THE PEACE CORPS, SIERRA LEONE, AND ME:
FIFTY YEARS LATER

NORMAN TYLER
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Introduction

This is the story of a naive nineteen-year-old kid from Michigan who joined the Peace Corps in 1964. Enthused by the challenge from President John F. Kennedy for international service, I applied to the Peace Corps in 1963 and accepted a placement the next year for a Rural Development Program in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Throughout my two-year tour I kept a diary of daily activities, occasionally expanding comments into personal reflections on my role in this unfamiliar culture. Reading the diary served as a reminder of the many challenging, but ultimately rewarding, experiences I had that gradually changed me and my entire perspective on life. The two years as a Volunteer in Sierra Leone have had a profound impact on who I am fifty years later.

The following pages represent my daily thoughts as a young man who had little knowledge of, but great curiosity about, the world outside the borders of Michigan. Diary entries are quite regular in the first year, and become less frequent during the second year, when much of the newness of things had worn off; they have been abridged to better keep the reader's interest. Interspersed are sections from letters home to Mom and Dad (Norma and Charles Tyler). The letters were thoughtfully preserved by them and given to me upon my return to Michigan. Also included in the narrative are "sidebars" describing in more detail relevant information; they provide context for the diary entries. Most of the photos are my own. Others are credited to Mike Bradbury, my Volunteer housemate for the two years. Images may be poor quality by today's standards, since some of the film deteriorated in the tropical climate, but enough detail remains to give a visual image of our experiences.

I lived in the town of Kenema, upcountry in eastern Sierra Leone. For most of that time I lived with fellow Volunteers Mike Bradbury and Joe Sharp. After reviewing the diary entries, I found the great preponderance of the narrative was about projects for which I had primary responsibility, rather than other volunteers. It will be left to them to tell their own stories. Although our relationships as housemates were sometimes strained during our two years, as would be expected under the stress of living in such a foreign environment, I have continued to keep a friendship with Mike, and have had occasional contact with Joe, over the past fifty years.

When I decided in 2015 to convert the handwritten entries to digital format, it was the first time I had read the diary since leaving Sierra Leone. I originally intended to record this manuscript as a memoir for my wife, Ilene, our two sons and daughter-in-law, and other close relatives. However, readers who reviewed it as a manuscript encouraged its publication, since they indicated my experiences in those two years would be of interest to a larger audience.

The Peace Corps was largely responsible for changing me into a lifelong community advocate, a perspective carried throughout my professional career, providing motivation to work on community issues and, in a typical 1960s kind of way, change the world for the better. It is difficult to underestimate the influence the Peace Corps experience had in influencing my life since then. I continued to participate directly with the agency for a number of years, first as a trainer for new Peace Corps Volunteers, next serving with my new wife, Ilene, as VISTA program volunteers in Baltimore, followed by a period of recruiting new volunteers for Peace Corps and VISTA. As described in the Epilogue, the two of us have stayed involved as community advocates wherever we
have lived and worked over five decades. But the root of this involvement was in 1964 when I received the acceptance letter inviting me to become a Peace Corps Volunteer.
The origins of the Peace Corps

The idea of an international volunteer corps was initiated by John F. Kennedy during his presidential campaign in 1960. He first proposed the concept in a late-night speech on the steps of the Michigan Union at The University of Michigan. Soon after his election, he followed through on the idea and the Peace Corps was established through an Executive Order and authorized by Congress in September 1961. The first director of the Peace Corps was R. Sargent Shriver, the president's brother-in-law, who was given full responsibility for development of its policies.

Just as America's early pioneers developed the wilderness by spreading out across the land, the idealistic basis of the Peace Corps was that American volunteers would spread out across the world and help develop "Third World" countries. A Peace Corps recruiting brochure stressed that "the volunteer must be prepared to live a pioneer life."²

The first volunteers were placed in Africa. It was a strange view most Americans had of the "Dark Continent" at that time; it was seen as an almost mythical place. Robert Coughlan described Africa when writing for Life magazine in 1959: "It is the black Africa of apes and ivory, of Stanley and Livingston, of crocodile and lion, and of 125 million people still living in or at the edge of savagery." He wrote, "almost all Africans were quite primitive," suffering from the "inertia of eons of ignorance." For Coughlan, Americans had a role to help Africans "explode out of the Stone Age into the modern world."³

The challenge of the Peace Corps was to bring a better understanding between Americans and other peoples of the world and reduce such misunderstandings of other cultures. The Peace Corps was established on three primary purposes—to provide technical assistance to other countries, to help people outside the United States understand American culture, and to help Americans to understand the cultures of other countries. The Peace Corps would only place volunteers in countries where they had been requested, and only in programs the host country had described, so volunteers should feel welcomed upon arrival.

Because the policies of the new agency were amorphous at the beginning, the ideal Volunteer was seen as a recent graduate with a B.A. Generalist degree able to adapt to do almost anything, since "... nobody knew exactly what they were training the volunteers for."⁴ The Peace Corps idea caught on quickly, especially among younger Americans. Shriver and his staff conceptualized how "... a cadre of new pioneers would help cure a malaise among the American youth of the 1960s."⁵

Within two years over 7,300 Volunteers had been placed in 44 countries. Policies regarding volunteer placement have remained largely unchanged over the years. Volunteers typically serve for two years. The Peace Corps provides them with housing and a living stipend to cover food and incidentals—allowing them to live similarly to the people in their community. The minimum age for service is 18; there is no upper age limit. The health, safety, and security of volunteers are the Peace Corps' highest priorities, and most volunteers recognized medical care as one of the most satisfying aspects of their experience.

The agency has stayed true to its original goals. Over the decades other countries have been concerned about America's military and economic dominance and hegemony, and anti-American sentiment often causes international friction. However, over the years the Peace Corps has steered
clear of major political and diplomatic conflicts. It is a testament to the underlying idea of volunteer service that in the 54 years of its existence, over 220,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in 140 countries; currently there are over 6,800 Volunteers placed in 64 countries. The Peace Corps remains as strong and effective as ever, with a significant number of applications and placements every year.
Applying to the Peace Corps

My experience with the Peace Corps began quite unexpectedly while eating lunch with fellow students at Benton Harbor Community College. I was part of a group that discussed many current issues with individuals who liked to challenge each other just for the stimulation. On that day in February of 1963, I noticed a display in the lunchroom describing the Peace Corps and asked the others what they thought about the still-new federal program. To a person, they were unenthusiastic about the program, for a number of reasons: it would cause international problems to have young people representing the United States in foreign countries; we should focus on helping people in our own country before helping in other more far-flung areas; the federal government did not know how to administer such a program. However, I was intrigued with the concept and said I felt the program possibly could make a real difference in U.S. relations with other countries. Although none of us had at that point really thought through our positions, a couple of my classmates challenged me by asking, If you are in such support of the Peace Corps, why don't you apply. In response, I went over to the display, extracted one of the application forms, and took it home with me that afternoon.

At home I considered it more seriously. After discussing it with my parents I decided to apply, since the form clearly stated that the application did not represent any final commitment, but was intended only to express an interest on the part of the applicant. I was nineteen years old, the youngest of three brothers and with two younger sisters. At that age I had little practical experience, but before the end of the semester I received a letter stating there was a potential placement for me in an Agricultural Development Program in Pakistan. I surprised myself by having two reactions to this offer—first, I was truly excited to find that I was acceptable for a Peace Corps placement, and second, I realized I was not interested either in an agricultural program or in going to Pakistan. In the letter from the Peace Corps was a box where an applicant could decline the current offer, but indicate a preferred time, place, and/or type of program. I filled in this area indicating two criteria—first, I would prefer to be placed in Africa, since I felt it would be a culture as different from my own as possible, and second, because my dad had been a carpenter and I had grown up in a family where there were always construction projects, I felt my best fit would be in a construction program.

The school year ended, summer passed, and I began my sophomore year as a student in the architecture program at the University of Michigan. During my first semester on campus, I received a new offer to be a volunteer in a Rural Development Program in Sierra Leone, West Africa. This interested me much more, and I decided to accept this offer, once more with the promise that if I changed my mind at some point during the three-month training program there would be no further obligation. This was enough reassurance for me to drop out of the architecture program temporarily and make plans to spend the next two years of my life somewhere other than in Michigan, a place that I had left very few times.
My parents, Charles and Norma Tyler

My parents, Charles and Norma, questioned me directly on the decision. I appreciated the fact they had concerns that I had no idea what was ahead of me. I grew up in a close-knit family, and it was difficult for them to understand my enthusiasm for leaving a good college program in my sophomore year to work for two years in an area of the world that we all understood minimally and where we had no ties. They questioned whether it would be more appropriate to serve as a volunteer in a program in the United States, where there was a great need for assistance, rather than in a foreign country. I appreciated their concerns, but said my interest was in going overseas, where I would get exposed to a completely different culture. I now was at an age where I was able to make such a choice. Ultimately to their credit, they said it was my decision to make, and when I accepted the invitation into the West Africa program they tried to find ways to be supportive. Thus it came to be that twelve months after I first noticed the display at the community college, I was on my way to the campus of U.C.L.A. to begin training for a construction program in West Africa.
Peace Corps training

We spent three months in a Peace Corps training program on the campus of U.C.L.A. in Westwood, just outside of Los Angeles. It was a special time, living in a comfortable hotel with a pool in an upscale university neighborhood. Our cohort began as a group of 31 men. I was the youngest at 19 years old, and Jack was the oldest at about 55 to 60 years old. Most of us had construction experience, however some did not.

Training on the campus of UCLA

We spent much of our day learning about the culture and geography of Sierra Leone, and in other sessions learning Krio, a formal English-based pidgin language that was spoken by many throughout the country, even in upcountry tribal areas. I was relieved to have our language studies focused on an easy-to-learn language, since I have had difficulty learning languages, and the tribal languages would have been very difficult to learn in three months.
Learning Krio from a Sierra Leonean, with me reading

We learned construction skills appropriate for where we were going and shared our skills with each other. We were given a variety of handbooks on construction, and constructed a model representative of the construction of a typical village school. Especially useful was a comprehensive handbook written by one of the Peace Corps Volunteers in the first Rural Development group in Sierra Leone. It included a wealth of practical information one would need upon arrival, from how to build a school, to how to repair a Jeep, to how to get a meal when staying in a small village.

One of the highlights of the training was when we went to a camp in the San Bernadino Hills above Los Angeles to spend a weekend working on a series of small construction projects. This helped us develop a spirit of camaraderie that would prove valuable when we needed each other during our tenure overseas.
Our Rural Development Program group on a work trip in the snowy San Bernadino hills

Volunteers who are part of the following narrative (taken from group photo):

Wiley: my initial housemate
Mike: housemate for 2 years
Joe: housemate/auto mechanic
Mario: from Brooklyn
During training, there was plenty of time to experience the southern California culture. Regular weekend trips were made by city bus to hang out at the beach at Santa Monica, spend many days at Disneyland, or go to Hollywood to see Cinemascope movies for the first time. I even saw Red Skelton and Kirk Douglas as they did everyday activities in the Westwood neighborhood. And of course, being on campus in the 1960s, with all the young coeds and the Beatles' "I want to hold your hand" the number one song, made all of us feel comfortable with our situation.

Throughout these three months, Peace Corps trainers were regularly evaluating our psychological fitness for spending two years in a remote part of Africa. The screening process was one of the most intense activities during the training program. Parts of the training regimen I especially remember all these years later included: a daily two-mile run around the U.C.L.A. campus.
to better condition our bodies; removal of any wisdom teeth, a painful process for me since all of them needed to be removed; and having the experience of killing a chicken by hand as a way to get used to life in a village.

A policy of the Peace Corps training program was that trainees were encouraged to "deselect" themselves from the program if they became particularly concerned or stressed about their future placement. A number of individuals did decide to leave the program during training for a variety of reasons. (Others probably should have, since a number from our group left the program soon after arriving in West Africa.) I am sure the staff was concerned about my young age; they asked me about it a number of times. But I guess I convinced them I was prepared for the "adventure," which is how I saw it. By the end of the three months, the number in our group had been cut substantially.

The staff then began to make decisions regarding who would be living with whom overseas, and in what locations or settings. I was intrigued with finding out whom I would be placed with, since I had not formed a close bond with any one individual. Most of the group were more "mature" than I was at that time, and although I felt part of the group, I had come from a protected and religious family life and did not drink, dance, or even flirt. I was told my partner would be Wiley Carmack, an older guy from Colorado who seemed to have a lot of experience.

I had a brief time at home to pack. It was difficult to know what to include. In addition to our luggage, each volunteer was allowed to pack a cargo box to be shipped by sea. It would arrive later and could contain larger items. I really did not have much to take, since I had not yet established a household, or even a dorm room, so packed as best I could with things that might be appreciated while living in an area with few resources and very little in the way of American goods.

I was ready to begin.
The trip over

May 9, 1964, Saturday:

The trip began with a first class flight from Chicago to New York. After getting settled in a shared room at the Statler Hilton in Manhattan, new Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) George Arlin and I decided to go to the Metropolitan Opera to see about getting tickets for the evening performance. We paid $5.00 apiece for the 5th balcony. We saw La Sonnambula with Joan Sutherland and were enlightened between acts on everything possible by a college girl who said she has been going to the Met since she was four, averaging multiple performances each week. She said she was disappointed that the Met would be torn down after the next season.

Later, we ran into other PCVs at the top of the Empire State Building, where the wind was so strong I could not stand outside without holding onto something. George joined the others and dates they had picked up and were on their way to a bar, so I decided to explore the city on my own, since there was so much to see in a very brief visit. My first stop was the United Nations Headquarters. It was past midnight, so there was no access to the facility. I continued my jaunt to another famous landmark, Grand Central Station, which was open, but empty. My goal was to make it to Central Park. I window-shopped along the way, getting to the park about 3 am. Even at that time of night the horse and carriage rides were busy carrying riders through the park.

On the way back, I stopped to talk with the desk clerk at a small hotel near Carnegie Hall. He told me how proud he was of New York City, and after my early morning self-tour I was ready to agree. On the way back down Broadway I ran into three men who said they had women for me. I declined. A little further on a bartender who was just going home walked with me for a while. I described my evening to him; he suggested I should go back to my hotel, which I did. When I got back at 5 am, roommates Mike and Ken were still awake and talking. They told me they had been to Greenwich Village. Finally we all went to sleep on this first day.

May 10, Sunday:

We woke up at 8 am, and by 11:00 we were on our way to the World's Fair. We took the Pennsylvania Railroad Special to the site of the fair. I noticed that whereas Grand Central Station had been one gigantic room, Penn Station was a labyrinth of spaces. Little did I realize this grand structure representing the power and wealth of a railroad empire would soon be demolished.

The World's Fair was better than I anticipated. In spite of the large pavilions, which were quite impressive, I especially liked some of the little things—the IBM probability machine; getting a metal stamp with my name; and being able to write the verse, Genesis 41:1, in a handwritten Bible.
At the end of the visit I went back to the hotel to get my luggage. The others had already departed for the airport, so I paid $6 for a taxi ride to Kennedy International. When I got there, I did not remember the airline on which we were scheduled. There was no way to find out other than to go to every terminal building, all placed one after another in a giant circle, and ask. At the last one, the new Eero Saarinen-designed TWA Terminal, I saw PCV Larry Christian and was relieved to find out this was where we were supposed to be. We were given our passports and departed from Kennedy International around 7:00 pm. Our group was joined by 76 other new Volunteers on their way to Nigeria. During the flight to Europe we were served dinner and saw the movie "From Russia with Love," during which most of us, not surprisingly, fell asleep.

May 11, Monday:

We landed in Madrid around 1:00 in the afternoon the following day. Most of us had very little sleep, but we sure did eat. We were served a dinner soon after taking off, there were snacks during the night, we had breakfast on the plane, and a light lunch before landing in Madrid. The airport was all we would see of Spain, but I exchanged some money and bought stamps and postcards to prove to the family I had made it as far as Europe. Then came the bad news that the baggage handlers had torn the tags off most of the luggage, so everyone needed to come to baggage claim to pick out their own suitcases. I think this was where my airfreight was lost, not a good beginning to things.

After the fiasco with the tags being ripped off, we had more to eat at the Madrid airport. After two hours we boarded Ethiopian Airlines for a flight to Conakry, the capital of Guinea in West Africa. At the airport the Nigeria group continued on, but the men of the Sierra Leone Rural
Development group stayed and were honored with a seven-course banquet. I never was able to determine who sponsored the feast, but everyone in our group asked for wine or beer. I was a teetotaler, so was served bottled carbonated water instead. I thought to myself, Is this what I have to look forward to drinking for the next two years?

During the layover in Conakry, I had a chance to talk with the Peace Corps Director for Guinea, who explained we were at a Russian-built airport and would be making our final flight in a Russian plane. During the meal we were watching the runways and saw a small plane coming down for a landing and catching fire. The fire was put out quickly, but we realized we were observing the plane designated to take us to Freetown. Some of us were sure that the Russians were out to get us. Because the plane was so small, the transfer to Freetown took two trips. Most of the group boarded the first flight, but Louis, Jan, and I needed to stay and wait for the next plane and were responsible for keeping an eye on everyone's luggage.
The countries of West Africa

The flight was relatively short, but there was no air-conditioning, and we poured sweat as we made the flight to Lungi Airport, just outside the capital city of Freetown. We quickly found Lungi Airport was not up to international standards, as we were lowered to the ground in a forklift. The three of us were met by Bob Golding, our Program Director for Sierra Leone, who was actually an employee of the CARE organization. Because of our late arrival, we were literally run through customs. The reason for the urgency was that the Sierra Leone Dance Troupe was waiting for the three of us before beginning a special performance. The troupe had an international reputation, and it was enjoyable and interesting to see the acrobatic moves of many of its members. The dancing was well choreographed, mixing traditional dances with humorous antics and acrobatics. We probably would have appreciated it more if we had not been mostly awake since leaving home on Saturday morning.

Sierra Leone Dance Troupe acrobatic dancer holding water while tumbling
At that time Sierra Leone was under the control of Sir Albert Margai, the brother of the first Prime Minister, Milton Margai. Sir Albert did not have the diplomatic and political skills of his brother; he favored his own Mende tribe over other groups, including the prominent Temnes and Krios. Fortunately, I was one of the volunteers placed in the city of Kenema, which was situated in the heart of Mende country, so we were to recognize little of the antagonism toward the government found by volunteers in other sections of the country.

The day, and the trip, finally ended at the Government Rest House, where we were fed for the sixth time. There I found out Wiley Carmack would be my partner upcountry. We would be introduced to the projects and villages in our construction program by Phil Mahle, the PCV who had been the first volunteer for the program in the city of Kenema and was now on his way home.

![Freetown](image)

**Brief history of Sierra Leone up to my arrival in 1964**

Sierra Leone was established as an Afro-European colony by the British, primarily as a location to place freed slaves. In 1792, 1,200 slaves escaped from America under the supervision of the London-based Sierra Leone Company and sailed to the Sierra Leone coast for the purpose of beginning a new settlement. The slaves were freed under the iconic Cotton Tree in what became the city of Freetown. They developed as an ethnic group known as Krios, and formed the focus of a relatively small coastal British colony. The remainder of the territory was dominated by two tribal
groups, the Mende and Temne. Over time the British and the Krios expanded their sphere of influence upcountry, primarily for purposes of keeping the peace and establishing trade with the many tribal chiefs. If such treaties and agreements did not lead to peace, the British would send troops for purposes of pacification.

In 1891 the British had become concerned about the colonial influence of France in West Africa, so the British Governor traveled the country obtaining treaties from chiefs as cooperative agreements between the British and the tribal governance. Upcountry boundaries were eventually established between French Guinea and Sierra Leone, but the boundaries were based more on geographical features (rivers, watersheds, parallels), than on tribal boundaries, which would have been more logically culturally. Ever since, these geography-based boundaries have caused conflicts between tribes and governments with many lines of fission. In 1895, the British established Sierra Leone as a protectorate, giving the British dominant status, leading to many chiefdoms striking back with armed resistance. Power was taken from paramount chiefs and given to the British governor, along with the establishment of a tax structure. In 1898, both the Temnes in the north and the Mendes in the east and south rose up in hostilities toward the British, Krios, and any Europeans, but because of the lack of any coordinated strategies the tribal uprising was put down by the British in two months. This was the last of any significant resistance to British control and governance.

At the time the British had a huge global empire, at one time controlling a quarter of the world's land area. Young British men who wished to rise through government ranks often accomplished this goal by serving in the foreign service, eventually achieving more prominent positions and, hopefully, advancing to a final position in London as a career official or diplomat. One of the first positions taken in such advancement was in one of the African colonies. Many were stationed in Sierra Leone for a number of years. However, these young men were not able to fight off many of the tropical diseases found in West African countries, and they died as young men from the lack of proper medical care. Sierra Leone became known as the "White Man's Grave." On one trip to Freetown, I visited one of the cemeteries, where I saw an inordinate number of headstones with traditional British names and dates indicating men who had died in their twenties. It truly was eye-opening. Fortunately, as Volunteers we had access to preventative drugs and medical support that kept us free of most of the dangers faced by these early colonialists.

By the 1950s, there were stirrings for independence in many colonies around the globe, including the many colonies in Africa. In 1960, a Sierra Leonean delegation went to London to negotiate for independence. They took their lead from Ghana, which had led the African independence movement by successfully becoming independent in 1957. It resulted in a wave that carried forward in many of the other African colonial states in the 1960s. Sierra Leone received its independence in 1960. Under the leadership of Sir Milton Margai, an astute leader, a constitutional democracy was established, with Margai elected as the first Prime Minister of Sierra Leone. For his few years in power, he brought a legitimate and much-admired democracy to national politics as head of its Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP).
Sierra Leone, West Africa
Our two-year tour begins

May 12, 1964, Tuesday:

We had breakfast at the City Hotel, a landmark made famous in Graham Greene's novel, *The Heart of the Matter*. The book described British colonialism, and was one of the places where English culture could be found in West Africa. Although it had been jokingly referred to the night before, we found the City Hotel was the country's second-best hotel, but also its worst, since there were only two. Because I was not yet a coffee drinker, breakfast consisted of bacon, eggs, and Sprite. We knew that water could be dangerous to our health, so drinks should only come in a bottle, and soda and beer were the most available options.

![City Hotel, Freetown](image)

Three days of orientation lectures began at the U.S. Information Agency offices. We met many of the leading officials of the country. One evening Bob Golding invited us to his residence on beautiful Lumley Beach. Bob was a staff member for the CARE agency and was designated to serve as director of the Rural Development Program in Sierra Leone. We spent the evening learning of his passion for Miles Davis and listening to his collection of albums. The next two days were beach days; we soon recognized this would be a major reason to return to Freetown once we had been upcountry for a while. Lumley Beach is beautiful, unspoiled, and excellent for bodysurfing.
In the evening some of us went to the Roxy Cinema and were pleasantly surprised. It was only eight shillings (about $1.00 US) for a triple-feature; we saw The Enemy Below, The Last of the Vikings, and a William Faulkner story. The Sierra Leoneans loved the two adventure pictures, and cheered throughout, but laughed during the Faulkner psychological drama.

May 16, Saturday:
Phil Mahle and his colleague Paul Wrobel took us to the Paramount Hotel to introduce us to "granat (groundnut, or peanut) stew." It consists of a big bowl of rice on which each person puts a chicken and peanut stew and then adds his own combination of toppings, ranging from pineapple to mango chucks to okra and pepper. Out of thirty-five toppings, our table tried about thirty-three before the waiter took them and hurried to another table.

Mom and Dad,
Tomorrow morning we head on up to our base camp. We are going to Kenema, about 150 miles from Freetown, and about a ten-hour Jeep ride. The Peace Corps office has given each of us about $200 to furnish our household. There are four of us staying in the same house in Kenema temporarily; the other pair may move out after a while, maybe not. The house itself is much more than anyone expected. There are four bedrooms, a sitting room, a dining room, a living room, and a detached kitchen. We have electricity, running water (which we must boil before drinking), and possibly a shower. This is all paid for by the CARE office, as is a watchman, which is a necessity for every household; everyone in the previous group has had something stolen while they have been here. Sometimes a thief will stick a long pole through a window at night and snatch things from your bedroom. There will be razor blades attached to the poles in case you tried to grab it. But they say if we pay a watchman, the watchman reports this employment to some village organization and no one will rob the house, even if the watchman sleeps all night. This might be something like bribery.

May 17, Sunday:
Phil, Wiley and I finally began our trip to the bushland. It was not really bush, for we ended up in Kenema, a good-sized city not too far from the border with Liberia. The house we were to live in had not yet been vacated, and the landlord had not finished putting in an outdoor shower and
electrical outlets, so we went to the District Officer's home to see if he could find a temporary place for us to stay. We were put temporarily in Government Rest House #2.

May 18, Monday:

New volunteers Mike Bradbury and Mario DeSalvo arrived today and had the same problem with housing and ended up in Rest House #3 across the road.

Somehow Wiley and Mario got into an argument over screens for our new house. Wiley insisted he would not pay for them, and Mario said his personal comfort came before money. They could not find a mutual understanding, and Mike and I could see this was a bad start to our living together, especially since no one had seen our new house and did not know the situation and whether or not there was a problem.

May 19, Tuesday:

Two other volunteers, Bill Derrenger and George Arlin, arrived at our house on their way to their final post in Kailahun, further upcountry. We all had a lot to discuss, except for Wiley, who for some unknown reason just sat and stared blankly into space while conversations went on around him. Finally he went into his bedroom and stayed the rest of the day. I had no idea what the problem was.
May 23, Saturday:

Previous Volunteers Phil and Paul took us to see a water supply system built by a Belgian working for the United Nations. This was our first visit to a project site. The pipe used for the bridge was held precariously by sticks. Interestingly, seeing this gave me some confidence, since I felt that using such simple construction techniques was something I could do.

May 25, Monday:

We were finally able to move into our permanent housing. We went down to the Forest Industries plant in Kenema to buy some furniture and were ready to move in. After paying three pounds (eight dollars) for the electric bill at the two rest houses, we settled in. That evening we were able to visit with Bob Golding; Hank Richards, a CARE field man; and Tim Howell, a PCV who had graduated from architecture school and had been designated as the Volunteer Leader for the Rural Development Program. We had the luxury of visiting them in the air-conditioned Diamond Corporation house where they were staying, a residence used by the area's diamond mining industry for their visitors.

Mom and Dad,

I have not told you about our cook and his helper yet. On the advice of the previous volunteers we hired an older man, Faya Kissi, as our cook, and since there are four of us living together we also hired a young boy, Tamba, as his helper. They cook all our meals, do the dishes, make the beds, do the laundry, and clean up the house. They come every morning at 7:30, take a couple of hours off in the afternoon, and work until about 7:30 at night. This probably sounds real good, but the phenomenal part is that we are paying the older man twelve pounds (approximately $33) a month and the young boy four pounds a month. Last night they
fixed us native rice with a curried chicken sauce. As with all foods here, it was seasoned hot, but sure was better than the beans and peanut butter sandwiches we had been eating.

Removable stamps

Virtually all the correspondence I sent home for the two years was using an airmail envelope, a lightweight, pale blue single sheet purchased at the local post office. A message was written on one side and the sheet was then folded into an envelope for the address.

At that time the country wanted to earn additional revenue by issuing stamps that would be popular among stamp collectors. In 1964 they had a new stamp, designed in the shape of the country. They did not need to be licked, but could be removed from their backing and pressed on an envelope. The self-adhesive stamps became quite popular with collectors, especially the one honoring John F. Kennedy, who had recently been assassinated and who had been quite well respected in Africa. The problem with these stamps is that after their use they easily could be removed from an envelope; because of their shiny surface the postmark could be wiped off and they could be reused for a second or third time. We found this to be an interesting result to what was otherwise an innovative attempt at economic development.

Sierra Leone's self-adhesive stamps

May 26, Tuesday:

Our real Peace Corps experience truly begins. Tim and Phil took Wiley and me to the village of Falla, where we talked to the paramount chief and village council about constructing a two-room school. The chief seemed to be very receptive. We continued on to the village of Barma, where the chief had just been in a lorry (truck) accident and laid in his hammock as he talked with us. He told
us we could go look at the site for construction of a water supply system, which we did, but he did not seem very enthusiastic about the prospect of such a project moving forward.

Map of Sierra Leone indicating trip routes I most commonly used

May 27, Wednesday:
Phil took Wiley and me to meet the District Officer, the person in charge of development in the Kenema District. We discussed allocating funds for the school at Fala. Maybe things will move forward, but in Africa such planning is not at all predictable.
That evening we learned that Dick Munson, a fellow PCV from our group, had to drop out of the program and return home after one week because of heat exhaustion. This was a bit of a surprise to us.

Mom and Dad,

I finished my first project today. It was shelving for my bedroom, made of mahogany, yet. Mahogany is about the only kind of lumber they sell here, and although it is beautiful, it is three times as heavy as pine, three times as difficult to cut, and overall difficult to work with. It is slower going, but it sure gives a beautiful finished product. I took a picture of it in front of our house with Tamba, our houseboy, so you can see what I am talking about.

![Mahogany shelves I made for my bedroom, with Tamba, our houseboy](image)

Next day:

Well, I thought I had finished those bookshelves yesterday, and so bought some sandpaper to smooth all six feet of it. After spending much of the day on this work, later I was told that native labor would have done it all for about seventy cents. Oh well, I will pretend I never heard that. Besides, it draws a crowd around our front porch when they see a white man do manual work.

May 29, Friday:

We traveled to the project villages and had our first overnight trek to lay groundwork for a new school and water supply. We did next to nothing, but felt we were busy and had accomplished something simply by being out "in the bush."
June 1, Monday:

Previous volunteers Phil Mahle, Paul Wrobel, and Gary Montgomery stopped in for the last time before heading to Freetown and beginning their trip back to the States. We went over to a nearby school to shoot some baskets. It was interesting, for I had just taught fourteen small boys how to play basketball and they were soon outplaying us. I must be a good instructor, but they also had a lot of enthusiasm.

That evening Mario told me he would like to change partners, with me living with him and Wiley and Mike living together. I told him this would probably not be a good idea because our backgrounds were so different, and I would feel uncomfortable living with a boisterous Italian from Brooklyn who obviously had a very liberal attitude about a lot of things. My fundamentalist religious background would not meld well with his very urban experiences. It was becoming obvious that the training program staff had difficulty finding the best mix of housemates, if Kenema was any indication.

June 5, Friday:

The Peace Corps administrator, Bob Golding, decided Mario and Mike should live together in the small village of Daru, further upcountry. I would stay in Kenema and live with Wiley. Mike and Mario were chauffeured to their new home in the Provincial Secretary's lorry, but it broke down three miles from the village and they needed to walk the rest of the way. However, they were given a warm welcome by the village chief, who "dashed" (gifted) them a huge pineapple and two chickens.

June 6, Saturday:

Wiley and I met with the District Officer to discuss construction of the new school. It was to be an innovative A-frame structure designed by volunteer Tim Howell. The design was to represent the look of huts (called "shimbeks") that farmers constructed in their fields to serve as shelters while they were away from the village. The women would sit with their children in a shibeks throughout the day scaring birds and monkeys away from their crops.
June 9, Tuesday:

The four new Kenema Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) made a multi-purpose trip to Freetown. We were going to say goodbye to the former group, who were flying out the next day. I also wanted to finally retrieve my airfreight that had been lost in Madrid, but was told when I arrived that it was already on its way to Kenema. I also wanted to get something for our new houseboy back in Kenema, and picked up ping-pong and badminton sets and a new soccer ball from the Peace Corps office.

We got news about a new volunteer coming to live in Kenema. Joe Sharp would be transferred from another site and live in the house with Wiley and me. Joe, Mike, Wiley and I all spent the afternoon at Lumley Beach, and this social afternoon in a beautiful environment made us feel closer than we had before. In the evening we went to Bob Golding's house for a party and spent the evening talking with many of the other volunteers.

June 11, Thursday:

Bob Golding had a nine-o'clock meeting with Mike Bradbury, Wiley, Mario, Joe, and two group leaders, Tim Howell and Mike Dyer. During the meeting it seemed Mike and Wiley's views toward Mario did not seem too rational, and most of the morning was spent arguing over petty things. Mike B. said it was intangible things that made him want a separation from Mario. I felt he was just making an argument to have Joe as his partner. Mario had not really done anything objectionable, but his outgoing personality did not blend with ours, and a change would be better for everyone. Rumor had it that I might be paired with Mario, but I was against this. Joe stayed after the meeting to discuss it further with Golding, and told us later he would be designated as a swing volunteer in the north and travel to all the various sites.

At three o'clock there was nothing further to discuss or argue, and Golding said he thought the best solution was for Mario to start the village development projects on his own in the village of Daru, living there permanently. Mike would help him get started and then return to Kenema as his
home. Everyone agreed to this. Volunteer leader Tim made a good speech that if we kept ourselves busy, we would not have time to bicker. If the projects were not yet active, we could do something like help a Boy Scout troop, or start a local sports team. After the meeting Wiley said he thought Tim was an "ignorant idealist" for saying these things, but I took it to heart.

That evening Wiley and went to Lido's restaurant and we each had a bowl of Jollof Rice, a common West African dish made from fried rice, tomatoes, onions, and red peppers. This also gave the two of us a chance to talk. Wiley tried to encourage me to be more open about my feelings, and to occasionally pick a verbal battle, even with him.

June 12, Friday:
On our last evening in Freetown, Mike, Joe and I sat on a wharf and watched the sunset across the Atlantic and thought of home. It became clear Joe is quite a talker, and also quite a philosopher.

June 13, Saturday:
We returned to our home city of Kenema. We gave our houseboy Tamba a soccer ball for his team, compliments of the Peace Corps.

June 16, Tuesday:
We talked with the District Officer about approving our school plan. He said it needed to be approved by an engineer, the education department, and the Provincial Secretary. It was a bureaucratic approach the new Sierra Leonean government must have learned from the British.
That evening I relearned the rules of Canasta and played with Wiley and Mario. It was the first time Wiley ever did anything voluntarily with Mario.

June 17, Wednesday:
Mario and I started playing Piquet. It was described in my card games book as "the aristocrat of card games for two."

Mom and Dad,
You asked me to describe our meals, and though it may seem boring, here goes:
Breakfast is pretty much the same as it is back home, either bacon and eggs or pancakes or corn flakes. Milk for cereal is not fresh, but comes in cardboard packets from England; how it stays drinkable without refrigeration I have no idea. Lunch is usually very light, with soup and jam sandwiches. We eat bread in great quantities. The city bakery is just next door, so we get it oven fresh as homemade bread, and eat about two loaves every meal. The one caution is that we check each slice for possible baked cockroaches.
Supper is our big meal, and the cook does his own shopping for this. Our cook had served as a steward in the English army and was used to serving a big lunch and light supper. After about two weeks of reminding him daily, we got it switched around. Most of the time the main dish is "rice chop," which is a bowl of rice and various sauces on top. Usually the sauce is native beef (tough) and gravy with seasoning, but it is very good. Lately we have been getting
him to bake stuff more in our small potable oven. I look forward to supper each evening (mainly because I starve through the other two meals). Someone said you do not eat as much in a hot climate, but I have not found this to be the case.

