

graze, and also many donkeys. These have a lovely black yoke-like stripe draped over their shoulders.

The house is shaping up, and we're starting to feel at home. We now have shelves, and will soon have 2 new tables.

We're getting to know the village a bit, and are learning what the marché has to offer. It's a fair amount, actually. Mike is thrilled - he can buy beef for 500 francs a kilo (about \$1.25!). We'll try to buy whatever we can here.

Tuesday Nov. 5

A very busy day. Had someone do a huge load of wash this morning. Mike helped Adia harvest millet. I visited the CEG to discuss the possibility of teaching English classes. I intended to say no, but I admit the idea intrigued me, and so I said I'd do it till the end of the quarter, in mid-December.

The Director is thrilled, and I'm terrified. What have I gotten myself into? I hope I don't make an utter fool of myself, or waste the kids' time. I'll teach a level 3 class with 25 students, only one of whom is female!

We found a Moba teacher, who will also teach Mike French. He'll come this week, then will be gone for 3 weeks, and will start again in December.

Also visited the dispensary. There is a young male nurse in charge, assisted by a male interpreter & a mid-wife. The facilities are bare bones, but the nurse is very nice and seems pretty modern & well-educated. He wants to join our Moba classes.

Have spent a lot of time talking with Adia lately. He has been very good to us. But he can really be a pain to talk with sometimes, as he babbles on & on, & often

ends by totally confusing us as to his meaning. He told me this about traditional

• Moba burials: women are buried in a granary-shaped hole, facing west where the sun sets, so they are ready to prepare the evening meal.

A pot or marmite is buried with them or set on top.

Men are buried in an oblong hole, facing east, so they are ready to go to their fields when the sun rises.

Their hole & daba are set on

• top. Now, however, Christian style burials with tombstones are more common.

Once the millet is harvested the fields are lightly burned. This clears debris and burns the leaves off the stalks so they can be gathered & used for roofing or fuel. By day the air is full of smoke & ash, and at night the horizon glows.

• Amazingly enough, these fires seem to burn very controllably.

Tonight there is drumming
& singing in the concession.
Something to do with an
upcoming fête.

Our chef is a fascinating
fellow, who looks half his
age, and is very handsome.
He currently has 10 wives
(1 died), and stays young,
he says, by being very
active. He has a beautiful
big white stallion that
he takes great care of.

Sun. ~~Sat.~~ Nov. \$ 10

We've had a fun
weekend. Dave came by Sat.
morning and we went to
the marché at Yembour,
about 15 km west of here, near
the Ghana border. It's a
good-sized marché, pretty
animated, and draws people
from Ghana. Thus you can
hear Moba French & English.

From Yembour we went to
visit some Lutheran missionaries
up on the plateau west of here
and north of Yembour. The road
was hellacious - deep sand, rock

4 mts; and, with mine & I riding double we dumped once & nearly gave up. But we arrived

and got a very friendly welcome. There are 2 couples, one of whom has worked in Africa for 15 years. They are very nice people, but their mission is one I can hardly relate to. They also run a dispensary, and do some agricultural work - tho' the aim is always evangelism - and I'm not sure how well-thought-out or appropriate their secondary (not to mention primary) projects

are. Helen served us pumpkin pie: from local pumpkins, which was absolutely delicious!

From there we continued north across the plateau on a narrow ribbon of trail. The landscape here is harsh & dry, with scattered trees the only relief from the rock & sand & dry, blown grass. Scratching a living from this parched, rocky soil must be

incredibly difficult, and God only knows what they do for water! But it's very

Beautiful here also. Reminds me a lot of canyon country in the southwest, but instead of the dark-skinned native American peoples who no longer live in their traditional way, there are the even darker-skinned Moba peoples. And here are some of the last outposts of their traditional way of life.

There lives here in these hills have remained fairly unchanged.

~~There~~ There are probably fewer trees, a bigger population, perhaps the soil has grown a bit poorer. And there are ~~no~~ various accoutrements of modern society: clothes & plastics, & vehicles.

Jedie, Hugo, Rensus & Dave came for a pseudo-enchilada dinner. Hugo is a fantastic musician, and he & Dave played us some nice tunes.

They stayed the night, and after breakfast we all headed up onto the plateau to explore the cliffs. Mike & I were exhausted after cooking & cleaning & washing dishes endlessly! We found a

trail that wound high up onto the cliffs. It was rough going, but great moto practice!

Up on the cliffs the land is composed of sheet-like shale, gravel, & almost no soil. Yet somehow people live up here! Tucked between rocky outcrops are clusters of huts. We arrived rather unexpectedly in the village of Japol (?) where villagers soon appeared out of nowhere & led us, in a swelling group, to the home of the local sous-chef. Everyone assumed we had come for a guided tour of the local caves.

~~This~~ Their price was rather high however, so we settled for a hike to the cliff edge.

And lo & behold, there below us stretched the magnificent valley of Bogon! We were directly above our house and had a fantastic panorama of all the local landmarks. A real bird's-eye view.

We bought some boisson which we shared with the crowd, and they seemed well-pleased.

One of the boys is a student in my English class. He hikes down from the

cliffs to school every day! They told us the women haul water up from the valley several times a day!

It's very dry & dusty these days, and after a moto ride clothes, skin, pack, & moto alike are covered with a thick, tenacious layer of red-brown dust. I think one resigns oneself to living in a dusty world for a large part of the year. You breathe it, bathe in water mixed with it, live in a house covered with it. It irritates nose & throat so that you go nowhere without Kleenex & water. The Harmattan cold. Ugh.

Then there's the bugs. Most don't bite, but they hover in droves around lanterns & drive you crazy ~~with~~ landing in food & drink & buzzing by your face.

Caught my first English class Thursday. An interesting

experience, and a bit frustrating. Their level appears to be a bit lower than I'd expected, and

• their materials are pretty poor. They don't even have dictionaries!

So the pace of life is picking up, and it's quite nice. My bouts of depression grow less frequent, and things with Mike & I seem to be going pretty well.

Sat. Nov. 16

• Lately the days have been flying by, and we've been very busy. Journal writing often bites the dust. Here, what you don't get done in the morning often doesn't get done at all. Energy disappears in direct proportion to the temperature.

We eat just after dark and usually have barely enough energy & motivation left to brush teeth & pee before

• lying down! We often read before sleeping, which I love to do. I've read several wonderful books lately: "Cachelma"

by Susan Howatch, "The Moon & Sixpence" by W. Somerset Maugham (my first book by him - a fantastic writer!), "A Town Called Alice", by Nevil Shute - a wonderful book that you wish wouldn't end. I'm now starting Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court". Promises to be quite entertaining!

Makes it sound as if I spend an inordinate amount of time reading! Actually I probably only average an hour a day - but I can really devour books - sometimes I think I should read slower & savor more, but I can't seem to help myself.

We're coming full into burning season now. By day gray smoke rises all over & black patches are appearing on the landscape. By night the horizons glow with hidden flares, and on the hillsides around us lines of bright flame burn ~~in~~ silent & smokeless, like halos of fire suspended in the darkness. It's quite

magical & beautiful, and hopelessly impossible to photograph. Thursday we rode home from Dapaony after

dark, and around us were patches of bright orange & yellow flame, lighting up shadowy sections of landscape. The moon was a tiny new crescent. The effect together was very impressive.

The sunsets have grown colorful with the combination of ash & harmattan dust in the air. Unfortunately the cliffs block our view of these from the valley bottom.

