Africa Remembered
Adventures in Post-Colonial Nigeria and Beyond

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When President Kennedy launched the Peace Corps in 1961, I was working as a copyboy on the *New York Post*. In the scruffy newsroom in lower Manhattan, I responded to shouts of “Copy!” from reporters, carried fresh editions of the newspaper to the 19th floor aerie of publisher Dorothy Schiff, and fetched coffee and cigars for editors sitting around the rim.

I was a small town minister’s son who had seldom traveled outside New England and had never flown in an airplane. Foreign films in art houses fueled my desire to see the world, but I couldn’t imagine how to do it. I had applied for Army Intelligence as a college senior but was rejected for medical reasons. Despite encouragement from my father, I couldn’t bring myself to become a missionary.

The Peace Corps opened an unexpected door of opportunity. I don’t remember applying in 1962, but I do remember the phone call inviting me to train for service in Nigeria. Teaching in Africa seemed more fun and exciting than waiting for a trial as a reporter on the *Post*.

The early 1960s were a time of hope in Nigeria. Tensions between the north and the south had not yet erupted into civil war and a series of military dictatorships. Elsewhere in Africa other newly independent countries struggled with their colonial heritage, while southern African countries chafed under minority white rule. I was privileged to witness this time of transition between colonial empires and fledgling nation-states.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my late mother, Ruth Caswell Clapp, for saving my letters home, typing them up on stencils for my father’s mimeograph machine, and distributing them to a wide circle of family and friends. She would have been thrilled to see this book.

I wish to thank to my wife Bette Hileman and my Peace Corps housemate Lowell Fewster for reading the manuscript, and Florence Nash for her superb layout and design.

*Spring 2008*
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A place called Yola

Africa and the Peace Corps seemed a match made in heaven. Newly independent countries were eager to expand their school systems at little or no cost, and America had a ready supply of young, idealistic college graduates — “BA generalists,” we were called — who could be quickly trained as teachers and installed in African schools.

However, Nigerian secondary boarding schools were still staffed and run, for the most part, by expatriates who had stayed on after the demise of colonial rule. As a result, there was ongoing tension between career British educators and the fresh-faced Americans who suddenly appeared in their ranks. Armed with recent memories of our high school years, we were a constant source of wonder and irritation to our colleagues and our students. “I preferred the American way of teaching,” one of our former schoolboys said decades later, “but I learned to give British answers.”

During our Peace Corps training in New York City, one of the instructors mentioned a place called Yola, a hellhole in a river valley surrounded by hills that trapped the heat reflecting off its hard soil base. I don’t remember the context, but he made it clear that it was a place to avoid. Sure enough, I was assigned to teach English in a secondary boarding school for boys in Yola, the capital of Adamawa Province in the so-called “Middle Belt” between northern and southern Nigeria.

The first European to visit Yola was the German explorer Heinrich Barth. Arriving in 1851, he found “a large open place, consisting, with a few exceptions, of conical huts surrounded by spacious courtyards, and even by cornfields, the houses of the governor and those of his brothers being built alone of clay.”

It was a Friday, the Muslim day of worship, and Barth’s men proceeded to the mosque, an oblong hall with clay walls and a flat thatched roof. His companions raised their rifles in the air and fired a salute.

“This,” Barth recalled in his journal, “was not very judicious.”

The disturbance so annoyed Yola’s emir that he refused to grant Barth an interview for two days. When the emir did agree to an audience, he rejected the explorer’s gifts and ordered him expelled from the town.

Despite this inauspicious beginning, foreigners came to Yola in increasing numbers, first as soldiers and traders, then as missionaries and technicians. A British base camp in the port village of Jimeta was converted into a sabon gari (“new town” in the language of the Hausa-speaking tribes of the area) for non-Muslim residents of Yola.

Most of the foreigners were Englishmen. By 1963 there were also Americans, continental Europeans,
Indians and West Indians in Jimeta. Regardless of origin, foreigners were known to the local populace as Batures ("Europeans") and to one another as "expatriates."

Early in its history Jimeta acquired a reputation as a punishment station. Before tropical medicine and airplanes, a group of five British soldiers sent to Jimeta could expect that three of their number would die outright and a fourth return home permanently broken in health. Even in the 1960s the station wasn’t a pleasant place to spend three or four years. Jimeta’s remote location on the Benue River forbade travel to other expatriate settlements on weekends. During the 110-degree weather of the hot season, expatriates moved their beds outside their houses in hopes of catching a stray night breeze.

Compensating for these hardships, the countryside was beautiful and the people fascinating. The broad Benue River flowed across an immense plain against the backdrop of the Cameroon mountains. Cattle egrets roosted in baobab trees at sunset. Hawks and vultures circled endlessly in the sky.

**A smoothly functioning household**

My own journey to Yola began with a charter flight across the Atlantic Ocean and continued with a train trip from the jungles of southern Nigeria to flat, cool Kaduna in the north. The final 500 miles to Yola were driven on a dusty, often unpaved one-lane highway that served as the North's principal east-west artery. We sped along at 40 to 50 miles per hour on the clear stretches. A cloud of dust signaled the approach of another car or a "mammy wagon," lorries that contained incredible loads of goods and people. Because of the constant danger of accident, these trucks bore colorful mottos such as "Thy Will Be Done" or "More Days, More Hope."

The car windows were closed; the driver steered to the side of the road, and the two vehicles eased by each other. My hair turned about two shades redder during the trip. Red laterite dust from the roadway got into everything, even suitcases locked in the car’s "boot" (trunk).
Three of us were driven by a rather nervous Englishman who taught physics and chemistry at Adamawa P.S.S. The other riders were Harvey Flad and John Bishop, who would be teaching in a newly opened school in Ganye, a town even more remote than Yola. They would be surrounded by the pagan Chamba tribe of Sardauna Province, a new jurisdiction formed from sections of the former British Cameroon that became part of Nigeria. The Chamba voted almost to a man to become part of the French Cameroon, so the Nigerian government was eager to woo them with schools and roads. Hence Harvey and John.

In contrast with the two of them, who had to set up an entire household, I moved into a system that had been functioning smoothly for well over a year. There were four of us plus the servants. Hassan, the cook, prepared food for all four. Isa helped him and also cleaned our house. Abubakar, the so-called “small boy,” washed and cleaned up after Lowell Fewster and me.

Lowell was a Princeton graduate who had dropped out of Harvard Divinity School after a year to join the Peace Corps. The others were Tom Seiler, a graduate of Indiana (Pa.) State College who taught English, and Rod Larson, an outdoorsman from the Midwest who taught chemistry and general science. Tom and Rod were the first Peace Corps volunteers to arrive in Yola and would leave later that year.

Except for the hot climate and the small size of the expatriate community, ours was scarcely a hardship post. We regularly dined on guinea fowl shot by Rod, then adjourned to the senior service club to play tennis, darts and snooker, a favorite billiards game of the British.

Adamawa P.S.S. was evenly divided between Christian and Muslim students, reflecting political compromise. The Muslim boys didn’t score as well on entrance tests on average, but they were
admitted in equal numbers, and they generally caught up with or surpassed the mission-schooled Christian boys by the time they graduated.

All the boys would have liked to claim membership in the dominant Fulani tribe, and a good deal of the Fulfulde language was still spoken in the school. The school shield was a Fulani bull and the motto in Fulfulde was “Tiddo Yo Daddo” (we were unsure of the translation). But boys in the school also bore the scarifications of the Higgi, Chamba, Marghi, Kilba, Gude, Fali, Bata, Mambila, Yunnur, Njai, Verre Higi-Fali, Kanuri, Sukur, Wula, Tur, Wagga, Ga’anda, Mumuye, Bura, Yendam and others among the 126 tribes listed at one time or another in Adamawa province. In the bush there were still plenty of pagan tribes and even one or two, far in the hills, that had not yet been “settled.” Every five years or so an unwary tax collector got his head chopped off.

**Letters to the home circle**

My day follows the rhythm of the sun. In the faint light of early dawn, I hear the crowing of cocks and the call to prayers from the Jimeta mosque. I wash and shave and walk in sandals through the cool morning dust to school. There are three 40-minute class periods before breakfast, which we eat at 9 or thereabouts. The five remaining class periods follow, and school adjourns at 1:40 p.m. It’s then time for afternoon “chop” (the pidgin English word for food, which covers all meals) and afterward rest or quiet work inside the house.

The long African dusk brings people out from their houses again about 5 p.m. For us this means playing tennis and snooker at the club or perhaps supervising one of the games at school. A volleyball court has just been built, and I am among those who supervise the game. My one other extra-curricular activity will be leadership, with another English teacher, of the “literary and debating society.” At 7 or 7:30 it’s time to return for evening chop. School preparation follows, and at 10, I go to bed.

A word about breakfast. This consists of eggs, beef liver, tomato slices, cold cereal occasionally, bread and butter, jam and tea. It is perhaps the finest meal of the
day, although we do pretty well at other times. The Fulani beef is tasty, if tough, and Rod’s hunting varies the menu with bush fowl and orby, a small antelope he shot last week. Because the river is nearby, there is excellent fish to be had. Rounding out these meals are rice, yams and cassava. Fruit, cakes and puddings for dessert. Alas, no salads.

My pupils and I have gotten acquainted during the past week. There’s an immensity of labor, some of it exciting, most of it mechanical. I frequently need to revise practices and aims. This is the pick and shovel work of learning the English language.

I meet one class seven times per week, often twice on a single day. A “third former” would be roughly the same age as a high school freshman or sophomore. He is hardly the academic equivalent of an American high school sophomore, however. Limitations of language and culture, not to mention maturity, make the average third form boy the peer of a bright American junior high school graduate.

It is the task of the school to take first form boys, graduates of Muslim and mission primary schools and barely literate, and transform them into candidates for the West African School Certificate Examination set by Cambridge University in England. The road is long and tough, and the selection processes to pick the brightest primary school graduates are far from foolproof. Teaching a “B” section here is little more exciting than teaching a slow class at home. What the boys they turn down are like I can only guess. “I am the second boy in my hamlet to be educate” was the remark by a first form student on a Story of my Life essay that I assigned during one of my composition classes early last month.

The two third form classes I teach meet six times per week each, and Form 2B I meet four times per week. The work includes reading comprehension and vocabulary, which are easy for anyone who knows the language as a native speaker, précis practice for the third form, composition work for 3A, 3B and 2A, and “sentence patterns.”

This last is the most difficult and the most crucial. The school wisely lays little stress on grammatical analysis until the fourth and fifth forms. There is, after all, little point in studying a language that one has not yet learned to speak or write. The lower forms, therefore, must learn new ways of
writing and speaking through explanation, practice and drill.

The textbooks offer little help here, as the English staff rightly considers the books’ approach to be inadequate and outdated. We therefore must search for exercises on our own. What to teach and how? is the challenge I face daily. Should I teach sentences as units or as clauses and phrases? How many verb tenses should I teach at one time? Should I give new grammatical terms to youngsters who have already been brainwashed with old ones?

Complicating the problem are the students themselves, who like the safety of neat grammatical exercises. They would prefer classes in which English is constructed like mathematics rather than those in which effective expression is demanded and practiced. But one week has at least given me a schedule of teaching units.

Life falls into a pattern only too quickly here. The only variation in a succession of cloudless days is the growing heat and minor changes in the amount of harmattan, fine sand from the Sahara that blows into the region each winter.

This week I established a pattern for classroom work that is likely to remain for the term. Last week all the forms wrote for me on “The entrance of the Lamido [emir] at the agricultural show.” This week Form III writes on “drought” and Form II on “when I went to the cinema recently.”

Lowell and Rod are recovering from what is suspected as a touch of malaria. They were in bed most of Thursday and Friday but managed to teach today. Beginning yesterday, the first of the month, the four of us separated into two groups for eating. Hassan continues as cook-steward for Tom and Rod. Isa, his assistant when I first arrived, has come over here to cook and clean for us. Abubakar has returned to primary school at Lowell’s and my expense, for
which he performs a portion of the laundry and cleaning.

Ramadan, the Muslim month of penance, began last Saturday. During this period strict Muslims won’t eat or drink between sunrise and sunset — no small hardship considering the amount of water we find ourselves drinking around here. The school must make accommodation. Classes are cut from 40 minutes to 35. Muslim teachers may leave the school grounds at 12:45 p.m. Special fast-breaking meals are held at 7 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. Muslim boys observing the fast are excused from various school activities, including sports. It’s not unusual to find a boy sleeping in class.

Harvey and John were up here from Jada overnight. It was their monthly trip to civilization. Theirs is the most “bush” Peace Corps post in our group, a newly opened secondary school for Sardauna Province. They form half the faculty of four for the new school, which has only one form at present. In March the school moves to Ganye, still further away, and a second form moves in. They draw water from a well and use kerosene lamps in the evening. Here, the only hardships are water boiling, mosquito nets, and the chance of being bitten by a snake if we are not careful.

Frequently asked questions

It is Sunday afternoon and I am recovering from an unhappy night and morning of “tummy palaver,” one of the many varieties of stomach distress receiving this
nickname. I was healthy for the most part in the first month. Rod and Lowell finally recovered from their malarial distresses early in the week. On Monday I had to take a schoolboy to the local hospital with a malarial fever of 104.6.

I have in front of me letters from various people back home with pertinent questions. Baobab trees are medium to tallish trees with huge trunks from whose branches are suspended large egg-shaped seed-pods. At this time of year, at least, they are lifeless and look rather like oaks hung with Chinese lanterns.

Another letter asks if students here are advanced enough to study literature. They are, but they study it as a separate course from English language. The English language teacher divides his classroom hours among “comprehension,” reading of short prose passages; “grammar,” sentence patterns or whatever one chooses to call this side of the course; and “composition,” the writing part.

The third form, in addition, spends one classroom period per week on précis, an exercise virtually unknown in the United States but quite common in English schools. Students are required to digest a prose passage into one-third or so of its original length. There are a number of very formal procedures for this exercise, but at my level, fortunately, youngsters are merely required to show some understanding of the passage.

Teaching here in the North is quite different from teaching in the other regions. Expatriates dominate, and the schools follow the British pattern more closely. Aside from the mallams, Nigerian staff members who teach Arabic and Islam, the staff here is composed of two Pakistanis, two Nigerians, a Welshman, six Englishmen and we four PCVs. Our presence makes possible double streaming of the whole school: “A” and “B” sections for all five forms. Contrary to my earlier expectations, there is no sixth form in the school. “I doubt that Peace Corps people will ever teach sixth form,” says Tom Seiler. “There are too many contract teachers who are better qualified.”
Discipline and rebellion

The school has a curious mixture of strict discipline and rebellion. Boys stand up for teachers at the beginning of the class—each form stays the better part of each day in one room while the masters move—and are apt to offer to carry one’s books if they are burdensome. There are three uniforms: two corduroy outfits, one white and one brown, consisting of a pair of shorts and a smock-like garment that comes to the waist. The white outfit is for class and the brown one for work and games. There is also a set of long white trousers and a knee-length outer garment kept immaculate and used only for ceremony and for going to town on weekends.

Prefects, appointed from the fifth form, are responsible for roll call, games order at mealtimes and for lights-out. One of the staff, the duty master for the day, is present on these occasions but takes a back seat in keeping order and discipline.

Classroom order is enforced through plus and minus marks in a “Work and Tone Book” and through the more effective threat of detention on a Friday or Sunday of boys who otherwise would be allowed to go to town.

Within these limits, however, there is room for rebelliousness. It is almost impossible to expel a boy from school—he must have committed a fairly serious social offense—and thus academic preparation can be assured, in less academically inclined boys, only through a system of academic detention. A “0” on a homework assignment means little here.

Rebelliousness may be the wrong word. “Impudence” was the word Tom used this morning, and it’s more accurate. “In the States, a boy would never get up in class and say, ‘Sir, why are you teaching us this?’” Tom said.

Here it happens all the time—with the exception of classes taught by the principal and perhaps one or two other teachers. It’s a source of annoyance to both Lowell and Tom. I have been stung by this sort of thing in teaching the “A” section of third form.

It is an impudence born of both cocksureness and insecurity. On the one hand, the boys are convinced they are the crème de la crème; on the other, they know they must pass an external examination at the end of their
course. They know they are good; their doubts concern the ability of the teacher to get them through the school certificate exam. Any teaching that deviates from that narrow goal is, in their eyes, useless.

This is not true of lower forms. My most enjoyable class by far is 2A, which is bright without being obnoxious. Discipline is worst in the fifth form. As I mentioned earlier, there is an element in 3A that is quick to jump on anything they regard as incompetent teaching. The B sections are too disheartened to care.

This week, however, I seemed to have come over the hump. My classes and I have taken each other’s measure, and I think I have come out well. I sent a flock of boys to academic detention last weekend, with the result that work in all but one of my classes (3B is regarded as hopeless by every teacher) is handed in promptly now. 2B, where I was having problems with classroom order, quieted down after a couple of boys had been sacrificed to full detention.

On Monday one of the 2A boys came down to the house, ostensibly to talk about this week’s composition but really to ask if I could find him a girl pen pal in the United States. I gave him my sister Nancy’s address, not realizing that another schoolboy had indeed written Nan as he had promised. I admire Nan for having taken on this correspondence.

Four of us Peace Corps volunteers were sitting around the dinner table last week reading a fresh batch of mail. I mentioned my brother Dave’s thoughts about the future. “Tell him that if he goes to Harvard Divinity School, he’ll join the Peace Corps after a year,” said Lowell. “Tell him he doesn’t have to bother with the Peace Corps either,” added Tom. Well, everyone has his disillusionments.

You’ve asked about the school building. It’s built in a “U” shape to enclose an open courtyard. Two additional classrooms are in a building some 50 yards away from the main school. The school is quite solidly constructed of large yellowish bricks, with maximum attention given, of course, to windows and open space.

The walls are thick enough so that only the noisiest classes can be heard in adjoining rooms — which is a
factor of some importance out here. On the other hand, the classrooms are open enough so that I, sitting in the staff room, can hear the voices of three or four teachers drifting up from the classes below.

The grounds are quite pleasantly laid out — flame trees with scarlet blossoms are blooming in the courtyard right now — although they are far from lavishly kept up. The library, although hardly spectacular by American standards, is one of the best school libraries in the North, I’m told.

There are no striking deficiencies in school supplies. Paper is rationed carefully, as is everything else, but there is enough. There is a mimeograph machine and a motion picture projector, which is used on average once every two weeks for films from British Airways, Shell, the Northern Region Ministry of Information, the U.S. Information Service, British Information Service, and so forth.

The shoe pinches on the side of quality rather than quantity: “It would be nice to buy a new textbook series, but we can’t afford not to wear these out.” If anything, the school is too well established. The Peace Corps here is not expected to build a school, as in Ganye, or even to experiment, as in newer schools, but merely to maintain or improve existing standards. Except for one teacher, who has won confidence largely by adhering to the British pattern, and Lowell to some extent in religious knowledge, we are regarded as junior members of the staff.

Prefects run the school outside the classroom — even the games largely run themselves — and so personal relationships outside the classroom are rare between staff and students. The soccer ball from Dave and Nan, my brother and sister, remains
uninflated, although our small boy Abubakar has been pestering me to play with him. (He’s captain of this primary school form’s team.) One might regard it as a symbol of the deflated aspirations of Peace Corps teachers in Yola.

The sundowner club

Tom is our ambassador to the British. He was the first Peace Corps volunteer on the station and, fortunately, the best suited to the life of Yola Club, a so-called “sundowner club” for after-work drinking and socializing common in colonial outposts. He’s an officer now, in fact. “Tom was willing to go and drink with the English,” Lowell said the other day, “and that made it easy for the rest of us.”

There’s no Anglo-American friction here, which is a blessing. In Mubi and Bauchi nearby, bad feeling between Peace Corps volunteers and other expatriates is open and raw. It’s not hard to see why. The agricultural and mechanical officers are not exceptional people; many of those who have remained are simply here for their “lumpers,” the lump sum of money paid for loss of career to discharged officials of a former colonial empire.

Left to their own devices, the expatriates turn to bridge, gossip and drinking for entertainment. PCVs, who need a satisfying social life even more than the other expatriates do, quickly chafe at the series of decorous but empty entertainments offered. The result is the common phenomenon of Americans becoming more American when they go abroad. PCVs quickly justify the British belief that all Americans are crude and not worth knowing.
For my part, I have become quite addicted to a daily set of tennis at Yola Club, with or without a game of snooker later on. The rest of it I can take or leave. I can’t say I’ve enjoyed any of the social evenings either at the club or elsewhere. Part of it is age, of course. There are no expatriates of our generation out here.

On the positive side, it’s a truly international society: the doctor and his wife are Indians; two of the agricultural officers are Danes; all parts of the British Isles are represented, and the two “health sisters” are West Indians. Nigerian civil servants are active tennis players. Two teachers, a policeman, an educational inspector and a hospital attendant are regulars at the club. I was accepted for membership at the beginning of this month and have begun paying the one pound monthly dues.

**Birds of town and garden**

Mention of the Abyssinian roller prompted me to go to my illustrated “Birds of the West African Town and Garden,” a small but useful handbook, to see if the bird described might be the same as some brilliant blue birds I had seen cavorting about on the school compound recently. Apparently it is. Of the many other birds I have seen, I would dare to label six others: the cattle egret, common vulture, laughing dove, pied crow, black magpie and Senegal fire finch. This last is “the tamest bird in West Africa.” We saw it on our way from Kaduna to Yola when we stayed overnight in an American’s home in Bauchi. As we sipped tea in the living room, a small scarlet bird darted in from the veranda, hopped about on a chair and table, and flew into the space above the window with nesting material. It was still doing so when we left the house a half-hour later.

Except for the clean white dickey across its chest, the pied crow looks and sounds much the same as an American crow. On our lawn — if one can call it that — wanders a succession of crows, goats and occasionally a small flock of cattle egrets.

Another bird on the list: the carmine Nubian bee-eater, a bird with an exotic name and lowly habits. Nearly every afternoon a small flock of goats wanders across our compound baa-ing and scuffling about in the grass. If there are not two or more cattle egrets mixed in with them, there is likely to be a medium-sized scarlet bird with an iridescent dark green head riding the back of one of the goats like a fashionable equestrienne.
taking the air. Presumably it picks off insects that land on the animal’s back.

The bee-eater generally sticks with one goat rather than flying from back to back, and both animal and bird appear content with the arrangement. It’s a not quite believable bird. In shape and color it’s such as a talented child might draw, all reds and blues with long pointed wings and tail. If frightened, it soars upward like a small brilliant kite to the nearest perch. It remains there, flycatcher-like, happier to sit than to fly, until it can swoop back down again to its mount.

A glimpse of the emir

Yesterday I attended the Nigerian equivalent of a county fair. This was an agricultural show on a hot, dusty polo ground. There were demonstration booths arranged by agricultural officers, sack races, cattle judging, and a tug-of-war won by the Batures (European expatriates). Contributing heavily to the victory were Peace Corps volunteers John, Harvey and Rod. Their eight-man team beat the local Nigerian police team.

The highlight of the afternoon was the arrival of the Lamido, the emir of Adamawa Province. He was accompanied by a troupe of spear-bearing horsemen dressed in fiery scarlet robes and fantastically embroidered trappings. Walking among the horses, cheeks puffed to the limit, were musicians bearing the long nasal-sounding horns of the North.

On all sides of the parade ground, women took up a shrill trilling ululation as a sign of respect. Men raised their arms in the traditional two-fisted salute that signifies “This is your land.” Drums had been pounding all afternoon, but now a way parted in the crowd and out came drummers, dancing women, a dancer on stilts, a juju man dressed in feathers, and a man groveling in the dirt and pushing a hoe with his mouth in a gesture of obeisance. The noise and dust and color were overwhelming.

If the Sultan of Sokoto sees the moon tonight, tomorrow will be sallah in Nigeria. This is a day of prayer andfeasting that marks the end of Ramadan, the lunar month of fasting in the Muslim world. Tomorrow and the next day have been set aside as public holidays in the North. Religious officials generally work it so that the moon is seen on a Sunday or a Wednesday, thereby prolonging the weekend.

Most of the schoolboys have departed in lorries to spend the holiday at home. For us, it’s refreshing to know that we don’t have to teach again until Wednesday. Sunday is the only day we get off ordinarily, and it ends all too soon. Boarding schools everywhere consider it unwise to offer a two-day weekend. Here, boys go to classes before breakfast on Friday, and then the Muslim boys go to mosque and to town. Saturday is a five-period day with dormitory inspection following classes. On Sunday, it’s the Christian boys who have town leave.
Last week we had a minimum of plane flights into Yola, due to the return of heavy *harmattan*. The airport was impenetrable to all but the instrument-carrying DC-3s of Nigeria Airways. On Wednesday one plane circled the field three times before landing with a panel of judges for a local trial and, of course, a load of mail.

We had been experiencing the debilitating hot and humid weather that presages the rainy season. Temperatures had risen above 100 degrees each afternoon. In the months to come, I’m told, it will be commonplace to teach in a 110-degree classroom.

An afternoon nap gave me the sensation of turning on a spit: I perspired freely on the side of my body nearest the bedclothes; meanwhile, sweat on the exposed skin dried with each hot breath of air from outside. The humidity and the passing of an occasional cumulus cloud brought talk of early rains this year.

By Wednesday morning, all had changed. Tuesday night was windy and cool with a veiled moon that turned the countryside into ghostly pallor. Wednesday dawned cool and gray. The fine sand from the Sahara covered the land with whiteness less like fog than the mist of a snowstorm. The tall lonely trees of the bush, baobabs mostly, hardly worth noticing before, stood as friendly landmarks of a vanished horizon.

The comparison with snow ends here. The *harmattan* is dry as the desert itself. The mucous membranes dry up, some of the teachers lose their voices at the end of the day, and doors rattle in their frames. The weather is hard on tennis rackets: two strings popped on Lowell’s racket, and the frame of a racket I had borrowed shattered as I hit a backhand shot. Two other racket frames have gone recently as well.

**Visit from a spirit**

As if the weather had not cast an eerie enough spell on the week, we had a manifestation of a spirit. For some reason, these are most often seen on the balcony of the classroom building, where the staff offices and library are located.

While on an errand in that area Sunday night, a fourth form boy saw a creature “three times as large as a man” making a phone call in the principal’s office. The spirit chased him downstairs and into the boy’s classroom. A 2B boy who was with him saw nothing but ran to the master on duty for help.

The boy was found in the classroom, feverish with terror, beating the floor with a fork. Somehow a spoon was substituted for the fork, and the boy was fed sleeping pills until he dropped into a fitful slumber that lasted well into the next day.

The effect on the school was predictable. Boys who had been sleeping outside hustled their beds and mats into the dormitories. Other spirits were recalled. It seems that the school is located on the ruins of a deserted village and is thus a particularly choice haunting spot.
Certain trees in the area are famous for harboring spirits. A tamarind across the way is one of them.

About 100 yards behind our house is a tall tree dripping with foliage—something like a willow—that Abubakar, our small boy, won’t go near. Always alert for a picture, Lowell photographed it on Wednesday, getting a picture of a “spirit tree” enshrouded by harmattan.

Fear of spirits seems to cut across religious lines. The form four boy was a Christian, but the last boy to whom something like this happened was a Muslim. The supernatural is deeply rooted in African culture—as it is, I suppose, in the subconscious of us all.

I confess that I didn’t enjoy having to run a solitary errand to the staff room around 9 p.m. on Monday night. “We don’t believe in them, but we respect the fact that you do” is the approach taken by most of the staff towards boys frightened by spirits. Lowell, who is in charge of religious instruction classes, says that he neither needs nor can attempt “demythologizing” of the miracle of Christ’s casting the devils into a herd of swine. All the boys take the story literally.

**The disgrace of walking**

Last night there was a great wind that blew off most of the harmattan. Rod and Lowell took the jeep on another trip to visit missionaries. Lacking transport, I walked the mile or so to the club to play tennis. This was as daring as running the distance would be at home. Both Africans and expatriates will go to any lengths to avoid traveling on foot. The lowliest peasant, given the chance, would travel on a bicycle, his rīga billowing out behind him like a sail, or on a motorbike or in a car if he were richer.

An American walking is as perverse as an Englishman out in the noonday sun. The Englishman, for his part, is clinging to his dignity—it’s all he has left in this country—and so he rides. His Nigerian counterpart is striving to attain the expatriate’s dignity, so he rides also.

Walking along Jimeta’s streets under the shade of its Indian nim trees, one can count on the puzzled but friendly greetings of Africans on foot or on bicycles and a series of offers of rides from fellow teachers. These offers can be poignant. As I was about to leave the school compound on one of these occasions, one of the Nigerian teachers, who was coming in the opposite direction, practically begged me to take his bicycle. Behind his charity was the fear—borne out by Rod, Lowell and a Welsh couple who have walked for pleasure—of a kind of subversion: “You, as a teacher, by demeaning yourself are demeaning me.”