June 19, Friday:
In the evening I picked up Bill Camp, an engineer with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) agency, who had been sent to give advise us on our construction projects. I quickly gave up on playing Piquet; it was not very intriguing; I guess we are not aristocratic enough. I think Hearts will be the game of choice in our household.

June 23, Tuesday:
Today we took Bill to the town of Barma to look at the proposed village water supply site. Bill could talk with chiefs easily, and by the end of the day had lined up the project for us.

June 24, Wednesday:
John Burdick, with the Peace Corps office in Freetown, said we could start on the first school project immediately not in Falla, but in the village of Nyeama, which is in Mike's territory. He told us it was a rush project and not to hesitate. He said he knew of the personality conflicts within our household, but that all four of us should work together to rush this project through.

June 25, Thursday:
Mike, Wiley and Mario drove to the city of Kailahun, in the Kailahun, to get a Local Purchase Order (LPO) from the appropriate District Officer. Why they needed to go to Kailahun, rather than Kenema, was not clear to me; possibly because Kailahun was also the headquarters for the Provincial Secretary. This LPO would be used to purchase materials for the Nyeama school project.

June 26, Friday:
Mike and Wiley took our Jeep pickup and took the long trip to Freetown to pick up materials for the school. Their plans are to bring all of it back tomorrow in the Provincial Secretary's larger lorry.

June 27, Saturday:
Locals had warned us of a potential problem with thieves. Last night we had a thief pay us a visit. I left my windows open, but all windows have thief-bars on them, iron bars about six inches apart. The thief had a ten-foot pole and stuck it through the bars. My pants were hanging on the other side of the room. He hooked those and then saw my camera hanging under them. He hooked this too, and took it back through the bars. Then he went down to Mario's room, where Mario was woken up by the thief's flashlight. Mario waited by the window; the thief shone a flashlight through the window and put in the pole to hook his pants. In response, Mario poked an umbrella through the window, gave a yell, and the thief ran away.
We had hired a watchman to avoid this problem, but the watchman had been sleeping. He finally woke up and searched around the house. This woke me up as well, so I got up and discovered my pants had been stolen. We went out on the front porch to look, and saw a flashlight some fifty yards away. The watchman and I gave chase, but the thief easily escaped. In the morning, I found my wallet and driver's license lying on the ground, but that was all. Mario had gone to get the biggest macheté he could find. I felt we needed to stay on our toes, for my pants had in its pocket the key to the back door, and with the unmitigated gall of these local thieves anything would be possible.

In the morning I went to the Kenema police station and reported the theft. It took about two hours of explaining for them to fill out the report. I was fortunate to have my insurance policy up-to-date, and could file for money to replace my camera. The only trouble with a new camera is that I would not be confident on how my slides came out, since I was sending them back to Michigan, where my dad would have them developed for free where he worked at Whirlpool.

When I returned from today's trek, I found they had recovered the stolen camera and wanted me to identify it. It was indeed my Graflex camera, but with the name scratched out. I was very happy, since I did not want to buy a new Graflex camera, where I would not have confidence on its settings, since I would not see the slides for a long time. When I looked at the camera, there were only five slides remaining from a roll of 36, so there may be many slides that are unexplainable when they are developed.

Meanwhile, Mike and Wiley returned from Freetown with a load of materials for the new school. We filled them in on our adventure during the previous night.

June 28, Sunday:
We went to the local cinema, the Capitol Theater, and saw a double feature of "Never on Sunday" and a Zorro movie.

June 29, Monday:
Mike, Wiley, and I went to Nyeama to prepare for our first upcountry overnight trek starting tomorrow. We instructed the villagers to clear the site for the new school. They need to clear trees
and brush from an overgrown site and make the finished site large enough and level enough for the school building and a football (soccer) field. This will all be done by hand, so a good number of men are needed for a few days.

June 30, Tuesday:
I cashed my Peace Corps paycheck today, and it is good to have some cash again after being "tiffed" (stolen from). After putting ten pounds in the household pot, I only had enough to buy some jam and an occasional ticket to the cinema. The Peace Corps purposefully does not pay volunteers more than a local living wage so we do not appear too wealthy to the local population.

Bob Golding, our program director, arrived today to discuss with various district ministers the design and construction of the new A-frame school. The discussion turned into a heated argument, from what he later told me, but the ministers finally agreed to a trial project at Nyeama, after which they will decide whether to build other schools like it.

Bob also told us that in September Kenema would host a two-week meeting of all the Rural Development Program volunteers. They will look at projects in this area, and all thirty of the volunteers will be staying at our house. Wow! Our house is spacious, but not big enough for that many.

Mario will be moving to Daru to live on his own at his host community. He took his first load of belongings. Plans are that he will stay there during the week and return to our Kenema house on the weekends, gradually lengthening the time of his stay in Daru.

July 1, Wednesday:
Mario completed his move to Daru. He will be living by himself in a small village; this is quite a different arrangement from our large house in a good-sized city.

Sahr, our watchman, was found asleep again, this time on the back porch, so we fired him. Everyone has been telling us not to be lenient with a watchman, so we had begun cracking down on him, but to little effect. He would rather sleep. We hope Farah, our cook, will get us a new one tomorrow.

July 2, Thursday:
Well, I finally got to Nyeama for my first real day of work on trek. Mike dropped me off and headed to Daru to assist Mario. I told people at the village meeting just what we would be doing. There were about three hundred men who were ready to work. This seemed like enough, if not too many, but the paramount chief had given the order that all men who were able were to be here, since the finished school will be shown to the ministers. Bokari Kallon, who was selected as our counterpart-worker, said we could expect two thousand workers on Monday. Meanwhile, the village headmen, who worked under the direction of the construction headman, split the workers up according to projects. For example, there were about eighty men working on the drive to the school. Or, rather, there were five men working and seventy-five or so looking on. Whenever a limb was to be chopped off, everyone would gather around to watch one man cut it. He would ask if they wanted it cut here; they would say No. Here? No. Here? Yes. Only then would he cut it off with his macheté.
On one trunk, the workman ran into a trove of fire ants, nasty little red ants that sting like crazy, but he stayed to finish chopping before running away and brushing himself off.

There also were about forty men clearing and leveling the field where the school building and the soccer field would be located. They said they knew how to do it, but the site had a little slope, and all they were doing was cutting off the bumps and filling holes. I stretched a level string to show how much of the field needed to be filled. They all laughed at me at first, but later understood this was what had to done, so they started wickedly wheeling those wheelbarrows. Mike had returned, and he checked the line with a hand level. One of the workmen humorously mimicked him by standing behind him and holding a stick to his eye.

The workers called it a day at three o'clock, since some had to walk as far as six miles to return to their village and work at their farms until dark. Mike and Wiley returned to Kenema, but I stayed overnight at a rest house in the village. The boys in the village drifted into the rest house out of curiosity to watch me. (When you are in the Peace Corps, it seems like you live in a glass house.) I pulled a softball and glove out of my trek box and showed them how to play catch. Only one boy could speak English, so I just showed them and they carried on from there. I got a pickaxe handle for a bat, and they began hitting the ball and running to a base. It was great while it lasted, but whenever there is a ball it inevitably becomes a game of soccer. I guess they did not have any set time to return to their homes, for they stayed into the evening. To keep the party going, I brought out my short-wave radio and found some West African "high-life" music. They didn't wait, but went right out on the floor; though each had their own gyrations, they all were in rhythm. Continuing the amusements, I lit a lantern and put a mirror next to it. I guess they don't see too many of these, for they were really fascinated by it, making faces for each other while I smiled.

Finally I had to shoo them out so I could get some sleep. However, I found this was a rest house not only for me, but for others as well. Two of the boys kept coming back into the house, jabbering in Mende. Finally the boy who spoke English explained they were to sleep there in the hammocks, while I slept on what may have been the only mattress in the village. I thought later that it was interesting that not one girl had so much as popped her head in. I guess girls, even at the age of nine or ten, are supposed to stay home most of the time.
July 3, Friday:

I woke up and it was still pitch black. I looked at my watch and it said seven o'clock, so I assumed there would be some light. Then I remembered that this bedroom was right in the middle of the rest house and there were no windows. I groped for my flashlight, but couldn't find it, so I stumbled over to the door and tried to unlock it with the keys. Finally I found it had been locked with a bolt. I finally realized there really was daylight. Oh, well.

The workmen came to the house and took the tools I had brought, counted them, and went down to the site, all without my saying a word. The villages had apportioned the work to be done, so when men came later from the more distant villages, they went right to work. I could foresee a time in the very near future when there would not be enough work for all these men. The first day the paramount chief had sent policemen to check and see that all the men were there and working.

The workmen finished making a drive about three hundred feet long, finished leveling the site, and gathered rock to be broken for aggregate for concrete. A master drummer arrived, and all the men, about two hundred, set to work clearing the field with their machetes to the rhythm and speed of the drummer. My coworker for this project, Bokari, said that when they hear a drum they become wild men; I was ready to believe him from watching the way they were now working.

Bockari Kallon, my coworker

The workers asked me the inevitable question of how old I was. Being only nineteen years old, I am sure I looked young, but they guessed I was thirty years old, probably out of courtesy. When I admitted my actual age they laughed and called me a baby, but it did not seem to hurt my ability to supervise them.

During a rest break, I offered to pay a pound to anyone who would bring me a monkey smaller than a thermos jar. Mike and Wiley have said they would like a monkey as a pet, and I thought this offer would be a way to get in good with the workers.

At the end of the day Wiley arrived and said that Mike's Land Rover had broken down on the way to Nyeama. This was the third time it had been unreliable. Fortunately we had two vehicles, so we returned to Kenema with the Jeep pulling the Rover.
July 4th, Saturday:

It is the Fourth of July, our country's 188th anniversary, but we did not take time to celebrate. Mike, Tim Howell, and I got an early start to the school project in Nyeama. On the way, the Jeep overheated, probably because of a lack of water in the radiator after pulling the Land Rover back yesterday. We all used our canvas hats to pull water from a nearby stream and filled the radiator. While stopped, we decided to change one of the tires, which had been worn through its sixth ply. We had ordered new ones, and I hope they arrive soon. I hope this is not the beginning of vehicle problems, for it is very difficult to find mechanics, and especially parts, in this area.

Mike and Wiley hauled rock to the site all morning, while the rest of us laid out the building using batter boards. In the afternoon, we all took off to the village of Daru to see festivities the workers had been talking about all day. The acting Prime Minister was to come, along with other notable dignitaries. We were able to meet Migor Colon, Minister of the Interior, who was a cousin-who-made-good to everyone in the village, it seemed. I found out Bokari is his cousin. Some Peace Corps teachers arrived that evening for the reception and dance, and it was a pleasant change from the monotony of life in Kenema. One of the teachers tried to teach me how to dance the High Life, a simple two-step dance, but I guess I'm hopeless when it comes to rhythm. Mario, who is now living in Daru, had made friends with everyone in the village and was happy to introduce us to many of them.

Arrival of the Prime Minister's caravan

Later in the evening the acting P.M. arrived with his entourage. The visit was a big deal for a small village. The festivities were very colorful, with devils in their straw costumes and carved wooden masks. Each village has its own kind of costume, and brings its own devil and two or three
drummers. We saw a group called the Daru Dancers dancing in the street when we arrived at one o'clock, and they were still dancing, non-stop, when we finally left at one in the morning.

July 5, Sunday:

It is Sunday, and a restful day to read and catch up on my diary. Mike and Wiley decided to make individual meals for themselves, rather than a common meal, which is okay, but they are also signing their names on everything—the food, the tools, even on the wheelbarrows. I am concerned about this seeming lack of cooperating with household goods and tools.

July 7, Tuesday:

Today a CARE agency truck brought pan roofing to be used at the Nyeama school. We took it to the site, where there were still about one hundred workers showing up. We are starting to worry about what to do with them all at this point in time.

July 8, Wednesday:

Wiley and Mike stayed at Nyeama with me overnight, so I thought they were going to help work. However, they stayed at the work site less than a half hour all day, so I am beginning to think this will be my project by default. I am not sure of their thinking; maybe they feel it is up to the villagers to manage the work. When I go to lunch, I am eager to return to the site to see how much has been accomplished and how the work is going, in contrast to their staying behind.

July 9, Thursday:

Fred Sievers, a volunteer from the previous group, stayed with us in Nyeama today. You can tell he is a veteran volunteer in the way he handles the villagers in an ever-friendly manner, and how he faces each event coolly. Fred and I made forms for the footings of the school. We had a little competition among the two of us to see who could cut the squarest corners in the very hard wood used for forms. We checked each cut four ways for squareness, using one of my dad's old little squares I had brought from Michigan. Later Wiley came from Kenema to tell us the cement had not yet arrived, so we all headed back to Kenema to see if we could find some cement for pouring the footings.

July 11, Saturday:

We bought cement and went back to Nyeama to pour two piers for the A-frame trusses. This turned out to be a full-day job, and was the first real day of work I have put in yet. It was the first time I poured concrete into forms, but it was easy and I am sure I can and will do it again soon.

Working with Fred is fun and educational, and I think Tim and Mike feel as great as I do about the work done today. However, Wiley stayed home. The work seems to be more relaxed and go better when he is not there, even though he probably knows more about construction than any of us. There is definitely tension when he is present. He will not talk out a problem with anyone; he just says we should do it his way, and that if we do not, he won't have any part of it. Maybe it is an
attribute to have this much confidence in oneself, but it seems to me to be a negative response to the situation.

July 12, Sunday:

It was Sunday and a free day, so Mike, Wiley, and I went to the city of Bo for a couple of days to visit with Culbert, a PCV from our group who lives there. It was a pleasant visit, but Wiley was sick and talking with no one during the trip. On the way back, however, I came across his hometown newspaper in the vehicle and saw an advertisement for his dad's farm equipment business. I asked him about it and all of a sudden he became very conversational. I found that the best way to get him to talk is to bring up the subject of his home in Colorado. He may be getting homesick, and that may be causing some of his problem.

July 14, Tuesday:

We were in Nyeama pouring two more piers for the A-frame. The workers are now completing the leveling of a football (soccer) field in front of the school, and are working on their own without our supervision. When that task is completed we will only need about five men every day to mix concrete and other things.

July 15, Wednesday:

Back in Kenema, our electricity went out tonight, as it seems to almost every evening at about 7:30. It was dark, and we were all reading a novel, so with the aid of a flashlight we filled a jar with kerosene, inserted a wick, and lit it. It made too much smoke for the house, so we all went out on the porch, huddled around the flame, and continued reading. To celebrate when the electricity came back on, Fred cooked a pot of oatmeal for everyone. What a life!

July 16, Thursday:

We were all back in Nyeama to pour more piers. I think on my next project we should pour the piers before we have all the village workers show up; it would be more satisfying and efficient. All five of us stayed overnight. Wiley and Mike have established the policy that we eat separately while we don't have a house cook on trek. I think this is a waste of everyone's time, so I asked Tim and Fred if they would eat with me. Although my idea was good in principle, I had not planned trek food for three people, so supper consisted of spaghetti, scrambled eggs, spoiled bacon, luncheon meat, and soup, with bottled Vimto to drink. Wiley and Mike likely were laughing on the inside when they saw our lack of organization, food, culinary ability, and dishes. But on trek, even that type of food tastes good.
July 17, Friday:
Wiley and Mike went back to Nyeama, so they did not see our concern about dinner on this second night, since all we had left was a can of soup. We went over to the village shop to drown our troubles in a bottle of Vimto, and the owner dashed (gave) us a dish of uncooked rice. Manna from heaven! Bokari showed us how to cook it after some village boys crushed and washed it. So we got what we considereed a feast out of the rice and the soup we put on top of it.
For sleeping that night, Fred and I went to a nearby village and each bought a hammock. All I can say is I should have done it sooner.
Mom and Dad,

One subject that I have not written enough about, which I am sure will interest you, is the attitude of the people in the villages. Whenever people have heard of the Peace Corps (they call us the "Peace Corpse") they are always unanimous in their approval. They look forward to Peace Corps projects, and whenever we are working on one, they have two or three down the road that they would also like to have built, which we usually cannot fit into our schedule.

Even if villagers have not heard of the Peace Corps, they are delighted to have a young, white American boy come and help them, and the whole village accepts any of us without hesitation. (Exception: The tots cry and run whenever they see us; we can do nothing to appease them.)

But then the work starts and you see the men's bad side, their laziness and love of talking and arguing. The workers for our projects are "volunteers," so we do not expect them to break their backs, but in reality they would not even bend a straw unless it was specifically in their portion of work for the day and they could find no other way to get out of it. They also love to palaver, or argue, at the drop of a hat. Although the voices get excited, and everyone gets his say (usually all at one time), they always settle the matter completely and no one is left with hard feelings. I cannot help but think of this as true democracy at its base.

Enough about the men; I suppose you are also interested in the women. A woman's main task is not to cook, as one would guess, but to farm. Every day the women and children go to their farm outside the village to hoe or plant or harvest, almost always with a baby strapped on the woman's back. In contrast, what a man's daily work is I have not yet figured out.

Women clearing a field to establish a farm for the year

As for the kids, you will never find an unfriendly boy here, although the girls are usually shy. The boys love to do anything you love to do, working or playing, but primarily they like to watch us eat, catching our scraps and tin cans when we throw them away.
My daily routine while on trek consists of starting work about eight, palavering for an hour, and then working through until about three in the afternoon with the volunteer workmen. I come back to where we stay at a guest house room and cook myself a big meal, usually with native corn or potatoes or fruit, and then lay in my hammock and read or play with the local boys.

July 18, Saturday:
Saturday; a full day on the job, and then back to Kenema.
When we returned, I talked with Tim about my problems living with Mike and Wiley. He said he thought they were acting foolishly, but that I should just keep living with them as I have been.

July 19, Sunday:
It is Sunday, and both vehicles are down. The cam shaft is broken on Mike's Land Rover and it looks like it is out of commission. The tie-rods are bad on the Jeep, and it will need to be fixed before going too far. So, for transportation this week, I don't know what will happen.

July 20, Monday:
As soon as new wheels arrive for the Jeep, Wiley will be driving to Freetown to see a doctor about his backache. At times he says it is quite bad. Meanwhile, I looked all over Kenema today for a trek stove, but could not find one, so while Wiley is staying home I am using his on the sly. Mike said to go ahead, but don't tell him, so I guess it is okay.

July 22, Wednesday:
In Nyeama today, and later in the afternoon Bokari took us for a walk down to a nearby river. It was a fairly wide river, and spanning it was a bamboo bridge, about one hundred feet long and rising about thirty feet above the water. A new bridge is built every dry season and lasts a year. He showed us fish traps, made from sticks and poles, that are placed in the river. The water is dammed up, but holes in the dam allow fish to swim through and up the platform. They can't go to the end, however, since it rises out of the water, and they are trapped on the platform when the water ebbs. This is an interesting way to catch fish.
Mike arrived from Kenema with word that our personal sea trunks had arrived from the U.S. and were waiting for us in Freetown. I had been looking forward to this, since mine contained a guitar. I had forgotten to loosen the strings, so I hope there is not too much of a warp in the neck. I have forgotten what most of the other stuff is, so it will be a nice surprise when it gets to our house.

July 25, Saturday:

Fred Sievers left today for Freetown, where he will end his two-year tour with the Peace Corps. He plans to go first to London, where he will meet up with his brother. From there, they will hitchhike around the world, eventually getting to Australia before heading home. They planned on it taking about eight months. Fred has really helped us on the school construction thus far, and I am sorry to see him go. We talked to each other a lot while on trek, and he has been a big help to me personally, as well as on the Nyeama project.

July 27, Monday:

The new tires arrived for the Jeep. The old ones were threadbare; one was down to the tube. The Land Rover was not ready to use yet, so we had to stay home, wasting a workday in Nyeama. Bockari will probably be having a fit tomorrow, not knowing what to do with the workmen, but there is nothing we can do about it.

July 28, Tuesday:

Wiley took off for Freetown to see the doctor and pick up our sea freight and get supplies. Mike finally got his Land Rover back from mechanics at Morgan's garage late in the afternoon, so we took off immediately for Nyeama, two workdays already wasted this week.

July 29, Wednesday:

Although we planned to start work on the concrete floor of the school, Mike and I had a new idea for an easier way of putting up the large, heavy wood trusses, using a platform as a brace. Well, the workers were ready to put up three trusses we had ready, but not our slow, safe way. They just wanted to push them up using bush poles, ropes, and plenty of men. We were very skeptical, but we could not talk them out of it, so Mike and I grabbed our cameras and watched while the men, with terrific self-organization, set upon the task. The first went up with surprising ease, and two more trusses quickly followed. The day seemed very complete, just having those three towering A's point to the sky.
After work, we were climbing into the Land Rover. A lorry was coming from the other direction, and the smallest boy of a group of boys got scared and ran directly in front of it, narrowly making it to the other side unscathed. The lorry stopped quickly, and immediately a boy on the lorry ran toward the small boy, I thought to see if he was hurt. Bockari realized the lorry boy wanted to punished the small boy, so he intercepted the pair and had a hard time keeping the older boy away. Other riders in the lorry were now out, ready to punish the small boy as well. Although speaking in Mende, I could tell Bockari used fast talking and swift hustling to help the small boy to the safety of our Land Rover, and we took off. I questioned Bockari a couple of times on what happened, but he would not give any direct answer. I guess they wanted to teach the small boy a lesson he would not forget, or so they thought. The whole event happened so fast, as though on cue, that I got the impression this was not the first time.

July 30, Thursday:

The paramount chief where we are working came to look at the school, but primarily to get some men to go with him to work in his diamond mine. The diamond bug has hit Nyeama and the entire district, and it might be more difficult in the future to keep our workers.
August 1, Saturday:

This was the first day we were unable to work because of rain. About eleven o'clock it began pouring. It did not let up, so we came back to Kenema. There, sitting inside, was Wiley and my sea freight. It seemed like Christmas when I opened the trunk and discovered all the goodies I forgot I had packed. I made a desk for my room out of the sea freight box, and it was surprisingly easy.

Sierra Leone's rainy season

Sierra Leone has a coastline facing southwest to the Atlantic Ocean. During the dry season the primary winds, known as the harmattan, come from the north and the desert, bringing heat and dust. However, during the "rainy season" the movement of the sun angle shifts winds to the southwest, off the ocean. From April to September, but most prominently in July and August, the climate transitions to a continually wet tropical rainforest, with sunshine amounts typically only two or three hours each day. The average rainfall for the year amounts to 75 to 120 inches each year, most of it coming during the rainy season. The average temperature is 80 degrees, changing little throughout the seasons in the coastal areas.

During the rainy season, most of the unpaved roads become difficult or impossible to travel. Bridges are washed out, ferry service stops, and ruts form basically one-lane roads that become deep and muddy.
August 3, Monday:

We went to Nyeama and got the last two trusses up. What a relief that was. Wiley made a trip to the work site and put up a few purlins. He seemed to be enjoying this project, but when I corrected him on one he left in a huff and went back to the guesthouse and laid on his cot the rest of the day. Mike said to just ignore him, but I don't understand his attitude and why he is so short-tempered with everyone.
August 4, Tuesday:

As usual lately, Wiley was the main subject of interest at the work site. I think it was because of what I said yesterday that he was still rebellious today. He came to the school site in the Jeep and sat in its front seat all morning, not doing anything. Bockari asked Mike and me why he was sitting there, but it was difficult to explain what was going on in his mind.

After work I went down to the river to try fishing, although I had no hook. When I got back to the village, Mike said Wiley had returned to Kenema and he thought Wiley might decide to call it quits completely. We talked about what we could do and decided the best thing was to let him settle matters by himself in his own mind. Maybe Wiley would be happier working on a project of his own, but Mike told me he had already written letters of resignation, which was news to me. I hope he makes the right decision, but what it is I could not say right now.

August 6, Thursday:

We poured the first section of concrete floor for the school today. It took longer than expected, and even though we were done by three-thirty, the workers considered it a long day. They were mixing large batches of concrete at the end of the day, more than forty head pans full at once. Mixing concrete by hand is one job the natives have little trouble with if we give them the ratio of materials, although it is slow work. We could not get a water barrel, so two men took wheelbarrows to the stream, filled them, and pushed them back, usually spilling half the water on the last bump. Of course, unfortunately it began to rain during our final pours. Mike and Bockari held a pan over the fresh pour while I finished smoothing it, and then put pan of top for the night.

Pouring the concrete floor in Nyeama
August 7, Friday:

Bockari explained to us why village Muslims are dancing around and singing every night, all night. This is the Muslim Ramadan season (it was explained to be like "Passover") and carriers from nearby villages come to the feast to get rice to take back to their villages. Later, these same carriers bring rice back to Nyeama as kind of a reciprocal gift. In the evening they all sit in the court barri (village open hut) and listen to a story from the Koran, the same stories as in the Old Testament. After each story the people sing and dance with joy. This goes on all night, and the chanting and singing are quite interesting.

Mike went with Bockari to pick up the Muslim leader from this area and bring him to Nyeama. He is to pray for diamonds for the villagers digging for them. Even Catholics like Bockari must pay a ten-shilling sacrifice offering for these prayers; if he does not, he is brought to court and fined.

I am gradually learning about the Muslim religion. For instance, they pray six times a day. One of those times is four o'clock in the morning, because they say otherwise they would be forgetting about God (Allah) when they sleep. Each of these prayers seems to last for about fifteen minutes.

August 8, Saturday:

Bob Golding and Tim Howell, our volunteer leader, stopped at the site of the school construction. Bob seemed quite pleased with the progress, which made us feel better about our involvement in Nyeama.

Bob had been talking with Wiley yesterday and seemed to understand the problem. He suggested as a resolution that Wiley could do the projects in Barma and Falla using the Jeep, Mike could start a chieftdom development project near Kenema using a Moped as a vehicle, and I would do various projects around the district using the Land Rover C4211, including a new health center project in Gegwema. I told Bob I would like to specialize in A-frame schools if possible, working
with the Education Department. He said that would be fine. This way I also could do a little more travelling for my projects, seeing more of the country. I would like to get the construction of these schools down to a minimum of time and cost, showing their true potential.

Mike and I came back to Kenema, and Wiley never seemed in better spirits. It is difficult to know what he is going to be like next, but we will see how things sort themselves out.

August 9, Sunday:

Sunday, and the living is easy. Bob and Tim came over and we planned a meeting in Kenema on October 25th for all of the Rural Development Program volunteers in Sierra Leone. Also, Bob explained how the three of us would be split up after the Nyeama project is completed. Wiley is to take the northern part of Kenema District, I am to take the southern part, and Mike is to start a chiefdom development project, working and living in a nearby chiefdom.

August 11, Tuesday:

I am in Nyeama once again. It is the rainy season, and work is slowed by the constant rain, so today was a depressing day for me. Or maybe it is the prospect of building ten frames for ventilation doors on both sides of the Nyeama school; it took me all day just to do one frame. Anyway, the rain is here to stay, so that had better not depress me too much.

I took my American-style football out of my trek box and began playing catch in the rain with the village boys; the temperature is warm, so it does not slow down the fun too much. The boys had fun watching the way this odd-shaped ball bounced, and trying to catch it. They especially liked it when I would showboat a little, looking at one person and throwing it to another, or tossing it behind my back or through my legs. This always draws a crowd.

I decided to buy Wiley a "lappa" of native-dyed cloth for his birthday, which is today. Momie, a village entrepreneur across the street, is going to dye a piece for him, and then he can make whatever he wishes out of it.

August 13, Thursday:

I thought today would be a short workday, since we had no cement or nails, but right after the men began to work volunteers Hank Richards and Bill Atkins arrived. Bill, a mason by trade, came to put up a rock wall in both ends of the school. He went right to work, saying he wished he could put up rock walls all the time he was here.

Then Wiley arrived with thirty more bags of cement, which should be enough to complete the project. He also brought some loads of rock in the Jeep. Mike came from Kenema with nails. Tim also arrived and planned to help with construction for a couple of days. So between the six of us, and locals willing to work with all these supervisors, we got a lot of work done. I only wish we had the manpower to do this every day.

Bill, Mike, and I stayed in Nyeama in the evening. To keep the kids amused we taught them the Bunny Hop. I played the tune on the guitar, and Bill led the group of kids around the room. It was really a riot.
August 14, Friday:

All six volunteers were working in Nyeama again today. Although we do not get more work out of the men, we were able to accomplish much more among ourselves. Tim said he liked it here on trek in Nyeama, and I told him that makes two of us. The people in the villages are so much friendlier than those in Kenema.

Today we taught the kids how to play dodgeball, and soon half the village was out there jumping away from the football.

Mom and Dad,

About the questions you asked about the natives:

They usually get enough money from selling oranges and bananas in a local market to buy a shirt or a piece of cloth occasionally. But really money is a luxury with them and not a necessity. Each village is almost totally self-sufficient. They grow their own rice, catch fish with handmade nets, and a village hunter kills monkeys for fresh meat. They grow cotton, spin it, and weave cloth and blankets. They go barefoot, so no shoes are needed. Every village has a stream for drinking, bathing, and washing clothes, with the drinking water upstream and washing and bathing more downstream. The houses are built of mud, sticks, and palm leaves for thatch roofs. So you can see anything else that is an import, from plastic sandals to corrugated metal roofs, is a luxury that is good for prestige.
August 15, Saturday:
I woke up chilled to the bone, shivering and shaking. I thought it was because I did not have enough blankets, but when I still had goosebumps at breakfast, I thought I had caught a cold. After about a half-hour at work, I was growing faint and had a bad headache. I decided to go back to the guesthouse to take some aspirin and lie down. Hank came later and diagnosed it as malaria, which he had had a month before. He said he got over it in a day by taking a lot of Aralen tablets and staying in bed. He and Bill took me back to Kenema on their way to their hometown of Bo. I lay in bed, almost too weak to lift a soup spoon. I slept off and on through the night.

August 16, Sunday:
By this morning I was over almost everything, except I was still weak and tired. But I just lay around, not doing much of anything.

August 17, Monday:
Today began like many other days—I bought food from the Cold Storage store, ordered lumber from Forest Industries, and then drove to Nyeama. But facts I learned from others made the day quite exceptional.

From Tim I learned that the Provincial Secretary wants me to go down to Gegwema this Sunday to look at an incomplete health center and talk with a Mr. Lefevre. I am to help on this project when the Nyeama school is complete. My job in Gegwema will only be to order materials and help with the more difficult problems. Also, when the Nyeama school is done, Wiley and I are to tour through the entire district with an interpreter and a policeman, stopping in every chiefdom and talking with its paramount chief. We are to find out what projects each wants done in their chiefdom, and from this make a priority list to take to Dad Weber, the new Assistant District Officer, with whom we will likely be working. This way we will get jobs that fit our capabilities first, since they will be our own choices.

Then I found out from Mike that the provincial secretary is trying to get him to be the coordinator for the annual Kenema Show, a kind of provincial agricultural fair that has not been too big in the past, but that they are hoping to become nationwide this year. The P.S. is quite enthusiastic about the prospect, as we are, but it has to be approved by Bob Golding. If this goes through, I will get full-time use of the Land Rover, since Mike will be able to use government cars.

Sierra Leone’s government structure
My milieu as a volunteer in Kenema was not involved with national level governance, but with governance at the provincial, district and chiefdom levels. It is useful to describe the significance of each, since the officials at each level float through this diary on a regular basis. Sierra Leone has three provinces: Eastern, Northern, and Southern, plus the "Western area" around Freetown; Kenema is one of the largest cities in the Eastern province. The provinces are divided into eleven districts, with three districts in the Eastern province. Every district has a number of chiefdoms, each presided over by a paramount chief who resides in the chiefdom headquarters town. Chiefdoms are then divided into sections, each headed by a section chief, who typically is the oldest male descendant of...
the original founder (as of the political restructuring), although this is sometimes disputed, and I did work with a woman section chief on one project. I felt the paramount chief had the most interesting role, since he is not only responsible for the safety and well-being of his people, but resolves many disputes, and protects the authority of secret societies under his control. It is the role of a benign dictator, and chiefdom inhabitants perform services and provide gifts on a regular basis to their paramount chief. In return, he allocates land each year for farming and other uses based on need and personal closeness. Although traditionally paramount chiefs were selected for life through selection by the former chief's family, today they are elected. In every district, one paramount chief is selected to represent the district in the national parliament, so they do have a limited role at the national level. Because of the recent civil war and its great disruption to a functioning government during the years 1991 to 2002, there is only a weak judicial system and chiefdoms have been where most disputes have been resolved in recent years.

![Example chart of Sierra Leone Government structure](chart)

This evening I had a long conversation with Bockari at the guesthouse in Nyeama and learned many things about the Mende tribal culture. I only wish I had had a tape recorder to catch them all. He explained as much as he could to a white man about the Poro Society, a secret society that all Mende boys must join. If they join voluntarily, they stay in the bush for six months, but if they are not cooperative, they must stay for a full year. As Bockari tells it, when the "Devil" comes through the village at some unknown time in December, all the boys who are not already members must come to him when they hear the swinging of the sword—if they instead stay inside, severe measures are taken. The boys are taken to live with the Devil in the bush. They are not allowed to see females at all during this time. In fact, when women walk through the bush, they must sing loudly so they will not accidentally come upon a Poro camp. Although it is a closely guarded secret what the boys do during this time, after they come back to their village they must be serious at all time for three months, with no singing or dancing. Although they can now talk to females, they are not allowed to touch them, and any object must be laid on the floor and picked up by the other one, instead of being handed directly.
The conversation with Bockari then switched to recent village wars in the Jawi chiefdom, of which Nyeama is a part. For fourteen years there was no paramount chief. As late as 1959, all the women were sent to another chiefdom for protection, and villagers were forced by the elders to raid other villages, trying to burn them down. Bockari himself had been forced to do this, fighting man-to-man with a gun, and standing guard in his own village against raiders. The government sent in policemen, but the villagers fought them as well. Finally the elders decided to get together and elect a paramount chief, and this put an end to all the troubles. I would never have guessed any of this if Bockari had not told me, for there are no signs of any fighting now.

August 19, Wednesday:

Today I saw a boy go by who was tied up in a hammock and hung from a long pole, being carried by men at either end and followed by a string of about twenty men. When Bockari came later, I asked him if it was part of the Poro Society rituals. He did not say anything for a minute, and then said that the boy fell out of a palm tree and they were taking him to a doctor. I asked where a doctor could be found in the bush, but he just said, "There are. There are." I intend to find out more about this Poro secret if I can, since it is all quite intriguing.

Poro Secret Society

Little is known of the rituals and organization of the Poro Society of Sierra Leone and Liberia. It is a secret society, primarily of the Mende people. There are three grades within the Society, the first for chiefs, or big men, the second for fetish-priests (or devils), and the third for others. The Poro devil presides over ceremonies, wearing a masked costume. During the dry season young boys near the age of puberty are taken into the bush and indoctrinated into tribal customs and rituals. Paramount chiefs are considered secular leaders only. The Poro Society serves as a type of spiritual native governing body, creating their own set of laws, deciding on war or peace, doing spiritual healing (with the cooperation of their healers especially significant during the Ebola crisis), and other community actions. Poro elders make decisions based on aspects of the spiritual world that can be effective in deterring antisocial behavior. Many natives, both educated and uneducated, give credence to activities of secret powers and forces inherent in the Society.
August 21, Friday:

Bill Atkins, the PCV mason, came to Nyeama with Mike and Wiley. The news is that a Peace Corps publicity photographer from Washington is coming Tuesday to take pictures of the school, and we are to have as much completed as possible by then.

