

Sunday August 11,

Lots of miscellaneous odds & ends to write about, but rarely much time & energy to do so. Days are "full", mostly of various dull obligations: I've been sleeping a lot, partly to pass the time, and partly cause there's a lot of sickness around I'd like to avoid getting. Slept in late this morning. Sat in the pailôte overlooking the road, to chat with the family. Numerous fellow stagiaires walked by and we dragged them in to chat a moment & have a sip. Drinking much tchouk first thing in the morning is a big mistake, we discovered, as it made us incredibly groggy. Went on a little neighborhood tour with mama & a few kids after b'fast. Spent the afternoon at the center, and rode motos a bit. This afternoon there was a small fête nearby to celebrate the official end of a young woman's 3-year seamstress apprenticeship. A gorgeous, pink sunset.

We are getting to be very fond of our family, and to feel more comfortable here. Unfortunately, our room is filled with various critters, most of them biting gnats. I've taken to practically needing benadryl to sleep at night. I itch constantly, my entire body on fire from it. I've had to wear pants, shoes & socks lately to keep from getting eaten alive. I'm afraid we may have critters in the mattress, who are munching us at night, despite the mosquito net.

The Pope arrived in Loko on the 8th and stayed for 2 days. The T.V. is full of lengthy & boring nightly broadcasts of his visit.

I need to get out of here - but there's plenty of busyness to keep me here. Eric comes this week to visit.

As much as I really like the Togolese people, they are of course only human, and have their share of faults & foibles. People poop & piss

anywhere, with no regard for disease. People spit a lot, including women. People can appear a bit coarse, not having been taught our American-style "puritanical" manners. People drink a lot of tchouk and distilled palm wine, and especially on market day, can get rather belligerent and obnoxious. Yesterday at the marché, we watched 2 women nearly get in a fist fight. Not a pleasant sight.

Thurs. Aug. 15

Still here, tho' haven't had much to write about. Yesterday went to Atakpamé with Bonnie, mostly to get away from stage. Had a good time, bought a few goodies at the SGGG. Also ran into Jim Kearney, an ancien ami de high school! That was strange. He's a volunteer in Mali, on vacation. Actually, we were pseudo-buddies in H.S. because he was in my

French class. He's real nice
but a bit of a braggart & kind
of hard to be around for long.

He rode up to Pagala with
us, stayed the night, and
left this morning.

Talked with Mark this
morning about leaving stage
early, and it looks like
a good possibility. I'm
afraid to get my hopes up too
high - but I sure hope so!

I'd leave here in early
Sept. and head north to get
our house squared away.

Moba is coming along
OK. I've only had one lesson
this week - I'm now learning
numbers. It's fun - but very
exhausting!

Today had a wonderful
moto lesson. Farzan & Ron
took us on an obstacle course
of a trail - up steep, muddy
hills, through a deep creek,
over lumps and rocks & thru
deep mud. At first I
was pretty freaked out,
but once I got the hang
of controlling the back
bike, I had the most fun

I've had around this place in
ages! a nice, sunny day
today. We've had a lot of
drizzle and storms lately.

Sun. August 18

Been thinking lately of our work
here in Togo. How in the states,
home was always a first priority,
and work, even if interesting,
a way to support my real interests.
Here, work is to be our first
priority, and home a necessary
means to support our work.

Thus I may have to give up
some of the time I might want
to spend at home, puttering,
gardening, etc. I'd like to have
a nice home, livable & comfortable.

I've gotten permission to
go north in early Sept., and
to stay a few weeks, to look
for a house. Much to my dismay,
however, I am discovering that
few volunteers will be around at
this time. Also, the housing
situation is sounding kind of
bleak - Andy has looked, but
hasn't found much.

This time of year, the new ignams are ready to harvest. The new ones are sweet and taste much like potatoes.

To celebrate, ignam fêtes are held in each village. Some people won't even eat new ignams until the fête has been held. Our family, fortunately, doesn't hold to this, and rather, believes that if old ignams are eaten after new ones are harvested, they will make you sick. I'd tend to agree: they don't taste very good, but grow woody & bitter as they are stored.

Spent the day at the center, reading & writing, and longing for some socializing. The days tick slowly by; got some mail the other day, plus a box of slides back from France! Turned out good.

Every 5 years, the Kalyé people have a large nationwide celebration, with all kinds of traditional dancing, wrestling, etc. Today, a group of dancers, dressed in palm or feather head dresses, masks, and

carrying various instruments, paraded through the village. For some reason, they stopped here and

came into the concession to dance ~~with~~ ~~the~~ for the family. I think it was kind of an honor. Our family has been here quite a while - one of the older families in a young village. Also, they seem to be relatively well off. These things may have earned them a certain place of honor or respect in the village. I don't know.

Tuesday August 20

Went to visit ODEF today in Blitta. They're sort of like the national forest service. They make & sell charcoal, and raise plantations of teaks for firewood, char posts, & lumber.

Because they exist to earn a profit, they practice sustained-yield forestry, which bodes well for Logo's future. We had an interesting tour; although it was quite hot, and drove through some gorgeous sections of virgin forest. Firebreaks have

grown over in the rainy season, and are lush, green isles, carpeted in short, soft grass. The ODEF's

two biggest problems are fire & elephants!

Yesterday we were all invited to a local chief's house to celebrate the ignam fête. He is chief of the Anyagants, the original inhabitants of this area. We sat in a big circle in the middle of the Blitta Road (luckily not used much this time of year!), with 2 large jars of tchouk in the center. The whole

affair came off rather poorly organized, not unusual in this village of myriad tribes.

The chief, a sour, middle-aged fellow, who speaks no French, presided in a lawn chair, and an elaborate, Egyptian-style headdress boasting enormous, fake gold, 3-0 symbols. The Pagala soccer team had won the big match the day previous, earning themselves a big silver cup. It was presented to the chief, filled with wildflowers & money.

after lengthy speech-making by various influential members of the community, in which they

alternately praised President Eyadema, the soccer team, and Peace Corps, the fête moved on to a lengthy passing out of Tchouk. At long last, when it had grown too dark for pictures, music & dancing began. 9 women wore matching pagne outfits in bright white w/ colored patterns. I expected them to perform, but instead the dancing was a haphazard jumble of us & them. They are rather more graceful than we, and all got roaring good laughs watching us attempt the "chicken dance", etc.

Here, nearly all work is done on the ground, including cooking, washing, and eating. Tables are usually low, and people sit on benches or small stools. I also, women spend an incredible amount of time hunched over, working. They stand straight-legged, bent at the waist, often with a baby on their back, stirring, pounding,

or washing. Yet all seem to have beautiful posture, and I haven't heard about back

problems being common.

