

our front porch, in the hopes of making it somewhat rainproof.

Wednesday I met a P.C. volunteer from Gabon in Dapaong. Turns out he's from Biham, and trained with some Togo volunteers stateside, who had mentioned his name to us. I invited him to Bogou, and had a great visit. His name is Dave Jepson. On our way through the Fosse Wed. evening, we saw a large group of elephants. Ahead was a van with some Swedish tourists up on the roof with binoculars & spotting scope. We clambered up and had a great view of the elephants. They worked their way towards us, and soon were quite close. I was nervous, but it wasn't safe to climb down either. They then crossed the road, about 15 of them, and at one point they were very close to the van. The largest of the group was a male, as we could see his balls hanging down. Suddenly he seemed to notice us for the first

time, turned abruptly toward us, extended his ears, and stared intently for 5 or 10 interminable seconds. Would he charge? I felt immensely vulnerable. We were quiet & still as corpses. Then to our immense relief he turned & lumbered slowly off through the tall grass, stopping to strip entire trees of leaves & branches as he went. Dave was thrilled - although there are a few elephants in Gabon he's never seen one. Here he'd gotten probably the best look at elephants possible.

Back in Bogou, we ate a great dinner and yakked till 11 pm. In the morning we hiked onto the cliffs, getting terribly sunburned in the process. Luckily a steady breeze was blowing to cool our sweat! After lunch and a haircut for Dave (he'd been travelling for 4 weeks), we hit the market. Poor guy - he drank about 5 calabasses of boisson and was pretty wiped. It

was a rough day, as 3 women we know well had boisson, so we had to put in an appearance at each stall! So Dave was in no shape to drive back to Opaong. Instead we baked carrot cake & chicken stew! He said cultivated fruits & vegetables & western-style foods are rare in Gabon, so he reveled in the good eating.

A light rain hit just after we put the cake in, but didn't last long. We were on the northern edge of the front, and south of us we saw ~~some~~ heavy lightning & rain (in Barkoissi, 20 kms. south, Lucy's straw roof blew off!)

It was interesting hearing about life in Gabon, as it's very different from Togo. Still 90% tropical forest, the people are hunters & gatherers, and cultivate very little. Roads are few and poor, so distance travel is by plane. (Much of Gabon's oil money has been invested in airplanes). Dave says it's the rivers that are the high point

of the country: gorgeous blue forest streams surrounded by lush vegetation, and safe to

swim in! The beaches are also spectacular & swimmable. But in the humid tropical climate infections & fevers flourish, along with mosquitoes & insects galore.

My friend Dimbriang in Tandjoaré recently gave birth to a baby girl. She's the one whose baby girl died at age 3 months, exactly a year ago. This new baby was big & healthy. But I just found out she died at one week old! No apparent reason. That poor woman has suffered so much!

Assir's mom has been suffering from some kind of ear infection. I've been giving her Benadryl to help her sleep at night, and will take her to the hospital on Monday. I'm afraid they won't be able to help much.

Had fun the other day by bringing a bunch of salad makings as a surprise

for Assisi. They love salad,
and they're fun to give things
to.

Driving in to Dapaong
early yesterday morning we
passed a large group of
elephants. We hadn't even
stopped, when one of them
charged us very aggressively -
a bit of a heart stopper.
We moved quickly on.

Visited Leslie yesterday,
and she told me that she
& Hugo are splitting up. They're
getting along fine, but she's
realizing they have no future.
He's not at all interested in
marriage or children, and not
especially committed to Leslie.
She wants marriage, commitment
& children, & feels there's no
point in staying together if
there's no chance of that. It's
very painful. Luckily she's
going on home leave soon, and
will have nearly 2 months to
be away from here & from him.

Sunday March 22

all day yesterday was

cool, breezy & overcast - a great day for working on our apatams.

Took down the old one & put up the new frame. Today we layered on the straw and tied it down - looks great! It's taller & more sloped than the old one - hopefully it will shed rain.

Today it was clear skies, sun, & fairly hot, but with a constant light breeze.

Monday March 23

While riding through the forest this morning, noticed a huddle of people, a-foot & a-cycle, by the side of the road. Drove a ways past them, and suddenly the same elephant of last Friday fame charged out towards me from the bushes. Ears flapping, trunk raised up, and front front stamping, he bellowed & snorted & gave me quite a start. Seems he was probably injured by a poacher, and is mean now. The govt. forest agency will have to

shoot him. Meanwhile all those people in the park were trapped & couldn't get through.

Thursday March 26

Had a good formation in Campiang on Tuesday with Steve G. & Mike. Built an utterly asymmetrical 8-pot boisson stove.

Got home Wednesday morning to find that someone had stolen one of the keys to our magasin, so Mike had to change the lock. Then we realized Mike had 10,000 francs missing from his purse. It was stolen from inside the house, yet we were only gone for a short while. Adia &

Nilman were really the only possible suspects, and yet they're the least likely to have done it. Ugh. So now we have to be extra extra careful with keys & money & trust no one. Loads of fun.