This evening was really great fun, with all four of us in good spirits at the guesthouse. I got out my guitar and we really howled some familiar folk songs.

August 22, Saturday:

Another big explosion from Wiley today. I guess there was a mix-up in the work and there was no one to help him; we were all busy on other jobs. We asked if one of the locals could help, since they had helped me many times with the same type of work, but he said he wanted one of us. Because we were not cooperative in his opinion, he began taking apart what he had put up yesterday, dropping lumber to the ground and becoming a danger to himself and others. Within a few minutes he came down and took off in his Jeep.

When we returned to Kenema, Wiley was in his bedroom, feeling quite detached from the rest of us and reading Ayn Rand's long philosophical novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. He came out only to eat. I wrote him a note and put it in his door. I said I was confused as to what the dispute was about and asked him to tell me what I had done wrong so I could work on correcting it. Later, Mike and I found a note from him at the guesthouse. It read, "You owe me 1 (one) 50 ft. tape that you borrowed. So long glory boys, the field is now clear." It was signed, "Wiley." The last sentence I could not understand at all. One thing about Wiley, life is never dull when he is around.
August 23, Sunday:

As far as Wiley is concerned, he seemed happy today, whistling and singing as if nothing is wrong, but still pretty well ignoring us. He tacked a long typewritten statement on his door regarding his membership in the Ayn Rand Society, and the principles it stood for. In essence, it said that he believed he should live only for himself and that he was not his brothers' keeper, but should try and perfect his own life. I was left very confused by this note because it seemed to go so directly against the idea of the Peace Corps. In the statement, this sentence was in capitals: "I SWEAR I WILL NEVER LIVE FOR THE SAKE OF ANOTHER MAN, AND NEVER ASK ANOTHER MAN TO LIVE FOR MINE."

After these notes, Mike and I were at a loss as to what to do, and with no one else to talk with about it, we decided to do nothing. Mike would like to talk with someone about the situation, for it seems to have gone beyond our abilities to deal with it, but right now there is no one else to talk to. Mike decided to respond in kind by tacking a few quotes on his own door, pointing at the idea that anyone can make mistakes, but those who do not admit to them will sit down to a "banquet of compromises." Mike believes that the whole crux of the problem lies in the fact that Wiley will not admit that he is wrong about anything. If someone shows him a mistake he has made, he goes off and pouts. This is what happened the three times he had been in Nyeama to help on the school. Since he had not been working with us enough to know what our plans were, or how we intended to do the work, he would understandably do something not according to the plans. Rather than let him continue to do the whole thing wrong, we would tell him about it as subtly as we could. He inevitably would think of it as a slam on his work. I was most disturbed because he would do this in front of the workers—for example, the day he sat in the cab of the Jeep on the site all day. The workers do not understand English, but they could tell when something is wrong. To me, the disputes at home can be quite open, but when it is done in front of the workers, this ticks me off.

I began to read Atlas Shrugged to see why Wiley considered it such a great novel.

August 24, Monday:

Here on the job site we are having other problems. Bockari has been suffering from a continuing problem with malaria, so he has not been working. Without him to oversee, the men just sit all day, waiting until we let them go home. We have tried to be forceful with them, but because we do not speak their language and do not understand their ways, it is kind of hard to be authoritative. However, we began to put pan roofing on the school today, and the work went well, the only difficulties keeping the pan straight and lining up the corrugations properly.

August 25, Tuesday:

Today Bockari was on the job site once again, and it makes a big difference in the amount of work we get out of the locals. All the men kept busy, sometimes under their own initiative, which is rare. The men know how to put on the pan roof by themselves, and are good workers for this project. It is just the jobs that require a particular construction skill that they do not have that cause problems.

Today the Kallon family (Bokari's family), the political bosses of the chiefdom, are meeting in the guesthouse where we stay. We were told the family meeting will last two days, and the
paramount chief and elders are going to stay here. It was reassuring that even such influential people feel they need to come in and greet us, thanking us for helping their country.

August 26, Wednesday:

We are back in Kenema after a full day's work. Today was one of the longest workdays yet, with the men working until 2:30. This is still earlier than it should be, but I guess we were too lenient about scheduling at the beginning of the project.

When we got back to Kenema, Wiley was still hibernating in his bedroom. Tamba, our young houseboy, said that Mr. Wiley was a vexed man. Mike and I both found notes tacked on our doors from Wiley. One was a very appropriate poem, saying how he wished he could get out of hot Africa and back to the mountains of Colorado, back to "avalanche country." Mike received a more morbid poem saying that even after a life of doing good, all you leave in this world is a name coldly chiseled on a gravestone.

Although he has said nothing to either of us about quitting, his tactics seem to indicate clearly that he is depressed, in culture shock, and trying to find a way to get back home. A further indication was that when a Nigerian trader stopped in tonight to show us his wares, not an uncommon occurrence, Wiley bought twenty pounds worth of souvenirs, a very large sum of money for him to spend at one time.

August 27, Thursday:

Back in Nyeama, the Kallon family was having a family council at the guesthouse where we stay. A feast with dancing and singing all night was over, so we missed that, but tonight they stayed up until 2 am discussing family matters. The family bought a cow as part of the celebration, cutting up portions for each of the families. They were nice enough to give Mike and me a huge steak and a liver. After everyone had gone we gave the liver to Bockari.
August 28, Friday:

The Kallons are still having meetings. The elders are discussing with the younger men the family's land—who owns what, and how it is taken care of—in preparation for having the younger men take over. Whenever the paramount chief, who is a Kallon, goes anywhere, he takes along a man who blows through a beautifully carved ivory tusk horn. It gives out a rich, low, mellow note, and the man breathes in such a way so that he never stops blowing this note for five or ten minutes. I made a hit with the paramount chief by letting him play my guitar. He said when he was in school he learned to play it, and he still was very good with it.

August 29, Saturday:

Tim arrived at the site with a publicity photographer for the Peace Corps. Ther photographer took what seemed like a million pictures, and we were busy and not aware of his taking most of them.

When we got back to Kenema we talked with Tim about the problem with Wiley. Tim went into Wiley's room and talked with him. Afterwards he seemed to understand the difficulty of the problem. He did say that Wiley showed an interest in the Gegwema health center project, and I said I was willing to let him have it. Tim thought it was best to try this, and if Wiley blew up again he would do what he could about getting him out, for he could be endangering the entire Peace Corps program in Sierra Leone.

Mario came in from Daru and we all went to see a movie at the Capitol Theater. Mario seems to be getting along well out by himself in the small village. Mike has gotten over his bitterness toward him, and Mario should be able to take over the Nyeama school project soon, since it is in his chiefdom.

August 30, Sunday:

Tim, Mike, the photographer, and I drove out to Giema, a village that will be included in Mike's chiefdom development program. Mike wanted to meet the paramount chief, and the photographer wanted to take photos of volunteers interacting in village life. The paramount chief was not there, but we arrived on a day when the whole village was replastering the exterior walls on their mud-wall mosque. Mike and I were not to take any pictures, since the photographer did not want photos where we had cameras, He took four rolls of film in less than an hour while we busied ourselves mixing with the natives and setting up good shots for him.

This was the first time I had seen a mud structure being built, and it is quite interesting. Clay soil is dug from anywhere and water is added to it to make mud. Men then get in with their bare feet and squash it, mixing it thoroughly. It is then rolled up in balls and carried over to the building where it is thrown against the wall and pounded into intermeshed sticks. This ultimately forms a mud wall.

The photographer wanted more photographs, but it started raining quite hard, so we left. I asked him why he was sent to West Africa during the rainy season; all he said was, "That's Washington."
Back in Kenema, at lunchtime Wiley came out and ate with the four of us, the first time he has not eaten alone in many days. This afternoon Tim and the photographer went into Wiley's bedroom to play chess with him.

Later I approached Wiley about the Gegwema project, since it would be necessary to buy materials for it tomorrow morning. I wanted to know if he would do this, since he was supposedly taking over the project. I asked him face-to-face; he walked around me without answering and went into his bedroom. Tim saw this and went in to talk with him. He came out and said Wiley would come to me and talk about it.

August 31, Monday:

Wiley left a note asking me to fill in details on the Gegwema project, so I guess he will take over that project.

Mike and I drove to Nyeama, but as we arrived the Land Rover began making a loud noise. We looked at the wheels and discovered one front wheel was about six inches forward and was scraping the fender. We did not know what was wrong; it must be something with the axle. Since Mike does not know much more about vehicles than myself, we ought to have fun tomorrow trying to fix it.

September 1, Tuesday:

Somehow we were able to temporarily fix the Rover, although I still am not sure what we did and how we did it. Mike will limp back to Kenema with it tomorrow. Today we drove carefully to nearby Daru, where Mario was installing some culverts to complete a local road. Culverts are an important improvement for any village, since the roads can become impassable during the rainy season without proper drainage. While we were in Daru we picked up some checks from the chiefdom clerk, including the first paycheck for Bockari, which he was glad to get.
September 2, Wednesday:

I stayed overnight in Nyeama, but was able to hitch a ride with two other volunteers, Bill and George, who were going through on their way to Kenema. Mike had come back earlier in the day, carefully driving the Land Rover. When I arrived Mike gave me the following note:

Dear Mike and Norm,

As you may have gathered, I have decided to terminate my service in the Peace Corps. I believe when doing something irrevocable in leaving the field it should be with all business taken care of.

Please be good enough to accept my abject apologies for any hard feelings or inconveniences that I might have incurred with you.

I find upon much soul-searching that my role in this life does not suit me for that of a PCV. My reasons for coming to this conclusion are many and varied; needless to say they are mine and private.

Could we make an equitable arrangement in the disposal of my share of the household appliances, cookware, food, etc.

I wish you to know that I am very sorry for the hard feelings that were brought about by my own fault this past two weeks. Can we part as we met? As friends.

Sincerely, Wiley

The note was not really a surprise, since there had been many indications of Wiley's unrest in his role as a PCV in West Africa. It was a situation he found he was not well suited for, and we were relieved to find the situation had been resolved. The letter also expressed his apologies for any hard feelings and gave all of us a chance to have his departure on good terms, "As friends."

September 3, Thursday:

I drove back to Nyeama to tell Bockari we would be taking Wiley to Freetown, so he was on his own with the project site for a few days. We left Bockari with a list of things to be done and a load of tools. If he gets them done, we can still finish construction of the school before classes begin. But the project has taken much longer and cost much more than we originally hoped. I still believe the A-frame has potential but it will require finding shortcuts for the next one. I would like to leave Nyeama, for I have four other projects to take over now that Wiley is leaving—the Gegwema health center, a cattle scale in Talia, a school at Falla, and a water supply system in Barma. They are all in different directions, so I will be doing a lot of travel with the Jeep. I am looking forward to all of them, except perhaps the Barma water supply, since I do not have confidence in my skills for that one.

September 5, Saturday:

Wiley turned over the household money and books to Mike. We each gave him ten Leones (Sierra Leone pounds) for his share of the household utensils.

I finished reading the novel, Atlas Shrugged. I consider it an interesting, but long, story. Ayn Rand certainly knows how to develop a plot line, but the author's philosophy does not have the same
impact on me as it may have on others. I thought of it as simply something to while away quite a few hours.

It is now the middle of rainy season, and vehicles are getting stuck in the mud in our driveway on a regular basis. Every time we come in we look for a new route, looking for a dryer one, but it is impossible.

![Vehicles stuck in our driveway during the rainy season](image)

September 8, Tuesday:

Mike and Wiley took the Jeep to Freetown before I was even awake. I will be taking the Land Rover (C4211) to a mechanic at Morgan's Garage in Kenema and will leave for Freetown as soon as it is fixed, probably tomorrow morning.

In the meantime, Faya, our cook, and I tried to make a pie today, and what a catastrophe. We did not have a pie tin or cake tin of any kind, so we used an empty metal cracker box. Also, we did not have a rolling pin, so we used a glass bottle. The dough was so sticky that all we could do was break off pieces and press them into place. Oh, well, at least it tasted good, so I guess it was worth the trouble.

September 9, Wednesday:

I got the Rover from Morgan's at 2:00pm and started out on the six-hour drive to Freetown, hoping to arrive before too late at night. There are no words to describe how bad the driving is on the country's dirt roads during the rainy season. You go from mud wallow to washboard to potholes with never a letup. The Road Department works on the roads halfheartedly, but there is nothing they can do to help until the dry season returns. Also, just as it was turning dark I had a flat tire. Oil was leaking out of the hydraulic jack, so it would not lift the vehicle high enough. Luckily, a lorry driver stopped to help me. He was almost killed crawling under the vehicle when the jack slipped. But things ultimately worked out. Instead of jacking the Rover up, he dug a hole under the tire and took
it off this way. With the main road from Bo to Freetown closed because of the rain, the trip by nightfall was turning into a nightmare.

After eight hours, I had driven considerably off route into the Northern District. I stopped in the town of Makeni, about one hundred miles out of the way, to bed down for the night. It was too late to look up any volunteers in Makeni, so I pulled into a closed gas station, found a parking spot, took out the front seat cushions and lay down on them in the back of the vehicle. The Rover is a "long station wagon," but it was still about six inches too short for my body, even lying angularly. After a full day of driving, I thought I would have a good sleep, but I don't think I slept at all. It was definitely the worst night I have had yet.

Our Land Rover C4211

September 10, Thursday:

I had the tire patched at the gas station where I slept, filled the vehicle with gas, and drove the last four hours to Freetown. The roads were a little better as I got closer, but still terrible. When I got to Freetown, Mike couldn't get over the fact I had made it. He said he left notes for me all over in Bo telling me to turn around and go back, but I had not bothered to stop there, so did not see them.

September 11, Friday:

The next day I was off again. The Peace Corps office in Freetown let me know I was to use the Jeep pickup to pick up and move a Peace Corps married couple who were in Freetown from the town of Njala to Magburaka. I was hoping to make it back to Kenema that night, but the teachers told me I had better plan on staying overnight, for they had to move a complete household seventy miles between the two towns. The trip was easy, however, since most of the roads were paved.

When the teachers and I arrived in Njala, we met an American family, the Thompsons. Dr. Thompson is principal of the Njala Teachers Training College and works with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the University of Illinois. The college has a beautiful campus with grass fields all around. The housing is some of the best I have seen for Peace Corps
Volunteers. We ate dinner with the Thompsons, who have a large, beautiful home, and the home-cooked food seemed deliciously strange after all the bush meals I had been eating for months.

September 12, Saturday:
I spent the day helping the teachers move their household to Magburaka, which ended up taking three loads with the pickup, rather than the one load I had anticipated. I stayed another night and ate dinner with the Clossons, another American family teaching at Njala. I really enjoyed playing the game of Clue afterwards. It was quite comfortable staying with the families, and I am getting to think I might not want to go back to Kenema after all this luxury.

September 13, Sunday:
I took another load today. We had asked for help from another volunteer, but his Jeep had mechanical problems and he was not able to come. So instead of heading to Kenema I returned to Njala. I got there just in time to have a spaghetti dinner with the Thompsons and about ten other guests. I hope they get extra compensation for serving so many guests every night, but that is life upcountry. I slept overnight in a bed with clean white sheets for a change. I also took a shower and used the softest, fluffiest towel I ever felt. It was really great.

September 14, Monday:
We loaded the Jeep one more time and took the last load to Magburaka. Later, after three days of moving (instead of the half-day I had planned) I was finally off to Kenema. But it had been a very enjoyable three days, the food was excellent, and the people were terrific.

I arrived in Kenema after a five-hour drive, and Mike was finally able to relieve his concerns about me and where I was. I estimated I had driven more than one thousand miles in the last week, and on rainy season roads that is something, but now I feel right at home behind the wheel of the Jeep.

September 15, Tuesday:
Today was spent completely cleaning, checking, and lubricating the Jeep. I still know next to nothing about auto mechanics, but have four different owners manuals on Jeeps. With their step-by-step instructions I was able to pull off nearly impossible feats, including greasing it, changing the oil, replacing the muffler, and flushing the radiator.

Without Wiley now, Mike and I talked about redecorating the house, possibly putting up bamboo partitions, separating the rooms with dangling beads, painting a mural on one of the big, bare walls. Oh, we are full of ideas, especially since our lease says we must live here for at least one year.

September 16, Wednesday:
PCV Joe Sharp stopped in with news that he is moving in with us next week. Mike and Joe seem to have a close friendship; they have been asking to be together since we first arrived, so both of them should be quite pleased. To me Joe seems like a nice guy, with no bad habits except that he
talks too much. I don't know much about him, but will be happy if the chaos and turmoil in our household will finally be over.

I also learned that our Jeep will be transferred to another volunteer, so that means I will be left with the C4211 Land Rover again, which is falling apart on a regular basis.

September 17, Thursday:

There are problems with the rock wall in Nyeama. It seems to be weak, so Bockari, Mario and the paramount chief decided the inside face should be plastered. The villagers also feel that the rock looks too primitive. They have asked that it be plastered over with cement parging. This is a blow to the budget, and an indication we should not have a rock wall on the next school.

September 18, Friday:

Mike and I began a mural painting of native scenes on one full wall of our house. The landlord is due to come tomorrow, so if we can keep him from seeing it, we might get it finished one day. So far it includes a mud hut, an A-frame school, a latrine, a Peace Corps Jeep, a boy in a hammock, and a life-size picture of a Volunteer taking a picture of the mural.
September 20, Sunday:

Our landlord, Mr. Koroma, came today. We told him the things we would like done, such as putting in a water line, fixing our impassable driveway, and getting paint for the concrete floors. He left us with promises to get them all completed quickly. We had also covered our mural.

Mom and Dad,

A riot started today in our house. One of the visiting volunteers, Louie, seems to be a frustrated artist, and he decided to add his stamp on our large wall mural. He went crazy and wanted to turn the mural into modern art by throwing paint on it, splashing paint on it, smearing paint on it, brushing paint on it, and even kicking paint on it. (You can even see a few of the drips on this letter.) My only involvement was to quickly lay newspapers on the floor.

Anyway, the final result is that two of our walls are ruined for good. Trying to explain this to the landlord will be difficult. I guess it just shows that after six months in the bush anything can happen.

September 22:

Bill Camp, a water engineer with USAID, had arrived the previous evening. Today he and I drove to Daru to explore possibilities with Mario to get started on a water supply project. Mario had originally intended to bring a pipeline from a spring 4-1/2 miles up in the hills, but Bill discovered a clean creek only 700 feet from town where a well could be dug and a pump put in to fill storage tanks for the village. Although Peace Corps training included some construction experience, as Volunteers we were left largely on our own to find relevant information needed for projects. As someone from a large city with little experience, it is now up to Mario to decide which to do. Hopefully the work goes well for him and the people of Daru.

Bill has an interesting personality. If you pay close attention when he gives practical advice, it is quite worthwhile. He is one of the easiest guys to get along with I have ever met. In his mind you cannot do anything wrong, but only in a less effective way. He never runs out of patience, certainly a virtue in his type of job. On the other hand, he thinks all the natives are ignorant about how to live in a "civilized" country, and that the only answer is a total, all-out push for education for everyone.

September 23, Wednesday:

Today Bill Camp, Tim, the District Officer, and I drove to Gegwema to discuss the health center project. The D.O. wanted to be particularly helpful, and led a discussion about what design the roof structure should be. The villagers wanted to have a hip roof. I explained the advantages of a gable roof, since a hip roof would use more lumber, require angled cuts, and would require much more cutting of the pan roofing. However, the villagers were convinced a hip roof would look better, even though they gave no practical reason for the preference. I believe they simply think a hip roof looks more "civilized." This will need to be sorted out over time.

September 24, Thursday:

Tim and I drove to the Nyeama school project. I talked with him about how to enclose the end of the A-frame above the rock wall. I suggested pan, since it would be easy and quick, but he did not
like the look of it on the design he had originally created. We both agreed enclosing it with bushboard would be a better choice.

![Enclosing the end of the A-frame school]

Late in the afternoon I went to visit Mario in Daru. He seems so lonely living there on his own. He appreciates any visitors, and he insisted I stay until ten o'clock in the evening playing cards and chess with him. It seems the one thing that keeps him satisfied is that he said he has relatively easy access to female companionship in the village, and this is important to him.

September 27, Sunday:
Mike and I drove down to Bo to deliver some materials. We talked with Tim, and it looks like there is more chaos with another of the volunteers. Jack, an older volunteer, is being sent home because of a drinking problem; the Peace Corps staff felt his problem had gotten out of hand. Anyway, it seems likely someone will be sent to Bo to replace Jack. Tim thought it might be someone from Kenema. Since Joe will finally be getting together with Mike after much peaceful coercion from both, it seems I might be the person moving to Bo to live with Culbert. I dread the thought of packing up and leaving Kenema, for I have really settled in, and have a number of projects about to begin. So I hope nothing comes of it.

September 29, Tuesday:
Henry Lefevre is the foreman of the project in Gegwema. I stopped in to see him and deliver supplies.

Then on to Nyeama with more supplies. Things in Nyeama are in a bad state, for Bockari is not able to get any workers to come to the site any longer. Instead of 300 workers, as we had at the
beginning, we are now lucky to get two or three each day. And the project is so close to completion it is frustrating. I learned from Bockari that the paramount chief is disappointed with the appearance of the school, since its A-frame shape makes it look like a shimbek, one of the thatched-roof shelters built out near farms where the women and children sit throughout the day and throw stones at birds in their fields. They would have been much more satisfied with a standard building with a low-slope roof, it seems. This was really frustrating to hear, since our Peace Corps group had invested so much energy in developing a new type of school structure first designed by Tim, our Volunteer leader.

October 1, Thursday:

In Gegwema, I had a chance to discuss the health center project with Henry Lefevre. He said the villagers definitely want a hip roof on the building. Although it will cost an extra one hundred dollars or so, it is impossible to talk them out of it.

I then drove out to Talia to look at the site of a cattle scale project. Although I do not yet understand its construction, they want to start work next week and I had better learn by then.

Mom and Dad,

I certainly am learning to become a jack-of-all-trades with the work I am doing. I am learning to become a carpenter, mason, engineer, salesman, supervisor, mechanic, novice architect, political scientist, cook, bum, worker, ambassador, and African. And many more traits I cannot think of right now. That is why I love this work; it is always so varied.

October 2, Friday:

I drove to Nyeama to try to light a fire under the workers. Bockari is getting only one or two workers a day, which makes the work go very slowly. The paramount chief left a note saying he wanted to see me when I arrived, so Bockari and I chased all over trying to find him, but were unsuccessful. Bockari said he thought the chief wanted us to stop work, but he did not know why.
Back in Kenema, I learned that Wiley was on a flight back to the States. He had to pay for his own ticket, something like seven hundred dollars.

October 4, Sunday:
Mike built a small cage from screen left over from the screen window project. He is trying to catch two mice that live behind the cupboard and make pets of them. I think if we could get a pet of any kind it would add some interest to our home life and serve as a nice distraction.

October 5, Monday:
Just when things start to get dull, a million things happen at once. My plan for the day was to go to Nyeama and buy bushboards for the school. Mr. Lefevre wanted me to also go to Gegwema to talk to people there about the roof, so I went there first, but the villagers we needed to talk to were not there. I also had the inspiration to ask the locals to catch a chimpanzee for me as a pet. They said there were none to catch, but they thought they could have a monkey the next time I came.

So I continued on to Nyeama. Bockari was not at the school and no one was working. Someone told me he was in Daru, so I went there. When I arrived I found he had gone to Segbwema, so I headed back home. Just outside of Nyeama I saw Bockari, who said Mario had school furniture for me in Daru, so we both headed back there, where I waited four hours and heard nothing, so I went on to buy bushboards. The boards were not ready; they would be ready in three days. It was a lot of running around.

Then I pulled a first-class blunder. Bockari had been begging us for a long time to be able to drive once. I decided to let him, figuring that on this back road where there was no traffic the worst that could happen was a bent fender. He excitedly got in the driver's seat. At the bottom of one of the hills, starting up a steep incline, he was not giving it enough power and something under the floorboard exploded.

The Jeep was done. I did not know what was wrong, but realized it would need to be towed back to Kenema, so we got out and started walking. Just as we got to the main road, we were very
lucky to have a Forest Industries truck come by and stop. Forest Industries is a big company located in Kenema, so our timing was very fortunate and I talked them into giving us a ride. I got to Kenema at nine o'clock, tired and hungry, not really ready for a big day tomorrow.

October 6, Tuesday:
I got up at 6am so I could take the Land Rover out to the Jeep and clean it out. I needed to be back in time to drive to Talia to supervise the beginning of construction on the cattle scale project. The workers there seemed real anxious to have the project completed, and they were fortunate enough to be paid laborers.

Today is my birthday. I am going to have a hard time adapting to the idea of being twenty years old, for age means so little here. Most of the locals do not know how old they are, and do not care.

October 7, Wednesday:
Volunteers Mike Dyer and Kent Carroll came to Kenema with the intention of picking up the Jeep and taking it to its new home up north. They were very disappointed when they heard the news of the vehicle's status out in the bush, and so left without it.

I drove to Talia once again and helped with the pouring of the first concrete for the base. The project foreman said it was strange that I came back on the day I said I would. He said Europeans seldom do this. I guess it is part of life in West Africa that things are always unpredictable, and planning for trips is often subject to change because of weather, bad roads, broken vehicles, unavailable resources, shifting priorities, or many other reasons. It is not uncommon for Europeans, as well as Africans, to not be reliable with travel dates.

October 8, Thursday:
After waiting for two hours at Morgan's Garage, a tow truck was commissioned to go and get the Jeep and pull it back to our house. When looking at it, the mechanic said it was the bell housing that was busted, a very difficult part to replace. Joe Sharp had had the same trouble with his vehicle,
and he has been waiting four months for a replacement part. Maybe Land Rovers are a better choice, since they are British vehicles, are much more common in West Africa, and have many basic parts that can be easily cannibalized from other vehicles.

Volunteer Bill Derringer was staying with us overnight. He is based in Kailahun, and he said the District Officer, the governing official in that district, is concerned because our Nyeama school project was never approved through proper channels. Bill told us there is talk of taking off the bushboards and tearing down the rock wall. This news is tragic, and we need to better understand what is going on.

October 10, Saturday:
Tim came to Kenema for his regular visit. We all talked about the Nyeama school and seemed to agree that the problem arose when we did not "sell" the school project to the right people, like the Works Engineer, the paramount chief, and the District Officer. But no one has a solution to the problem as it stands. Tim plans to go to Nyeama early this week to get a few people on our side again.

October 11, Sunday:
The situation with the school looks grim for the moment. Mario told the paramount chief that he personally would make the requested changes in the school, plastering the rock wall and replacing the bushboard with pan. However, the Provincial Secretary, the high official governing the Eastern Province, said he would not allow these changes under any circumstances. The Provincial Secretary did not know about the paramount chief's role, and vice versa, but each is determined to do it his way. We are caught in the middle, and Tim, Mario, and I will need to work out some kind of compromise to get the school finished.

October 13, Tuesday:
Tim, Mario, and I went to Kailahun to talk with the Provincial Secretary and find out what is really wrong with the school. The P.S. said he did not like the appearance of the rock walls, and there was no arguing with him on this point, since it was just a matter of taste. He said he had expected a smooth wall, so we promised to chip off the sharp edges and fill the biggest holes. He also said he would rather have pan on the end walls, but since we started with bushboards, we might as well finish it that way and then paint them. So Mario and I will patch up the pieces and get the work completed. The aesthetic values of these people are so different from ours. This is not to criticize them, but while Americans like a rustic, natural look, Africans want anything but that. In a way, it is our fault for not understanding this when we began the project, although it is difficult to know how we could have discovered their preferences before seeing something.
October 14, Wednesday:

I went to Talia today and the workers began putting the cattle scale together on the concrete foundation. This seems to be a very easy project that will be completed quickly. Maybe one more trip to the site will be sufficient.

An author, Edna McGuire (Boyd) stopped in Kenema today on a tour of Sierra Leone. She and her husband are interviewing Peace Corps Volunteers for a book she is writing on the Peace Corps for junior high age students. They asked many questions about the A-frame project, and I answered them as best I could. We are getting used to being interviewed while over here. After Sierra Leone, the Boyds will be going to India and Malaysia to meet with other PCVs.
October 15, Thursday:

Mario and I went to Nyeama to try to figure out what to do with the school. We hired a skilled mason and carpenter to help until work is complete. Mario was enthusiastic about getting the school done quickly. I expect he soon will lose this enthusiasm as he fits in with the pace of the workers and begins to understand the frustrations with this project.

I stayed overnight in Daru with Mario and played about ten rousing games of chess.

October 16, Friday:

I took the paramount chief to Nyeama to look at and talk about the school with Tim, who had driven to Nyeama for this meeting. We were also to meet with the District Officer, but by noon he had not arrived, so Tim decided to leave for Bo. When he had driven about seven miles his ESP told him he should turn around and return. He drove onto the site just as the D.O. arrived, so it was fortuitous he had decided to come back. As a result of their conversation, we all decided it would be appropriate to take down the bushboards in the upper area of the end walls and replace them with corrugated metal pan. The Chief and the D.O. also wanted to further plaster both sides of the rock wall and groove it to look like brick. I think it is unfortunate to make a natural rock wall a fake brick wall, but we agreed to comply.
October 17, Saturday:

I went out to finish the cattle scale. It is great working with factory-made equipment, where everything fits together appropriately. The scale does not weigh pounds, but CWTs, whatever that is. In any case, it is a project that was completed in ten days, requiring just four mornings on my part. Hopefully it is a good sign for the future. If I can ever get Nyeama out of the way, maybe I can really get things going. I would like to have Mario take over the school project while I begin some new projects.

October 20, Tuesday:

Today Joe Sharp moved into our house. He made himself right at home, and said he came to straighten out our servant problem. I did not realize we had problems, but if he can get better efficiency from them, and wants to take the responsibility for choosing menus and finding work for them each day, I will go along with that. In any case, it will be nice to have a full house with three Volunteers once again.
October 21, Wednesday:

I drove to Gegwema to help find a water source for the health center. We drove up a bush road, then stopped and continued on foot through genuine jungle. Every step had to be cleared with a machete, with all kinds of thorns, razor-sharp grass, and swamp. I don't see how the natives can walk through all that barefoot with just shorts and no shirt. We did find a clean river—one that did not have a village upstream that would dispose of waste by dumping it in the river. When we got back to Gegwema we found the source was only about one half mile distant.
Upon my return I decided to service the Land Rover. I'll tell you, I need to learn better how to maintain these vehicles. On my first attempt to change the oil I took out the wrong plug and instead drained the transmission fluid.

October 22, Thursday:
At four in the morning we were all rudely awakened by thieves. There was a gang of them, and they scattered so various watchmen from other houses could not easily chase them. While our watchman was chasing some, others came and broke the chain on Mike's motor scooter and took it. We got up too late to protect it, so about all that was left to do was to fill out a police report. The theft really vexed our watchman, and now he will not let any outsider step on our property while he is on duty. Finally, we have a fine watchman who takes his role seriously.

October 24, Saturday:
Mario and I went to Nyeama and found there had been no workers for a number of days. We found Bockari in town and told him, in ten different ways, to get on the stick. We told him he was not earning his pay, that this chiefdom now would probably not get another school built there, that the people of Nyeama are very lazy, that they are wasting much of their own money, etc.

October 25, Sunday:
It is the first night of the PCV Rural Development Group conference in Kenema. All of the volunteers made it here today except for Jeff, who went to Monrovia to look for parts for all the broken Jeeps. Everyone is making themselves right at home and they seem to be having a good time, although a few are complaining about paying sixty cents for each of the meals. Mike and Joe are planning and coordinating the meals and are doing a good job of it. In the afternoon some of us went to practice for the big softball game planned for Tuesday; it ought to be fun. Now it is one o'clock in the morning and guys are still coming and going. Some are trying to sleep, but the place is still jumping.

October 26, Monday:
In the morning we all met in a room at the Kenema Information Center to give a brief report on our activities and projects. After lunch there was a tour of the Forest Industries plant. The rest of the day was spent practicing for the big ball game tomorrow between the North and the South and East volunteers; it looks like there is a fierce rivalry developing between the two groups.

October 27, Tuesday:
We began a six-vehicle caravan on a two-day tour. I drove our six-passenger Land Rover. If I had known what the roads were like I never would have taken it. Some ruts were actually three feet deep. The only way to drive them was to ride the ridge and straddle the ruts. The Rover's wheels are not nearly as wide as a Jeep, so it was precarious driving, some of the most dangerous I have had yet.

Anyway, first we visited a diamond field in Hangha. Sierra Leone now has many diamond fields near Kenema. This was the biggest such operation I have seen. To open a field, first a crew
digs off the topsoil and digs a square hole about fifty to seventy-five feet deep, with a layer of gravel beginning about twenty feet down. The gravel contains the diamonds, so a crew digs through the gravel, usually one man with a pick-axe, one with a shovel, and about seven others in a bucket brigade hauling the gravel and water out, a headpan full at a time. They fill sacks with the gravel and carry them to the river, where the gravel is washed. They pan-wash it to get off the large stones, then put the remaining gravel in a screen box and wash it more. They then dump it and look for diamonds. The first two loads we watched they found three diamonds, which we thought was great. However, later we found out they had planted them for us before we arrived.
Diamond mining in Sierra Leone

When I arrived in Sierra Leone in 1964 the country had a strong economic base, primarily because of its significant mineral resources. The country was generally shifting from mining for gold to mining for alluvial diamonds, which were readily accessible by anyone with a shovel and a sieve. Although diamonds had been discovered as early as the 1930s, in the 1960s it seemed mining companies were buying land and taking effective control of large areas of the Eastern and Southern provinces. The workers required to dig and sieve the soils in these districts received little benefit from them. If one of the workers tried to hide a diamond on his body and got caught, the punishment was inevitably brutal. There was constant strife with the diamond companies (largely DeBeers) and the resulting corruption associated with the national government.

Although the prime gold fields were located in the next district north, the Kenema district was central to one of the largest diamond areas. In the 1960s when we were there, diamond mining was not the great concern or problem it became in the following decades. Lebanese traders arranged to ship diamonds to Jewish diamond merchants in Antwerp through a regular supply system, which may not have always worked smoothly, but seemed to function adequately. However, when DeBeers pulled out in 1984, almost all of the diamonds were being smuggled and sold illicitly. Diamonds helped high-ranking government leaders live high. Eventually they were stolen by revolutionaries during the civil war of the 1990s and used as "blood diamonds."