Most food eaten here is first ground, either at the moulin, or mill, or by hand, using a flat granite slab and crushing stone. I ground some piment one night, and my hands felt as if the skin were burned. At first I thought it a shame to grind everything you eat, but really it makes a lot of sense, because things cook much more quickly, and this conserves fuel as well as cooking time.

Clothes here are a lingarde mélange of traditional & western. People wear clothes until they are literally hanging off their body in tatters. I saw a fellow today returning from the fields, his pants legs tied on with string.

Yesterday at the igname fête, during the speech-making, one of the orators remarked how wonderful it was that we, with

white skin, would come here and eat the villagers' food with them. This really makes them

happy. Luckily, our family has been feeding us well lately; lots of rice, and twice they've made colicos, deep-fried ignams! I fear they may have realized we don't like pâte & fufu, since we don't eat much when they serve it. I hate to think of them going to extra trouble to prepare different food for us, although we do give them 4000 F. a week, which should cover the costs of food, plus hopefully a bit extra for them.

Sunday Aug. 25

Yesterday we drove up to Kara en masse to get away for the weekend (from the center, tho' not from each other!) Stopped in Aledjo, a small village just south of Bafilo, to visit a Christian retreat center run by Europeans. They have lovely organic gardens, orchards, and raise chickens, rabbits, bees, and unfortunately,

mongoose, of all things! They are not native, and if they went wild could wreak havoc on the

natural ecosystem. They eat snakes, which is why they're raised.

We arrived at the Affaires Sociales Office in Kara, just east of town, about 1 PM, in time for a driving downpour. Oh - en route, we stopped at an abandoned

campement (govt. run hotel) for a picnic lunch. It sits

on the mt. top near Aledjo, surrounded by a few radio towers. The view was spectacular,

east for miles toward Benin, over a landscape of rocky outcrops & short-grazed grass.

Could almost have been the Scottish highlands. The

Affaires Sociales is a large, modern complex with a bar, restaurant, inexpensive rooms to rent, and an enormous courtyard where various gatherings are held.

We beelined it to the Village des Enfants, an orphanage just up the road which sells homemade ice cream, yogurt,

and gateaux for ~~at~~ reasonable prices. The orphanage is supported by societies in Europe, and is one

of over 100 in the world. This one was built by a lovely young French nun 14 years ago. She lives here with 80 children! There are 8 houses with 10 children each, of varying ages & both sexes, with a Togolese "mom" to care for them. Each family cooks & lives separately, with the kids sharing 3 to a bedroom. It's a large compound with gardens, orchard, animals, a dispensary and a school for the younger kids. The sister is delightful; she gave me a tour of one of the houses. She reminded me incredibly of Donna Clifford.

It was wonderful to watch her with the children, whom she obviously adores. For dinner we went to the mini-Suisse, a German-Togolese restaurant out past the Hotel Kara! Sausages & sauerkraut dominate the menu! A very nice place.

Had wonderful, cheap spaghetti. They also had an adorable, affectionate orange kitty who sat

on Janet's lap & purred through dinner!

Friday we attempted to make charcoal at the center. A young man came from a local family to show ~~us~~ us the traditional method. Thurs. we we had gone to his house to collect the wood, which we then carried on our heads to the car! It was very interesting to see first-hand how the charcoal is made.

It's very sad to see how incredibly fast local families are destroying the forest. They cut to clear new land, plant crops until the land gives out, then leave it for a few years to regain a semblance of fertility. In the interim, however, brush fires and erosion strip the land of organic matter & topsoil, leaving behind a sterile laterite that will take hundreds, maybe thousands, of years to regenerate.

Sat. Aug. 31

This week the Kabyé tribe had their fête d'ignams. It turns out that our papa ~~was~~ used to be the Kabyé chief. He gave it up 2 years ago, after 4 years. He said it was a very hard job - sort of a volunteer position with lots of work & no pay.

It has its side benefits, I'm sure, in terms of social status and small cadeaux. But there's an endless stream of visitors & favor-seekers, and everyone brings you their problems to arbitrate.

For the ignam fête, which lasted 2 days, all spent the days wandering from house to house, drinking voluminous quantities of tchouk, and eating ignams in all their various forms.

The night at our house was spent dancing - the entire night until 5:30 the next morning!

Someone brought an enormous boom box & small generator, and the music blared non-stop.

Unfortunately, dancing here in Logo never seems to start

before 10 pm, which means I'm usually too tired to last long.

There's an adorable little boy here ~~at~~ named Kwami. He's the son of one of the daughters. At 2, he's got a stocky build, an enormous round belly, a close-shaved head of fuzz, and large, heavy-lidded eyes. Sitting cross-legged on the ground, stark naked, he looks like nothing quite so much as a ^{well} little Buddha, thinking profound thoughts. He's a calm & gentle quiet kid, and seems to spend his time thoughtfully taking in the world around him. He's let me hold him now several times. He doesn't exactly like it, but puts up with me quietly, and always seems a bit relieved when I put him down.

We gave a stove stage to the rest of the stagiaires yesterday. It came off well. We built stoves at the center in the morning, and in town in the afternoon. My group built a double tchouk stove for mama. The family helped

a fair amount, not as much as I would have liked. Hubertine was gone, and mama was

busy selling tchouk. I'm not a very good directrice yet, and despite a promise to step back & have others do the work, I ended up taking over. The stoves look good, but are cracking.

Sun. Sept. 8

* Our 1st Anniversary *

We are spending our first anniversary here in Kpalime tucked in the mts. in a southwestern corner of Togo, near the Ghanaian border. It's very picturesque and green here, with dense vegetation, fog, hills, & plateaus with waterfalls plummeting down their steep faces, disappearing into a tangle of dripping foliage. It rains here a lot, as the moist marine air backs up against the mountains, rises & cools.

The trip here from Pagala was very long, nearly 8 hours! We took the train

to Atakpamé, which took $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours. It was uncomfortable & very crowded, perhaps because on

Saturday there are so many marches. As we moved south the train grew layers deep in people, sacks of charcoal, bundles of ignames, basins of odds & ends. In Atakpamé, we were relieved to get a ride in a nice taxi, in the front seat! We made pretty good time to Kpalimé, & the ride was beautiful. There are many lovely villages out here, and soft, lush scenery. It feels like a very different Africa than up north: tropics vs. savanna, and all their accompanying imagery, courtesy mainly of Nat. Geographic. In Kpalimé we had a semi-chère, but delicious lunch at the mini-brasserie. We were exhausted and decided to forego the enormous Saturday marché. We took a taxi up the road to the artisanal center, a crafts center where artisans make & sell beautiful pottery, weaving, batik, and wood-

work. Unfortunately, prices were very high, and "non-negotiable!"
Next we visited the famed

Au Fermier, where ice cream & other delights are to be had. Ran into several PCU's as we imbibed our café & guava ice cream. Plan to meet Maureen there today, and go out to see her house.

