

the kitchen staff essentially cooks 2 meals per meal! The Togolese here practically outnumber us "blancos"!

● The typical Togolese food is pâte & sauce, or fufu and sauce - and that seems to be about it. Fufu-making is a time-consuming process, and a real ritual.

Special wooden fufu stands & pounders are ~~wooden~~ used.

Shaped a bit like mortar & pestal, the stands are flat-topped, with a depression in the center, where the fufu is pounded. Fufu is made from cooked ignames, enormous tubers with white, starchy flesh. This cooked flesh is then pounded with wooden pounders for quite some time. The result is a gooey, starchy white blob, which is actually rather tasty. While the fufu is pounded, the pounders (there are usually two), sing songs.

Another favorite local concoction is Tchouk, a fermented, beer-like drink made from millet. Certain women in each village are Tchouk-makers, and this skill is passed on to their daughters. To find out where

to buy Tchouk in a village, look for small aluminium pots, or marmites, along the road in front of their house. Tchouk is made in enormous pots, and must cook for 2 days, so traditionally, this consumes a lot of wood. Building a longa stove for Tchouk can save a lot of money / wood, and can reduce cooking time.

The weather has been very sultry, so I was thrilled when the rains began seriously today, and the temperature dropped. The moon was full Monday night, and just as pretty as anywhere!

~~the~~ Thursday July 4

Today is the 4th of July, so we had a small afternoon celebration, with sack races and relays.

Gary, Mike, & I were in the process of building our 2nd stove, however, so didn't participate.

It's been raining seriously for 3 days now, and lets up for a few hours only now & then.

It's a warm rain, though

The rain has brought cooler temperatures. We've been sleeping so much better. Our room is a

● real heat trap, with poor air circulation.

The other day 3 of us stopped by to visit the local clinic. It is run by 7 French & Dutch nuns/nurses. Most have been working in Africa for many years. The clinic is ~~an~~ a rambling series of clean, cement-block buildings. It is supportedly, except for 3 employees, entirely by the nuns' congregations.

● The main users of the clinic appeared to be pregnant women. The Togolese midwife showed us the "postpartum wards", where women recuperate with their babies after birth. The babies were adorable, and very tiny. The average weight here is only 2.5 kilos, or about 5½ pounds. The nurses said we could come to watch a birth if we'd like - I think that would be wonderful!

● Today we built our second stove, on our own.

It took a while, but was lots of fun, and turned out

great - we got good & dirty.

Land use here in Togo - all land is theoretically owned by the government. I am very interested in learning more about traditional land use in villages - how is land passed on, how is new land opened up, is land "owned".

We've had some cross-cultural classes, and have learned some Togolese do's & don't's: for example, never use the left hand for eating, waving, or shaking hands; never smell food or sniff kitchen aromas - this is an insult; salutations are extremely important - never enter directly into a business transaction, but chit-chat first; show respect for elders by bowing slightly, and cupping right forearm in left hand when shaking hands; don't whistle or sweep at night - this is thought to attract snakes.

I've always heard that women in the 3rd world grow old very fast because they work so hard & have so

many children. Yet the women I've seen often look very young - even the ones who aren't. Pauline,

our cook, is 45, and looks 30. I think the weather here must be easy on skin - wrinkles aren't that common. People chew on special sticks instead of toothbrushes, and most have pretty decent teeth. What strikes me most about the women are their radiant, girlish smiles - really attractive. The Togolese people are ~~an~~ very strong physically. Women, children,

or men walk for miles often carrying 50 or more pounds on their heads. It's really cute to see a little 3 year old trundling behind his mother, carrying a ^{small} chunk of firewood on his head.

Saturday July 6

Today we drove to Atakpané to visit the "other half" of the trainees. The landscape along the main road is lovely; green & lush, with fields of corn, tall grasses, & tropical trees.

Every few miles is a cluster of huts or a small village, and groups of people carrying every conceivable type of thing on their heads.

Atakpamé is attractive overall, with rusty red tin roofs, and houses clustered together in a low valley, and climbing the surrounding hills. Within the maze of houses, however, it felt crowded & dirty. It's a good-sized town, and is bustling with noise & activity. The market spreads in 4 directions along a main intersection, and is a real madhouse of crowded stalls, and honking vehicles. Atakpamé sports several "real" stores, where we were able to purchase such luxuries as chocolate, wine, books.

Otherwise, our visit to 'Atak. wasn't too thrilling. The trainees there live in a large old school. During the year it's a private catholic girls' school. The dormitory is a series of tiny, windowless cubbyholes with sagging metal cots. The building is where they eat, sleep, study, etc. There is really no yard. It felt cold, sterile and somber to me. Echoing cement.