Sunrises, the times were up early enough, have also been hazy & colorful.

The weather is dry & warm, averaging 95-100°F. Nights vary from delightfully cool, occasionally even requiring a blanket!, to warm enough to sleep with no cover.

Mornings & evenings are a very nice temperature, and we relish our porch with its comfortable chairs and our new coffee table covered in blue vinyl!

Mike built a lovely stove they now, which we hope to use for a sand oven. It's in a spot where many women see it every day. The chief's stallion came to inspect it one day. To our amazement he stuck his enormous head down inside it and began to lick up the still-wet clay! He came up with his nose coated brown and serenely licked his chops. We roared with laughter and Mike took a photo. If it turns out it should be priceless!

Over the last 2 weeks or so we've noticed enormous flocks of cattle egrets. They stream overhead morning & night by the thousands. I don't know if they are migrating through as the millet ripens and will then disappear. Time will tell. Wed. we heard about the volcano in Columbia which killed over 20,000 people. In a way I'm glad there's no T.V. to see film of

the disaster on. It would only make me feel sadder & more impotent.

The burning of fields has its pros & cons. When done now, before it's too dry, the fires burn controllably and don't destroy the millet stalks or trees. Later, when it's very dry however, they rage, destroying trees & shrubs, not to mention houses.

The millet stalks are important as fuel, so it's a shame & a waste to lose them in brush

fires. Yet I was amazed to learn that many women sacrifice great piles of the stalks which they burn, collect the ash from, and filtrate with water to get a thick phosphate solution which they use for cooking. The phosphate lowers boiling points or something, thus making beans, etc. cook much faster. This saves both time & fuel, but it's ironic how much fuel they consume to create the phosphorus. I don't see why they can't just use cooking

ashes, instead of artificially creating piles of ashes.

We have people now who supply our wash water, do our laundry, and sweep. This makes life lots easier, as the details of daily life are very time-consuming.

It's now actually Sunday morning (no, I haven't been writing all night!) and I'm listening to B.B.C. I often listen in the morning & evening, and really enjoy their programming. Their news is thorough but concise, and their other programs include a variety of music, plays, commentaries, and human interest.

Listening helps me feel a little more in touch with the world, and I admit there's many times it's nice to have talking noises filling the house. Less lonely.

Been thinking a lot lately about the feelings of loneliness & isolation when you're far away from

family & old friends, you're certain these feelings are hitting you harder than ever.

• Yet the intensity of these feelings is not proportional to distance; I'm not really sure what influences it.

I think of Rick & Margaret in Tennessee, not a few hundred miles from "home", yet going through adjustments just as difficult as Mike & I.

Or Dave & Mary moving to Lynwood, not 100 miles from Bellingham, to "start a new

• life". I think of the bouts of loneliness & melancholy I've had everywhere I've lived - near & far. We're

really so alone in this world. We spend every second of our lives with ourselves, and know ourselves so much more intimately than anyone else ever could. Perhaps at

times we become acutely aware of just how much an

• entity unto ourself each of us really is, and it can often be quite painful & scary. It makes us

either reexamine ourselves ^{our lives} ~~at~~, or else try to hide a bit by seeking solace in friends, travel, books...

all those wonderful escapes we humans have developed to help us deal with the overwhelming fact of being alive.

Life here has the potential to be just as rich & full as life anywhere. Certainly the social life could keep one busy nearly constantly! There are a lot of white people here in Dapaong. It's disappointing to realize that we've all come here to work with the Togolese, yet we seek each other for "real" company. Part of it is language, of course. It's nice to speak English! Part of it is culture - ~~so~~ we tend to seek the company of people from our own cultural background - we can "relate" to each other better.

My English classes are going quite well. Lesson preparation is getting easier -

less time-consuming & less scary. Our French-Moba teacher, however is turning out to be a

● disappointment. Not sure what we'll do.

It's a very harmattan day today. Hazy, cloudy, & blessedly cool with a gentle breeze.

Had a mtg. with M. Tchanganana, the director of affaires sociales, on Thurs.

Mike, Steve, and I talked about the stove program, and our plans. He was very supportive and easy to talk with. After our hour-long meeting he bought us all drinks and we had a nice, informal chat. It was such a relief to find out he can be a nice guy!

The Togolese market women have a wonderful way of eating oranges: they remove the thin outer layer of colored skin, leaving the orange soft & squeezable. ~~the~~ a round plug is then cut out of the top, and the juice sucked out, squeezing the

orange until dry. It's fresh-squeezed juice - delicious & very refreshing.

When most people think of Africa they think of women carrying things on their head. This is the most common means of transport, and incredible quantities of goods are moved from place to place in this way. It's such an integral part of life that I find I hardly notice it. But I just wanted to remind myself how amazing these women are: they work like oxen, and they are strong, carrying very heavy weights on their heads.

Thurs. Nov. 21

Yesterday was John's 1-year anniversary in Barkoissi! Went down to "assist" at a formation that never materialized. Ended up drinking coke & gins. ~~& tonics~~ - ugh! - and

singing songs to John's guitar.
Mike spent the day in
Dapaony, and brought home

a shiny new moto rack
he had made at the Tech.
college! He brought long
letters from Caryl & Marti -
at last we hear from Jay &
Marti! She is sponsoring a
Christian Children's Fund child
from Togo. She requested a
Togolese child because of us,
and, amazing but true, her
girl lives in Bombouaka,
about 6 kms. away! We'll
try to find her.

Driving down to John's
yesterday the landscape struck
me as very impressionistic.
The fires have caused many
trees to lose their leaves,
leaving behind tangled slopes
of rock, ash, and gnarled,
stunted limbs against a
hazy, harmattan sky.

The effect is somewhat "unreal".

Oh - driving into Dapaony
on Monday an enormous
lizard crossed the road
ahead of us. He was a good
meter long from nose to

tail tip, and very thick.

We got a good look at him before he disappeared into the brush.

We've been quite busy this week. We've spent several mornings at the Cathwell nutrition center watching the baby weighing & food distribution. Very interesting. M. Atankou, the Bogou Affaires Sociales agent, has introduced us & our stoves project to each group!

This morning we got to help weigh babies - I thought it was fun! (The kids didn't!)

I'm still teaching English at the CEC. It's fun, but takes a lot of time. I'm under pressure to continue next quarter, but must refuse. I have a hunch we'll be very busy with stoves.

Tues. Nov. 26

Another mood swing in the downward direction, but not too low. It's the middle of my period (these have been so light they're barely non-

existent); also I've been depressed about gaining weight. I'm turning into flab. But as for exercise,

I don't know how to get any in this heat. Perhaps just stretching & muscle-toning on the floor at night?

Spent the entire day yesterday at my desk! Can you imagine? But I got so much done. I just can't believe it took all day. I've realized, however, that it's not good to spend entire days at home like that, without going out at all. It's important to force yourself to get out - somewhere - at least once a day.

I'm also finding that it may be best not to get too involved in local village life. It seems the more people we get to know the more village problems we learn about. Adia is forever telling us of his problems. Half the time we don't even understand what he's talking about. Then there's some fist-fighting going on between Adia's brothers & some

others, so there's yelling & screaming going on, arguing over who started it. Then we were

invited to spend Sunday at M. Atoukou's. He was gone for most of our visit, and his wife, an enormous but very nice young woman, proceeded to tell us, in great detail, about their problems, domestic & otherwise. After all, she basically implored us to help her husband find a better job. It was rather embarrassing.