The caravan of Volunteers then went to Mende, a village where a United Nations man, Mr. Den Donckers, had been working. This village was a real morale booster for all of us, since the villagers had taken the initiative on many projects. He said there was never a shortage of labor since the locals willingly volunteer to help. They have built a successful water system, complete with pure water and twelve showers located around the town. They also have improved the rice swamps with dams and plateaus, as well as developing cacao and palm oil farms. The villagers asked us to stay to join them for "rice chop" (a meal) and gave us the best they had to offer, oranges and rice. It was a hot chop, really hot! This was the first time I was unable to eat rice chop because it was too spicy, and the Peace Corps doctor traveling with us looked at us all and laughed at our red faces. When it was time to leave Mende, most of the village women got in front of our vehicles and began dancing so we could not get through them and depart. Cul, our African-American volunteer, got out of his vehicle and began dancing with them, and they loved it. We finally left the village, all in very good spirits.

We then traveled to Mario's town of Daru to sleep overnight. We had planned to play the ball game at the end of the day, the big ball game, but we got there too late, so postponed it until tomorrow. We all slept in the Daru town "barri" (open-sided hut) overnight. I had forgotten my country cloth blanket, and had only a sheet, so had to suffer through a cold, sleepless night.

October 28, Wednesday:

In the morning I found the Land Rover had a flat tire, probably a result of hitting too many bumps with a full load. I changed it with the spare before the group toured Mario's projects in Daru.
We then drove to Nyeama to show the others the A-frame school. Everyone I asked liked the A-frame, the construction of it, and the price of it, so that was encouraging.

In the afternoon we returned to Kenema and were ready to play softball. Everyone was there and wanted to play, and the rivalry between North and South was now at its peak. The game progressed and it was 10 to 6 in favor of the North team in the bottom of the sixth inning when the rain came like a hurricane. As they say in Krio, the country's pigeon language, "Na een dat" (Now ends that). So there were no winners with bragging rights, and the game will need to be refought at the next volunteer conference.

That evening there was just enough time for everyone to shower and clean up before a reception. Most of the local people invited came to it, and the rice curry dinner was quite good. Mike and Joe did a great job in seeing the meal went well; I know it was a lot of work for them and the cooks. But yet they did not want me to help at all. It seems Joe and Mike might be taking charge over all the household matters, much like Mike and Wiley did. I talked with some others about this, and they said I should assert more authority. The thing is, I do not know how to go about it. It is much easier to coast along with what they decide, and they do have a majority.

The use of the Krio language

Krio is a dialect based on English that was developed by returned slaves who had been in America. Over many decades it has evolved into a language of its own, unique to Sierra Leone, and is commonly used in Freetown and the country's Western area. Although English is the official national language, many locals speak only their own tribal language (for example, Mende or Temne). Krio is commonly used by villagers who do not speak English and who need to communicate with non-tribal visitors. During my stay in Sierra Leone I found that in a typical village you may find a few people (e.g., traders or elders) who speak Krio, but even fewer (maybe a school teacher or merchant) who also speaks English. Currently, Krio has become much more widespread throughout the country and is now spoken by over six million people, including 300,000 Krios, for whom it is their native language. It is similar to Nigerian Pidgin and Jamaican Patois, with some mutual understanding.

I found Krio to be an interesting language. We quickly learned phrases such as "Na een dat," translated loosely as "Now end that," or "It is done." "Aw di go de go?" becomes "How are you?" "Ay de go" or "Mayk haysha" is simply "Goodbye."²⁰ It was easy to learn because it has its own grammatical structure and rules. Perhaps the reader can interpret the lyrics to one of my favorite Krio songs about a common problem with the train traveling to the city of Bo, a train where occasionally the riders literally would need to step outside and push it up short hills.

"De train fo Bo ee no wan gree for go.
De train fo Bo ee no wan gree for go.
De train fo Bo ee tyre
Becoz ee no ge fyre.
De train fo Bo ee no wan gree for go."
Although the ability to speak Mende would have been a great advantage in our upcountry work as Peace Corps Volunteers as we traveled throughout the Kenema district, our Peace Corps training program focused on learning Krio, both because it was much easier to learn and because it could be used in all areas of the country. I felt relieved as a trainee with this approach, since I was not adept at learning languages and Mende was especially difficult, with guttural sounds, such as gb ("gbo-be-ga-hun") and kp ("kpa"), where the "g" or "k" was formed in the mouth but did not come out as a sound. (Mende was not a written language.) However, one Mende word was quite useful; it was pronounced "bis-see-ay." There is no English equivalent to its meaning. It is used whenever one is in the middle of a conversation, but there is really nothing further to say at that point. If conversation lagged, native Mende speakers would say "bissea" to indicate, "I am still with you even if I am not saying anything right now." One person may say "bissea," the other would respond with "bissea" as often as warranted, until the conversation began again. I found this phrase quite useful when I was in villages, for I used it as a way to say in a friendly manner, "I can't speak with you in Mende, but I am here with you nonetheless."

October 29, Thursday:
All the volunteers left for home after breakfast. Mike and Joe and I cleaned up the house, a real job. Afterwards, we were so tired and miserable it made for an all-around lousy morning.

A while back I had asked a wood carver at Forest Industries if he would carve me a chess set with pieces made of mahogany and ivory. He said he is the number one carver in Sierra Leone, and he has made furniture and carved a Sierra Leone coat of arms for Queen Elizabeth, so I was looking forward to the finished product. In the afternoon I went to his studio to pay him an additional ten pounds. He had all the wood figures completed, and they looked wonderful, but now he needs to buy
the ivory for the white set. He said he would also give me a complimentary carving of a deer when he was done. A real nice guy.

October 30, Friday:

More personality problems. Bockari told me he refused to work with Mario on further projects since, as he said, Mario "did not praise him." Mario only worked with him for three days, and each time it was important to rush, so Mario may have been a little short-tempered. I told Tim about Bockari's decision and he said if Bockari felt this way maybe I could take him on as my own counterpart, which I would just love.

October 31, Saturday:

I spent a miserable day at home with a cold. I think I got it when we played softball in the rain. To keep my clothes from getting wet, I took off my T-shirt and shoes. This is what could have done it.

Our cook had the rest of the week off so he could go to Kailahun to get another wife. Now I am sure we are paying him too much. Anyway, I was cook tonight, so I cooked up what I thought was a marvelous batch of beef stew. It took all afternoon, but I followed the cookbook recipe explicitly, with all the extras like bullion and dumplings, and it really came out delicious. I was constantly sneezing into the stew, so this could have helped give it that extra-special taste.

November 1, Sunday:

Another month is beginning. To start it off on the right foot, I drove up to the village of Tungie to survey for a new project, a new health center. The town is seventy-one miles from Kenema and the dirt roads are terrible, not because of rain but because they go up and over mountains. While
there all I did was talk with Paramount Chief Kanji and Chiefdom Clerk Mana. This discussion was important because it was the first step toward implementing the work.

Joe drove me to Nyeama in the Land Rover and then returned to Kenema for the week, so I am really stuck here now. I noticed some men laying out the structure for a traditional thatched-roof building at the school site. I asked Bockari about it; he said he had heard second-hand that the District Officer authorized a contractor to start building a traditional-type school structure. I thought they still liked the basic idea of the A-frame, but now I am not so sure. We will need to see how this plays out for future projects.

A day of painting the pan on the school. The workers did a very sloppy job of it, so I am going over it all again. We still get no volunteer workers, just the paid carpenter and masons, Bockari, and myself.

I did not bring any drinking water from home, an error of the first degree, so I have been using iodine in water taken from the stream. The soda I buy at the shop is actually hot, so I have put bottles in the stream for cooling.

It began as another day of painting, but the sun made the metal surfaces too hot to paint.

I had not brought any clean socks to Nyeama, so I decided to take my first lorry ride back to Kenema to get clean socks (as well as more cement, nails, locks, and paint). The first lorry was jammed with people; the next turned around and went the opposite direction. Finally there was a driver who was willing to take me after negotiating a jacked-up price for a white man. The lorries are not unduly uncomfortable, but neither are they comfortable, sitting on a board in the back for
thirty miles on a bumpy road. On the road the lorry came up behind a large timber truck and we followed its dust cloud for what must have been miles, never really seeing it because of the dust. I could not think of a greater feeling than finally passing this dust cloud and coming into clean air once again. Everything in the lorry had become covered with a coating of red laterite dust.

Back in Kenema, Mike and Joe once again had been making "home improvements." Recent projects included painting a frame around the wall mural; installing a light bulb at each of four corners of the structure to discourage thieves; painting large milk cans and flour cans, punching holes in them and using them for improvised light shades; and hanging curtains on the windows in the sitting room. I could say the changes make the house look better; I will say they do not make it look worse.

November 6, Friday:
Tim came back from Kailahun, where he said the District Officer told him a new building at Nyeama is to be a nursery school. Although they really need another school building, why they need a nursery is beyond us. The D.O. said he wants Tim to design it, putting the A-frame on top of seven-foot high block walls so the teachers’ quarters can be put on the second floor. There sure is a big gap between their design tastes and ours.

There was a rumor throughout Kenema today that President L.B.J. had been assassinated, although there was no word of it outside of the town?

We had a thief pester us again tonight and the whole neighborhood was out with clubs and shotguns. All the guy did was break windows, so hopefully that is the end of it.

November 7, Saturday:
Joe brought home two baby leopards! He bought them from a boy downtown for 10 Leones (L), after a starting price of L28. Since getting them home he has been trying everything for feeding them.
He tried feeding them milk and meat with a cup, a baby bottle, and a syringe without the needle. They will need to be fed every three hours around the clock, according to a book he happened to have.

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**Our 1960s attitude about pets**

I feel it is somewhat necessary to better explain our approach to keeping pets, based on attitudes common in the 1960s. At that time neither American nor African societies had a heightened awareness of the down side of keeping wild animals as pets. Although the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was established in 1866, its purpose was to prevent outright cruelty to animals, which was more common in the 19th century.

There was little interest in animal protection after World War II, primarily because of the many animals being used in scientific research and because of the increased use of factory farming. This shifted in the 1970s, when advocates such as famous actress Bridgette Bardot maintained that animals should no longer be viewed as property, and she devoted her life to animal activism. This is generally considered the period when the animal rights movement began. The group Animal Rights International was formed in 1974.

As I retrace our two years in West Africa in the mid-1960s, it is obvious that such concerns about animal rights were far from our thinking. We tried to take good care of our pets, and felt they might be better off in our compound than out in the wild, but we also enjoyed their companionship, even if we were not familiar with the concept of political correctness.

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November 8, Sunday:

Today we went to the Kenema Club, the British ex-patriates social club, to watch their Sunday morning go-kart races. Many of the English still stationed in Kenema have go-karts, and their families come to watch and to race. They do not seem to have a good mechanic among them, for they were running around looking for tools, asking each other how to get this bolt off or adjust this or that. But the important thing is they seem to all have a good time racing on their a paved track.
November 10, Tuesday:
I went to see Mr. Kamanda, the government official who is responsible for supporting the Tungie health center project. He was able to procure £5,200 for it, so everything is clear to begin construction. He wants me to go to Tungie with him to set up labor, jobs, etc.
The leopard cubs are doing fine, walking all over the house and shrieking at the top of their lungs. For their size they are the loudest things I have ever heard.

November 12, Thursday:
Joe and I decided to drive to Freetown to take care of some business and buy building materials. The roads were greatly improved, there were no detours, and we arrived by 8pm, got settled, and another long day of driving had ended.
November 13, Friday:

I was able to locate all the building materials I needed, most from the Public Works Department store. Then I went to the USAID office to see about getting more corrugated metal roof pan, which they were supposed to donate. They told me I needed the original copy of the release from the secretary of the District Council in Kenema. The secretary had told me he had sent it to Freetown. Mr. Diffenderfer, the head of the AID office, said the normal procedure would be to go back to Kenema and have them file it once again; it was their policy that if a mistake in procedure is made, they should learn the hard way by correcting it properly. But since I was here in Freetown, he would make up another one for me.

My next goal was to find the Kenema District Officer, who had told me I would be able to find him in Freetown to get a Local Purchase Order (LPO) from him to pay for other materials. This became a real snag, since I had tried to set a time and place to meet him, but he had said we would naturally run into each other. I knew where he would likely be, but I was one step behind him all day. I asked Peace Corps Director Bob Golding what I should do, since the D.O. was likely leaving tomorrow morning. Bob said we should return to Kenema, get the LPO and send it to him, and he would take care of having all the materials loaded on a train and sending them to Kenema. This I considered to be a real lifesaver.

November 14, Saturday:

Joe and I decided to do some personal shopping while in Freetown. I had brought a list of items, and the first thing on my list was a turntable and some records. I had planned on spending about £8, but could only find a better Garrard changer for £12. I bought it, along with three records, including Gershwin's Porgy and Bess, a record I had been looking for in the States. A review of my wallet revealed I now had only enough money to get home, so it looks like I may need to borrow some for anything else.

Joe went to see Bob Golding and ask for reimbursement for the "improvements" to our house. Surprisingly, Bob asked his secretary to bring in a total for the amount we had spent thus far. It put Joe off balance for a minute. I think it will be best if I begin putting my foot down in the future, since Bob seemed to be suggesting we were approaching a limit to such expenditures.

November 15, Sunday:

Joe and I spent the whole day at Lumley Beach, one of the most beautiful parts of Sierra Leone. The sun could not have been more comforting, nor the surf better. I have been told that saltwater heals all wounds, and this could be the case both physically and psychologically. However, I can tell you that playing football on the beach can make for more wounds. The sand was like sandpaper, and when a few other volunteers joined us on the beach a few good falls left some red spots on my legs and feet.
November 16, Monday:

After my spending most of today looking for Joe, I finally ran into him at the Peace Corps hostel, and we finally were able to leave Freetown at 5:30 pm. It turned into a long trip late at night, and after a stop in Bo to see Culbert we arrived back in Kenema at 1:15 am. I had mail from home waiting for me, so this meant I stayed up for even longer.

November 18, Wednesday:

Bob Golding had told me a health center had been built in Panguma of the same design we are building in Gegwema and Tungie, so I went there this afternoon to look it over and maybe get some ideas. I could not believe it when I saw it. It was a complex of buildings, including a 32-bed ward and homes for the doctor and nurses. All the buildings had tiled floors and the walls were painted in two-tone pastels. One of the walls was a beautiful rock wall. The property was landscaped and had grass. I talked with the foreman, who had many years of construction experience, and he said the work had taken two years so far and was almost complete. Seeing this project was a real morale booster for me and helps me understand this type of construction, seeing a completed project.
November 19, Thursday:

The irony of keeping a diary is that on days when you have something interesting to write about you are typically too tired to do it. On days when you have time to write there is usually nothing much going on. Today was a slow day, but I did some thinking, especially after reading a National Geographic article about the Peace Corps. Although I now have plenty of work to do, I do not feel I am teaching the locals anything new, so am doing little good in the long run. As a result, I decided to take more time with my coworker for Gegwema, Henry Lefevre. I would take him to Freetown to show him how to order materials and put the supplies on the train. This meant I would not need to forward the paperwork to Bob Golding and have him take care of it for me.

November 20, Friday:

Henry Lefevre and I went to see the District Officer in the morning and obtain the necessary paperwork for the trip to Freetown. I am always surprised that although Henry is a capable and reliable Sierra Leonean, local government officials process paperwork and payments through me, a young American foreigner. It is obviously a remnant of the colonial system of British control that has not yet evolved into one where local officials fully trust their own people. It may have to do with habit, tradition, tribalism, local politics, or a number of other factors I do not fully understand, but it is obvious to me, and a bit demeaning to Henry.

Later in the day I went to Nyeama to do some painting of the interior. The yellow paint we had purchased was rubber-based and much too thick to spread properly. I tried to thin it with gas, but that did not work. I then read the label and it said to thin with water, and this made it very spreadable. So much for paying attention to the basics.

At the end of the day I went to Daru to get checks for the project from the chieftain secretary. Mario was gone for overnight, so I stayed in his house. For dinner his cook heated up the first C-ration I had eaten. It was good, but not nearly filling enough.
November 21, Saturday:

Back in Nyeama for another day of painting.

Later I told the locals I would take their picture for 13 cents each, which was my cost. This idea went over big, for they love to see pictures of themselves. I must have taken at least twenty photos in total. From looking at the negatives, I feel they should make good prints.

![Hair braiding in the village](image)

November 23, Monday:

Back in Kenema on a Monday morning, I found Mr. Lefevre and asked him if he wanted to come to Freetown with me today so he could see how to order materials and put them on the train. A long morning at the District Office got all the papers ready, including more than enough LPOs (Local Purchase Orders) to handle whatever I will need. Then we took off to Freetown.

November 24, Tuesday:

In Freetown, Mr. Lefevre and I went in the morning to the Public Works Department with our paperwork. We were told they were in order, but it would take two days before the materials could be taken. As a courtesy visit, I took Mr. Lefevre to the AID office to meet Mr. Diffenderfer and Bill Camp. We stayed there throughout much of the afternoon talking. Afterwards, I took Mr. Lefevre to his brother's house, where he would stay overnight, and I spent the afternoon shopping and reading.
November 25, Wednesday:
Fellow PCV Ron Hall and I spent the day shopping and taking photos around the city. I forgot to bring a swimsuit, or else it could have been a good day at the beach.

November 26, Thursday:
It turned out to be another frustrating day trying to get the P.W.D. to give us our materials. I called the District Officer upcountry to find out what to do, and he said go to the Ministry of the Interior. However, I am coming to the conclusion the District Officer does not seem to know what is going on, for he gave me an unauthorized form and an illegal open LPO with no specified amount and then sent me to the Ministry with no further instructions.

November 27, Friday:
Another frustrating day. Mr. Jusu, a secretary with the Ministry of the Interior, went out to talk with someone at the P.W.D. to see what could be done about letting me get the materials. After this discussion, he went back to his office to make out new paperwork for us. I took it to the P.W.D. This time it was called a Departmental Warrant, but in essence it was the same as the other papers; it was still unauthorized and meant I would need to try something else. The chief storekeeper at the P.W.D., who had been a real stickler, had also been patient throughout this process, considering the number of times I have been out there to bother him. Finally he said he would personally take care of it and everything should be ready Monday morning. This means Mr. Lefevre and I will need to spend a long, and costly, weekend in Freetown, sleeping at the Peace Corps hostel but buying my own meals. Although I love working in the villages, the red tape and seeming incompetency at higher levels of government are starting to create a new attitude of frustration for me.

November 28, Saturday:
It was now Saturday, and volunteer Ron Hall had come to Freetown last Monday intending to return to his home station last Tuesday. However, he does not have his own vehicle and his ride did not come through, so he stayed in Freetown all week with nothing really to do. Bob Golding was perturbed about this, but Ron explained that in his Kono district the diamond trade had taken over everything and no one had any interest in community projects. Ron said the place is really getting bad because of diamond smuggling and people now need a permit to live there. Everyone wants to dig for diamonds and Ron has had no cooperation at all. After talking further with Bob, the two of them decided Ron should move to Bo to continue his tour.

November 29 and 30, Sunday and Monday:
I went to Bob Golding's new home on the ocean, where he was entertaining other volunteers, administrators, and some English families. A chicken barbeque, swimming in surf, and touch football on the beach all made this a wonderful afternoon. I heard some of the visitors call Bob's house the most beautiful residence in Sierra Leone and after seeing it I can believe them.

Then this happened on my way back into Freetown...
ACCIDENT REPORT

At 8:30pm on the night of the 29th of November, 1964, while coming into Freetown from the home of Robert Golding, I struck Mrs. Fatamata Bah with Land Rover C4211 in the vicinity of 40 Kroo Town Road. Although braking and swerving to the left, I was unable to avoid hitting her, and the Land Rover struck her on the right front bumper. She was knocked to the ground, and I got out as soon as I stopped to see what condition she was in. She was able to stand up, and no injuries were noticeable. A policeman then came to take charge. He put the woman in a taxi to be taken to Connaught Hospital. He then marked the position of the tires with chalk, and directed me to nearby Western Police Station. Here a short report was written and the Traffic Department was notified. I was then taken back to the scene of the accident, where the investigating officer from the Traffic Department, Bassie Kamara, painted the position of the tires and where the victim fell. He then took me to the hospital, where Mrs. Bah's condition was unofficially described as not serious, with only bruises. I was then taken to Traffic Department headquarters, where I made a statement. Next morning, the 30th, under instructions from the investigating officer, I took my vehicle to the checking station in Kissy, where its condition was found to be satisfactory. We then went to the victim's home, where she was found to be in satisfactory condition. A check was then made of the insurance at the Peace Corps office, where the essential facts were also recorded for Peace Corps files.

Signed,
Norman Tyler
Peace Corps Volunteer

Although I am very glad the woman was not hurt, I kept thinking about PCV Jim Beck, who had just killed a woman in a similar accident. As of now, though, it seems the whole case is finished and no one is the worse off permanently. One interesting aspect is that the policeman suggested I might "dash" (gift) the woman some money to keep her and her chief from taking the case to court. However, witnesses said the woman ran directly in my path without giving me a chance to miss her. This is more common than one might think, since people and animals are not fully aware of the dangers of traffic on roads and often do not pay attention as they cross.

November 30 (continued):

The P.W.D. finally let Mr. Lefevre and I have our materials, and their workers began loading everything on a train car. They will finish loading tomorrow morning, so Mr. Lefevre and I hope to head back to Kenema then, a full eight days later than anticipated. I wonder what Mike and Joe are thinking about our absence, since I have not had contact with them since leaving.
During the evening I sat on the porch in the Peace Corps hostel and watched traffic below. Most of the traffic in Freetown consists of taxi drivers, who never have brake lights, most not even taillights, and they stop where they are whenever someone needs a ride. They do not hesitate to back up into approaching traffic, but each seems to know how another driver will act under certain circumstances, so they avoid collisions most of the time. However, the streets are a "mosaic," with an almost continuous pattern of painted marks indicating the positions of tires where accidents have occurred. I never realized how many until I had contributed my own set.

December 1, Tuesday:
I told Mr. Lefevre to be packed up and ready to leave today. I took him to the P.W.D. compound to watch the final loading of the railroad car. We had everything we came for, and the accident case was completely taken care of, so we departed for Kenema. It was an uneventful trip—we only had one flat tire—and arrived to find Mike, Joe and the leopard cubs in good shape.

December 2, Wednesday:
Today I learned that Mike would be moving to Giema; he will be taking Tamba with him as his houseboy.

December 4, Friday:
Mario dropped by and said all the masonry work at Nyeama will be completed in one day. I started work on the blackboards and partitions, which I could do at home. It looks like I will complete the rest of the work myself, since the Prime Minister will be making a visit in a few days and all the locals are distracted preparing for this big event.
December 8, Tuesday:

The Prime Minister, Albert Margolis, made his debut in Kenema today, and every village along the route was festively decorated with flags and palm arches. Later we met him at a cocktail party. Did I say cocktail party? It was more like serving beer in a playground park, with hundreds of people invited and thousands more standing outside the fence. P.M. Margolis came over to talk with the Peace Corps Volunteers. He asked each of us what we were doing, how we liked Kenema, etc. He was quite friendly and had personality plus.

Later in the day a wild animal collector came over to look at Joe's leopards. He said they looked in good health, and he said he was prepared to buy them. Joe gave a bottom price of L65. (Joe had bought them for L10.) The man quickly wrote a check and took them with him, and the transfer was over quickly. In fact, it was so quick that Joe was thinking about it later and thought he must have been rooked, so he went over to where the man was staying, handed him the check back, and took the cubs home. Now he is happy once again.

December 10, Thursday:

It was a day to spend at the large annual Kenema Fair. Displays I enjoyed the most were of handmade products, such as cloth, carvings, toys, and such. Some are really fine work. One exhibit had weavers weaving a four-foot wide section of country cloth, using a semi-automatic shuttle; it was quite ingenious. Most of these items will be on sale until Saturday, but my bank account is almost empty, so it might be better just to stay at home.

December 11, Friday:

I talked with Mr. Kamanda, who is the local official backing the Tungie Health Center project. He seemed perturbed that we had not yet started construction. I told him the District Officer did not have approval for funding. Kamanda said he could fix that tomorrow. He also said he would hire a surveyor to prepare the foundation and determine the block and timber requirements. This was like telling me I had not been working fast enough and he would get someone else to take my place. In spite of the threat, I enjoy being associated with someone who wants to get work done quickly, and
worry about incidentals later. His attitude is so different from other administrative officials, who typically work at a snail's pace.

December 13, Sunday:
Volunteer Jeff Mareck brought up the bell housing for the Jeep; we had been waiting three months for it. Joe is our mechanic, and he said with a little help we could have it all together by tomorrow night. It would be great to have a second vehicle once again.

December 14, Monday:
Joe and I crawled under the Jeep, dropped the transmission, took it apart, only to find all the parts were not there. Joe and Mike decided to drive to Freetown in the morning to get them.

December 15, Tuesday:
I stayed at home to get projects rolling again after the slowdowns from the Prime Minister's visit and the Kenema Fair. The train car of materials had arrived, so Mr. Lefevre and I went to see about getting them transported for Gegwema for the health center project.

Meanwhile, Bill Camp, the USAID engineer, had gone to the town of Tungie on his own and returned to tell me the people there were not ready for a health center project, but were willing to help build a town water supply. I don't know if his being a water supply engineer had anything to do with this, but it seems wherever he goes he finds there is a greater need for a dug-well, pump-fed water supply system than any other type work. Anyway, I may end up being in charge of this project, since the funds have not been allocated yet for the health center.

December 16, Wednesday:
A District Council secretary stopped at the house and left an owl. He said it was "dashed" to Mike for his work on the Kenema Show. It is a beautiful brown and white bird, but it would not eat or drink anything. And right now it is crying. I hope it is not a problem having both the leopard cubs and an owl in the same household, and with Mike and Joe away I need to monitor the situation carefully. The owl sits on a perch in the living room, but his chain hangs to the floor and the leopards like to play with it.

December 17, Thursday:
I wanted the leopards to get used to the owl, and vice versa, so I let all of them go free under my close supervision, swatting the leopards whenever they got close to the owl. Finally they just ignored the owl, so I walked into the other room for a brief minute. I did not hear a sound, but when I got back I saw the cubs playing and the owl was laying on the floor, face down and as still as death. I got a can of water and threw it on him, but he was already gone. I don't know how I should explain this to Mike, since it was my fault for not watching them, but I really thought the owl would be able to fly away if it was in danger. I don't know whether to bury him or keep him, in case Mike wants it stuffed.
December 19, Saturday:

Mike and Joe returned from Freetown with all kinds of news. Mike had a new motorbike, which he can use for getting around town and going out to Giema. They were unable to get parts for the Jeep, so now there are two jeeps sitting in our yard incapacitated. In other news, Volunteer Bill Derringer will be going to the States to be treated for a number of ailments, so Joe will be able to use his Land Rover while he is gone. Tim and Volunteer teacher Gay Revi are engaged and plan to get married in July; this will be a special Peace Corps wedding. They also told me Bob Golding said the P.W.D. architects in Freetown like the idea of the A-frame design, so Bob wants my improved plans drawn up and sent to him.

Joe got evidence that Faya, our cook, has been helping himself to our personal property while working around the house. Before leaving for Freetown, Joe marked the level of liquid in a wine bottle, knowing that Faya likes to partake. Sure enough, he checked and the level was down. We have all now lost our trust in Faya; I hate to have anyone working here who cannot be trusted. We will begin looking for a new cook.

December 20, Sunday:

I went to my first church service in Sierra Leone. Reverend Groves, a new Methodist missionary here, held a carol service at the Forest Industries Recreation Hall. All of the hymns were Methodist, and although some of the words were familiar none of the melodies were. Twelve people attended; a very rare dry season rainstorm probably kept a few walkers home.

December 21, Monday:

Mike and Joe sat around the house again today. I don't like to be critical, but especially Joe has not done one ounce of Peace Corps project work since he has been here. At first I thought they were waiting for the Kenema Show to be over; then they went to Freetown. Now I guess they are waiting for New Years, or to get the Jeep fixed, or something. I know some days I also do not do a lot, but I know it is not a good thing to spend two years here and never get your teeth into something meaningful. I think this is one of the reasons Wiley could not make it here, since he either did not like the work or did not have enough self-initiative. Currently Joe has a road project waiting for him. The people in the town are ready, and they talked to the Prime Minister about getting started on it. All Joe has to do is take tools out and check once in a while, since the locals know how to do the work. I told Joe I would take this project if he did not want it, but he did not say one way or another. Tomorrow I intend to know for sure, since someone needs to get it going.

December 22, Tuesday:

Mr. Lefevre and I arranged for transport of materials from Kenema to Gegwema. I gave a dash to the driver of the lorry. I don't know if this had anything to do with it, but later Mr. Lefevre asked me if I was going to give him a "Christmas" (gift). I feel now I got started on the wrong foot by giving dashes; I certainly should not feel any such obligation. The Africans think I am crazy to do it—that is, all except the ones who expect a dash from me. They just call me a rich American, and I cannot convince them otherwise. And a rich American I certainly am not. I just closed my bank account because there was no money in it.
December 24 to 27, Thursday through Sunday:

The three of us had been invited to spend four days with an American family, the Spencers, in Gbangbama. Mr. Spencer is working for a mining company, Sherbro Minerals. Mrs. Spencer had written a wonderful book, *African Creeks I Have Been Up*, describing what it is like living as a family in West Africa. She was quite sociable and happy to have us join in holiday festivities. They live in a camp up on a hill with seven other American families. They have five children; Lolly is married and lives in Rio de Janeiro, Suzy graduated from college and now teaches in Gbangbama, John and Tom are taking correspondence courses for high school, and Rob is attending an integrated school in Kabala. They have a comfortable environment, with electricity, a tennis court, and other amenities. There were three mining companies located there, and each night one of the companies hosted a holiday party, each consisting of social conversation and typically ending with holiday singing.

![Mrs. Spencer and her kids](image-url)

December 28, Monday:

We had not trusted Faya’s honesty for weeks, but when we were sure he had picked up ten shillings lying on the table we decided to fire him. He gave us a half-hour speech on how he had been a victim of circumstances, but we have been missing too many things that we are sure he took. He said he would get the Commissioner of Labour after us, so there might be a "palaver" in the future.

December 30, Wednesday:

I made the rounds of administrative offices this morning. The money for the Tungi project is definitely available, although the District Officer indicated he thought I had asked one too many times about it, saying that white men never trust black men. In any case, I can start ordering materials as soon as I get to Freetown. That means I will return to the P.W.D. in Freetown once again, where I had so much trouble before for the Gegwema project, this time to requisition seven hundred bags of cement.
The D.O. had other projects for me to consider—a court barri at Mondema, a water supply at Barma, and a water supply at Boajibu. Although this sounds good, it could be too much for me to handle on my own, even if Mr. Lefevre is transferred as my coworker.

Another thing I began to realize is that the local Public Works Department head, Mr. Alex Brown, seems to despise the Peace Corps because we are cutting into their department's work, and their profits. So although I will be using their plans, I have been advised not to change the smallest detail on the plan or he will get vexed. I wonder how much good I am doing here, maybe making more enemies than friends. However, if I stick with it, eventually we should be able to show them we are not that bad.

December 31, Thursday:
The end of the year, but no real celebrating.
We got on the track of a cook who has been looking for a job and has been recommended by many others as a good cook and reliable. He has been working for Europeans and better understands our customs, not like Faya, whose experience had been cooking for the Sierra Leone Army.

January 1, 1965, Friday:
I have another whole year and then some to keep a daily diary. Glory be, that is a lot of discipline.

Mom and Dad,
It is only a year more to go. I have just noticed that instead of counting the months that I have put in so far, now I am thinking about how much time I have ahead to get things done. My vacation begins in August, and when I return the new Rural Development Program volunteers should be arriving. We will be spending time discussing how they can take over from where we leave off on projects. So really, essentially the next six months is the time I have remaining, through July.

January 2, Saturday:
Joe and I drove to Gegwema to visit the health center project. The whole town turned out to be with us. As soon as our discussion on the construction of a latrine was over the elders told us in a nice way to please leave, since when I was there the men would not work. Gegwema is the first town where the people are happy to be volunteering their help, and glad to have the Peace Corps for assistance. Before leaving they dashed me two pans of oranges and grapefruits. This was my first real dash from a village and I really appreciated receiving it.

The following letter was written without my knowledge by one of the elders in Gegwema to my father...

Dear Sir,
Serves to you information that your son Mr. Norman Tyler is working with us in our area at Kenema, the South E. Province of Sierra Leone. He is making a great progress of our country. He is working on bridges, hospitals, schools and another minor works in the District.
We hope may the almighty God help him till he gets back home. We are too much pleased of his works. He is the only one I have known supervising works in our District at moment. Nothing further to communicate at the present moment. Your son is pretty well as usual of which I hope you are the same.

Good wishes of the season
Best of Luck, Your obedient Servant,
M.K. Bundu

Pa Bundu giving me the gift of a leopard skin

When we returned to Kenema, Tim and his fiancé, Gay, were at the house. Tim had written an article on the A-frame school for the PCV magazine for a special article they will have on Sierra Leone. Tim also asked Joe the $64 question; when would he begin doing some project work. Joe hemmed and hawed an answer, but he doesn't seem to care what anyone thinks. I have a hunch he might be trying to coast until Jeff Mareck, a former group volunteer who has stayed on, goes home in January. Jeff has been the unofficial Jeep repairman, and Joe would like to do the same type of work, I know, even though he has not yet mentioned it.

We applied for a cook at the Labour Office. They sent over a man who we had turned down twice because of poor references. We decided to give him a trial and let him cook one meal to see how we liked him. He made stew, an easy dish, and it tasted quite good, so we decided to talk with him more. We found that he would not accept any less than ten pounds a month in payment, but we had already decided to make eight pounds our top. We also found that he knew Faya, our old cook, and loves to palaver (talk) just like Faya. We considered him a bad bet, and Joe decided that even with a growing stack of dirty dishes it would be better to bypass him and try again.
January 3, Sunday:

We had another overnight flat on the Land Rover. We have had six flats in the past week, and I have fixed them all. It is not difficult, just laborious.

Volunteer Ron Hall arrived with his father, who had come for a two-week visit. I found out Mr. Hall was a contractor, and quite a successful one, so we talked for a couple of hours about building and architecture. It makes me more than ever want to get my hands on some good books about architecture, since I intend to return to architecture school after the Peace Corps.

January 4, Monday:

We had trouble starting the Rover this morning; Joe almost jumped out of bed and gleefully climbed under the hood to begin its repair. Today it was the fuel pump. He went through the whole system, checking and cleaning. After a full day with a wrench, and just as he was going to take a shower, we tried to start it and it would not start, so he literally climbed under the hood with only a towel wrapped around him. One thing about Joe, when it comes to vehicle repair he does not quit until it is done, and today that meant working until ten in the evening.

Meanwhile, during the day, our trial cook came back in the afternoon, demanding seven shillings pay for the meal he cooked. We had offered him three shillings on the night he had cooked, the standard rate for three hours of work, but he would not take it then. Today he came yelling and cussing, using every trick in the book to get seven. We tried talking with him, but he did not listen, only yelling as loud as he could so other Africans nearby could hear how Americans were taking advantage of him. Finally Mike and I went to get the police to take him off our compound, but when we could not find any he seemed disappointed. He must have thought he had a chance to sway a policeman to his side. When we suggested we all go to the Labour Office, he would not hear of it. Anyway, we laid the three shillings on the porch rail and went inside to eat lunch. He stayed outside yelling through the screen door, but finally took the money and left, realizing finally he would not get more from us.