It makes me really appreciate
Pagala.

The roads here are truly the
arteries of ~~the~~ life. goods & people
travel them by foot, cycle,
car or truck, villages cluster
along them. They also serve as food
& clothes drying racks. They are
fairly clean, & readily absorb
heat, for drying things quickly,
yet much food is lost to
animals, wind, insects, rain,
truck tires! It's bizarre to
mount a hilltop & find a row
of clothes spread out into the
road itself.

Driving here is hazardous
at best. Animals roam
freely, and love to dart out in
front of vehicles, trucks & taxis
often stop in the middle of the
road, at the top of a hill,
clothes, people, & bicycles appear
in the most unexpected places.

The topsoil here in Togo is
very shallow, often only 3 or 4 inches
Underlying this are often lateritic
clays. If exposed, due to
erosion, construction, etc., it
then takes into rock hard, red
fragments upon which nothing
will grow. It takes hundreds of

years for these exposed clays to once again become fertile soil. Tropical soils are extremely fragile.

But along the sides of the asphalt road, the strips of exposed red clay make lovely contrasting ribbons of color against the brilliant greens beyond.

The teak trees are in blossom now, with large, inflorescences of tiny white flowers. They look like slightly yellowed old lace from a distance. The woods here are varied, and often gorgeous hardwoods, such as teak. The carpenters make beautiful furniture with hand tools.

Wednesday July 10

Things have been going pretty well for a few days. I've had time to catch up on letters, sewing, French, and some interesting readings on agriculture and development. Wrote a long letter to Ghana - 10 pages! I've been feeling kind of lonely here, and writing letters helps me connect with my friends. The folks in Ghana, because they're closer

physically, and because I've seen them more recently than my other friends, seem more of a support system. However, I haven't heard from anyone yet. The problem with letters is that the response ~~takes~~ is delayed, which is decidedly less satisfying than immediate feedback. For a few days after writing a letter, I feel tense & eager, wondering when it will arrive, when I will get a reply. I can imagine how delighted I would be to receive a 10-page letter, and hope the feeling is mutual! Sometimes I feel I just endure the days, not really excited about what I'm doing, but plodding along obediently, fearful of losing momentum. I hate myself for it, but I've begun counting the days till I get out of here (training) yet I'm worried that if I'm not happy now it's my own fault, and I may not be happy even after stage. I long for a house, with furniture, my own kitchen (I haven't had my own kitchen for nearly a year), hopefully a garden. I haven't really made any friends here.

Most everyone is quite young - 75% ~~of~~ are under 25, and just out of college. Partying seems to be popular. Also, our houses are spread apart, and each household seems to hang out separately together. Also, except for our house, all the others are non-co-ed, so it's hard for Mike & I to go visiting. I don't really feel that comfortable visiting, anyway.

Our household includes Mike, myself, and Tadox & Phil, 2 fisheries volunteers. Tadox is pretty quiet and studious, and our household isn't very sociable. The daily routine consists of breakfast, class, snack, class, lunch, class, snack, class, one hour break, dinner, and 2 hours before bed. "Free" time is either non-existent or ^(rarely) too existent. There are 5 or 6 old-timers on the staff, whom I like infinitely more than my fellow trainees. Yet they live an existence a bit apart from us, and it's been very hard to get to know them. All in all, I feel pretty lost without a support system of friends accessible. I hope we will have a circle of

friends in Dapaong.

The doctor came today, bringing a third rabies shot, and up-to-date copies of newswest, PCU's receive a copy of this weekly. The world news is so incredibly depressing, however, that it's tempting not to keep up. We don't listen to the shortwave much; cassettes are much more pleasant, not to mention necessary for emotional survival. In only 9 days we leave for travel week - I can hardly wait. But upon our return, we move in with families in the village, and I'm very apprehensive about that.

We've been having spectacular storms for the last week or so. Torrential rains lasting from a half hour to half a day, or all night, and thunder and lightning of ferocious, impressive intensity. Often there is heat lightning, illuminating the sky in enormous, brilliant flashes of blue. After a heavy rain, the rivers nearly swell rapidly into raging torrents of muddy brown (precious topsoil, unfortunately), then just as quickly subside again.

I received the clothes I'd commissioned from the tailor the other day. It's a skirt & a blouse. He did a very nice job, putting in zippers and buttons (the buttonholes are all sewn by hand!). The skirt is a bit large, and the blouse a bit small, but that's OK. It's fun to have some new clothes, in bright African fabric. The whole thing together is actually a bit overwhelming, I think, but that's one nice thing about Africa - no one cares! 1500 CFA.