Neither the English nor the Hausa are egalitarians, and for this reason the English are visibly happier in Northern Nigeria than in the South. Here the white man is still called “master” and can expect to receive the raised fist salute and cries of “Ran Kaidad!” (“May your life be long”)—said by an inferior to a superior.
The theory of indirect rule, founded by Lord Lugard, the first governor of Northern Nigeria, depended on trust rather than force. For the system to work, every European had to be regarded with as much respect as the traditional ruler commanded. At its worst, this means that a Bature must demand homage even when he doesn’t deserve it. At its best, it leads to an affectionate partnership between African and expatriate civil servant. There is a story among the British of an emir who was presented with...
a high tax bill by the new government shortly after independence. “Independence!” he snorted. “Things were never like this when the British were here!”

In the North things have not changed very much since independence. It will be years before this country can ever afford to dispense with the skills and advice of its expatriate civil servants. The unspoken accord will not last forever, however, and this leads to a sort of gallows humor among the British. Their favorite stories are about incompetent young Nigerians promoted to responsibility shortly after independence. Instances of inefficiency, mismanagement and graft are recounted with a grim relish.

The favorite target is the Ibo, the energetic young clerk or lawyer who has pushed himself into a position of authority. Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* provides a fictional model of the “pushy” Ibo. Outside their Eastern Region, Ibos face a situation similar to that of Jews in America. Bright, energetic and meticulous, they are at once disliked, distrusted and indispensable. They keep the country running; they drive its trains and lorries, staff its banks and teach its children. They are most often the students who attend British and American universities.

Outside their own region, however, Ibos can’t vote or hold political office. “I don’t like having an Ibo working for me,” one Englishman told me. “You can’t call an Ibo a fool if he does something wrong. He can’t stand to have his pride wounded.”

The other target for scorn is the “Been To.” This is the Nigerian of whatever tribe who has “been to” the United States or the UK and returned with a fund of academic knowledge but no practical experience. In a non-African country, he would soon get this experience.
painlessly enough in the lower ranks of his profession.

Here, however, he may find himself promoted to a position of great responsibility upon his return to Africa. Understandably, he finds it hard to cope. His reward for his pains is the envy of his countrymen and the contempt of the expatriates he replaced.

The expatriates’ feelings are understandable: a man who has given his life and career to a foreign country cannot be expected to feel charitable toward an untrained replacement. Nothing moves an Englishman here to wry mirth faster than tales of a power failure in Lagos or Kaduna caused by an incompetent young Nigerian engineer.

Snapshots from daily life

I’m sitting at the club waiting for someone to show up so that I can play tennis. The others left this afternoon for distant parts of the province in order to supervise Common Entrance Examinations for the secondary school, held at primary schools in selected locations throughout the province. The top 30 boys will go to Government College in Keffi. We get the next highest 60, and the teacher training college and the commercial and technical schools must work with the rest.

Abubakar, our houseboy, has had four years of schooling. I made the mistake of showing him Ebony magazines, and he now goes off on flights of fancy in which he imagines himself a classy American Negro. The other day he grabbed Lowell’s tennis racket and preened before us: “American Negro going to club in car to play tennis,” he announced while taking a few swings with the racquet.
Our house cost roughly $15,000 to build, but it is not nearly as cool or solid as the Muslim-style house, which has thick walls built around a courtyard. New this year, our house’s roof creaks and booms with expansion and contraction due to the heat. It’s not hard to imagine, if one is alone, as I am tonight, that someone is trying to break in. We have lights, running water (including a shower if there is pressure enough), a gas stove and an electric refrigerator.

The Northern Nigerian Self-Government Anniversary was celebrated on our school’s athletic field. School-children marched around the track to “Marching through Georgia” and “Old Folks at Home.”

Harvey Flad danced the twist at the Bright Star bar in town, drawing the awe and cheers of the Africans. He was hugged by his African partner.

A pink-faced Ohio missionary to the pagan Mumuye tribe, a friend of Lowell’s, lent us his pump organ, as he is going on leave soon. Our house echoes to “Shall We Gather at the River” and “Sweet and Low.”

Yours truly, terror of the Yola Club tennis court, won his first match in the singles tournament, beating the best Nigerian player 6-2, 9-7.

A hunting expedition

I’m afraid I can’t work up any lyricism for this letter. The days are dull and hot with a terrible sameness: classes in the morning, sleep in the afternoon, tennis, reading or grading, and so to bed. The weekends don’t help much, because we have only Sunday free — it’s a day like all other days except for more reading or more letter-writing.

Hoping to break the spell, I invited myself to join Rod and Lowell on their weekly expedition across the river for Sunday morning hunting. Rod had his own gun and Lowell a borrowed rifle. The third regular is Brian Hanson, a fiftyish agricultural officer who lives for hunting and once had half his face torn off by a panther.

I didn’t find the trip very satisfactory. I spent the morning walking briskly behind Lowell and his guide, a villager hired to find guinea fowl and to keep us from getting lost. We were moving too fast to see any other birds, so that aspect of the journey was a failure.

There were plenty of guinea fowl about, but Lowell’s gun sights were off or something, and he pumped one 22-caliber bullet after another into the middle of flocks with no result. Guinea fowl are fat, rather shmoo-like birds that are still as tame as American partridges must have been before they became wary of hunters.

Lowell and I both fired a dozen rounds into a tree containing seven or eight guinea fowl with no more effect than to cause one or two to fly away. Brian Hanson bagged eight. Guinea fowl is to be the featured dish at Yola Club’s monthly “chop night” on Saturday.
The agricultural and medical officers are the hosts for the occasion, and they have shot 12 guinea fowl thus far.

**Weather report**

I have experienced my first rain since coming to Nigeria. Sunday night a week ago was cloudy and windy. Towards dawn I heard a few drops spatter on our zinc roof, and then the sky opened up. For an hour it poured so hard one couldn’t distinguish among the sounds of the drops. Not a drop has fallen since—the weather continues hot and humid.

More heat this week occasionally relieved by more rain. Yola has the highest average temperature — though not the highest extreme — of any spot in Nigeria, according to Lowell. The body adjusts to the tropical climate. Basal metabolism falls 20%. Temperatures in the 80s are pleasant, and a drop to 70 is positively chilly.

As for tennis, you must remember that it is not being played with the sun directly overhead, which is unpleasant anywhere. It is a sweaty proposition nonetheless. Rod and I played our singles semi-final match on Thursday. He won the first set easily. In the second set he wilted and I came back to win. A more determined player probably would have finished him off, but my will to win had been exhausted and I lost the third set.

At 8 p.m. or thereabouts Lowell measured the temperature inside our house at 96. Rod and I had been playing tennis in heat somewhere between 100 and 110.
There are two reasons for the extreme heat. If you look at a globe, you'll notice that Yola is at practically the same latitude as Lagos. The town has no altitude to speak of; the hills surrounding it form a basin that traps the heat, which reflects off its hard laterite soil base.

Small wonder that British have long considered Yola something of a “punishment station” fit only for newly-arrived government officers and other officials with no political pull. Visitors from other towns happily flee back to their relatively temperate stations. There is an air conditioner in this house, but it costs in the neighborhood of four shillings (60 cents) per hour to run. Most people turn their units on only if a member of the family is ill and suffering.

Today I attended a public whipping. I had no choice actually. This was at the school. Four boys had returned to school drunk on Sunday night. Two were habitual troublemakers, and provincial officials elected to expel them. The other two, however, were sentenced to “eight lashes before the assembled school,” the punishment next lowest in severity.

It was an unpleasant ritual. This practice is a legacy from the organizers of Nigeria’s educational system, most of whom were graduates of England’s “public” (boarding) schools. Nigeria has kept the punishment even though England abolished public flogging sometime before World War II. Northern Nigeria, in particular, is a land in which a premium is put on obedience and humility; defenders of whipping argue that it is the only punishment that works. Denial of privileges is effective only to a point, and expulsion is rare.

**Onset of the rainy season**

It has been raining every two or three days of late, and large grey cumulus clouds lend interest to the formerly blue sky. The heat and humidity are intense and relieved only by the rain, which comes after a great wind and darkening of the sky. The wind often reaches gale force, and the rain that follows is heavy but not long-lasting.

Soon the sun is out. Wading birds frequent tiny pools, and insects whine in the growing heat. The countryside is now green—there is the luxuriance of spring with none of its cool pleasures and sense of renewal.

At night insects, great and small, beat against the windows and screens. (We have to put up our own screens, as the British, whose screens have incredibly fine mesh, spurn them for “cutting down ventilation.”) The tinier creatures work through the screens into the house; the tiniest even get inside mosquito netting, adding to the discomfort of the night.

The insects seem to be coming in waves these days. One day it’s flying ants. Another day it’s sand flies or delicate long-winged things. Mosquitoes perched around our outside light at night look like iron filings pulled into a pattern by a magnet. Today a ball of bees festered
beneath our tin roof before falling to the ground, where the principal stepped into them while getting out of his car.

Sunday night, following a monsoon-like gale of wind and water, we played snooker in the club by flashlight and candlelight. Last night we had to battle locust-like things that flew in clouds above the table and settled on the cloth in front of the cue ball.

By day we notice growing numbers of white-bellied storks, graceful birds with glossy purple heads and necks, white legs and under parts, whose arrival is the first signal of the rainy season. They are common in the compounds and in town, where they can be seen gathering grasses for their bulky nests, and in the fields, where they wander in flocks of a dozen or more. (They could be called a “herd,” for their sheep-like movements are accompanied by the continual swooping and perching of the bee-eaters, who regard the larger birds as insect-carriers on a par with goats or cattle. This is the first time I’ve seen one bird perched on another!)

Glancing through an open doorway during a class recently, I was startled to see a flash of emerald in a bush just outside. The sun had caught the head and breast of a brilliant tiny bird I later discovered is the olive-bellied sunbird. Such are the signs of spring here.
The Peace Corps required volunteers serving as teachers to undertake special projects during our school's long summer holiday. In 1963 another volunteer based in Maiduguri arranged month-long primary school teaching jobs in Bornu Province for three of us. Mine was in Dapchi, a small village in the far north near the border with the Republic of Niger. I had visions of fulfilling the Peace Corps image of an American in a mud hut. I hired a steward and invested in "bush gear" for the trip. Having a steward took a lot of the drudgery out of going bush, but I wondered if I could stand a month without electricity, a phonograph, tennis and other civilized pleasures I enjoyed in Yola.

This letter will be given to a lorry driver and, I hope, reach you in time. I'm writing for myself as much as anyone, because this serves as both a journal and a way of passing the time.

I'm sitting at a table in the Dapchi rest house, a cell-like building of whitewashed cinderblock built by the province to accommodate the infrequent travelers passing through this village. (The infrequency of guests may be indicated by my expectation of having this place to myself for the full four weeks.)

As rest houses go in the bush, this is a good one. There is a concrete table that serves as my desk. I'm sitting at my dinner table, a metal affair that might easily have graced a senior service club or a seaside restaurant. There are concrete shelves for provisions in the building's other room.

Several yards away, my steward, Hassan, who is Rod's steward ordinarily, makes his headquarters in an airless little building consisting of a kitchen and two bedrooms. A sarkin barki (chief of house) from the village provides water and firewood daily.

For living here I have brought a water filter, camp bed, Tilley (kerosene) lamp and a transistor radio that I bought in Lagos in January, along with the usual assortment of clothes, books, film boxes, canned goods and other provisions.

A zinc roof extends some 10 or 12 feet beyond the walls of my room to supporting pillars and a substantial concrete platform. There are four windows set in iron casements and a door to match. The windows I leave open for the most part, which increases the flow of insects and even birds in and out of the room. (Part of the ceiling is missing, and birds come in through the eaves beneath the roof.) Last night, my first night, I had to close the windows, however, for a sandstorm preceded and then accompanied the fourth rainstorm Dapchi has experienced this summer, coating the room with a fine layer of sand.
There is the constant chatter of songbirds—sunbirds, swallows and doves—in the nim trees that shelter the building and, indeed, most of the streets and houses in the town. As I look out the window beyond the trees the land is level and sandy to the horizon, save for an occasional tree or shrub. About 150 yards away a solitary man in blue is taking advantage of last night’s rain to hoe his field, singing as he goes.

I arrived here last night after spending the weekend in Maiduguri and Monday in Damaturu, where Henry Etzkowitz and Blue Eagle Woolridge are assisting the primary school in English and arithmetic, respectively. Henry’s decision to do this project, and to persuade others to participate, is proving far less quixotic than I, other PCVs, and even the Education Secretary had feared.

The value of these expeditions is not so much what we will be teaching primary school students—what difference could a month of our instruction make, after all?—but the introduction of valuable teaching techniques to the regular staff of the school. Henry feels, and I agree, that we can be of most value as examples of good teaching. Already, in Damaturu, Henry has transformed one young woman from a frightened, incompetent novice into a confident English teacher. On the basis of Henry’s success thus far, the Education Secretary has said he would be happy to send out as many PCVs as wanted for these primary schools.

Primary school in Dapchi

It remains to be seen what I can do here to strengthen the English teaching. Classes I and IV are being handled by a recent graduate who can certainly use help, but who resents my presence in his classroom. The headmaster, on the other hand, is friendly and quite competent. Any suggestions I am able to make to him will be minor.

What I have in mind is for each teacher to alternate with me in teaching and observing. I hope we’ll all learn—it would be presumptuous of me to think of myself as a master teacher. (I’ve just finished chasing a
goat out of the doorway. I’m not making this up—it’s God’s truth.)

The ride here yesterday was peaceful. We passed through the sleepy villages of the sub-Sahara, populated by Kanuri and Shua Arabs. Cow Fulani can be seen on the road and, I’m told, will be common in the market now that the rainy season has started.

A white man is a curiosity here. There are few missionaries, and the nearest center of civilization is Maiduguri, so I was greeted with shouts of “Sanu, Bature!” (Hello, European) as we passed, and I was surrounded by small boys whenever we stopped.

Under the nim trees sit tall Kanuri men in their ubiquitous gowns of blue or dark blue. Europeans find most Kanuri women unattractive, and this has little to do with nature. First, there are the scars—three vertical slashes on each cheek—and then the distinctive hairdo, a sort of Raggedy Ann effect achieved by braiding the hair and tying it into strings that fall over the ears. One sees them on the roadside in their shapeless gowns carrying calabashes on their heads, and in the markets witchlike in their silence and dark sobriety.

I arrived in Dapchi in the late afternoon, met the headmaster and accompanied him to the house of the District Head. The meeting was classic in its evocation of the countless encounters between tribal chiefs and European officers. I was ushered into his mud-walled courtyard by the headmaster, who bowed from the waist.

Zannam Baba, for that is his name, rose from a faded beach chair, shook hands, and directed his key keeper to bring me a chair. This protector of 40,000 souls, descendant of some feudal lord whom villagers in
It's an attractive and lively school. Tiny Class One girls were weeding the flower beds when I arrived. Borders are marked with green Star beer and soft drink bottles stuck into the ground upside down—quite effective, actually, and the first time I’ve seen it. The boys are dressed in white outfits, for the most part, but the girls are garbed in emerald green dresses with pantaloons underneath—for the games, I guess, which are vigorously coeducational.

I watched the physical training period from 7 to 7:40. This was a routine of calisthenics, relays, tumbling exercises and indigenous games “customary games” this area once depended on for protection from slavery, is a tall genial-looking man with a curly black beard flecked with white. He was wearing a long blue gown, a pea green cap, and had a thick gold seal ring on his little finger. As he spoke no English, we called upon the headmaster, sitting cross-legged on the ground nearby, as interpreter for the exchange of pleasantries.

Meeting Zannam Baba was one time when I wished I had kept up my Hausa. After the interview, he offered to take me to the rest house. The pageantry ended when we jockeyed for seats in the Land Rover. In deference, I sat in the middle, legs straddling the clutch, between the District Head and the driver. Not the least of the services provided at the rest house is a policeman patrolling the place after dark. I, too, am dependent on Zanna Baba’s protection.

School begins at 7 a.m. I met the staff—five, including the headmaster—and was introduced to the school. There are seven classes in the program, but many schools admit a new class only on alternate years. Thus, in Dapchi there are classes 1, 2, 4 and 6 this year.

Language classes capture some of the gusto of the games. One child leads the exercise, and the others follow like a revival meeting chorus. “Classroom,” reads a boy at the top of his voice. “CLASSROOM,” echoes the class. “Teechuh!” “TEECHUH!” And so forth.

There’s none of the usual problem in starting a
yesterday, so the Frisbee and a half-dozen rubber balls provided the athletic equipment for the late afternoon games. The oddest thing was watching the otherwise dignified mallams tossing the platter with as much delight as the children. For their part, the children jump and dart after the Frisbee, treating it more as a contact sport than as an effete diversion. I'll have to let the secondary schoolboys have a try at it.

Wednesday night I was plagued by every variety of flying ant and beetle hatched by the rains and attracted by my Tilley lamp. Last night there was another rainstorm. I was about to close one of the windows when I noticed a tiny turquoise bird with a crimson spot on either cheek blinking at me from the sill—a red-cheeked cordon bleu—a “cage favorite,” according to the book. He stayed the evening, flying to a perch on a loose ceiling support after an hour or so on the sill.

**Frisbee in Dapchi**

It's late afternoon, and people are passing in twos and threes along the road outside my window on their way back from market. It's not that much of a market, I discovered today. The major markets lie to the north and south at Gashua and Damagum. Still, the market is a diversion on a day when there is no school—there's no school because it is market day, as a matter of fact. And I did see my first camel in Nigeria. I was returning home, surrounded by a dozen or so schoolboys, when I passed a man leading a plodding camel toward the marketplace.

The Frisbee proved to be an instant success. I brought it along on an impulse, and it more than justified the thought. The school's football bladder was broken...
A few days later

I’ve been here a week now, and I can say it’s been one of the pleasanter weeks in this country. The routine would become wearying after a while—especially as I am alone—but it’s pleasant enough for a few weeks. I go to the school after a cup of tea, watch the physical training and possibly toss the Frisbee with whatever class is using it.

My only regret is that the Frisbee seems to have supplanted some of the time devoted to African games. On the other hand, it develops throwing and catching skills, which are rare among Africans. Henry, who visited me this past weekend, is enthusiastic. “You should ask the education secretary to order a gross,” he said. “You’ll go down in history as the man who introduced the Frisbee to West Africa.”

The teaching is going well. I alternate teaching and observing with the regular instructors, stressing sentence patterns and drills. Class One can now answer questions such as “What is the teacher doing?” and “What is the boy doing?” Class Two is developing personal pronouns: regular players, as are some of the town’s young men. This athletic activity concludes about 7 p.m.

Generally my teaching day is over by noon or 12:40 (breakfast is an hour-long break at 8:55). I eat, read and/or sleep, and return to the school about 4:30 or 5. At this time it’s football for the boys and Frisbee for the girls, and I play either or both. The principal and the youngest mallam are regular players, as are some of the town’s young men. After supper there is little to do but climb under the insect netting and read by Tilley lamp. Mom will be happy to know I have found time to carve a bird. However, I’m afraid that learning native crafts in my spare time is a trifle romantic. Most crafts are utilitarian rather than decorative.
Today was the day chosen by Zannah Baba and his men for the beginning of planting. Soon after dawn I began hearing drums and the piercing notes of the aljaiba in the distance. Arriving at the school, I spied Zannah on his fine white horse nearby. “Sanu da aiki,” said Zannah Baba. (Greetings at work)

“Sanu, sanu,” I replied. “Ina Lafiya?” (How are you feeling?)

“Lafiya. Ina Aiki?” (Fine. How is your work?)

“Aiki lafiya.” (The work goes well)

“Too” (splendid)

This is about as much conversation as I can manage these days. Anyway, the drumming was still going on after my first class. The headmaster said it was because of the planting and suggested that I might want to take pictures, because I had no further English classes before breakfast.

I walked the mile or so to the spot, passing men hoeing and women sowing groundnut seeds. The noise increased, and just over a slight rise I saw several dozen men flailing at the earth with short-handled African hoes to the accompaniment of two small bands composed of drummers and an aljaiba player or two. One of the musicians, an ex-serviceman perhaps, was periodically splitting the air with a misshapen bugle.

I toured the area with the zannah and took pictures of the men, who waved their hoes and shouted, “Bature!” Zannah Baba asked if I was going to my house, and I said I was. From somewhere he found the English word “donkey,” indicating that this would be my return transportation.
I set off with one of his servants, who led me not to a donkey but to the zannah’s own horse. It was too late to back out—anyway, Europeans don’t walk in Africa—so I mounted, indicating my helplessness when the reins were handed to me. So I was led, amid much laughter, back to my house, feeling very foolish. Almost as foolish as the time I ran for a train in Kaduna carrying a basket on my head. That one brought the house down.

Visiting the missionaries

“Why don’t you take a trip to Gashua?” Henry Etzkowitz suggested during his visit. “It would be a good break. There are some missionaries there. You could stay with them.”

“Shouldn’t I let them know beforehand?” I asked.

“Out here?” said Henry. “This is bush. You don’t need to be formal out here. What are you going to do? Send a calling card by lorry and wait for a reply? Just show up. They’ll be happy to see somebody—especially you, since you’re a minister’s son.”

It did seem like a good idea, so on Thursday afternoon I packed some things and walked down to the lorry station. The sky clouded over, rain threatened, and I was about to give up when the man in charge said a lorry would come about 5.

It was close to 7 when the lorry actually got under way. I was in the gabah with the driver and his assistant; my bag was in back in the bodi with several sacks of groundnuts and about a dozen other passengers. We slogged over the rain-dampened road, pausing to meet lorries coming in the other direction. Occasionally a bell would ring in the cab. This was a signal from somebody in the bodi that another
lorry wished to pass. We would crawl off the road and allow ourselves to be overtaken.

I was quite sore from sitting on the wooden seat by the time we arrived in Gashua around nine. I asked for the *gidan Bature* (Europeans’ house), and I was directed to the home of a Sudan Interior Missionary named Worling. SIM stirred some misgivings. Lowell’s nickname for them is “Fundies,” but my previous experiences with missionaries had been mostly pleasant, so I had no idea what was in store.

Then, too, anyone — fundamentalist or not — might be less than charitable to a stranger who knocked on his door at 9:30 p.m. It was with a mixture of relief and apprehension that I greeted Mr. Worling, who had been reading by kerosene lamp, and introduced myself.

To enter the Worling living room was to enter pre-war America. Little had changed, I’m sure, since the couple had come to Gashua in 1938. The woodwork was dark; the furniture plain. A metal sign, “Jesus Never Fails,” hung above their bedroom door. On one wall was a gallery of family photographs showing the gradually thickening Mrs. W. and her four smiling daughters.

George Worling was a man of medium build—on the smallish side, actually—with graying hair and a face whose aspect was curiously open and cheerful. He and I spent the next few minutes feeling each other out, I doing my best to present my humanitarian side and to drop all the hints I could about my solid Protestant background. I figured that a few key phrases such as “Peace Corps,” Harvard” and “Congregational minister” would soon establish rapport. Instead, I found myself increasingly on the defensive.

“Congregationalist, huh?” said Mr. Worling. “Ever hear of the Park Street Church in Boston? Ever hear Rev. Ockengay preach? He’s quite a preacher, you know.”

About this time Mrs. W had finished making up my bed and wanted to share the tea and ice cream George had fixed. “This is Mr. Clapp, Sue,” said George. “He’s with Kennedy’s Peace Corps—teaching down in Dapchi, aren’t you? He heard we have good beds and chop over here.”

“Pleased to meet you,” said Sue. “Maybe you can tell me what this Peace Corps is all about. Is it a social scheme or what?”

“Yes, it’s a social scheme,” put in George before I answered. “Social,” in the Worling vocabulary, I discovered, is short for “socialist.”

I thought I might have some luck charming Sue, George having proven a pretty tough nut to crack. Sue, however, was even tougher. She struck me as a curiously American phenomenon: a woman whom virtue, or something like it, has made hard and cynical. In her vision of the world, the evil are successful and the “saved” are doomed to misfortune.

A creature built for comfort, Sue now drags herself
through the day, complaining constantly of her lumbago. Her lack of charity extends even to her daughters. “Millie’s trying to get another degree at Oklahoma State,” she told me. “That’s what everybody’s doing these days. I guess the end of the world is near.”

“How’s that?” I asked.

“You know what it says in the Bible,” she said. “In the last days there will be a great seeking after knowledge. That’s what everybody wants these days—knowledge and more knowledge!”

“Well, that’s certainly true,” I answered, happy at last to be able to agree with something the others said.

My campaign with Sue was further compromised by coincidence, I discovered in the morning. I, the pagan vagabond, had arrived on the night before Sue’s birthday and was doomed to share this special day with her. I think her suppressed loathing for me reached its peak during breakfast. I mentioned that I must have been born about the time they came to Gashua. Indeed I was, and they had lost a baby boy a few days later. “He would have been just your age,” she said, all but suggesting that their child had died that I might live. Truly, the evil prosper.

Please don’t think I picked any quarrels over religion. I bent over backwards in hypocrisy in order to avoid biting the hand that was feeding me. But the further I retreated, the faster George and Sue pursued. Had I heard of Bob Jones University? What did I think of Jonathan Edwards and his sermon, “Sinners in the hands of an angry God”? Did I like to listen to fiery preaching? Did I know that John Birch’s brother was an SIM missionary? What magazines did I read? When it wasn’t direct questioning, it was a wearying one-way discussion with George in which I found myself nodding at all kinds of preposterous statements to avoid quarrel.

And I didn’t want to quarrel, really. Their situation is bitter enough without my adding to the bitterness. For 30 years they have devoted themselves to preaching to Muslims, whom they do not respect (“It’s just another
kind of paganism, as far as I’m concerned,” says George) and who also happen to be Negroes, a race they don’t much care for either.

What satisfaction can there be for them? Their converts are but a handful (“I’ve seen a lot of people die without accepting Christ,” says George) and if the number ever threatened to become large, they would certainly be asked to leave. Their one concession to the social(istic) gospel is a morning dispensary in which Sue hands out pills and injections to 100 people or so, but this is clearly subordinate to the preaching.

So they have turned their energies inward, praying for themselves and other SIM missionaries and converts and uttering prayers that are more like curses for these “bigoted Muslims” and “godless pagans.” Like most people who believe the world is soon coming to an end, they do so because they have little to gain by its continuance. They live for heaven, where they will meet a God who will embrace them while sending the unrepentant to hell.

I escaped the morning prayer meeting by going into town to run some errands. When I returned, however, I found the SIM forces had been strengthened by the addition of a Miss Janet of Iowa, the Worlings’ neighbor and partner. Janet was a big-boned woman in her early forties — not unattractive, really, with a soft face, hair pulled back into a bun and a somewhat distracted look that became focused and impassioned only when she began talking religion. To a greater degree than the others, she discussed salvation with a matter-of-factness that other women use in recounting surgeries.

“The night my brother died in that automobile accident — it was about a year after I had been saved — I remember I had a feeling that something was wrong,” she said during lunch. “And do you know, Sue, I prayed for everybody at home. Yes, I prayed to God to help them at home. And suddenly I had this feeling of peace. Yes, I felt peace, and I knew that everything was all right. I just know that my brother made his peace with God and was saved.”

After lunch everyone had a nap, and after the nap, tea. I was about to put away my teacup and reach for an old magazine when George plumped “The Evangelist’s Hymnbook” in my lap. “We usually have a prayer meeting at this time,” he said. I decided I’d better grin and bear it. They let me have first choice of hymns, and I mumbled a demurrer.

“Do you know 233?” asked George. I said didn’t. I didn’t know 235 either, a “good one” proposed by Janet. I did acknowledge acquaintance with 234, “Come Thou Almighty King.” Sue said they didn’t know that one too well. So we sang 233, one line of which I remember: “Dear Jesus, wilt thou love such a miserable worm as I?”

There was a Bible passage—something about unbelievers and their fate slyly intended, no doubt, to bring me around. Following this was a prep period for the prayers. George handed out assignments: “Let’s see,
today we’re supposed to pray for that little girl down in Mutum Bui. Oh, yes, and those people in the Somali. Can you think of anything else, Sue?”

Sue couldn’t, and at a signal that I failed to catch, all three whirled from their seats, knelt on the floor and buried their faces in the seat cushions. I was left, somewhat dumbfounded, staring at Sue’s ample backside as she knelt. George led off the prayers, Sue followed and Janet was anchor. There followed a silence, which I filled with a quiet “Amen.”

Apart from all this religiosity, the Worlings were very hospitable and kind. George took me around to meet the emir, whom he grudgingly admires, and the school manager and headmaster. The emir is ruler of Bedde district, a buffer zone between the Hausa states, which were overrun by the Fulani, and the kingdom of Bornu, whose warriors successfully resisted the jihad. The present emir is a rotund, affable, well-educated man who speaks excellent English and who recently received money from America for leprosy control. George, whose command of Hausa is such that he preaches in the language, can talk with the emir in either language.

