

just accept what comes, whether or not it seems to fit my idea of the "perfect" formation.

So I ended up leaving the stove half finished, and told them to finish it, before I come back. An experiment - will they do it? We shall see.

I'd like to be writing in here more often, as it's the small, daily experiences that ~~are~~ I want to write about.

Now that we're settled in, there are fewer adventures and new experiences to write about.

We have at last found a house to rent in Dapaong, and are looking forward to installing ourselves. There will be 6 or 7 of us renting it, as a crash pad, and a place for the library, etc.

I have a woman friend in Bombonaka named Josephine who I like a lot. She is young, married, but has 6 kids!

She speaks great French, and is fun to be with. But unfortunately, the other day she told me about her 13 year

old daughter who she wants to
apprentice to learn a trade. She's
afraid she'll run off & get

pregnant soon, otherwise. So
she wants us to help out
financially. Now we're faced
with the difficult position of
deciding if we want to help,
and if not, extricating
ourselves from their expectations.
I get so tired of being asked
for money & things!

Went on a formation
pre-check to a nearby part of
Bogor yesterday. As is so
often the case, we found sick
children, and the parents much
more concerned with them than
with a cookstove! This time
it was measles, making its
highly contagious rounds of a
family, leaving each child weak,
emaciated and prone to
diarrhea & dehydration. The
poor parents rely on the local
dispensary, whose advice is
often questionable. We tried
to explain the importance
of rehydration & nourishment,
but I don't know if they

understood. This woman has 7 children, and one can't help wondering if death for one night not be a blessing.

Mon. April 14

Had a wonderful formation this morning in the Bogor quarter of Bogor. As do so many formations, this one started out on shaky footing. Despite 2 fe-vrats the 2 days before, the clay wasn't ready, and there were no women around. I was ready to suggest we reschedule. But all of a sudden, after an hour of sitting around, everything fell into place. A bunch of women arrived, the mix flew together, and we created a nice boisson stove. I hardly touched it. Like so many jobs, I often dread "going to work". But once there, I almost always have a wonderful time. My Moba is coming along, if slowly, and I find it very helpful in the work. I love working with women. I try to always allow plenty of time

for each formation. I like being able to spend time sitting around drinking boisson and yakking. I hope someday I can speak Moba well enough to talk without a translator.

Yesterday when I went for the formation pre-check, I talked with 2 young men about the water problem. It was a depressing exchange. They asked, in the usual roundabout way, ~~why~~ if I could help them solve the problem. In other words, could I get money to build a pump or barrage. I tried to explain why neither was feasible here, but they didn't listen. I also explained that I didn't have any money & didn't know much about pumps or barrages anyway. & They asked if I could go get money & advice elsewhere. This went on for some time, until I was really frustrated. I'm tired of this "cadeaux mentality". For so long these people have counted on foreigners to come

in with heaps of money & give them things, that they no longer know how to solve problems for themselves. Why don't you dig wells, I asked? Why don't you do it for us, they replied, We don't know how to do it right. They've lost faith in their own skills & think modern, western way are the only way. In the end, I don't feel I handled the exchange very well. I ended up saying: Look, you can't just expect others to solve your problems for you. You need to at least try yourselves. And outside money is not endless - it doesn't just grow on trees. And also, you're not the only people in the world who are poor & have problems.

I get so tired of people assuming I and all foreigners are rich, and the western world has no problems. The majority of the world's people, including many in America, are much worse off than these Togolese villagers. I get so tired of them feeling sorry for themselves. Where do they

think all this outside money comes from? To them it's just an endless font. If they

realized that it comes from taxes, and that a lot of poor people pay taxes to support ridiculous, inappropriate, wasteful development programs!

Many of us foreigners may live ~~rich~~ have more material wealth, but that doesn't mean life in the western world is any easier. It's often much more complicated and certainly more stressful.

Had a lovely chameleon spend the day on our bush. He changed colors obligingly and was very entertaining. Now he seems to be gone. (July - She's still there!)