I keep rambling on, because I'm in kind of a down mood, and writing feels good.

I've been reading "Attending Marvels: A Patagonian Journal", by George Gaylord Simpson. Written about his 1930's paleontology expedition to Patagonia, it is a delightful account of travel and natural history, and quite well-written. However, it lacks a plot, and thus the ability to transport the reader effectively out of everyday life. (I speak of escapism).

Thus I look forward to finishing, and moving on to Rebecca, which promises to be great escapism!

Mon. July 15

Well, I've already finished Rebecca - rather more quickly than I'd anticipated, I'm afraid. But it was so good, I couldn't help myself. Also, I got very ill Saturday night, and spent Sunday in bed (my birthday!), and having a wonderful book to read was a real joy! Several people have had similar illnesses - intense stomach cramps & vomiting for 4-6 hours, and after that a nausea & fatigue that lasts one or two days. Thankfully, it lasts no longer than that. We are becoming busier & busier these days, and energy is quite essential. We started motorcycle training Thursday. We were taught basic maintenance and riding. We're expected to maintain & repair the bikes, and to ride at least 3 hours each week. Today, Mike & I rode to Pagala Village, 5 or 10 Kms west of here. The ride is absolutely gorgeous this time of year, and ~~at~~ from the top of a hill we could see for miles in every

direction - rolling hills of thick, lush green, that look from a distance much like the Northwest.

This eastern part of Togo is hilly, and the rolling terrain makes for interesting landscapes & gorgeous views. I feel much less scared of riding now, and am learning to feel comfortable in various situations.

Today on the road we encountered myriad animals - moto beats duck, chicken, pintad (guinea fowl), baby goat & sheep, dog. Moto sometimes beats goat & sheep. Moto never beats pig, car, or truck.

Each animal has its own characteristic way of crossing the road. Most stay put until the last minute, and then ^{either} dash ~~either~~ wildly back & forth in front of you, or amble ever so slowly off in the most unexpected direction.

Ducks either stay put, or continue walking, completely oblivious, at the same speed, and in the same direction. Thus, one always heads for the rear end of a duck.

Passing through villages on the bike is a most amazing experience! Children, young people, and men, are fascinated

a) by white people, and b) by white people with motos. I also don't think they're used to seeing women on

motos. The village women don't take much notice of govos or motos. I don't know why. Anyhow, riding through a village is like being the royalty in a parade - a clamour sets up on all sides, children run toward you in ever larger groups, yelling and waving, everyone stops along the road, waves, smiles, shouts hello. Quite an experience.

Friday night a Togolese friend of Mark's came to tell us stories. We sat in an enormous circle, with a bonfire in the center. A group of 20 or so drummers & dancers came from Pagala gare. The men played a variety of instruments: animal skin drums, wetted down before use, brass bells, a gourd covered with beads. The women danced and sang in Ewe. They have harmonious, chanting voices, and incredible rhythm. Groups of us occasionally joined in, 'looking' ludicrously silly trying to

imitate the dancers' supple rhythms with jerky, contorted movements. The storyteller spoke in flowing, beautifully accented English. His stories were those told to him as a child, in the Ewe language. They were all short & simple, and often featured a spider as the hero.

Wednesday July 17

Yesterday we had a delightful opportunity to visit a wealthy farmer near the town of Blitta. He is the father of one of Mark's Togolese friends. From the outskirts of Blitta we walked about 3 km on a narrow path through fairly flat fields of tall grass & scattered trees, to a low range of hills. Corn & millet fields were common, and in every stage of growth. Also saw a fair amount of manioc. "Papa", as I shall call him, since I don't know his name, reigns over a small kingdom on top of a hill. The view in every direction is spectacular. He has "at present" 6 wives and about 30 children, ranging in age

from 2 months to 40? He figures himself to be about 70. He was dressed in a flowing shirt of northern

cloth, mis-matched pants, white plastic slippers with yarn pompons, a multi-colored stocking cap, and eyeglasses (quite rare here). He is not your average farmer, but a man of vision, foresight, and intelligence. Quite on his own, he realized that he could create a farm interweaving crops of all kinds, self-sufficiency, and a pleasant environment.

Rather than clear his land, remove the trees, expose the fragile soil to the elements, and risk short-lived soil fertility, he chose to create (unbeknownst to him in quite these terms) a self-sustaining ecosystem. He did clear his land, but he replaced many of the trees with more productive types: palms for baskets, mats, nuts, etc., bananas, papayas, pineapples, leucaena for forage.

He ~~saw~~ after 20 years, he has created an amazing microenvironment of perhaps 30 hectares (70 acres).