In the Worlings house I was treated to two nights on a firm mattress — a luxury after this hammock-like camp bed — and a profusion of food: biscuits and jam, eggs, hot cereal, Kool-Aid, pigeons, duck, chicken, ice cream, potato chips and popcorn. The latter items were served up at Sue’s birthday picnic in the evening at a spot overlooking a lake just outside of town.

A Cypriot couple that are store owners and the bank manager, an Englishman about my age, were in the party, which consisted of the total expatriate population of Gashua and, for that matter, Dapchi. The Englishman and the Cypriot had shotguns, which they used in vain on lines of ducks and geese flying overhead. The rest of us watched the setting sun, the ducks, geese, and flocks of pelicans, storks and hornbills streaming across the sky.

When the last of the birthday cake had been eaten, everyone, including Sue herself, was ripe for “blowball” or some other parlor game. Everyone, that is, but George. “Have you forgotten what day it is?” he asked. “This is the fourth Friday of the month — it’s SIM prayer night.”

Well, that drove the Cypriots and the Englishman away pretty quickly. Even Janet and Sue seemed to have difficulty working up enthusiasm. But soon we were back in the living room with the hymnbooks and another mimeographed schedule of people to pray for. Things went pretty much according to form, except that George, in a burst of charity, managed to include my family in his prayer.

Morning came. I said goodbye to Sue and stepped across the way to bid farewell to Janet. “Well, all the best in your work,” I said, turning to go. “Yes, and all the best to you, Stephen,” she said, “and I mean the really best.
You know what that is, don’t you, Stephen?” Her face was beautified by a look that, on another woman, would have seemed shamelessly flirtatious.

“Well, yes, I think I do.”

“I think you do know, Stephen. Yes, it’s Jesus, isn’t it? He’s the really best. He’s the only one who satisfies. I mean nothing else really does satisfy, does it?”

“I suppose not.”

“Oh, I think you know in your heart that he’s the one that satisfies. I mean, do you know that if you died tonight you would meet your Savior?”

I finally tore myself away after she had pressed a handful of tracts on me. It was a relief to drive away with George, who was much easier to take when he wasn’t with his women. There was talk of writing a letter to my family in Connecticut. I wonder if it was done and what it said.

**Riding in the bodi**

I rode home with the common folk on Saturday. There was a lorry waiting in the lorry park when I arrived, but the seat in the gabah had been preempted by a policeman, so I had to settle for the bodi.

The lorry system has come about because of the extra space in the backs of all Nigerian trucks. Other than trains, there is no other system of public transport. It is quite well-organized. A dispatcher, called the da’an commissioner, collects fares from passengers and gives them to the driver. (Such men are not lily-pure, I discovered. The commissioner at Gashua charged me two shillings more than anyone else. It didn’t occur to me to appeal to a policeman.)

The bodi is packed with commercial transport goods. A few inches above this foundation, planks are laid that bridge the distance between one side and the other. These are seats for passengers. Passengers put their bundles in the small spaces between and below the seats. As one sits on a seat, there is another system of planks running about forehead level parallel to the seats. These stabilize the sides and provide handgrips for passengers.
The driver was in no hurry to leave. I climbed aboard at 10. At 10:30 we left the park only to stop a few yards further at the New Hope Bar, where the driver picked up more passengers and bought himself a drink. We stopped again for passengers just outside town — a technique used to avoid arrest for overloading — and it was 11 before we really traveled in earnest.

Every stop was agonizing. The sun beat down, and there was no breeze. I had expected the press of bodies to be unpleasant, but it was far less than a subway at rush hour. Periodically we would stop in the shade of a huge stork-filled baobab tree, and this was a blessing. We finally chugged into Dapchi at 1:30—three and one-half hours to travel 40 miles!

It was good to be back. Two small boys seized my bags when I disembarked. They carried them to the rest house, and when I offered them three pence, they refused to take it. Truly, I had “arrived” in Dapchi.

**A profusion of birds**

At the height of my birding days — when I was 13 or 14, say — I occasionally had a dream in which, looking out my bedroom window at the tulip tree, I would see its branches covered with a twittering variety of birds I had never seen before or hoped to see.

Dreams sometimes come true. I’ve thought of that dream recently in my continuing amazement at the profusion of birds in the grove of trees outside this rest house. I have merely to walk outside — sometimes merely to look out the window — to record a new species. At least half fall outside the scope of “Birds of West African Towns and Gardens,” a modest, color-plated little book that attempts to introduce readers to 100 common, relatively civilized species.

West Africa needs a Roger Tory Peterson. It’s frustrating to note every detail of some brilliant little bird seen close at hand, then fail to find it on the color plates. The book has been a help, though. From it I have lately been able to identify the Senegal concal, little African swift (which nests in the eaves of this building), hurricane thrush, rock bunting, red-cheeked cordon bleu, common bulbul, guinea fowl, grey woodpecker, red-headed dioch, village weaver, grey-headed sparrow, black kite, purple-glassy starling, black-headed oriole, white-throated bee-eater, blue-breasted kingfisher and scarlet-breasted shrike.

The shrill cries of hawks and kites continually surround the house. Bulbuls and white-throated bee-eaters chatter and swoop in the nim trees outside. I’ve just begun to notice kingfishers; here they are small and are often found far away from water — in my trees, for example, where they eat insects. I saw a brilliant white one today — an albino perhaps? — hovering over a pool near where some schoolboys were catching fish for me. It could have been an albino. “What has a kingfisher to do with being white?” to paraphrase Robert Frost.
Death stalks the village

My life is about as full as it could be in a village such as this. I’ve taken to tutoring an agricultural officer, Mallam Buka Gerima, in English to help him for a qualifying exam for further study. I go to his compound about three in the afternoon. It’s much cooler and freer of insects than my place, and I stay there till it’s time for games with the schoolchildren (I continue to run the Frisbee concession, charming the girls and the boys too small to play football).

He’s taken me around to look at his citrus orchard. It’s a pleasant half-acre or so a short distance from this rest house. He and his workers grow mango trees and guava plants in beds and sell them to farmers. There are also oranges and papaya trees. At the entrance of the orchard is a small gate of wattled branches, and around it is a hedge of briars to keep out goats. Orioles nest in the trees bordering the hedge, and their cup-like nests hang everywhere.

Mallam Buka is young and ambitious. When I took his picture, he posed with “The Student’s Companion” — a homely almanac-thesaurus and book of proverbs favored by schoolboys — clutched prominently in his hand. He graduated from senior primary school and an agriculture school outside Kano.

I had hoped to see something of family life in his compound, but he informed me with a slight frown that his wife had died in childbirth in May. “She had—I cannot know exactly—too much blood or something like that,” he said. “I mean—after the baby was born there was still blood. I gave the child to the grandmother. I bought some of this milk—I hope you know this milk powder—and some of these rubbers for sucking. I gave it to the grandmother and showed her how to use it. But, still, after two weeks the child died.

“Yes,” he paused. “Yes, but there is another lady in the town I hope to marry. Yes.”

I looked in vain for a photograph of Mallam Buka’s dead wife in a photo album he showed me. She had vanished completely.

Death cannot be taken with too much grief here, for it stalks everywhere. A common name for children, both boys and girls, is Kolo. In fact, during my first days here I heard the sound so often I thought it represented some common word such as “stop” or “give it to me.” (There is another Kanuri word, kola, which means “pot.”) But the name is derived from the Kanuri verb “to leave” and is a sort of prayer uttered by parents who have been barren or who have lost many children: “God, leave this one.”

“We get 40 children for Class One,” explained the school’s manager in Gashua as he showed me the school buildings there, “but some die, of course, and so the upper classes are smaller.” Here in Dapchi, Class Six numbers about 26—how much of the attrition is due to death I can’t say.
Certainly some of the children are far from healthy-looking. In Class One are a couple of small boys whom some combination of illness and malnutrition have left painfully thin and listless. They can't be learning anything. In class they seem half asleep; it's almost impossible to get a response to a question.

In general, West Africans are not underfed. They don't eat much, and one never sees fat children, but they don't starve. Here in Dapchi, though, the principal tells me, there has been trouble feeding individual children whose parents have not provided enough money or food for their stay. Most of the children are not from Dapchi itself but from villages within a radius of 40 miles. The Native Authority pays for their schooling but not for their food. Children live with families in the town, but their food must be paid for by their own parents.

Among the healthier are those with watery eyelids and sores of one variety or another, and those with scalps scabby and white with fungus, over which a violet tincture is sometimes painted.

But the greatest number by far abound with an energy and life that transcends their ragged uniforms and drab afternoon dress. They are wonderful children, really, juggling four languages and three cultures with resiliency and enthusiasm. It's common, as I teach Class Two, to hear the children in Class One singing songs in Kanuri and Class Six chanting the Koran in Arabic.

I had heard the cliché that Nigerians are “eager to learn,” and I had met this eagerness in secondary school in a more advanced and somewhat self-seeking form. In primary school, however, the eagerness is unsullied by any thought of examinations and careers. Here a child will catch onto a bit of knowledge, treasure it, and present it to you in a shout of joy. Even the dullards, who number as many as half the class, will make some attempt at an answer.

Their respect for teachers borders on adulation. This is an outgrowth of a culture in which elders, especially brothers and fathers, must be deferred to, but I continually feel an American’s amazement and sheepishness at not being allowed to carry my own chair, my own thermos bottle or what-have-you, at children bowing from the waist to greet me at the beginning of class (“Stand up!” yells the class leader to the class. “Sah loot!” Then the class, bowing in unison, “Good Mawning, Suhl!”), at having the tiny girls of Classes One and Two drop to their knees when receiving or returning an object from my hands.

The schoolboys seem forever willing to fetch and carry, to accompany me to and from the market on Fridays and act as interpreters. One of the Class Six boys offered to catch some fish for me. I wanted to see the river, so I went along to watch them sweep back and forth across the pools with nets.

If I have a favorite among the children it’s Salamutu, a strong, handsome Bedde girl of fourteen or
fifteen who engages in every facet of school life with zest and competence. This month she was the second highest scholar in Class Six (first on my English test), a more remarkable feat because of the usual meekness and non-aggressiveness of Muslim girls.

In games and physical training she's a match for all but the three or four strongest and fastest boys. She's a woman for all that, however, a champion of fair play, a second mother to the younger children, a settler of disputes and wiper of noses and tears. What a successful American girl she would have made!

There is a great deal to remember and record: storks nesting in the trees above the compounds; the mid-afternoon babble of the Koranic schools, groups of two or three boys under a tree with a mallam and wooden slates from which they recite the Koran; young hyenas muzzled and tied to a tree in the market, emitting short yips; the mud wasps in my house, which patiently carry balls of wet earth into the room and smooth them into small houses for their larvae.

**Parading for rain**

It hadn't occurred to me before, but there has been little rain for the past week. There has

*Women dress in their husbands' clothes in hopes of ending a dry spell*
been lightning and winds that have darkened the sky with sand, but no rain. At times the clouds have been dark overhead, and on the horizon I could see blue-gray masses of rain falling on other villages, but only a stray drop or two has hit Dapchi.

This had been a matter of casual observation to me, but I learned today that it’s been a matter of serious concern to the village. Planting began soon after I arrived here, and the seeds are now seedlings badly in need of water.

This lack of rain today caused the revival of a ceremony that hasn’t been used in Dapchi since last year. There were the customary sacrifices of food yesterday, but today, in a sort of Masque of Fools intended to startle the gods into sending rain, each woman in the village put on her husband’s work clothes and joined a parade through town led by the drummer’s wife. The farmers’ wives carried hoes; the mallams’ wives bore wooden tablets; hunters’ wives carried bows and arrows. It was a motley crew, and the paraders trooped between the compounds, drum pounding, followed by chanting, cheering children.

My final days were spent in an orgy of picture taking. On the last day, I photographed each class in black and white and gave the negatives to the headmaster. I left the Frisbee at the school — it seemed cruel to take away what had become so popular. Here’s a problem to solve: how do you play Frisbee with 40 or 50 schoolchildren? If you throw it to all of them at once, they trample each other trying to catch it and fight for turns. If you make a circle and throw to individuals, the procedure is boring and slow for everyone except the one child whose turn it is.

Answer: Divide the kids into four or five teams with ten or so players each. Throw the Frisbee to each team in turn, giving a point to a team each time one of its members succeeds in catching the platter. When a team scores a point, one of its younger members gets to sit down and play in the sand, glorying in his chance to be a concrete representation of his team’s “point.” When all the members of a team have sat down, everyone gets up again and plays.

Rain finally came to Dapchi, but only after a goat, a ram and a cow had been sacrificed and after several parades by women wearing their husbands’ clothes. I had the ghost of a fear that I might be the next to be sacrificed — it certainly might have occurred to someone that I had brought bad luck on the town. And, in truth, had I left Friday afternoon as planned, my departure would have been the signal for the heavens to open.

As it happened, the rains were my undoing. The Native Authority’s Land Rover got delayed by the rain and didn’t appear until late in the evening. We started early in the morning, but it was still wet and rainy, and the road was impossibly slow — so slow that I was unable to get to the bank in Maiduguri in time and thus
had to wait until Monday to leave for Kaduna, missing at least one ride in the process.

What more is there to tell about Dapchi? I’ve been away for a week now, and the village has slipped far away in my consciousness. I remember a man leading a string of steaming camels through the rain at the end of market day. There was an old man opposite the agricultural assistant’s house who was curious about America. What most impressed him about our wealth is the fact that Americans don’t eat goat meat. (Only this week did I learn that a lot of our meat in Yola is goat; I had thought it was a poor grade of beef.)

On Friday afternoon I saw Cow Fulani men challenge each other in the marketplace. It’s the custom for a Fulani man who wishes to marry a girl to stand up at the close of market day and proclaim his love and his worthiness over his rivals. He waves a slender stick during all this boasting, and older men beat drums and yell at him and his rivals to assert themselves.

If a rival is present, he will pick up the stick that the boaster has dropped and issue his counter challenge. Then he bestows an indefinite number of lashes with the stick on the lover, who must strip to the waist and receive the blows just below his ribs. At another time, the man who received the blows can issue the same number of lashes to his tormentor. A rather brutal custom, but the Fulani think it makes for brave men and chivalrous courtship.

**Summer travels**

I went to the lorry park to send Hassan and my things on a lorry to Yola and send myself to Kaduna. I booked passage on a lorry going first to Kano and then Kaduna. I paid four pounds to sit in the cab, which is probably twice as much as any African would have paid.
Still, I was a privileged passenger, as evidenced by the driver’s giving up his cab to give me a place to sleep for the night when we parked in a village about 25 miles outside Kano.

It was a grueling trip. I shared it with the wife of the minister of social affairs of the Chad Republic, who also sat in the cab with her baby girl and a collection of powdered milk, rubber nipples, a thermos full of hot water and various rags that served as diapers. She was an Arab, a handsome woman with chocolate skin and a strong-featured Semitic face. My French and Hausa are equally poor, which was frustrating because she showed an eagerness to talk right from the start. My speech became a mixture of market Hausa and beginner's French: “Je suis makaranta dans Yola.” (I am a teacher in Yola.) When we failed to understand each other, the driver would help out with his rudimentary English.

Although the road is macadam all the way, the trip to Kano took about 13 hours. Like a local bus or milk train, the lorry stops every few miles for repairs, for oncoming traffic, for praying and, seemingly just for no reason at all. The seat is as uncomfortable as one can imagine, wood on both the seat and back, and the numbness and pain can only be appreciated by imagining yourself sitting in a football stadium for 13 hours with occasional chances to get up and walk around.

Food, drink and warmth are problems for a Bature on a lorry. I found myself sampling African food rather timidly; I bought some bananas at one stop, pepper chicken at another, groundnuts and a loaf of bread at another. My fellow travelers kept urging me to try some of the gruel or meat or whatever else was being sold (“Bature, you no chop?”).

Thirst I combated by drinking water from a thermos and buying soft drinks where possible. Cold was the worst problem after sunset. I had not realized that nights would be cool near Kano and that I would be bothered by wind whipping in above the wooden waist-high door of the lorry. For five hours I rode in a seat that was almost as open as a Ferris-wheel seat while my suitcase lay in the back, hopelessly buried under other loads.

By midnight I had taken to counting the milestones. We stopped about 30 miles from Kano, however, and the driver explained that we would enter the city at seven in the morning after spending the night. He told me to sleep in the cab and gave me a blanket. Although the seat was no softer than a floor, I had no trouble getting to sleep, except that people from the village would come up, look in and go away laughing at the “bush Bature.”

The sky was covered with thick clouds in the morning. We drove into Kano and through its narrow streets. I was pretty hungry by now and determined to eat European food, so when the driver went off to the garage with his lorry, I got a taxi and asked for the nearest rest house.

I was taken to the Central Hotel, Kano’s poshest,
stepped out after the doorman opened the cab door and, bleary-eyed and unshaven, became the hotel’s guest for breakfast. I felt slightly subversive, as if I were defiling a church or public monument, but no one betrayed any suspicion that I had spent the previous night in a lorry.

We started riding again at two in the afternoon. This time my companion was a man from Mali, and again I suffered because of my lack of French. The trip was uneventful. Because the lorry was passing a few miles outside of Kaduna, I was able to transfer to a microbus in Zaria and ride the remaining miles quickly and comfortably.

A sea voyage

I’m writing this on board the M.V. Tafawa Balewa, a government coal ship, named after the prime minister, which transports coal weekly from Port Harcourt to Lagos. This is the boat’s return voyage. I booked deck passage, steeling myself against the contempt of the ticket agent (“Is this for your servant?”). It was either deck passage or first class with nothing in between.

When I had finally committed myself to the deck, the bursar came forward to offer me his bed if I would “dash” him sufficiently. We settled on one pound, ten shillings, although I might have held out for less. Still, he’s now quite friendly, so I guess it’s worth it. Food is the worst, three pounds for European chop with the first class passengers. That should be fun, however, and worth the $10 for three or four meals.

This is really a pleasant way to travel — so far anyway. I’ve just been on a tour of the ship and watched the petrels following in our wake. My first real ocean voyage, come to think of it.

There were only two of us at lunch. The rest of the passengers were afflicted with “sea worries,” as the bursar describes it. I’m not entirely comfortable myself, but if I were going to be really seasick, I guess I’d know by now. We’ve been out about five hours; the trip takes 28 or 30.

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We’re in Port Harcourt now. The sea did catch up with me, finally, and I spent most of the voyage in bed. It wasn’t all that bad; I foolishly tried to eat a supper of fish, chips and baked beans. At a cost of roughly $2.50, I wasn’t about to turn down a meal lightly.
The Tafawa Balewa is not a big ship; it was empty, having unloaded its coal in Lagos, and the sea was choppy. The rolls got to me after I had downed a heavy cold lunch of cold pork, beet salad, hardboiled eggs, noodle soup, cheese and biscuits, pudding and coffee. Each tilt of the deck was accompanied by a faint whine and shudder from somewhere deep within the ship’s engine, and this combined assault on my outer and inner ear was more than I could take sitting or standing. I got lots of sleep, and between naps I chatted with the bursar and another man from Rivers Province.

Most of the crew are Rivers men—Ijaw tribesmen—and are unique among Nigerians in being excellent swimmers and divers. I struck up a friendship with a Mr. Princewell, a personnel manager for the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria who was traveling first class back to his home town, which he claimed he hadn’t seen in 17 years.

We shared meals — the only two passengers extravagant enough to pay for the ship’s food. He is a member of one of the two ruling families of the Ijaw tribe. His father is a chief. European contact with this tribe has been constant since slave days. There are no Muslims here; Anglicans, Catholics and pagans only.

After we had passed Bonny, once an important Portuguese and Spanish slave center, we entered the delta creeks, and the water was calm. We chugged in through a maze of waterways bordered by thick man-grove swamp forest. Fishing settlements and small canoes could be seen to our left and right. The air was thick and heavy.

We passed through patches of rain. Port Harcourt and the Niger Delta are Nigeria’s most humid location. Roger Leed, a PCV from my training group stationed in Ibonemma, says that one of his camera’s shutters has already rusted on him and another is going fast.

A bit of luck: the ship’s steward suggested that I spend the night on board rather than going to the expense of a hotel in the city. I paid for food, and I was moved into a cabin for nothing. The quay at night was a ring of jewels, reflecting the lights of Israeli, German, Liberian and Dutch ships glowing softly against the dark. Our ship was far from peaceful, however; the hatch was opened soon after docking, and throughout the evening coal poured from a conveyor belt into the hold.

**Return to Yola**

I returned to considerable changes in Yola. The new principal is here, an Englishman named McNeany. He was principal in Funtua and comes highly recommended by one of the PCVs there. We’re extremely short-staffed. The Nigerian biology teacher I was tutoring in German left for another school shortly before I returned.

In recruiting expatriates for secondary schools, the ministry of education in the North under-hired by 60. As a result PCVs on holiday in the East and West are, in
In some cases, being pulled up here to teach at provincial secondary schools, which opened this month. All the PCVs arriving in September and assigned to the North will be put in secondary schools rather than teacher training colleges. Rumor has it that three new Peace Corps teachers are slated for Yola, which would give us a total of six in this one school — close to half the staff.

Yola is warm and sleepy this time of year. Teachers have been away in Britain but are filtering back in twos and threes. Classes don’t begin until Sept. 5, so this period is rather like a month of Sundays for us. It resembles a childhood summer vacation in which we must think up a way to amuse ourselves each day. My excuse for being here is that I’m “working on the syllabus,” but there’s really no guarantee that I’ll have any of the same classes this fall.

Some things are constant: There’s always tennis at the club, with a game of snooker in the early darkness. There isn’t much rain up here, at least compared to the South, which seemed to drip moisture day after day. Daytime is mostly sunny but with rain clouds massed in shifting patterns of blue, gray and white on the hills.

The Benue River is high and filled with canoes, barges and even a paddle wheeler or two dotting its broad bosom. On the shore near the ferry, where it now takes a full hour to cross the river going upstream, barges of the John Holt company are being loaded with bags of groundnuts by files of Africans trotting up the gangplank to the rhythm of a drum. It’s a scene straight out of “African Queen.”

* * *

Classes begin tomorrow. Nearly all the boys are here, although it seems a miracle. Roads to and from Yola are impassable in nearly all directions now. Culverts are broken; bridges are washed out. The river is the highest it’s been in years for this season. Ordinarily the peak is not reached until later in the month.

It’s been a remarkable rainy season. As of Sept. 1, the Yola area had received rainfall equal to the total for last year. And the rains continue until well into October.

I haven’t had to do any driving during this period, and it’s just as well. Streams one scarcely noticed before are swollen and swift-moving. Nearly every road is punctuated with “drifts,” areas covered by water knee-deep or deeper for distances of a dozen to 100 yards.

The procedure is for the driver to walk through the water to determine where the road is and how damaged it is. If there’s any danger of water stalling the engine, he may choose to loosen the fan belt. Driving through drifts is generally done in second gear. One local agriculture officer backs through the water, thereby lessening the danger of stalling. The worst thing that can happen, I’m told, is for water to flow up the exhaust pipe of a stalled vehicle, which could crack the engine block.
Shakespeare and soccer

A committee appointed by the provincial secretary decided that each secondary school would be given a quota of one-act plays to present, and that our school would put on three. This burden fell on Allen Bailey, the senior English master; Abdul Tamanna, the Pakistani who is advisor to the dramatic society, and me. Each of us decided to be responsible for one play.

Tamanna side-stepped the chore by exhuming a play the society had rehearsed last spring but never performed. Bailey decided to stage a “free drama” based on Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale. I took it upon myself to direct the Shakespeare scene in which Macbeth learns his fate from the witches. I’m teaching it in fourth form literature, so it seemed an appropriate choice.

This past week we had three rehearsals in an old recreation room on the second floor of the classroom block. The lead went, by default, to a boy who asked to do it. Stephen Tura as a child played with missionary children at his home in Garkida. Although he’s no star in other subjects, he has a firm command of English. He’s too gentle and soft-spoken for Macbeth, but one can’t have everything.

There are fourth form boys playing the parts of the three witches and Hecate. I had thought a cultural tradition of magic and spirits would produce some excellent actors for these roles; instead, they either reproduce the lines in a stiff sing-song or manage a ludicrous imitation of some of the gestures I have tried to show them. I’m hoping that in costume they’ll feel more like spooky old women.
A certain amount of misunderstanding is inevitable. When the stage directions call for the witches to dance, the result—all my efforts to the contrary—is unmistakably African in rhythm and gesture.

The production is enthusiastic and high-spirited, however. We found a witches’ cauldron yesterday. Stephen Tura led me down to the cooks’ area behind the dining hall, where one of the cooks found a half-buried cast-iron kettle, mounted on three legs and about two feet in diameter, once used for boiling rice. It couldn’t have been better had a stage crew designed it.

I bought a native drum in Yola market a couple of weeks ago and this, it turns out, is quite adequate for producing “thunder.” Tomorrow the bursar is going to show me the school’s stock of costumes.

Also keeping me busy—as a temporary substitute for tennis—was the Senior Service Side, a motley football (soccer) team assembled from the dozen or so Yola Club members who are not too old, out-of-shape or unskilled to play against our schoolboys. We had our stars: Victor Pam, the Nigerian superintendent of police, without whose play at center half the team would surely have been disgraced, and a handful of skilled if aging Englishmen in the forward line.

Generally speaking, the team was weak in the backfield. Rod, at right half, had virtually no previous experience with the game. Lowell and I, fullbacks, were far from sanguine about being the last line of defense.

We used my ball for practice and would have used it for the game itself had not one of our players over-inflated it.

The schoolboys were fit, skilled and trained, and we were none of these. The final score, 3-2, hardly tells the story of the game. Worst of all, it was the second team that defeated us—most of the best schoolboy players were on the bench.

I now have an inkling of what it must be like to play in a faculty-student basketball game back in the States. The whole school turned out to watch, of course, and, if anything, showed less tact than American youngsters on a similar occasion. (The schoolboys laugh at one another mercilessly in class and during games.) The sight of ten Batures fumbling around in a soccer game was an unending source of mirth. They thought it even funnier when one of the schoolboys was outplayed by us, and it was comforting to realize there was nothing personal in the comedy. Still, when there was applause—and I got some myself two or three times—we were tremendously pleased.

Parades and movies

Today was Republic Day, the third anniversary of Nigeria’s independence. It was also the first day when Nigeria’s status in the British Commonwealth changed from dominion to republic. The change is largely formal, but some cherished traditions will disappear. No longer
will pictures of the Queen smile benignly down on schools and government offices; no longer will official envelopes bear the notice, “On Her Majesty’s Service”; and branches of the military, the Royal Nigerian Navy, for example, will no longer be “royal.”

“Nigeria, which has been independent in fact for three years, has now become independent in name,” President Azikiwe said in a speech today.

Senior service officers, including ourselves, observed the day under a broiling sun in the middle of Jimeta football ground. Here we were obliged to watch the marching maneuvers of the local units of the Nigeria Police and the Native Authority police before and after the provincial commissioner read a speech from Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa celebrating the occasion.

There was the inevitable march of schoolchildren, “the hope of Northern Nigeria’s future.” This time they marched to Colonel Bogey and Scotland the Brave. Listening to the Colonel Bogey march with the sun beating down on our unshaded seats reminded us of the “The Bridge over the River Kwai,” the Academy Award-winning film about British prisoners of war in Burma that played at the Jimeta cinema two Sundays ago.

I must have described Alhaji Bakar’s cinema at some point, haven’t I? It got blown down by rainstorms in late May but was repaired over the summer. Current practice is to show one British or American film per week sandwiched between a yeasty fare of Indian films expressly designed for export to Africa and the Middle East. In their way, the films have everything: melodrama, comic subplots featuring turbaned Abbots and Costellos, dancing girls, swordplay and a brand of pseudo-judo that triggers laughter in an American used to realism in fight scenes. The subtitles add to the dreamlike quality of the action as they flicker by in misspelled and ungrammatical English.

“Live in infinite future constancy is what my heart yearns” reads the subtitle as the pretty girl singer raises her shrill voice and motions with her arms. Finally there is the music, a jangle of traditional instruments souped
up to Tin Pan Alley rhythms broadcast nightly over the loudspeaker. Even we, in our houses, must seek refuge from the noise.

But the Africans love every minute of it! In a “Dear Dolly” advice column in Drum magazine recently, one Lagos reader informed Dolly that the heroines of Indian films had so captivated him that he had resolved to marry an Indian girl. Where could he meet such an angel?

Choosing a film that will appeal to both expatriates and Africans is another matter. Rumor has it that the son of the owner is a playboy who treats the local cinema as a source of personal entertainment. Certainly he sees every one of the films he rents from Lagos; whether he chooses them for personal reasons is a matter for debate. His taste apparently runs to Hollywood westerns, masculine adventure films of almost any type, science fiction spectacles and Steve Reeves epics of the splendor and sin that was the ancient world.

