

and be animated, or else. Part of it is that the S.P. looks bad if there's a small turnout,

so he's protecting his own interests. Also, a good turnout shows good community motivation, and might encourage "generosity" on the part of the ministry.

So everybody was yelling, and I was struck once again by how often people, incl. adults, get yelled at here. I'm still not sure if it's possible to get anything done by being nice.

People here are like little children. cowering before elders who expect all manner of strange obeisances. They giggle when yelled at, say anything to please, pretend they haven't done wrong and lie to cover up. Grown-up children, with little confidence or self esteem, initiative, creativity, motivation? Discouraged & nipped in the bud. Negative feedback at work here. So afraid to get yelled at, that not doing anything is the safest plan.

Remembering the stages of life overseas I've heard about, I'm at the stage of being very aware of negatives. Eventually this should balance out, and I'll see the good & bad well-balanced together. People & life here aren't perfect - but neither are they anywhere.

Mon. May 19

Had a lovely rain last night. Commenced with a dusty wind which soon died down, and a steady rain followed, lasting several hours, the last part of which was a peaceful sprinkle. We collected nearly 1000 liters of water off the front roof!

The minister is coming today, and the concession is a buzz of frenzied activity. Just picked up a skirt from the tailor, and now have an African complet to wear!

The Minister's visit was a pretty good success I think. The crowd wasn't as large as it could have been, but the dancers were

all there, and people were animated. He couldn't stay long, which meant the speech making was blessedly short. The cotton group gave a speech about its projects. I was really impressed by the number of members, the amount of money they've generated, and how organized they appeared. An apatame had been built for the entourage, and Mike & I got to sit there. It was a nice sight, with the colorful animation groups to either side and a big circle of faces. I was very proud of "my" village, and felt sharp pangs of nostalgia for the day we'll leave. Life here gets more & more comfortable, and although it still has ups & downs, they're much more manageable. After the speeches the entourage flew to the chief's to bolt down a huge meal. The cook had really gone all out this time, and the spread was very impressive. My complet was a big hit. I got lots of incredulous looks & favorable comments.

Work in the fields has begun, and patches of fresh plowing are appearing. Most people use beef to plow now, and I finally see what a huge improvement this is over hand plowing!

Mike has begun jogging with M. Nyandi, a local teacher. Who would have imagined people would jog here. But sports are very popular, and you see evidence of it, but as with most things, such "fake" exercise is usually reserved for the more sedentary upper & middle classes.

Sat. May 24

Talked to Adia about crops & fields. He says his family eats about 3 sacks of millet a year, or about 120 bowls (40 bowls per sack). That's 2-3 bowls a week for 4 adults, 6 kids, & 2 dogs. But when his wife makes boisson, she uses 8 to 12 bowls of millet - for a single 25 gallon marmite of boisson! There are

2 main types of millet:

3 month millet, or sorghum, which is reddish; and 6 month millet, which is grayish.

The 3-month is less popular for eating, and is often used for boisson.

Have been sick with something non-descript, but now I feel better. For about a week, had achy muscles, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, mild nausea, shortness of breath, less energy. I think it might be partly nerves.

Yesterday I didn't do much, and had some bouts of melancholy. I'm not keeping busy enough (partly because I've been sick). Things with Mike & I haven't picked up much. Poor Mike. I have absolutely no interest in sex and cringe every time he comes near me.

Tues. May 27

We've hired several women to come crepissage our garden walls. First they smooth on a mix of soil & water. Then they add some liquified cow dung, mix it with soil, and smooth it on. The result is a beautiful chocolate brown with a swirling pattern. Last, they will apply a coating of ground meri bark & water.

I seem to be over whatever malady I had last week, and am bouncing back to my usual, fairly positive outlook on life. Haven't been too busy with work, which is all in all OK. Enjoy it while it lasts! Still unreliable rain: so we haven't planted much yet. We're also having another heat wave - ugh. I'm tired of sweating!

Tues. June 3.