Drove to Kara today. The landscape is delightfully vibrant, with a soft green

coating of grass fuzz, and trees & shrubs thick with tiny new leaves, wet smells heavenly: lush

wet earth and heady perfume from trees covered in yellow or pinkish-white blossoms.

Friday March 27

In Lomé - whoopee. Off to a less than thrilling start. Everything on the book is way behind schedule, so we're starting from where we left off a month ago. The typed rough draft stinks.

Walking to dinner at Marox, a smiling Togolese man, draped in 6 yards of cloth, Toga-style, asks me when I can come to his hotel. Puke. Back at the hotel, then a delightful little retarded girl of about 7 follows me around, smiling brightly.

Wed. 1 April

Last day in Lomé finds the second draft of the book looking

much better than the first. Lots of loose ends have been tied up. Eric is very upset with me because I made many "unauthorized" changes in the MS when typing it up. That's a bad habit I have, of correcting other people's work without asking. It's a blow to anyone's ego to have someone else basically criticize what they've written, by changing it.

Saturday April 4

Driving home from Kara with Mike we saw an enormous elephant running through the bushes. I don't know why he was running, but it scared me, as I expected to come around the next corner and see him coming towards us! ^{Rare to see elephants in the Keron Park}

Then ran into Steve at Naboulgon. Had a drink and caught up on lots of old business. While I was gone in Loué Mike found out that it was Nibman who stole our money. It turns out that he stole

quite a lot over a period of several months. What upsets me most is to realize that whenever he came to work he was scheming ways to grab money. All the time we trusted him completely, and found him such a conscientious worker, he was dipping his fingers into our purses. Now he's run away, but we were told to sell the sou-prefit, which we did. If Nibman is caught he'll have to work to pay off the debt. Everyone agrees we shouldn't let it drop, but that he should be punished. Otherwise it sets a bad example that people who steal from us (or other whites) won't be punished.

Sunday April 10

A very busy week, but accomplished a lot. Tuesday spent 9 solid hours with Bombone going over the stores M.S. Wednesday arranged everything for the big A.S. formation. Thurs. & Fri.

We trained 16 agents in 2 intensive days. It went fairly well, but many of the agents don't really care about stores. They just want their per diem money, and they bitch constantly that they don't get enough. At one point I got so fed up with the bitching that I told one agent "this money doesn't fall from the sky; it comes from middle class American taxpayers, like you, who ~~think the poor~~ feel sorry for all the people suffering in the third world and want to give a little something. Then it ends up going to assholes like you who bitch that it's not enough!"

Built 2 large boisson stores for 5 + 10 marmites that turned out really well. Demands from women for these large stores, are pouring in and we can't keep up.

Monday 13 April

Had a delightful weekend in Bogou, just hanging out and taking care of all kinds of odds & ends. Now in Pagala

gave for a 3-day mt. stores
conference with all the volunteers,
the coordinators, and 5 stores

volunteers from Benin.

Driving down from Bogor,
the fauna is incredibly green -
a huge change just since last
week. At one point I
suddenly noticed a huge
elephant standing right next to
the road - the same one we saw
last week. He was standing
perfectly still and I only saw
him when I was right next
to him. Pulled ahead and
turned to watch him
lumber across the road,
looking slowly from side to side.
Wonder what he thinks of
us on our motos - scared,
or just another local critter.

Monday 20 April

Got back yesterday from
Pagala. The conference went very
well and everyone's all fired
up to get back to work. A
huge all-volunteer party in Ketao
Saturday night. I didn't go -

no longer enjoy these huge gatherings of white people. Don't know most of them either!

Woke up this morning, went into the shower, then heard a big commotion like a dog fight. Stepped out to see what was up and a little white dog was staring at me with a pair of terrified eyes.

Then a contingent of the chief's son burst in the front gate brandishing clubs of wood, shouting "rabid dog!". The poor dog knew it was all over.

He just laid down on his paws, and stared up with big sad eyes. I went inside while they clubbed it to death.

I doubt it was rabid, but it was free food for the family.

Friday April 24

Friday (today) & Monday are Togolese holidays, and we took yesterday off, so we're essentially in the midst of a 5-day weekend. The weather for nearly a week has been

unusual for this time of year:
a heavy haze of dust like
during Harmattan, but still +

almost windless. Nights are
relatively cool, but not as cold as
Harmattan season. No rain yet!
Our ~~Massing~~ cistern has dried up
and the ^{water} truck which promised
to show up yesterday never did.

Everything is in a state of
helpless desiccation. The poor plants
are hanging on bravely - we
don't have any water to water
them. All our projects are
on hold until water comes,
including the water jars Mike
is building next door at Adia's.

Driving in to Dapaong
Wednesday a group of 20 plus
elephants trundled across the
road. After a few too close
encounters I'm leary of them,
but what magnificent animals!