Entering his land is like crossing a line between field & forest. From open fields of crops

or grasses, you are suddenly surrounded by foliage ~~in~~ at every level, from tiny herbs, to 100 foot kapoks. The trees shelter certain vegies, shade out undesirable grasses, protect the soil, add organic matter.

after 20 years, he's still farming the same land - unheard of here.

On his land he and his family raise nearly everything they need. They gave us an over-

whelming reception, complete with demonstrations of basket-weaving, palm oil making, soap-making, and the production of all kinds of food. They served

us calabashes of tchoukaton, and a sumptuous repast of about 8 dishes. My favorite was Benées, little round cakes of ground beans, deep fried.

Papa didn't speak French, but through a translator we asked him all sorts of questions, which he happily answered. His family was a pure delight. They posed

excitedly for pictures, smiled, giggled, stared wide-eyed.

These people are so incredibly easy to love. When we left, the women gave us big hugs and kisses. Walking back, the sunset was exquisite: a hazy pink-red ball behind scattered trees, tinting the long grasses. It hits me occasionally how wonderful it is to be in Africa. Taxi ride home - 11 of us in a Datsun-sized pickup bed. Sore butts! However, back at stage, the mood quickly subsides. I am so incredibly sick of this place I can hardly stand it. My motivation & physical energy levels are very near zero. Thank god we leave Saturday.

Sunday July 21

Left early yesterday, and arrived in Lomé about 1:30. It seems big after Pagala, and very developed: streetlights, main avenues, millions of cars. But it still feels clean & pleasant. The Hotel Le Prince

is looking good: they've done some work since our last stay. We went to the grand Marché,

which was a mad bustle of activity. After the slow, friendly pace of Pagala, the pushy street vendors, street-wise children, & clamor of taxis, was quite obnoxious. Bought leather money pouches from "the sandal man", a small shop on the street where beautiful leather items are made. Their sandals are considered "standard" Peace Corps issue!

We spent the evening "fête-ing" chez Bill Piatt. He is our country director, young, energetic, and extremely friendly. He has a sweetheart of a German wife, and two young boys. They live in a nice, 3-story house with a large yard, chickens, a small garden. They served mounds of hamburgers, hors d'oeuvres, cake, and home-made ice cream.

There were a good 200 people there, including a large % of the 110 or so Logo volunteers.

Met some great people, and had a nice chat with the

ambassador, who is extremely friendly and talkative. The dancing went on till all hours,

but we were tired and bowed out about 10:30.

Today we went to the sandalman and purchased a gorgeous leather duffel bag and shoulder bag. Together they cost #25,000 CFA (about \$50, or 1 night at the Hotel 2 Février).

It was a huge splurge, though an excellent price for quality leather goods. I hope we don't run out of money

for travel week... They gave us 42,000 each. Later, we

went to see the infamous Hotel 2 Février. This is the tallest building around, at 35 stories, located on a large circular plaza, across from the RPT, or central government building. The pool is deluxe, and 1900 CFA includes a buffet lunch and swimming. Good food, but exorbitant

drink prices. I felt like a real tourist. On the way back we stopped at the Bé marché. I found a bright

pink sweatshirt for 300 CFA -
love it!

Tuesday July 23

Sunday night we had a fantastic dinner at a French restaurant in Lomé called au Relais de la Poste. It has a cozy, European interior, gracious Togolese waiters dressed in sparkling white, and the food was superb. Lobster, fish, sour cream sauces, and cold white wine. The place, however, appears frequented by white people. Two young black men played music while we ate. They sang folksy songs in French & English on guitars, and had wonderful harmony.

The prices were very reasonable.

Early Monday morning we caught a taxi to Isévié, an hour or so north of Lomé. The taxi was a mini-van, and fairly comfortable. It cost 460 CFA for two fares + baggage.

Isévié feels like small-town America, though a bit friendlier. It's actually a good-sized town (perhaps 10,000?) but feels small & comfortable.

It doesn't seem quite as clean as
Lomé. ~~\$~~ Monday we built an
enormous tchoukaton stove for a

local woman. 2 women agents
of Affaires Sociales were there to
learn & help. The stove will
hold 3 enormous pots, with
one fire underneath.

Tuesday we went to a meeting
of UNFT: Union National de
Femmes Togolaises. We came at
the end, and showed the women
how to build stoves. There is a
large festival coming up to
celebrate the bean harvest, and

they need 5 or 6 big stoves
to cook beans on. They seemed
to catch on very quickly during
the first stove, and built a
~~the~~ second on their own.

These women were all leaders
representing local quarters.

After this we advised some of
these women as they built a
stove at a local fufu bar.