We’ve had a run of these classical epics lately. In May it was “Giant of Marathon” (Steve Reeves); three weeks ago it was “Last Days of Pompeii” (Steve Reeves) and this week it will be “Colossus of Rhodes” (Rory Calhoun). Alhadi Inua clearly has a taste for violence on a grand scale: “Marathon” ended with a fight between burning galleys; “Pompeii” ended, needless to say, with a volcano; “Bridge over the River Kwai” ended with a bridge exploding as a train passed over; and, according to the preview, “Colossus” will topple in an earthquake.

Dennis Bowen, the geography master, claims he spends most of his time with his hand over the eyes of his five-year-old son, Adrian, shielding him from the gore. However, Adrian did watch and apparently enjoyed the bridge explosion in “River Kwai.”
Safari to the Mambila Plateau

The 1,500 square mile Mambila Plateau is the southernmost area of the former Northern British Cameroons, which had elected to join Nigeria under a United Nations plebiscite in 1960. It offers one of the most beautiful landscapes in Africa. At the time of our expedition the plateau was accessible only on foot, and it had not been affected by overpopulation and climate change.

Harvey Flad and John Bishop, who were teaching at a secondary school in Ganye, had schoolboys from Mambila in their classes, as did Lowell and I in Yola and Bud West in Mubi further north. Harvey and John conceived the idea of visiting their Mambila students in their home setting during the 1963 Christmas holiday break and invited the others to join them. They also recruited Roger Leed, a Peace Corps volunteer who had trained with us and was teaching in a secondary school in Nigeria’s Eastern Region.

When I flew back to Yola from Kano on Dec. 20, preparations were well underway for our trip to the Mambila Plateau. Roger Leed had arrived by plane on Wednesday. Bud West and the Ganye volunteers were to come later on Friday.

Friday and Saturday were spent getting wooden boxes for carrying food and pots and pans, buying 110 gallons of gasoline so that three jeeps could make the 300-mile trip to Mayo Selbe, our point of embarkation, and return without needing another gasoline purchase on the way. We had no guarantee that either of the two petrol stations along the route would have a supply when we arrived.

We needed kerosene lanterns and stoves, supplies of tinned meat and vegetables (little food is available for strangers on the plateau) plus all our personal equipment of clothes, blankets, cameras, safari cots and boots. Before he returned home from his Peace Corps tour, Rod Larson sold me some of the camping gear he had been unable to take with him—a Safari camp bed, an army poncho, and a duffel—so I was well set up.

Lowell and I bought over $50 worth of film between us; I used up four rolls; he three. For all the expense of equipment and labor, our joint expenses for the trip—apart from film and art objects and other personal items—came to roughly $250, or less than $50 apiece for the six of us. One-way plane fare to Kano costs more than two weeks on Mambila.

We left Yola for the plateau on Sunday, Dec. 22. There were four Africans in the party, each of whom proved invaluable during one stage or another of the journey: Bobboi, a Muslim second form student at Ganye PSS; Jonathan, a Christian student at Mubi...
When we reached Serti, Harvey and Roger had arranged accommodations for us all in a senior primary school. It was the first in a succession of schools for us. The schools were on holiday also, of course, and as visiting teachers we were invited to use their empty rooms as our headquarters in the various towns where we stayed. Mazu and Yunius made us the first of many meals: an 11 p.m. snack of tinned beans and sausage.

We were off again soon after dawn, traveling the 26 miles to Mayo Selbe over a bush road that had been built only a few years before. (Until comparatively recently, most of the journey from Yola to the base of Mambila had to be made on foot.)

One marks the progress of road building by observing the dates on bridges. Just south of the Yola the dates go back to the ’40s. Bridges south of Jalingo were built since 1957. Further south the bridges become increasingly recent—1959, 1961. The Serti-Mayo Selbe road has no concrete bridges and no dates. Once our jeeps had to ford a stream whose bridge had been broken by an army lorry. It delayed us 45 minutes or more.
Negotiating for carriers

In Mayo Selbe we began negotiations for carriers. These talks went on intermittently until 9 p.m. and broke out periodically throughout the whole two weeks. We became amateur experts in collective bargaining, carrying on negotiations over wages, weight of loads, length of stages and amounts of food money paid in advance. Should we pay five shillings a day rather than four? Was 50 pounds a reasonable load for a head carry? Would we do the 24 miles from Ngurogi to Gembu in one stage or two?

Such were the questions that were to nag us day after day. Mazu bore the brunt of these exchanges, becoming, as translator, a mediator between our two sides. It was he also who had to cajole and threaten laborers who refused to walk the final miles to camp. Several times he had to carry a load himself until another laborer could be found and hired.

“Mazu really outdoes himself in the bush,” one of his former employers told us. Mazu himself would, I’m sure, rather have been at home with his two wives. “Daji ba kyan,” I overheard him say to Yunius the first night out (“Bush is no good”).

When we thought we had hired four carriers, we proceeded to the campsite of the Nigerian Army, which is building a “defense road” up the 4,500-foot high escarpment and onto the plateau. There we were greeted by Capt. David Charlesworth and his wife, a Cambridge-educated English couple who have settled quite happily with their two infant children into a bush rest house at the foot of the plateau.

Capt. Charlesworth supervises the building of the road. His wife continues her anthropological studies by investigating a small tribe in the area. (“The only trouble is I can’t learn languages,” she says.) They served us beer and loaned us an Army tent when our carriers refused to go up onto the plateau in the heat of midday. We bathed in the local river and were taken by the captain up to the end of the work on the new road.

Although ostensibly for defense, the road up onto Mambila is of far more importance economically. It is very primitive now—only four-wheel drive vehicles will be

Breakfast in camp
able to negotiate the steep climb—but nevertheless it will greatly improve communication between “upstairs,” as government officers are fond of calling the plateau, and the rest of “downstairs” Nigeria.

Equally important, equipment that now must be head-carried piece by piece up the tortuous path to the top will be transported by vehicle. It is also hoped that eventually a substantial number of Mambila’s large cattle population will be trucked to market down the road instead of being walked down the trail.

Most of the road on top of the plateau, which is relatively level, has been completed. Army officials hope to join the top and bottom sections later this year. During our stay, 400 local laborers were hired to begin the rush toward completion. Heavy construction equipment is being sent in as well.

The great danger is the rainy season, which threatens to wash away any section of the road that has not been outfitted with proper drains. All of the preliminary work on the road was done by the Native Authority of the district, which employed only manual labor. Capt. Charlesworth has great admiration for the work they were able to accomplish. “They had no dynamite,” he explained, “so to break up a large rock they had to build a large fire around it and then throw cold water on it to make it crack.”

When our laborers refused to carry four loads, we lightened them and hired two more carriers. They then refused to work for four shillings a day, the price previously agreed upon, and at the captain’s suggestion we finally agreed to pay five shillings. The parley was completed at 9 p.m. or so, and the six carriers agreed to return at dawn.

The challenge of Biyu da sisi

The day before Christmas found us up before light, packing our loads by a quarter moon and eating breakfast in the pre-dawn cold. The laborers arrived, and we drove them and the jeeps to a village two miles further on where the road comes to an absolute end and the trail up the escarpment begins.

We left the keys in the jeeps for Capt. Charlesworth’s officers, who were to drive them back to safekeeping in an Army parking lot. The boxes, duffels, suitcases and camp beds were divided up among the laborers, who set off along the trail with the loads balanced on their heads. Imagine carrying a 45-pound hat up Mount Washington for 75 cents—that’s what our carriers were being paid to do!

We started up a dirt trail packed smooth by generations of feet. Rich or poor, old or young, this is at present the only way to reach the Mambila Plateau. Bobboi, one of our schoolboys, related that his grandfather had paid three pounds to be carried up the escarpment when he was too old to walk.

We raced against the sun, hoping to reach the top
before late morning so that the heat of midday would be nullified by the 6,000-foot altitude. I found the climb grueling—we had to climb 4,500 feet in a few miles of walking. There were no really rocky stretches, but the constant upward course of the trail made it an exhausting hike. There were almost no level or downhill stretches to give us relief.

The final bit of torture is a hill called Biyu da sisi (two and sixpence). From the bottom one sees the trail laid out like a snake twisting in switchbacks to the summit. It got its name from a carrier who is said to have seen the hill, dropped his head-load, and refused to budge until his employer paid him an extra 2/6 for the climb.

The first of us to arrive at the top found ourselves among a party of horse boys and retainers waiting to greet the district head of Mambila, whose party had been scheduled to climb the hill that day and receive horses at the summit.

Mazu encouraged us to try cocoa yams that some Fulani women were selling. We did, and they tasted like cold mashed potatoes. We lay down on the hillside and enjoyed the sun and the cool breeze and watched walkers and trains of donkeys pass us on their way up and down the escarpment.

When four of us had reached the top, Bud and John pushed on to Mai Samari, our destination, while Harvey and I stayed behind to wait for Lowell and Roger. They toiled up to the summit about an hour and a half later. Lowell ate a cocoa yam and an overripe tomato and promptly threw up.

"Acquai wahalla," said the Nigerians ("There is suffering"). This was to prove a key incident on the trip; all of Mambila was to learn how the six Batures had suffered coming up Biyu da sisi.

“You have suffered,” people declared in distant towns upon meeting us or, perhaps, “You have tried very hard.” Offering us six of his horses for the remainder of our
trip, the district head spoke of the climb and assured us that, in the future, we would not suffer. “Wahalla” was our watchword.

The walk to Mai Samari was six miles over vast meadows of ankle-high grass turned golden by the early dry season. On the horizon one saw the grass yurts of nomadic Cow Fulanis, and here and there one of Mambila’s many cattle herds inching its way down some distant slope.

On the trail we met one of two Mambila students at our school in Yola, the son of a chief who was making his way “downstairs” in order to take an examination in Zaria. Hills appeared and were mastered, and we finally found ourselves facing an oasis of huts and luxuriant shade trees set among hills and ridges and bordered by a small stream. This was Mai Samari, the first of three major towns we were to visit.

We were put up in a forestry department storeroom that, with its stone walls and barred windows, resembled a jail cell more than a home. We had been so slow arriving that nearly all the carriers had come before us despite their 45-pound loads.

This was to be the last day of such embarrassment, however. Our schoolboys found out that the district head was to arrive the following day, Christmas Day, and the new district officer the day after that. We would do well to wait and ask to travel with their party; it was our best chance of obtaining horses and traveling in comfort.

We agreed and settled in for a three-day stay in the town. We had some hot soup and crackers, read or played cards, and waited for Mazu to prepare the evening meal. I found a place to wash in the town stream; the others came later. It had been an exhausting day.

**A Christmas Eve worship service**

As we were eating dinner by lantern light, Jonathan, the Christian student in our party, came back with the news that the local Christians, members of the Cameroon Baptist Association, were holding a Christmas Eve service at eight that night. Did we want to go?
We said we did and dressed as neatly as we could for the occasion.

We were led over the stream across a log bridge and up a trail onto a hill that commanded a view of the town. There the Christians had built a small square building of mud bricks with a thatched roof. As we approached we could see and hear them dancing in the moonlight outside the building. There was one lantern outside the church and another one inside near the back serving as an altarpiece.

Greetings were exchanged and the dancing continued. A couple of us ventured inside the church to inspect it, and this precipitated a movement of all the Christians inside. There were log benches — the women and children sat on the left and the men on the right — and we arranged ourselves as best we could on the back bench and the one in front of it.

The preacher, a wiry old Kaka tribesman with filed teeth and a jaunty manner, greeted us as brothers. “Look at these people,” he told his flock. “Today they climbed Biyu da sisi. They have suffered. But here they are in church tonight. Would you do that?”

He spoke in the pidgin English of the West Cameroon, where he was trained and presumably born.

There is a remarkable amount of pidgin spoken in these remote hills. Rumor has it that the Germans began its use as a lingua franca when they owned the colony, and the British continued speaking pidgin after 1918. One even finds pidgin Bibles, although they are increasingly prized by collectors and therefore difficult to obtain.

The service continued with impromptu hymn-singing — more than just singing, for each member of the congregation had a drum or makeshift musical instrument for accompaniment. There were long pieces of wood carved with notches to give a washboard effect when scraped with a metal ring. One or two men blew on cattle horns. Children had rattles made from old Ovaltine cans.

A whispered message reached us at the back of the room: Would the Europeans sing some of their own Christmas songs? After some discussion, we settled on “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” “O, Come All Ye Faithful” and—for its rhythm— “Deck the Halls.”

We sounded strange to ourselves singing in that dark little room, and I can only guess how we sounded to the Africans. There was another hymn by the Africans, and then silence for a sermon by the pastor, the retelling of the Christmas story.
“How come this Christmas?” the preacher asked. “This Christmas no be just for dancing—how come this Christmas?” His phrases were translated from pidgin into Fulfulde, the Fulani language, which is the lingua franca of most of Sardauna and Adamawa provinces.

He went on to tell the story of the Nativity, conjuring up African images of the “couriers” (wise men) and “men for bush” (shepherds) whom the angels “makum big fear.” The Virgin Birth had to be explained: “How Mary makum pickin with no concession? How she be no bad woman makum pickin no marry?” I wish I could remember it all.

Another message reached us at the back of the room—would we give them a talk? Lowell, who had completed a year of divinity school before joining the Peace Corps, was chosen for this honor, which he performed by telling them how much we enjoyed celebrating the holiday even though we were many miles from our own homes.

We stayed for one more hymn and then departed, leaving the worshippers to dance in celebration until dawn.

**Christmas Day in Mai Samari**

We slept late Christmas morning. Lowell and Bud got up first and left the hut to go touring the town. John and I followed soon after. We were walking down the town’s principal street when a man gestured us into a doorway. “Come, join your brothers,” he said. Inside were Lowell and Bud. Our host was a Cameroonian trader from Bamenda, a Christian who had seen us the previous night and wished to usher us to the church that morning. He changed his clothes, and we left for the service.

The dancers were no doubt tired after their all-night session, but there were a few on hand when we arrived. The children wore shiny red and green clothes; their elders were dressed in a motley assortment of European dress and local costumes. One man wore a feather headdress like an Indian chief’s.

The dancers were Kakas and Mambilas, members of the two major farming tribes on the plateau. Fulanis are, of course, Muslim cattle-herders. There is no major religious conflict—each religion seeks pagan converts but leaves the other alone for the most part—but bad feeling is bound to exist and does between cowman and farmer. The two groups practice peaceful coexistence by choice and necessity.

The service showed no signs of beginning, so we watched a few dances, took many pictures and left for breakfast.

Soon we were to meet the Fulani half of Mambila Plateau’s tribal partnership. We were eating maize porridge when the faint, bagpipe-like whine of an *aljatba* and the steady beating of a drum warned us of the imminent arrival of the district head. (He is called
“Lamido” by people on the plateau, but this is a blend of flattery and wishful thinking. The Mambila district head is not yet recognized as a third class chief, let alone a Lamido—emir.)

The party of horsemen, drummers and musicians moved down the hill and across the stream into town. Drums and horses moving together in stately fashion are fascinating to watch. The district head sat on a black horse under a twirling faded beach umbrella. We waved to him and took his picture. Suddenly, unexpectedly, he stopped his horse in front of us. He motioned to a retainer, who reached into a bag and produced a camera. He made adjustments to the camera, we lined up and smiled, and the camera clicked. The camera returned to the retainer’s bag and the party moved on.

We had our interview with the district head in the afternoon. He speaks some English—he said he had been a professional photographer in Onitsha before his election in 1962—but an interpreter was needed most of the time.

There were the usual greetings; we gave him two presents, one of two Christmas cakes Lowell and I had bought independently, the other a box of toffee candy that my girlfriend Sara had brought to me from London. (We had intended to eat the candy ourselves, but it seemed appropriate as a “dash.”) We were granted the use of six horses. We would not suffer, he said.

Our Christmas dinner consisted of a canned ham, canned peas, canned beets and rice. We had Christmas pudding for dessert, coffee and cigars. My 25th birthday was quietly noted by all, and we spent the evening playing a six-handed game of Hearts.

The day after Christmas is called “Boxing Day” in Britain and its colonies. (For a long time I was able to persuade John Bishop that it was a Nigerian holiday honoring their world champion boxer Dick Tiger.) It’s apparently the custom for tradesmen to come around with boxes for Christmas gratuities on this day. Anyway, it was some time before we understood why we were suddenly receiving many visitors from the town.

Lowell and Harvey went off to buy candy, sugar cubes and Kola nuts for “dashes.” They returned in time.
to pass out sweets to the Christians, who came en masse to dance for us during breakfast. They had danced for the district head earlier, and he had given them several pounds. We quickly decided that a gift of one pound would probably be in order. The gift was handed over to the preacher, and the Bature Sextet hastily reassembled. This time we sang “Jingle Bells” and “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”

The Christians retired, we returned to breakfast, but in no time we faced a replication of the previous morning. Drums were sounding, the *aljaiba* was whining. This time it was the new district officer. The district head had gone outside the town to greet him, and now the two were riding back to make their formal entrance. Once again we rushed out to wave and take photos. The D.O. was installed in a hut near ours, and it was not long before we were able to pay him a visit.

Mallam Adamu Chiroma proved to be a somewhat small, bookish and extremely pleasant man from Bornu Province. We found him sitting on a chair with a tape recorder, a copy of Giovanni di Lampedusa’s “The Leopard” and Ian Fleming’s “Live and Let Die” on a mat beside him.

Mallam Adamu told us he was a graduate of University College Ibadan and had worked in the office of Sir Ahmadu Bello in Kaduna, the regional capital, before accepting this new job. He is the first Nigerian District Officer of the area; his predecessor was a 28-year-old Englishman who ruled the plateau like a kingdom. Because communications were impossible with Kaduna, he could not be blamed for making decisions that no other D.O. would dare make on his own. Mallam Adamu had asked for the post. In this respect he is a rarity; Nigerians who seek positions in the “bush” are scarce.

**Adventure on horseback**

We took a short and uneventful walk among the hills around the town in the afternoon and went to bed early. Friday morning we were on time, but our horses were not. The Lamido’s party had been riding for some time before horse boys finally showed up with our
horses. Lowell and I were outside when the horse boys arrived, and we were the ones who were offered the first two.

I was the lucky one. It was explained that the horse I had been offered was the “lead horse.” In any case, it was the strongest of the six we had been given. Lowell’s proved to be almost as good, but he was never fortunate enough to be able to catch the Lamido’s party. I was.

I’m no horseman, but I learned a few things in a hurry that day. The first third of the journey Lowell and I spent whipping our horses to get them to move faster than a walk. Fulani horses are trained to be beaten, and you can wear your arm out on a lazy horse.

We must have made some progress, because it was not long before the aljaiba’s note came floating across the hills ahead of us. Soon the Lamido’s party itself came into view, horses disappearing over the next hill as we climbed the hill behind them. It was tantalizing to be so close to such majesty.

Finally, on one long uphill stretch, my horse responded to the whip and closed the gap at a gallop. I found myself at the tail end of the Lamido’s party trying vainly to explain in Hausa to the man ahead of me that I couldn’t pass him because I didn’t know how.

The horse seemed to know where he belonged, however. One by one, we passed the other horsemen. On the uphill stretches the horses moved at a walk or a stately trot, the drums and aljaiba sounding wild and warlike among the empty hills. Downhill and on the level the party, with the Lamido in the lead, broke into a gallop, rigas billowing in a cloud of dust. It was one of the authentic thrills of my life, my first and most memorable day on horseback, a ride in feudal splendor.

We continued thus for the next six miles or so. I was able to maneuver my horse up behind the Lamido’s and bid him good morning. “Doki mai kyau,” I said (“The horse is very good”).

I wasn’t sure whether I should ride with the Lamido or behind him, and my horse found a compromise, which consisted of bumping into the hind end of the Lamido’s horse at the end of each gallop. He was able to turn this misfortune into a gracious compliment later in Gembu. “One of these Europeans was such a good rider,” he told an assembly in my presence, “that I kept worrying that he was going to pass me.”

My ineptitude finally caught up with me, however. I had somewhere gotten the idea that you were supposed to post while galloping. I was therefore standing in the stirrups, my hind end thumping against the saddle, when one of the stirrup straps broke.

When we had slowed down, I explained the situation and started to dismount. My leg turned to jelly and I fell. “Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry,” said the Lamido.

The stirrup was fixed, and I staggered around to the
left side of the horse to remount. I was waved back to the right—Muslim horses are mounted from the right. “Oh, sorry, sorry,” the Lamido said again.

I put one foot in the stirrup and swung myself about halfway onto the horse, from which position I sort of crawled into the saddle. “Oh, sorry, sorry,” said the Lamido again. I replied something to the effect that there were motors, not horses, in America. There was indulgent laughter and one or two mutters of “wawa” (fool) from the ensemble. We galloped off, but the next time the stirrup broke I lingered behind. My horse and I entered the next village at a walk.

Lowell was not far behind. Not long after we had stopped, a messenger asked us to resume riding so that we might slip into our destination, Ngurogi, more or less unobtrusively ahead of the major welcome for the Lamido. This we did.

It was exciting watching the preparations for the welcome, which consisted of horsemen arriving in twos, threes and even larger groups—eventually nearly 100 horsemen in all. Occasionally one would separate from his party and break into a full gallop on one of the dusty tracks that lay aside the main trail. Nearer the town was a group of Cameroonian Christians who had come out to dance a greeting to the district head and the new district officer. Everywhere we were saluted with bows, upraised fists and the cry, “Ran Kai dedi” (May God preserve your life).

**Market day in Ngurogi**

We reached Ngurogi saddle-sore and sweaty about 1 p.m. We were taken to the town’s junior primary school, where the classrooms had been cleared of benches so that we might set up camp. We returned to the town for a bottle of orange soda and a look at the market.

Friday is market day in Ngurogi, but this market day had two additional attractions. For the Fulanis, it was a chance to greet the Lamido. For the Christians, it was a time for Christmas dancing. People from miles around had come in their finery.
We were particularly struck by the Cow Fulanis, who in this area seemed of such a pure strain as to be almost unworldly. Women strolled alone or in pairs, tall, thin and silent, with long black hair worn in puffs at the back and sides, and faces oval and Semitic with sculptured lips and aquiline noses.

The Fulanis looked like patrician visitors among the squat and large-headed Mambilas and Kakas. Many were shy about being photographed at first, but when we returned the following week, we detected a definite pride in being selected to be snapped by the Europeans’ cameras.

Later in the afternoon both the Christian and Fulani groups were dancing. However, I was weary from the journey and chose to skip this spectacle. We were to see an awful lot of dancing on the plateau, although this was to be our last chance to see Fulani dancing.

When we traveled, meals were infrequent: a breakfast of coffee, crackers, peanut butter and jam snatched before our loads were packed; lunch, if we were lucky, of raisins or bananas on the trail. Dinner was the big meal. Our constant hunger lent zest to the plainest concoction of tough beef and market rice.

When we could not buy local food, we eked out our ration of staples with tinned cheese and corned beef, crackers and Rye-Vita. Breakfast, when we were not moving, was made pleasant by a discovery Lowell had made back in Yola. Maize (corn) flour makes an acceptable porridge in the morning if served with raisins, milk and sugar. It’s not unlike Cream of Wheat.

We could always count on buying maize flour in markets. The raisins and sugar we brought with us, and it was often possible to buy Fulani milk and boil it. In fact, Lowell and I continued to eat the dish occasionally in Yola after we had returned. It grows on you.
Trekking to Gembu

Gembu was our goal, and it was a goal not easily reached. Many travelers choose to do its 24 miles of rolling hills in two days, stopping overnight in a small village called Likitaba. However, Saturday, the 28th, was market day in Gembu, so we decided to cover the distance in one stage, arriving in the town in the early or mid-afternoon.

Gembu is the largest town on the plateau, the administrative and economic center (if any town on the plateau can be called an economic center). It is a relatively new town, impossible to find even on those maps that do show towns on the plateau. Nevertheless, in the weeks and days preceding our arrival, we endowed it with every quality of exotic civilization we could think of. It was “fabled Gembu,” our Lost City, and we approached it with the enthusiasm of the explorer Mungo Park rediscovering Timbuktu.

If nothing else, Gembu would have food supplies. Heretofore, we had scraped by on our tinned foods, on rice and sometimes sweet potatoes from the market, and on such goat meat and chicken as we were given by well-wishers or bought at outrageous prices in the market. Eggs were often as much as four pence apiece, and once we were unable to buy eggs for a day or two because Mazu had insulted one of the sellers. Told the price, he replied, “This is Gembu, not London,” whereupon the man refused to sell him eggs at any price.

Everything imported from “downstairs” is a shilling more expensive than normal. It does no good to argue. “Biyu da sisi,” says the tradesman with a shrug, referring to the hill, and repeats his first price.

We packed our loads early Saturday morning and waited for our horses and horse boys to show up. It grew late. The carriers left with their loads and only three horses had shown up. At this point Bud West, who was eager to move, and I, who was not looking forward to another day in the saddle, told the others that we would walk. If horses should prove available, let them catch up with us. (We later discovered that the three other horses had run away.)

Bud and I started about 7 a.m. and had a pleasant enough walk in the early morning. I took to running down hills, and what with that and his brisk walking pace on the level, we were covering between four and five miles each hour.

I soon realized that it would be no picnic, however. It wasn’t that my legs or my wind were taxed; blisters were developing on the heels and balls of my feet with each mile we covered. We had expected to ride, not to walk, and the change in plans caught me wearing ill-fitting sneakers and one pair of cotton socks.

Bud was somewhat better off; he had on his thinnest pair of socks, but he was wearing rubber-soled shoes. We went through Likitaba, the half-way mark, a little before eleven, and even then I felt I was walking on hot coals.
The trail seemed to wind forever through hills parched brown or burned black by Fulani grass-burning, and the hazy sun overhead did not help matters. My spirits lifted somewhat when we overtook a family of Mambila people resting at the foot of one hill.

“How many miles to Gembu?” I asked. There was some discussion, and a small boy answered in English, “One.”

The family had started from Ngurogi at four in the morning, and was carrying babies and belongings. I thought I detected an air of expectancy in their manner, particularly as one man in the party had a pipe on which he kept repeating a cheery four-note phrase, perhaps his way of heralding his arrival.

Well, we must have walked at least four miles from where we met the family, but they did give us hope. We looked for the town over the top of each hill, and when we didn’t find it, we were eager to push on to the top of the next hill.

When we actually could see the town spread out on a hillside before us, I flopped down and died a small death. It was 2 p.m., and it was enough for me to have gotten that far: 24 miles in seven hours of virtually uninterrupted walking.

Bud, however, was anxious to get on; incredibly, he wanted to get to the market. He left me there where, several minutes later, I dragged myself onto my feet, limped up the trail into town and asked for the senior primary school.

A secondary schoolboy on holiday took me in tow and led me over an awful final mile of paths up to the school building. I met the headmaster, who himself was suffering from fever, asked where we were to stay, and collapsed on the bare springs of a bed in the room I was shown. I lay there for over an hour before being roused by Jonathan, one of our schoolboys, who persuaded me to join Lowell, John and Harvey, who had arrived at 4 p.m., in the market.
It was too late to see much in the market, but John and I bought old army campaign hats to keep off the sun (I believe I suffered a minor heat stroke that day). All of us bought loaves of bread, the first we had eaten in days. Feeling no shame, I began munching mine right there in the market.

Darkness came on, but we walked in moonlight to the home of a Mr. Odeka, forestry manager and a friend of Bud’s, who served us a dinner of beef, rice and tinned peas, the most complete we had had in days. While there, we learned that Roger had arrived about 6 p.m. with the protesting carriers not far behind.

Mazu did not appear until the next morning. One of the newly-hired carriers from Ngurogi had developed a hernia. Mazu had had to carry him to a village and hire a replacement. He spent the night in the bush without blankets. The great hazard in hiring local carriers is that they may at any time throw down their loads and refuse to go on. If this happens, you are stuck at your destination without food, beds or blankets. Our carriers very nearly did this on the 24-mile stage, but when they saw we were going the whole distance, they did also. Only once did we get separated from the carriers for a night, and that was neither their fault nor ours.

### Welcoming the New Year

Monday morning was divided into two tours, one of the Native Authority offices, the other of an experimental coffee plantation. The N.A. offices were not very exciting, but we met a veterinary technical officer who had received some training at Colorado State University. He mentioned the recent death of President Kennedy with some feeling, describing learning the news quite early over the radio. He was a warm and knowledgeable host, and later we received a gift of 15 eggs from him at a time when we could not buy eggs anywhere.

Sven Smith is a stolid, hard-working Dane whose only detectable passion is coffee. His experiment with a strain of Arabica from Kenya is being followed quite closely by political leaders because of its potential as a cash crop for export. “They’re big on coffee right now,” he commented, “but in a couple of years they may be big on something else, and then coffee will suffer.”
The next morning four of us went down to the plantation to hull some coffee beans covered with a paper-like shell into beans for roasting. We took 15 pounds back with us.