The little girl with regede seems to be doing OK.

Friday April 25

Built a boisson stove for mom this morning. Unfortunately she didn't help much, though she did see how we did it, and cut one chimney.

Our chameleon is still around, and Mike delights in feeding him flies!

Also built stoves at Dave's in

Loaga on Wednesday. Unfortunately, these were also a bit of a cadaver.

We've now stayed several nights at our new house in Opaong, and have begun to set up the library. There are lots of books, and even shelves!

The other day, drove up to Japok in a truck with Laurent, a French volunteer working on reforestation. He & Mike each gave a talk, and Mike will go back to do a stove formation.

Sunday, drove over to Steve's in Bidjenga for lunch. John from Bassar, & Dave also came. On the way home, saw monkey playing on the mountain. The trail is hellacious as ever, and I don't expect it will get any better with the rains.

We're digging like mad on our cistern. It's a lot of work, and hard as rock down there!

Laura & Dana, 2 new coops volunteers, arrived the other day. Seems we're headed for some in about a week! Ugh.

Tues. 29 April

Had a long, busy, & very full day - the kind that leaves you both wired & exhausted, but satisfied. Never a dull moment, though a few disappointing ones, & lots of good ones.

Went to Ichimbranbang to build a giant 6-jar boisson stove. It went well, though it had more the feel of a work party than a formation. Mom was selling boisson, so there was a large crowd of people watching. We used bricks to build a wall around the stove, then finished the top with clay. It was attractive, & I think will work well.

After building, we sat to drink tchakalo in the shade. It rained hard there the night before, and it was a cool, slightly hazy day. At first I was in a great mood, laughing & talking with everyone. (a better translator had showed up). Minor witticisms

drew roars of laughter from everyone. But soon the conversation degraded into the usual

semi-joking requests for things: a shirt, pants, cigarettes. But they won't let up - they go on & on & on, until I want to scream:

"Dammit shut up & leave me alone!!". Lots of this bullshit about how poor they are - if they only knew how rich they were in comparison with the majority of people in the world.

My morning would have been a big success, but I blew it as I was leaving. My translator, an older man who had helped with building as well, asked if I could buy him some cigarettes. I said I'd buy him a pack if he shared with all the other men.

But oops - I forgot about the women & kids, and about my pledge not to give cadeaux. Once again, I was caught off guard, and forgot my "rules" about handling these

situations. Instead of taking him aside & saying I couldn't, after all, give him money, I went ahead & gave it to him as I was leaving. I tried to hide it, but everyone saw, and it was really embarrassing. I drove off & didn't look back, feeling I had really 'blown it' & undone all the good feelings I'd built up there.

Now I feel obligated to bring something to the women & kids to "make up for it", but I really don't know if it wouldn't just do more harm than good. Ugh.

Then drove to Yorgo to see the boisson stove there - but she hadn't yet used it so I'll have to go back yet another time (the 9th or 10th ??).

I just occurred to me: I love giving gifts, but here it so often seems to backfire & leave a sour taste behind. So I'm torn between the desire to give, and the sad realization that it usually

just causes trouble, jealousy,
or just plain unappreciativeness:
"is that all?").

In Dapaong I was hungry,
and went to my corn p^{ate} &
gombo sauce lady, but all she
had left was ignam p^{ate}
and red sauce. The ignam p^{ate}
is made from dried ignam
ground into flour. It's a dark
brown color, and much like
millet p^{ate} in texture. Had a
hint of that underlying ignam
diminess though, and I couldn't
eat much.

Then found out that John,
Peter, & Marco were in town, so
met them all at the LaFia to
catch up on gossip. It was so
good to see them! Took Dana,
Laura, & John to show them
the new house, then stayed a
few minutes to label the
library shelves.

I had given Assibi a
ride up in the morning,
as she was a bit sick
& wanted to go to the
hospital. We were to meet at
3 but I never found her.