Spent the night at the Campement, a govt-run hotel on ~~the~~ a mountain top about 12 km out of town. It cost a bit to get a taxi out here,

but it's absolutely gorgeous, peaceful, green & quiet. We have a lovely room with bath & furniture. We are almost the only guests. Last night a wispy fog blew in, and this morning a night rain had left the world drippy, moist, green, & still foggy.

We took a walk on some forest paths, looking for a view, and found some fields, and some views into green valleys. We don't seem to be up high enough to get any distant views.

Wednesday morning I headed south to Wohala, to escape stage for a few days, and

to take my moto test from Jarzan. Arrived in the early afternoon after three fairly decent tapi rides. Jarzan lives with Pete (another volunteer).

Jacqueline, Pete's Togolese fiancée, is currently staying there.

But that's another story. Jarzan drove me 20 kms south to Notsé on his bike to run

errands. Extended rides on the back of a dirt bike are slightly less than comfortable. Notsé is a pretty fancy place, with all kinds of stores. Went to a cooperative woodworking center,

where absolutely gorgeous furniture is made & sold. The Peace Corps built a solar wood dryer here which is quite poorly designed & ineffective, so

Jarzan is hoping to revamp it for them to make it work better. Thursday morning we

headed out to a small village about 30 kms west of Wohala, where Jarzan is building a school. Halfway out, he

realized he'd forgotten something, so he zoomed back & I walked for a ways. It was fun to be out

walking on brousse. People were quite surprised to see me out there, and with my helmet in hand, assumed my moto had broken down. I came to a small village at a fork in the road, and waited for the moto. The villagers were thrilled & surprised to see me. I sat under a paillet & shelled sesame (like squash seeds) and chatted

a bit with the kids who spoke French. Like many people here, they were fascinated by my hair, and some of the braver ones touched it wide-eyed. In the village we were met by the director of the school and some helpers. After an obligatory calabash of tchouk, we spent a few hours laying out measurements for the foundation.

Pete & Jacqueline showed up to help. The Director's family then served us a wonderful lunch of rice, sauce, and

more tchouk. I ate so much I fell instantly asleep, and spent the next hour dozing.

Meanwhile the rain came, and everybody returned to the paillet, where they talked and drank. I slept, as usual, through it all.

Finally at 4 PM we decided, rain or no, we'd better go.

Jarjan announced that I was driving! As usual, I started out scared as can be, and ended up having an absolutely wonderful ride. Despite deep mud, slippery clay, rain, and the usual obstacles, the bike is amazingly stable.

We arrived home soaked & muddy, to hot chocolate & a hot shower! Friday morning

I took my written & maintenance tests, then Jarjan ran me up to Atakpané to catch a taxi. Incidentally, I was told I'd passed my moto test. In

Atakpané there was an enormous crowd waiting for taxis. Amazingly, I was able to load up quickly, and

Tanjan saw me safely ensconced before he took off. The minute he did, I was informed there was

no room for me after all, and I'd have to get out! I was pissed, but reminded myself that things always work out for the best (which they do) and trudged off in the rain to hitchhike. Got a ride to Anié with two Chinese fellows who work in a paper mill in Kara. In Anié, I walked for a while, then got a ride with a Canadian

woman named Cynthia from Tomé, who turns out to be a good friend of Mimi's. We had a nice chat, and she dropped me off in Tangabou. Walked for a while towards Pagala (much to the dismay of the villagers I passed, who were afraid I intended to walk all the way!), and got picked up by a kind taxi driver who had to put me up front with the four people who were already there!

Donated Food & Clothes: Food & used clothing arrive here from Europe & the states, supposedly

to be distributed to the needy.

Instead, they ~~are~~ often end up for sale in the marchés. Rich women comercants in Lomé buy them as they come in by ship, process them through enormous warehouses, and distribute them through Togo's intricate marketing system. Thus, the ubiquitous "dead yovo" used clothing stalls in every marché, and the widespread availability of canned milks, sardines, flour, & tomatoes.

Market Transport: The market system here in Togo really is complex. It's an impressive bustle of seemingly disorganized activity that manages to ~~quite~~ quite efficiently move enormous quantities of people & goods from place to place on a daily basis. Within a given circle of villages, each has its marché on a given day, so that a vendor could theoretically move her goods to a different marché each day of

the week - which is what many of them do. Transport is by taxi, train, or truck. The

quantity of merchandise moved is overwhelming, and it's not unusual to see a woman returning from the marché at the end of the day, hauling basically the same amount of stuff she hauled in in the morning. In other words, these vendors (90% women) haul entire mini-stores with them from place to place, yet often sell very little. ~~Other~~

Obviously, however, it's enough to get by.

Many prepared foods are sold in the marchés, and the most common method of serving them (à la "take-out") is in leaves.

Monday Sept. 9

As we got ready to leave Kpalime a heavy rain blew up from the south, that threatened to last quite a while. We decided we'd better go for it, rain or no. Got taxis quick and

Mike got out in Langabou. We won't see each other for about 2 weeks! I hope he isn't worried about me.

The taxi took me to Aouda, where he decided he didn't want to continue on to Sokodé. So I hitched a ride, and got picked up by a guy & girl from Holland, who were going to the same place I was! There is an in-service language stage at a place called the Maison Familiale. Stayed the night here and got some info about who'll be up north, etc. Steve showed up and told us all about his trip up north for a month: to Mali, Niger, Timbuktu, canoeing on the Niger River!

Had some very interesting news today. It appears that Andy, who lives in Bogou, is seriously thinking of moving out of the north. ~~at~~ The circumstances are unfortunate, & it would be nice if he didn't have to, but it looks like there's a fairly good chance that Mike & I would move into his house! We would be thrilled though it's too bad it would mean Andy leaving.

So although I still need to keep my eyes open for a house elsewhere, this has taken some of the load

off my mind. Now, instead of having to hightail it up north, I can kind of take it easy.

I left Sokodé this morning after breakfast. Walked into town from the "maison", which was very interesting. I think I must have passed through the "yongo", or muslim quarter. The women were all plump & tall, & wore loosely draped veils around their heads.

They would stop to "salué" each other by kneeling on the ground in a circle, and chrousing a chant-like, monosyllabic greeting. Sokodé is a large city, I believe the second largest in Togo. It's crowded & bustling, and seems a miniature version of some of the worst aspects of third world high-density living. But it's also friendly, and somewhat attractive, and hasn't yet

grown so large. I called Lomé from the P.T.T., and miracle of miracles, found Andy there. So we talked about the

house, and he'll let me know his final decision soon. Left the PTT and began walking out of

town, when Victor & Mimi drove by again! They had spent the night in Sokodé and were heading north, so they gave me a ride to Kara.