January 5, Tuesday:

Mr. Hall needed to get to Freetown to catch a flight home the next day, so I drove and Joe, Ron, and his father started out for Freetown in Land Rover C4211. Well, the inevitable happened. Most of the roads in Sierra Leone are dirt roads with high centers and deep cuts on either side, making them essentially one-lane roads where everyone drives in the center. That is, until a vehicle comes from the other direction, and room must be made to pass. The previous volunteers had told us no one could be there for two years without having an accident. I thought I had already had my fair share, but on the road to Bo we met a "mammy wagon" (an open-sided passenger van) on a curve. The Rover, a top-heavy vehicle to begin with, had been swaying with the extra load in back, and the rear wheels started sliding on the inclined, loose gravel shoulder. Then auspiciously a culvert showed up right after the curve. Although the Rover was not out of control, I could not get it back on the hard gravel in the center of the road, and we hit the head of the culvert. As we hung on the edge of the culvert, the vehicle slowly began tipping over and rolled down the steep embankment sideways, stopping upside down. Joe and I had seat belts on in the front seat, so we were just hanging there, but Ron and Mr. Hall in the back did not have seat belts and held on for dear life, rolling with the
vehicle. We landed upside down in the stream, and everyone got out as soon as they could. Luckily, we saw that the extent of cuts or bruises consisted only of Mr. Hall having his sleeve torn. A village was very near; by the time we were out of the vehicle the villagers were standing on the bank yelling at us in Mende. Joe and I had a look at the extent of the wreckage, while Ron and this father carried all the luggage away from the site. We saw that the oil pan was badly damaged, as well as a cross brace. We determined it could have been a lot worse, so decided to try to roll it over and push it up on the road with the help of the villagers. Now the interesting fact. In my almost two years in Sierra Leone I never saw a tow truck, but just at that time a Public Works Department tow truck happened along the road; it was miraculously good timing. We paid the village chief eight pounds to have the men roll over the vehicle and push it up the hill while the tow truck pulled it with a chain. It was a lengthy, precarious process, but we got it back on the road and had it pulled into the village. There Joe fixed what he could, filled the oil where we had lost it, and put our baggage back in. The engine turned over, the thing started, and slowly I drove twenty-five miles to the next city of Bo.

In Bo we went to PCV Culbert's house, where we found his Land Rover, but no Cul and no keys. Joe took off the dashboard to jump the wires to start, and there he found the hidden keys. We left a note for Cul, put our baggage in his Rover and took off for Freetown. We got into the city at nine p.m., allowing enough time for Ron's dad to get his papers for his flight home the next day.

When we got to Freetown, there was a party at Bob Golding's house to celebrate the wedding tomorrow of Volunteers Ed Clinch, who is in our group, and his fiancé, Ruth, a PCV teacher. We wanted to tell Bob about our accident, but he had been drinking and celebrating, so we decided to hold the news for the next day. Cul was also at the party, and we told him his Land Rover was in Freetown, but offered no explanation as to why. He took it all in stride, since such things were common enough among all PCVs who had vehicles. All in all, it was a pretty eventful day.
January 6, Wednesday:

Since we were in Freetown, we decided to join Ed and Ruth's small wedding ceremony. About fifteen Rural Development Group volunteers attended, along with a few others. It was very nice, and the catering service had very good food, with silver service, but the real celebrating seemed to have happened the evening before.

January 7, Thursday:

I went to the Public Works Department in the morning to fill our order for cement for the Tungie project, only to find the P.W.D. no longer sold cement. (I wonder if this is a policy exclusively for the Peace Corps?) The clerk said I would need to buy cement at a local company using a Local Purchase Order (LPO). This means a trip to Kenema to get the LPO and a trip back to Freetown as soon as possible.

While in Freetown, we learned there would be a new volunteer joining us in Kenema. His name is Fran Koster, and he has been transferred from Tanganyika, where the political situation had become too dangerous for the Peace Corps to stay. I had a short chat with him and found he likes music, especially barbershop singing. That will be something different in our household.

January 8, Friday:

I spent the morning locating a cement company where I could buy one thousand bags. They were selling at £1.03, a good price. After telling Bob Golding about my problem with the P.W.D., he said I should send down an LPO from Kenema and he would arrange to have the cement loaded on a train and get it shipped upcountry. This saves me another trip to Freetown and a big headache.

Joe and I headed back to Bo to switch vehicles once again. We found the dent in the oil pan fortunately had missed the oil pump by about an inch, so tomorrow we will try to buy a new oil pan gasket and put it back together. Fingers crossed.

January 9, Saturday:

Without too much trouble we got the oil pan back on with a new gasket. The Rover was ready to drive to Kenema, although it was shaky in front, possibly from a loose axle. When we arrived back home, we had a lot of explaining for Mike, what with the accident, the wedding, and a new volunteer joining us in Kenema.

Joe and Mike pulled the cover off the Rover, but I said the last thing I wanted to do today was work on that machine; I was sick of vehicle problems; they were plaguing us, so tomorrow would be soon enough to deal with it.

January 11, Monday:

Fran, the new volunteer, arrived at the Kenema airport this morning. He is scheduled to work in swamp development with Joe, but I am hoping to swing him into my projects as well, since he has more engineering training and experience than me and I am really in need of such expertise. He indicated he is interested in a more varied experience, since his work in Tanganyika had been
January 13, Wednesday:

I got the Land Rover out of Morgan's Garage, where it was being repaired. There was more work than they thought, but they did not charge more for the extra work, which was nice.

Fran is anxious to get out and see some of the projects, and also help on some. He said he would rather do this kind of work than swamps, so I am willing, very willing, to share my work with him.

January 14, Thursday:

I am getting depressed and very frustrated with Land Rover C4211. We got it back from the garage and now it has no low range or four-wheel drive and the carburetor is not getting fuel. None of these were problems when we took it into the garage. I got it started many times, and it drove well in the driveway, but as soon as it was on the road it sputtered and choked and then would come back to life only to sputter again. We were no further ahead with its repair at the end of the day than at the beginning.

January 15, Friday:

More vehicle problems—the bane of our existence, it seems. I took the small Jeep to Blama to check on cement availability and prices. I did not go over twenty miles an hour because of its extreme shaking. The steering was loose, and it would head for the side of the road unpredictably and keep going that way. It was a dangerous trip, but important because Blama was near Tungie and the price of cement was less expensive than in Kenema.

When I returned I checked out the Rover once more and surprised myself to find the source of the problems. When the "mechanics" had welded the new frame on, they had burnt through the fuel line, leaving a big hole. I was able to fix this myself (with just a little help) and was proud to have accomplished this repair on my own.
January 18, Monday:

I decided to have a big PCV workathon this Saturday to finish the Nyeama school project. My hope is that many volunteers will show up and complete the work on the ventilation doors, painting, and partitions. This way the project will finally be complete and I could in good conscience move on to other things. I went to the PCV teachers compound in Kenema to ask my friend Marcia if she would be willing to make pies for the event. She was reluctant, so we compromised on cakes, which were much easier to make with the promise she would have them ready early Saturday morning.

January 19, Tuesday:

Volunteers Larry, Chris, and I headed up to Kailahun. I wanted to get reimbursed for all the Nyeama school receipts. However, when we arrived the town was in an uproar. The paramount chief was on trial for padding his pockets once too often. He had been convicted and would be going to jail, and the people were celebrating by dancing all around the town. Larry and I were in PCVs Bill and George's house, and I hid in a chair inside, knowing how gregarious African women can be when they are celebrating. A group of women's society dancers made a left turn on the street and headed toward the house. They came right into the house and celebrated in the living room. Things really are different in this "bush-town."

In the afternoon Chris said he wanted to set foot in Liberia, with the border just a few miles away. He and Bill drove there in our Land Rover. They met a Peace Corps teacher who was living in a very small mud hut, matching the image of a true Volunteer. On the way back, somehow Chris ran into a stubborn cow that refused to move off the road, completely smashing one front fender. One more scar on our vehicle. I don't know how he dealt with the cow's owner, but typically a driver must give some appropriate compensation.

January 20, Wednesday:

The Kenema District Officer today notified me that the district would receive materials for construction of six schools from the USAID agency. Two would be built in Kenema using paid labor, so I would not help with those, but I may have a number of other projects to add to my list.

January 21, Thursday:

I was in Nyeama today. I had driven up in C4211, but when I was ready to return I found it had no brakes. We have driven vehicles in "ill health" before, but I was not ready to return without any brakes and, of course, no emergency brake. Although I had no auto mechanics training, the Land Rover is a vehicle that is easy to understand, and thus relatively easy to repair most of the time. So I crawled under the vehicle and saw the hole in the brake line where the brake fluid had exited. I borrowed some heavy tape from one of the villagers and wrapped the line well enough to stop the leakage, but needed brake fluid to refill the cylinder. However, this is West Africa, and sometimes you must improvise. I went to the village store and bought a bottle of peanut oil, most commonly used for cooking. I found it also could serve as brake fluid in a pinch, so filled up the cylinder, got rid of any air in the lines, and was able to once again hobble back to Kenema.
When I returned I found out Tim had taken Mike to Giema to live there. This was a surprise, for I knew Mike was moving out soon, but did not realize it would be today. Tim said Mike has a nice, comfortable three-room house of his own in the chief's compound.

January 22, Friday:
In the evening all of us took some rice chop and drove to Giema to have a housewarming for Mike. He has a real nice house, with free services of a houseboy, laundry, water, etc. The downside of the situation is that the paramount chief's number one wife and sons also live in the house with him, although in separate rooms. This may take some getting used to for him.

January 23, Saturday:
By 8:30 in the morning there were many PCVs on their way to Nyeama to help complete work on the school. I was really pleased at the response of so many. The women teachers came in dresses, so I did not know what they were expecting to be doing. But we all got down to work. Don and Walt nailed slats to the doors. All four girls, Marcy, Marcia, Kathy, and Robin, got busy with green paint buckets painting doors and frames and were busy all day. Mike and Tim worked on the gutters above the vent doors and figured out a good solution. Joe worked on cleaning the floor. Chris and Larry formed and poured steps for the entrances. I put bolt locks on the door and fixed hinges. Finally, Bill and Fran painted the roof with aluminum paint, a difficult and dangerous job; they were not quite done when everyone else was packed up in the afternoon. The day was very successful, there was enough work for everyone, they seemed to enjoy it, and we had enough tools and materials to complete the projects, although we were short on drinks for everyone. The day came off as well as I could have wanted, and this supposedly brought an end to the Nyeama school project at long last.
When we got back home, a letter came from Bob Golding saying Mike should pull out of Giema and return to Kenema. Fran would be moving to Bo to replace the volunteer who went home. The letter seemed to be written in an off-hand manner, so Mike wrote back to make sure of the decision before he did any more moving. Overall, our Rural Development Group in Sierra Leone seems to be quite unstable, with a lot of moving between locations.

January 25, Monday:

Tim and I took off on the daylong trip to Tungie, which became a frustrating trip. You must cross one river to get there. There is one rope ferry that can carry one or two vehicles. When we arrived, there was a long line waiting to cross. When we finally got to the head of the line, a car came tearing in front of us and went right on the ferry, leaving us to wait for another trip. We went down to ask the driver who he thought he was, but a group of lorry drivers stopped us to tell us this was a P.W.D. engineer and he had priority. We were perturbed, but waited for the next crossing. Just as the ferry came back, a Land Rover from the Department of Lands, Mines, and Labor did the same thing right in front of us. This time we got out to yell at the driver before he got on the ferry. While we were palaverer, a police vehicle drove up and got on the ferry ahead of all of us, saying it was an emergency. We had to wait once again, in total for about two hours.
We arrived in Tungie, anxious to talk with the paramount chief about the new project. We found that he had driven to Kenema for the day. So we asked townspeople some of the questions I needed to have answered. They replied to every question the same way: "We cannot say until we talk with the chief." Even when I asked questions like if there was a sawmill nearby, or a blockmaking machine in town, or how many people lived in the town, or if there was somewhere to get sand and rocks, they would only say we must ask the chief. So now I will need to make another trip and hopefully find a day when the chief is there.

WAWA: West Africa Wins Again

West Africa Wins Again (WAWA) is a phrase that has been used by generations of expats and others to express frustration in a joking way when plans change in ways in which you have no control. In West Africa, expectations cannot be trusted, and sometimes you just figuratively throw up your hands and give in to whatever externalities take you further from rationality. In a way, WAWA has allowed westerners—the British, and later the Americans—in Sierra Leone to better accept and accommodate situations over which they had no control.

January 30, Saturday:

I have begun decorating my bedroom, and it is looking pretty good now. One wall was painted crimson and another a dark, dark maroon. I put gold-colored curtains over the window. I want to paint the other two walls different shades of red, but the shops did not have any other colors, so I will go with what I have.
February 1, Monday:
I found two other shades of red, so finished painting the walls. The walls look okay, but when I speckled the floor and painted the door silver even I recognized it was just too much of a frustrated attempt at decorating.

Mom and Dad,
To answer your question: No, I haven't seen TV once since I have been here. There is one TV station in Freetown that broadcasts for five or six hours every day, usually news and old American shows, such as The Bob Cummings Show or I Love Lucy. There is talk of extending service upcountry to Bo and Kenema, but it is very impractical at this time. First I think they should get reliable upcountry phone service. To call Freetown I must go to the post office, try to get a connection on their phone, and, if I am lucky enough, yell into the phone to be able to be heard at the other end.

February 3, Wednesday:
I drove once again to Tungie, a long day of driving. The chief had staked out the health center and showed me where men are digging a well for the new town water supply system. The chief seems enthused about the work to be done, and since he is a powerful leader and understands the Peace Corps only works with volunteer help, this might turn out to be an ideal setup.

February 6, Saturday:
A new bell housing finally arrived for the Jeep broken last September when Bokari had his "driver's lesson." It was not like the other two we had tried; it was the right size and fit properly. But Joe found one more bearing inside that was busted and will need to be replaced before the transmission can be put together. So it looks like the Jeep will continue to sit here in our driveway even longer.

February 10, Wednesday:
I was regretting the trip to Tungie today, for I was two days late and had not been able to purchase a pump for the water supply system, the primary need right now. I was expecting to hear complaints when I arrived. However, I met the paramount chief on the road. He was going to Kenema, but would be back this evening, so I would wait for him and probably stay overnight. I knew I should not direct any work without the chief's approval. The day was easy, as the chief's houseboy brought me a lounge chair, a table, some fruit, a radio, and some water for washing, while I found a good book in the chief's house and had a relaxing afternoon. Later, I was really surprised when the houseboy asked me whether I would prefer to have a bathtub filled with cold or hot water. Since it was hot all day, I asked for cool water, and it was quite a refreshing wash. Let me tell you, this paramount chief knows how to live.
That evening, when the chief returned, I told him what I needed and he set everything up, lining up workers and telling the lorry driver to go get the blockmaking machine. That evening I ate at the chief's house. Everyone in his family sat around a table with a big bowl of rice and condiments on the side, including chicken. We ate the rice without utensils; I learned how to roll up a ball of rice with my fingers and dip it in the condiments. Later a number of "big men" came to the compound to visit with me and the chief; I should try to remember their names. That evening I had my own bedroom and bed in the middle of the house, with a pretty comfortable mattress.
February 11, Thursday:

We worked all morning setting up batter boards to outline the perimeter of the new health center building. Other men were put to work clearing stumps and brush and putting up a workmen's "shimbeek" (open hut), which was complete in the afternoon. Also, one of the men in town said he had a pump we could use while digging the well. This was good news.

Laying out batter boards for the new Tungie Health Center project

I have never been given, and never eaten, so many oranges and bananas as today. That is what I exist on when on trek, since they are a good substitute for water. I was dashed five bottles of soda today, as well as a pineapple. Much of it has come from the chief's refrigerator, but when I went to other parts of town I was greeted just as warmly. I found that for most of the villagers I was the first white person they had ever seen, so I was quite a curiosity. They asked questions that indicated an unusual perspective on Americans—questions like who was taking care of my horses while I was in Africa, or did I leave my six-guns back at the house. It was humorous to hear these questions, all relating to their impression that Americans were cowboys. This was totally reinforced later when the chief's son rode up on a white horse. How they got that horse to Tungie was a question I could not get answered, but it was really one of the most interesting afternoons I had had since coming to Sierra Leone.
February 12, Friday:

We got the workers organized this morning, and there should be enough laborers to last quite a while. The chief had set up a system where twenty-five older boys would be responsible for coming every day. I learned the chief told them there was a town jail for any that did not show up. So it is forced labor without pay, but that is what I need to expect to get a project completed in a timely way.

That afternoon I headed back to Kenema with three chickens and a pineapple I had been dashed. I told Mike and Joe of my great life on trek.

February 14, Sunday:

It was Sunday, so I attended the new Methodist church service in the morning. Before the service, somehow the conversation got around to music and pianos, and how I missed playing one. First thing I knew, Reverend Groves had run home and come back with a small, foot pump organ. He put me in charge of music for the new church. It had been a long time since I had music in front of me, and I started by playing the first hymn in the wrong key; it sounded horrible.

February 17, Wednesday:

Today I started out early for Tungie, so early that I had fog for the first hour and half of the trip. The fog was not so bad, but whenever a vehicle came, the dust would stick to the mist on the windshield, making pure mud. I would need to stop, get out of the vehicle and wipe the mud off. Fortunately there was no wait for the ferry this trip, so it actually took less time.

In Tungie, I received more of the royal treatment. The project foreman, Kpa Teway, dashed me two chickens, a twelve-foot long country cloth blanket, and a large bag of rice, at least forty to fifty pounds. I especially like country cloth blankets, and hope to get more. Boy, I think I probably should return the favor, so will need to find something good to give him in return.
Country cloth blankets

Country cloth blankets are quite common in African villages. Although most common in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the craft probably came from the Sahel desert area to the north many years ago. The most "authentic" blankets are made of hand-spun cotton with threads colored with local dyes, most commonly shades of blue and brown. The weaving is done on a portable treadle loom in one continuous strip about four inches wide and often about three to four feet in length. Sometimes the warp is set up to travel around the village, extending through the court barri and around one or two huts, with the weaver moving the loom and rolling up the strip in a ball that gets larger and larger as it is woven. The strip, or strips, are then cut into an appropriate length for a blanket, a shirt, or other use. They are sewn together by hand with cotton thread to make the finished piece.

A village weaver

Country cloth blankets may also be made using English threads for some or all of the fabric. Locals typically consider these to be superior blankets, since the threads are more durable, there is a much bigger choice of colors, and the blankets last longer. However, the purchase of the threads adds cost, so traditional blankets were still being made, for which I was grateful, since I was more interested in getting native goods whenever possible.
One of the policemen in town showed me an ivory tusk, taken from one of the many elephants he has shot near the town. He offered to sell it to me, and I agreed to buy it for six Leones. I was concerned about the fact he was killing elephants, but this seemed to be what he did as a hunter, so I was not especially bothered that I could buy tusks. He said he could get me many more if I wanted, and I may if I can afford it.

The best thing I found after arriving was how hard the men had been working. Every one had been there each day and had worked a full eight hours. I am sure they are expecting to be paid, even though the chief made it clear once again that only the mason and carpenter would be paid. Some things are better to ignore.
February 18, Thursday:

I returned to Kenema, and Tim and Bob Golding pulled in right behind me. They had come to talk with Joe and Mike about the swamp development program. It seems the project is taking a wrong turn in their mind, since they are working under the USAID engineer and not making enough contact with locals. Bob wants them to do the swamp project, but also other projects, possibly some of the AID-supported schools. Joe and Mike both said they prefer to continue exclusively in swamps, for they feel this project makes a vast improvement in economic gain. Bob felt others could do the work just as well, and the purpose of the Peace Corps was to spend more time with Sierra Leoneans, showing them better ways to do things and how to procure funding, etc. It was not our role to be doing the work, but to be supervising and facilitating projects for local towns and villages. It is sometimes difficult for me to just supervise, since I like to build things and want to be part of the construction crew whenever possible, but I realize this is not really meant to be our role.

One Volunteer's perspective on being a Rural Development specialist

One member of our Rural Development Group was Louis Rapoport, who stayed with the program for two years, although he felt out of place, since he had no previous construction experience. This is best described in a letter he wrote for the Peace Corps Volunteer magazine.

"No one really knows what community development entails, and who is better qualified for an undefined project than an undefined person?" Rapoport readily admitted that he 'could do absolutely nothing of a practical nature.' Far from being a pioneering jack-of-all-trades, he claimed to be a clod around the garage. Nonetheless, he was assigned to a construction project and 'tried to fake his way by dropping words like hammer, cement, and wrench.' In the end the project failed, in part due to his incompetence."

February 20, Saturday:

There must have been at least forty people, mostly Africans, who came to the house today to see Joe's two leopards. They looked through the screen door. The word is getting around, and everyone seems enraptured, as well as frightened, when viewing them.

February 21, Sunday:

It was the first regular service of the Kenema Methodist Church, and I was asked to play the organ. The service was half in English, half in Mende. There were more than fifty people who attended. After church, Reverend Groves let me take the organ to our house so I could practice on it. I sweated all afternoon pumping the bellows, but it was great to have a keyboard in front of me again.

That afternoon Joe said he had found some of our clothes, a handkerchief, and a pair of shorts in our new cook's pockets, so he and Mike decided to fire him. The cook got down on his knees and begged to be kept, but it was all over, and we are once again looking for a cook. I decided I had been wrong in judging this cook's character, so stayed away from the whole controversy.
February 22, Monday:

The Tungie pump had arrived, so I took our houseboy Tamba with me, since he was interested in making the trip, and we drove to Tungie to deliver it and get it installed for the water supply system. The chief said this was the week for the Wundu Society initiation, so no one would be working all week. Most of the boys in town were painted white, and I saw a man pouring sap from a newly cut limb into the eyes of another man. It is impossible to get any information on any of this, but I assume these all are part of the secret society's initiation.

I was dashed two more chickens and another large bag of rice by Kpa Teway. Later I promised Tamba I would give him half the rice, but under the condition he would not receive it until November, the worst of the hunger season. I do not know if he understood my reasoning, since no one saves rice they harvest. Sierra Leoneans have a big feast after the rice harvest and then sell the remaining supply, rather than storing it. They then need to buy it back during the hunger season for a much higher price. I would like to initiate a rice storage program in some village while I am here, but recognize it will be difficult, if not impossible, to have people cooperate, so ingrained are they in their traditions.

February 24, Wednesday:

Tim, Mike and I had a meeting with district education officials about construction of two AID schools in Kenema Town. AID would provide the materials if locals would do the construction. When we explained our position that the Peace Corps does not work in larger cities with paid help, the officials understood surprisingly well.

After the meeting the District Supervisor of Schools, Mr. Taylor, took Mike and I out to two villages where AID schools are proposed. We talked to the townspeople and received a very encouraging response. The villagers had already collected sand and rocks and cleared the sites. We have two more sites to visit tomorrow, and then we can have local volunteers begin making "Cinva-Ram" blocks, which will be used for the walls, along with a steel frame and pan roof. The projects are now up against the beginning of the rainy season, so work needs to begin soon.

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**Cinva-Ram blocks**

We learned about Cinva-Ram machines during our Peace Corps training period. It is an inexpensive way to make blocks by hand that could be used for walls of buildings. Cinva-Ram machines are popular around the world, especially in developing countries where hand labor is readily available.

To make a block, a high degree of pressure is needed. This is available by having a sturdy steel box and a long lever. The form is filled with a mixture of readily available materials. In our case, we found an excellent mixture to be riverbed sand, a small amount of cement and water, and our magic ingredient, sticky soil taken from termite hills. After being pressurized, the blocks are lifted, as shown in the photo below, and then carefully placed in a shady area to dry. In a few days they have reached full strength and can be laid in any pattern similar to manufactured concrete blocks. Because they are made of natural materials, Cinva-Ram blocks can also be used successfully for outdoor ovens and stoves.
February 26, Friday:
Today a small boy brought to our house a small, hairy creature. I dashed him for it, not knowing what it was, but knowing that Mike likes many kinds of animals. After much guessing, a little asking, and some book learning, we found it to be a mongoose, known as a very lovable pet. They also eat rats and snakes, so it could be useful for us at some point.

February 27, Saturday:
The mongoose was dead in the morning; I don't know why. Maybe it was because I fed him cold milk from a syringe and let him run on the floor, and he might have caught cold. Anyway, later a farmer came to the house with four baby civet cats, similar to the mongoose, but with more colorful hair. Since I had had terrible luck with the mongoose and the owl, Mike and Joe agreed to
take care of these new pets. The civet cats are being fed from a syringe and never seem to have enough. I guess we are becoming known for our love of bush pets.

March 2, Tuesday:

Joe and Mike hired a new cook, Momoh, who starts work today after moving his family into a nearby house.

I got an early start to Tungie, where I found the inevitable had happened. The workers realized they would not be paid for their work, so all but three men stopped coming, and those three were intending to work only until I arrived. I decided to give straight facts to the townspeople that either they were willing to volunteer their labor or the health center project would be abandoned. This leaves the town in a dilemma, for the District Officer and paramount chief had explained when the project began that it would use volunteer help and that was understood and agreed to. I think confusion might have resulted when the self-appointed town clerk began recording who came every day. That naturally led the workers to think they would be getting paid based on their showing up. Tonight Chief Kanji is meeting with all the big men of the town to decide what to do, so we can begin work on the well tomorrow. They will likely decide to split the chiefdom into sections, with each section responsible for a portion of the work. I do not feel pessimistic as a result of this palaver, but actually more optimistic because I feel the people are learning how to organize themselves to do their own work, rather than waiting for a handout from the government or a "rich" white man. When a town understands this, then my role as a Peace Corps Volunteer is to help them with technical assistance and maybe a few intangibles.

March 3, Wednesday:

I took the pump down to the well site, but once again there were no workers. People were concerned about not getting the work done before the rainy season began, but not one man was willing to work. I threatened to take the pump back to Kenema, with or without the well dug.

March 5, Friday:

I returned to Kenema with no resolution to the dispute in Tungie. PCV Bill Derringer was visiting. The two of us can get into long conversations about the Peace Corps. His feeling is that building roads are the only projects worth doing. I argued that the type of project is not nearly as important as whether you are helping people change their attitudes to be able to do things for themselves. Neither of us was convinced of the other position, so the conversation will undoubtedly continue in the future.

March 8, Monday:

I went to see the District Officer to discuss the labor problems I was having on various projects. He suggested I use some of the project money to buy rice and give some to the workers every day. I was not sure what to think of this idea, since it seems like payment for work. While there, the District Engineer said he wanted to review my plans for the water tank. He looked at them and became very disturbed. He said the construction of the bottom of the tank was not nearly strong enough to hold the weight of that much water. It was embarrassing, but I had to agree with him,
since I did not have the engineering background he had. He said we would need to increase the depth of the concrete bottom substantially and incorporate strong steel reinforcement. We agree that this could be done most expeditiously by using sections of railroad track, cut to the proper length. In a way, I was relieved to know his advice would allow me to avoid an embarrassing mishap at the completion of the project. The down side was the engineer lost a lot of faith in the expertise of Peace Corps Volunteers, and he was not afraid to state that to my face.

Joe had the Jeep together one more time, but then he remembered he had put one small bearing in backwards, so his last two days of work had been wasted, and he needs to take it all apart one more time.

March 9, Tuesday:
When I returned from trek today, I found Joe had completed work on the Jeep and it was running as good as ever. Whoopee! Although I think I will continue to drive the Land Rover, which in some ways is a more reliable vehicle.

March 13, Saturday:
Gerald Durrell, brother of famous author Laurence Durrell, is a journeyman writer who travels the world looking for animals for his zoo in England. He came to Kenema hoping to find a pygmy hippo. We went to his compound across town, but Durrell was out on trek, so his young English assistant showed us the animals they had collected. They included two chimps, which were really cute and made me want to have one as a pet more than ever. Also included in his menagerie were civet cats, owls, monkeys, rats, mongooses, birds, and assorted other animals. It was an interesting collection, but one that requires a lot of care. We were told it costs about fifty pounds a day to feed them all. Durrell will very likely be interested in Joe's two leopards and may want to buy them. This is what Joe is hoping, since they are now quite large and expensive to feed and care for. We were told he would come next week to look at them.
March 25, Thursday:
I returned to Tungie, where we got down to serious business in digging a well for the town water supply. A dozen men were there to dig, and the pump was in top order, but when we got about eight feet down the walls started caving in and the men started climbing out. We braced the walls with bush poles and dug a little more, but struck a spring from the hill. The half-mud, half-clay walls caved in and pushed in the braces. I had hoped we would hit gravel, but now it looks hopeless for us getting any deeper, even though the hole is a good source of water. So the paramount chief is all in favor of starting a new well at a site further down the riverbank where it looks like there is gravel. We will look at it tomorrow and see which way is best.

It is funny how I dread making the trek to Tungie, and look forward to returning to Kenema, yet while I am here I feel good; the living is comfortable, the people could not be friendlier, and I love it.

March 26, Friday:
We decided on a new site for the well, and the men worked very hard again. We laid out a nine-foot-square hole, and the men dug six feet and struck water. Three feet was light brown topsoil sand, two feet more was moist clay, and then came the snow-white riverbed sand and the water. It looked like a good source. Then we found there was one large rock all across the bottom and we could not get down far enough for the deep water. It made the hole impossible to use. The chief was not discouraged, however, and neither were the men, so we looked for another good site where we could try our luck once again. We finally decided, at the suggestion of the chief's brother, that we would go back to the first hole and dig it much wider at the top, sloping in the walls so they would not cave.

I must admit that I had tried everything I could think of to get back on the road to Kenema today because I was and still am very tired of going to the work site and sitting all day watching men dig. They will not let me so much as touch a shovel, but give me dirty looks if I am not interested.
enough to be there watching. So to save hard feelings I just sit at the site all day and watch. Anyway, I am sure they will not need me tomorrow either, but the chief more or less insisted on me promising to stay and watch the new method tomorrow.

While digging the hole today, a group of women from town came down to the river to fish. They jumped in bare as the day they were born, carrying only a fishnet and walking down the river shaking branches in the water and scaring fish into their nets. The catch was small, but they enjoyed the sociability of each other as much as being in the cool water. I am getting used to seeing women in various states of undress. They seem uninhibited, and often wear no top unless they have a baby strapped to their back.

March 27, Saturday:

Once again, I sat and watched the men dig all morning. After they bailed out the water from the hole, I told them I needed to leave, which I did. Somehow I am always so much happier to be in Kenema, I guess because I get lonely very quickly in distant Tungie.

April 6, Tuesday:

Back in Kenema, I found a local man who was willing to cut railroad track to length for me. It was easy to find and purchase the track, but the only way we had for him to cut it was to sit in our backyard with a hacksaw blade. We found that track is made from very hard steel, and it took a number of days to cut the necessary pieces. But after quite a few hacksaw blades, a lot of patience, and a relatively small reimbursement for labor, the rails were ready to take to Tungie on the next trip.

A while back Mike had taken a monkey, who he named Agatha, as a household pet. Recently he decided she was too much trouble and he turned her loose. Well, she does not like the bush anymore and would rather stay around our house. Now she lives on our front porch, chattering loudly and opening the screen door when she feels like coming in. She is still aloof and independent, but comes in every night and eats bugs on our floor. This is the way I like to keep pets. But I guess Mike is planning to drive her out in the bush and hope she does not have a homing instinct.
Mom and Dad,

Although it was a neat idea, I never got a picture of our pet leopards reading the hometown newspapers you sent me. I tried, but they grabbed the camera, and then the papers, and then my shirt. Boy, was it a mess. But I am sending home some pictures I was able to get of them taking a bath, which was pretty cool.

Our pets

For most of our time in Kenema our household resembled a menagerie. Mike and Joe were especially interested in caretaking as many different species of local fauna as possible. Relying on my memory does not give full credit to the number of pets we had at one time or another, but in addition to the many chickens given to us, some of the most memorable pets included: two leopards, four civet cats, a mongoose, an owl, a pangolin, a chimpanzee, a monkey, and at one time even a pet praying mantis.

Joe and Mike bathing one of Joe's pet leopards
April 7, Wednesday:
I was not able to get to Tungie because the last bridge had collapsed. It was being replaced with a temporary palm-log bridge and a big landfill operation. I gave instructions to be forwarded to the chief in Tungie that rather than wait for me to come to operate the pump, one of the workers should go ahead and run it so work would not be delayed. Here is hoping the pump will be in one piece next time I make the trip.

April 17, Saturday:
A new project in Kpuabu for a new school. We laid out the foundation and I told the workmen to go ahead and dig it. But then the first misunderstanding arose. The men did not think they would be able to understand the instructions and might do such a bad job the building might be condemned. I explained there would be a coworker, Henry Lefevre, there to check and see they were doing the
work correctly, and that we both would be showing, not telling, them what to do, so they could learn the necessary skills in case they wanted to build another school. They finally agreed to my suggestion of having a certain group of men learn each phase of construction so we would not need to worry about teaching a new group to do the same work every day. The paramount chief came and explained quite clearly what we were trying to do, and I think the project now is off on the right foot.

April 20, Tuesday:

Joe took the Land Rover and headed to Freetown, hopefully to sell his leopards to Gerald Durrell. We expect he will be back in two or three days.

Bill Flexner, a PCV teacher in Kenema, came over and said he had made arrangements for the two of us to begin our long-awaited vacation. He had made reservations to be passengers on a British mail boat going to Nigeria on July 24th. It was a round-trip fare of $170. I can hardly wait!

Mom and Dad,

My vacation plans are pretty well set now. On July 24th I have a reservation on a mail boat to Nigeria. It is a five-day trip over and four days back, so I have 36 days to travel within the country and possibly get to the Cameroons to visit with our church's missionaries stationed there, the Hendersons. I figured out the amount of money I will have is about $13 a day for everything. If I stay in Peace Corps Volunteer households throughout the country, as most volunteers do, it will probably cost about $2 a day for room and board. So I think there is little to worry about financially. I am really looking forward to going, and now I have found out there are about 40 teachers from Sierra Leone taking the same boat to Nigeria. I have an idea it will seem like a long three months waiting for July 24th.

April 23, Friday:

Today I delivered a load of timber to the Gegwema health center project. The last time I was there I had a discussion with the workmen about America and somehow it included the topic of redwood trees in California. So today I showed them a picture in a photo book I had brought, and the men were astounded at the size of the trees. We then went through the entire book, with my explaining many different photos, such as snow, cattle ranching, cowboys, logrolling, and sailboating. It was enough of a distraction to keep their interest for more than an hour, so not much work was done in the meantime.

April 24, Saturday:

Joe was to have returned from Freetown four days ago; Mike and I are disturbed by the fact we have no idea where he is or what he is doing. I hope nothing unfortunate has happened to him. He has the Land Rover, so I do not have a vehicle to use while he is gone, limiting my options tremendously.