Everyone thinks we can help them, not realizing we're also just peers.

Then there's our (ex-) language teacher, who turned out to be a real obnoxious guy, and drunk half the time. Well, he accosted Mike in the marché yesterday and proceeded to tell him that Mrs. Atoukou is "evil" and we should watch out for her. Then it turns out he was in his room at their house during our entire visit Sunday and overheard our entire conversation. Yet he never came out or said hi.

We were there for 5 hours! Wind
(By the way, we had a

delicious lunch of fried pintard,
tomato-flavored corn pâté, a
great sauce & a salad.

Well, it turns out there's
an ancient vendetta against
the Mrs. and our infamous
director. She detests him,
and made no bones about
telling us so. That's all we
need is trouble with him!

Then there's Adia's radio,
which we had repaired for
him in Dapaong (a whole
mother histoire, not worth
going into). Now it's

fixed he plays it full
blast, which would be fine
if it weren't such awful
reception! So it's currently
a sort of war of the radios.

We baked a pumpkin
pie last week in our oven.

The oven seems to work well,
altho' the pie wasn't a huge
success. But it was edible,
and the crust was quite
good!

So tomorrow we leave
for Somé. I'm looking
forward to getting away.
After a few days, life here

grows a bit intense, living in such close proximity to Adia, with little privacy.

I think I'm going to stop feeling guilty about not integrating whole-heartedly into village life. I think it will cause too many problems in the long run. Perhaps it's best to let your village be a place of refuge & quiet, and your house an escape and a private "space".

Wed. Nov. 27

I'm writing this on Dec. 15, looking back. Lots to catch up on! Left our bikes at Kurt's in Mango and had a very uncomfortable but fairly fast taxi trip to Kara. Stayed the night at Affaires Sociales & left at 1 PM Thurs. in a Peace Corps "happy van" for Tomé. With sleeping space at a premium, Mike & I shared a bunk for the night! Spent Friday mostly in the office, getting reimbursed, etc. Moved to Hotel Aofa.

Saturday morning we attended our first volunteer council mtg.

Fairly organized for the number of people & issues to be discussed. Then adjourned to the Ambassador's for swimming & tennis! He has a gorgeous place near the 2 Février.

Then Sat. night was Thanksgiving at Bill's. The food was fabulous - turkey, stuffing, gravy, salad, deserts galore!

Then we danced on the roof under the stars until Mike finally dragged me away at 3 AM! At one point I got my foot crunched by an over-enthusiastic swing-dance partner. gave me trouble for quite a few days, but is almost healed now.

After much hemming & hawing, finally decided to go to a Counseling Workshop in Kpalimé for 4 days. Mike went north ahead of me. Spent

Tuesday & Wednesday working on stove packets to hand out to agents. Got drunk on gin & tonics Tues night at Hotel le Prince w/ the moto crowd

(actually, gin & bitter lemons - yum).
However... I'm afraid I made
a bit of a scene by breaking
down crying hysterically, etc.,
and even further confusing my
already pretty warped reputation
here. The more I try to repair
the damage, the worse it
seems to get...

Anyway (deep breath),
harmattan blew in hard & strong
in Lomé, and all was
obscured by a pall of dusty
brown. It felt "socked in",
just like a N.W. fog. The
beach felt rugged & remote,
and a steady wind bent
the palm trees southward.
It felt kind of homey, and
very reminiscent of N.W. weather.

Spent several Lomé mornings
at the abri, an English-
speaking establishment on the
beach road near the Peace Corps
office, where one can get a
continental breakfast w/ omelette for
700 CFA. (Dollar's down to 380 CFA now).

It's a lovely spot to sit, feel
the breezes, and watch the
beach & fishing activity. One

morning after breakfast Mike & I wandered down to the beach to watch a net hauled in. The

men pulled in 2 lines on shore, while others thrashed about in the surf organizing the net. Very similar to what I saw in Portugal, but no women helped here, and the men were black & many were incredibly muscular.

Thurs. Dec. 5 - Kpalimé

got a ride to Kpalimé in a Peace Corps van. There were 10 of us Logo-ites attending, and 2 volunteers from Niger, Joel & Kim, both very nice. Helen Miles gave the conference - a ~~is~~ widowed woman in her 40's who has lived & worked all over the world as a teacher, counselor, etc. An incredible woman, and worth going to the conference just to meet her.

The conference was a very good time for me. I felt more relaxed & at peace than I have in a long time.

Had a very good talk w/
Steve, and began to see the light
at the end of the tunnel. We
reached some understandings,
and I feel a huge weight lifted
off my shoulders (crumbs
have since fallen, however,
knocked loose by my clumsy
fingers). We had a lot of
time to reflect, and wander,
talk to others, listen to
music, sing songs. So nice to
be away from the pressures of
work & adjusting to village
life. We talked about P.C.
life & it was good for me to
realize how "normal" some of
my ups & downs have been.
It's just that I've been
venting the pressure in in-
appropriate ways.

The conference ended
Monday, & we spent Monday
night at Dean's in Kpalimé
(Steve & I). The weather
during this time was very
cool, dusty, & also foggy
(as in moisture!). It is
lush & green here, and
humid!

at Dean's, met Charité, a sweet Togolese woman studying in Ghana. She speaks English

well, and we had some nice chats.

Tuesday morning, caught taxis first to Atakpamé, then to Kara. The second was like a furnace as everyone refused to open the windows. Towards the end, my butt was also dying! Spent the night at Barry's, after a delicious coleslaw at Tamara's! Barry's place is just delightful - feels like a mt. cabin perched on a knoll. He's filled it with warm & wonderful things.

Spent Wednesday in Kara, looking at Barry's projects. We heard Joe could give us a ride up on Thurs., so decided to wait. Watched shooting stars from Barry's front porch Wed. night, and listened to wonderful music.

Thurs. morning caught a ride with Joe to Mango. He's a real strange bird, but nice. Talks a lot, however.

Expecting to see the north
black, lifeless, & dusty, I couldn't
believe my eyes when I saw

new, green shoots everywhere!

Grasses, leaves, & even flowers!

Like a miracle - what a relief
to see the world, instead of
bleak & drab, - reborn & spring -
green!

Mike met me at Kurt's in
Mango - he was rather worried that
I was 2 days late.

Arrived in Bogore and
got descended upon. Everyone
came to say hello & welcome
home, and then Peter showed
up & spent the night. It was
all rather overwhelming - didn't
even get a chance to unpack, or
to read the piles of mail.

I was dismayed to find
myself sink almost at once
into the same old funk I
was in before Tomé. I am
getting real tired of myself -
if only I could have kept
it to myself, instead of
dragging others into it. Of
course, what it comes down
to is my reputation - I've

never regretted much in my past - but I've done many foolish things, and perhaps

it's only luck that so far things have always worked out for ~~the~~ well.

The cotton harvest is wrapping up here in Bogou, and the new banco storage enclosure is crammed full of cotton - measured in tons. The farmers carried their harvests in in burlap sacks & made piles outside the enclosure.

At night, family members guarded the piles by climbing into them to sleep. Mike photographed them early one morning - a sea of cotton piles, bright white, with one or more black heads sticking out of each! Very warm in there! The cotton was then ~~the~~ weighed, farmer by farmer, paid for, and dumped inside the enclosure. The cotton society (S.O.T.O.CO.) trucks will then come to collect it, take it to the gin in Loué, then ship it to Europe (where it will be

manufactured into cloth & resold to Logo!).