We were separated for New Year’s Eve. Bud and John set off in the early morning for Mbanga, a town 12 miles away from Gembu across the Donga River. Two of John's students at Ganye who were from the town had promised to show us many objects of the Mambila tribe’s traditional culture and religion.

I longed to go, but my feet were still healing, and I was afraid that an unnecessary 24 miles might ruin them for the return trip. Lowell and Roger dreaded the idea of going to Mbanga and returning the same day as planned, so they stayed behind. Harvey got involved in a school administrative wrangle and was unable to travel, much to his regret.

On New Year's Eve, then, we had as good a dinner as Mazu and we could scrape together for the occasion and, singing college songs, set off for Sven Smith’s house. At midnight we toasted 1964, Nigeria, America, Denmark and coffee. Altogether, it was a wistful bachelor evening.

The next morning Harvey, Lowell and I hiked down to the River Donga to bathe and to satisfy our curiosity about the stream, which we could just barely see from the top of the hill where the D.O.’s house was located. It was a long walk downhill, and on the way we met John and Bud returning from Mbanga with art objects they had bought in the town.

We bathed in the Donga, a shallow, swift-moving river at this point in the dry season, and we returned up the steep hill to town.

Lunch followed, and then a walk back to town to watch dancing by Kaka and Mambila Christians. At this time we arranged – or thought we arranged – for Native Authority horses to be ready for us at five the next morning for the return trip to Mai Samari.
All was well.

We decided that our return trip to Ngurogi would be done in two stages, and that one of them would be through Kakara, a largish Mambila town, so that the four of us who did not go to Mbanga would have an opportunity to see such a town.

It takes a village...

Morning came and our carriers left with the loads. There were no horses, however. At least three of us might have started walking right away, but we decided that would be impolite. So we waited until nine before going into town.

Still no horses. The hours crawled by, relieved only by occasional reports that the Maidoki (chief of horses) was scouring the countryside for available nags. By 2 p.m. there were five horses and four saddles, with promises of more to come quickly.
Harvey, John and I volunteered to act as a scouting party to tell the laborers at Kakara to proceed to Ngurogi in case the other three should be delayed. We had roughly four hours of daylight in which to make a 15 mile journey, but we were optimistic.

Harvey had a strong black horse and was soon out of sight. John had a sturdy brown pony, but he was carrying so much in the way of cameras and art objects that he refused to let him gallop.

My horse was a loser from the very start. I refused to wear out my arm whipping him, but his slow plodding drove me to agonies of frustration. I ended up pulling him behind me as I walked; he was more trouble than he was worth.

John comes across as absent-minded, but he somehow manages to muddle through brilliantly. It didn’t bother him that darkness was falling. He assumed, I guess, that there would be a village nearby when he chose to stop. He was right.

Harvey, on the other hand, after riding swiftly ahead of us, waited for an hour, saw no sign of us, and concluded that we had taken a short cut. Furious at himself, he was to drive himself and his horse until dark, spend a cold night sleeping in the bush with nothing but horse blankets, and resume a cold, hungry ride to Ngurogi at dawn.

Meanwhile, John and I plodded over the bleak hills by the light of a late afternoon sun. Two hours brought us to the village of Lemi, where we learned that Harvey had left just ahead of us. My horse got about a quarter mile outside the village. John pressed on; I later learned that he had seen Harvey disappearing over a distant hill and had been eager to catch him.

I left my horse in the care of the villagers and set off on foot after John. On the path I came up behind two Cow Fulani women who, after jumping about a foot when they saw me, raced along behind me, chattering and asking questions in their high, bird-like voices. We didn’t understand each other very well, but they gathered I was looking for somebody and that I hoped to get to Kakara. I walked about a mile before turning back, leaving John to his fate. The women, it turned out, caught up with John, told him of my plans, and ushered him to a nearby Cow Fulani settlement, where he spent the night.

At Lemi, I returned to a bit of a problem. There are two sections to the town: a “Hausa” section for Town
Fulanis and a “Citizens” section composed of Mambilas and Kakas. I learned all this from Peter Kwala, an English-speaking preacher in the Citizens’ section.

On my return I was met by the head of the Hausa section, who, in Hausa and sign-language, conducted me to a bare little sleeping room. When we couldn’t communicate further, he called on the preacher, who took me down to the Citizens’ section, which had some extra huts he was accustomed to loaning to strangers.

Perhaps I would like to look at the room? I found it difficult to refuse. He showed me one hut where the former D.O. had sometimes stayed, but it had not been used for some time and perhaps was “scenting.” Would I like to see another? The next hut was furnished with a wicker bed, a glowing fire in the center and—Lord be praised!—blankets. It was too much to turn down.

My return to the Hausa section was awkward. There was simply no graceful way of explaining my decision, and I knew it. I don’t know what the preacher said, but the Hausa head man’s reply was something to the effect that I had not really insulted him—he “owned” my new host’s hut, in effect, because when that man had first come to the village he was obliged to beg from the Hausa head man. I left feeling rather sheepish.

Back in the Citizens’ section, I was shown a kettle and basin to wash in. I had brought no food? The host offered me his own, adding that if I did not find it “tasteful” I could ask him to prepare something different. I resolved not to do that.

The meal consisted of two enamel bowls, one containing a bland lump of guinea corn meal, and the other containing a rather gluey dark brown liquid with small pieces of meat. One is supposed to dip the meat
into the sauce. I ate what I felt was a fair sample of the
guinea corn, poured the sauce on the remainder and
closed the lid. I hadn’t the heart to taste the sauce.

The preacher returned soon afterward. He had fixed
a basin of warm water for me to use in washing my feet.
After I had done this, we talked about the town and the
plateau. He told me how people in that area had loved
the previous district head, the Englishman, for his work
in settling the boundary between Mambila farms and
Fulani cattle ranges.

I put out the kerosene lamp the preacher had given
me and lay in the darkness listening to the sounds of an
African compound at night: children playing the last of
the day’s games, a lonely flute piping in the distance,
chickens clucking and scratching.

I wanted to get up early, and as a result I was
restless all night. Several times I awoke and opened my
hut’s door to find the compound bathed in moonlight. At
five or thereabouts, the first cock crew. Soon afterward, I
began hearing the rhythmic thump, thump, thump of a
woman beating her wooden pestle against its wooden
mortar in an adjoining compound. Still no light.

At six, I washed and dressed in semi-darkness and
walked out to see if I could find my horse. When I
returned, the preacher was there. He had promised to
visit me a final time before beginning a journey to
Gembu that morning. I decided that I could no longer
endure the horse—could I arrange to have it sent back to
Gembu? This was easier than I had hoped. My host took
the horse and was charged with responsibility for return-
ing it.

I thanked my host, gave him five shillings and said
goodbye to him and the preacher. I left the village on
foot carrying a plastic water container and a piece of
sugar cane the host’s wife had given me.

I hadn’t walked more than a half-hour before I
sighted a collection of Cow Fulani yurts on the crest of a
small hill a few yards off the trail. Then, to my surprise, I
saw among them a blue-shirted man in European dress;
it could only be John. He was moving toward a horse
grazing to the right of the trail. I waved; he recognized
me, and I moved up to the Cow Fulani settlement to join
him and take pictures.

The conditions for photography were ideal. The
light was the soft golden light of early morning that,
together with the warm tones of late afternoon, is
virtually the only worthwhile light for color photography
in Africa.

The women had just left their yurts for morning
chores, milking cows, pounding flour in mortars. The
cattle were tied up outside, and young boys hovered near
them. Children played or watched the women in solemn,
gypsy-like silence. The few men about looked rather like
gypsies, in fact. I was a stranger, of course, but I was not
unexpected; John had already broken the ice by spending
the night with the Fulanis. Instead of being camera-shy,
they were either oblivious of me or amused by the whole undertaking. I shot half a roll of pictures of that breathtaking morning scene, and I'm counting the days until I see how they came out.

John returned with the horse. The only trouble was that it proved not to be his, but the horse of one of his hosts. Where had his own horse gone? I asked. It had “gone for bush,” said the Cow Fulani man. But there was news of it, he added, and a small boy had been sent to fetch it.

While we waited for the horse, the women served us bowls of warm milk fresh from the cow. After a night of little food and a morning of no breakfast, this was a delight. I'd never drunk milk straight from a cow before, but hunger dispelled all squeamishness. It was delicious. John showed me the grass yurt he had shared for the night with one of the young Fulani boys. It was all an idyll, and my mood changed from annoyance and impatience at our delay in reaching Kakara to gratitude that we’d had such lucky accidents.

The horse arrived, we bade farewell to the Fulanis and moved down the trail, one man walking and the other riding. The rider could keep up with the walker without too much effort, so we made good time, late though we were. On the way, we descended into a large valley filled with crops. There I saw a professional “bird watcher,” a man paid to scare away birds. We met the village head, a Town Fulani, and learned that Harvey had arrived about six, spent an hour, and left for Ngurori soon afterward.

We stayed about three quarters of an hour there talking and eating bananas. We also left John's horse in the village head's care; it had begun bleeding from one of its hooves. John had come to consider horses as much of a nuisance as I had.

We walked the remaining nine miles to Ngurogi in the midday heat. I arrived shortly after four, just before a messenger was being hired to look for us. We found Harvey and the others in the rest house, and we all related our adventures over bowls of hot packaged soup served up by Mazu. The others hadn't even started from Gembu the day before; their horses hadn't shown up
until four. They had spent a final, boring night in Gembu and in the morning rode the entire 24 miles to Ngurogi via Likitaba. Harvey was still sleeping off his night in the bush.

A final, unwanted adventure

At this point, four horses remained for the use of our six-man party. The following morning we started with two. One of the horses—Harvey's strong black one, whom he had come to regard as a friend and fellow-sufferer—was stolen in the night by thieves. Mazu claimed to have heard them.

We were told that horses are seen as common property by many of the Fulani, who “borrow” a horse for a while and leave it in another village. No one seemed worried; the horse would turn up. This was small consolation to Harvey, who had ridden the one good horse of the six. Bud's, weak and lazy the previous day, was discovered to have developed an ugly saddle sore from a loose saddle. It was left in the village head’s care.

We divided the 18-mile journey into three stages, each man walked two and rode one. I walked the first two stages, and this was uneventful enough. For the third stage, Harvey and I found ourselves on horseback, which was to give us both a final, unwanted adventure.

We had rested at a stream before getting the horses from their previous riders. Apparently we got lost as soon as we mounted. We started riding to the left of the main trail and stumbled on to a secondary trail that led us miles out of our way. We both thought the country was strange, but Harvey was the first to voice the suspicion aloud.

The countryside, which until then had seemed ruggedly beautiful, became sinister and confusing. We asked directions to Mai Samari. Half the answers were vague; the other half were tinged with amusement. “Boy, are you lost!” was the implication we read in all of them. We rode up to the top of a ridge—Harvey startled a herd of antelope at the top—and from there all we could see were hills, all of them looking the same. Above us was a dark grey cloud—were we going to become drenched as well as lost?

Discouraged, we started down the ridge when we noticed a man racing toward us. He held my sunglasses case, which had fallen from my pocket not long before, I guess. We seized upon him as a savior. Did he know where the trail was? Would he take us there? For money he would. I reflected ruefully that money, not Hausa, was doing our talking for us. But hireling though he was,
he led us three miles or more to a hilltop from which we could see Mai Samari spread out in a valley below. We were saved another night in the bush.

I won’t recount the rest of the trip back. We disposed of the two horses and the next day walked—or should I say raced?—the 4,500 feet down the escarpment to Mayo Selbe. The next day we drove the 300 miles back to Yola, arriving shortly after nine.

That night we kept the Catering Rest House staff past their 9:30 deadline for serving dinner in order to enjoy a proper meal. We couldn’t face another meal of packaged soups and tinned corn beef. With laterite still in our hair and eyebrows—we each took only minutes to shower and change—we filed into the rest house to enjoy a passable dinner of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, mashed potatoes, green beans, carrots, sherbet, cheese, biscuits and coffee. A proper end to a good trip.

Back to school

I’ve said little about school after nearly a month since our return. The staff is no less overworked than it was last term. We lost Rod and gained a replacement, a biologist named Ted Oldham. The Peace Corps wanted to send another woman here as a roommate for Mary Dunn, a Northeastern University graduate recruited to teach math and science, but our principal wouldn’t hear of it. It’s not that Mary hasn’t done well, but the principal is scared stiff of female PCVs in boys schools. He apparently had two unstable women in his previous school.

We weren’t very happy with this decision, needless to say. The principal only accepted another volunteer—of either sex—this term because the Ministry of Education was unable to send anyone else. It’s an awkward situation; we outnumber the British five to four at this school, and neither they nor Peace Corps headquarters in Kaduna is happy about it.

Because the Ministry of Education is either unwilling or unable to hire more contract teachers, Peace Corps volunteers continue to fill the gap. It would appear that the North has reached the saturation point for American volunteers. Yola’s “quota” is four, but our number is five—and still the planeloads of volunteers keep coming, and the North keeps insisting on its share.

Ted is tall and slender, quiet and pleasant. There
were still empty houses when he arrived, so he fills a Cosely house vacated by a Pakistani couple who moved into Rod’s former house.

I teach the same number of class periods as last term, but the workload is heavier. The Englishman who is senior English master decided he was too busy teaching fourth and fifth form English language—and having to teach other subjects as well—and dumped fourth form language teaching onto me.

This by itself wouldn’t be bad, but I’ve been assigned all third form language and literature classes as well, plus four odd hours of English teaching with the “B” section of Form I. Thus, I have 30 classroom hours, 24 of language and 6 of literature. I have more than enough exercise books to correct to fill two to three hours every day of the week.

We are currently enjoying Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, so classes are only 35 minutes, school closes at 12:10, and the work has not yet begun to get me down.

You’ve asked me to write more about school life. Again, it’s like taking pictures of yourself; it’s hard to describe yourself accurately, but it’s also impossible to expect someone else to do the job. Have I improved any as a teacher? I can’t say, I don’t care much for teaching English language, which mostly involves dull exercises and long hours of correction. It would help if I weren’t teaching twice as many hours of this subject as any other teacher in the school.

The only classes I really look forward to are the literature classes, where I’m currently teaching George Orwell’s “Animal Farm” and a collection of stories by Mark Twain, William Saroyan, James Thurber, D. H. Lawrence and others titled “British and American Short Stories.” Both books I purchased on my own last fall.

The other books available are mostly dismal English novels of the 19th century: “Tom Brown’s School Days,” “Far from the Madding Crowd”— just the thing for African boys! But “Animal Farm” and the short stories are entertaining and present some intellectual challenge as well. Every student knows villagers who resemble the pigs in “Animal Farm.” Everyone can relate to D.H. Lawrence’s “A Rocking Horse Winner,” where the house whispers, “There must be more money! There must be more money!” It’s a literature class, not just 40 minutes spent trying to comprehend a story.
If possible I hope to avoid fourth and fifth form classes during the remainder of my stay in Yola. The reason is that, after the third form, teaching ceases and “school certificate work”—a kind of cram course for an exam—begins. Boys demand notes, mimeographed if possible, and they want to know the techniques and tricks that will enable them to pass the school certificate examination. Nearly every teacher finds himself drawn into the conspiracy, trying to second-guess the literature examiners and feed the boys answers that he or she thinks may appear on the exam.

My contempt for such a system is deep and unconcealed. My lasting impression of British education will be a picture of a juggernaut, ancient and complex, a Dickensian horror moving blindly into the future with no one brave enough or powerful enough to stop it. I’ll come away with a profound respect for the virtues of American secondary education.

It’s another matter for the boys, however. Like it or not, they are caught in the system and must survive. Many resent American teachers for the reason that we have not had to take the exam and are therefore less able to prepare them for it.

We are hoping for relief in the shape of two sixth form graduates whom the ministry assigned here after desperate pleas by the principal. One is a chemistry student; the other specializes in English. They enter university in the fall and would be teaching only as a stopgap measure, but they would certainly be welcome.

“When they hear it’s Yola, they probably won’t come,” the principal says gloomily.

Four of us were invited to an African farewell party a week ago Saturday. The guest of honor was the chief clerk at Barclay’s Bank, an Ibo whom we had known casually as a soccer opponent and as boyfriend of the West Indian woman who was “health sister” here for a time.

I found myself sitting at his side and delivering a speech, an honor I merited as a European, I guess.

Such occasions are terribly formal: a “chairman” is elected, “supporters” are called to the front, and a printed program prescribes a series of toasts, speeches and presentations. The local photographer posed us for a picture. In all, a strange afternoon.

The doctor did finally tour through here, Ganye,
Mubi and other locations about three weeks ago, and at that time I received five injections (polio, typhoid, gamma globulin for hepatitis prevention, smallpox and something I can’t even remember). I was instructed to have laboratory work done at the local hospital and finally got that done last week.

Everything was in good shape except evidence of cysts of *Entameba hystolica*, the byproducts of amoebic dysentery. I had been feeling rather run-down and was somewhat relieved to know that this was the cause. I’m currently taking bismuth iodine pills three times a day over a five-day period. If those don’t work, I will have to go on injections to get rid of the illness.

Harvey Flad in Ganye had a really bad bout with amoebic this past fall. In its worst form, the disease can be debilitating and even fatal, producing bloody stools and body dehydration. Mine is the so-called “insidious” kind, showing itself only as general fatigue and “vague abdominal distress.” I have no idea when I picked up the amoebas. It was before Mambila, I’m quite sure. Anyway, I’m relieved to be getting rid of it and annoyed that I didn’t track it down before.

Shistosomiasis is very rare on the plateau, although altitude apparently has nothing to do with its incidence. Sparse population might help. Anyway, we were led to believe that the streams were certainly harmless for bathing, if not for drinking. I wouldn’t make a habit of drinking raw Fulani milk, but on that one occasion John and I felt the risk was justified.

**Visit from a thief**

You deserve an account of our visit from a thief last week. Items taken: two pairs of socks and a half-empty pack of cigarettes. It was rather scary, though, especially for Lowell. My first indication of trouble was Lowell’s waking me up about 2:30 a.m. “There’s somebody in the house,” he said. Several minutes before, he had been awakened by the opening and closing of doors throughout the house.

We went through the house flipping on lights in every room. Lowell suddenly noticed that the door to our laundry room was open, and he went inside. The light revealed two panes of glass missing from the lone jalousie window in the room. Outside, the two panes lay neatly on the grass, where they had been placed after removal from their metal fittings. (This was the only unscreened window in the house. Mazu had left it open,
thus making it easy for the thief to remove the panes.

The thief was evidently out for cash alone. He ignored this typewriter, which was in the living room, and stepped right over Lowell’s camera on his bedroom floor. After entering the laundry room, he began providing himself with quick exits, unlocking the doors to that room and the living room. (The keys were in plain view.)

He went through my desk drawers. He then proceeded to open the bedroom doors next, somehow waking Lowell in the process. The police were called the next morning. A detective found a fingerprint on one of the windowpanes. Lowell bought himself a door latch. The laundry room window will soon be screened in. We were lucky.

I am once again busy with extracurricular activities. I volunteered to coach the runners on the athletics (track) team and am now busy with that. The season’s big meet, the Northeastern Zonal Championships, is just two months from tomorrow, and we have just three weeks to choose and train a 20-member team to represent the school. (Muslims were fasting until last Friday; other than Christians, few athletes were training before this week.)

I am almost certain to be one of two coaches journeying to Waka, a Church of the Brethren secondary school, where the meet will take place. Waka is a shoo-in for team honors. The school won last year, and all the stars are still in school. Yola’s standouts, including the boy who became national schoolboy champion in the javelin last year, have all graduated.

It’s a “rebuilding year,” as coaches like to say, but it should be fun, and I hope I can help build the core of a strong track team for future years. This week we had trials for the whole school—a circumstance greatly resented by the senior boys—and not a few second and third form youngsters won places on the squad. We’ll be sending a good, young team.

Culture clash

You’ll notice a sizeable collection of school photos in one of the boxes I sent home. It’s difficult to take good school pictures, and it’s doubly difficult to get an unimaginative photographer to take good ones with me as a subject. I must take the trouble to pose myself, and that smells a little of public relations.

The boys cannot relax before the camera. It’s a novelty. Given the opportunity, they will crowd into your intended picture, stare at the lens and pose stiffly until the shutter is clicked. That answers your question as to why there aren’t more pictures of the boys or of me.

To complicate matters further, Lowell and I seem to have run into trouble showing to the upper form boys some of the local scenes that, we explained, we thought people back home might enjoy seeing. Since then we have noticed criticism in essays that the Peace Corps is sending back pictures that would cause discrimination.
against American Negroes and Africans studying overseas.

At the root of such charges, of course, are feelings of inferiority. The boys clearly feel that we are exposing their developing society to Westerners. If you are ashamed to come from a mud village, you resent someone taking pictures in that village. Photography is a personal thing to Africans—the posed group photo is part of the ritual of any important social gathering—and I imagine the basic impersonality of an artistic or journalistic photograph must be puzzling and finally insulting.

“Why do Europeans take pictures in bush?” is a universal complaint. “Why don’t they take pictures of Lagos or Ibadan, where there are many fine and modern buildings?” I have always tried to be polite about taking pictures. In the future I suppose I’ll have to be even more so.

We had a meeting yesterday morning with the principal. It seems that someone (a schoolboy?) had sent a letter to the Premier’s office complaining that the Peace Corps here was attempting to convert Muslim students to Christianity. All our names were mentioned—even Steve Krasner, who is Jewish—which may mean either that the charge was a general one or that the writer felt each of us had had a hand in the conspiracy. The matter had been investigated, the Ministry of Education’s letter continued, and the charges substantiated. Would the principal please describe the full extent of this proselytizing activity?

Nobody here takes the matter seriously, least of all the principal, but it is further evidence that someone here finds us suspect and unwelcome.

At least we can’t be blamed for the school certificate results of last year’s fifth form, which came out recently. Only 12% of the boys received their West African School Certificates, the poorest result outside of Sokoto Province. Lowell and Tom are the only ones among us who have taught fifth form; history and Bible knowledge results were good, and literature results reasonable. The disastrous scores were in physics and English language, both taught by Englishmen.

And so the new term begins…
When I arrived in Yola, I quickly discovered that expatriate life centered on Yola Club. The isolation of the station gave the club an importance in expatriate life that was unusual even in West Africa. Where most social clubs I had known prided themselves on exclusiveness, Yola Club anxiously embraced all eligible members of the community, rather like a small-town church.

Yola Club had originated among the bachelor officers and merchants who frequented Jimeta in the early days. In the mid-1950s an enterprising district officer arranged the club’s current home, a stolid one-story building of yellow granite blocks that had served as the community post office.

The provincial administration granted the club a lease to the land and the building. A tennis court was built and some adjoining land cleared for a golf course.

The building and its grounds were in a style best described as West African Ministry of Works. The corrugated iron roof overhung a small concrete porch with tables and chairs. This fronted on a cracked cement platform big enough to contain a badminton court.

During “chop nights,” monthly dinner dances, the badminton court served as cabaret and dance floor. It was bordered by low cement flower boxes and metal poles that supported a string of colored light bulbs. On the edge of the tennis court was a large flame tree shading a table and chairs for waiting players. The court itself was bordered by bougainvillea and backstops made of woven grass matting.

The clubhouse was divided into two rooms. The sports room contained a snooker table, a dart board, and British Airways wall posters. There was a half-door connecting this room with a bar on the other side. In the bar, the steward, an African, stood underneath a wooden overhang fashioned to look like a shingled roof. In one corner sat the gramophone and records; opposite was a door leading to a tiny library housing novels and mysteries left behind by departed expatriates. The club notice board shared the wall with a portrait of Queen Elizabeth, which was later replaced by an unframed photograph of Sir Kashim Ibrahim, then governor of the North, when Nigeria became a republic in 1963.

I had not been here long when I realized that the club was changing. In previous years the British had controlled virtually all senior service posts and managed the banks and trading companies. When Nigeria received its independence in 1960 there were over 60 British expatriates, including wives and children, enrolled on the
A tennis match at the Yola club

membership books. There had been tombola, a British variety of bingo, twice weekly, and polo on the parade ground on Sundays. Jacket and tie were required for interviews with administrators; black tie, candles and table linen were *de rigueur* for evening dinner parties.

Nigerians had become a sizeable minority in the club by 1963. The British had never officially barred Africans from joining, even before independence. When a constitution was drafted in 1961, residents 18 and over “of whom the committee may approve” were invited to join. A later amendment restricted such approval to holders of senior service positions and to businessmen earning at least $2,800 a year.

By 1963 several Nigerians could meet one test or the other. When I went to the club in the afternoon to play tennis, I was likely to meet the head nurse at the hospital and his wife, a schoolteacher; the postmaster; a telegraph technician; an assistant police superintendent; and several secondary school teachers. During dinner dances the Nigerians usually sat together drinking Star beer in one corner of the badminton court, the wives shy and silent in their bright gowns and head scarves. On their side, the expatriates chatted and danced to the records of Victor Sylvester, the British counterpart of Guy Lombardo.

By early fall two issues had arisen to strain the neighborly ritual of club politics. The British career officers, who were mostly bachelors and men with wives at home in England, had begun to grumble about the club’s younger members, who played tennis and did little or no drinking in the evening. Buying one round of beer after another and paying sixpence a game for snooker, these older men came to feel that they were providing the club’s main financial support. At sunset the bachelors would arrive at the club to sit together on the porch dourly drinking Star while awaiting the departure of the younger members from the bar and snooker room.

“The snooker players are subsidizing the tennis players,” one angry bachelor wrote in the club suggestion book. “I’ve seen the tennis players play game after game, all for five shillings a month, and never buy more than the odd Pepsi or orange squash. If this continues, the
club may as well pack up. You can’t run a club without bar profits.”

The other issue was leadership of the club. As the senior service had become more international in character, the British had attempted to reflect this trend in the club committee. Tom Seiler, one of the first Peace Corps volunteers on the station, was elected secretary. An informal tradition had arisen that Nigerians were to be given the post of “sports member,” which involved upkeep of the tennis court and organization of tournaments and matches.

During the summer the Nigerian sports member had been called away from the station for several weeks, and he had not bothered to arrange for a substitute. This defection had annoyed the other members of the club committee, who decided against nominating a Nigerian as a replacement.

However, the committee hadn’t calculated the Nigerians’ reaction to this decision. At the October election, the expatriates discovered that their numbers were nearly balanced by the Africans. With the support of a few expatriates, the Nigerians were able to vote in two candidates of their own.

“African social member”

Later in the meeting one of the Nigerians asked the club to consider establishing a committee position of “African social member.” Nigerians did not enjoy the club’s dinner dances, he said, because the music and the food were arranged by and for expatriates. The African social member would be a Nigerian woman would act as advisor to chop night committees, seeing that African needs were provided for.

“What about the new committee?” an expatriate asked. “You have two people on it now.”

“Yes, but what jobs do they hold?” the Nigerian cried. “Librarian, sports member—these are not the important places on the committee. You always give us the job of sports member. If we cannot be elected to more important positions, then a special office is needed for us.”

Downtown Jimeta, the “new town” for outsiders
Although this proposal got lost in the machinery of procedures required for constitutional change, it caused a new willingness among expatriates to make accommodations to Africans. At the new committee’s first meeting, the sports member proposed purchasing new records for the club, including the Nigerian national anthem and several selections of “highlife,” a variety of calypso that is popular with West Africans of all social classes.

Highlife had been played at the club before, but always with records loaned by Africans and always as a concession to the Nigerians’ unwillingness to dance to little beside highlife and the twist. That highlife had been played at all was remarkable, for in most expatriate clubs such music was unthinkable. “If I want to hear that babble, I can go to any bar downtown,” one expatriate said to me, and his was the usual view.

Just before Christmas came the development expatriates feared. A dozen Africans applied for membership in the space of two weeks. The applicants included not only the usual civil servants transferred to the station, but also Yola residents who had previously stayed away because of the dominant expatriate atmosphere.

The Nigerians who had joined the club previously were mostly Christians from other parts of the country. The Christian Nigerians were not at home in the local culture or religion and were as much strangers in Yola as their British or American counterparts. Their lingua franca was English, and their social common denominator was the graces learned during overseas training.

The new applicants were grassroots Northern Nigerians. Their religion was Islam and their principal language was Hausa. They had a secondary school
education at most. With one exception the applicants met the test of eligibility and were made members. The bursar of the secondary school, who lived in a house of traditional dried-mud construction, was rejected.

“We have to draw the line somewhere,” commented the retired British army colonel who served as club secretary. “These Southern lads are bright enough and catch on to things, but the Northerners—that’s another story.” He tapped his head with his forefinger. “They just don’t have it up here.”