I've decided to spend the day here, and head to Mango tomorrow. Steve gave me the key to his house, and permission to use his moto. This experience so far has been so ~~the~~ enjoyable.

Peace Corps is like a giant family, and everybody looks out for each other. The grapevine carries messages at an astonishing rate. I feel I've been taken care of & looked after, and have already grown really fond of lots of the people I've met.

Clothes here reflect a lot about people's religion, & tribe. ^{of social status.} The muslims dress in enormous flowing robes, embroidered at the collar. ~~The~~ women in genl. dress in startling combinations of bold colored pagnes &

clashing shirts, headscarves, & veils. Many men wear the pajama-like "complet" of trousers & tunic in flowers or bright patterns, embroidered at collar & cuffs. Fonctionnaires, or govt. employees, wear the "fonctionnaire" business suit of polyester blend short-sleeved jacket & matching trousers. School children wear khaki shorts or skirts. The gendarmes, or national military, wear a French-influenced uniform with black box hat, khaki shirt & shorts, brown knee socks & black shoes. The army wear green fatigues & big black boots. Modern women wear elaborate complets of ruffled shirt & long skirt made from matching pagnes, or modern dresses.

A few wear pants. One sign of a "liberated" Togolese woman is long hair. Women here usually either keep their hair very short, or tress it.

Tresses are tiny braids or pom-poms done in patterns on the head. Artificial hair is woven in to make longer braids which can be woven into

patterns. Some women now just grow their hair long; but to keep it from standing up into an afro, they have to grease it down. Also here, both women & men often have their faces scarred when they're young. The scars often denote their tribal membership. For example, the mobas have four small scars on the back of their necks. Many people have scars on their cheeks, and it can be quite attractive, actually.

Wed. Sept. 11

Stayed the night at the affaires sociale office for 900 Francs. Walked up to the orphanage, but it was closed for sieste, so I walked back into town. Today ^{is} the big marché, with lots to buy, but I wasn't much in the mood, mostly because I didn't want to spend too much money, or have to cart around any stuff. Found some colicos & went to the mini-riz for a beer, and to write in my journal.

Ended up having 4 beers - the 4th was on the house! also had an excellent spanish omelette.

Ran into Jim, a PCU from Ketao. Headed back towards the orphanage around 5, but found out it closed at 5:30, so I returned to my room and slept early. Felt so good to get 12 hours of sleep! Up at 6, it's off to the orphanage for yogurt, I hope!

Sun. Sept. 15

Well, here I am back in Kara!

Have had many adventures in between. Wednesday morning I had "breakfast" at the orphanage, of so-so yogurt and a muffin. Walked on the route for a while until I got a ride from a French fellow going to Pya. So I got out in Tchitchao to say hi to Barry & see his new house. It's lovely. Sits on a low hill in a grove of baobab, with a view down the green valley toward Sarakawa. From his elevated terrace he looks out on his grove of trees, his family's concession, the view, and the

flowers he planted. John Braniff showed up with his moto and gave me a ride to Baga, just north of Niamtougou where he's living with John Elmer, a volunteer just getting ready to leave. I had intended to keep heading north, but inevitably got sidetracked, and ended up staying the night. Had a marvelous dinner of submarine sandwiches. Thursday morning I finally made it up to Mango. Got a ride from an evangelical preacher & his chauffeur (both Togolese).

In Mango I found Steve's doors swollen shut, and his house a real mess, with tree debris strewn all over the courtyard, and the cases littered with pieces of paillet, & puddles where the roofs had leaked. I spent the entire day cleaning up, with help from his house boy, Kumla, who has been keeping an eye on the place. Kumla kept me company, and took me into town to run

a few errands and find dinner.
Spent a peaceful night in the
"guest room", which I fixed up.

The weather has gotten
warm & sultry, as the rainy
season up here draws to a
temperamental close. It's so
green now, even compared to
the last time I was here.
The grass is tall & soft, and
the greens have grown deeper &
brighter.

In the Baga area I
noticed the predominance of
Baobabs. They are considered
sort of sacred, and are
almost never cut. Here, the
northern-style concessions begin,
of round bance cases connected by
mud walls.

Friday morning I hitched
up to John's in ~~Bak~~ Baketossi. got a
ride from the same preacher
who had picked me up Thursday!
John had errands most of the
day, so I stayed at his house
& read, then in the after-
noon we rode up to
Dapaong. Saturday morning
we headed down to Steve's,
got the place closed up,

and caught a ride to Baga,
for John Elmer's going away party.

About 30 people showed up
for dinner & dancing at
"Chez John's" in Niamtougou.
The music arrived late due
to a heavy rain, but
nevertheless, it was a nice
party. It continued long
into the night back at
John's, where we all found
places to sleep on every
square inch of floor.

Sunday I caught a ride
with some of the party to
Kara, where I spent several
hours poolside, and also
pigged out on ice cream.

got a ride back to Baga
with a German volunteer,
where John prepared spaghetti
for the 14 or so remaining
guests! Monday morning
got a ride in a fast
car and made it to
Mango in record time.

Just south of Mango
is the large Keran game
reserve. The speed limit is
50 KPH, unless you get a "pass",
or pay off the guards.

It's nice to go slow, as you see a lot more, but this was my third time through in less than a week, so it was nice to go fast. Going through on Saturday we saw lots of antelope, monkeys, baboons. They're hard to see up close, and no photos are allowed, but it's wonderful to see these exotic animals. Unfortunately, after seeing them in zoos & photos all my life, the real thing was kind of 'matter-of-fact'.

Wednesday Sept. 18

Back in Mango at Steve's. Rode John's bike up to Dapaong Monday morning to run errands. Had expected to be back that evening, as I had Steve's keys, and there was a chance he'd arrive, which he didn't. So I got to Dapaong fine. What a fun ride. Though a bit scary at first to be alone on the open road on a 65k trip. In Dapaong I found the postal box key missing, the

AG66 closed, and the bike decided it wouldn't run. Thought it was a clogged carburetor, so I took it apart in front of the AG66 and found it clean as a whistle. Then it rained - a long grey drizzle that threatened to last at least until dark (which it did). I had a "map" to Tom Webb's house, but had no luck finding it. At last, with the bike completely dead, I wheeled it to Affaires Sociales' office, hoping to leave it there for the night, and then find a room somewhere. But, as things always work out for the best, who should I run into at the office but Tom Webb! He was a real sight for sore eyes. Had a beer with him & a friend, and stayed the night at his house, which is nice & roomy, and clean. I'm getting used to guys' houses being piggens. I've stayed with easily a dozen volunteers here, and every one has been guys.

The group verdict on the bike was bad gas, so the next day I drained the tank & filled it

with fresh gas, and it runs great, thank goodness. Tuesday I went on a hunt for some books written in Moba. Went to 4 offices in Dapaong, and finally someone sent me to the mission in Barkoissi Bombouaka where, lo & behold, they had a whole library of Moba books.