April 27, Tuesday:

We are looking forward to moving soon into a new house quite near out current house. The work on it is coming along well and it could be finished in a week or two. It is a beautiful house with
three bedrooms, a living room with a semi-circular window wall, and indoor bathroom and kitchen. It will feel much more like being at home than it ever did in our current house, which is more like an assembly hall than a residence. However, a horrible job was done on the painting, and the landlord has agreed to provide the paint if we want to do the painting ourselves.

April 28, Wednesday:

Well, the Land Rover came back, but seemingly by itself. The pieces to the puzzle of Joe's disappearance are still very jumbled. What I found out today is this. On the 23rd a note was found on the Peace Corps bulletin board in Freetown saying that if anyone was going upcountry to please take C4211 to Kenema. Who wrote it? I don't know. Anyway, there happened to be an American couple in Freetown who are making their way around the world, and they took three days to get the Rover to Kenema. The vehicle was muddy, low on water and brake fluid, but still was running okay. So I have it back. The big question still is, "Where is Joe?" Nothing too serious could have happened or we would have received immediate word from Freetown, but we are beginning to wonder whether he is in Freetown, for we got his paycheck in the mail today, and he would have picked it up at the Peace Corps office if he was in town, it would seem. We wonder if he is even in the country, or if he went back to England with Gerald Durrell. But that is wild speculation. Nevertheless, I sent an urgent letter to Bob Golding asking him for any details, hoping for news.

May 1, Saturday:

Volunteer teacher Bill Flexner joined me today in visiting project sites; he has been wanting to do this for a long time. We put in a long day traveling to three project sites. In Kpuwabu, we started to put up the first of the metal columns for the school structure. It will take skilled labor to lay the cinva-ram blocks for the wall, so my coworker, Henry, or I will need to be there most of the time while this is being done. In Gegwema, we laid out the foundation for the latrine building located behind the health center. It was strange because the villagers wanted to have separate entrances for men and women, even though they went into the same room and had wall-less open holes. I assume this is because they knew that in westernized areas there were separate entries, but they saw no need to build two separate rest room areas.
Finally, in Damawulo I had been having trouble getting volunteer workers for their new school. We had another long discussion with the elders, the chief, and the teacher about the school design. (I should call it a "palaver," which is more of a disagreement than a discussion.) After much discussion, with everyone confused, the decision was made to follow the plans explicitly. While we were there, Bill and I pegged out the corners so they could dig the foundation. It would really be nice if these villagers did as much work as they said they wanted to do, but this project will undoubtedly need a lot of supervision and coercion. In any case, at the end of the day Bill said he had really enjoyed himself, taking pictures like crazy, and said he wants to go out with me on any Saturday that is possible.
May 4, Tuesday:

I was in Tungie today, where we pumped all the water out of the well hole, but as we pumped the walls caved in. It still would be dangerous for any men to work inside the hole, but the Chief had a new idea. He suggested we make a box frame about eleven feet square and drop it in the hole. This would hold the dirt back while we dug out from the inside. When we got down deep enough we could put a smaller box inside and pour concrete walls between. It seemed like a good answer, so I agreed to try it. I think it is better when the people try their own solutions to problems being encountered, not because it takes the blame off me, but because it shows they are thinking, and it will keep them more interested in the project.

When I got back to Kenema, Joe had returned. He explained that he had been helping Gerald Durrell all that time with his animals. He said he had been offered a job working for Durrell's zoo in England, or possibly the directorship of a national zoo in Sierra Leone. He said he probably would have taken the offer if he was not so worried about being drafted. There are still some questions in my mind about Vietnam and the draft, but if I wait a while I think I will find out about everything I wish to know.

Mom and Dad,

Back to the leopards. Joe just sold them to Gerald Durrell, an English animal collector and author. They are now on their way to England. We hated to part with them, but then again, they wore their welcome thin by growing too large and playing so rough they were dangerous and had to be locked up constantly. In the end, Joe was feeding them five pounds of native beef a day, so it was expensive to keep them any longer. But it was a once-in-a-lifetime treat to have them as long as we did.

May 6, Thursday:

The District Officer and I had traveled to Tungie and had good discussions about the projects. He was surprised how large the health center building would be. He said he had his doubts about it being a good project for the Peace Corps, and whether such a large building was needed in Tungie, but since the project had workers every day, and since there was enough money allocated for it, he did not see any reason to change anything. The Chief is carrying on with his solution to the well problem, and it might finally work out. I sure hope so; we have tried everything else.

Mom and Dad,

The bad news this week. While I was away from Tungie, where we are digging a well, the man I left in charge of running the pump we were using to bail out the water let the motor run too fast, pull too hard, or something, and the pump exploded. This may not sound too bad, but it means we will have to locate and borrow a new pump, sometimes an impossible task here. Since this was an American pump, and the piston and insides exploded, parts will be difficult to obtain. We will probably have to send back to the States for new parts, a four or five month process. This could easily delay the project quite a while, although the paramount chief says he will try to borrow a pump from the diamond miners. Needless to say, miners don't harken to the idea of loaning out their pumps. So we will see what we can work out. I guess worse things have happened in the past, so we will carry on as best we can.
I heard a strange explanation of the attitudes of the people here. We are now starting to lay blocks for one of the school projects. I asked the "bigmen" in the village to select some men from the town, or some students, and I and my coworker would teach them how to lay blocks, a task that would be hard to learn but that could be of much value. The headmaster then told me that this was the wrong way to approach them, because if I said I wanted to teach them this meant that they had to volunteer to learn. It was much better if I just asked for men to help do the work. If they learned anything in the process, that was incidental, since that was not what they came for. I explained that the whole idea was to teach people how to do such work, and getting the school done could be considered a useful byproduct. Needless to say, we did not understand each other too well, and if you can understand his reasoning, please explain it to me.

Otherwise, the work is not too much different from usual. Every day is different, but every day now seems to be part of a routine. I might try to drop one of my projects because I have spread myself way too thinly, and it is showing, but I do not know how to go about it without creating a lot of havoc. If I do drop one, I want to leave the people with a better method, possibly with a contractor.

May 7, Friday:
I went to Kpuabu and found no work was being done on the school there because the headmaster had taken the keys to the tool room, so there was nothing that could be done. I then went to Damawulo and the headmaster there told me the reason why the keys were gone. It seems one of the teachers in Kpuabu had a woman palaver with another man's wife. The other man is taking his revenge by putting "juju" (a curse) on the man and making him crazy. The teacher now is crazy enough in the head that my workers will not work in that town, and the Kpuabu headmaster is asking for a transfer. The school's enrollment has dropped from 150 to 50, and no one wants to be near this "fetish" man. Instead of kicking this man out of town, or trying to help him, everyone is just leaving town themselves.

May 15, Saturday:
One of the workers in Tungie brought me a headpan filled with broken pump parts, saying he tried to fix the water pump. It looked like the repair was more chiseling than anything else. Joe was really mad when I brought the parts back to Kenema, saying it was bad enough that the engine blew up, but when they tried to fix it themselves with a hammer and chisel, that was the end. I told him I could not get too mad at them at the time since the chief's brother had just died and everyone was in mourning. So Joe said he wants to go up there with me to pick up the remaining parts and maybe give them a piece of his mind. I doubt if he will, though.

May 17, Monday:
Joe and I went up to Tungie. We were prepared to stay overnight, since the chief said they would be ready to pour the concrete base for the well. When we arrived we found it had already been poured and was drying. It is twelve feet by twelve feet and seems to be letting in a lot of water, so it looks like it will be a good well. The only trouble is it was poured on soft sand, so it may sink. But
the chief suggested a number of good ideas to take care of this contingency, and continues to push the work forward himself.

*Bracing the Tungie well*

While up there I got a letter from Kpa Tewa saying he was still waiting for money for the country cloths he gave me. I told him the way I understood it was I paid for one of them by giving him five doorknobs for his new house, and I was told the other one was dashed to me. Chief Kanji and others talked with him for a while in Mende, and finally the interpreter said everything was settled. Kpa looked disappointed, but agreeable, so I let it go at that.

May 20, Thursday:

In Kpuabu, problem with the headmaster was somehow resolved and the work is once again continuing. The headmaster brought together all the older boys to lay block and before long they were laying blocks as well as I could. One man, who called himself a mason and who volunteers every time I am there, was the least desirable of the bunch and the most obnoxious. I think he took it as an insult that the boys were doing as well as they were, and he kept trying to correct their work when there was nothing wrong. So, as of today I am satisfied with the work in Kpuabu and hope for its success.

May 21, Friday:

In Damawulo, a "very big man" of the chiefdom had died last night, so people were arriving from everywhere for the funeral. The headmaster explained to me that he had totaled up this man's age at 120 years old. He had been a Muslim leader for the last sixty years. The headmaster also explained that according to Muslim custom, the body should be buried immediately and no one is allowed to cry. I told him about Tungie, where I had heard much wailing and crying when the chief's brother had died. The headmaster explained that the Muslim religion was coordinated with the Wundu secret society, and relations were allowed to cry as much as they wanted after they had contributed as a family one hundred pounds money, one bushel of rice, and other goods to the
Society, but not before. Also, if they did not pay this, and anyone touched the estate of the deceased, he would be killed. I cannot say how much was fact and how much exaggeration, but it is all possible as far as I know.

May 22-23, Saturday and Sunday:

Our new landlord, Mr. Boston, said he could not get anymore tile to finish the floor for our new house, but other than that the interior word was completed, so we could move in any time. At supper on Saturday, we decided, "Why not now?" We moved some of the storeroom junk over that evening and on Sunday we had everything moved by noon. We then began straightening out things. Momoh, our cook, took care of the kitchen, and each of us arranged our bedrooms. I have the largest of the three bedrooms, but am still crowded by all of my shelves, two desks, and supplies of pottery and country cloth. In comparison, Joe’s small room was so bare he was looking for things to fill the voids. In the new living room we placed furniture in all kinds of angles to hide the unfinished areas of tile work. And the best thing, we all took our first hot bath!

Mom and Dad,

We are now living in our new house, and it has everything. It is as comfortable of a house as you would want. Many of the merchants in town, and others, have asked about renting it, but luckily we were here first. It is a modern design with a good floor plan, plenty of electrical outlets, and an indoor kitchen and bathroom. What is strange is that everyone we talk to wishes they could live here, but the local contractors continue to build traditional African houses, using a plan with a very large central room, reminiscent of a dance hall, and four or six rooms off to the sides, like cells. I can see why they like ours better, but they are unwilling to change.

June 7, Monday:

It happened again. Mike was driving back from Bobama and I was with him, when just inside Kenema a small boy ran right out in front of the Jeep. The loose gravel made it difficult to stop, but even on cement it would have been impossible to stop in time. The boy hit the front bumper and was thrown forward, sliding on his face. I picked him up and saw he was bleeding all over his face. I told Mike to drive to the hospital while I held him. At the hospital, they cleaned the wounds and found there were two bad scrapes, on his forehead and on his upper lip. But he was alive and not badly hurt, and there was nothing internal. In fact, most of the trouble was because I was holding him, and as soon as I handed him to an African he quieted down. Mike went down to the police station to fill out a report while I stayed at the hospital until Joe got the news and came to take the boy back home.

Mom and Dad,

Here I am, ready for a change, such as a vacation. There is a standard policy in the Peace Corps and the CARE organization that personnel should not stay in one country longer than two years. When I first heard this I thought it quite strange, but now I am beginning to understand that in the second year of a placement overseas a person loses the impetus, initiative, and optimism that they come with at first. It is only natural that after a year or two you should settle into a routine of some kind, and no matter how busy your routine is you
develop an attitude that you have done all the experimenting, and end up each day doing the
tried and true. In a small country developing as quickly as are the new African nations, this
kind of rut can almost be a drawback. I don’t know if you understand what I am trying to say,
but I think I am now coming to that point where I have my work set out before me, enough to
last until my tour is completed. I will probably continue daily going out to each site and
checking the work, showing them what to do next. But I think my primary role here is as an
idea-man, one who tries to keep finding new and better ways of solving everyday problems.
There are many men who can drive a vehicle, many who can see that the people keep working,
and many who know construction skills, but now that I have fallen into a pattern of doing these
things as I have done them over the last year, we are beginning to lose that exuberance of a
new arrival.

Understand? I am not sure I do. But I am thinking about this kind of thing now.

June 12, Saturday:
Volunteer Larry Hunter was driving just outside of Kenema when his Jeep hit a muddy spot just
before a bridge. He hit the side of the bridge and flipped upside down, landing in the river below.
We towed the Jeep back to our house. Joe once again is in ecstasy having a vehicle to work on,
trying to pound and bend and pry the pieces back into shape.

June 13, Sunday:
I had been making plans to go on vacation next month with Bill Flexner, the Volunteer teacher
in Kenema. However, he had gotten himself into a very awkward situation at his secondary school. It
seems he wrote the following as a discussion test question, "Slavery was good for Africa. Explain."
Although I am sure he stated it to challenge the thinking of the students, they accepted it as a
statement of fact. One of the African teachers, strong on anti-Americanism, blew up the issue until
Bill had no alternative but to contact the Peace Corps director, since there could likely be a court suit.
Bill was moved to Freetown, where he will be stationed until he gets a new placement. I later learned
he had been discharged, so it looks like I will be traveling on my own during my vacation.

Mom and Dad,
I have a new camera and just got back my first roll of black and white film from the photo
shop here in Kenema. The owner is notorious for being incompetent, especially in developing
negatives. About three-quarters of the pictures had black marks through them, just about
spoiling the entire roll. The thing is, the man who runs the shop does not especially like
photography, and would rather be a truck driver, so he lets his ten-year-old son do the
developing. This time I told him I would need to have a guarantee of a new roll of film if I was
to give it to him. He agreed, but when they came back spoiled, it did not bother him at all, and
he was so nonchalant it was hard to get really mad at him, especially because he gave me all
the prints for free and a 6x8 inch enlargement of one of the good ones. The Sierra Leoneans
have no sense of free enterprise and competitiveness. If they make some money on a sale, they
will invite their relatives to visit and treat them to rice chop. If they do not make a sale, they
will visit their relatives for chop instead. The only merchants who keep good business practices
are the Lebanese, and most of them have a Mercedes Benz sedan to show for their effort.
June 23, Wednesday:

I had every intention of doing some work today, but Joe said we needed to pick up someone at the Kenema airport and take them to Kenema's Rural Training Institute (RTI), an agricultural school where there were festivities and the acting Prime Minister would be attending with his entourage. Because the Jeep had a leaky gas tank, we decided to take the busted up and dirty, but drivable, C4211 Land Rover. I still had hopes of getting to one of my projects after this, but when I got to the airport none other than the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, G. Mennen Williams, and his wife and daughter, were getting off the plane. (I was familiar with "Soapy" Williams, since he had been governor of Michigan for many years.) I was told their transport had not arrived, and was asked to take them to the RTI compound. There were Joe and I, Joe with a dirty shirt, me with a four-day-old beard, and the Rover with two hundred miles worth of laterite mud dust evenly covering the inside and outside alike. I was lucky enough to have a rag in the back and hurriedly dusted off the door handle and the back seat. I generously offered to give them a lift. The Secretary looked around the parking lot; when he saw it would be riding with us or walking, he and his family climbed into the back seat. It was strange when we arrived at RTI to see everyone from the Prime Minister on down driving up proudly in their Mercedes Benzes, and then see the Williams family step out of our dusty Rover, which I had cautiously parked in a corner of the field where it could not easily be seen.

Joe and I decided it would be best to wait for the ceremonies to be complete and make sure they had a ride back to the airport. After the ceremony, they came back and we rushed their return to the airport. They thanked us, and the Secretary said to us, although not enthusiastically, that it did beat walking.
June 26, Saturday:

The Prime Minister was continuing his tour of the Eastern Province with a stop today at the site of the Gegwema Health Center project. Although he was scheduled to arrive at one o'clock, it was two-and-a-half hours later that six Mercedes Benz cars pulled in front of the health center. The Prime Minister walked around it and into all of the rooms. I explained how each would be used, what had been done, and what was yet to be completed. He seemed especially impressed with the pit that had been dug for the latrine, which was twenty-five feet deep and ten feet long, and he stood looking at it for a while. He was also surprised to find most of the work had been done with communal, volunteer labor. He then went to the village's court barri, where a welcome address was given by the chief, and he answered it by saying people in Gegwema should stay perfectly united behind the paramount chief, as well as continue their loyalty to the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). He suggested there could be a good chance of arranging for construction of a town water supply. To the locals, government is still a rich uncle that will give many things, even though government says to them they must help themselves. This is true of a lot of the people here; they believe they can get more by begging than by working.

![Image of the health center](image1.png)

*Workmen and me standing in front of the health center after the Prime Minister's visit*

June 28, Monday:

Right now Joe has the Jeep chained to a small station wagon that he is pulling into our yard to repair. People in town realize our house is somewhere where they can get repair work done for free. If we object, they say we have Sierra Leone government vehicles and not our own. Today a man had five boys push a bus to our driveway, which I feel is going a little too far. But this is not the only way they take advantage of us. They are always asking for rides. No matter where we are going, they seem to be going in the same direction. And although they resent it if we do not take them, most of
them are not the least bit grateful if we do, for they know we have government vehicles and we should be expected to help anyone.

Our previous cook had departed, so a few weeks ago we had hired Edward to replace him. Although he has been doing a good job, Edward was taken to court on a charge of trespassing, and also woman palaver, which I assume is a love battle with another man over a woman. He is locked up now, after the police came to the house at suppertime to get him. It looks like we will once again be looking for a cook.

**Eating and meals:**

*Mom and Dad,*

You asked what the native foods are and what we eat. The natives usually eat twice a day, at dawn and at dusk, and maybe a snack of fruit in between while they are at their farms. The village women usually have two or three large, soot-covered iron pots that they use for cooking rice, with a wooden spoon for stirring. They put the cooked rice in a large white pan with a sauce. Everyone in the family gathers around on the floor and, rather than using utensils, dips in a hand and comes out with a very big handful of rice and some sauce. The sauce is usually made from potato leaves and palm oil, which tastes fairly good but smells and looks awful. They may sometimes have a peanut sauce, which tastes quite good, and has a distinctive taste, like rice with peanut butter. If they are fortunate, they may even have some fish or chicken on it. This is about it, not too nutritious. Some of them look underfed, but most seem to be fine.

Actually, I think the natives are getting more variety with their food than we are at the moment. Although we have a new cook, and each table setting is set with two knives, three forks, and no spoon (English-style), the cook is not imaginative in his cooking. For the last few mornings we have had beans on toast (also English in origin), and frequently boiled potatoes and hamburgers for supper. But I think he is catching on to our hints, and tonight we had something different—peach pancakes. There is one store in Kenema that has a good variety of canned foods, from apples to frozen steaks, so there is food. It is just a matter of having enough money in our household food budget to be able to afford these things.

June 30, Wednesday:

With Edward, the former cook, now in jail, we have a new cook in the house, and he is really one of a kind. He has that instinct of what to add to make a dish something extra, and can even read a cookbook, so we have not had the same dish over and over. Although our food budget has had a noticeable increase, we have been eating in style. In fact, he even takes cookbooks home at night and studies them. Indeed, his only real weak spot is that he laughs too much, not gentle, smiling chuckles, but full, deep, heartfelt, constant laughs. I asked him why he was always in such a jolly mood, and he said it was better than crying, wasn't it? I told him a big smile would usually be sufficient.
Norm's simple recipe for Granat (Peanut) Stew

Boil chicken and debone; cut into chunks.
Saute onions, peppers, and garlic
Combine chicken pieces, broth, with sauteed ingredients,
Add one cup of peanut butter, one cooked and mashed sweet potato.
Add salt and pepper, cumin or curry powder, and basil
Add small can of tomato puree or paste.

Cook rice
Spoon chicken peanut sauce over rice
Serve with many of the following condiments, cut in small pieces: bananas, pineapple, raisins, chutney, coconut, hot pepper, mango, oranges, peanuts, eggs.

July 2, Friday:

Surprisingly, Joe decided to hop in the Jeep and go on trek with me today. We started at 11:00 o'clock and I told him it would likely be a long and probably frustrating day, but he wanted to go anyway. We first picked up my coworker, Henry Lefevre, and started on the trip.

In Kpuabu, about fifty women were down at the waterside, ready to haul sand on their heads to the construction site in buckets or platters or anything else they could find. In this village, hauling sand is women's work, and I have seen them doing it before—young and old, pregnant or not, they do the work. However, we were lucky to be driving the Jeep pickup today, so I hauled four loads of sand up a narrow, narrow road the men had cut through the bush, so it saved a lot of time and labor.

In Gegwema, everyone agreed to pay the latrine digger ten pounds, instead of the twelve he had requested, so I wrote a contract and the chief and the digger both signed it with their fingerprints. Mr. Lefevre also needs to resolve a palaver between the carpenter and the mason that is slowing the work. My input was to say if they have a palaver in the future, keep working anyway and get it straightened out when Mr. Lefevre next came to the site.

We then went to Zimmi, where we talked with a Mr. Wickens, an American who runs the rubber plantation there and in Gegwema. We talked about the loan of one of his pumps for use at the Gegwema health center and he readily agreed, even offering to find an "engineer" to run the pump for as long as we needed it. This was much more than I was hoping for, and I think it will really help. All in all, a productive day on the road.

July 4, Sunday:

Mike brought up the subject of Joe today, saying he was concerned that Joe had no interest in doing any work while here in Sierra Leone. We both agreed that Joe shunned responsibility for any of the work. I don't think he has been out to any of his school projects more than once in the last month, so Mike has been left filling in for him when he could. I suggested to Mike that he tell Joe he will have nothing more to do with the schools, and Joe would need to answer any calls for help...
himself instead of passing the work along to Mike. Then he might come around and show a little initiative, something he has never shown except when repairing vehicles.

July 10, Saturday:

The big news today is that Joe will be moving to Kailahun after vacation time, to take over for Bill, a Volunteer who will be going back to the States next week with his PCV wife Kathy, who will be having a baby. Joe is going to Kailahun tomorrow to be shown around for three or four days. This came as a complete surprise to me, but Joe said he had already guessed this might be happening. It is a natural change, since Bill will be leaving a number of projects and Joe was doing next to nothing in Kenema. It will be interesting to see how Joe takes to his new assignment.

This means that after many months Mike and I will be living alone together once again. I sometimes have difficulty understanding Mike's temperament, such as today when I suggested we share the cooking while we once again did not have a cook—he said he did not know how to cook, and I did, and then stormed out of the door in protest. I have a hard time keeping up with him, but Joe's coming departure may have something to do with his current attitude.
Finally, an extended vacation

Mom and Dad,

I am in Freetown now, trying to make arrangements for my boat trip to Nigeria. I am buying a few new clothes, getting a visa, getting leave pay, buying tickets, etc. I have a week to get everything completed, (The boat leaves on Saturday.), but a technicality has popped up. The boat travels from England to Nigeria, so Freetown is a midway stop. This is the season when English schoolboys make trips, and the boat I hope to go on is packed with passengers from England. Now they are telling me they cannot say for sure if I can get on until they find out for sure how many are getting off before arriving at Freetown. Since I made reservations in April, my name is at the top of the waiting list, so I think I should be able to get on, but there is no guarantee. I was told if I cannot, I could be sure of getting a flight to Nigeria and then take the boat for the return. On Thursday I will find out for sure.

Others who have traveled by mail boat said the food is excellent, and in addition to the three regular meals they have teatimes at 10 and 4 every day. One girl said she spent most of her trip either eating or getting ready to eat. After living upcountry for more than a year, I think you can see why I would rather travel by boat. The more I hear about the boat trip, the more I like it. Now hear there are about thirty other PCVs getting on at Freetown, many of them female teachers; I am the only unmarried male among them. Or so the rumor goes.

Prior to coming to Freetown, the last two weeks had been really hectic. I was running to all my projects almost daily, trying to get things set up while I am on leave. I am leaving one African worker, Henry Lefèvre, in charge of all of my projects. He has been very reliable and valuable in the last year, and I feel the work is set up well enough for him to continue successfully in my absence. I told the workers what I expected to see done by September, and I think it will be. A high point of the last two weeks came when the men at Gegwema offered a Muslim prayer of safe journey for me in their tribal language. They all gathered around in a circle, lifted their palms up, and chanted it in unison.

July 22, Thursday:

I am in Freetown and told myself I would not eat out this week, saving my money for the trip. I heard they have very good meals on board, so I am proud of myself for having eaten every meal at the Peace Corps Rest House this week, cooking them myself.

I received a letter from missionaries George and Alma Henderson in the British Cameroon. They wrote that the weather is very bad right now, with almost constant heavy rains, but they will be glad to show me some of their work if I came. As of now, I am hoping to include this as part of my trip and take a lot of photos for the people at Napier Parkview Baptist Church back home.

July 24, Saturday:

I was able to get a boat ticket, and finally my vacation begins. We took a cab to Queen Elizabeth Quay in Freetown and sat for three hours before boarding. There are eleven other PCVs on board, all teachers except for the Clinches, who are in my Rural Development Group. When I found
my room on board, my luggage was not there. I went to hunt for it, but Volunteers Judy and Nancy said they had taken it to their room temporarily. That was settled, but when I returned to my room, there were three other suitcases sitting there. I thought it might be a double room, so I looked for another bed, but found none. I asked the purser about the name on these suitcases and he said this was a mother and two children; I should put their baggage in the hall and it would be taken away. Finally I was able to settle in.

The real luxury aboard ship, as promised, is the food. It is plentiful and delicious. Real class. I had a huge lunch, and then counted thirteen different courses for dinner. Tonight I am sitting with Judy and Nancy and three Nigerians, making for interesting conversation.

July 25, Sunday:

The boat stopped in the morning at Monrovia, Liberia. Most of the Volunteers went ashore to have a quick look at the city, but I stayed aboard to enjoy breakfast, and then watched deckhands unload cargo from the hold. It was interesting to see them throwing crates around and lifting them on deck using a crane. With all the rough handling, it is a wonder none of it falls off while in the air.

I discovered a piano on board in the library. A couple of us gathered around the piano; I played and we sang from the sheet music that was there. I hope no one gets tired of my playing, since I know I will not.

July 27, Tuesday:

Today the ship docked in Ghana. In the morning I took a guided tour of two cities, Tema and Accra. Ghana is strict about letting in visitors; it seems almost to be a police state. I saw many more policemen and policewomen than I have in other countries, and the military seems to be everywhere. More than that, they will not let any Ghanaian money go out of the country, so while the purser on the boat can make change for any other currency, they cannot in Ghana. All the money you have exchanged at the bank while you are there must be spent there; it is worthless anywhere else. Also, no visitors are allowed aboard a ship while it is docked without a special permit.

So we took a hurried bus trip through the country's two largest cities. Tema is a new city being developed by the government as a showcase for progress. They are doing a lot of work putting up multi-family dwellings, row upon row of them, all looking alike. The town is divided into different communities, named Community Number 1, Number 2, through Number 5. Community number 5 is for low-income residents, where the cost for two rooms with kitchen and bathroom is $7 per month. Each community has its own small medical center, shopping center, etc. I don't know how this sounds to you, but it is the last kind of place in which I would want to live.

Accra is the capital city of Ghana, and it also is developing at a very rapid pace. Everywhere we drove there were large construction projects, being built not with manual labor as in Sierra Leone, but with modern construction equipment. Driving into the city we drove past a large square, all concrete construction, with grandstands on three sides and a statue of Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first Prime Minister, on the fourth side. It is a very large square used for celebrations, parades, and other events, and reminds me a lot of pictures of Red Square in Moscow.
The main street in Accra is called Kwame Nkrumah Avenue, and I saw the Nkrumah Training School, a statue of Nkrumah in front of the Parliament Building, and a lot of other signs that seemed to me to indicate a dictatorship. Yet when I walked through the city on my own for a few minutes I noticed immediately how friendly the people were. While walking down the sidewalk a woman stopped me and asked if I would take her photo, a common request throughout Africa. I politely told her no, but she offered me a handful of peanuts anyway, giving me a big smile before walking on.

July 28, Wednesday:

The boat arrived in Lagos harbor in Nigeria. After a long wait at customs, we were able to pay two pence to take a ferry across the harbor, and then took a taxi to the Peace Corps Hostel. It is a new building and much better equipped than the one in Freetown.

July 29, Thursday:

Lagos is a hectic city, with a new city being built along the waterfront with modern skyscrapers in various stages of construction. What is strange is that right downtown on the main streets beautiful buildings line one side, while on the other are small native stands and shacks, hundreds of them standing in a row, right on the sidewalk, where people live and have small shops.
I was hoping to attend some plays or concerts while in Lagos, but there were no cultural events that I was able to find, which surprised me. The bus service is very good, however, so I took a ride to Victoria, where the shipping lines are located, to see about getting a ride to the Cameroons. The first and only boat was leaving in a month, so I gave up on that idea. However Jeff Mareck, a PCV from Sierra Leone who was finishing his tour, was on a trek with his Jeep around the rim of Africa and he has offered to take me with him that far if I pay for my share of the petrol. That sounds like a good idea, and I think I may take him up on it.

July 30, Friday:

I was able to get my visa for the Cameroons in one day. It was written in French on the application form, so I guess it is now a French-speaking country, so I hope I do not get lost there. I guess Jeff will be leaving at the beginning of next week, so that gives me plenty of opportunity to see Lagos.

All the other Volunteers that arrived with me in the boat have left Lagos and are going upcountry. Culbert, a PCV from my group in Sierra Leone, just came back from Kano in northern Nigeria, where he had spent all his money on souvenirs. He still has three weeks of vacation and no money. I fear I might go on a buying spree myself, so I am not even looking at the carvings on display every night in front of the hostel. However, I did come across the shop of a wonderful local entrepreneur who had his own music shop, with a motto on the door, "Ambition is Prosperity." My favorite purchase from the shop was a book of popular song lyrics put together by the owner. To compile each song he would listen to records, write down the lyrics as best he could understand them, and then he published a small paperback with 326 songs of the day. Most were pretty accurate, but
once in a while his written lyrics wandered into new meanings. An example is his interpretation of Jingle Bells:

Jingle bells— jingle bells  
Jingle all the way  
Oh what fun it is to ride in one horse open sleigh

Rock'n through the snow  
And suit up open sleigh  
Sandels up to date  
Rolling all the way  
Bells on bop tail swing  
Making spirit rise  
What funny is to rock'n roll  
A sleighing song at night

Ben Okonkwo's music shop, a true Nigerian entrepreneur

July 31, Saturday:

Because of the extra days, I decided to hitch a ride to Ibadan to see what the largest city in West Africa looks like. The mammy wagon bus ride was crowded, but it only took 2-1/2 hours to go the one hundred miles—not too bad. After getting there, I walked around the city, gradually making my way to where the hostel should be located, according to my travel map. I never saw so many narrow, twisted streets, though, and soon found my route twisting back on itself.

Everywhere I walked there seemed to be tall buildings growing out of small, streetside shops for no reason. It seems like a good example of an old city trying to turn modern, but with no planning, only people with ambitions and money. Finally I found some PCVs in town; I introduced
myself, and they gave me a ride to the rest house, which was now in a new location where I never would have found it.

August 2, Monday:
Some other PCVs and myself got up at 5:30 am to go to the "sixteen-day cloth market." Ibadan has this market every sixteen days, and we were told all the good cloth is sold by 8 am, so we had to go see for ourselves. Although it was still dark, people were setting up displays along the street, in between houses, and anywhere else there was space. I ended up buying some gara (hand-dyed) cloth and woven cloth. I like to buy cloth because it is easy to carry and send home.

When I tried to catch a taxi for the ride back to the hostel on Ayo Road, it became a real task. Every taxi was full, and when I told them where I wanted to go each of them drove away without saying a word. I began thinking there was a kind of juj in saying I wanted to go to Ayo Road, but after walking for over a mile I finally wised up and told a driver I wanted to be taken to town, where everyone else was going, and from there ask for a ride back to the rest house. The cab ride was interesting because Ibadan in a hilly town, and whenever the cab was going downhill the driver would turn off the engine, put it in neutral, and coast. At the bottom he started it up again. I asked if this might be hard on the car. He said he did not care, since he rented the cab by the day; because he had to pay for petrol he wanted to use as little as possible. Another example of local economics in West Africa.

Later I walked from the rest house to Sam's Gift Shop nearby. Sam had a good selection of native goods, and I finally spent two pounds, ten shillings for an intricate silver bracelet. It had been made by getting silver by melting U.S. dimes, which were the least expensive source of silver. I purchased it with the idea of possibly giving it someday to my future life partner. (Note: Many decades later, my wife, Ilene, has it stored in her personal jewelry box as a keepsake of Africa.)

In the afternoon I was able to be a passenger in an AID shuttle going to Lagos. I was glad to be back at the Lagos hostel, a place where there was enough water to take a bath.

August 5, Thursday:
Jeff was ready to continue his journey around Africa, and I joined him as his passenger. We began by heading east to Benin City. The road was paved and easy to travel, except where heavy rains were washing away the bridge embankments. But in Benin City itself, the roads were some of
the worst I have seen. They reminded me of streets you might see in a small town in an early cowboy movie. I am sure they could improve them if they wanted to.

Jeff decided to drive on to Sapele, where he knew a PCV lived who taught auto mechanics. He wanted to get his cracked frame welded on the Jeep. We just caught the Sapele ferry on its last trip of the day and got to Carl's house in time for chop.

Map of Nigeria and Cameroon showing route of trek

August 6, Friday:

After breakfast Carl took us to his workshop, where he welded the Jeep frame while I fixed the flat tire we got yesterday driving through Benin City. It did not take long as Jeep repairs go, and we were ready to leave by 11:00. The rain was continuing, but Jeff said he was not worried, since he had driven his Jeep through water that came up to his dashboard. I asked him where he got the Jeep. It seems he had been the PCV Jeep repairman for volunteers in Sierra Leone, and at the end of his tour he begged the Peace Corps office to allow him to buy the Jeep he had been using to be able to take this trip around the perimeter of the continent. He had outfitted the bed of the pickup with a large gas tank that would provide enough fuel to cross the most extensive wilderness, or so he hoped. After Africa, he was planning to eventually go across the Middle East and Europe and end up in London, where he would sell the Jeep before heading back home. When he told me of his plans, I had a hard time imagining him ever being successful.
One hundred miles later we were at the Niger River, waiting for a ferry. We were wondering if we would be able to get across before it stopped crossing for the day. Some of the lorries on the other side had been waiting there for two or three days. We were sixth in line and it was 5:30 in the afternoon. The guard said there would be one more crossing. We tried desperately to get a ticket to let us cross. After many anxious moments, the guard pressed one in my hand. Jeff ran to the office to pay the one-pound fee, and we were the last ones to get on for the day. We got to the city of Enugu at 9:00 pm, too late to get dinner, so we ate English biscuits and drank Fanta pop, just what I had been drinking all day. We stayed overnight with Ann, a girl Jeff knew who had been waiting for us to arrive so she could join us to ride to her station in the Cameroons.

August 7, Saturday:

We spent the day relaxing in Enugu. In the evening we went to the Government Rest House for dinner, the first time I have had a good meal since getting off the boat.

