

Tuesday Dec. 9

The first clear day in a while. The sky's a cornflower blue with just a hint of dust.

The chief has decided to bring his 70 head of cattle to live next to our house!

The abandoned huts behind us will be for the Peuhl shepherd.

He calls him "my peuhl".

I'm leary of the noise & smell, and the potential of having people tramping back and forth next to the house a lot.

It's been so peaceful since the family moved away ~~almost~~ almost a year ago.

Our new shower is done.

It's taller than the old one, and I can't see out any more, tho' the top of the cliffs is visible.

Poor Adia, who's shorter than I, must feel claustrophobic!

The grey cement blocks are much less attractive than the old, earth-colored banco. It feels institutional. But at least it won't fall apart in the rain.

Our banana tree now has

about 100 young bananas on it!  
They are ripening very slowly.

Am feeling much more positive lately, though I still find it hard to motivate myself. I spend little time at my desk anymore. I get too sleepy & lethargic.

I'm dismayed by how little people know about basic hygiene & health. The task is so overwhelming. How do you retrain a lifetime of bad habits?

Children are allowed to piss & poop anywhere, and dogs or pigs are called to clean up. If mom cleans up, she doesn't wash her hands. Few small children wear shoes, so they pick up worms, and cuts & scrapes get infected.

Friday Dec. 12

Jan. 13, 1987, is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the President's taking power here in Togo, and preparations are underway for huge political rallies and celebrations nationwide. All

citizens are being called upon to participate, and practice sessions take place almost every day.

Here in Bogou, this largely consists of "marching practice" up and down the road in front of the Chief's house. Self-appointed leaders bustle importantly up & down the ranks, admonishing old ladies & men to line up, and stay in place. They chant a monotony of meaningless syllables, over & over.

Work on our wall is progressing, though we ran out of bricks today. I'm disappointed we didn't take enough care lining up the foundation, and the wall isn't straight. Hope we can cover it up somehow.

Yesterday Eric came up from Lomé with all the new materials for the stove program. Had a frustrating meeting which both the Director & Mme. Honkou were supposed to be at - and neither were - and at which we realized how poorly organized our region is. Not knowing

who else to dump on, I dumped my frustrations with Mr. T on Eric, and to my dismay he got very defensive and was less than helpful. Clear & sunny again today. Got a sun headache this morning that threw me off for the rest of the day.

Sunday Dec. 14

Yesterday 2 carpenters came from Dapaong to install a drop ceiling in our bedroom. The whole project almost fizzled when they refused to do what we asked. They knew one way of doing it. period. Any other way simply couldn't work. But they stayed, and after a very long & messy day, finished our plafond. We drove them into Dapaong, then splurged on a late dinner at the Campement.

Today drove home to clean up and put the house back together. ~~to~~ Saw elephants for the first time this date last year, but not today.

Wednesday Dec. 17

Wierd how the first thing that came to mind as I wrote the date is Jami Wise's birthday. Same thing last year. But I've both times forgot Gail's - 2 days earlier and a close, current friend. Wierd.

Monday night drove out to Brent's house in Namoundjoga for a house-warming under the full moon. Yummy BBQ chicken & tater salad! He has a cozy 2-room house in a concession, with a wrap-around front porch and a view of big fields and a valley. Often think if I'd known what I do now, and had it to do over again, I'd choose to live in a concession, with a smallish family.

I get tired of trying to divide affections between so many people & kids. Adia's family's big enough, but the rest of the neighborhood occasionally drops by as well. If you actually live with a family, they help buffer you

from hundreds of daily visitors  
& prying eyes. And you can spend more  
quality time with just a few special kids.

Baked a pumpkin pie today  
with a can of Libby's filling  
left behind by Nancy Leonard.  
And it is yummy! Had a  
good domestic day, with half  
of it spent in the kitchen  
and the other half in the yard.  
Kittie showed me how to make  
easy granola: Toss quaker oats  
with a mix of 2:1 oil: honey  
& some cinnamon & raisins.  
Then sauté on the stove till  
crispy. Quite yummy.

I've learned lots about  
cement lately - mostly how  
finicky it is. It needs to  
be watered constantly while  
drying, and with our erratic  
schedule and limited water  
supply it's a real pain.

Seems Koffi, the chief's  
son, picked a fight with  
Adia yesterday. Although  
Adia says he held his  
temper and didn't hit  
back, he got yelled at by  
the chief. He was so fussed  
about the incident that he  
went into Papaong this morning

to telephone the landlord!