We have myriad house projects underway, just as before we went to Somé. We don't seem to be able to help ourselves - always full of grand ideas. We are trying to do things as simply, cheaply, and appropriately as possible - but obviously that's relative. I would like to live a simple lifestyle here, to have few possessions & an uncluttered house, with just the "bare necessities." But you can buy anything here, and we find ourselves accumulating little odds & ends, just as in the states. We ~~find~~ find ourselves "needing" more shelves, just to put it all on! Ugh. It's so defeating at times. We now have 4 tables (5 actually), 4 armchairs, a couch (the proprietor ordered it from the local carpenter ages ago, but never picked it up!), 4 straight-back chairs, 2 sets of shelves, and a kitchen drowning in gadgets. Oh my. Is this the example we want to set for

our Togolese friends & neighbors?
Now we've designed shelves to
unclutter & better organize the

kitchen (more efficient use of
space & all that), have
rearranged the bedroom in
anticipation of more shelves and
an armoire, and a desk for
Mike. Oh my, when will it
end? Also - put mosquito
netting on windows and are
working on a screen door, and
finally have cutting boards.

The walls are filling up
with photos & cloth hangings.

New tunes, fresh from Somé,
fill the house, along with
BBC, which comes in clear as a
bell these days. So I think
I'll survive. Have wide
swings up & down. Sometimes
feel I'm "putting in time",
waiting for some of the
ambivalence, lack of motivation,
dispiritedness, to wear off. Have
tried to make it go away,
but sometimes things just
need to run their course.
Need to make the best of
it, see the positive in tough
times, look beyond your

petty cares and see a broader perspective. Feel a need to nurture my spiritual self.

Saw elephants for the first time Friday Dec. 14!

A mother & her enormous baby! They were eating trees right next to the road! A smooth, pale grey, they were just 'lovely'. And humbling. The mom turned toward us, flapped her ears and trumpeted - a hollow, almost anguished sound, very primal, and we were glad we'd left our motos running! Saw 3 today, several hundred yards away(?), splashing in a pond. Such powerful, enormous creatures - so wonderful to see them in the wild. Yet they seem so vulnerable - too big for the "wilds" that are left here - always on display, unable to hide, "protected" only by a thin veneer of flimsy laws.

The griot came out with a smattering of my contributions. Was dismayed to find one had been misprinted. No

biggie now, but at the time it was rather depressing. My pride was hurt. How could

● I get compliments on a mis-printed article? What a thin facade we humans weave around our fragile & all-too-visible egos!

Saturday morning early I drove to John's to give Peter belated birthday presents, etc. Went with Steve out to Bijanga, his proposed new home, a lovely village in a long valley. His new

● concession didn't greatly impress me - pretty small, isolated, unattractive. I hope he'll be happy there. Drove back over a rocky mt. path. Fun, but hell on the moto! I'm getting to be a better rider, and really enjoy "tricky" trails.

The weather's been lovely!

Very cool & windy at night.

In the darkness it sounds like a typical northwest storm, and I often awake wondering if it's rained (no way). Days are cool & breezy, with afternoon

highs perhaps 70-75°. Taking showers has been a chilling proposition, and even if we heat

the water, the wind chill is sobering! Skin dries out more each day and I'm thankful to have lotion. Suddenly am using many things I thought I'd never need: warm clothes, sweatsuit, knesocks - I wish I had slippers!

It's very pretty up here - things are still surprisingly green, though the colors have become muted by a coating of dust. Harmattan has so far been light.

There were 2 days, just before my return of heavy dust.

But now it's fairly clear, and nights are ablaze with stars.

It seems there was a decent rainfall in the sahel this year, & crops pretty good. So perhaps there will be less dust than usual. I hope so for the sake of the land.

The children are covered with dust (~~to~~ as is everything else), ~~and~~ but on them it looks white, as if they'd been dusted with talcum powder.

We are keeping busy, and so far it seems to be a good balance of domesticity and work.

Did a Monday morning formation at affaires sociales. Not too organized, and Atikou wasn't in a great mood, but in the end we had about 11 women watching & working, and the stove turned out well.

Sunday, built a small stove at Atikou's. He caught on very fast. Tues. Dec. 17 (Janniwise is 27 today!) visited the new sous-préfet with Adia. He's very nice. Working on kitchen shelves.

PM - They're done - wow! what a kitchen! Built a stove at the chef's - went well. That makes 3 stoves this week! Enfin, we're really working!

Thurs. Dec. 19

Built a stove this morning with Adia's mother-in-law.

Turned out well, but I feel frustrated by our presentation style. It really doesn't work for us two to do formations

together. We have quite different approaches. But the women say they understand well, and feel they could duplicate the stoves. Usually, it's men who do the translating, and always there are hordes of onlookers, so we feel the technique should spread well.

Thurs. Dec. 26

I watch my journal entries drifting farther & farther apart. To be expected, I guess, as daily routines & a home life set in. We've been busy. Friday went to Mango, where all was rather quiet. Lunched w/ Kurt, Nancy & her brother Charlie. Saturday we visited Atoukoi's & repaired their stove. Sunday we rode to Bijanga to "housewarm" w/ Steve. The place really looks good, & he is very happy there. The people are wonderful. We had the best pâte & sauce I've eaten here - delicious! Drove back on the "overland route". Lovely up there. Monday morning we crept the stove at the nutritional

center. Most of the
responsables came, and they
were wonderful. Energetic,



• animated, willing to
work. Marco brought
his mom & her boyfriend. They
took photos, and we showed
them around a bit. The
crepissage worked beautifully:
first a mix of clay, water, &
gumbo tiege slime! Then a
coating of ground neri husks
& water. They rubbed & polished
until that stove practically
glowed. It has dried hard
as cement, and should
resist the rain well - we'll see.

The afternoon we spent in
Dapaong. Finally found
Tchangana. He was very friendly
& obsequious, really. He is
being more than helpful in
planning a stoves formation for all
the A.S. agents. Had a lovely
"porc roti" dinner at Bar Sofia
of Marco & co. I really like his
mom a lot. Always sad to

• say bye to people you know
you'd become friends with, but
may never see again. Thought we
saw elephants eyes glowing in the dark on the
way home? Very cold in the park. Bright moonlight.

Tuesday we visited the folks in Gondoga again. The stove hardly cracked at all. They weren't yet ready to do the cement crepissage they'd requested, so instead we did a "full dress" family portrait. They were stunning - oh how I hope it turns out !!

Christmas eve we decided to spend here in Bogou. Adia's wife made us pâte & sauce. Mike & I went to mass at 9 PM at the catholic church. It was packed, but about 50% children. Quite a few yovos came down from Dapaong.