August 8, Sunday:

Jeff, Ann, and I started out early for what we hoped would be result in my trip to Victoria, British Cameroon. Ann wanted to be dropped off upcountry in Bamenda before Jeff and I headed to the coast. Jeff decided he should fill up his gas tank before leaving, since petrol could be hard to find as we headed into the bush. It took almost a half hour of pumping to fill up both tanks. I was worried about the danger of transporting so much petrol in a relatively vulnerable place, but he reassured me it should be safe, and was very necessary for his extended trip.

The roads in Nigeria were paved and dry for the most part, but as soon as we crossed into British Cameroon the rains started, the landscape became hills and mountains, and the pavement ended. Being Sunday, we had little trouble at the border crossing. There was little lorry traffic, so we had the road to ourselves, which was helpful since Jeff needed to adjust to driving on the right side of the road. An interesting feature of the drive was there was a national law that when driving upcountry, because of the narrow roads traffic was permitted to go only south on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and only north on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Because it was Sunday and there was supposedly no traffic, you could travel either direction.

We had ninety miles and took five hours before making it to Bamenda, during which for seventy miles we had no sign of human habitation. We were glad to make it to Bamenda and Ann's house on her school's compound. But frustrations of the day continued when we found the electricity was off, and at 4,000-foot altitude we were facing a cold winter evening. It took over an hour, but we finally got a fire burning in her wood stove. Her cupboard was mostly bare, but we scraped together some macaroni and cheese and canned plum pudding for dinner.

Although we had just put in a total of thirteen hours of driving, we never were in poor spirits—it is just life on the road. Jeff is a good traveling companion; he knows his Jeep inside and out and makes the best of every situation. I was almost tempted to join him when continuing on his African odyssey.
August 9, Monday:

We slept in after yesterday's hard day and looked forward to the short trip to Victoria (ha! ha!). Two other PCV women were hoping to hitch a ride with us as far as Buea, the capital city. Jeff agreed to let them ride if one of them was willing to sit on my lap. It was crowded, but just another part of the experience of Peace Corps travel.

Driving through the British Cameroon

We were driving through some of the most beautiful country I had ever seen. Large hills, almost the size of mountains, were covered with grass and scattered thatched huts, with an occasional waterfall. The roads wind up one hill and down another. At one point we needed to cross into the French side, where they had beautiful paved roads following the ridges of the hills. However, because the road signs were in French we missed our turn back into the British side. By the time we had realized our mistake, we had driven forty miles too far. We turned around and headed back, but after about ten miles Jeff remembered he had left his hat back at the signpost where we had stopped. It was a possession he prized highly, so he turned around once again and went back for it. It was now about 9:00 at night, and because no lorries are permitted to drive after dark the road was pretty deserted. On the way back to the British side some gendarmes were along the road and waving at us. We went past them slowly and then heard a whistle. Jeff did not feel like stopping, so he kept driving. A few miles further along, another gendarme car pulled us over, undoubtedly called by the others. Needless to say, we were worried, since French Cameroon is nearly a police state. But when Jeff showed his Peace Corps identification card, everything was fine and they waved us on with a smile. I have to give the gendarmes credit for their efficiency, since in Sierra Leone the police do not even have radios.

We got back to the British border, which supposedly closes at 6:00 pm. The border guards asked where we were going, and then gave us permission to pass. Two other cars were parked
waiting until morning to get permission to pass. In fact, the African driver of one of the cars came to the desk and started yelling about why could we go through, but they could not. He was promptly told to "Shut up!" It seems that traveling with girls helped us through these circumstances, for we were later told we would never be stopped if we had a girl with us.

We finally made it to the Peace Corps hostel in Buea at 2:00 in the morning, where we stayed overnight. I really appreciated getting relief from having sat on each other's laps for twelve hours.

**Status of Cameroons in 1965**

When European colonial powers divided the African continent at the Berlin Conference of 1886, borders were drawn by these European powers across the continent without regard to tribal or cultural boundaries; the interior of the continent was essentially unknown territory to the Europeans. The Kamerun had been a German colony throughout the 19th century, but during World War I the British and French battled the Germans. This spilled over to fighting in Kamerun, forcing the Germans out of the territory. Following the war, the territory was split between the French and British, with a border largely following the line of mountains, with the British side much smaller than the French. Tensions remained between the two countries for decades, largely based on the fact that the French continued to use forced labor for development, while the British discontinued the practice early on. The territories, now known as British Cameroon and French Cameroun, remained split between the two colonial powers, with the British aligning the administration of British Cameroon with that of Nigeria, the neighboring British colony, leaving this area largely neglected. After World War II there was a movement to have British Cameroon join Nigeria, while French side advocates pushed for the two Cameroons becoming one, and under French control.

In 1960, as a result of a five-year revolt by the Union des Populations Camerounaises (UPC) peoples party, independence was proclaimed for the French Cameroun, and it became the Republic of Cameroun. Soon after, an effort was made to reunite the French and British sides. A referendum established that the northern portion of the British side would join Nigeria, with the intent for the remaining British portion to eventually join the French Cameroun. This is the period when I traveled through the Cameroons on my way to the city of Victoria (now known as Limbe). Unification finally happened in 1972, establishing the Federal Republic of Cameroon, with a federal structure and new constitution.
August 10, Tuesday:

After a little running around in the morning, Jeff and I began the final lap to Victoria. We were traveling past Mount Cameroon, the highest peak in West Africa, and it was twenty easy miles into Victoria. The only problem we had was when Jeff needed to pull over to take a pee. Unknown to him, he stepped in a column of fire ants just off the side of the road; they are tiny things that move in great numbers and have an unstoppable sting. While he was relieving himself, they immediately started climbing up his legs, filling his pants and quickly reaching his most vulnerable spot. There was nothing he could do but pull off his clothes, shake loose the tiny red ants as best he could, and put himself back in order. I did my best not to laugh too much at the whole escapade.

We arrived at the Baptist Girls Secondary School in the afternoon and found missionaries George and Alma Henderson to be quite warm and welcoming. They remembered me from my letter, and we sat and talked for two or three hours. The Hendersons began this school just four years ago and they now have a campus of about twenty buildings. Most of the planning is done by George, but together they hope to develop a first-rate, high standard school.

They gave the two of us a house where we could stay, at least until more guests arrived, which they seem to have a lot of. Supper was the best meal we have had in a long time, and the only meal we have had in the last two days.
August 11, Wednesday:

Jeff decided it was time for him to leave, so we all said goodbyes and I thanked him for his interesting ride to Victoria. I know he enjoyed his overnight stay here and hope he has a good trip through Gabon and on to South Africa. He wanted me to come with him to see Albert Schweitzer in Gabon, but I told him it was just too distant and would take too long.

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**Jeff Mareck's trip around Africa**

The following is a description of Jeff Mareck's trip, written by Jeff upon his return to the United States. I include the lengthy narrative here because it gives an incredible perspective on travel on the African continent in the 1960s. I think you will appreciate the perseverance of this very special individual.

*On the Fifth of May, 1965, upon terminating my service with Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, I started off on what seemed to many a rather optimistic venture. My goal was to drive down the West Coast to South Africa and then up the East Coast to Egypt, and subsequently Europe. My vehicle was used Peace Corps transport, a 1963 Jeep Pickup with 70,000 miles on the clock. The Jeep was purchased from the U.S. Embassy for the sum of £50.*

*My first stop was Monrovia, where I took a two-months stay. I built a wooden canopy for the truck, installed an 82-gallon gas tank, repaired the engine, brakes, etc. etc.*

*From Liberia I drove to the Ivory Coast and Ghana. In Ghana, I encountered my first border "trouble." Relations with Togo had been strained for a year or more, but after four days of palaver with Togolese officials, I was allowed to pass. It is ordinarily a six-hour trip from Accra to Lagos, but road construction and a hard rain had created an almost impassable situation.*
Needless to say, after twelve hours of “mucking,” the Peace Corps hostel in Lagos was a beautiful sight to behold!

I remained in Nigeria about one month waiting for a Congolese Visa. I never obtained a visa for Congo, so I continued on to Cameroon. I scrounged a few spare parts, including a left front fender, from a smashed Peace Corps vehicle that I pounded out and put on my Jeep. I also asked for one bald, scrapped tire, which threw the AID man into a red-eyed, hair-raising fit! After all, “who has a right to give away perfectly good United States Government property?”

I drove on to Yaoundé and eventually found my way into Rio Muni.

Back on the "Capetown-Algiers-Freeway, I headed for Libreville. I was in Libreville for one day when I met a PCV who was on his way to Lambarene where the Schweitzer Mission is. I had heard that "Le Grande Docteur" was very ill, and this might be my only opportunity to meet him. The PCV agreed to pay some of the cost for gas in return for the ride back to his site and so we took off. At the Kango ferry, we met a Frenchman who told us the doctor had died and that he was to be buried at two p.m. that day. We hurried on to Lambarene, reaching there in time for the funeral. It was a quiet, simple service. As the casket was lowered into the grave, the Mission bell tolled. Schweitzer himself had always tolled the bell when a worker had finished a tour of duty and was leaving the Mission. When the service was over, I talked with the Doctor’s daughter and that night returned to Libreville.

I was hired by AID to repair AID/Peace Corps vehicles and supervise construction of a garage and parts store, etc. My stay in Gabon was a memorable one highlighted by fighting with vehicles, mud, indifferent ferry operators and their broken down ferries, and the frustrating French language! How does one say to his mechanic helper, "torque the output shaft universal joint nut to 200 foot pounds" in French? I worked for forty-six paid days and lost thirty pounds; a few more days and I would have left Gabon in a mahogany box!

There was no way to get into Brazzaville, so with the money I had made I put the Jeep on a boat bound for Luanda, Angola. I flew to Leopoldville where I was stranded several days before getting a plane to Luanda. I retrieved my Jeep from Customs without too much trouble and spent Christmas and New Years camped on the beach a few miles from the city.

I had intended to proceed to Southwest Africa, picking up a visa at the border, but the American Consul said I must apply for it "here." He proudly told the South African Consul that I was a Peace Corps Volunteer and my Visa was rejected on that basis. I applied, and after one month of camping on the beach living on fish, crabs, and coffee, I was again denied a Visa.

I gassed up, (102 gallons of gas and 2 gallons of oil) and set off crosscountry. Three thousand and three hundred miles, three weeks and three days later, I reached Dar Es Salaam. That crossing was a very difficult one.

From General Machado in Angola to Mongu in Zambia, the track is mostly deep sand. For more than five hundred miles, the Jeep was in low range. For hours at a time, it was never out of low range, low gear. I spent three nights at a Portuguese military camp while trying to find a way around a flooded area. At one point I was given a crude map and told it would take me through. After a hundred and fifty miles it did not, so I went back to the military post. The following day I started out to the site of a broken bridge. If I could somehow span the abutments, I would be able to
bypass the flooded area. Before I reached it, the Jeep slid off the filled road into a swamp. (No matter how much cable you have it is always ten feet short of the first tree.) I walked 30 kilometers back to the camp.

The Commander issued orders for a patrol to rescue me. An armoured 904 Caterpillar wheel loader with ten men perched on it appeared. What a sight! Nothing could ever stop this! My spirits soared, the Jeep would be out like nothing. I hopped on and the behemoth lumbered down the narrow track. When we reached the truck, the driver confidently, and with expert precision, drove the Caterpillar into the swamp where it promptly sunk to the top of its five foot wheels! The next eight hours were spent digging, building a dam around the 904, and bailing the water out. Finally, like a giant green bullfrog, the monster came roaring and belching out of its hole. Getting the Jeep out was anti-climactic. We spent two days repairing the bridge. When I finally drove across the resulting structure, it sagged sickeningly but held.

An armed soldier was assigned to show me the way to the border, a place called Seth. Sixty miles of deep sand and ten hours later, we arrived. The transmission had been screaming like a banshee. It had gotten so hot that the oil inside smoked and sizzled. Seth consisted of a military post, two tents, one shack, fifteen men and a store operated by a Portuguese merchant and his African wife who had been educated in Lisbon. It is not often that they have visitors, so I was treated like royalty. Breakfast included beer and red wine. Johnny Walker was served for the morning "coffee break" and the rest of the day. I was given a guide to get me through the grasslands of Barotseland. He soon had me into water and swamped—water from horizon to horizon. We waded toward a likely looking hump on the horizon that happily turned out to be a village. Five men came with us to help. While we were struggling with the Jeep, like an unbelievable miracle, twelve oxen with their driver materialized out of nowhere. With twelve oxen and seven men the truck was soon out.

Later, when we were approaching our destination, we again became bogged down. This time school children from a nearby village, urged on by their headmaster, pushed the Jeep out.

I left the guide in Mongu. After another two hundred miles of detour, I found a ferry to take me across to Zambezi. Two more days of alternate mud and sand and I was in Lasaka. There I was able to repair the transmission and arrange an issue of 56 gallons of gas to get me out of the country. Gas was difficult to obtain because of the Rhodesian situation.

From Lasaka I drove the Great North Road to Dar Es Salaam and on to Kenya. In Nairobi, I was requested to put up a 100-pound bond in favor of the Sudanese Government in order to obtain a permit to pass through the Sudan. I also obtained a Somali Visa. The annual Peace Corps Reps conference was being held in Nairobi at the time, so I met many Peace Corps friends. It was a great reunion!

In Somali, I stayed with an American Construction Company engaged in building a port at Khisimaio. I did more repairs on the truck and proceeded to Mogadishu. It took two days to drive the two hundred miles of mud. Eight hours the first day I spent winching from thorn tree to thorn tree and slept in the mud bound Jeep. The next day went better and I arrived at the Mogadishu Peace Corps Hostel about 10 pm. I stayed nearly a week before heading for Hargiesa in the north. AID had a new truck that was going to Hargiesa and they wanted another vehicle to accompany it, since the trip was both difficult and dangerous because of the Shifta. The trip took five days to go
one thousand miles. The average speed was fifteen miles per hour. A couple of days we drove 20 out of the 24 hours. The new truck broke down twice. I used the steel plate from my winch to repair it.

From Hargiesa, the next stop was Djibouti. I obtained an Ethiopian visa there and drove to Addis Ababa. Peace Corps Addis remembers me for ruining their vehicle, the doctor's Land Rover, a nearly new, long wheelbase station wagon. Peace Corps asked me to drive it to a remote site where a Volunteer had been reported gravely ill. Two PCVs accompanied me. It was raining and the road was like ice. We put on chains and inched along. About midnight the rear differential broke. I took out the axles and put chains on the front wheels, which enabled us to continue driving. At 4 am we could go no further. We slept a few hours, then hiked fifteen miles into town. Who was the bright and smiling face that met us at the door?? Yes, the dying volunteer!!!

I left Addis and drove on to Asmara where I obtained the necessary visa for the Sudan. I met a British couple who were also driving to Egypt and we decided that, because the Nubian Desert would have to be crossed, we would travel together. The first couple of days in the desert went reasonably well. Then as we were nearing Port Sudan, the front axle broke on my vehicle. The British couple took me into the city where I was able to get a truck to tow me in. They decided they must continue on without me. Four days later I was again on my way, but ironically with no four-wheel drive. At the town of Halib, I met two Sudanese drivers who rode with me to show me the way across the trackless burning sand to the Egyptian frontier. I had to drive with my “foot in the carburetor,” 30-35 miles per hour so that the Jeep would not sink in the sand. If one gets up speed and holds it, shifting before the engine lugs down, he will get through even the softest sand. It is, however, hell on the vehicle. At one point we became lost. I was scared, but we followed our tracks back until the Sudanese recognized a landmark and we continued on to the frontier.

At the frontier, the police arranged for an aged Sheik, a respected and famous “man of the desert” to guide me to the main highway in Egypt. We blasted across the sand. After about one hundred miles I noticed a wheel paralleling ours; soon there were more. At this point, I began to feel better. The old man began pointing to the right and speaking in Arabic. I looked and could see nothing. He pointed again and spoke in an irritated voice. I veered to the right. Within fifty yards, we were on paved road! I left the Sheik at Abu Diya and continued on through the rest of the day and night, arriving in Cairo about 9 a.m. the following morning. It was a memorable day! It had taken me sixteen months, but at last I was in Cairo.

I took a ferry to Beirut and drove through the Near East, Syria, Iraq, etc. and then on to Turkey where I met Don McClure who had been my Rep. in Sierra Leone. From Turkey, I proceeded on to Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Italy, Austria, Germany, and Belgium where I ferried across to England.

For two hundred and fifty dollars I bought passage to New York for the Jeep.

On October 10, 1967, I was back in the “good old U.S.A.”

During the day I toured Victoria on foot, a nice small port town. It is a tropical climate town with heavy rains, constantly moving clouds, sometimes revealing special views of Mt. Cameroon or, in the other direction, Fernando Poo Island off the coast.
The Hendersons typically have many house guests for meals, but this evening I was the only guest. I told them I felt like an only child, since I feel so much at home already. They seem to appreciate my visit and want me to stay as long as I can, even though I first introduced myself only with a letter and then dropped in unexpectedly. But I soon realized they are very busy people, and I would soon be in the way.

August 12, Thursday:
In the morning we went to the shipping office to see if I could catch a boat back to Nigeria; the only one until the end of the month leaves tomorrow and it only had deck passage. They hoped I would be able to stay an extra two days so I could attend a Sunday service, but it does not look like that is possible, since it would be too expensive to fly.

In the afternoon George and I and one of the native pastors walked up the mountainside to a small, small village where people had begun to build a church on their own initiative. The village could not have had more than one hundred people living there, but one of the villagers attends the pastor training classes and now leads services every week in his church.

August 13, Friday:
Friday the thirteenth, and an unlucky day for me because I had to leave the Hendersons. I was told at the shipping office to come at noon to see when the freighter would be leaving. At noon, they told me the ship would leave at one o'clock, which gave me just half an hour to return to the school, gather all my things, say goodbye, and get on board. Four of the people from the school came to see me off, and they rode out on a small launch to where the ship was anchored. I was told the only way to get on board was by climbing a high rope ladder hanging over the edge of the ship. I gave my camera to George and asked him to take a picture of me on the rope ladder and then send the camera with my suitcase, to be sent up on a hoist.
I hated to say goodbye so soon, but I got a warm reception on board. The purser told me he had never had a European travel by deck passage, which meant sleeping somewhere on the deck and eating rice chop with the crew. Feeling beneficent, he gave me the empty assistant purser's cabin and let me eat in the duty mess. I eat by myself, but have my own waiter and eat the same food as the captain. I cannot complain about the situation for a ticket with a total price of $6.00.

In the evening I was invited to the purser's room, where we talked for a while about life on board. He said it costs 540 pounds a day to operate the ship, but 450 pounds a day to sit in port. So they lost money in Victoria, where it took them four days of waiting to unload a cargo that could have been unloaded in three hours.

August 14, Saturday:
Overnight the ship made it to Nigeria and traveled upriver to the city of Port Harcourt. For some reason it has now stopped, and the captain will not get permission to unload anything or anyone until at least tomorrow. So it has been a lazy day aboard ship, reading magazines and playing solitaire, trying to stay out of everyone's way. It also has been a good day to rest. Meanwhile the ship's captain realized it might be a few days before they would be able to unload, and technically I would need to stay on board until they received official permission from the Port Authority. But the captain asked for special approval on my behalf, and I should be able to get to shore tomorrow.

August 15, Sunday:
The ship pulled into Port Harcourt early, so I was given passage to shore on a small boat and went through customs and immigration before breakfast. Now I had the problem of finding a place to stay. When leaving the dock area I asked guards at the gate whether they knew of any "Peace Corpse" people in the area. They did not, so I asked for the name of the largest secondary school,
hoping a PCV would be stationed there. A taxi took me three or four miles to the school, where I found there were no PCVs, but there was an American couple teaching on contract. They invited me for breakfast and asked me to stay overnight, but as a complete stranger I said I would stay at the government rest house. I found the rest house was full, however, so I took the easy way out and took a nice room at the Hotel Republic. The cost was over three pounds, and although it was a reasonable price my vacation budget did not leave room for such luxuries, so I will be leaving tomorrow.

August 16, Monday:
I wanted to get to the town of Asa. I caught a Peugeot taxi—a fast, inexpensive, and comfortable way to travel, except the drivers are "cowboys" who like the thrill of taking chances on the road. From Asa I hitched a ride to Akwete, a small village where others had told me they make the most beautiful woven blankets you will find anywhere in Africa. It truly was an unusual village, for it seemed each house or hut had a large loom on its front porch. A local merchant said I should visit one compound where six women were weaving multi-colored cloth. I asked about the price of one I liked, but they seemed pretty blasé about selling it. I came here to buy a blanket, however, so I paid five pounds for the one I liked. While I was walking back down the road a small boy came to get me to show me another compound where there were more women weaving. I told him I was not interested in buying another, but when I went there I saw the most beautiful blanket imaginable, with cotton cloth interspersed with silk. It only cost four pounds, so I bought it as well.

![Weaver of blankets in Akwete, Nigeria; on the right is the colorful one I purchased](image)

I realized how low my money was now getting. The funny thing is, I spent a total of four pounds in seven days riding with Jeff, but now I had spent over fourteen pounds in one day.

August 17, Tuesday:
Here I am sitting on a somewhat deserted train platform, halfway between Enugu and Jos at two o'clock in the morning. I did not find out I was on the wrong train until I got this far. I hopped
aboard the first train that pulled into the Enugu station, since it was arriving at the right time—this in itself should have been a precaution—but later found out it was a limited train to Kano. Halfway through the trip, the porter told me to get off at this station and wait for the local to Jos, so that is what I am doing now.

August 18, Wednesday:

I got aboard the local, and it was not any more or less comfortable than the limited, although it did make many more stops. I was able to catch maybe one hour of sleep between various stops, with many people constantly getting on or off, squeezing into every empty seat. Chickens, dogs, hot corn on the cob, naked babies crawling on the floor, blind beggars who regularly came along asking for alms, constant chatter in the Ibo and Hausa languages—these all made the trip both interesting and frustrating.

We finally arrived at Jos, a heavily English-populated town, at about six in the evening. I asked for a taxi to the Jos Museum Hotel, and it was apparent the British had spoiled this town for tourists, since it cost a whopping five shillings to ride for one mile, while the African who rode with me in the taxi and was going further only need to pay two shillings. But the Museum Hotel turned out to be twenty beautiful individual thatched huts. The whole compound is interesting and well cared for.

August 19, Thursday:

In the morning I was able to leisurely walk around the city of Jos. In the afternoon I spent three hours at the Jos Zoo, a very interesting place. It had lions, a leopard, secretary birds, a peacock, lynxes, and other animals, all situated in natural looking cages. The "zukipa" let me follow him around while he was feeding the animals. Very hesitantly I followed him into the hyenas cage, where the hyenas came charging the food in a very threatening manner, making a loud noise, grabbing a piece and running back into the cage. It was not the kind of animal you would want to meet in the wild.
Later I met other PCVs who were on vacation as well. It was nice visiting with them, but I do not regret travelling by myself, for I am never lonely and get a chance to meet a lot of new people, people I probably would not bother to talk with and eat with if I was travelling with anyone else.

August 21, Saturday:

It was time to leave Jos. Tom, a PCV stationed near Kano, decided to hitchhike with me to Kano. They say hitching is the best way to travel in the North, and Tom has done it often, so I was glad to be travelling this leg of the trip with him. We waited along the road with our suitcases for more than an hour. A number of packed lorries stopped for us, but we told the drivers we were not interested in squeezing in. Finally a Nigerian in a Mercedes stopped and offered to take us to Zaria, more than halfway. It was my first ride in a Mercedes, and I really enjoyed the comfort.

After being dropped off just outside Zaria, we sat for two hours before a big lorry stopped and offered to let us sit up front for the ride to Kano. It was late, so we decided to take the ride. I got half a seat, and Tom had to sit on the hump, but the road was good and we got to Kano about eight o'clock in the evening. It peeved us that that driver stopped before entering the city and asked us to pay or get out. We palavered with him, and he finally agreed to take us at no additional cost to a spot where we were able to walk to the rest house. The rest house was filled with PCVs, many stationed
in Ethiopia. It was a real mess there, so we went to the Kano Club for a real nice steak dinner and then continued to Tom's house, where I was able to stay overnight, finally getting to bed at 3:30 in the morning.

August 23, Monday:
In the morning I rented a bicycle (Kano is the land of bicycles and donkeys) and rode around inside the walled part of the old city. One of the most interesting districts was where many dye pots were located. Dozens of these large vats were being used by men to color beautiful cloth; I am not sure why dying cloth was a man's task, but it was obviously the case here.
The historical character of the city is in evidence everywhere. All the structures are made out of mud, the streets are narrow and winding, and the people live simply. The Muslim religion is the most important influence in their lives, with a mosque located in the center of the city. I climbed one of its minarets and got a good panorama photo of the city, a large city enclosed by twenty miles of mud walls.

When I got back to the rest house, I was surprised to see Mike and Joe, who were also on vacation. What a great reunion. They filled me in on facts from home in Kenema. They told me the projects were falling apart, of course, and that there were money problems with Mr. Lefevre.

August 24, Tuesday:
In the morning Mike and Joe and I rented bicycles and rode to the U.S. missile tracking station about five miles from town. The flat land makes this region good for cycling, and it is also a cool way to get a tan. At the tracking station, all the Air Force men seemed happy to show us around. They said they encourage visitors to come and see what the operation is like. The controls and tracking systems are housed in one small building, but the layout looked complex. A highlight was when we heard astronauts talk over the loudspeaker with Houston base command.

August 25, Wednesday:
My U.S. passport was expiring today. I guess I should not have waited until the last day to deal with this, but did nonetheless. I found the Kano police station, where someone told me I could get it renewed. They could not help me, and sent me to the airport. The airport was three miles away, so I rented a bike once again and made the trek. Once I found the airport's immigration office it took only fifteen minutes to get through the formalities and get it stamped, which is good, since Mike said it took three days to get theirs renewed in Lagos. I also looked around the "Kano International Airport," built recently with runways for jet aircraft. In spite of its newness, I found it interesting that there were camels on the runways that had to be chased away whenever a plane was ready to land.

August 26, Thursday:
Today I was ready to go to Kaduna. I traveled by hitching rides on a Honda scooter, in a Land Rover, and in a mammy wagon. Kaduna had a good rest house with plenty of room, so it was relaxing to see this city before heading back to Lagos, which may be difficult traveling on the weekend.

August 27, Friday:
Getting down to Lagos is going to be a problem. I checked at the railway station, at the USAID offices, at the Peace Corps office, the British Council, the Hamdala Hotel, and the Catering Rest House, and at none of them did I find someone traveling to Lagos with whom I could hitch a ride. So I guess I get out on the road tomorrow. At least in the afternoon I was able to swim in the Hamdala Hotel's Olympic-style swimming pool. The pool is typical of most in this wealthy community—it was new, modern, and well planned.
August 28 and 29, Saturday and Sunday:

These ended up being two long days of lorry riding, with thirty-one hours on the road from Kaduna to Lagos. After one-and-a-half hours of standing by the road in the morning, finally a large lorry carrying a load of peanuts stopped to pick me up. The only room was sitting in back on top of the peanuts. I knew it would be a slow, arduous trip, but at least I was on my way. After a few stops, the driver was willing to move me to the front seat. Thirty miles an hour was his top speed. He liked to stop at every village where the road widened enough to turn off, most of the time for no real reason. He continued his drive through most of the night, snatching only a two-hour catnap. At noon on Sunday he finally said I had better try to get a taxi if I wanted to get to Lagos today. For the rest of the trip I rode in a Peugeot taxi, sometimes at seventy miles an hour. I did not mind, since I was tired enough to catnap through most of the trip.

I finally arrived in Lagos desperately needing both food and sleep. The food took priority, and I went with another PCV to a French restaurant, Le Peon Rouge, where I had one of the best-tasting steaks I had ever had; it was called a Chateaubriand steak. The meal was expensive, and cost a total of two pounds, but was well worth it. Now it is time to catch up on my sleep.

August 31, Tuesday:

Well, the hard part of the vacation is over, and now there are five days of leisurely living on board the mail boat. It was a different, smaller boat, but just as plush as the one we came on. Three PCVs from Ethiopia were on the boat and on their way to tour Freetown and Sierra Leone, but with a much shorter schedule than I had in Nigeria.

September 2 and 3, Thursday and Friday:

Two full days at sea with no stops. I learned something new today—a wonderful card game called Bridge. The PCVs taught me, and although the rules are not extensive, it can take years to learn the strategy. It was a lot of fun and we played for four hours between breakfast and lunch, a very short four hours. The rest of the day was spent relaxing, as you can do only on board ship. I moved from lounge chair to bed to sofa and back again, reading and talking and not much else.
Returning to Sierra Leone

September 4, Saturday:

We arrived in Freetown and I was worried about getting all my newly purchased souvenirs through customs. I did not declare anything, and the customs official did not even open my suitcase, or anyone else's for that matter.

The Peace Corps Rest House was filling up rapidly with a group of new teachers, 86 strong. All the Rural Development Program volunteers are coming to transport them to their assignments, but I will be looking for my own ride this time. I was hoping to have my Land Rover in Freetown, but Mario had had an accident with it and it was impounded in Kenema.

September 5, Sunday:

In the afternoon the Peace Corps director had a big informal reception at his house for all the volunteers. I met a lot of the new arrivals, and they looked so fresh. I met two of the six new volunteers headed to Kenema. One of them is teaching in a school none of us knew about. I thought I knew Kenema well. If there is another secondary school, either I was uninformed or it was put up very fast.

September 7, Tuesday:

This was the night of the big party, given for new volunteers. It was a lot of fun. In the spirit of the local culture, there were fried plantains, dried cassava, granats (peanuts), and cold drinks. An African "high-life" band played dance music, and it was all very atmospheric for the new volunteers. Then R.D. Volunteer Lee played his guitar and sang folk songs. I needed to leave early, since I would be getting up at 5:30 am, since I had been given responsibility to drive some of the new volunteers upcountry.

September 8, Wednesday:

I was given another Land Rover and told to take eight people to Kenema, Segbwema, and Bunumbu. It was too much for one vehicle, so another PCV, Dan Griffin, drove his Jeep pickup with all the suitcases in the back. The roads were infinitely better than last year at this time, but the new volunteers still complained about the rough ride. We were in Kenema by seven o'clock, a considerably shorter time than last year, when it took two days going down and a week coming back. Anyway, it meant nine people were sleeping at our house overnight, most of them on cots.

When we got to Kenema, I found out that two U.S. helicopter pilots were staying at the government rest house, but were storing all their equipment at our house as their base camp. When I first met them, they had landed in a field because they had run out of gas. I asked them how they were able to survive running out of gas and land without crashing. They described how the blades provide enough air resistance so a landing without power, although it can be hard, is not catastrophic.
The pilots offered to give me a ride over Kenema in the helicopter. I said I would be thrilled, as long as they did not run out of gas again. It was thrilling to have the chance to take some aerial photos of Kenema, and especially our house and compound. It was a lot of fun to see things from this perspective and get an idea of what Kenema really looked like as a city.

The pilots showed up at the house later with air mattresses, Cokes, and bacon and eggs for breakfast, so they were staying overnight at our house. Mike and Joe were still on vacation. If they were here, they would probably be really flustered at all the activity happening at the house, but I love a lot of people and wish they could stay beyond tomorrow.

September 9, Thursday:
One of the new volunteers took over the job of making breakfast for everyone, which was great. It looks like two of the Kenema teachers, Hank and Dick, will be staying with us for a while until
they get their own housing. The others I took to Segbwema, where they all saw their new school compounds and where they might be living.

September 10, Friday:

Some of the new teachers wanted to borrow the Land Rover, to save me the bother of driving them to their new location. I was glad for that, but it left me without a vehicle. C4211 had had the brakes fixed, but the clutch and steering are still in sad shape, so I would have preferred that it not be driven out of town. Instead, I switched batteries and put its battery in another Land Rover, which Joe will now be using. He is getting a vehicle that is also in sad shape, but in different ways. Its rear end seems ready to fall out at any minute, and I really do not know what to do. Oh, the continuing headaches of Peace Corps vehicles.

September 12, Sunday:

Today a missionary from Liberia joined our ranks for supper before moving on. The cooking chore was left to a new cook, Vanda, who I am trying for a few days in the hopes he will work out. I hope to have someone trained before Mike and Joe return so Mike will not feel so bad about our former cook, Edward, now being in jail for twelve months.

September 13, Monday:

It was my first full day at project sites since my return. I took Henry Lefevre out to Kpuabu and Gegwema. In Kpuabu the walls for the new school were up to about six feet in height, so we were real pleased with the progress, and recognize we can now put up the roof. However, in Gegwema little had been done other than some painting, and of course they had run out of paint and were no longer doing that either. I showed my disappointment, so we decided to move the project carpenter to Kpuabu. But Henry is doing a good job of overseeing all my projects, and I think he will always be able to keep things going even after the end of my tour.

My co-worker, Henry Lefevre
September 14, Tuesday:
We said goodbye to the helicopter crew and hello to Tim and his new wife, Gayle. They were going to stay with us for a week or so while Tim conducted chiefdom surveys in his role as PCV leader. So now the house has five people, Tim and Gayle and Hank and Dick and myself, a pleasant group to be living with temporarily.

September 15 through 21, Wednesday through Tuesday:
Mixed days of project work, work at home, and days of visiting and relaxing. Nothing worth noting in the diary.

Mom and Dad,
A long time ago I had promised a gift to the village that finished work on their school first. I had almost forgotten about this, but yesterday the headmaster at the school that will be done first had not forgotten and was anxiously waiting to see what the donation would be. To tell you the truth, I am at a loss for thinking of something different and inexpensive to give them. I wonder if you have any ideas. If you are still active in PTA at Eaman School, maybe they would be interested in contributing something, such as a map or a globe. People here always consider things that come from the States as being three times more valuable. It could be sent duty free by marking it as Educational Materials. Just a thought.
I sent in my application for the University of Michigan architecture program, and should be getting a Yes or No in a month or two. I am hopeful of returning to school upon my return.

September 22, Wednesday:
The big happening of the day was when we were sitting in the living room reading in the evening and a long white arm reached in the door and unfastened the lock. All of a sudden Mike and Joe were back home. We spent a long time talking about everything, especially our vacations. They asked about Edward the cook (now in jail), the house, the projects, and Henry Lefevre. It is great to have things return to normal, so I do not need to take care of all the household problems myself. Hank and Dick will soon be leaving for their own housing, and we will then be the core household of Mike, Joe, and myself.

October 6, Wednesday:
I turned 21 years old today. It seems so inconsequential, and there was no celebration to recognize its significance. Oh, well.

October 7, Thursday:
The projects have been moving ahead satisfactorily in the past weeks. My big campaign now is to see if we can get the Rural Development Program in the Kenema District operating on its own without the need for the Peace Corps. It would be under the direction of Henry, who is quite competent, but not fully accepted by government officials, primarily because he is an African. I talked to the Provincial Secretary; he seemed open and receptive to the points I had made. Next will
be to also get approval from the District Officer, although the approval of the Provincial Secretary will mean a lot finally.