Crossing the road looks
difficult for them - they have
to heave themselves up the
steep embankment, placing
both front feet on the road,
and hauling themselves up,
like a fat man trying to
mount a gymnast's vault.

Have the last dregs of a cold.
Luckily it hit hard yesterday,
when I had the day off.

Shiela, the new P.C. nurse,
came by on tournee yesterday
for breakfast. Poor Steve G.
had a close call the other day
when he was tooling around
his village ^{w/ no helmet} and Shiela drove
up unexpectedly. By some miracle
she didn't see him - if she
had he would have been ^{sent} home
within 5 days! Gave him a good
scare.

Saturday ^{April} ~~March~~ 25

Another hazy, fog-like
morning - a pall of still white
dust blocking the view, and
rendering the world peacefully
silent. It's very reminiscent
of a gentle N.W. winter morning -
the kind where you can
bundle up for a crisp walk
^{along} some piece of water, and
you know it won't rain. I
find this weather soothing
to my nerves - I can forget
completely where I am.

Yesterday I escaped for almost the entire day into a good spy novel by Frederick Forsythe - "The

Devil's Alternative". Walked down to Assibi's last night to drink some of mom's Boisson, and to drop in on a big funeral nearby. There have been few funerals this year. Mom had said to come down in the evening, but when we arrived she scolded us for being so late, and said the Boisson was too fermented now. Although it was friendly scolding, I felt deflated, as I have so many times here. I feel no matter how hard I try, it's never enough. People always want more. And of course there's always the dual language barrier. We walked over to the funeral, but right away I felt very uncomfortable - one of the strongest feelings I've had of simply not belonging. We stood on the fringe of the crowd, in the edge of dust-muted lamp light. The talking and drum beats formed a roar, and I

sensed some of the essence of
primal Africa. I suddenly
felt I had no good reason or

desire to invade. It struck
me how completely alien was
this culture to mine. How
a culture ~~is~~ becomes an
essential part of you only when
you've been a part of it since
birth. I had a feeling no
matter how long I stayed here
I could never abandon the
roots of my own upbringing enough
to really embrace & understand
these people & their lives. Would
I even want to; or would
they want me? What's the point?

As I slunk away towards home,
leaving Mike at the funeral,
I ran into a group of ~~chatting~~
women. They surrounded me
and began chattering in Moba.
If I hadn't understood I think
they would have been very
disappointed with me as a white
person. I felt a real pressure,
as if I were on trial. I
answered back in Moba and
they gasped and giggled delightedly.
As I walked on again, 2 of

them walked behind me, talking about me. I understood only snatches - something about the

white lady, and the local medical clinic. I longed to understand, and to know what these villagers really think of me. If I had only realized how important & helpful it is to speak the local language, I would have worked harder at it. Now I'm leaving soon, and it's too late. It would have saved me much indigestion & frustration.

Monday April 27

Another Togolese holiday, and a day off. It's miserably, oppressively hot & dry, with the same pall of whitish dust hanging thick in the air, and not a sign of rain. The water truck was supposed to come ~~on~~ Thursday, but didn't show up, and now we're out of water. As we had 4 free days, and no water, decided to drive out to visit Tom & Mary in Bagné. It's a very long drive on a monotonous



red clay road, through a grim landscape of open scrub, parched & brown & smothered in dust. It was very hot, with furnace blasts of hot wind. We arrived unannounced and almost too wiped out to be sociable. Plus I had all the symptoms of a bladder infection, for the first time in years. Luckily Mary's a nurse, and gave me some ampicillin.

Their house is like a state-side Rambler, L-shaped with a big open kitchen-family room, 3 bedrooms, & a fenced yard. They had asked for it to be painted light brown, but it's pink! They have a VCR, so we watched "The Gods Must Be Crazy". Wasn't so good the second time around. They have 2 little kids, are planning more, and are committed to 10 years here in Togo as missionaries!

May 1 1987

Labor day, a fair in Tapaong, Ramadan begins, and a marriage ceremony at the Chief's. Still no rain, though the haze of "desert dust" has thinned, and shadowy vapor clouds appear in the evening like hesitant mirages. Tonight there's lightning to the south. Our cistern is cracking—again—and we just got a load of water. So yet more costly repairs are in order. The moral of the affair: don't build a ferrocement cistern without grillage! ~~2~~

A slight scandal the other day. Adia appears to have "lost" 3 months' worth of rent money, and was hauled off to see the proprietaire in Kara, to explain. We don't know the details, and don't really want to.

A pig roast party at Brent's tonight. We're invited to visit Karen & Mike in Pogno tomorrow night, so elected to stay home tonight.

As for the marriage ceremony at the Chief's, one of his sons recently "took" a wife, and tonight

her family is coming on a visit,
to bring her kitchen supplies. There
are about 40 in the entourage,

and a cow & pig are currently
being prepared for their consumption.
They'll stay the night, and we're
told each of these young ~~one~~ ones
will pick a young member of
their family - in-law to spend the
night with?! In the morning
they'll be given a gift by their
host!