The priest is polish, and his French is nearly impossible to understand. His paroles were translated into Moba. He talked endlessly, and his words were tute, rhetorical, cliché, and really quite meaningless. I longed to shut him up and hear a speech that had some real meaning for these people. Their traditional faith is so much stronger than anything the western world has dreamed up. How about talking of

Christmas as a time
to cherish loved ones,
to care for each other,



to try to be especially appreciative
of what we have - our health,
children, friends. Anyway,
there was some lovely singing &
dancing in Mda. But we
left early, quite bored with
the priests' unimaginative paroles.
Went back into town to hang
out with Adia & his pals at the
bistro, but it hadn't opened
yet, and we sat at a table in
the dark until too sleepy to stay
longer. (Adia made it home
at 4 AM!). Christmas morning
we awoke slowly and opened
presents: engagement calendars
& two magazine subscriptions from
the family! From each other,
little things like a message
blackboard, sparklers, drinking
glasses. It was fun! Then we
got ready for brunch. Baked
quiches, chocolate cake, breads,
cookies. Made salads, and
chilled wine. Steve showed up
early and we nibbled. Finally
about 1:00 Laura, Carol, Rob Covini,
& Jon showed up. Pigged out,

drank too much wine, listened to BBC Christmas tunes and tapes. Mike, Saura & Carol went for a

walk to shake off the sluggishness. Jon headed home. Steve, Rob & I snoozed out on the porch. Gave cookies & pumpkin bread for presents. Steve stayed for dinner.

Adia barbecued a chicken we'd been given by his relatives in Gondoga, and we made rice & sauce. Very good. Then Steve announced he was riding home on the overland trail with out a headlight! The moon was nearly full & very bright, but still!

Then today we just hung out most of the day which was nice. Wrote a letter, baked, talked with Mike, organized slides. Dragged ourselves out of the house in the afternoon to go to the marché. Had a wonderful time, and as always, was very glad I forced myself out of the house. We ate delicious beans & rice with the tailor & one of the chief's sons, then drank *boisson* for a while & chatted. The marché is very animated these days.

We're getting to know lots of nice people, and also to know who to avoid!



I especially love the women. By chance, we wandered over to the nutritional center as a meeting was in progress with all the regional responsables! Nice to at last figure out who's who, and where they're from. Animated, friendly, wonderful women!

Friday Dec. 27

I did a formation in Gondoga this morning, while Mike did one at the Tailor's. We're getting off to a busy, if haphazard, start. Ça va. Received a gift of peanut oil from the Gondoga woman for whom the stove was built. Spent the afternoon in Dapaong. Got 2 pkgs. of Christmas books from Mom & Dad! Visited Tom & Mary, took pumpkin bread to the marché sisters, stopped to see Hugo.

Got a letter from Dave at last. It seems that Mary has moved out. They aren't

sure what's going to come of their relationship. He's pretty lonely. It's tough to be away from friends

when they need you. Wrote him a letter attempting to give solace, but it felt far away & impotent.

Some excerpts about being here:

" Christmas blues: we look at the year gone by and wonder where we are, where we've been, where we're going. Here, these questions have loomed larger than ever before.

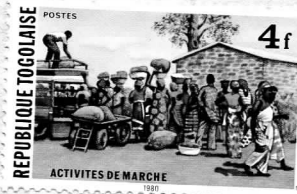
There are moments of panic as I realize how displaced I feel, and out of context. Who I used to be is really of no consequence.

The past has little meaning here.

... I often feel these 2 years will be a growing experience compressed. A building up from the tensions & uncertainties of the beginning.

A peaking, as a niche is carved and a sense of belonging and confidence (comfort) sets in. A winding down as the cycle draws to a close, new beginnings and old realities loom nearer, fears & uncertainties threaten a secure world. But in the end, a new strength, a sense of self, a

broader perspective an acceptance of life's challenges, ambiguities, ups, & downs?



I think this may be how it is. And in all honesty, that is a large part of what keeps me, and many other volunteers, here: a belief that it is worth it to struggle through the tough beginnings here. That we will come out, at the other end, "better", stronger, more fully developed people. I've realized lately that for perhaps the first extended time in my life, I want time to go by quickly. I almost wish the days on the calendar away. I think this will diminish with time, however.

And yes, I did suffer a bit from the Christmas blues, but not nearly as bad as I'd expected. It was nice to have our own private Christmas - the first Christmas at our house, without travelling all over to visit people!

Mom sent a copy of Alice in Wonderland, along with Alice's adventures at Oxford, which tells about the

real Alice, & Lewis Carroll (really Charles Dodgson), who lived at Oxford in the mid to late 1800's.

He was a mathematics don, and she the daughter of the head of Oxford. The tales were written for her and about her. So what about Jefferson Airplane's drug-induced Alice theories?

Well, I'll just have to accept that they're not true. Too bad.

Just finished Mathiessen's "At Play in the Fields of the Lord". Excellent book, and very well-written. Disappointed in the unresolvedness of the ending.

We were invited to go camping at Niamtougou Falls this weekend. Would have loved to go, but logistically and time-wise, it was too much hassle. It's a long trip, not to mention out of our region.

There's been some strange family quarrels lately, first with Jonangma, the local juvenile delinquent, and then with George & Koffi, of all people! Seems there are some family histories which go way

back, between the Chief's family & Adia's family. We surely hope



to not get involved. Poor Adia is rather distraught over the whole thing, and we scarcely know what to say or how to help. The main hope is that things subside, and don't continue or worsen. We shall see.

Friday Jan. 3 1986

So New Year's has come & gone, and it's 1986. New Year's Day turned out to be quite peaceful, and our fears of village inundation unfounded. However, we did get inundated by children. I handed out candy to a few kids, and before we knew it they were swarming over our porch, clamoring for more. Traditionally, children come to wish people "Bonne Année", and are given a "little something". Goro "somethings" are obviously in very high demand. The children are supposed to come in the morning. Later, the adults make the rounds, wishing friends & neighbors Happy New Year. Adia advised us to

order 2,000 francs worth, which we did, expecting a steady stream of well-wishers. We had a few visions of our less favourite locals over-staying their welcome, of heavy drinkers, or even quarrels. But hardly anyone stopped by, except a lot of volunteers heading south after the Dapaong Walking Tour, and the next day found us with over 1000 francs of tchak left over (and a very sticky front porch). Didn't know whether to feel unloved or relieved!

Fanzan had come home with us to spend New Year's day & night, and turned out to be a rather unwelcome house guest.

Clumsy, sloppy, and quite anti-social he sat or layed around all day reading comics & complaining about his amoebas, while Mike & I cooked, cleaned dishes, & entertained.

He never once offered to help or said thankyou for anything, and was in a sour, argumentative mood. He hardly had a word to say to Adia, let alone a smile, and refused to eat the special dinner Adia's wife cooked us, which he said was terrible.

(It wasn't exactly delicious. However...)

It was nice to see him go. Like a little Pippin, it cleared up in

his wake. — Gave Adia Mike pedals & a sweater for New Year's, but he never said thank you. Hope he liked them.

And then there was the Dapaong Walking Tour... Nearly 30 people gathered throughout the day, some as early as 10:30 AM. As we moved from bistro to bistro, the crowd grew, until a wave of white people could be seen surging intermittently through Dapaong's narrow, crowded streets. We walked to 25 bistros, ending up at the campement about 11:30 PM. By this time people were exhausted from walking, wiped out from drinking, and faint from hunger (ambiance ran out of food about 7:15!). Needless to say, it was a haggard crowd, most of whom were hard-put to make it till midnight! We left about 12:01, and slept at Hugo & Sestie's.

Read "Moontide", Stella Cameron's Harlequin Super Romance. She's a good writer, but the book's

pretty schmaltzy, not to mention
very risqué! Hard to imagine
my mother's friend writing about
passionate love-making - quite
explicitly.

Funeral season has set in,
and drums are a constant back-
ground element, from dusk till
dawn.