The new members were slow to pay their entrance fees and dues. The previous summer, with many members behind in their subscriptions, the club had passed an amendment to its constitution stating that all members were required to pay subscriptions through a monthly standing order at the local bank. A few members had complied. Most, however, continued to pay their dues directly to the treasurer, either from habit or out of refusal to start a bank account in a station they expected to leave within a matter of months.

Nigerians, in particular, had ignored the standing order amendment. The new Nigerian members neither began standing orders nor paid their dues promptly in person. Muslim members often brought their wives to chop nights but failed to pay extra dues for them.

As treasurer I found myself caught between pressures from both Africans and Englishmen. To the expatriates, improper dues seemed an ideal way to discredit the new Nigerian members. “A rule is a rule,” they would tell me. “Members must pay by standing order—otherwise they’re just not members, are they?”

The Nigerians, for their part, had custom on their side. The club constitution specified penalties only against members who failed to pay their dues. No one had ever been ejected from the club for failing to pay his dues in the proper manner.

“Why should I start all that worry with the bank?” the Nigerians would ask me. “You’ll get the money from me in person.”

**Guest rule challenged**

Another point of contention was the club’s long-standing rule against low-status guests. There was little pressure among Nigerians to lower the requirements for membership as such. However, most Nigerian members had friends of less than senior service rank whom they would like to have invited to the club from time to time. Expatriates had no such problem; any expatriate resident would meet the requirements for membership.

Normally the only guests at the club were civil servants and businessmen from other stations. The only lawful guest was one “who is resident in Yola for a period not exceeding three days at any one time and at the discretion of a member of the management committee.”
The guest rule received its severest test during a holiday early in 1964. Many civil servants had taken the weekend off, traveling to other stations to break the spell of the hot season in Jimeta. One civil servant journeyed to Jimeta instead of away from it. He was Mallam Kolo, a new member who served as district officer in Numan, 40 miles away.

A large gruff Kanuri tribesman, he possessed a middle school education that had won him various administrative positions throughout Northern Nigeria. It was Mallam Kolo’s custom on weekends to get drunk in Jimeta bars and sleep it off at the house of another district officer based in Jimeta.

On a Friday evening Mallam Kolo arrived at the club with several beers under his belt. He sat down at a table with two Nigerian companions and ordered a round of Star. Soon afterward he called over a small boy passing on the road and sent him running off toward town with a message. About 15 minutes later there appeared in the courtyard three gaily dressed young women who Mallam Kolo later insisted were employees of the Northern People’s Congress, the ruling political party in the North.

Whatever their occupations, they looked suspicious to Isa, the bar steward, who refused to serve them drinks. Other members, including Mallam Kolo’s table companions, walked into the bar, leaving him and the girls sitting at one table and the club president sitting at another. The president went into the bar, brought out the guest book, and frostily presented it to Mallam Kolo to sign. Mallam Kolo looked at the president and the guest book, then let the book fall to the ground. He finished his drink and walked out of the club with the women.

The next day the club president assembled as many committee members as were not away on holiday. The expatriates were enraged. They suspected that Mallam Kolo’s actions were the result of a conspiracy by Nigerians to insult expatriates. The committee decided to report the matter to the provincial secretary, a Nigerian who served as second highest official in the province. He, in turn, sent stern letters to Mallam Kolo and the other Nigerians who had shared his table when he had sent for the women.
By the time I had returned from my weekend away, Mallam Kolo’s table companions were angry at having received disciplinary letters. They had considered themselves bystanders of the incident. One Englishman had written a note condemning African manners in the club suggestion book. One of the men who had been at the table had replied by asserting that “Nigeria is not South Africa” and complaining of having received an undeserved rebuke. “Perhaps the committee should compile a ‘Who Is Who’ of members,” he declared.

Soon afterward Mallam Kolo let it be known that he was planning an African takeover of club offices at the annual general meeting in April. The provincial engineer would be president. Mallam Kolo would be treasurer. Isa, the steward who had refused to serve drinks to his guests, would be sacked.

The Christian Nigerians, who had previously been considered Uncle Toms cooperating with expatriates, fell in behind the Muslim Northerners’ drive to Africanize the club. The club began to run on a curious schedule. It was black by day and white by night. The Nigerians

would come to the club in the afternoon to play tennis and talk. At sunset they would leave and be replaced by the British and their wives.

In the bar and snooker room expatriates sought every possible scheme that would prevent an African committee. One simple tactic was to postpone the next general meeting from early April, when Peace Corps volunteers would be away on holiday, to late April.

**Mustering white faces**

“I don’t know how you and the others feel about the club,” I was told by the club president, “but we want all the white faces we can muster.” We were sitting in the bar at the time. “Otherwise, all this,” he said, and his look took in the room and the other expatriates drinking Sunday afternoon Star, “all this will be gone.”

Again, expatriate thinking turned toward dues, the point on which the Nigerian members were most vulnerable. It was too late to do anything about the amendment requiring payment by banker’s order, but the club consti-
tution had clearly stated from the beginning that members owing dues couldn’t vote at meetings. It was suggested that I, as treasurer, should let the new Nigerian members fall further behind in their dues so that they would lose their eligibility at election time. I refused, and in March I sent out notices to all members who were behind in their subscriptions.

The semiannual general meeting took place on a sultry evening in late April with about 50 expatriates and Nigerians present. The Nigerians had nominated a full slate of their own candidates for the committee. Instead of posting rival nominations, the expatriates had let the Nigerian nominations stand, hoping silence would encourage the Nigerians to believe their candidates were unopposed. The expatriates would then pack the meeting with voters and nominate their own candidates from the floor.

Once the meeting began, the Nigerian district officers attacked the policies of the current club committee. Why had so much money been spent over the Christmas holidays? asked Mallam Kolo. Why hadn’t an equal amount been spent during the Muslim feast days? Wasn’t this religious discrimination?

Another district officer demanded to know why the club had celebrated the New Year at one in the morning. He hoped to embarrass the British into explaining that they had waited until midnight, Greenwich Mean Time, one hour later than midnight in Nigeria. A third district

Selling salt in the Jimeta market
officer wanted to know why the club was trying to force Nigerians to pay their dues by standing order. Wasn’t this an attempt to legislate business for the local bank?

The British water engineer announced his resignation from the club and stalked out of the meeting. “Go home to England!” was the cry that followed him. “Who needs you anyway? You never do anything but drink on the job.”

When the list of eligible voters was read by the president, Nigerian voting strength was obviously superior to that of the expatriates. Only two of the Nigerian candidates for the committee lost. As the balloting proceeded, the district officers sitting in the front row looked behind them from time to time to see that their forces were in line. In an ironic turnabout of the expatriates’ old policy of throwing the sports member job to Nigerians, the district officers greeted enthusiastically the nomination of Ted, a Peace Corps volunteer, for that position.


You don’t even play sports.”

Africanization begins

Africanization of Yola Club began the following afternoon. Nigerians who had never before come to the club began dropping by after work. The police chief brought two of his four wives. From the bar blared the sound of the highlife records the club had recently purchased. Loud shouts sounded from the snooker room, where the district officers were taking up the game.

“Sanu da aiki (‘greetings at work”),” the district officers would yell to fellow Nigerians sweating on the tennis court.

“This club will soon be nothing but a third-rate brothel, mark my words,” the bank manager confided to me over a bottle of Star. “We should have made it clear in the constitution that Yola Club was going to be a club for expatriates. We don’t mind the Pakistanis and the West Indians and you Americans. But we work with the Africans all day long. We should be able to get away from them in the evening.”
The expatriates felt that the only barrier to complete destruction of the club was the guest rule. If that fell, Nigerians would soon import the atmosphere of highlife and prostitution that ruled in the local bars. At the very least, the club would decline into a mere sports club like Jimeta Club, a society of southern Nigerian clerks and minor civil servants.

The expatriates’ threat was resignation. They would quit the club and do their drinking at the local hotel or in the African bars. In fact, they began doing so in the first few weeks after the new committee had taken over. There were no outright resignations, but the bachelors assembled for drinking sessions at the hotel. The club was empty in the evening. Saturday nights, when the club had always been full, expatriates took themselves to the Royal Palace Bar in town.

But the leadership of the Nigerian members had passed from the district officers to the new club president, Mallam Tukur Usman, the provincial engineer. A large man in his early forties, Mallam Tukur was one of the few Muslim Northerners of his generation to receive higher education. He had been trained in civil engineering at the University of London, and he was thoroughly at home with the British and their customs.

“The British just didn’t trust us,” Mallam Tukur told me later on. “We had a meeting of our own after the elections. Everyone wanted to eliminate the guest rule from the constitution even though they knew the British would resign from the club. “Let them go,’ they said. The police chief and I were the only ones opposed. ‘Please,’ I said. ‘The British need this club more than we do. We must make it possible for them to remain.’”

After the other Nigerians had dropped their plans to eliminate the guest rule, Mallam Tukur encouraged the expatriates who had left the club to return. When the club held its first chop night after Africanization, he appointed as master of ceremonies an Englishman who had earlier resigned in anger. Yet there were changes as well. Before, tables for chop night had always been discreetly arranged so as to accommodate separate socializing for expatriates and Nigerians. Now the tables were packed together so as to make segregation impossible. After dinner, the Nigerians obligingly danced fox-trots along with the British, and a handful of British attempted the highlife.

By autumn Mallam Tukur had built a second tennis court and placed new matting around the old court. As provincial engineer, he had arranged for Ministry of Works employees to lay the court’s foundation and surface, thus continuing a time-worn expatriate custom of appropriating government equipment and labor for club projects. The committee rented feature-length films for weekly showings and revived tombola, the bingo game that had met its demise as British civil servants were replaced by Nigerians.
Return to normalcy?

The club would never again be the center of expatriate society it had once been, however. On weekday nights only the loneliest of bachelors dropped by for Star and snooker with the handful of Nigerians who frequented the club in the evening. Instead, the British took turns inviting one another to massive Sunday afternoon curry parties. Such bitterness as there was among the expatriates found its voice in a middle-aged water engineer named Ted Driver. Stocky, with curly black hair and a moustache, he had been in Nigeria for 20 years and in and out of Yola for the previous five. He remembered when there had been golf and polo and Englishmen invited to dinner in the evening wore formal dress.

Finding the club in its Africanized state when he was transferred to Yola during the summer of 1964, Driver conceived the idea of running for president. To the British he offered a return to normalcy on the executive committee. Among the Nigerians he was admired for his smooth direction of summer chop nights.

Driver’s ambition coincided with a loss of momentum in the Nigerian leadership. The Nigerians were finding it difficult to replace the officers who had been elected in April. Mallam Tukur expected to be transferred later in the fall, and the other officers had tired of their jobs. The bar secretary and treasurer hadn’t run an audit since taking office, and the bar rarely possessed enough stock to keep members happy.

But the expatriates decided against turning back the clock. Mallam Tukur was persuaded to run, and Driver’s aspirations were brushed off with light humor. At the October meeting he got three votes: his own and those of his nominators. Mallam Tukur was reelected virtually unanimously. For the other offices, the club members began searching around them in the old neighborly way. They found a British secretary, an American sports member, an Irish bar secretary, a Danish librarian, and Nigerians as treasurer and social member.

The election over, Driver vented his spleen. He had never seen the club in such tatty condition. Money had been spent on a second tennis court, but not on the bar. Drinkers supported the club while tennis players received free balls, free ball boys, and two tennis courts for a mere five shillings a month.

“T’m tired of supporting these tennis players,” he said. “Some of them—and I’ve seen this—order water from the bar.”

Up jumped a young Nigerian schoolteacher. “If Mr. Driver is tired of supporting tennis,” she said gaily, “then I suggest that Mr. Driver give up drinking.”

Driver shrugged, sat down and turned to his companions. But the other expatriates were laughing.
Yola was within driving distance of some of the most exotic regions in Africa. Early Peace Corps volunteers in rural Nigeria were issued jeeps, perhaps reflecting the program’s Cold War origins, and we took full advantage of the vehicles until administrators decided they were inappropriate and took them away. We drove here and there within Nigeria and, in violation of Peace Corps rules, crossed borders into the Cameroon and Chad.

Like Adamawa province in Nigeria, the northern Cameroon was considered Adamawa country because it covered the easternmost drive of the emir Adama, whose Fulani warriors, bearing the green flag of Usman dan Fodio, swept across the plains, killing and converting. As a means of defense, the pagan tribes of the area left the plains and took to the hills, where they built compact little compounds and organized mountain societies, resisting the efforts of modern Fulani administrators to get them to come back down to the plains.

They were known as Kirdi, the Fulfulde word for “godless.” Theirs was a spartan existence. Each day they trekked from their mountain fortresses to farms on the plains and returned at night. No space was wasted. Soil on the rocky hillsides was terraced, and there more guinea corn was grown. The Kirdi in the Mandara Hills were known as Mofu—a generic name rather like Hausa—and they were “settled” only as recently as 1949, after they had killed two administrators who threatened reprisal if they refused to submit to taxation.

Four of us set out on a long weekend in two jeeps for the Cameroonian towns of Rhumsiki and Mokolo. Harvey and John were in one jeep. Bud West, a Nigerian student staying with him, and I jammed into the other. We had to get by on John’s imperfect command of French—so bad that all of us, even I, were able to contribute phrases. Hausa is no good here. Fulfulde is spoken by the Fulani, and the other languages are hopelessly foreign.

We stayed in Mokolo in the kind of hotel I always imaged as typical of a French colony: yellow concrete walls with a zinc roof; flamboyant trees in the courtyard, an airy dining room, a wine cellar, bearded Frenchmen playing bowls in the driveway. As we sat drinking café au lait and eating a breakfast of bread and jam, the local Fulani gathered on a parade ground next to the hotel for Sallah prayers. The leaders moved off on horseback to the beating of drums and the cacophony of aljaibus.

We had missed the Sallah show, but an English-speaking Frenchman suggested we journey through the Mandara mountains to Khoza, a distance of 18 miles. This led to the highpoint of the trip. We drove in and out of the mountains, noting the compounds dotting the

Left: Terraced hillsides in the Mandara mountains
bluffs and shoulders and coming upon breathtaking vistas of the plains stretched out far below.

We stopped at a French Catholic mission station, chatted as best we could with its jolly, pink-faced priest, and journeyed on to Khoza, where there was an Adventist mission station. Here we were entertained by an American doctor and his wife and were shown around the mission’s hospital. A dedicated man, he said he had performed 77 major operations the previous month and treated countless ills daily. People from as far away as 200 miles show up at the hospital.

The doctor and his wife mentioned a visit by a French artist who contributes to the *National Geographic*, *Life* and *Paris Match*. She showed us a *National Geographic* article by him on this area, from August 1959.

After taking many photos in the area, we returned to Mokolo, where we watched a Fulani dance and took further photos. We had a multiple-course French dinner at the hotel and then set off for Rhumsiki, where there are sleeping quarters but no food. Here the attraction is the “Valley of the Moon,” barren purple hills relieved by spectacular volcanic stocks, huge chunks of rock that rise vertically hundreds of feet in the air. It’s best seen by moonlight, they say, because at this time it is one of the few places on earth that resembles the landscape of the moon as one imagines its peaks and craters seen by “earthlight.”

There was no moon, so we had to wait till morning to take in this awesome landscape. But there was another pleasant surprise. We had been told that the French painter was in the area and, sure enough, on the night of our arrival we saw his camp vehicle—painted with black and white stripes to attract zebras in East Africa—parked outside one of the rest house huts.

We met him in the morning. He spoke respectable English—he had lived in Montana until the age of nine—and told us much about Africa, where he has been.
traveling for 14 years. It was his opinion that we were stationed in one of the three areas of the continent “worth seeing” (the others are the Tibesti plateau in northern Chad, where a tribe of caravan raiders lives amid live volcanic mountains, and the game parks of Tanzania). The rest, for him at least, has been spoiled by politics and progress.

Sunday and Monday were unhappy. We had two major jeep breakdowns, and John, Harvey and I missed our Monday classes. All the trouble and expense of the trip were worth it, however.

Lake Chad and Waza game reserve

On another trip Harvey and I visited Lake Chad and the Waza game reserve. The trip was divided into three stages. The first included visits to towns in Sardauna and Bornu provinces in which Ganye P.S.S. schoolboys had returned for vacation. They were our guides to markets, compounds and sights we would not have seen or understood without their help.

We went to markets in Michika and Lassa, where the Higgi and Marghi people dress in little except red mud and metal ornaments; to Madagali and the ruined palace of Hamman Yaji, a notorious slave-trader of the 19th century; and to Gwoza, where primitive Kirdi live on the terraced hillsides and practice a religion of animal sacrifice. (We climbed 2,000 feet to see some of the compounds, including a house for a sacred bull that is fattened for two years before slaughter.)

Sardauna P.S.S. has some students from the Dikwa division of the Lake Chad area who were admitted before this area became part of Bornu Province. We stopped only briefly in Bama, a large Kanuri town, and in Dikwa itself, where we saw the ruins of Rabeh’s fort, the residence of a powerful Sudanese general who was killed by the French near the turn of the century. We drove straight on to Ngala, home of the Soo people, a legendary race of giants who inhabited the town before they died of hunger long before anyone living remembers. The Soo people left behind them a large wall and huge stone
receptacles that, if they were indeed “pots,” must have been carried by a race of giants.

We stayed overnight in a pleasant bush rest house in Ngala and set off to see Lake Chad the following morning. Schoolboys from the town accompanied us, and we picked up another in Gemburu, a town nearer the lake. From there we went to Wulgo, where a finger of Lake Chad dips down to the south, permitting easy access to lorries transporting dried fish east toward Fort Lamy or west to Nigerian markets.

The schoolboys arranged with the Wulgo village head for us to be taken on a wooden boat onto the lake. We waited in an area where dried fish was being packed into bags for transport. You can imagine what the smell was like. To our left was a field of locally marketed tobacco. Men were picking—not the leaves but the bright red flower at the top of the plant. The flower is ground into a fine powder that many Northern women, especially Kanuris, use to stain their teeth.

A boat was obtained, and we hopped our way across a traffic jam of fishing boats, sometimes unable to avoid stepping into the filthy water of the inlet. A striking feature of Lake Chad is papyrus boats, small craft for a single fisherman made by binding the stalks of papyrus plants. There were other boats as well: wooden affairs that can hold three or four fishermen and large metal ones designed for whole parties. We poled our way among these and out beyond a curtain of papyrus fronds onto the lake.

We left Ngala for Fort Lamy at four in the afternoon. It was a hopeless attempt, because we had to go through customs and catch a ferry before sunset. The border between Cameroon and the Chad Republic is the River Chari. As at Yola, Numan and most ferry crossings in West Africa, the ferry begins at 6 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. If you don’t make it, you either sleep on the bank or take a canoe to the other side, leaving your vehicle behind. We had good luck here, because the Cameroonian town of Fort Foreau, opposite Fort Lamy, did have a campement with huts, showers and even steak.

The next morning we ventured across the Chari. Tanned Frenchmen were waterskiing on the river as we floated across the water on a large ferryboat driven by two engines.
We gave a ride in our jeep to a trio of French soldiers, part of a garrison of more than 3,000 based in the city. It was paratroopers from this base who were flown into Gabon recently to put down a revolt against President Mba.

Colonialism is far from dead in French West Africa. Nominally independent, the new nations are nevertheless full of French military, and senior officials in most ministries are French. The idea of settling in West Africa has been much stronger among the French than among the English.

We met some of these officials shortly after noon on Sunday. Our jeep was stuck in customs for lack of a temporary import permit. We also wanted to stay in a U.S.AID rest house we had heard was maintained for U.S. government workers. An embassy man named Soldat came down with his wife and kids, took us to the rest house for a shower and a nap, and rejoined us in the evening.

It took us a while to get our jeep bailed out of customs the next morning, but an embassy man somehow worked out a document that said our jeep was U.S. government property under the temporary responsibility of the U.S. ambassador to Chad. We were issued a two-day permit to take the jeep to Waza Game Reserve and back. By 11 a.m. we were across the Chari and headed southwest.
Compared with the giant game reserves of East Africa and South Africa, Waza isn’t much, but it’s the best West Africa has to offer, and at the right time of year it can be as exciting as any game park in the world. A tourist brochure listed 25,000 cobs de buffoon, 20,000 damalisques, 2000 girages, 4,000 bipragues, 250 elephants, 300 autruches, 100 lion, and 100 guepards.

The drive was long and hot, but on the way we passed flocks of crownbirds, cattle egrets and innumerable varieties of wading birds beside small pools in the flats through which we drove. We arrived about four, contracted a guide, set ourselves up in a hillside chalet, and drove off with the guide in search of game.

It was a bumpy, frustrating drive getting to the meadows where the cob and antelope were feeding. Adding to our gloom was the information that rains had come early to the area south of the reserve and that elephants and other exciting game had departed for those regions. As with Lake Chad, this year’s early rains proved our undoing. Ordinarily early or mid-April is the best time for viewing game, as lack of water has driven the animals to the few pools that remain, and animals can be seen easily through the bare trees and coverless ground.

We did see enough giraffes to please even Harvey, who had been to East Africa as a teenager but had never seen a giraffe at such close range as he did in Waza. Our evening trip took us to a meadow filled with cob and other antelope. Adjoining it was a pond in which pelicans were swimming.

At one point we stopped in order to chat with some people in a Land Rover. They turned out to be a Boston businessman and his wife on a business/hunting trip through Africa. In the Land Rover was a lion cub that had been treed, caught and tied up by the white hunter in order to be turned over to the reserve’s game warden. A lioness had been recently killed by poachers, they explained, leaving two starving cubs. This one they had been able to rescue.

It wasn’t a very pleasant night. We had wanted to save money by cooking our own food, but we weren’t allowed to use our kerosene stove inside the chalet. We took it outside, where it blew out. We were thirsty but had used up all our water during the day’s drive. The
restaurant offered only the usual high-priced soft drinks and beer; to get water you had to pay 300 francs for a liter of tinned mineral water from the Alps. We ended up putting Halizone tablets into the water we had been supplied for washing. We could never have boiled enough on our kerosene stove.

After getting up the next morning at 5, we left at first light, and our first sight was a family of giraffe feeding on cool morning leaves in trees by the side of the road. They didn’t seem particularly shy, and they lumbered off in their ungainly way only when we advanced on them with cameras.

There were other animals to be seen: cobs and antelopes in the meadow; wart hogs—mean, ugly beasts trotting briskly in single file through the woods with their short, tasseled tails held straight up like small flags; and a wading bird as tall as a man with a black head and neck and a bright orange bill. The closest we got to an elephant was a look at some old spoors on the ground. The most exciting giraffe we saw stood in the middle of the road as we rounded a curve. We got as close to him as we dared—he showed no sign of fright—before he moved off.

One more animal was ours before we left. In the village of Waza, which is just outside the limits of the reserve, a tame ostrich was padding around under some trees. The villagers showed him off to us, and we got some good photos before we left.

We caught the very last ferry to Fort Lamy. The next morning we slept late in air-conditioned comfort, then occupied ourselves with fixing a flat tire in the embassy’s work yard. In the afternoon we received news that another Peace Corps jeep from Nigeria had arrived; more company in the rest house.

The other jeep turned out to be Bud West’s. He and Henry Etzkowitz of Maiduguri had driven that day with a schoolboy friend of Bud’s, and Henry’s steward, Samuel. On Henry’s recommendation, six of us had dinner that night at the Hotel de Chari: Chateaubriand, wine, salad and the works. Quite a meal for Bud’s friend Timothy, who is a fifth form schoolboy at Waka.

The next morning we saw what passed for a sallah celebration in Fort Lamy. It was Id el Fitir, the feast of the ram, but traditional public display was absent as far as we could tell. President Tombalbaye flashed by in a black Pontiac on his return from the prayer ground. Following him were contingents of police, soldiers and cavalrymen. No feudal trappings here.

Bud and Henry never did get to Waza. They rejected the route we had taken in favor of a more scenic trip on a dubious road that runs alongside the Logone River. Harvey and I had wanted to see the fishing villages of the Logone, so we followed.

Five hours later we found some fishermen on the river in the late afternoon. Two hours after that we finally found a road that would take us west to Maroua,
and after three hours of finding the road—not much more than a track through a swamp—we reached the town.

By this time I was sick, and Henry got equally sick during the night (from the Hotel Chari’s water?) but we were ready to travel again by mid-morning. A travel brochure listed the route to Mora as especially interesting, so it was there we went, with Bud and Henry close behind. It was Kirdi country, terraces and pointed huts such as we had seen last year and some days earlier at Gwoza. A rather dull afternoon, actually. We stopped in Mora and spent our last francs.

Later, Harvey and I found ourselves on the trail of the sare of the chief of Oudjila, a pagan castle that the tourist folder says “constitue une des habitations des plus curieuses de l’Afrique.” For once our luck was splendid. Had we known better, we would probably have taken the road earlier in the afternoon and might have passed by the sare. Certainly the light would not have been right, and light is everything in tropical sightseeing. We headed south again along a twisting, climbing road that took us across the Centre Massif, a landscape described by Andre Gide as “l’un des plus nobles du Monde.” It was late afternoon; the huts shone golden in the sun, and rocks were etched in purple shadows. We reached the sare about 4:30, and a small boy took us through it.

A tall wall of stones surrounds the chief’s palace. One walks through some mud-walled waiting rooms into a sort of courtyard in which stand a dozen massive cylinders arranged in rows. Above them is a loose roof of sticks and grass allowing in a fair amount of light. The cylinders (shaped like the “candlepins” found in Massachusetts bowling alleys) are at least 12 feet high and adapted for different uses. Some are storage bins, others are kitchens, and still others are used as sleeping quarters by the chief’s wives!

I don’t think I would enjoy this area another time. Commercial tourism is making remarkable inroads in this country. According to a Swiss missionary we stayed with...
that night, a European travel service offers a two-week African package tour of $550 that includes a week in the Nord Cameroun and a week in Tanganyika.

Three planeloads of tourists used the service in 1962; ten planes—each packed with maximum of 90 tourists—touched down in Maroua airport last year. This year they expect 100 planes to land. The road through the Centre Massif has become a pagan’s paradise. There’s no need to ask people to pose for photos; the sound of a Land Rover motor brings them running, waving and smiling, hands out for a few francs cadeau.

We were recommended to a Swiss mission station where the head missionary had just built a rest house for guests. (Things have really gone commercial when missionaries get into the tourism business.) We found the place, met our host, a former baker who spoke good English, and were very pleased and grateful for our good fortune. His rest house displayed some of the most careful workmanship I have seen in Africa; he had built it himself with great skill and care.

I think I should telescope the remainder of the trip. After all sorts of misadventures with the jeep, including trouble with customs and a broken universal joint, Harvey and I drove into Yola at 9 a.m. on a Wednesday.

A Series of Illnesses

Crises were popping up like dandelions last week. It would take me another six letters to do justice to each one. First there was “Ted” (not his real name), whose crackup I watched with awestruck sympathy. The problem dated from vacation, when the rest of us took off on various trips, and Ted—unable to make up his mind about either travel or a project—stayed in Yola. The principal has never been very happy about our flights from the school during vacations, but having Ted around got on his nerves as well as Ted’s, and I’m quite sure he now realizes the therapeutic values of a change in scene.

Ted didn’t greet the new term with much enthusiasm. He mentioned doubts about staying here the full two years; he hoped the next vacation would allow him to get away from the place.
He was soon having trouble with the 4A class, which harried him about his biology lessons, claiming they were unclear. Two weeks ago he stopped teaching and took to bed from “exhaustion.” He confided to a British teacher that he wished he could get away, possibly for good.

Things remained this way for the next few days. He slept most of the day, going out of the house only for meals at Steve Krasner’s house. On May 21 he had a spell of crying at Steve’s during breakfast, coupled with an attack of heart flutters. After that he began taking Phenobarbital as a sedative.

Lowell and I were only dimly aware of all this until later, when Ted came over to our house during one of Lowell’s free periods and asked him to take him to the hospital, because he was having more heart palpitations. This Lowell did, and the Indian doctor diagnosed the problem as a “mild heart condition,” advocated a month’s rest and removal—not by air, as this would have been too exciting—from Yola.

This prescription was hardly calculated to quiet Ted’s nerves. Lowell left on some errand, and when I returned to the house Ted was lying on Lowell’s bed, white-faced, trembling and moaning to himself that he “mustn’t worry.” Poor Mazu was scared out of his wits.

It happened that two Peace Corps officials, one from Kaduna and the other from Lagos, were stopping overnight on a routine visit, and with their help we planned Ted’s removal. Their first thought was to take Ted with them on their five-day swing back to Kano. This struck me as optimistic. By nightfall they felt the same way, and plans were made to charter a plane from Lagos or Kano the next morning.

At 12:30 p.m. on Sunday the plane was in the air, and by 4:30 Ted had been tranquilized and sent off on the return flight with Dr. Conrad. As one Englishman remarked, “That’s more than my country would do for me.”