Stopped at Andy's on the way back. I think it will

be a very nice place to live. As I neared Barkoissi a torrential rain began, and I dashed into John's dripping wet, with an inch of water in the bottom of my pack. Spent a gloomy two hours wondering if I'd have to spend the night there, and slept a bit. Finally the southern sky grew less ominous, and I dashed off, making it to Mango through only minor sprinkles.

And still no Steve. I'm a little peeved at him. It's pretty lonely up here, for one thing. Also, he told me he'd be up, his house is practically ununlockable, and I'd like to see his reaction to his clean house (yes, selfish motives).

I'd also love to go out to the Barrage again, and I don't know if I could find it alone.

If he doesn't show up today I'll take John's bike up to Barkoassi tomorrow and perhaps leave for Sokodé a day early. It would be nice to see Mike soon - I miss him!

I'm spending the day catching up on some letters & writing, and it's nice to have the time to do it.

I've got the cassette deck hooked up to the moto battery, so have tunes to keep me company. Last night I made spaghetti-yum, and cleaned some more - it's endless, especially with the paille roof, which drops debris all over the place.

Kumala came to visit. Slept a long sleep and puttered all morning. Had a tomato, cheese, and avocado omelette! Going into Mango to shop is getting wierd. The kids are starting to drive me nuts, always shouting at me, & laughing. "Salué-ing" people seems more trouble than it's worth. I often feel people are laughing at me, and of course they talk about me as I go by. Sometimes it would be nice to be somewhat anonymous.

We take 500 mg. of Chloroquin a week to suppress malaria. It has some strange side effects. Seems to slow the tanning process, causes the skin to itch, and many people report above-normal hair loss. I've noticed all of these.

Friday Sept. 20

Spent a peaceful, rainy Wednesday writing letters, listening to music, and reading.

Thursday morning I drove John's bike back up to his house and found a quick ride back to Mango. Packed my things, closed up the house, and no sooner had I hit the road but a car pulled over. A very nice French man, with family in Lomé. Near Kanté we picked up a soldier, and the 3 of us struck out onto the old route national that heads west in a big loop from Kanté to Sarakawa. It's a dirt road, now heavily used by overloaded trucks bringing food up to Bourkina Faso. We got stuck once in ~~a~~ a sea of deep mud, but got out fairly quick. These truck drivers are crazy. They drive as if their trucks were cars, and they overload them terribly. The result is dozens of accidents. We saw, on a 40km stretch of road, 3 semis tipped over on their sides.

Made it to Sokodé by afternoon. Joel gave me his card and asked Mike & I

to come visit in Somé. Phase 2 of the Sokodé stage is considerably more lively than the first. Lots of people to say hi to.

Sat. Sept 28

I'm writing this from Somé by the side of the Hotel Sarakawa pool. I seem to do a fair amount of my writing poolside!

Arrived back in Pagala a week ago Friday and had about 4 days to tie up loose ends & get ready to leave. Spent some good moments with the family, took some photos, and had a quiet going-away dinner, where Papa gave a flowery speech that was really touching. We gave some small cadeaux to the family.

Packing was hectic but not as bad as feared, although we somehow ended up with over twice as much stuff as we started with: 3 packs, 3 duffels, 1 table, 2 baskets, pails, tools, day packs - incredible! Before leaving Pagala we had a reception at the center for our parents &

the village notables. The prefect came & gave an extremely boring, lengthy speech. But everyone was honored he came.

It wasn't the least bit sad to leave Pagala - it was timely. Because it will become a permanent training site, I'm sure we will be back there many times during our stay here.

Somé has mostly been a bustle of confusion & frustration, until today ^(Paco!) We're staying in a very nice hotel, close to downtown. Wed. afternoon we had off, and Thurs. was spent at meetings and signing papers. Thurs. night we had our swear-in party at the home of the Embassy Chargé d'affaires & his wife. They are a young couple and very nice, and the party was very enjoyable with Sangria punch & wonderful food. Logo TV filmed the speeches & our oath. Met lots of nice people.

Friday was to be for shopping, but the bank hasn't yet

processed my account, so I couldn't get money, which was kind of nice, as it saved us from

running madly around town trying to buy things. Instead we spent the day at the Peace Corps office taking care of millions of logistical details. Typed up a 4-page letter to Bill, outlining some of our discontents with stage 1, & making suggestions for future ones. We shall see.

Friday night had Chinese food at the Golden Crown. Excellent.

Some is getting expensive.

Other than work, there's not much to do here but eat & drink. There's really no cultural things to explore. And there seems to be no mid-point between street food & decadence. It's either 100 F for fufu & sauce, or 2000 for any sit-down place. Some is full of fancy, gorgeous places to shop & eat, and is in many ways more "developed" & "western

than cities in southern Europe. Easy place to go, broke & get it. This Peace Corps experience thus far has been a real mixed bag. In general

I feel I've been treated
inconsiderately, and often callously.
We've often been made to feel as

though the ^{office} staff merely puts up
with our existence, rather than
But we're the reason they exist;
without us they wouldn't have
jobs. The office is very over-
crowded, and can be a pretty
degrading experience.

So Monday I head up
north, and, oh I forgot to
mention (can't imagine why)
that Mike didn't receive a 2nd
on his F.S. I. Test, and he
has been sentenced to 2 more
weeks of stage in Sokodé. It
was hard times there for a few
days as we fought with anger,
disappointment, and yet another
postponement. But it will work
out fine; I'll come back to
Somé at the end of his stage,
we'll both get our money, and
buy our things, and head north.

Sat. Oct. 5

Before leaving
for Mango

I'm at Andy's now. Kodjo dropped me off here Wednesday afternoon, after introducing me to the Dir. of affaires Sociales, the Prefet and the Police & gendarmes. Wednesday night John G. stayed the night to keep me company. Also, Leslie stopped by to say hi. She's very nice. Tuesday night I spent in Dapaong, and got to know Laura a little, who is also very nice! Monday night was spent in Kara with Linda & Jannelle; Erica got installed that day! Ran into John G. & two Swiss/French girls had met on the taxi coming up from Atakpamé. They were adorable. Rode up to Mango with them the next day, where I waited at Steve's for Kodjo. It appears his house was broken into after I left, and lots of little things were taken, as well as his cassette deck & his photos.

of home. I feel terrible, though I know I'm not responsible. He came up Thursday night to keep me company. Friday I rode to ~~Maha~~^{Dabaong} to run errands. My moto is brand new and runs great - what fun! I also have a shiny yellow moto & helmet & goggles - pretty amazing get-up! Today I had lunch of millet p^ote & sauce with the guardian & 2 of his brothers. I can speak bits & pieces of Moba, & seem to be understood. Understanding what's said to me is another matter!