I realized yesterday how
little culture shock I am
feeling here all of a sudden.

There are some draining
aspects of life here, but in

general life is pleasant and comfortable, and we are treated warmly and matter-of-factly.

I long to speak local language, however, and hope I can learn to speak Moba well.

Eric's house is very nice. It's cement block, with a tile roof, and false ceiling inside. He has a large front room with nice furniture, and 2 bedrooms. He has a nice "indoor" latrine, but it's the favorite haunt of cockroaches.

Friday July 26 Mango

Wed AM got lucky and intercepted the Lomé-Kara bus in Iséirié. 1700 CFA each. The bus was crammed full, and we had to settle for "seats" on the spare tire. It was fairly comfortable for the most part. Music blared over speakers the entire trip, which was, luckily, ~~more~~ pleasant ~~than~~ despite the decibel level. We stopped every hour or two to pee, stretch or buy food. The bus is run by the government railroad company, so every few songs the music was

interrupted by boisterous "ride the bus" propaganda. I've never heard anything quite like it: in a "children's

animation special" voice, the male narrator blasted out his taped messages. He harangued us about the comfort of riding the bus; the music, so soothing to the nerves (!) on a long & tiring voyage; the cold drinks available from the "frigo portatif" (ie ice chest); the gorgeous views we were blessed to be able to appreciate from our lofty position in this modern bus. One speech

was about money, and how, thanks to money, admittedly a sort of necessary evil, we were able to travel by bus, etc. Another speech discussed the importance of order & place on a long & crowded bus journey. We were, he informed us, having a wonderful time: laughing, talking, and of course, enjoying cold drinks! The music was fairly enjoyable: a mixture of reggae, caribbean, spanish, with lots of steel drum, and many voices. Songs are in French or English. Very danceable stuff.

In Kara we headed straight for the Hotel Kara pool. The Hotel is very nice, and is frequented by yovos,

especially germans when we were there. Met a family from Vancouver B.C. who are working in Ghana.

Also ran into Linda, a fellow stagiaire. Spent the night at

Barry's. He has a large house with a big front porch and yard, and a gorgeous view. He also has an adorable, tiny kitten. Kara is a

lovely area; very green now, but open, so views are distant.

Thursday AM we missed the first taxi to Mango, so began

waiting. After 2 hours we were dismayed to see a tachee pull in. These are small pickups with a canopy and wooden benches.

After a heated argument with the driver over the price of our baggage, we crammed in with 14 others.

The ride was nothing short of 4 hours of agony, but we made it.

Mango is a dusty, small town, but the countryside is gorgeous: open, grassy savanna, like I

imagine Kenya. ~~Today~~ Thurs. we we drove with Andy & Steve up to Andy's house in Bogon, a

small village just north-west of here. Had dinner with his family. Wasn't too thrilled with the corn p^{ate}, but the

gombo sauce was wonderful. Andy has a lovely house with a big front porch, and is surrounded by spectacular scenery, including a series of rust-colored, southwest-style cliffs. Friday we drove to Nanso, our potential village-to-be. Very quiet there, so hard to imagine what living here would be like. The affaires sociale agent here is young, energetic, and very interested in improved

stoves. The area here is stunningly beautiful. Drove next to Dapaong, and had lunch at the Campement, or govt.-run hotel. Andy left for Kara, Steve showed us around a bit, then we hopped a taxi for Mango, and he ran errands on his bike.

Dapaong did not overly impress me. The Campement wasn't bad; had a tiny pool, decent food, and cold beer on top. "Downtown" it was

dusty, noisy, crowded, and very smelly.

Sunday July 28

Saturday we gave a "formation" of sorts at the guards concession next door. I had a wonderful time playing with the kids, singing songs, and stomping stove mud. 5 stoves got built: a large tchouk stove first, and then Steve, Mike & I split up and helped with 4 other stoves. We were invited to lunch with the first family: the head mom was a jolly, large woman with 4 kids. She served us millet pâte, and a sauce made with adimé leaves and dried fish. I'm afraid I'm not very fond of the pâte, but I hope I'll grow to like it, as I have a hunch we'll be eating lots of it with others. The sauces, however, are delicious, especially if not too spicy, although they often contain strange tidbits of unknown origin.

Sunday Steve & Mike went to a village NW of here, and with limited transport I elected to stay here. Steve lives in a villa of sorts: a series of 6

round, paille-roofed huts, in a circle, and connected by a low, circular wall. The center is a large

courtyard with 2 teak trees and a hammock between. Each small hut has a different use: kitchen, study, etc. Also "built in" to the circular wall are a shower & latrine, which are private and mean he doesn't have to walk far for these. I know just what kind of house I'd like to find for us, but don't know how much luck we'll have. I know I need a decent latrine, enough living space, and privacy.