We don’t know yet whether Ted is still in the country or has flown back to the States. It’s a shame; he was a pleasant addition to our number, and we thought he had adjusted with a minimum of complaints, certainly fewer than Mary and Steve.

* * *

Tuesday may witness the departure of Lowell, who is the latest among us to be struck down by illness. About the middle of last week he was running a low temperature, feeling listless and experiencing a dull pain in the middle of his chest. Friday morning he went to the hospital for a lab test. It confirmed what he had suspected after reading up on his symptoms: infectious hepatitis—jaundice.

Lowell was ordered to stay isolated from the rest of us and go on a salt-free, fat-free diet. Doctors aren’t sure about the infectious stage of the disease, but I, as his
housemate, have an excellent chance of coming down with the disease 10 to 40 days from now.

Lowell is now the color of a Chinaman and will likely leave on Tuesday’s plane. He’ll probably never come back, because the disease requires three weeks recovery and another three weeks of recuperation. By that time our school term will be over and he would be on his way out of the country anyway.

It makes sense for the Peace Corps to ship him back to the U.S. immediately, although he would, of course, prefer to leave here normally and travel through the Near East and Europe. It’s a sad way to leave in addition to putting a burden on the already short-staffed school.

As if Lowell’s illness weren’t enough, we had a robbery soon after the beginning of a violent rainstorm early Friday morning. With the start of lightning and thunder, I closed one of my bedroom windows where the rain always blows. About this same time a thief was sawing away at the screen over one of our living room windows.

I was lying half-asleep amid the noise and lightning flashes when I noticed a steady glow near my door. Becoming fully awake, I was met by the blinding glare of a flashlight shining across the unused half of my double bed.

There was mosquito netting between me and the holder of the flashlight, and I couldn’t see clearly. I first thought it was Lowell, either sick or closing windows. “Yes?” I asked. There was no answer. I asked once or twice more, and the reply was a garble of bush English—it must be Mazu. “What do you want?”

A pause. “Bring money!”

“What?”

“Money? You have money, Bature?” He feverishly picked up a notebook that was lying on the unused bed, riffled through it and threw it on the floor.

With a sickening understanding, I answered, “Yes, yes,” and began to climb out of bed through the mosquito netting. At this the thief turned, slammed the door and ran out into the rain.

I probably should have gone to warn other people,
but the one other time someone had tried to rob us it had
been a one-shot attempt. I should have issued a warning,
because for the next three hours the thief went down the
line of faculty houses until he reached the principal’s.

The principal was awake in bed, heard the tell-tale
noise of window panes being removed, grabbed a shot-
gun and fired a single barrel through the window and
over the head of the fleeing thief. (British law has stiff
penalties against harming thieves. An American would
have aimed at the legs if not the head.) My own protec-
tion in the future will be a track starter’s pistol under my
pillow.

* * *

Thanks for all your letters and support during the
past couple of weeks. I’d like to think I’m over the hill
with this thing, but every time I’ve about decided that, I
get another spell of sensations and realize that it will all
take time. Peace Corps doctors have been in the process
of a big shift recently, but I finally got to see the new
head doctor here in Lagos, a Dr. Van Reenan, about a
week ago, and my dealings will continue to be with him.

Like the other docs, he feels that the numbness in
my foot is psychosomatic and the product of last term’s
stress. He’s a neurologist by training, and after an exami-
nation yesterday he ruled out any possibility of a neuro-
logical disorder. I’ve been taking a mild tranquilizer
called Meprobamate since Yola; tomorrow he will try me
on some other medications he feels may be helpful.

Knowing that these sensations are psychosomatic
doesn’t make them any easier to live with, but at least I
can stop worrying that I’ve got some mysterious disease.
I feel that my general emotional tone is much better than
it was in Yola, and I now feel that I can return for the
final term without the sense that I’m a fool for doing so.

Have I mentioned that all but a handful of us who
came in January 1963 have left or are leaving Nigeria? A
dispute arose over the planned termination date of
December 1964 for our group, with the result that a few
people with “compelling personal reasons” were given
permission to go home early. After this the floodgates
opened, and one volunteer after another decided that he
or she had to go home this fall.

The departures make it that much tougher on those
of us who had planned to stay. Friends of mine who are
staying include Harvey Flad and Judy Hikes. Knowing
others are leaving makes for homesickness, but I hope
my zest for travel will be strong enough in December to
keep me from rushing back without seeing Europe.

Yola has now earned a just reputation among Peace
Corps officials as one of the worst stations in Nigeria.
The climate, the present condition of the school and the
isolation are a lot to swallow. It’s ironic, because my
initial reaction to my assignment was a feeling of good
fortune. Rod Larson used to say he wouldn’t have
chosen anyplace else. Lowell had hoped for the Eastern
Region, but he took to Yola quickly enough.
Steve Krasner, a Cornell graduate who had expected to go to Zaria, chafed at his assignment from the beginning, however, and Mary Dunn has always felt lonely, although her complaints have never been desperate. It seems now that Mary will definitely be transferred, and Steve will likely be transferred out as well.

That leaves me and any other volunteers the Peace Corps sends in September. It would be foolish to transfer me. The strain of moving and adjusting to a new school would be worse than the strain of lasting out one more term. And I do like the school and the boys; it was the isolation, not the teaching, that drove me under in June.

Lowell's departure was the final straw, I'm now quite sure. The fact of his leaving and the circumstances of his leaving were too much for me. I was left to pack his things in an empty house full of more responsibilities than I wanted to bear. Both he and Ted had “escaped” their problems through illness, and I was likely to catch hepatitis myself. These two facts made it possible for my subconscious to give way to the first suspicion of illness to come along. “Juju,” said the English doctor in Kano wryly; the African nurse beside him smiled.

The final fall term

In spite of having only nine teachers for 280 students, school did start after all. The staff roster includes two Englishmen, three Peace Corps volunteers, two Pakistanis and two Nigerians who have completed sixth form, the British equivalent of junior college. The boys seem to have resigned themselves to a chronic shortage of teachers, and discipline—while far from good—is not the problem one might have expected. I think they realize that no amount of protest would do any good until the ministry in Kaduna changes its attitude toward our school.

We are running the same schedule we ran last term. The fifth form is receiving no instruction in history, physics, geography or Bible knowledge. The fourth form is not being taught history, geography, biology, Bible knowledge or physics. The lower forms have more free periods than instruction.

Mary Dunn and Steve Krasner did come back, contrary to what I'd been led to expect in Lagos. Mary was offered a transfer to Katsina but held out for Maiduguri, where she has several friends. When the ministry turned down her Maiduguri request, she decided to stay in Yola. Steve, who began applying for transfers almost as soon as he had arrived, has grown increasingly well-adjusted to the place and looks forward to spending the rest of his tour here.

Mazu still works for me, but the arrangement satisfies neither of us. I decided in the summer that I didn't want to eat alone this fall, and I told Mazu that he might as well find another job. He hasn't found one yet. I've kept him on half pay as a kind of unemployment insurance. He cooks breakfast for me and does the
washing and cleaning. I eat the other two meals with Mary and share all food and fuel expenses with her. Domestic service is not a career with a future in Nigeria.

Did I tell you that the thief and his two accomplices who broke into my house in June came to trial a couple of weeks ago? The principal, another Englishman and I were called on to testify at the Alkali’s court in Yola town. The North has two judicial systems, civil and Muslim. Our thieves were tried in the Alkali’s court because the police wanted them to be awarded stiff sentences. Civil courts can give only two-year prison terms. The Chief Alkali in Jos can award up to 20 years.

The trial was held in a thatch-roofed building adjacent to the Native Authority headquarters and the Lamido’s palace in Yola. The defendants, three of them, sat chairless on the concrete floor. On the walls were British Council and U.S. Information Service posters. Each of us was called into the building separately. We were questioned by the Alkali, tall and dressed in pinkish riga and white turban, and his assistants. It was a laborious process, and the cross-examination had to be translated from Hausa into English. Afterwards the defendants were allowed to challenge the testimony if they wished.

We hear of local political troubles through the Catholic fathers, whose congregation includes most of the Southerners living here in Jimeta. In the downtown, Northern Peoples Congress thugs wrecked the headquarters of PEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union), a minor opposition party, and burned its records.

The wreckage remains undisguised as a warning to political heretics. Another NPC move to bring voters into line is the insistence that Southerners sign pledges of support for the party or else pay a fine. The priests in Ganye tell us that their Southerners must pledge unanimous support or else pay a collective fine of 400 pounds. Several shopkeepers have already left the town, according to the priests. Don’t believe everything you hear about Nigeria being Africa’s best hope for democracy. An Ibo in the North has about as much political leverage as a Negro in Mississippi.
In late December 1964 Harvey Flad and I began a long journey home by boarding a French holiday cruise ship in Lagos for a six-day voyage down the west coast of Africa to Point Noire in the French Congo. We got off the boat with only one visa in our passports. That was to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the former Belgian colony, and how and whether we would get there was very much on our minds. Our hope for getting into Portuguese Angola rested on air tickets we had bought through Air Afrique in Lagos. We had no visas for Angola, as Portugal had no embassy in Lagos.

Perhaps the sweetest train smoke in the world can be smelled on the Camino de Ferrer Benguela, a railway running from Lobito, Angola to the frontier of the Congo. Behind every engine is a crib of eucalyptus wood, fuel for the firebox. Stands of eucalyptus trees have been planted all along the 800 miles of track. The full journey takes three days, with frequent stops for refueling.

We rode the Benguela railway in the course of a trans-continental journey across Africa. Our trip started in Angola, a square-shaped block of desolate bush on the southwestern African coast that is ruled by Portugal as an overseas colony. We rode in a mahogany-paneled compartment with green leather padding and brass appointments.

Our meals were taken in a dining car glittering with cut glass and polished chrome bottle-holders for wine from the home country. Passing our window in the opposite direction were freight cars laden with copper, iron ore and possibly gold and diamonds—part of the 3.5 million tons of freight hauled annually from the heart of Africa out to the Atlantic coast. We were enjoying the luxury of 19th-century empire builders in the Africa of 1965.

We were lucky to be in Angola at all. Portugal, which has been suppressing a rebellion in Angola’s northern province since 1960, does not welcome visitors, especially American visitors, into its colonies. Visas are difficult to obtain under any circumstances, and in our case they were impossible to obtain. Harvey and I had decided to fly into Luanda, Angola’s capital, without visas and take our chances.

“They don’t like strangers in Angola,” we had been told by a South African journalist we had met in Lagos. “They don’t play games there—they could teach your CIA a thing or two about security. I guarantee you’ll have trouble if you arrive without a visa. Just start yelling for the American consul as soon as possible.”

We boarded the plane to Luanda at 5 p.m. I sat near the rear and struck up a conversation with the steward-

Left: Sunset on the Zambezi River
ess, a stunning brunette from an old Portuguese family who, it turned out, spoke excellent English. The plane touched down in Cabinda, a tiny Portuguese enclave between the two Congos. Cabinda airdrome was a military base bristling with watchtowers and machine gun emplacements straight out of “The Bridge on the River Kwai.” Standing around were military types with dark glasses and revolvers who eyed us and our cameras with suspicion.

We flew over the mouth of the Congo River and down into Luanda, a city of glittering lights such as I hadn’t seen since leaving Idlewild Airport two years ago. Our stewardess, that guardian angel, delivered us into the hands of another guardian angel, the ground stewardess. Throughout all the subsequent trouble, this soft-spoken woman was always friendly and reassuring, unquestionably the deciding factor in our success with the police.

After leaving the plane we presented our passports to the uniformed attendant at a window marked “International Police.” He rifled through their pages two or three times, then looked up with a wry smile and said, “You have a problem.” We said we knew we did and subsequently did our best to explain our travel plans and inability to get visas. We were handed a DTA flight schedule, an indication that we might be asked to fly out of the country as soon as possible.

The miracle was that we weren’t deported immediately. The inspector general of police, a severely dressed older man with the face of an aging bullfighter, sympathized and laid down unusually lenient conditions for our deportation. We would buy tickets for the DTA flight to Nova Lisboa, in the interior, the next morning, then catch the Benguela Railway train on its trip to the Congo frontier. We would be allowed to stay in a hotel instead of being guarded at the airport. Our passports and most of our baggage were to remain behind, however. “If you are not here at 6:30 tomorrow morning,” said one policeman, “Pfft—finito!”

Walking the streets of Luanda that night, we saw some of the contradictions that caused journalist John Gunther to describe Portuguese African colonies as places of “backwardness, sterility, racial ease, ruthlessness, a vague feeling for future spiritual uplift, and, believe it or not, charm.” The city’s buildings and shops boasted an elegance that far surpassed that of Lagos and Accra, the two West African capitals I had visited. It was as if Rio de Janeiro had been transported across the Atlantic and put under armed occupation.
There were no racial barriers. The military vehicle that transported us to our hotel held a black-skinned officer who joked and gave commands to the others in the truck, whites and mulattoes. Faces on the streets ran a full spectrum from white to coal black. Unlike colonists from the northern European nations, the Portuguese encourage their soldiers and settlers to mix with and marry Africans. The children of such marriages are considered “white” rather than “colored,” and they have full social, educational and political rights.

Until recently Portugal divided Africans into two classes, *assimilado* and *indígena*, the former being Africans who had met requirements of language, religious belief and financial standing. The distinction no longer exists legally, but practically speaking it is as strong as ever. All doors are open to the “civilized” Africans, while the bulk of the population lives in appalling ignorance and squalor. It is not segregation but poverty that has made Portuguese Africa a prime target of African revolutionaries.

Angola was the one place in Africa where we saw white poverty. Riding through the outskirts of the city on our way to the airport, we saw the shacks of Portuguese settlers attracted to Angola by promises of a better life in the overseas province. Thousands of poor whites have come from the slums of Lisbon to settle down in slum African townships. It takes two weeks to build a house from packing crates used to ship American cars. Posters on the houses boast, “Ever bigger, ever better, ever more Portuguese.”

The next morning we were at the airport in plenty of time, and our flight to Nova Lisboa was uneventful. Again, at Nova Lisboa, we had incredible luck (or close surveillance), as we were escorted to the train by an American named Ferguson, a Westerner who has been iron mining since the ’30s and in Angola since 1945. The train arrived in the station as he was helping us buy our ticket. He negotiated with the clerk in Portuguese and changed our travelers’ checks into *escudos*. Without him we would never have made it on board on time.

Once aboard the train we were in luxury. We had asked for second class tickets, but it turned out the clerk had given us first class. As the train passed town after tile-roofed town, we noted the heavy representation of priests and soldiers among the people standing on the platform. The climate was brisk and bracing, as the
altitude is over 6,000 feet at the railway’s highest point. At night a guard in camouflage dress carrying a submachine gun stood silently in the corridor at the end of our car, the final one of the train.

Passengers into Katanga must wait a full day after the train stops at the Angolan frontier before boarding the Chemin de Fer du Bas Congo au Katanga at the town of Dilolo on the Congolese border. The stop was a blessing, actually, as it gave us a chance to visit an Angolan town, the frontier village of Teixeira de Sousa. There is one hotel in town. Our total bill was about $2.50 apiece for a bed and two fine meals. Along the way we bought fresh strawberries for about 7 cents a basket.

Many of the Portuguese poor are shopkeepers. In Teixeira de Sousa we must have visited or passed by a dozen small shops. All seemed to be selling more or less the same things, although several shopkeepers brought out leopard, zebra and python skins in hopes we might buy.

Who provided them with business? Possibly soldiers, who were garrisoned in this town as in most others we saw. Perhaps priests and missionaries, who until recently were the only source of education in the villages.

On to the Congo

The next morning we boarded a shuttle car that took us to the frontier, where we changed engines and were driven to the Congo town of Dilolo. The train in the Congo was dramatically different from the one in Angola. First class here meant a dirty compartment invaded by Africans crowded out of the second class car.

The train poked along, making stops of an hour or more at the tiniest of stations. We later learned that part of the trouble was security checks to prevent communists with propaganda from sneaking into the country from Zambia. All travelers are required to have a faire de route by police authorizing movement from one town to another.

Early the first evening we stopped at Kolwezi, a huge center of open-pit copper mining, and there we met some British missionaries putting one of their number, a sixtyish lady named Miss Haywood, onto the train. Miss Haywood was to prove our next guardian angel.

When morning came we had changed to an electric engine and were skimming along part of the 100 kilome-
ters of electric grid built by Belgium for the mining operation and its transport. The highways, power lines and modern housing of the highly-developed Katanga we had heard about were beginning to come into view.

Wandering around Jadotville station during one of our interminable stops, Harvey talked to an American missionary who predicted that Katanga would again attempt secession if president Moise Tshombe failed to defeat the communist rebels in the North. Time alone will tell whether the rebels can recapture the Stanleyville area. The missionary said Tshombe’s Katangese army had been largely trained in Angola during the 1961 troubles; Angola and Belgium would very likely support him again if he chose to break away.

We arrived in Elizabethville at midnight Friday night. Illiterate station guards had trouble understanding that our passports constituted a faire de route, but Miss Haywood got hold of the missionaries who were meeting her to help us explain the problem. They also put us up in their mission guest house for the night—the train had been four hours late, and it would have been hard to find an inexpensive hotel.

The next day we checked in at the U.S. consulate. We got a lead on hotels and reserved places on a tour of Union Minière de Haut Katanga, the famous copper mining firm. We found a Greek hotel, the Cosmopolite, whose room rate worked out to less than $1 apiece for us. This was at black market exchange, of course. We had one wonderful European meal after another in Elizabethville—Belgian, Greek, Italian—for a dollar or less apiece.

Saturday and Sunday were spent quietly exploring the shops, restaurants and patisseries of Elizabethville. There is a tawdriness about the city now that Africans have taken over public buildings and roads, but the city’s 14,000 Europeans held on throughout the civil war and are now beginning to see prices go down and imported goods come back to the shops.

“We live from deadline to deadline,” said the pretty South African wife of a contractor we rode with to the Congo border. “Last year we said we would see how it turns out in June and whether Tshombe lasted the year. Now we’re wondering what will happen in the elections in March.”
Meeting the mercenaries

Sunday night we decided to take in *All About Eve*, an American film with French subtitles that happened to be playing at a local theater. The film proved of lesser interest, because we struck up a conversation with an odd-looking teenager in a crew cut sitting in the row in front of us. He had heard us speaking English and turned around to ask about night clubs in town.

It developed that he and the thirtyish man sitting next to him were mercenaries just returned from the fighting around Stanleyville. They had come into town before making their way to Salisbury, Rhodesia, and they didn’t know where to find a meal or a drink.

We hadn’t eaten ourselves, so we steered the pair toward an Italian pizzeria, ordered soup, steak Milanese and Simba beer and sat back to listen to their stories.

Alf, the younger, was about 19, slim, narrow-faced, with close-set brown eyes, the hopeful beginning of a moustache and a small but sensual mouth. He was wearing tight-fitting black chinos and a light blue shirt with shoulder straps.

“Buster,” his travel mate for the homecoming, wore a striped sport shirt and slacks. He was on the short side and had a pleasant face and brown hair combed into a younger man’s wave.

They had come south by train. Their ride had been worse than ours, apparently, for they claimed to have been jammed in with six Africans, one carrying dried fish, and they had been interrupted several times in their journey by guards with rifles demanding *faire de route*.

“I’ve been pinned down in a rebel camp we captured—dead bodies rotting all around me,” said Alf, “but, I tell you, I’d rather be there than back in that compartment with those bloody stinking kaffirs around me.”

“The coons are so damned cheeky up here,” added Buster. “It’ll be good to get back to Salisbury, where you can kick a kaffir the minute he steps out of line.”

There was a bit more of this kind of talk before we asked some questions about Stanleyville. Was it as bad as *Time* magazine had made out? (Harvey and I were silently recalling *Time’s* phrase about the mercenaries being “riffraff from the bars of Salisbury and Johannesburg.”)
It was, they said, and worse. The atrocities on both sides had been vicious. They’d come into one town and seen the bodies of nuns and missionaries there. “We didn’t take any prisoners,” said Alf. “And when we killed the Muleles, we let ‘em die slow, after seeing what they’d done to those nuns.”

From their stories it seemed Tshombe’s armies were hardly any better off than their opposition. Medics had been appointed from the mercenaries themselves at the Kamina training camp. A planeload of medicines from South Africa, including an anti-gangrene serum, had never arrived.

Serious cases couldn’t be properly treated at the front, and transport to Leopoldville was uncertain. One mercenary died from a flesh wound after successive amputations of his arm had failed to halt gangrene. Another, blinded in one eye, lost the other because treatment was delayed.

Pay—including death benefits to widows—had been held up so that only one widow had received the sum promised upon recruitment, and only a scattering of the soldiers had received their weekly salary.

Alf had served out his full six-month contract with the mercenaries, but Buster had quit in disgust after six weeks. He wasn’t sure whether he’d get his job back or be able to make payments on his house and furnishings. Of 40 in Alf’s outfit, only nine been killed or wounded.

“In Stanleyville every safe in town was blown within 24 hours,” said Alf. “One guy in my outfit made off with one million dollars in solid greenbacks. He disappeared the next day, and nobody’s heard of him since. I’ve got about $800 with me now, and some in East African pounds, but another $800 got stolen from me in Stanleyville. It was amazing. You wanted a watch? Blam! You blew open a store front, reached in and got a watch. You wanted a woman? You just snapped your fingers. None of this haggling, like you would with a kaffir woman down south—and pretty too!”

Alf showed me one of his $100 bills. “We figured that if Tshombe wasn’t going to pay us, we were going to pay ourselves,” he said. “After all, we were mercenaries, weren’t we? I mean, you risk your life for what you can get, right?”

Not least of the mercenaries’ troubles were with the Congolese National Army (ANC), whose troops most often ran from battle or else fought battles with Katangese soldiers, against whom they had fought during
reputation as a young soldier, hoping to travel to the States or elsewhere eventually. Buster, who’d done paratroop duty during his National Service in England, and who had fought Mau Mau in Kenya, was going back to “the wife and kiddy” and the good life in Salisbury.

They were an interesting pair: Alf a born war lover for whom the killing held no more horror than a late-night war movie; Buster, no worse than most soldiers and no wiser or richer from his strange adventure.

Visiting a copper mine

On Monday we toured installations of Union Miniere de Haut Katanga around Elizabethville. Our guide was a Belgian public relations official named Van Brunnel who spoke enough English to be able to answer most questions. Harvey had majored in geology at the University of Colorado and had worked in mines during summers, so his questions were knowledgeable and encouraging to our guide.

We drove out to Kipushi, an underground mining operation for pyrite and copper-pyrite, which are low-
grade copper ores. We put on boots, coats, miners’ lamps and hardhats in order to make the trip down into the mine. The elevator took us down to 500, 550 and 600 meter levels so that we could observe the operation of water pumps, ventilation and transport of the ore. The elevator controls were being watched by Africans, but Van Brunnel stressed that they “don’t actually control anything—they just look to see that nothing goes wrong. It’s fully automatic.”

At 550 meters we descended by a series of rickety temporary ladders down to the hot moist passages where the actual mining was going on. It was exciting being down there with jackhammers rattling, dust and noise and water filling the air.

In the afternoon we were driven to the smelting operation in Lumbumbashi, an area just outside Elizabethville where a giant smokestack and slag pile are visible from most parts of the town. The major furnace had been closed down for cleaning, but we were nonetheless able to observe a portion of the smelting operation. The copper bars go from here to Lobito, where they are shipped to Belgium for further purification. The region’s copper ore is among the purest in the world.

**Trouble at the border**

We decided to leave Elizabethville the next morning at 7, at which time a convoy of cars went south across the border to Zambia, the country known until last fall as Northern Rhodesia. We later learned that the convoy had been organized to counter the banditry of former Congolese soldiers who had killed and robbed several Europeans on the road. The convoys were ended as unnecessary in October, however.

We had no sooner put our bags in position and tried out the European hitchhiker’s wave (a gentle downward flopping of the hand at the wrist) than a cream-colored Mercedes stopped, and a well-dressed couple offered us a lift.

The man’s name was Swanepoel. It’s a common Afrikaner name—his father was South African and his mother Belgian. The family owns several farms in the Rhodesia and recently started a contracting business that is now the biggest in the Congo.

The wife was a Rhodesian of English stock, a pretty blonde who only a year before had got a degree in fine arts from the University of Durban in South Africa. She had come to Elizabethville knowing no French and no Swahili. Apparently the loneliness and boredom undid her to the point where she had had to go back to Salisbury for three months of psychiatric treatment. However, she liked the place, she said. (All this we learned while the husband was off buying a fan belt for one of his firm’s trucks.)

The morning’s luck had been too good to be true. It turned in the most unexpected fashion. After sailing through immigration with a friendly Congolese official we met three young, eager and suspicious customs
officers. Would we open our bags for inspection?

Instead of the usual cursory turning over of dirty laundry, this trio went through everything, even taking caps off medicine bottles and looking inside. We later learned that our Angola baggage tags may have made them suspicious of diamond smuggling.

In my bag they found the first of some ore samples we had been given from the Kipushi mine and a lump of copper from the Lumbumbashi plant. Gleefully the officers made a pile as one sample after another came out of the packs. Where were the papers to prove our legal ownership of these valuable minerals? Swanepoel told them our explanation in French and Swahili, but to no avail. They wouldn’t arrest him for carrying us, they said, but we would have to return to Elizabethville under escort to prove we hadn’t got the minerals illegally.

We proposed just leaving the stuff behind—it wasn’t worth the trouble to us. The officers exchanged knowing smiles; we wouldn’t be allowed to slip away that easily. Our crime was not to be taken lightly.

The Swanepoels drove off, leaving us sitting glumly in a tin-covered shack with our bags. Hours dragged by while we waited for the chief officer to appear. We must have looked less suspicious as time went by, because it wasn’t long before the young officers were listening sympathetically to our story of being geography professors in Nigeria to whom the guide at Union Miniere had given the samples for Harvey’s classe de geographie.

Still, they said, Union Miniere should have given us papers proving ownership. What were the minerals worth? Nothing, we insisted.

Fortunately, the bureau chief was a reasonable man. By now everyone was a bit sheepish, and the officers offered to return the samples and get us a ride with the next uncrowded vehicle going south.

Hitchhiking in Zambia

Our luck changed for the good again. Our driver was an African trader who was taking his sons to a Catholic secondary school 10 miles outside Kitwe. We
would stop there, and the missionaries would take us to a hotel in town.

The mission—Franciscan Brothers—proved to be American, and a hotel was out of the question. We would sleep in an empty dormitory and eat with the lay helpers.

We ended up staying two nights at the mission. The school is one of the oddest I’ve seen in Africa, a Catholic mission school run by Americans (and now a handful of Zambians) for English boys. The school is supported by tuition fees and has a very attractive campus.

The Franciscans’ other work consists of missions to Africans in the bush as much as 300 miles away. We ate our meals and watched television with the lay helpers, two married couples, a bachelor and two single women from the West Coast who, in manner and attitudes, might easily have been a collection of Protestant missionaries.

Here we first encountered an attitude that appeared almost universal among Zambia’s Europeans: Africans (or “niggers,” as one of the lay helpers began to call them in the intimacy of our two-day acquaintance) are lazy, ungrateful children incapable of taking care of themselves, let alone running a country. “I give Zambia two years, five years at the outside,” said the maintenance man.

Lack of education is appalling, it’s true. Another American we met later said there are currently only 50 secondary school graduates in the entire country. President Kenneth Kuanda’s cabinet contains most of the nation’s college graduates, who have mostly American degrees. The same seems to be true of all of East and South Africa.

“In Nigeria it’s different,” we would answer, “There the African does run the country and the European is a guest.” It’s true that we didn’t really appreciate West Africa’s virtues until we came here.

During our one full day at the mission we got to go into Kitwe, a rich copper-belt town whose broad streets, trim stores (including camera and sporting goods shops) and supermarkets might be in any American suburb. The mining has brought Europeans and money to Zambia; if they stay, Zambia has a good chance as a nation.

We hitchhiked on Friday morning to Lusaka, the capital of the new nation. Our driver ran an informal taxi service, charging his African passengers varying rates for distances traveled. Unlike Nigeria, Zambia has almost no taxis or passenger lorries. There is hardly any money economy among Africans, and no great transportation network as in Nigeria. There are beautiful corn and dairy farms around Lusaka, but they are all run by European settlers.

Like Kaduna in Northern Nigeria, Lusaka is an administrative capital and nothing more. It’s a pleasant enough town, though, and we spent two nights there. We met the U.S. consul the morning after the president of
Rwanda had been assassinated. He told us to avoid all routes that go anywhere near the eastern border of the Congo. We may have to skip Malawi as well because of the anti-Americanism there.