I'm not allowed to leak the fact that Andy will be leaving. I've nearly slipped a couple times...

I think we'll be happy here. I'm in kind of a slump right now, wondering what the next 2 years has in store. Lots on my mind - lots of worries & fears, and joys. Some things I shouldn't

write about, but wish I could.
What good is a journal if you
can't bear your soul? what
help & release when you need
that? yet should any of us
have secrets we need to
hide for real fear of doing
lasting damage?

Thursday Oct. 10

These last days have
been some of the most
emotionally intense, joyous,
and bittersweet also, I've
had in a long, long time.
Saturday I drove to Mango
for Nancy Leonard's "surprise"
birthday party. There was
John G., Steve, Peter, Laura,
Kurt, Nancy, Leslie, and
2 French volunteers, Katherine
& Joel. Katherine just arrived
and the party was at her
house. Joel has been here
to go, and left the ~~the~~ next
morning! He had a lovely
villa - style house with a
pool, so after a glorious
dinner of rice with a
fabulous pintard sauce, we

danced a little, then went to Joel's for a moonlight skinny dip. We had a blast!!

Had races, played "Marco Polo", did crazy dives, floated around staring at the sky. I haven't laughed so happy & full in a long time. Very late we straggled, utterly exhausted, back to Steve's where Peter, Laura, & John slept 3 in the double bed,

giggling madly into the night. Steve & I, being the "biggest" got the other mosquito net - considerably more comfortable! - and talked most of the night away. I tell you - I could fall in love with that man - I already sort of have. It's funny - I feel about him sort of how I felt about Mike when I first met him. They're very similar personalities.

Sunday we all slept in and had coffee in our pagnes, laughing & talking & thoroughly enjoying each

other's company. It was nearly noon by the time we made it to Katherine's, where we'd

been invited to breakfast. They had all long ago eaten, so we took the 'leftover' rice & sauce to Kurt's for lunch. It's been hot, and we sat sweating, so of course a trip to the pool is in order. Joel had gone, and left the water in the pool but without the filter working it will be green in a few days. So

we passed another crazy, hilarious few hours basking in the cool water. Played frisbee games & got totally exhausted. Just before sunset, Nancy & I drove out to the barrage to watch birds. She knows the local birds pretty well, and we saw some gorgeous, close-up views. It was so nice to have her identify. Saw Bishops,

Squacco herons, Senegal thick-knees, white-faced ducks, several heron spp., little bee-eater, etc.

For Nancy's real birthday dinner we got colicos & beignes in town & dipped them in the ~~sauce~~ left-over sauce - yum! There were just the 4 of us at Kurt's, and we were so totally exhausted after 2 full days of "fun in the sun" that we got sillier & goofier & slap-happy, and by about 8:00 all of us were off to bed. Steve & I ~~stay~~ fell asleep right away, but woke up in the middle of the night and lay there talking for a long time. I ended up sleeping half the day away. I finally got myself in gear and headed north, feeling real depressed & lonely. Going home was about the last thing I felt like doing. Steve & I had a long talk about ifs - if I weren't married, but I am married, and mostly glad about it. I don't want to start over, I don't want

to give up what I've got. also,
as crude as this sounds, Mike
is by far a better man for

me than Steve. (I think).

Hard to say, of course, but
standing back & looking at
them subjectively, I think
there are more things about
Steve that would bug me
after a while. But anyway,
we both had a long cry,
and man, seeing him cry
was so incredibly touching,
it just about 'broke my'
heart. I cried & cried

and just had to lay
there until I had enough
energy back to force myself
to get up & face the day.
As much as I know Mike
loves me, it's so wonderful
to know that someone else
loves you too. I've felt so
whole & happy & loved
lately, surrounded by
affectionate, fun-loving
people who accepted me
instantly & have treated
me like family. So instead
of going home, I stopped

at John's in Barkoassi, and
thank goodness he was there.
He took me around the marché
where we had boisson
practised Moba, and ate fufu.
It was fun, but very
hot, and when we got back
to his house around 5,
I fell asleep for over an
hour. I woke soaked in
sweat, took a shower, and
we had a really good dinner
of noodles with sautéed vegies,
tuna, & vinaigrette. John
serenaded me to sleep with
his beautiful guitar music.
So I woke Tuesday morning
feeling much happier. Drove
home, pattered around, then
headed up to Dapaong for
Moba class with Teslie &
John. The class was pretty
boring, as there were
people at all levels. I think
it will be worth going to
though. After class we had
dinner at the Ambiance,
and I left early and slept
at Teslie's. She, Nancy & I
had a little slumber party.

Wednesday was busy. opened my Papaong bank account, visited Sophie & Nicoletta, and shopped

for so much stuff I had to strap a basket onto my bike to get it all home.

Got home early afternoon and set up for my party! Cleaned the house, made custard, chopped vegies, etc. 9 people came: Sophie, Nicoletta, Patricia, Steve, John, Dave, Brent, Marco, Tom. We had guacamole, crackers, vegies & cheese ~~at~~ hors d'oeuvres.

Dinner was rice with sautied squash, tomatoe, onion, garlic, green beans, herbs & lemon. Leslie gave me some soy sauce, and I added some seeds from the marché.

Had wine & beer, and Brent brought a bottle of Pastis.

Liquor here is incredibly cheap. For desert we had a lemon cake, compliments of Sophie, etc., and

maple custard - yum.

Then we stayed up half the night singing songs, telling jokes, & playing

games. Had a wonderful time! Slept on the terrace and some in the house.

We have enough mattresses here now to sleep 8 plus people! Had a wonderful breakfast of cakes, custard, bread, cheeses, jam, fruit, etc. We were up early, and by 9:00 everyone was gone, except Steve, whose bike decided not to run. Poor guy woke up with a cold, and had to spend an hour working on his bike. So my first party was a grand success, and incredibly fun! Am spending the day preparing to leave for Lomé in the morning.

The family doesn't yet know that we'll be living here permanently, which has been kind of nice, as I can act more like a visitor, and don't have to make quite the same efforts at socializing with the family. They've been very good to me. Someone always sweeps the

terrace, fills the water jar, fills & cleans the lamps. Mom has several times brought me

● Tchakbalo, including this morning. The kids are really cute, and in general they don't come around, but once in a while they come onto the porch or even into the house! I have to be very firm so they don't learn bad habits.

Adia has several times invited me to eat with him, and the food has been very good. I'm actually starting to like pâte & sauce!

Sun. Oct. 20

Finds me again in Tomé. Sat. the 12th I arrived in Sokodé to find that Mike had failed the test & was sentenced to another week of stage - I was irate, and spent the day ● arguing with everyone about the ridiculousness of these F.S.I.'s. I'm afraid I didn't impress

anybody, and my angry words
fell on deaf ears (which made me
even angrier). Now I know how

people get ulcers. So I came
down to Soné Monday with
the 7 people who had passed
(incl. Gary!), and spent the
week shopping. In the process
I also spent all our money...