So, things between Mike & I are not going so well. It's ironic, but ever since our wedding we've become less & less close. We seem to bicker almost constantly, and I ~~for~~ find myself liking him less & less. I think it probably has a lot to do with the fact that we've been together practically 24 hours a day for nearly a year.

Also, it's hard leaving any semblance of a routine, and living under strange conditions, in a strange environment, for

quite some time. Our life for
10 months now, has been lived
in transit. I've been craving

good friends, and time alone,
where I'm not part of a unit.
Poor Mike, he's feeling so unloved
these days: I ignore him,
he gets his feelings hurt but
doesn't say so, and a wall of
bitterness builds up between us.
At some point we both get very
upset and try to talk it out -
but there seem to be no solutions.
We keep saying things will get
better when we finally have a
home again - god, I hope so.
It's really weird, also, because
when I first knew Mike, I
thought he was the sweetest,
kindest guy - everybody seemed
to really like him. Yet now,
I suddenly find myself thinking
he's socially inept. I have trouble
having him in a group conversation.
Yet I know he's still the same -
why have my perceptions of him
changed? I'm torn between
wanting to always love him,
and never wanting a divorce;
and a desperate longing to be
single again. Yet I know that

would never solve anything - I think the problem is my own, and will exist whether I'm married or not.

Married, I found myself very attracted to other men, craving affection from them. Yet I don't think any of them all men I would be attracted to if I were single. And I remember the frustrations of being single, and the loneliness. Promiscuity doesn't fill any empty spaces, and it often creates them. Having an affair is the biggest mistake I could make - it would destroy our relationship for good.

~~Monday~~ Wednesday July 31

Monday we left Steve's bright & early for the taxi gare. I really enjoyed our visit with him; he's a sweet, fun guy, with a great sense of humor. He's also a good cook! We once again were confronted with the prospect of four hours in a *bachée*, but luckily Mike was able to sit up front. In back, things went from bad to worse, as we stopped to add

increasing numbers of passengers to the luckless crush already inside. I'm sure I decreased a

hip size enroute. This time, Mango to Kara took only 3 hours, thankfully. From the view seat up front, Mike saw baboons, a wart hog, and many antelopes in the park. Spent Monday night at Barry's. He has named his kitten Tchitchao, in honor of the village where he will soon be living. Tuesday morning we headed "home" to Pagala. We got lucky and got the up-front seats in the taxi. Our chauffeur spoke great French (he was a ministerial chauffeur for 15 years). His truck is brand new, and quite comfortable, so it was a very pleasant ride. In the mountains near Bafilo, we entered a thick, misty fog. It grew hotter as we arrived in Sangabou. We made good time, and were surprised when we arrived to see a Peace Corps van sitting there. It is market day in Sangabou, and a woman from the kitchen had come to do some shopping. Thus we got a ride back to the center.

I was dismayed, on arriving back at the centre, to realize that life is as chaotic as ever. There is so

much to do! French classes, note maintenance & riding, hair cuts, tech. projects, repair the stoves. Then, to top it off, we must pack our entire belongings to move to our families tomorrow.

Wednesday morning we had four hours of ~~work~~ fairly boring French classes, and right after lunch we began unloading our room. It's truly dismaying how much stuff we've accumulated. At 3 pm,

Mark, Sam, & Koba drove us to our family and we unloaded our things. What a surprise to learn we will be living with the tailor who made my skirt & blouse (which I just happened to be wearing when we arrived!).

Our room is small, but adequate. We will live out of suitcases until we can get some shelves, and hopefully, a table. The family has given us two chairs for our room! It is a large family, of 2 wives & 7[?] children (I think). The first wife is Kabye: she has 4 girls & 1 boy? The second wife (3 of her children died.)

is Thosso: she has 2 sons. The father speaks French, as do several of the children. ~~To eat~~ The

women, unfortunately, do not.

It seems to be the role of the first wife, and her children, to care for us. In honor of our arrival, they killed one of their ducks for us. Also, there was an unfortunate moment when Sam explained I don't eat meat. I hadn't intended to say anything, and tried to ameliorate the situation by saying that yes, I did eat duck. Unfortunately, I think he ~~I~~ now thinks he must feed me duck! I hope this doesn't become a problem.

The ~~middle~~ ^{middle} girl of the first wife, Hubertine (I can't remember her Kabyé name), has taken us under her wing. She drew our shower water for us, ate dinner with us, etc. I asked to help with dinner, so they let me crush the piment & tomatoes. They use a large flat rock, and grind with a smaller one. First they take the seeds out of the tomatoes - I don't know why.