Had a good rain last Tues. night, and first thing at Wed. morning the villagers were out en masse, like little bees or ants, plowing and planting like mad. The men & young guys lead pairs of oxen and a plow, in teams of 3 people, back & forth, leaving behind lines, then enormous squares, of moist, fluffy, chocolate brown earth, like receding wakes behind a boat. The women follow, barefooted, each with a stick, punching holes about 10" apart along the crest of each row. Next the millet is sown, also by the women. They hold 2 calabashes, one in each hand. One contains 3-month millet, the other, 6 month. They drop 4-5 grains per hole, filling 2 holes with 3 month millet, then 1 hole with 6 month. Their feet shuffle along the rows, closing the

holes behind them. I tried this, and found it very difficult to coordinate 2 calabashes,

fingers, aiming, and shuffling! It would take a lot of practice, but I'd like to plant some millet next year, I think. Anyway, the valley is just lovely now, with squares of rich, brown earth, and bright green tufts of grass-like millet just beginning to sprout.

This weekend Sessie, Kurt, Lorna Nell, + Bob came over. We hiked up onto the cliffs. It's wonderful to watch the valley change through the seasons. The squares of fresh-plowed fields were clearly visible, and the valley looked somehow clean & neat, as if freshly swept, dusted & spring-cleaned. (The animals must be kept tied up now, so they don't eat the new millet sprouts. This makes moto riding much less nerve-racking!).

The cliffs are lush now with bushes covered in

fresh new leaves. It's cool,
 breezy and delightful up
 there. We clambered around
 rocky ledges & overhangs, found
 some gorgeous, bright-red
 flowers, like huge, soft, spiky
 balls, on short, bulbous
 stems. Remains of old rock
 granaries are tucked under
 rocky overhangs. Birds made
 a racket of calls, though
 we couldn't spot them. It's
 very peaceful up there. Vines,
 trees, bushes & grasses are
 beginning their rainy season
 takeover, and it's amazing
 to see all this sprout from
 the bareness & brown twigs
 of winter. Looking out over
 the valley it's clear how few
 trees are really left.

The griot is out, and
 includes a scathing article
 on the Peace Corps from a
 conservative magazine, called, of
 all things, Reason. It's
 extremely biased & angry,
 but nonetheless, has given me
 much food for thought. It's

implications are disturbing.

I'm going through a new stage of Peace Corps existence:

questioning the very core of P.C., so to speak. Much to think & write about.

Our cistern is "nearly" done, and we have finally moved the mountains of clay out of the yard. No garden yet, however. Also, our "wall women" have never returned!

Thurs. June 12

A morning of blinding light, promising waves of heat once the sun crests the hill. But it's rainy season, and most days bring clouds of some kind. The white, puffy ones deflect & abate the heat. The thunderheads & dark gray masses bring lightning, wind, and sometimes rain. It hasn't rained in over a week, and the vulnerable new millet shoots are looking nervous. The next round of crops can't be sowed until it rains again.

Yesterday we finally drove the loop from Dapaong to Niakpoursma, Tami, Naki-West, then out to the pavement at Nanergou, and back to Dapaong. Just west of Dapaong, the dirt road climbs onto a low, flat plateau, which seems to slope down northward, towards Naki. They've received less rain than Bogou, and the crops are farther behind. The clay soil up here is very red & raw-looking, but there are many more trees than in Bogou, so the effect is softened.

We went to Tami to visit a mission center there. But first let me backtrack to last Thurs. and our visit to a similar center in Ogaro, on the other side of Dapaong, 15 kms. past Naki-Est (really Nakitindi-Tarié). The Ogaro center is 4 years old. Run by several ^{French} "monks", it's a live-in training center where men & their families come to spend 2 years. Prerequisite, of course, are Christian leanings, or a convincing semblance of such. These are

village couples - most speak little or no French; few have been to school.

The compound, though neat & tidy & expensive-looking, seems somehow at odds with its surroundings. The tumbled cobbles & turps, and the packed gray-brown earth appear more desolate and neglected next to the tall, square, trimmed & whitewashed, cement & tin buildings. I looked in vain for the honey, round huts that characterize village life in Togo. But here, the families live in tenement-style brick buildings, bare & stained and already run down after 4 years.

The priests are very friendly, though it was hard to tell what their live-in families thought of them. They expressed little interest in learning the local language, partly, as I understood it, because the Togolese are supposed to be learning French. "Curriculum" for the 2 year course includes classroom sessions in French speaking; basic reading & writing; basic arithmetic &