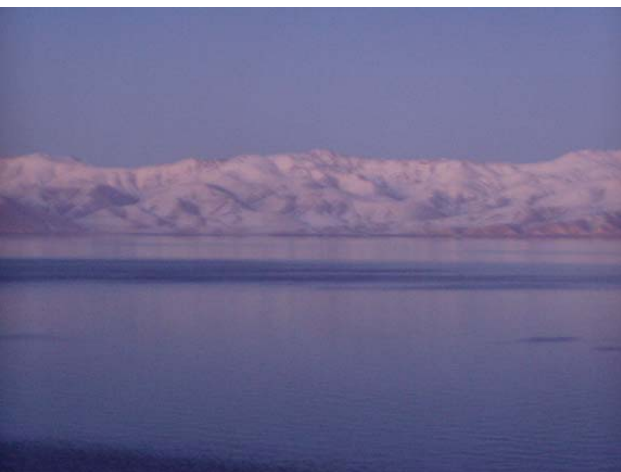
Rumor had it that there was a ton – I mean 2,000 pounds – of mail for the U.S. Embassy alone.

Normally, this wouldn’t have bothered me except friends Pastor Dianne Vielhuber, teacher Mary Edwards and communicator Cheri Johnson each told me to be on the lookout for a package. My mother also sent cards for me and for the UMCOR staff.

At first, I thought maybe they’d show up before our Christmas. Then I was hoping they’d arrive by New Year’s Eve. When they didn’t arrive by then, I knew not to look for anything until January 9. That’s because the entire country basically closes down from New Year’s Eve until their orthodox or traditional Christmas on January 5/6. (More about these holiday traditions in a separate article.)



Mt. Ararat from my office window.



Lake Sevan at sunset.

Back to the weather...

By western Christmas on December 24/25, the snow here was gone. I was kind of hoping it would stick around so it would feel like the holidays. Yet, I could also see the beauty in not having things be too similar to home. After all, I was miles from home, called home to wish good cheer to folks, but also knew there was a part of me that would miss some of the preparations in connection with the holidays.



Secular program at Marriott.

Marriott and another by the Gyumri orphanage in Komitas Music Hall. And I had a few small gifts I gave to people during our Christmas.

By Armenian standards, the weather has been cold. By Wisconsin standards, its more like a chilly fall. My landlord put in a gas heater, but I only turn it on every few days since the apartment isn't really that much colder than my house back in Wisconsin. (The exception to this was when I was sick during the first half of January. That, too, is another story.)



Religious program at Komitas

In fact, my December bills – gas (heater and stove), water, phone and electricity – totaled 12,500 drams. That's about \$28. Hripsime, the receptionist at UMCOR, thinks I'm very thrifty. I said that way I have more money available to make tasty little treats like apple crisp and peanut butter balls (and, yes, I have a whole story about cooking here!)



Playground time across from my house.

Both last Friday, January 20, and again today, January 23, it finally actually snowed. It was wonderful to behold, though we left the UMCOR office early because the roads aren't very good. In fact, just getting a few plows in here with some salt rather than gravel or ashes would do a lot to help all the bald-tired cars make it up all these hills.

The kids are the best to watch. Behind my building in the "alley," they scraped the snow down to the icy road and they're doing belly flops down the slippery slope. On the cobberstone sidewalks, all



Christmas in Republic Square

colors. There's texture and drama. Against Lake Sevan or a crisp blue sky, you just stand in awe and realize God is a powerful force in our lives.

Story and Photos by

Pamela J. Karg, Individual Volunteer in Mission

At the United Methodist Committee on Relief NGO

Yerevan, Armenia

P.S. Finally this week, I figured out the weather patterns here...I think. My friend Edgar told me that whatever weather they have in Moscow, Armenia gets it a few days later. I watch the evening news and they show the weather, but I don't understand enough to figure out if it's today's highs and lows or tomorrow's projections. Thus, until learning about the Moscow connection, I've simply gone out on my balcony each day before getting dressed to drink my Armenian coffee and try to decide what the weather may hold for the day.

the missing stones are now filled with snow and the kids take small sleds to race down the hill. In the center near the Opera House, they installed an ice skating pond where you can rent skates for 1,000 drams an hour (\$2.25).

Besides the kids, it's absolutely wonderful to see the mountains and the drama God can create in them. Any other time, everything looks so brown and visually flat. But with snow, the peaks and valleys take on light and dark