Political season is in full swing, and for nearly a 2 month period little work gets done as all the political U.I.P.s bustle about to meetings and rallies. This year so far there've been 2 major "congresses" and almost daily practice sessions for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jan. 13.

On top of that, Stevie has decided that there will be a presidential election on Sunday. However, he is the only candidate. It's kind of sickening to see hurriedly printed signs up everywhere saying "Vote for Stevie".

Renée and I talked the other day about how repressive this regime is. And it's all the creepier because it's so well hidden. But people, especially govt. employees, have no freedom of speech or action. Perhaps as upsetting is what a waste it is of human energy & creativity, not to mention a very real block to development & improvement of any kind. Very little ever gets done because workers are afraid to do anything

in case they get yelled at.

Renée says if a big enough crack ever opens in this govt.

- if a coup that appears well-established - the people may well go along with it. And it will be very ugly, she says.

The other day is a usual example.

At 10 am a truck goes by blaring a bull-horn announcement: all of Dapaong will close this afternoon - schools, offices, stores - everything - for a huge political rally. All must attend. It's a rally to encourage people to vote for Steve this weekend!

And if any U.I.P. doesn't show his face, he risks being blacklisted. All are afraid not to be seen. But us white folk seem exempted, thankfully.

The boring rhetoric and slogan-chanting can go on for hours.

Another example: a large group of "animators" was needed to perform & represent Dapaong for 13 Jan. So 100 young people were chosen involuntarily. They have no choice, as refusing would likely mean jail. They're

required to practice boring routines for hours in the hot sun every week. Their only

compensation: the govt. is spending a mint to make them matching outfits.

Thursday Dec. 18

Listening to my Thurs. morn.

BBC addiction: "country style". A little dose of Nashville-style tunes. Sometimes I get so fed up with the family. This morn. Adia made some cement bricks. He's supposed to get 34-35 per bag of cement, but doesn't mix the correct dosage. We've told him several sacks ago to change the dosage, but this morning, 31 bricks again. Plus, several had crumbled, and instead of redoing them he left them. A complete waste of 2 bricks. And he didn't clean up the tools, just leaving globs of cement all over shovels & trowels.

Then Savani comes over for sugar, inventing some story about medicine for Pangma. Sure enough it's for him & his bouilli.

But his french stinks, and I could never explain how lies piss me off. Togolese are just

like your basic adolescent. Scold or criticize them and they either ignore you or deny it. You never know if you got through. Oh, and a really

big thing that bugs me is that the children don't get fed enough. If grandma is feeling tired or is busy, she simply doesn't make food. Even Adema sometimes doesn't feed her kids for hours at a time. And she ~~complains~~ can't understand why Pangma's not gaining weight.

Occasionally little 4yr. old P'woy will come over looking very sad and simply say "I'm hungry". It may be 7 or 8 PM and she hasn't had a meal since noon or even earlier!

It's very gusty today, and slightly overcast for the first time in about a week.

Sun. Dec. 21

Winter solstice, & Erin's 9<sup>th</sup> birthday. Today election day as well. What a farce! Stevie is the only candidate, and ballots aren't secret. Each citizen over 18 receives a registration card & number. This morning they go to their assigned voting place. As their number is called they hand over their card & receive a ballot. It has Stevie's name & a place for a check mark. Then you hand back the card. I asked what happens if someone votes no - would everyone know? Oh yes - and you'd get an "x" next to your name.

The unspoken implication is that you'll catch hell, lose your job, probably go to jail. It all makes me sick to my stomach. And no one is allowed to say what they feel about it - stating any anti-government opinion is dangerous.

Put up the posts for chain-link fencing around part of the yard. It will be ugly, but add some privacy

(what's that?), and it's what the proprietaire wants. Our yard is now fully fenced, but  $\frac{1}{3}$  is blanco,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cement, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  chain link!

Am feeling pretty anti-social (of Togolese) today, and it seems they're everywhere, staring & asking & bugging. At one point I felt surrounded, with eyes watching me from four directions: over the back fence, through the open back gate, up on the front porch. One guy stepped forward to grab a pick out of my hands (they don't ask, they just grab) and I almost hit him - I can do it, thank you! Sometimes I'm so glad Mike is around to talk to visitors when I can't take it.

# Wed. Dec. 24 1986

Christmas Eve

Went to lunch at Assib's for fried pintard, rice & peanut sauce. They're having