Bought some nice pots & pans &
mugs & bowls & a stove & lamp and
all that stuff. Explored ~~a lot~~
of Soné and learned where lots
of places are. Visited with the
few volunteers who were around,
hung out in the Peace Corps lounge,
and left half my Christmas
presents in a taxi. I was heart-
broken.

Wed. Oct. 23
Thurs. Oct. 24

I'm in Dapaong. We're staying
at the Campement. Etienne
brought us up in one day from
Soné; a long, hot dusty trip,
but we got to stop & see a
few volunteers on the way up.

Went to the Ambulance for
dinner & ran into Kurt &
Tedie & Marco. Steve's house

got broken into again, and he lost a lot of money. They sawed open his door! I am so angry.

① Poor Steve, I feel so sorry for him. I dreamt about negative things all night and woke up feeling pretty depressed.

So - Mike came down from Sokodé last Saturday, and took his F.S.I. Sunday. He passed, of course, but as we had no money 'until Monday we spent Sunday just wandering around. Visited Joe & Gail's house

and ate pastries & ice cream at a bakery. Did a lot of walking which felt good.

Spent Monday & Tuesday shopping for last minute odds & ends, and dismayedly watching our money disappear. Had a long talk with Bill Monday afternoon à propos de "la lettre".

It went well, and we seemed to get most of our misunderstandings cleared up -

① though you never know, with Bill. Tuesday night 7 of us had dinner at the Abri, an English speaking Hotel-Restaurant,

They had gone with the wind
on a video machine! Walking
along the dark, poorly-lit
beach road, trying to get
a taxi. Holly told us how
she was 'robbed at knife point
here back in June! My god,
I was terrified - Mike & I
had over 100,000 francs on us!
all in all, it was quite nice
to get out of Somé.

Monday Oct. 28

Why is it I have a
million things to write about -
until I sit down to write,
and they all leave my
head? These last few days
have been a real drag.
Thursday Etienne dropped us
off at the house, and I
caught a ride to Mango
with them to pick up my
bike. We arrived to find
Steve & Kurt waiting at the
gendarmerie, where a
robbery suspect was being
held. Poor Steve - he was

an emotional wreck, as he spent the next 2 hours trying to explain to the gendarmes, who

seemed to be only half-listening, and to ask all the wrong questions, the whole series of events surrounding the 2 robberies. The man picked up for the robbery seems a very likely suspect, and Steve had a long list of reasons why.

The gendarmes then came to the house and acted incompetent for a while. It seems they will decide whether or not the fellow's guilty, based on

who knows what criteria, and there's a slim chance Steve will ever get any of his things back. On top of it all, Steve's faced with probably having to move out of his house! He's heartbroken about it, and has no idea what to do. He has no idea if it's really safe to stay there. He looked so lost & lonely when I had to leave, what

a rotten feeling to have to leave your friends when they really need you. So I headed

back home and stopped to see John on the way. Peter was there and we went to the bar. What I needed was a hug & a good talk with John, but instead we chit-chatted at the bar, and when I finally left, barely in time to get home by dark, I was feeling even more depressed. I hate it when a really low mood overtakes me, and I know in time I'll get over it, but meanwhile there's nothing I can do.

I fought back tears all the way home, feeling utterly empty & lonely. The sun was setting orange & hazy above the grasses, and I was angry at myself for getting so caught up in crazy emotions and forgetting to just look around me and appreciate how beautiful the world is. These have been tough times emotionally, though. I'm hoping it will pass. It really hit hard Sunday - but I also had a whopping cold,

my period just started, and I know it's "normal" to feel sort of lost & lonely when you first get to post. also, it's been very hot, and on top of a cold I've had headaches and no energy. The biggest thing of all though, is that I find myself utterly bored with & indifferent to my marriage. I would give anything to recapture the way I used to feel about him. For nearly 3 years I adored him, and he filled up all the spaces in my life. Now I find myself ignoring him, avoiding him, treating him poorly. I try so hard to treat him well, to be nice to him. god, I ~~hop~~ don't want him to think this is normal - and yet I really don't think he realizes how miserable I've been. I'm so confused - I'm afraid to tell him how I've been feeling, because I'm afraid it would hurt him too much; and I keep hoping, and praying, that things

will improve. Meanwhile I keep clinging to other people for my emotional support, especially John & Steve, and of course they can't really give me what I most need - which is my marriage.

Tonight there was a lunar eclipse! Just beautiful. The earth cast a shadow over the full moon, and then slowly, over half an hour or so, the shadow pulled back, exposing larger & larger crescents, until the moon was full! All during the eclipse, children sang songs & danced to makeshift drums. They sang to the sun to ~~give~~ let go of the moon! If they don't sing this they fear the moon may be gone for good. They seemed to be having such a wonderful time - how special it must be for them to suddenly see that the moon is eclipsed. For none of us knew it was coming.

I kept pretty busy today, partly in the hope that keeping busy would keep my mind

off melancholy thoughts, partly out of fear that if I stopped moving I wouldn't get going again. These days I could cry at the drop of a hat, and little things have threatened to set me off all day: songs I've always loved now choke me up; little allusions to home, or friends on the radio; postcards & photos. Sounds like classic homesickness, huh? But it's been so goddamned sneaky & well-disguised, and mixed up with so many other emotions! I remember being told in Colorado that we'd go through times when we'd revere anything American. We'd find ourselves reminiscing nostalgically & unrealistically about home, and food, & music. Well, it's happening. But we're getting settled in, slowly but surely, and eventually

this will really feel like home -
I hope. At times I ache for
our little Bellingham house.

I have such wonderful
memories of there. But we
left to move on to other
things, and that's that. I
don't ever want to say I
regret anything, because I
believe in the future things
always work out for the best.

Mike took Adia to
Dapaong today & they bought
planches, & cement to make
bricks. We shall soon have
shelves! Our money is
running very low, however,
so we've really got to watch
it.

It's been interesting
living with no electricity or
running water. Soon we'll
have a system set up and
I'm sure it will be quite
comfortable. Our butane lamp
works great in the kitchen,
and makes puttering
around pleasant instead of
aggravating. We've also
got our 2 kerosene lamps

4 candles. We've been acutely conscious of saving water, & try not to waste

● a drop. Rinse water becomes wash water; wash water goes in the garden or under trees. Adia has a glorious crop of tomatoes growing around the shower. We burn what we can, and put the ashes in the W.C. Compost will go in a pile. Empty cans & jars & boxes go to the family. The little that's left we'll bury once a month or so.