Wed. Jan. 8

Had a really fun day today.
Went to Namoun, a village north
of Papaong, with Marco, to build
a stove. Leonard is an
amazing young man whom Marco
has helped set up chicken & rabbit
elevages. He is incredibly energetic
& motivated, and has created
beautiful elevages. The family
itself is very inspiring, and
their concession is lovely - well
organized, well-kept, and very
pleasant. The father has three
~~two~~ wives, at least one of whom
is a potter. We hope to watch
her work sometime.

→ We built the stove
over inverted clay pots - a first-

and are very curious to see how it works. Will the clay crack off the pots?

Had quant flower sauce for the first time. Very good, with a pleasant, lemony flavor. Took the back road home. It's lovely out there, and a fun ride, with lots of sand, curves, and dry marigots to cross. At one point, the road was "blockaded" by a group of children painted w/ white chalk or something, wearing calabashes on their heads. They were chanting a song, somewhat solemnly, and soon a young woman came out to lead them. She chanted and they responded. She held out a calabash for money I suppose. Marco gave 100 francs. They were also approaching all Togolese passersby. Very interesting. Who were they? Orphans? I asked the woman if she was the children's mom (there were 10 or 15), and she said yes.

Had a birthday party for John on Sunday. Climbed the mountain with Peter & Margyanne.

in the morning, a lovely walk,
only about 45 mins. to the top!
Folks kind of came & went all

~~night~~ day, until by early
evening, only John remained.
got him a few little presents.
Mike made a fabulous chocolate
cake w/ peanut overtones. The
party was also visited by 3
old tchambas from nearby,
and the ~~att~~ Atankou's came
later, dressed to kill (as we
sat there in ragged attire,
as usual!). They are very nice
people, and are becoming good
friends.

Friday Jan. 10

The Big Day! Did a formation
at Affaires Sociales today for all
the 10 agents in the Zone region.
And guess what? They all came!
Plus 8 other people! It really
went well. We split into 3
groups & built 3 different
stoves: 1 boisson, 1 med.,
& 1 double pâte & sauce. The
groups were very animated,
energetic, & cooperative.

We spent all day Thursday getting organized. Affaires Sociales was very cooperative, loaning us

tools, helpers to dig clay, making a stencil, letting me use the typewriter. It was really quite enjoyable. I felt like I worked there! Things went very smoothly, we got to know a lot of very nice people, and I feel the formation was a big success. The agents mostly showed up in nice clothes, yet they were willing to work in the mud - real sports!

We have been so busy! But it's good busy, doing things we really enjoy doing. I'm beginning to feel much more comfortable here. It's funny, but if I spend too much time at the house I burn out on the visitors & neighbors. Yet when I'm gone a lot, I miss them and feel badly that I spend so little time with them.

Adia's sister has come down from Naki-ouest to visit. She is the mother of Owog, my favourite little girl. For some reason, Owog

and her older brother live here rather than with their mother.

Anyway, the sister ^{Dambé} seems very nice, and she speaks great French, so it's very nice to chat with her. This evening I went to the concession to visit.

I like hanging out there, but don't know if I am completely welcome. It's nice to have a woman I can communicate with.

I am increasingly fascinated by life here, and its many facets: joyous, sordid, superstitious, and I am beginning to move away from the feeling that I am "doing time", and to look very forward to living here. I'm beginning to feel at home.

Driving home from Dapaong today, I was filled with that wonderful joie de vivre that has come so rarely lately.

I drove in a happy daze, gazing around me and soaking it all in - thinking how very beautiful it is here! Peaceful & subdued, with shadows, colors, and textures grown soft with harmattan dust. Somehow, though it grows drier each day, things

are getting greener! It's like an
appeasement from nature to forgive
her the heat & dryness, in exchange

for soft, spring greens & harvest
golds. This place grows on you, and
if you let it, you can feel it
seep into your bones. I can see
already that leaving after 2 years
could be a real heart-breaker.

Oh, and the stars! They
have been fabulous. We slept out
for a few nights, until the
dusty wind wouldn't let us sleep
one night. Poor Mike got a
rotten cold after that one.

Adia saw the propriétaire
in Atakpamé last weekend. He
is in agreement with our plans
for a new garden wall, shower,
trees, etc. We haven't seen
much of Adia lately - he's been
out & about a lot.

got a package of cassette
tapes from Mark today: 2
KEZX tapes and 1 guitar Christmas
music - too bad it's just a
little late! Also, he sent a

wonderful, long letter. What
a neat kid - I love him
dearly, and worry about him
too much.

Sunday Jan. 12 Gondo

So at last we visit Gondo. It's nearly 2 hours from Bogou, and a tiring drive. But part of the trip is in the Keran Park, and we saw beautiful birds and baboons up very close! A big troupeau hanging out in & under a tree next to the road. What delightful, homely, fuzzy creatures! Just before Gondo, Mike got a flat rear tire, which threw a bit of a pall over the afternoon; we were tired & dusty from the drive, my stomach hurt, and the prospects for finding an inner tube looked ~~very~~ grim (the old one was shot). Also, we were over 2 hours late. But we perused the marché a bit, drank some Thosse tchoukaton, ate tons of colicos, and managed to get hold of an innertube: undersized, but new!

Peter's place is really nice - a traditional-style concession, with 2 round cases, cement walls, and an enormous, shady acacia. It's private, quiet, and secluded but with a few

nearly neighbors. Gando is a thriving little village in the middle of "nowhere". It's much bigger than

I expected, and the marché is enormous. It's the regional center, and is the only town of any real size for 50 kms. in any direction. I can see why Peter likes it here so much. He's really off the beaten path, but the town is big enough to be interesting. He also has really wonderful neighbors.

We drove out to Koko-Sambourma Sunday morning, 25 kms. south of Gando. The trail was pretty

decent, and the scenery was really lovely. Saw 3 kinds of trees in flower, all large blossoms: red, yellow, & white!

The village is one of several, famous for their 2-story houses. They are made of mud & wood beams. Grain storage bins look like round turrets on the top floor. The house

is really a series of 2-story cylindrical turrets connected by a floor which forms the 2nd story. There is no roof,

except over the turrets. Family members sleep in these, crawling

in through ^{small} round door holes.
Others hold grain. The ground floor
is for cooking & animals. Inside
here it is dark & cramped.
Stairs are slanted logs with foot
notches. We were shown
through the house of an old woman
whose husband is dead, so it
was in a bit of disrepair.

There was also a big commotion
over paying them for the "tour",
which was kind of a shame. I
would much rather have brought
food gifts. They also didn't want
us taking pictures, though
we were allowed a few. All
in all a not really satisfying
visit, but very interesting, and
a fun trip. The women ~~here~~ here
wear small white plugs just
below their lower lip.

Sun. Jan. 19

Sitting here listening to
Willie Nelson, one of the many
new tapes we've recently received,
with Adia's new puppy dog on
my lap! He's darling - mostly
chocolate brown with white spots

here & there. Don't know why he bought him - perhaps he thinks every home needs a dog - but it's nice

to have a puppy. Hopefully he'll be "1/2 ours".

These last few days have been tough. Partly due to a cold and my period. Also, we've gotten a lot of mail lately, plus Dave g. brought back a bunch of stuff my folks sent him in the states. Strangely, hearing from folks back home makes me melancholy. It's not really homesickness, more a feeling of how quickly life flies by, and

no matter how hard we try to live life well, we ~~are~~ always are acutely aware of things left undone, or not done well, of people we've known & loved, who we ~~now~~ wish we'd loved better. I think of times gone by, places I've visited, opportunities that may never come again.