(To plant)

For dinner we had millet p^{ate},
and a gombo-tomato sauce with
chunks of duck. The sauce was

pretty spicy, but good. The p^{ate}
was OK, but has an unpleasant
grittiness to it - maybe it's best
not to chew it? After dinner
we weren't sure what to do, so
we said good night to the
family, and went to our room.

Outside we hear the sounds of
the family: dishes, children
singing or crying, adults talking
in an ~~incomprehensible~~ incomprehensible tongue.

The family has many large
fields, which are about 6 kms
away. They grow everything they
eat: millet, corn, ignams, pea-
nuts, manioc, piment, tomatoes.
It's summer vacation, and the
children help in the fields.

The first wife makes
tehouk in large quantity. It is
very good. In the corner of the
concession is a paillet where
customers come to drink.

1987 Kara, Logo: This is a
3rd world
country?!



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Friday August 2

I am tired. Lots to do these days, and I can feel the stress level rising. It's not worth it to get sick, yet priorities don't seem to allow for any slack. Each sector of our studies we're told should take top priority. So it's my sleep time that suffers first - and that I need the most. We've also had very little time to spend with our family. Last night we got home at 9:00. Everyone was still up, and we had a nice chat with two of the sons. They speak great French, and had lots of questions to ask us about America. We sat with the family in the courtyard in the light of a full moon. It was warm and cozy. They served us a calabash of warm, fresh tchoukoton. It was delicious - like warm apple cider with cinnamon.

Today I had my first Moba lesson with Bonebone. There are some difficult new sounds to learn, but it's

such a wonderful to be challenged,
and to be doing something inter-
esting. Also had a good moto

lesson today, in the mud
& rain, mostly! Learned to
run over a brick, turn little
circles, etc. Have far to go,
but the confidence level is
rising slowly!

Today in town some
children had caught a chameleon.
It was gorgeous - a brilliant,
speckled light green, 6" long,
shaped like a dragon, with a
rounded back, peaking into a
shallow fin at the backbone.

It stood on a branch,
swaying slowly back & forth,
moving forward with deliberate
steps. Its toes are separated
into two groups of 2 + 3 toes.

Saturday August 3

A real shitty day. Work is
piled up to here, our things are
scattered everywhere in boxes
and suitcases, there's no place
to study, we're getting ragged
on for not speaking French enough,
or not riding motos enough.

We hardly have any time to spend with our families. To top it off, the pants we ordered from a tailor 3 weeks ago don't fit, she overcharged us, we already paid, and we don't know if we can get our money back. Also, somebody dumped out my desperately needed coffee.

Sunday August 4

Spent most of the day with the family, which was nice. Learned some of the basics of tchouk making & helped strain the sprouting millet. Had a wonderful breakfast of ~~potatoes~~ boiled, newly-harvested ignams, and an excellent sauce of tomatoe, pepper, onion, salt, & oil. It had a buttery flavor, and the fresh ignams tasted like "real" potatoes - delicious! Went to the moulin of Hubertine. It was packed. Very interesting to watch. Seems the women often must wait a long time in line. The grains are poured through 3 or 4 times to get a very fine flour. Showed Hubertine &

her sister, Victoire, around the center. Watched some kids play barefoot soccer at a small field nearby.

Living with the family is so fascinating. We feel pretty comfortable here, and are slowly learning a bit of Kabyé. Our piro has 2 wives, one who has kids nearly 30 years old, the other with 2 small children. What must it be like for her, coming in as the second wife, to a household full of nearly grown kids, and a wife of over 20 years? The first wife seems to get most of the attention, and has most of the kitchen and living space.

I'm starting to figure out who is who, also. This place seems to be a grand central station of the neighborhood. People come here to drink or eat, and many cut through to their houses. As it's right on the road, it gets a good share of promenaders too. It's incredible how interrelated everyone is. Life here seems quite full.

Lots to do, yet time to relax, play, visit. The girls work especially hard, though boys do a lot of the field

work, and their own laundry. Cooking appears to be done in shifts, with Hubertine & her ma cooking for the family, and Hubertine's sister Pascaline, cooking for herself & her baby. I don't know for sure if its her baby, actually, or where her husband is.

Mimi came up today. Had a good mtg. about our posts & our work.

Yesterday went to the marché with Lucas, one of the sons. Says he's fifteen, but looks 10 or 12. Many here do not know their ages or birthdays. He was thrilled to carry our backpack. Bought pagnes & a floor mat, and drank at mama's tchouk bar. The place was picked. 2 men blowing whistles came around to collect stall rental. This is used for market upkeep.