Of dust & lizards (and frogs and pigs and cows and horses and ducks and pintards and puppies and sheep...) I think that's about it. Harmattan is picking up. It's been hot - 100° or so at midday and 80-90° at night - but the world has grown hazy, and each day the breezes grow a little bit stronger. Soon the millet will be cut, and then the wind will be able to blow in on us

unhindered - we hope! With the tin roof, this place turns into an oven at midday, and we spend most of our time on the front porch. We have lots of plans for this place, and Adia has been wonderful-cooperative, supportive, trust-worthy.

Wed. Oct. 30

The moon hasn't come up yet, and the evening is very dark, a contrast to the last few bright nights when the moon was up before sunset.

We drove to Dapaong today. Visited affaires sociales & found out about the cistern project; ran into several agents, & found out that most of them are tied up in the cistern project for the next 2 weeks. Also shopped in the marché. It's fun to learn what's available, how to use local foods, to get to know marché women. It's very hot & dusty, and you're constantly parched & thirsty. We seem to drink constantly, but often beer &

tehak are all that's available.
alcohol & heat can be a very sleepy
combination! There've also been

a lot of bugs lately. Suddenly,
a few nights ago, they appeared
in droves, flocking around our
lamps, or biting. We've had
to use our mosquito net, which
is a bit stifling. It will be
nice to get netting on the
windows, though money's a bit
low, so we'll have to wait a
month or so.

Last night we had a most
amazing experience, all the more
so because it was quite un-
expected. Adia just happened
to mention that one of the chief's
mother-in-laws had died,
and the funeral would be that
night. - I'm sure the village
had known about and planned
for it for days (she died a week
ago), but to us, who don't
understand Moba, village gossip
doesn't reach us. Perhaps that's
why we PC's gossip about each
other so much; we're not
really able to gossip at the
in our village communities, so

we make up for it in our extended P.C. community. (a note on "gossip": if it's neither

malicious or negative, I think it can be very healthy and important to community social life. How else can over 100 people keep in touch with each other? I talk about people I care about, and talking or hearing about them makes them feel closer. No telephones here for long conversations with our friends).

So - the funeral was fantastic. The chief dressed in a long robe, billowy pants beneath, shiny black riding boots, and a tall, round cap covered with cloth symbols. His white stallion was draped in embroidered cloth and tassels. An enormous ~~red~~ white umbrella was carried alongside him. We stood in the crowd in front of the chief's concession, waiting for him to appear.

A troupe of young male dancers had been hired. They wore shorts, t-shirts, and wide, tasselled belts of cowrie shells.

The chief appeared & mounted his horse, ~~which~~ didn't seem especially happy about this, and pranced

wildly. Quite impressive!

The procession started off across the valley: the chief very regal on his tall horse, the umbrella being carried beside him, twirling & bobbing, the dancers & crowd behind, shells & drums, flutes & rattles in a rhythmic cacophony. It was truly a spectacular sight, and I felt it was worth coming here just for this one experience.

The funeral fete was held in a large, dusty field on the other side of the valley. There must have been 500 people there! It was reminiscent of an open-air rock concert: women sold everything from rice & beans to cigarettes & kola nuts, throngs of people gathered to chat, children gazed wide-eyed or ran eagerly about. The chief was installed in a chair beneath the umbrella, and benches placed on either side of him for the notables. To our surprise we

were offered seats here, next to the chief. We were ~~both~~ flattered, ~~and~~ but also hoped we hadn't upset

anyone by usurping their place. Many came to greet the chief & notables, but often they avoided us, which seemed a bit strange.

The dancing began, a circle of people rotating around, shaking their hips so fast they became a blur - incredible! We danced for a while, which everyone found uproarious. The dust grew thick & choking, and finally we were offered something to drink!

It was all very comfortable & fascinating. We felt in a way we were making our village debut, and hoped our presence there would improve our standing, or "score us points" with the villagers, to put it crudely.

I'm finally coming out of my depression and feel ready to interact with people.

The funeral lasted all night, but I'm afraid we didn't. The dust, & drums, & drink ~~noise~~ made us sleepier & sleepier, until we

feared we'd fall over if we stayed. Since we don't speak the language, it's hard to really

interact, and we didn't have (or really want!) any kola nuts, which is what keeps these fêtes going all night. They drink & chew & dance, and about 3 AM the chief killed a goat, we're told. Adia is a "chef scout", in charge of protecting the chief and maintaining law & order in general. He was hilarious at the funeral, dashing about, full of energy, directing traffic & giving orders.

Monday Nov. 4

Friday morning we left for the big Halloween fête in Kara. Marco had rented a "happy van" for us northern folk. Mike & I drove to Barkoissi, where we left our ~~the~~ bike. I like that village a lot, and always feel real comfortable there. Ate some delicious beans & manioc with

a group of young, friendly
Kotokoli women. I think they
were a bit surprised when
they said "Mangeons", and
I did!

The Halloween fête was
a grand success - I haven't
had that much fun in a
long, long time. \$ 30 or so
of us ate en masse at Sous
le Manquier Friday night.

Saturday we had a huge
softball game all morning,
with tunes & cold drinks.
I played terribly, but that's
nothing new, and no one
cared! Hit the pool for
the afternoon, and then
played more softball! Mike
was really impressive,
with some wonderful hits.

So the party began,
and lots of people came.

The costumes were fabulous:
the Vache Qui Rit, Nancy as a
Freudian Slip, a Mosquito
Buster, and Agent Orange.

I spent several hours
perfecting my skill as a
tortilla maker, and

dinner was superb: tacos with the works. The Kara party committee outdid them-

selves with planning & organizing. They had decorations and an incredible array of multiple tape decks & speakers arranged. Nick, Marco & John took turns as D.J., and ~~it was~~ the music was fantastic! and believe it or not, I actually danced all night! I had 2 glasses of beer with dinner, and for the next 9 hours or so

I fueled myself with lemonade, dancing, singing, music, and fun. I had such a great time! I never got tired, and I couldn't believe I had so much energy. The night was marred ~~by~~ when several people's packs were stolen because the guards fell asleep.

But ~~sunshine~~^{rise!} found a handful of us still going strong, playing sunshine songs, drinking bloody mary's, and eating

cinnamon rolls! At 7am. I finally slept, and at 10 the taxi arrived to cart us north. Ugh, a tough ride, but it went quick (the driver drove like a maniac).

Back home, we were shocked to see most of the millet had been knocked over to be harvested. You can see for miles now in every direction, and there's a view out our windows! The wind is finally picking up, hot & very dry, and it can blow all through the house now. We've discovered many new neighbors who were previously well-hidden in the millet!

Each day the landscape grows a little paler & dustier, and the crops & grasses turn a paler yellow-brown. It's very beautiful here with a variety of growing things: rice, cotton, millet, sorghum, peanuts, tobacco, manioc.

There are many cattle here, who dot the valley as they