I also think about all the people I love, especially my family, and worry about them, and hope they aren't having any wish that I could protect them from any pain or sadness.

So in our U.S. package was a letter from brother David, saying he wants to come visit us!

What a surprise! I'm really excited, but also kind of nervous. That's a lot of money, and what if he doesn't have a good time?

Isn't that silly? I've realized that life here has come to seem "normal" to me in many ways.

It's very hard to imagine myself as a newcomer again. Mom said in her letter that everyone was surprised to see how nice our house was.

Despite no running water or electricity, it is a nice house, and I've begun to wonder if I want this to be our Peace Corps experience. I'm beginning to wish we lived in a banco house, with a round, straw-roofed case or two, in more of a concession-style setting, and with more privacy. Lately I've become aware of all the things wrong with the place we live. After seeing Peter's place I've been comparing too much. It's silly, and I hope things will work out. If I were to make a list of all the pros & cons of our living situation, I think

the pros would win out. I get a bit tired of "family politics" here. There are so many people in this concession,

and there's no way we can be friends with all of them. It's frustrating when we try to do something nice for one person, because others get jealous. If we give something to several kids, all the others hear about it and come clamoring. There's even jealousies and bickering within Adia's family. I would like to have one family that we could do things for and get close with,

instead of 100 people! I also get a bit tired of having Adia live on our front porch, although he's been gone a lot lately and so have we. He's also been very quiet lately - actually he's been in a bad mood a lot, and hasn't been exactly fun to be around.

So Dave G's back from the states. He came down for the weekend. Sat. we went to the Yembour marché with Dambé.

Sunday we climbed to the very tallest part of the cliffs, clambering around over the rocks.

Then we drove overland to Steve's, where we spent the afternoon eating & drinking & gabbing.

His new place is really working out well.

We're still busy, busy. I would like the pace of life to slow down a bit!

Tuesday Jan. 21

A long, busy, but very productive day! Left early this morning for Nanergon, Tombou, & Cinkassé, to visit the affaires Sociales agents & attempt to plan stove formations. Had a late night madly preparing hand-outs for the agents, and an "early" morning (by our standards, not Togolese!), so we were rushed by the time we got home, about 4:00, and slept for 3 hours!

Driving north this morning, around 7:00, it was very cold! I wore several layers, including gloves & a raincoat to cut the wind, knesocks & a bandana under my helmet. I would have never believed it would be that cold here in "tropical

Africa". These days, it's cool or cold from late afternoon until well into the next day, with heat for only a

few hours. It's very pleasant, although there's still a lot of dust, and strong winds at night & in the morning. Sometimes we fear for the roof!

I've had a bit of a cold - it is a "half-cold", with mild but persistent symptoms, and mostly bothers me at night, which means I wake up tired! Also, I've been dreaming very intensely for quite a while now, including

some bad dreams which wake me up. I've been sleeping about 10 hours every night, but often wake up tired. By late afternoon, I'm ready to sleep again.

I don't really know if I "need" that much sleep, but suppose that I need more here than I did in the states, what with the physical & emotional stresses. We've both been wonderfully healthy, and are pleased & grateful. I think there's an element of luck involved.

We've been getting tons of

mail - mostly Christmas letters flowing in a bit late. I'm surprised & a bit overwhelmed by the amount of mail we're getting. It's wonderful to hear from people, but I'm also wondering how in hell to keep up with the correspondence! Is there such a thing as getting too much mail?! (I doubt it!).

Saw a large group of elephants next to the road in the fosse aux Lions this afternoon! Unfortunately, as soon as we stopped, so did a hoard of others, complete with cameras & roaring motors.

Several yovos walked right up to the poor critters, who got very nervous, understandably, and lumbered off. One young male bluff charged several times. There were about 8 of them, incl. 2 very small ones.

I felt terrible disturbing them, and was as guilty as any of snapping photos. We were a bit afraid of them, so kept the motos running & helmets on, and I felt bad for the noise. I would love

to be able to sit quietly & watch those beautiful animals.

I'm still going through a bit

of a "crisis of conscience", wondering if this is how I want to spend my two years in Peace Corps. Togo has come to feel very developed to me. We are not at all isolated, and have access to almost anything we had in the states. I really wonder what it would be like to be a volunteer in someplace like Nepal, where we were very isolated, and lived a truly simple & rugged lifestyle. Our life here

has come to seem very posh. Sometimes I feel frustrated by our work. We put out so much energy for such minimal results.

I can't help but feel sometimes that Peace Corps is just good P.R. for the U.S., and that our programs aren't meant to have a large impact. If they were, I think we would have much stronger govt. backing. Can you imagine what a nationwide govt. poster & ^{radio} publicity campaign for *foyers améliorés* could achieve?

Thurs. Jan. 23

Had another very long, but very interesting day. Drove to Naki-Est in the morning, via the overland route to Bijenga, and the back road to Pana. One of those shortcuts that takes longer.

After that it's about 15 kms of sandy, gravelly road to Naki. We're told it's nestled among a ring of mountains, but the harmattan dust had rolled in on wed., and visibility was slim.

Met the chief, a tiny old man in stocking cap, and received his whole-hearted support for our project. Tom Webb showed up and we chatted with the A.S.

agent for a while. A nice, mild-mannered guy. Hit the Naki marché for a mid-morning ~~snack~~ snack. Seems marches start up a bit late on harmattan days, and this one, at 10 am, was just setting up.

On the way back we stopped in Pana, where Laura lives. She wasn't home, but the chief's son showed us around. He then introduced us to his

father, the chief of Para, a most interesting character. His enormous concession is a clutter with gardens

and animals. He raises pigeons, fish, monkeys, rabbits, and the usual assortment of farm animals. He is a collector of any & everything: native plants, match boxes, pipes, stuffed animals (real ones - he does them himself), fetishes. His home resembles an elderly pack rat's, everything dusty & slightly neglected looking, new additions piled upon old. His personal house, at the center of the concession, has a

colonial flavor: white brick, with a front veranda, and a central high-ceilinged room that boasts several armchairs, a couch, a liquor cabinet, and a telephone! (Yes, it works). Every square inch of the house and the concession is cluttered with knick-knacks. He says he delights in putting around watering, feeding, & perusing his little kingdom. Next door he has built a little

museum: another collection of dusty knick-knacks, but Togo-oriented, and meant for posterity.

The chief was a civil servant for years in Iomé & Dapaong, until he retired & took over the

chieftaincy. He had a pretty important post, has travelled a bit, and speaks great French.

Lastly, his son took us to see the infamous crocodile ponds nearby. None were in sight, but others have seen them, so it seems they do exist.

On the way back I dumped my moto. Was going too fast and hit a rut. I braked just as the bike fell over side-ways - hard. I only got a few scrapes, luckily, but the handlebars bent and the bike got good & scratched up. By the time we hit Dapaong we were hungry, exhausted, and I had a whopping cold.

So today is being spent recuperating and hanging out. I didn't sleep well last night, what with coughing & runny nose.

Tues. Jan. 28

Have spent the past days in ~~near~~^{or} near the village. It's been very nice not to have to go anywhere far. I've still been sick. This cold hung on & on, but I feel much better today, so I hope it's finished.

Friday was Jan. 24, economic liberation day for Iogo, and was celebrated locally with an "animation" in Sandjoaré. 3 animation groups from local high schools were present, dressed in matching pagnes & brightly-colored t-shirts. They took turns doing group song & dances to the beat of drums. The songs were all very political & filled with slogans, most of which didn't rhyme, or fit the beat of the music! After this the local chiefs and the sous-préfet spoke. Political animation like this is very common here. Citizens are called militants. Hnam.

