

After all the other usual Dapaong stops (P.O., bank, marché, 5666), ran into Leslie, who's now back from vacation, and we had a nice chat. At last, unable to find Assibi, I headed home.

On the south side of the park I saw a group of 8 elephants taking dust baths right next to the road. 2 were very small, and fit right under the bellies of the bigger ones. They used their trunks to suck up dust, then threw it up onto their backs. Occasionally a big one would kneel down on its front legs and scoop up dirt. They used their trunks for many things. The adults fed the babies with their trunks. They tap each other, & seem to touch each other, and sometimes just swing their trunk back & forth, as if in fun. They also smell with the trunk.

Then another group of 7 elephants joined them. I turned around & drove slowly

past them, then back again.

As I returned, they had all turned toward the road,

preparing to cross it, and I saw a wonderful sight: 15 elephants in every size, posing as if for a portrait, all looking straight ahead and clustered together. After I'd passed, they began a slow, stately progression across the road, sometimes nudging each other on with their trunks. It was a lovely thing to watch, and I felt I could have cried at the beauty of it. I felt incredibly lucky to see them, but also to know there are that many of them, with young ones, and the herd seems to be doing well.

Finally I drove off, only to be stopped by 3 elephants irresolutely crossing the road.

A line of cars sat on either side of them, waiting, and I had to laugh at the sight of a traffic jam up here on this normally empty road. Finally they lumbered

• off ~~was~~ in the same direction they'd come from, as if confused by all the commotion & honking.

I drove by fast, and for a long second was as close to an enormous wild elephant as I ever care to come, even at 50 k's an hour!

Friday May 2

Yesterday, May Day, was Labor Day here in Togo! We participated in the Tandjarié festivities at the sous-prefecture, incl. walking in a "parade" of sorts! Led by teams of beef, we followed, grouped according to our work: we marched with the affaires sociales section. All in all there were probably 300 people in the procession. At the sous-prefecture we listened to speeches & animation. The rest of the day was spent visiting 2 marches & drinking. Drove up to Dapaong in the evening.

Saw Tom & Mary's new week old baby.

Barraige walk
trip to Lomé
Eric's mom

Tues May 6 Lomé

Well, we're back in Lomé again already. We came down to work with Eric designing materials for the stove project. But we learned that his mom died on Friday, and he has flown home. This is the family we stayed with while in training in Colorado, so we knew her a little. They were a very close family, and I'm sure this is very hard for them.

We got a ride straight to Lomé with Mike & Karen, one of the Lutheran missionary couples in Dapaong. She made a huge vat of popcorn which we munched en route. They're really nice, although we don't have a whole lot in common.

Spent the weekend in Mango, socializing. Had dinner Sat night at Motel de l'oti with Laura, Nancy & Steve. Sunday morning Nancy & Laura & Mike & I went out to the barraige. The rice fields

all brilliant green, and all is very lush. The water in the barrage is low, so we were able to walk

most of the way around it before a swamp turned us back.

There were hundreds of birds of many species, including wood ibises & storks! It was a delightful outing, ^{with an} overcast sky & a lovely breeze off the water. It's peaceful & almost feels like wilderness there. I'd love to go & spend the day or an evening.

Sat May 10 Somé

Returned today from 2 1/2 days in Aneho. Elaine Rice, an older volunteer, has a car, and drove us out Wed. night. The drive along the coast is past the port & several seaside factories, then through lush green countryside. Banana's, coconut palm, groves, and lush fields of corn, manioc, etc often contain tin & driftwood' shacks. It's muggy and thick & green.

Aneho is a potentially quaint seaside town, once the darling of the Germans, who made it their capital. A long, brackish lagoon, winds ~~to~~ through town, often parallel to the coast & separated by a narrow ~~silt~~ ~~bar~~ ~~of~~ ~~fine~~ ~~sand~~.
A ~~ridged~~ ~~of~~ ~~fine~~ ~~sand~~.

The beach is clean, though backed by open palm forest, its floor strewn with the refuse collected by years of wind deposition. The ocean is lovely, though the bank drops steeply and the waves crash against it with a dangerous undertow. Several hotels front the lagoon, all of which are overpriced and underquality. We went to visit Barbara's and stay with her. She lives in a rambling, one-story, colonial villa of sorts, overgrown & peeling & long past its prime. She has never been very happy here, and it's ironic that because she's never truly allowed herself to settle in, she thus feels unsettled and not

really at home. It seems to me so important to make a home here, and to have a place

that is nice to come home to.

Our stay with her grew uncomfortable as she began to rant on & on about all she doesn't like here: her job, her town, other volunteers, local people.

We suggested trips to the beach or into town but she just wanted to stay home, so we ended up moving ourselves to Elaine's where the atmosphere was more pleasant all around.

Had a nice walk on the beach, delicious meals with Elaine, who loves to cook, and on Friday, a trip to Vogan and its enormous marché. This is where voodoo began, and the area is noted for its abundance of fetishes & charlatans.

We were amazed by the diversity of products & local crafts in the market, and by how few people spoke French.

Leaving town we saw a procession of dancing people with drums & rattles. Leading

them were several men wearing fringed masks, arm bands, and ^{quasi} skirts. 2 of them were balanced on tall stilts, perhaps 15 feet high. These were strapped to their legs securely, so that if they fell, they would get very hurt. I can't imagine how they get on & off them. They were swaying & dancing up on the stilts, sometimes actually crossing them and wobbling their knees in & out.

I assume it was some kind of ceremony or celebration, but don't know.

Driving back to Somé on Sat. morning with Elaine, we were detoured for the passage of Steve & Yassar Anofat, who is currently visiting Togo.

Picked up a small book writing about P.C. in 1963, right after it began. Made me sad for the experience I'm not having. Is Togo too developed, spoiled, exposed, to appreciate the simple things Peace Corps has to offer? Or is ~~it~~

Has the whole world changed in those 25 years, so that P.C. workers can no longer expect the kind of simple, joyful, grassroots experience we all hoped P.C. would be. I can't help wondering what it would be like living & working in a small, isolated village, where simple improvements would really make a difference.

Thurs. 15 May Back in Bogoro

Home again, and it's very nice to be here. We drove all the way up on Tues. with Mike & Karen in their 4-seater Oatsun pick-up. As we arrived in Mango, a dust storm picked up, and we trailed a voracious storm all the way to Barkoissi, complete with heavy rain & blinding lightning. Bogoro got the first heavy rain since before we went to Lomé. We were delighted to find about 300 liters of water in our cistern!

There are so many things I haven't written about. Sometimes

I got a note to remind me later, but often I'm possessed of brilliant thoughts in the most inopportune

places: whizzing down the road on my moto, in the middle of a formation, sitting (squatting, rather) in the outhouse.

Some quick notes:

The local cotton groupement has collected several million francs for the construction of a beautiful new maternity. Mike & I hope to build a cistern with faucet there.

They say that the most recent Sahelian drought has "ended" - but the crops are now at risk from hordes of grasshoppers & locusts - figures. ^{Today I've noticed} many grasshoppers here.

The last few days have had thunderstorm potential: huge thunderheads, bright white to ominous black, building up like layers of shaving mousse, into tall white mounds high in the sky. Last night was filled with lightning. Mostly cloud to cloud, it filled the sky with a volley of blinding flashes, without thunder. To everyone's disappointment, we received only