In Lusaka we had a chance meeting with an American, George Metcalfe, who invited us to drop in at his school in Chisikezie. The Metcalfes and another young American, John Minor, had gone to Gonzaga College in Spokane, Washington. Metcalfe had met Zambia’s minister of education, who had encouraged him to sign a contract to help the new country. Minor had followed after turning down a bid to train for Peace Corps service in Nigeria.

Young Americans in Africa are usually liberals, and Metcalfe and Minor’s views were an oasis in the desert of white settler opinion we encountered in our travels. They were confident of Kuanda’s ability to make Zambia a success, assuming he is able to continue boosting education so that the country can get technicians and an intellectual elite.

Metcalf said the Central African Federation had been an evil thing for Africans, because the money earned by Northern Rhodesia’s copper exports had gone for development of white towns and cities in Southern Rhodesia. Nyasaland (now Malawi), the third partner, had received virtually no development assistance from the federation. Now that Rhodesia has lost Zambia, it is busy prospecting for its own minerals to support its farm economy.

**Across Victoria Falls into Rhodesia**

The next morning we hitched a ride south with an Englishman in a Chevy Impala. He took us to the Zambia border post, and from there we took a bus across Victoria Falls gorge to the Rhodesian border post.

On the Rhodesian side of the bridge a chain link fence with barbed wire topping is going up to prevent Zambian political agitators from crossing the border illegally. “Looks like Buchenwald,” wrote an angry letter writer in the *Bulawayo Chronicle*.

The falls themselves are a tremendous sight. Ten miles away in the town of Livingstone you can see the spumes of spray rising from the main gorge. The various cataracts are over a mile wide and an average 300 feet in depth.

As you walk through the rainforest that fringes the opposite bank, you get drenched in spray from the
rainbow mist. With its tropical setting and great height, Victoria Falls rivals Niagara Falls in magnificence.

I’m sorry we didn’t get to see more of the Zambezi River. We did have a marvelous time at the Sprayview Restaurant on the Zambian side, however. As we were sipping afternoon tea, one hippo after another floated down the river and into some reeds about 70 yards away from our table. They rose out of the water, munched on some leaves, then chased each other out into the river again with great splashes.

During lunch we watched a snakebird or darter, an antediluvian creature rather like a cormorant in size and color that uses its wings to swim underwater while its long curved neck sticks out of the water like a miniature dinosaur’s.

Thursday we had a frustrating day trying to hitch-hike a ride to Bulawayo. There was no traffic, and we finally resigned ourselves to taking the night train at 7:30. We bought third class tickets over the polite objections of the station attendant. “I can’t refuse to sell them,” he said, “but I wouldn’t advise it. You are not allowed to use the dining car, for one thing, and of course there’s hygiene. There is nothing to prevent some smelly African from lying down in the bunk next to yours.”

Second class was filled with white schoolchildren going south—possibly Zambians fleeing to schools in Rhodesia and South Africa to avoid supposed lower
educational standards brought about by independence.

On the platform an older white woman was complaining that her baggage had been locked in the ticket office. “I hope the attendant comes to open the door,” she said. “I’ve got all my bedding in there. I always bring my own bedding on these trains. I know they wash the sheets and all, but still they’ve been sleeping on them, haven’t they?”

We got the last laugh in third class; both cars were virtually empty and didn’t fill up all during the night. We got breakfast in the dining car thanks to our white faces. (I realize that we’re playing both sides of the racial fence on this trip, but it’s hard not to use the advantages you have. However, you wish others had them as well.)

Traveling from Bulawayo to Salisbury was quick and pleasant. Our driver was a young Rhodesian of British and South African descent. He had been an agricultural extension worker but was now selling fertilizer and pesticides for a German chemical company. Like most Rhodesians, he lost no time in bringing up politics. (“You’re from America?” said a headmaster’s wife we met at a swimming pool. “That’s good. When you get back, you can tell them to leave us alone.”)

Our driver was articulate and persuasive. “Look at what has happened in all the other independent countries Africans have tried to run. Look at the Congo; look at Tanzania; look at Kenya! Zambia’s starting to have its troubles already. Nigeria, where you fellows were, they’ve just had all that election trouble. Now, we can’t afford that kind of thing here. We’ve been on this land; we’ve got homes and farms here. We’ve got no place to go. We’re not British anymore; we’re Rhodesian.

“Here in Rhodesia and in the Republic [of South Africa] Europeans have done more for the African than anyone else on the continent. The African is going to have more of a say in the government, but it’s going to take time. Why does Britain want to sacrifice the whites here to a lot of troublemakers demanding ‘one man, one vote’? That slogan doesn’t make sense in Africa—those votes belong to illiterates and primitives who will do anything under intimidation. What you’ll get here is a dictatorship and possibly communism, just like everywhere else where the African has tried to rule. All we ask is that Britain and America try to understand what’s happening here and give us time to work out our own problems.”
“Leave us alone!”

“Leave us alone”—it’s a slogan among Rhodesia’s 200,000 whites. There is no longer much talk of declaring unilateral independence, but the firm stand of the British government against apartheid in South Africa and against minority rule in Rhodesia has created feelings similar to those among whites in Mississippi. “We don’t dislike America so much,” a retired policeman told us, “but we’re becoming very anti-British.” Amid all the usual eulogies following the death of Winston Churchill today was praise for the departed British leader’s “understanding” of Rhodesia and South Africa.

The ranks are closing in Rhodesia. We felt the chill directed toward outsiders shortly after we booked into the YMCA here. The director was friendly enough, and so was a rather odd English computer programmer who had just been on a trip handing out Christian tracts to Africans in the reserves. Downstairs there were about a dozen of the Rhodesian apprentices and young job holders who make up most of the Y’s permanent residents. (The Y isn’t integrated despite its best efforts. The government classifies it as a European hotel.)

“How was your trip, Pongo?” asked one of the teenagers. “How’d you like the kaffirs?”

“Yeah, how were the munts?” asked another. “Why didn’t you stay down there for good? Pongo, next time you go visit the kaffirs, don’t come back, eh?”

There was more of this, including a remark I assume was intended for us. The speaker expressed his pleasure at the departure of the last “bloody Yank” to visit the hostel. That night, at the cinema, a teenage couple sitting next to us exchanged seats so that the girl would not have to sit next to a young, well-dressed African who had taken a seat beside her.

We were in Salisbury for five full days, and during that time we met and talked to people representing the entire spectrum of opinion on Rhodesia’s political troubles. Sunday afternoon we were shown around the University of Rhodesia by Mathew Wakatama, one of the handful of African lecturers there. He is a leader of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) whose column in the now defunct Daily News caused the newspaper to be banned and nearly caused him to be placed in a detention camp. Two days later we had dinner with a couple who support the Rhodesian Front, the party of Ian Smith’s conservative government,
in Salisbury’s posh Mount Pleasant suburb.

When we arrived at Wakatama’s house, we noticed the stitches under his left eye. He had had an accident, he explained. A drunken European had crossed the divided highway onto his side of the road, forcing a collision. An ambulance was called. It picked up the European to take him to the white hospital but left Wakatama where he lay. An African friend who happened by later took Wakatama to the hospital. The European wasn’t charged with a traffic offense even though his insurance company was paying Wakatama’s expenses. “The police said nothing could be proven against him. There is no longer any justice in this country. I heard that, when the police found out it was me, they said they wished I’d been killed.”

Wakatama used a borrowed car to show us around the university grounds. A product of Methodist mission schooling, he got a London B.A. in geography and returned to Rhodesia to become the first African principal of a secondary school. He was offered a fellowship at Harvard’s School of Education but took the university lectureship instead, not wanting to leave his family behind. He was an early member of ZAPU, and when the party was banned and its leaders sent into detention, he became a member of the People’s Citizenship Council (PCC) a “political device” that arose to supplant the banned party. He is a supporter of Joshua Nkomo, the controversial leader of ZAPU.

What are a black nationalist’s grievances in Rhodesia? First of all, he can’t vote unless he has a sixth grade education and an income of 300 pounds per annum. If he has either qualification but not both, he gets \( \frac{1}{4} \) of a vote. His children can’t attend government schools for Europeans, except at university level. According to a land apportionment act devised years ago by Cecil Rhodes, he can’t live or lodge in certain areas of the city and its suburbs. (At the time, Africans in the “native reserves” were protected from farmers and land speculators who wanted their land—the law does have its good side.)

Since the advent of the Ian Smith government in 1962, Africans’ freedom to criticize the regime and organize political movements has been severely limited in Rhodesia. There is no legal apartheid, as in South Africa, but the laws of wealth and custom continue to act as effective barriers between the races. There are more educated Africans in Rhodesia than in Zambia and Malawi combined, yet majority rule and independence are still withheld.

Wakatama is an educated man and a Christian, but the same bitterness in another man would add another convert to communism. As he said to us, looking out the plate glass window of his home on the university grounds, “My garden and grounds put my neighbors’ to shame. In fact, I’ve been asked if a European did the landscaping. Yet I can’t live across the street [in the
European reserve], because I would ‘lower the tone of
the neighborhood.’”

Monday morning we called a phone number left us
by Buster, the white mercenary we had met in
Elizabethville. He invited us to have drinks with him
and his wife that night after dinner. At 8 p.m. a short,
dapper colleague of Buster’s showed up at the Y to take
us to the Punchbowl, a suburban bar frequented by
Salisbury’s rising young businessmen. There we met
Nicky, Buster’s district manager, and a collection of
middle-aged sports who model themselves—as described
by Nicky—on Playboy magazine. No politics this time,
just a succession of games of chance for drinks and, as
the evening drew to a close, Nicky’s stories and imita-
tions of famous movie stars.

We were invited to drop by Nicky’s office at Colo-
nial Mutual Insurance the following morning for tea.
Here we met Peter Morris, the sales manager, a hand-
some fellow in his late thirties.

“So you’ve been in Nigeria,” Morris began. “It must
be difficult for you to leave a happy country like that to
come down here to Rhodesia with all its racial tension
and violence and political trouble.” We were both nod-
ing away at these sage observations when we suddenly
realized it was all intended as irony, a more sophisticated
version of the usual South African’s approach to a
stranger: “How do you like our terrible country? Have
you seen any blacks whipped to death yet?”

It was necessary for us to chuckle, albeit awkwardly,
at the witticism, but it gave us the chance to show why
we did think Nigeria was a pleasanter place than Rhode-
sia. Poor Buster’s mouth was agape; when he met us in
Elizabethville he was unaware we harbored such subver-
sive ideas.

But Peter Morris was intrigued. Would we be willing
to appear on television that evening? We said we would,
but this proved impossible, and the next day we were
leaving. (Morris, a cricketer, presented sports news on a
6 p.m. TV show called “Tonight.”) Would we come and
have dinner with him and his wife that evening?

Morris described himself as a “converted South
African” who wouldn’t have been seen in the same room
as a black man 10 years ago. Today he would be willing
to entertain an African in his home “provided he came
up to my standards.” This was far from making him a
radical, of course, but he seemed so compared with his
wife, a frosty babe who had come out from England a
decade earlier. “I was a Pongo,” she said ruefully, using
Rhodessians’ derogatory term for the English. (Like
former communists who have turned on liberals, the
most racist Rhodesians are Brits longing to be accepted
by life-long residents.)

I won’t recount the evening in detail, except to note
how boringly similar discrimination in Africa is to its
fellow species in the United States. Africans and Indians
are dirty and smelly; they are ungrateful; they crowd
together into one house; they lower property values—the same things that have been said about Irish, Jews, Poles, Italians and Negroes in America. Rhodesians are almost as neurotic about hygiene as Americans; to hear them talk, you could catch VD from smelling an African across a room.

I hope I don’t sound too misogynistic if I say that if there weren’t women, there would be no racial prejudice. Women do not kill and enslave, it’s true, but men are not as likely to worry about whether their neighbors smell, how they are dressed, whether they suckle their babies in the open or urinate on the grass. Most important, they don’t harbor fears of rape. Where you have white settlers in Africa, you have race prejudice; where they were only soldiers, merchants and missionaries, you don’t. “The best friend West Africa ever had,” to quote an African’s famous remark, “was the mosquito.”

This is not to say that the Africans themselves aren’t at all responsible for the current mad talk of Rhodesia’s declaring unilateral independence. Three or four liberal-minded people we talked to say that if the nationalists had accepted the 1962 constitution and endorsed the reforms promised them by the previous government (including repeal of land apportionment and integration of sixth forms), they would now be on their way to self-government. “Joshua Nkomo is a fool and a dupe,” said a young American working at the YMCA. “The trouble with African nationalism here is that it lacks a good leader such as Kaunda or Nyere.” He reasons that Rhodesians voted for Ian Smith in 1962 as a protest against African demands for immediate self-government. They’ve been stuck with Smith since, and now the diehards seem ready to see the whole country go down with him.

**Train trip through Mozambique**

We’re riding in a fourth class railway car (there are no others) between the tiny Malawi towns of Balaka and Salima, which is a resort center. In one of those incongruities that seem to persist throughout our journey, we will step off the fourth class train into a taxi bound for a resort hotel on the beach of Lake Malawi. On your map, it’s probably still Lake Nyasa. For that matter, Malawi is still probably “Nyasaland,” unless you’ve got a map published since Oct. 24, 1964.

We got two rides today, and our catching the train was more or less accidental. The first was with a well-off African businessman in Blantyre, J.W. Jarawaza, who supports the cause of African nationalists from Rhodesia. Traveling with him was S.T. C. Mushong, a leader of the Zimbabwe African Nationalists Union (ZANU), the party that split off from Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU party. ZANU claims to be a moderate party dissatisfied with the aimlessness and violence of the ZAPU movement under Nkomo. ZANU’s leaders are intellectuals who broke away from ZAPU. They were inspired by the Rev. A.N. Sithole after ZAPU had been banned and Nkomo had refused to start a new party.
Moshongo was a broad man of medium height with a curly black beard. His English was somewhat faulty, but he spoke persuasively and with feeling. He blamed the violence in Hifield township, an African suburb of Salisbury, on attempts by ZAPU thugs to keep ZANU from enlisting followers. “Africans killing Africans,” he said. “That’s bad. We went after Europeans, but they went after Africans.” Wakatama, for his part, had blamed the violence on non-political thugs trying to cash in on the tension between Africans.

Where nationalist movements are caught up in dreams, not realities, irresponsibility becomes the keynote, as when Nkomo promised African government by the New Year. Moshongo spoke glibly of “directives” and “the masses” and complained that Nkomo could not possibly be a good leader because he had never been in jail. He was earnest, however, and he acknowledged the problems of a nationalist movement that is fighting not just British civil servants but also diehard white settlers.

We departed from Salisbury, Rhodesia on Jan. 29, getting a lift from an Irish shopkeeper and contractor living in the village of Inyanga, a town that sits in the heart of the Rhodesian highlands. He persuaded us to take a later train from Umtali than we had planned so that we would be able to visit Inyanga.

The next morning we packed ourselves into the family car of a South African named Stein who had agreed to take us to Umtali. We had lunch at a Portuguese restaurant and bought third class tickets through Mozambique to Malawi. (We had no trouble getting a three-day transit visa through Mozambique, but a longer visa would have been difficult and time-consuming to arrange.) Our request for third class got an even frostier reception here than it had in Victoria Falls. Our ticket-seller this time was a young woman with a stutter, which wasn’t helped any by our request. “But that’s f-f-for Africans,” she answered.

Two stony-faced Rhodesians came to her aid, selling us the tickets without a smile of bewilderment. The stares we got once we got in that carriage were incredible. Africans and Europeans alike did a double-take when they saw white skin through the window.

This time third class was pretty bad. A layer of greasy soot lay on the wooden seats, and bread crumbs lurked in odd corners of the floor. We had most of the car to ourselves again, however, and we didn’t lose any sleep because of lack of mattresses. Third class saved us $10 apiece for future travel.

We changed trains at Donda junction. This time a Portuguese official saw that our third-class compartment was cleaned from top to bottom. It was a monotonous trip, but pleasant enough in the evening when we used a 90-minute stop in Luchenza to have a last wonderful Portuguese dinner of chicken, rice and olives at the local hotel.

About midnight we stopped at the Mozambique border on the south side of the Zambezi River. All
passengers had to disembark for customs and immigration. In the shorts and sport shirts we had worn all day, we were immediately attacked by a swarm of mosquitoes. Immigration was an agony of trying to fill out forms while hopping and ducking and swatting.

Things were better on the Malawi side at Port Herald — we were properly dressed and had applied insect repellent, but we were plagued by the insects the rest of the night.

**Riding and cruising in Malawi**

Malawi, formerly Nyasaland, has been called the Cinderella country of Central Africa. “If scenery were for sale, Nyasaland would be rich,” wrote John Gunther in “Inside Africa.” Its land is green and fertile, its people are amiable and clever, but grinding poverty is the rule. The lush hills and valleys won’t support the three million Africans crowded onto them.

Our hitchhiking was amazing, in that we first got a ride from a German doctor driving a Rolls Royce and next waved down the car of the Israeli ambassador. We piled our bags into the trunk and drove off with the white flag with the blue Star of David fluttering on the car’s hood.

The ambassador said he was happy to talk to break the monotony of the ride. He gave us a little lecture on Israel’s role in Africa, that of a successfully developing country with meager resources trying to show other countries the way.

It was the kibbutz concept and Israeli leaders who began the Young Pioneer movement in Ghana and the Malawi Youth League. Both groups have been transformed into ugly instruments of political indoctrination and control, but in the beginning they were idealistically designed to give unemployed youth the desire and means to help the nation.

“We told these African countries not to give the boys special camps but to keep them within the community,” the ambassador told us. “We told them not to give salaries and uniforms and, above all, not to have them sitting around idle, but they did not listen to us … A country needs three things to develop — resources, technical assistance and the desire of the people to help
themselves. We’ve tried to encourage the last of these.”

The ambassador gave us the use of his car and driver to find the Zomba Day Secondary School, where there were Peace Corps volunteers who would be able to take us in overnight. We found the volunteers at their home, part of a French Canadian Catholic mission, and set off that afternoon on a hike up the 6,000-foot plateau. There were striking views from the top, including a look at Mount Malanje (9,000 ft.), the tallest mountain in Central Africa. The day was mostly sunny, but we barely avoided a rainstorm we could see advancing like a devouring wall of mist along the plains and hills below us. We had afternoon tea at a hotel on the top before we sped down a steep path to the bottom.

We rose the next morning at 4 a.m. to catch a train for Chipoka, where we were to board a 620-ton lake steamer that is the main north-south passenger transportation in Malawi. Once again, we had to face the issue of money versus comfort. First class was 8 pounds and pleasant; third class, a bunkroom in the hold of the boat, cost 2 pounds. There was no second class.

We decided to buy third class tickets provided we could get the captain to agree to let us eat with the first class passengers. We’d been told he would be reluctant, and he was, but after some hemming and having, some searching glances, and finally a warning that we would not be allowed upstairs except for meals, he agreed.

We didn’t set sail until 1 a.m. Below decks we set ourselves up on metal bunk beds without mattresses or springs. The wall next to our bed was alive with crawling things, and on the floor we saw a fishbone or two left from our fellow passengers’ meals. Despite two fans, it was hot and the lights stayed on all night, but we were able to sleep comfortably enough.

In the morning the lake was a tableau of moods and colors. The blues and grays of the sky shifted against the outline of mountains ringing the lake. Occasionally in the distance we saw what seemed to be brown or gray puffs of smoke left from an explosion. These were dense clouds of the tiny Nkunge fly, which drift over the water during the rainy season.

After three days on board, we prepared to leave the boat. We packed our bags and went up to the fourth class deck to try selling the grass mats we had bought for sleeping on the ship. Harvey sold his, and I was trying to sell mine when I was accosted by a boy of about 19 or 20 dressed in a torn red shirt, shorts and a quilted conical hat. He stood in front of me, staff in hand, and asked in broken English to see my bags. I began to notice other boys gathered around him. Some carried staffs, others wore motley “Boy’s Club” dress — teeshirts with ragged maroon strips running diagonally from waist to shoulder.

“We are from the government,” the leader said. “We want to look at your bags.”

How could he be from the government without a uniform? I protested.
“These are our uniforms,” he answered. I laughed and walked downstairs to the bunkroom with the sleeping mat on my shoulder.

Moments later I heard footsteps on the ladder as the whole gang of boys descended to the bunkroom. “We want to look at your bags,” the leader repeated. “We are from the government.”

I realized they weren’t kidding. I also realized they must be members of the Malawi Youth League, the youth wing of the ruling party whose current job is maintenance of road blocks to prevent arms shipments and subversive communications. They had boarded the boat at the village of Karonga, where we were docked, in order to search the ship. We had been told we might be subject to their harassment if we traveled by road, but it had not occurred to us that we would ever see them on board a ship.

“If you want to see my bags, get a policeman,” I said, feeling very much alone in the bunkroom.

A boy was sent upstairs. I was congratulating myself on a tactical victory when down the stairs came the ship’s policeman, a kind-faced older man dressed in the stiff, immaculately creased shorts and jacket that are the hallmark of policemen in British Africa. He was obviously embarrassed at having to conduct the search, and it was astonishing to me that he was so helpless before the political power of the Youth League.

The search began. They were looking for guns, the leader said, and “writings” to six rebel ministers in hiding in Tanzania. They went through my clothes and effects with painstaking but amateurish thoroughness, looking suspiciously at Halizone tablets and film cartridges. The most serious of the searchers was a sullen-faced boy with a bad eye whose well-cared for “uniform” and stiff bearing testified that he enjoyed his role more than the others.

“We are wasting time; we are wasting time,” he would say curtly when the others appeared to be lingering over some curiosity in my bags. He pursued the search with thoroughness long after the others were relaxed and friendly. Of such were made the worst Hitler Youth, no doubt.

Actually, at the end, they became quite friendly and apologetic. They were, after all, only teenagers. They asked Harvey and me for pictures of ourselves and were flattered when we asked to take photographs of them. The policeman, however, remained behind until the others had mounted the stairway, and then gave me an apologetic smile.

We went to the bow of the boat and watched the mountains at the end of the lake form an enclosing wall around us as we moved north toward Itungi, our port of disembarkation. A boat took us ashore.
Flying to Zanzibar

“When the flute is played in Zanzibar, all Africa east of the Lakes must dance,” says an old Arab proverb.

The tune currently played on the Zanzibari flute is revolution. Zanzibar has been described as the “Cuba of Africa,” and the parallels are striking. Both places are islands, both overthrew autocratic regimes with popular revolutions, and both are bases for communist subversion and propaganda.

More than four separate cultures mix on the beautiful island 20 miles from the Tanzanian shore. There are gas stations with “no smoking” signs written in three alphabets and four languages: English, Swahili, Arabic and Hindi.

A lightning revolution last year resulted in the slaughter of many wealthy Arabs, elevation of African revolutionaries to ruling positions, and insecurity for Indians, who are “in the middle” here as elsewhere in East Africa. “When the squeeze comes from the communists, Indians will be the first to suffer,” we heard time and again from Europeans we talked to.

The U.S. embassy in Tanzania doesn’t encourage visits to Zanzibar by Americans, but it can’t prevent them. One curiosity of relations between East Africa and the United States is that, however much these countries may resent U.S. policy in the Congo, American tourists are welcomed as heartily as ever.

We took off from Dar es Salaam airport in Tanzania in a single-engine seven-seat biplane, the sort of craft you would expect to see only at air circuses. We landed at Zanzibar airport about a half hour later and were met by Anthony Nazareth, director of the Bureau of Tourism, who guided us through customers and immigration.

“Did you have any trouble at the airport? No,” Nazareth began defensively. “Were you asked any special questions? Were you treated differently because you are Americans? People have the idea that people on Zanzibar do not like Americans. That is not true. We want tourists from all countries.

“Today you are going on a tour of the island. You will be allowed to get out at any time, to take pictures. In
the afternoon you will be completely free wherever you like. You will see for yourself; you are going to be our good will ambassadors. About pictures—people sometimes get into trouble for taking pictures of military personnel. Please don’t do this, because these army officers think you are going back to make propaganda. Otherwise, take any pictures that you like.”

We were driven to Africa House, a massive old hotel with a billiard room and a balcony that overlooked the incredible blue of the harbor. East Germans passed us on the stairway. (I say East Germans, because all West Germans stay on the mainland. Now that Tanzania wants to admit an East German consulate in Dar es Salaam, however, West Germany may pull out altogether.)

During breakfast, some of the disappointment came out in Tony, as he asked us to call him. Before “this big bang,” as he called independence and revolution, he had been director of a flourishing tourist business called Spice Island Tours. When the new government assumed power, he was informed that there were no longer any private tourist agencies in Zanzibar.

“However, they decided that they needed a bureau of tourism,” he said. “I was the only resident who knew anything about tourism, so they asked me to be director. What could I do? So now I’m director of tourism for Zanzibar.”

Tony is a Goan, a Christian from that former Portuguese enclave in India. Indians have thus far fared reasonably well on Zanzibar. They weren’t butchered during the revolution, as were many wealthy Arabs. They lost jobs in the civil service, however, and they aren’t allowed passports to leave unless they ask to be repatriated to India.

We set off in two taxis on the morning tour. We drove past the Peoples Golf Course, the Patrice Lumumba Technical College and the Gamel Nasser Secondary School.

Our first stop was the ruins of a building built by a 19th century sultan to house his harem. We wandered amid stone and coral rooms that had been cooled by an aqueduct nearby. Cows grazed in a seaside pasture beneath the palms that shaded the ruins.

Our drive took us past copra processing plants and clove estates. Zanzibar is truly an island of spice—we tasted cloves, cinnamon bark, lemon grass and soft red fruit that contained a translucent sweet center.
Another stop was at a building housing baths built by another sultan for his Persian princess. We went inside, where the walls were decorated in white and aquamarine. We drove past a camp of the People’s Liberation Army, but I was not allowed to take a picture of the sign. I did photograph the Youth League headquarters and a block of flats under construction by the East Germans.

The morning ended with a visit to a government-sponsored curio shop that displayed low-priced local handicrafts (the People’s Gift Shop?). The manager, who was named Zera, was the most beautiful Indian woman I have ever seen.

Lunch was at Africa House. The East Germans were out in full force. One was fixing the jukebox filled with such neo-colonialist hits as “My Boy Lollipop” and “A Hard Day’s Night.” Another we talked to said he was negotiating for his government’s shipping industry for a contract to develop Zanzibar’s harbor facilities.

At the table next to ours, a short, squat African in a khaki uniform with gold stars on his epaulets was eating with two Chinese and a Cuban. “It is shameful what the Americans did,” one of the Chinese said at one point in the conversation. Whether he was talking about Vietnam or Uganda, I don’t know, but he evidently wanted us to overhear.

Tony hovered around us, then fell into conversation with the neighboring table. On our right a party of Israelis sat down with an American. When we stood up, Tony introduced us to the African, who, it turned out, was an Honorable Member of the Revolutionary Council. The Honorable Member seemed unsure whether to shake hands or not, and after the ceremony he said something in Swahili to Tony.

“Did you hear that?” Tony fairly shouted. “‘Bring more Americans,’ he said. I didn’t ask the Honorable Member to say that. He said it himself. You see, he was friendly, and he wants more Americans to come!”

I asked for a photograph, but the Cuban’s eyes said no and the Honorable Member refused. We said goodbye, and we went clumping downstairs with the Cuban, a floppy khaki sunhat clamped on his head.
Recommended Reading


*Descent from the Hills*, a novel by Stanhope White published by John Murray, 1963

*Inside Africa*, John Gunther, Harper & Brothers, 1953

*Kirdi*, Rene Gardi, Alfred Scherz Verlag, 1955
Harvey and I continued traveling in East Africa, visiting Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Egypt. We then flew to Athens, where we joined two women we would eventually marry — Harvey’s future wife Mary Fogarty, a Peace Corps volunteer returning from Thailand, and my future wife Sara Sarfati, who was working for British Airways in New York City.

The next fall I entered Columbia Journalism School and reconnected with Steve Krasner in Columbia’s university-wide International Fellows Program. The following summer I moved to Washington, D.C. and began what was to become a career in food policy journalism. Steve went on to become a political science professor at Stanford University.

Lowell Fewster returned to ministerial studies after the Peace Corps. He became a vice president of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and then executive minister of the American Baptist Churches in Connecticut.

Harvey Flad is a professor emeritus of geography at Vassar College. John Bishop is a professor of education economics at Cornell University. Roger Leed is an attorney in Seattle specializing in environmental advocacy. Rod Larson is retired in Wyoming after serving as a water specialist with the U.S. Geological Survey.

In 2003 American University reached out to three former Yola volunteers — Rod, Lowell and Steve — to tell them that His Excellency Atiku Abubakar, vice president of Nigeria, wanted to meet with them in Washington, D.C. It turned out that Atiku had been a schoolboy at Adamawa P.S.S. and fondly remembered his Peace Corps teachers. With AU’s help, he has used his personal fortune to found a private technical university in Yola.

Apparently our efforts nearly a half-century ago did make a difference.