Saturday we built a big double-boisson stove in Gondoga.

Sunday Mike went back to
Gondoga & built another boisson
stove. I stayed home, nursed
my cold & wrote letters.

We received a chicken as a gift
both Sat. & Sun.! This bothers
me a little, as I don't want the
stoves we build to be thought of as
cadeaus they need to repay us for.
But everyone assures us that that's
the way they do things here, and
it's just a little something & so
the giver will be remembered.

Then on Sunday, the chef gave
us a pintard! I was rather
shocked. I have no idea what
would be an appropriate gift to give
him. Sun afternoon about twenty
young women from Gondoga came
walking single file into the concession,
each with a basin of pebbles on
her head. They came to Adia's
concession and dumped the
pebbles in a big pile, where they
will be used to resurface the
concession floor. They were all
"sisters" of Adia's wife.
Supposedly she really does have
10 sisters (& 1 brother!).

The girls spent the afternoon dancing outside under a tree. They did a circle dance where they

took turns stomping around inside the circle & smacking their hips together, like the bump. I joined in for a while which everyone got a real kick out of. During the game they sing chant-like songs, mostly teasing about each other's boyfriends.

Monday morning we walked across the valley to a pond we had spotted from up on the mt. It turns out that for the last part of the dry season, this is the only place in the whole valley that still has water. Even now, lines of women come down from the mountain top every day to get water. They use big ^{round} gourds with a small hole cut in the top. This way they don't lose so much water sloshing around. The gourds are often decorated with carved designs. It's really beautiful to watch a line of lean, strong women, dressed in colorful clothing, each with an enormous gourd on her head, making their way methodically

up and down the mountain.

Mon. night the spirit of the chef's mother-in-law supposedly came back to visit. I don't fully understand this, but supposedly some people go thru a 3-month ceremony when they are young, which earns them a special title, but I don't think it changes their status. We saw 2 young men two days in a row, at the Bogart Yembour marchés, who were going through this. They dressed in cowrie beads, headdresses, & various costume, barefoot & wearing a towel only. They didn't talk to anyone, but went from hut to hut dancing & acting goofy, and begging for food & money, I think.

But I've also been told that during these 3 months the person is confined and doesn't talk to anyone. Anyway, when a person like this dies, their spirit can come back once to visit. They are called back by drumming, and perform all kinds of strange & wondrous feats. I don't know how much is made up and how much people really believe,

but they say it scares kids
pretty good.

Banano tells us that a funeral can take place at any time after a person's death, up to a year later I think. There are 2 funeral celebrations, that take place at any interval. Tuesday night we walked into town to see a funeral. It had a "midsummer night's dream" feeling so we approached - a crowd of people shadowy against a big overhanging mango in lamplight. Drums thumped insistently, and the crowd murmur was a roar.

I only watched for a while from a distance, then walked back home, but Mike stayed for a while and said it was fun.

Wed. Jan. 29

Woke today. feeling abysmally depressed. just wanted to close my eyes & sleep the day away to get it over with. Who knows what causes these days - I don't. A

combination of stuff I guess. I've been very upset lately by my fat. I think I've gotten pretty

flabby since we got here, and am frustrated by how to change it.

Exercise seems to be the only answer, but aerobic exercise is rather hard to come by here, and I'm not motivated enough to do it in my living room every morning.

Kurt gets up and runs every morning at 5 am - I admire that so much - how does he do it? I miss my bicycle and cool weather to ride in.

So there's the fat syndrome, and the ugly syndrome. This climate does nothing for my self-confidence. I feel witted. And next to these lovely, chocolate-skinned black women, I feel pale & flabby & hairy & ugly.

I also get real down about me & Mike. I feel much more in love with him now than I did for a long time. But I still have absolutely no interest in sex. I want to but I just can't get excited. I can't blame the heat any more either cause it's been cool at night. So that all has me depressed anyway,

and then when we're not busy I have too much time to sit around & think about it.

Then today I just got hit with homesick & sick of Bogon on top of it all, and a feeling of utter despair flooded over me and I cried for quite a while with no end in sight until Mike finally dragged me out of the house for a walk. We went up the mountain a bit & sat in the shadow of a mango tree & had a nice chat.

At this point we're pretty determined to stay for the 2 years, though we'll just have to see how it goes. It would be nice to feel we "did it", and also it would be nice to have the money.

Thurs. Feb. 6

Went to Kara on Thursday, after spending Wed. night at John's and waiting all day for a taxi. Had a stove mtg. Friday morning, lunch at Le Jardin, an overpriced but delightful outdoor restaurant, and spent the afternoon at the pool - ah, glorious! Saturday morning

I went "dead yo-ying", and found lots of wonderful clothes! Spent the rest of the day lounging poolside, despite afternoon cloudiness, and thoroughly enjoying the vacation. Sunday found us enroute to Bogou, got a ride in an Oncho land rover, visited Kurt in Mango, stopped at John's for dinner, and arrived home after dark.

Monday we did 2 stove follow-ups then drove to Dapaony to meet with Bill, up on tournée. Spent the night at Marco's and Mike left early Tues. for a formation in Nanengou - cancelled. So Tuesday we arrived home early, just after our landlord & his wife had pulled in from points south.

They'll be staying a few days for the funeral ceremonies for the father of the Director of Radio Kara.

Bill came for the night, so as to attend his first Moba funeral. He was not disappointed, a glorious, starry night, the riotous drumming & dancing amidst clouds of

dust were intoxicating. We swirled amongst the crowded din in a whirlwind tour of

V.I.P.'s & village acquaintances, and even danced a bit. Had an astronomy lesson on the walk home, and learned some new constellations!

Wed. found us hanging out, on the terrace mostly, getting to know the proprietare & his wife a bit, and watching the crowds of visitors come & go. This place is hopping, and it's rather fun, partly because people aren't here to see us, but the proprietare, thus we don't have to entertain them!

We're also meeting lots of new & interesting people. The proprietare & his wife are very nice, and easy to talk to. They brought us new covers for our chair cushions - bright blue - very snazzy!

Thursday the Prefet came to town to "meet the population". We walked in to hear his talk, but it was blazing hot, and we couldn't see or hear a thing! The Chief gave an impressive luncheon for the

prefet, to which we were invited, along with various notables & fonctionnaires. He served up an

impressive array of salads, meats, spaghetti, and rice. A rather informal affair, however. The prefet was in a hurry, so more or less ate & ran! A troupeau of dancers and drummers performed outside to show that the Chief is a big & important man. They danced energetically in the blazing sun, sweating like mad, each dressed in his own costume of cowrie shell belt, or arm bands, cap, staff, leg rattles, etc.

The proprietaire told us about the "Boubous" or robes worn by traditional chefs. The elaborate ones, for very special occasions, can cost a fortune. His father (also the current Chief's father), owned a boubou for which he paid 2 all-white stallions, at that time worth the equivalent of 10 healthy bulls each! The robe was so big it covered his horse completely when he sat on the horse, and 4 servants

held it as he rode! The
Chief still has it - somewhere.
I'd love to see it.

So - that's Journal #1,
"Togo in the beginning"

We shall see what #2 has
to offer, what joys & sorrows
I'll find lurking in its
depths. May it fill up with
wonderful memories, and may
I be blessed with ever
improving writing skills!