Had a great fête at center last night. Spaghetti dinner and a dance, with great music.

Thurs. August 8

So life here, as always, goes on & on & on. For the most part I keep my spirits afloat by giving my psyche pep talks: I'll look back on this time & wish I'd appreciated it more; I should ~~also~~ take advantage of the opportunities that abound here; how can I complain when my life here is so posh & easy? However, the caged bird feels trapped - need room to spread the wings.

We're busy as can be - with research, interviews, notes, language, the family. Some of it's interesting, other of it is busy-work to keep up the momentum. It's fun living in town. We're getting to know some of the local people, and I am constantly amazed at how nice everyone is. The children especially, almost seem to worship us, which bothers me at times. Walking down "main street" is always a joy, with greetings abounding and lots of shiny white smiles. People use a pulpy piece of root

as a toothbrush. They chew on these and spit out the pulp. I don't know if it's the brushing

action or a chemical in the wood, but these people's teeth are gorgeous. Monday we had an extremely heavy rain, and for an unknown reason the village was partially flooded. Several people lost their homes, including one of the stagiaires, Amy. A river of water came pouring through one section of town and ate

away the bases of walls, so the walls collapsed. Amy recovered all her things, wet & muddy, but luckily she didn't lose much, and hopefully Peace Corps will cover what she lost. I'm told this "flood" was a freak thing and doesn't happen every year. I wonder a bit.

Anyhow, the heavy rains constantly gnaw away at "foundations". Eventually, I suppose people have to rebuild. The foundations are often made of rocks.

What's really sad about the flooding is to see the topsoil rushing away - forever.

So it was quite a spectacular storm. The tributary near the center rose and nearly in-

undated the garden. The town's only bread oven was also lost.

Had a table made by the local menuisier. He's a character. We ordered 2 tables and he tried to charge us a fortune.

It's a nice table, fits in our room well, and is just big enough for 2 to study. Cost 4.000 CFA.

Also had some pants made at a local lady tailor which were pretty much a disaster. Turns out women here don't know how to make pants. Oh well, live & learn.

At least we helped the local economy! Pagala is growing by leaps & bounds, with or without Peace Corps. However, our presence here has numerous impacts, not all of them positive in the long run, which bothers me. There's talk of enlarging the center & using it year-round. We'd change Pagala forever. At night it's enchanting to walk through town, lanterns & oil lamps

dimly outlining the road,
and the cluster of women
selling odds & ends into the
night. I'd sure hate to see
this place electrify. One of
the reasons Pagala is growing
is the relative abundance of
good farmland attracting
people from more populated
regions. Also there's the
railroad & a good road.

At times I think that
life here in Togo is so good,
why is Peace Corps here and I
have to remind myself that,
thankfully, we are here to
help prevent life here from
becoming not so good. Because
big problems are just around
the corner: overpopulation,
unemployment, a shortage of
agricultural land, deforestation.
I give the Togolise govt. credit
for being pretty progressive,
and have a fair amount of
faith that Togo will remain
a stable & fairly self-sufficient
country. I'm glad to be
living in a country where I
can see the positive side of
third world life. Not too

much poverty, sickness, or begging.
Something just bit my toe
and it hurts a lot. Must have

been a spider - really stings.
The other night a supposedly
rabid dog was on the loose,
and all the men of the house-
hold, armed with clubs, went
off to kill it. They never
caught it, so supposedly
it's still on 'the loose'. Looked
normal to me, but better
safe than sorry.

Our family writes on us
hand & foot; much to my
dismay. I try to help,
but really am only in the
way. They feed us pâte, fufu,
ignams, or rice, with a variety
of sauces. They go "fairly" easy
on the piment. Hubertine eats
with us, but noone else.
Eating here is definitely not a
big social event. It's food; if
you gotta eat to live.

Had an interview with the
Pagala chef of Foûts et Chasses
today. Very interesting.
Learned lots about the fuel
economy of Pagala.

Married life in a single environment:
I've realized that one of the
reasons life has been so hard

lately for Mike & I, is that
for ~~over~~ nearly 4 months now,
we've been living in a single
environment - surrounded by
young, single people, and almost
noone married. It's a decidedly
non-existent support system.

Staying married isn't easy, as
much as one wants to. To
do so, you have to create a
living environment conducive
to couple-dom. In B'ham, we
were creating a circle of married
or paired-up friends. Here, I
begin to long again to be single,
simply because ~~that~~ this is a
single environment, and Mike &
I feel somewhat left out. People
continually say, oh you're lucky -
you've got each other. As if we
didn't need anyone else!