Mom and Dad,

We just got done popping a batch of popcorn, the first we have been able to find since coming to Sierra Leone. There used to be a law against importing seeds, but I found some Jiffy Time popcorn today in a Lebanese shop. Either the law has been changed or the shopkeeper is ignoring the law. I read today that the Parliament passed a law making it illegal for any non-citizen to sell retail goods. This is directly aimed at the many Lebanese merchants who make a lot of money and send it back to Beirut, but nevertheless keep the economy alive. There are no African shops near large enough to handle even a small part of the trade here. Anyway, the law goes into effect on December 1st and the outcome should be interesting to watch.

October 11, Monday:

Bob Golding arrived at the Kenema airport this morning. He wants to make decisions on which chiefdoms should be selected to have new PCVs be Chiefdom Developers. He and Tim went to see the Provincial Secretary and District Officer about these matters. Bob leaves for the U.S. next week to make preliminary selections of individuals from the current training program. It will be interesting to see who will be replacing us.

Meanwhile, Vandi has been hopeless as a cook and we end up doing a lot of the cooking ourselves. He seems to resent it when anyone comes into the kitchen, but after a breakfast of bacon, tuna, sardines and nothing else, I really do not trust his judgment.

October 19, Tuesday:

Henry and I left early for Tungie, my first trip there since vacation. It took five hours for a trip that usually took half that time. One delay was an accident where a mammy wagon had met a taxi head-on on a bridge. The engine of the taxi was completely pushed to one side, but no one was hurt, so we just waited for a policeman to finish his official measurements before we could drive around the site. A little further along the road a lorry had run over a man and the body was still lying in the road. The driver was waiting for a policeman, but we were able to drive around and continued on.

When we finally arrived in the village, it was a wonderful sight to see the large water tank had been built right where I had parked the last time there. The people of Tungie were as enthusiastic as ever about our visit and showing us their work. Because of their remoteness I am sure the appreciation factor is always much greater than elsewhere.

Henry and I laid out the corners for the new health center building, leaving it for them to dig the foundation. We decided to stay overnight, since it was such a long trip back, and two of the townsmen dashed me rice and a chicken that the chief's cook made into a wonderful rice Jallof dish for us to eat for supper.
October 20, Wednesday:

The trip back from Tungie took almost as long as the trip over. It had rained all night, so I knew the roads would be bad, but did not expect to get stuck just two miles out of Tungie. With the muddy roads, our bald tires, loose steering, and steep hills, I started rolling off to the side of the sloped road and could not get back on. Luckily, a lorry came along and everyone helped push us back up on the road surface and we were on our way again.

Mom and Dad,

Yesterday the train arrived from Freetown and I received a package from home. Marv filled my request for popcorn by sending seven pounds of it. The postmaster was curious about the contents, but I explained it was a crazy American food and he let it in duty free. So we made up bags of fresh popcorn and took them to the cinema, making the movie experience much more enjoyable.

October 23, Saturday:

We woke in the morning to find one of the wheels had been taken off and stolen from the Land Rover. Sahr, our watchman, had been our longest-serving employee, but he had been progressively getting lazier, sleepier, and more inefficient. It seems we were palavering with him every day about his poor attention. It seems our help is in a constant state of flux.

October 28, Thursday:

We got a note from a cook, Georg, who has been working for a European couple for seventeen years and has high recommendations. He asked if we would please let him know if he could work for us. Vandi, our current cook, has been more trouble lately. I worked with him all day trying to get him to wash the windows, but he kept sneaking away. So we told him the bad news that he was fired.
Being his good-natured self, I don't think this will worry him too much. So Georg will begin on Monday. I hope Mike does not become as easily vexed with him as he had been with our previous cooks.

October 29, Friday:

After chasing him all week, I finally had a chance to talk with the District Officer about getting a raise for our construction trainees working under Henry. I was determined to come away from the meeting with some kind of answer to tell the men. I got the most positive turn down response I could have expected. When I told the D.O. the story, showed him the proper paperwork in the files, and told him it had become a pressing problem, he said he did not know what to do. I asked if I could go ahead with arrangements, keeping him informed, but he insisted this would be impossible, since such decisions were his responsibility, but he also admitted he did not know what to do. I said in that case I did not know what to do either, and then we just stood and stared at each other for a while. Finally, as a way of excusing himself, he said he did not see how the trainees could be qualified after only nine months of training, and that they should wait until it was at least a year. Of course, by then my tour would have ended and the request could probably be ignored. Such is life working with an African government functionary.

Mom and Dad,

Bob Golding, our boss in Freetown, came up to Kenema to look for locations for new Volunteers, who will probably be coming in January. The new Volunteers will live in pairs, primarily married couples or boy and girl, and stay in smaller villages. I need to make arrangements for one pair to be stationed in Gorama Chiefdom. They will likely live in a mud house in the chiefdom headquarters town of Tungie. I also need to set up a first project for them. I look forward to meeting them, telling them all the things that I have learned, and watch to see how they adapt in their first few weeks.

It won’t be much more than a month before I begin packing boxes to be sent home. There are many more things I would like to buy. I wish I had bought two or three of everything in Nigeria, for although it seemed like I was carrying a lot, now it doesn't seem like much at all. I am really not in a hurry to leave Sierra Leone, since I like the work and the people, but there are also so many other things I want to see and do.

October 31, Sunday:

We had a dedication of the new organ at the Methodist Church. The custom is that it should not be played until every donor had a chance to pull off a piece of the cloth that covered it. There were many people in attendance, and most of them donated and were able to pull a pin out of the cloth that covered the organ. I told Reverend Groves I had better not play it, since I did not have the slightest idea of what stops to pull, so Mrs. Groves did a good job instead.

Mom and Dad,

I got the wonderful news that I was accepted at the University of Michigan. I am looking forward to returning to studies again after two years away from a library or anything cultural.
To get in the mood, right now I am reading the biography of Abraham Lincoln, studying a botany textbook, and looking at a German language textbook. It seems I want to study everything a little. Anyway, if you can send the $50 enrollment fee that would be appreciated. I will get a letter off to the draft board and tell them my situation.

November 2:
The Land Rover greeted us today with a leak in the brakes, splashing fluid on the windows. Mike and I did more damage than good trying to take the wheel apart to fix it, so we took it over to Mitri's Garage. The owner said he could fix the brake linings, ball joints, and lug nut studs, spring U-bolts, fluid drums, and anything else necessary for twenty Leones, which was pretty reasonable. So maybe tomorrow it will be ready to take to Tungie.

Meanwhile, Henry and I are making plans to go to Freetown to get all the materials ordered for the Tungie health center and see if we can get them all transported at once. While I am down there I can see about getting a new vehicle, since 4211 will still have a bad transmission and a horrible body after the repairs are complete.

November 4, Thursday:
More trouble with the Land Rover this morning; we needed to push-start it. Henry and I planned to go to Tungie. Since 4211 is no longer fit for going on the mountain road, I told him I would take him as far as the ferry and he could take a lorry the rest of the way. Meanwhile, I wrote to the Peace Corps office and said I was coming to Freetown on Monday and I have high hopes of getting a new vehicle. So we'll see...

November 7, Sunday:
It is Sunday, and I finally was able to play the organ. I had practiced the hymns yesterday while schoolboys played ping-pong all around me. Reverend Groves told me to experiment by pulling out different stops, and I did, sometimes with weird effects, but always getting louder. One thing about this organ, when you pull out the stops it can drown out anything.
November 8, Monday:

The day for the big trip to Freetown. Henry and I left by 8:30 and were in town by 3:00. When I got to town, I went to the Peace Corps office and asked if they had read my letter about getting a new vehicle. Len, the person in charge, said he laughed all the way through it. He said he had a "Baby Blue" to offer me, but these are the oldest Jeeps in the country, and this would not be a step in the right direction.

November 9, Tuesday:

I returned to the Peace Corps office. They said they would give me Bob Golding's Jeep, as long as I found a used Citroen for him to buy to replace it. I found an old, dusty one in the corner of a garage, which was very cheap. Bob said he would recondition it and paint it bright yellow so Volunteers will recognize him on the road.

November 10, Wednesday:

This trip we were able to procure all the materials needed without a problem. We wanted to make arrangements to have them transported upcountry by train, but a bridge is out and the train is not able to go. However, the railroad agent said he could have all the materials transported by lorry, and they could be delivered directly to Tungie. This was great, and saves us a big headache of transferring everything upcountry.

November 11, Thursday:

I was given the keys to the Golding's Jeep, and Henry and I were on our way back to Kenema before I knew it. I was told the Jeep was a lemon, but we had no trouble driving to Kenema, even though it used a lot more petrol than 4211 ever did. Joe was in Kenema when we arrived, and as usual whenever he sees a different vehicle he crawled right under it and checked it out. He found thirteen things wrong with it, so I guess Mike and I will spend tomorrow putting it in shape.

November 14, Sunday:

Henry and I went on trek in the afternoon, the first time in more than a week. All the projects seemed to be going at an average speed, and all had their problems. The Kpuabu school was out of cement, with no relief in sight. Gegwema had dug another well and had deepened the first one, deep enough to provide for the entire town, I believe. The work on the health center latrine was still not complete, so Henry left the trainees at this site, rather than transferring them back to Mike's project. The Damawulo school project had a shimbek (a farm hut) built, and they were ready to begin work. The trainees there were pushing for their overdue raise and wanted to see the D.O. about it, but I got them to delay this while I had a chance to see the Provincial Secretary.

Mom and Dad,

All of us were invited to Segbwema on Saturday evening for a Thanksgiving dinner with the Peace Corps teachers living there. Someone told us ahead of time there would be turkey, a rare and expensive luxury here, but the turkey had been kept in the fridge unfrozen for a week.
and had spoiled. We had plenty of delicious chicken in its place, along with a rare lettuce salad, fresh green beans, and six kinds of pie. Boy, was everyone content after a meal like that.

I was very surprised to hear that you had already received my Christmas cards. It is typical of the postal system here that even though I had not put on enough postage for airmail, and had not written airmail on the envelopes, unpredictably they sent them this way. In contrast, one of the Volunteers in the Northern Province said his postmaster got vexed with him last year because he did not give him a Christmas present, and so ever since has been tearing up all the letters sent to him. He has not received any mail since March and must go to Freetown to pick up his paycheck every month.

December 1, Wednesday:

Henry and I started out early for Tungie and got there in good time, before noon. We found the workmen were completely done with plastering the water storage tank. I am still amazed at its size. The Chief took me to the well, which is now covered and completely done, even with rocks for filtering in the bottom. We then went to the health center site, where they were finishing work on the foundation. After that we went to the chief's compound, where we sat and discussed the new Volunteers that would be coming in a few weeks. We discussed projects for them. The Chief said he first wanted to complete the water supply and health center, and then have the main road fixed with new concrete bridges, then agriculture projects, and also have health and social welfare programs established. It is an impressive list, but sounds real good. I will need to caution the new Volunteers that they will need to learn to cooperate fully with the Chief Kanji if they want to accomplish anything, since he likes to keep full control.

Our trip back from Tungie turned into another long trip. We were delayed at a place where men were repairing and replacing palm logs used for a bridge. Three hours and two flats later, we got under way again by precariously driving on the rims of two logs. Then, after a long wait at the ferry, we returned to Kenema by about 7:30.

Dear Anette and Char,

I am finally writing my sisters a letter. It really surprises me that you are both so grown up already—in the seventh and fifth grades. And it frightens me a little too, because it makes me seem like an old man. It sounds like you both enjoy school, and I was glad to hear that Anette's class is sending over a gift. I know the students here will like it; they especially like any gift from America. I will be sure to write and tell you how they react when they see it. But first we must finish the school we are building.

I think I may be home sometime in March, after travelling through Europe, but I don’t know exactly when.
December 4, Saturday:

Hank, Mike and I decided to drive to Sulima, a small town on the Atlantic coast that we heard was secluded and had a good beach. We decided to find out for ourselves. To get to Sulima we had to fjord a small river, which fortunately was at low tide when we arrived. We splashed across with water up to our axles and came to the town of Sulima, with a main street consisting of soft beach sand. A local tailor showed us the way to the beach, which was beautiful and expansive. We drove down to the far end and set up camp, which consisted only of a fire. A fisherman came along and sold us two good-sized fish, one a barracuda and the other what looked like a sea bass. Hank cooked them over an open fire with plenty of butter; they were delicious. After talking for a couple of hours, each of us made our own bed, Mike in the Jeep's front seat, Hank on a mattress in the sand, and me on a cot by the fire. The wind on the beach turned cold during the night, so I took some large coals from the fire and spread them around under my cot and fell asleep again in a toasty-warm bed.

December 7, Tuesday:

Although the materials for the Tungie project had been promised to be delivered to Tungie, they got only as far as Blama, where they were held up by the station agent because of paperwork. Even with an indemnity note signed by the District Officer, they were not released. I rushed a letter to Freetown to get the necessary papers, hoping we can soon get them to the site.

December 8, Wednesday:

Bob Golding and Tim arrived the night before, planning to take the trip to Tungie to see the work there. Bob had had too much beer the night before, so when we got to a bumpy stretch he turned green. We stopped twice to give him time to recover. It was humorous to us, since Bob spends so much time in Freetown and he is not used to trekking. But he felt okay by the time we arrived in Tungie. Both of them seemed surprised when they saw the water tank, since it was so
large and so well done. They were just as surprised to see the quality of the work on the well. The chief is a wise old man, and he knew how to make a good impression, since he was looking forward to getting some new PCVs soon.

On the way back, when we stopped at the ferry a man there had a chimpanzee. Although I had been looking for one for almost two years to keep as a pet, it seemed late to get such a pet, but Bob talked me into buying it for twenty Leones. It is a small female, and she is very frightened, especially of me.

My chimpanzee "daughter," Babydoll

December 11, Saturday:

Mike, Joe, George, Mario and I all went to Freetown for the Peace Corps "termination conference." We had to fill out long questionnaires asking us our opinions about every concern with our tour. In the afternoon we discussed what we had written. Two Peace Corps officials listened to us talk, and from that they will write a comprehensive report and send it directly to Sargent Shriver, the director of the Peace Corps in Washington, D.C.

December 12, Sunday:

Today the Rural Development Volunteers had a meeting and really began knocking everyone, including the Peace Corps, Washington, USAID, the Sierra Leone government, and even ourselves. For the guys who had been stationed in the North the tour had been more bitter, since that is where the rival political party is strongest; the Temne tribes tend to be a much more stubborn people. We were especially critical of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party and its attempt to establish a one-party state. It was depressing because my pessimism about the country's future was substantiated by everyone else's pessimism.

December 13, Monday:

We traded in the Jeep station wagon, which Bob wanted back, for a white Jeep stake truck. We started for Kenema in the afternoon, with two other Volunteers laying on a mattress in the back for the whole trip, which they said they found quite comfortable.
December 14, Tuesday:
Mike and I spent the entire day working on the new Jeep, trying to get it in good running shape, which a vehicle never seems to be when it is given to you.

December 15, Wednesday:
I went to Blama, where arrangements have finally been made for unloading materials for the trip to Tungie. Chief Kanji came down and wants a driver to begin transporting early tomorrow morning. One good thing is the railroad ultimately did not charge us storage rates for the delay.

December 16, Thursday:
PCVs Ike and Beverly from Bo, Smitty from Mattru, Michelle from Pujehun, Pauline from Segbwema, and Paul from Bonthe—all these teachers arrived in Kenema to attend this year's large Kenema Show, and they decided to stay at our house. With the big show, the city's population has probably doubled, and there are "devils" dancing in all the streets. We all went down to see the Wundu Society dancing and there was Chief Kanji leading the procession. Everyone is in a carnival mood, and it is fun.

December 18, Saturday:
A group of us went to the Kenema Show field, where Sierra Leone's official dance troupe was to perform at four o'clock. This is the same troupe that had performed for our group when we first arrived in Freetown as new Volunteers. We had front row seats. I thought a 2-1/2 hour performance of native dancing would become boring, but the program was well organized and selected, and we all enjoyed it thoroughly. They had Mende, Susu, and Loko dances, with five separate comedy folk tales. It is too bad the troupe will not be coming to the States again until the Fall of '68, but I will plan on seeing them then, you can plan on that.

Sierra Leone Dance Troupe
December 20, Monday:

In the morning I began collecting all my souvenirs in one place and started packing them for the rough trip home. Customs officials in Freetown are going to inspect all the crates, and I am afraid they will not repack them carefully enough. They are especially concerned about foreigners exporting soapstone carvings that were at one time buried in farm fields to yield good crops. They are considered a national treasure now, but also a popular keepsake. Sierra Leone has imposed a large penalty on anyone trying to take them out of the country. Although I saw some of them, I never bought any, so this should not be a problem.

African warriors carving, one of many pieces of art I shipped home as gifts

December 22, Wednesday:

Miss George, the principal at the Segbwema Girls School, had invited me to lunch today to get my opinion on making additions to the compound, since Peace Corps teacher Kathy had told her I was a skilled architect and could help greatly. Because of our broken Jeep, I took lorries up and back to Segbwema, only the second time I have ridden in lorries, but it wasn't so bad—dusty and slow, but I guess I am used to all that now. Miss George is a nice old lady who talks very slowly and has a one-of-a-kind personality; the Volunteer teachers have told stories about what she does. She seemed glad to see me, and we walked around the campus, her telling me all the problems and the solutions she could think of. Although I did not openly admit my ignorance in terms of professional expertise, I learned you can help people just by listening to what they say, and then making comments that reflected theirs. That is all I did, trying to sort out what she said and weighing the advantages against the disadvantages. We finally hit on an idea she knew was right as soon as she heard it. She is going to turn the existing compound into all dormitories and build new classrooms across the street. That made the visit worthwhile, and I found this a most interesting day.
December 23, Thursday:

Babydoll, the chimpanzee, is becoming much friendlier now and does not run when you just look at her. The only trouble is she wakes up too early and starts rattling her chain, waking me up.

December 24, Friday:

Just in time for Christmas, the carver finally finished my chess set, made from ivory and mahogany. It looks good and I am satisfied it is a unique set. He also sold me an ivory tusk at the same time.

December 25, Saturday:

Merry Christmas! We splurged today and bought all the best and most expensive food we could find to use for a Christmas feast, which we cooked ourselves. It included sirloin steak (two each), pickles, olives, baked potatoes and French fries, fried onion rings, peas and carrots, onion and orange salad, biscuits, and pudding. It was the best we could do, and it was all very tasty, but my stomach is now acting up from all the strange mixtures.
December 27, Monday:

Keith and Doug, PCV teachers, stopped by because they had nothing else to do. Doug lives way up in the bush and badly needs companionship, so he wants to buy Babydoll from me. I will have to sell her, since I will not be in Kenema much after this week. Today Babydoll really became friendly and cradled up in my lap a couple of times. She held on tight and I could not get her loose without her going into a tantrum—unless, of course, I gave her a piece of bubblegum.

December 29, Wednesday:

We begged the Provincial Secretary's Land Rover, and Henry and I went to Damawulo to check on the school. We needed to straighten out the steel frame and roofing installed by one of the
workers. The villagers also wanted me to supervise putting on the pan roofing, but I told them I did not think I would have time. They are now in the month of Ramadan, and as Muslims they want to work in the shade, since they are not allowed to eat or drink during the day, and become very weak. This Ramadan is a strange thing, because about half the people in this area are Muslim, and so now half the workers can only work a few hours in the morning. This has a bigger effect than it seems. I was told something strange today. They said they only had to fast one day this month, but they did not know what day, so they are fasting the entire month just to make sure.

I continued to learn other things about this area today, some of which I did not care to learn. I was told there were still isolated incidences of cannibalism far back in the bush. I was concerned about this at first, but they said I should not worry, since it was caused by tribal wars—and they did not like "white meat"?!

December 30, Thursday:

I met the District Officer today to see if we could borrow a lorry. While I was with him, we got started on a discussion about the Peace Corps. He said he thought Bob Golding and Tim were too idealistic to expect new volunteers to do much when stuck way out in the bush with no vehicle. He said he wanted to write a protest letter to Washington, saying that as an outsider he saw Volunteers were held back when they did not have vehicles. I agreed with him, and hope this helps make a difference. I cannot imagine having an effective construction program without regular—even if not always reliable—use of a transport vehicle of some kind, whether provided by the government or the Peace Corps.

December 31, Friday:

Yeah! Joe dropped off the Jeep transmission last night, so today a couple of mechanics came over and installed it and the Jeep is running again.

January 1, Saturday:

I spent New Year's Day on trek, putting in a hard day at Damawulo putting on pan roofing. The people were enthusiastic and happy, as they always are when work goes that quickly. I had planned to pan only one side, so the workers could work in the shade, but the village's big men who sat and watched, as is their custom, convinced us it would not take very long to do the other side as well, and it did not. But I had not brought along anything to drink, and I was really parched by the end of the afternoon.
Mom and Dad,

My time and my mind have been occupied to no small degree with making final arrangements before going to Freetown to pick up the new Volunteers, getting a new transmission in the Jeep, planning my trip through Europe, packing everything to be sent home and selling the rest, and unpacking all the packages I have received from home. I have mixed feelings about leaving Sierra Leone. I anxiously want to get home again and back to school (Two years is a long time away from home.) I want to get away from all the corruption in politics that is always obvious here. I want to see if I really remember what life is like in the States. But on the other hand, I feel I am getting more done here now than ever before, with a number of projects near completion, and it seems a shame that the new Volunteers will have to start learning for themselves how to work with the local government. It takes a long time to learn, and I do not think I will be able to help them too much by just talking with them for a few days.

And about the opportunities for the new Volunteers, I have mixed ideas. They will not have vehicles (a new Peace Corps policy which I consider a severe handicap) and will be working in a much smaller area as a result, but government officials now seem to be much more cooperative than the ones that were here when I came.

Kenema has become a way of life for me in the last two years. Although it lacks many of the modern amenities, it is a comfortable and pleasurable life. I certainly do not feel like an outsider. I have been working in this town longer than any of the government officials (British or Sierra Leonean) located here, since they are transferred so frequently.
I do wish you could all come and see what it is like here. I learned a lot about the country and the people firsthand, and it is the kind of thing that I could not possibly explain or describe to someone who had never been here to see for him or herself.

P.S.: Is there anything you would like me to buy while I am still here?

January 2, Sunday:
I finished packing my crates to send home. I was over the 300-pound limit, so I hope the scale is off when it is weighed at the freight office.

January 3, Monday:
Today we are in Freetown. I went to a travel agency with George Arlin, a Volunteer I will be traveling with through Europe. We worked out a trip to Accra, Rome, Zurich, Geneva, Paris, London, New York, and Chicago, all for a price of 479 dollars air fare.

January 7, Friday:
A customs man came over to the Peace Corps rest house to check all of the Volunteers' crates we are sending home. He found one soapstone carving that had been packed by Louis, and he confiscated it right away. I did not have anything he wanted, but I was 65 pounds overweight. With Louis' permission, and since he only had 80 pounds to send, I changed the name on my crate to his, but kept my address. The official said this was legal, and I hope it will not cause confusion at the other end when someone in Michigan receives a crate with the name Louis Rapoport on it.

A group of new Volunteers, 72 of them, arrived in airport buses and were taken to the Paramount Hotel, and then up to Fourah Bay College, where they will stay over the weekend. I met and talked for a long time with the Rebells, the couple that will be going to Tungie and the Gorama Mende chiefdom with Paramount Chief Kanji. The wife seemed especially concerned that their location would be so isolated, but I told them the chief was a great person and it would be a friendly place to live.
January 8, Saturday:

Speeches in the morning by the Minister of the Interior, the ambassador, and others. Typical pomp of politicians. I am sure the new Volunteers are as tired of it as I am.

I was given a large Chevy Carryall for the weekend and was told it was my job to escort the new Volunteers around. It started this morning when I took a group to the bank to cash their checks. I got a chance to talk about Sierra Leone, and was surprised with how much information I was able to share with them. I promised myself to speak optimistically, which is often hard to do when talking about some things—for instance, the country's politics. I enjoy being with them to see how they react to things. It brings back many memories.

In the afternoon the new Volunteers were transported to Golding's house for a beach party. I found out that the Volunteer to replace me is Hugh, and that he plays the guitar real well, so it ought to be fun to get him up to Kenema.

January 9, Sunday:

We all went to the Peace Corps director's house for breakfast and appreciated the hospitality. Later some of us went to Khadra's restaurant for hamburgers. The new Volunteers were aghast when I ordered my burger with lettuce and tomatoes and drank water from the tap. I know I felt the same way when I first arrived, afraid to put anything in my mouth that had not come from a sealed, sterilized container, but it all looks so foolish now.
January 20, Thursday:

We are back in Kenema with the new Volunteers. I took Hugh to view my projects. Perhaps most satisfying was the Segbwema Health Center, which is now complete. It is a town where I feel he will be able to work with people easily on other projects.

Mom and Dad,

I took a young married couple up to the Tungie, the chiefdom where they will be working for the next two years as Volunteers. We stayed there two days, and the second day we followed the chief all around his chiefdom, while he made speeches and gave introductions. This has
been my favorite chiefdom, where we have built a water supply and most of a health center, largely because of the chief and because the people are hard workers.

This chief really knows how to talk to his people. He told them things could only get done by working together. In one speech he gave an example that one finger alone cannot pick up even a matchbox, but five fingers working together can easily do it. So should it be with their projects. Then he began on another favorite topic. He said that before, the white man (referring to the English) came up to his chiefdom once a year. When the town had a big palaver, they did not come; when a big man died, they did not come; when disease struck, they did not come. They only came once a year, to collect taxes. But, he continued, Mr. Norman has come here often, and not to collect money. That is why I am their best white man friend. But now, he said, two more Americans have come to live in the chiefdom, and after a while, when we compare them, maybe these new people will become our best white man friends. I did not take this as an insult, because it was a way for him to express his friendship.

I told the Chief I would send him pictures of my family when I got home. The villagers dashed me a country cloth blanket as a going away present. I really appreciated that.

END OF PEACE CORPS DIARY, 1966
Post-Tour

Letter from paramount chief Kanji in Tungie

In April of 1966, after I had returned back to Michigan, I received a letter from Paramount Chief A.K. Kanji, the paramount chief for Tungie. It read:

Dear Mr. Norman Tyler,

I have received your letter dated 19th April, 1966, together with 2 (two) photos enclosed.

1. I was highly pleased after going through your letter that you have not forgotten my people and myself together with the good work you started to do for the improvement of my chiefdom.

2. My people and myself will forever have to remember you at any time we see your good work, and your name will forever remain in the history of the improvement of the Gorama (Mende) Chiefdom, with special reference to Tungea Town, the Headquarter of the Gorama (Mende) Chiefdom.  

3. I have to inform you that the Hospital work is far advanced and that our proposed plan to replace all doors and windows with iron frames has come to a success.

4. Mr. Mikenor Rebell and wife are working hard like yourself and that we are now contemplating or laying out the main pipes which have been cleared by him from Freetown.

5. You will again hear from me after the Hospital has been roofed and the main pipes laid out. With happy greetings to you and family.

Yours sincerely,

A.K. Kanji, Paramount Chief

A letter from the Rebells, the Volunteer couple that replaced me in Tungie.

April 16, 1966

Dear Norm,

The fact that the post office ran out of regular air letters and we’re forced to improvise with these things should convince you that everything’s just as you remember it in Sierra Leone. We were really pleased to receive your letter, as was the chief in whose presence I opened it. I hope that you’re at home to receive this letter; your fears about the draft really were depressing. I hope you’ve been able to talk you way around things.

Life in Tungea is quite rewarding, though in many ways, especially relations with the Chief, it becomes frustrating. I’ve had many battles with him at the hospital (health center). He enjoys taking constant measurements which are often wrong; he refuses to budge from literal adherence to the plan, which in some cases doesn’t fit local requirements. And he refuses to be economical about expenses. The slightest mistake calls for ripping down an entire wall. I’m not
at all comfortable with the "voluntary labor" situation and although Chief Kanji gets more done than most chiefs, he is also more authoritarian than most and by inhibiting individualism and the growth of democracy, I think he is impeding development more than he is aiding it. For instance, instead of gradually giving responsibility to the carpenter and mason to develop their talents, he constantly deprecates them and holds them back. I always make sure to ask their opinions and try to raise their status. This week when we go to Freetown for supplies, I'm insisting that Sankoe come along so that someone from the chieftdom can begin to know how to do these things.

Susan has been tutoring school kids, teaching sewing, operating a quite successful library and feeding me. She's planning courses on child care and nutrition and a "project headstart" experiment for infants in the next weeks. Besides the hospital, I've been surveying roads, coaching track at the school, teaching Sankoe literacy, getting involved with some agriculture demonstrations and trying to learn Mende. Our presence has not revolutionized Tungea but it might be affecting it a little bit. And it certainly is proving quite the experience for us. The Peace Corps refuses to supply us with a Jeep or a TV but we do have a radio, a book locker, good food and each other. We get visitors every few weeks and the rare pleasure of spending endless hours in conversation, which you can only do in the isolated setting. I really appreciate. People here still remember and talk of you. As a matter of fact, I'm frequently called "Mr. Norman." It took a while to trace down the pump and pipes because the chief seemed to know nothing about the arrangements you had made. But I found the relevant correspondence in his files, we wrote to England, and the thing finally landed last week. We're going to Freetown Monday to get the pump, pipe, and metal doors for the hospital. I expect Dan Griffin to come up and help install it. Joe Williams, the lorry driver, has been hired to maintain it. So that's all on the local scene. If you're not in Vietnam, please continue writing. And even if you are in Vietnam. We enjoy the contact.

Good luck. Malaw Hue,
The Rebells

A letter from Henry Lefevre

In June of 1967 I received the following AirMail from Henry Lefevre, who had been my Sierra Leonean coworker on a number of projects. At that time I was in the Virgin Islands serving as a trainer for a new Sierra Leone Rural Construction Program group. The letter read:

June 27, 1966

Dear Sir,

Your letter date the 9th of June came to hand and contents carefully noted, of which many thanks are due you for it. I have delivered the pictures to the said owners and they send you their sincere thanks.

I am glad to hear that you are giving shows of the pictures you took here to your friends and people over there, by this they too will be glad to come to Africa.

As regards my families they are all keeping well and they asked to be remembered; also about the housework it is not completed yet, as I am out of funds to do the remaining work.
For your information about the projects, we have just opened the treatment center in Gegwema and moreover we have not started any new project; we are still on those that were started last year.

I would be very glad to inform you that Mr. Hugh is helping me a lot. About transport to convey materials I am always getting that from the P.S. office whenever the need arises.

The raise for the men, that has been settled. They are now getting 24 Leones each per month with effect from first February last.

I would be very grateful if you can send me a book which will work out estimates on buildings.

Remember me to all the families at home.

May I lastly take this opportunity of thanking you for your kind assistance tendered to me during your stay here and hope that God will bless you in all your undertakings.

My regards to you,

I remain your obedient servant,

Henry Lefevre
Brief history of Sierra Leone since my departure in 1966

Sierra Leone had been ruled by the Margai family and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) since the country's independence in 1960. Opposition leader Siaka Stevens and his All Peoples Congress (APC) party gained power in 1968 with a promise of multi-party politics. He began efforts to make greater links between the capital city of Freetown and the provinces, building roads and giving more power at the national level to paramount chiefs. But with his power threatened through coup attempts, he gradually became more authoritarian. Through intimidation and violence he took power away from his rivals in the SLPP and aligned closely with the military. However, the leader of the military, John Bangura, attempted to take control through a military coup. He was unsuccessful, and was convicted and hanged in 1970. A series of coup attempts in the 1970s made Stevens more a strongman, and in 1976 he was elected President without opposition. In 1978 a new constitution was written making Stevens' APC party the only approved party, and Sierra Leone officially became a one-party state. In 1985 Stevens stepped down as President and was replaced by his hand-selected candidate, Major General Joseph Momoh. Momoh needed to deal with extensive corruption throughout the government, and to that effect he announced a "Code of Conduct" for government officials. In 1990 a commission was established to write a new constitution reinstating a multi-party system of government, and the long-defunct SLPP was resuscitated as a political minority party.

Unfortunately, in next-door Liberia there was a major and brutal civil war taking place. Liberia's revolutionary leader, Charles Taylor, solicited support from some of the members of Sierra Leone's Temne tribe, and Sierra Leone was drawn into the conflict. Nigeria had sent troops to Sierra Leone to help oppose the revolutionaries, but Sierra Leone had a very weak economy and could offer little resistance of its own. A group of Sierra Leonean military officers stationed near the Liberian border boldly came to Freetown to launch a military coup of their own, which sent Momoh into exile and led to the execution of many leaders of his APC party. The young soldiers established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), which suspended the constitution, banned any political parties, and began to rule by decree. Soldiers were given unlimited powers without fear of reprisal. The NPRC was not able to hold off the Liberian revolutionaries, however, who entered the country and took over the diamond-rich Eastern province, the area where Kenema is located.

In 1996, a coup was led by Deputy Brigadier Julis Bio, who promised to restore civilian rule. He handed over power to the SLPP, with the hope of ending the country's civil war. A year later a new coup sent the new president into exile and a new group, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was led by Major General Johnny Koroma. All freedoms were once again taken away, and Koroma invited the revolutionaries to partner with him in the new junta government. After ten months, the junta was ousted by the Nigerian forces, an elected government was once again established, and the leaders of the junta were executed. To help keep order, the United Nations agreed to send in a peacekeeping force of 13,000 soldiers. The U.N. forces were led by the British military, who effectively took full military action to finally defeat the rebels and restore order. As a result, the British are now seen very favorably by Sierra Leoneans. In 2002, Ahmad Kabbah was elected president by a landslide and he declared the civil war officially over in Sierra Leone.
But the people in Sierra Leone were not able to recover fully from their long civil war before another great threat happened upon them, once again brought by a neighboring country. It began in late 2013, when a young boy in Guinea became stricken with the first case of the Ebola virus in West Africa. Unfortunately, doctors had never seen the virus before, and early cases were misdiagnosed, giving the disease several months to spread before being recognized. In Kenema district, the first person reported as infected was a tribal healer who had been treating Ebola patients in Guinea. When she died, her body was washed for burial, spreading the virus to those who touched the body. The Ebola virus spread quickly; by March the World Health Organization had attributed 59 deaths to it in Guinea, and there were suspected cases in Liberia and Sierra Leone. By July of the same year Sierra Leone had well over 400 cases, outnumbering both Guinea and Liberia. The number of cases grew more rapidly in Sierra Leone than in any other country, due primarily to a lack of medical facilities equipped to deal with the rigorous isolation needed for its victims. By late summer the government sent troops into the provinces to enforce isolation in Ebola-stricken areas, but the isolation led to hunger, and thousands were reported to have come to Kenema to look for food, making the situation worse. One official indicated the situation was catastrophic, saying entire villages had been wiped out. By the end of the year, the international community had responded by building emergency treatment centers in key locations, but the ill-equipped staffs were still overwhelmed. Finally, with drastic measures by the government, including putting sections of the country on lockdown, closing markets, and banning any public activities, the level of incidences began decreasing in early 2015.

Sierra Leoneans have been described as "The World's Most Resilient People." They have needed this trait to be able to come through crisis after crisis. Hopefully the goal of nation-building is once again able to be in their grasp.
Postscript

I was a sophomore in the Bachelor of Architecture program at The University of Michigan when the Peace Corps placement became available. I put studies on hold for two-and-one-half years to go to West Africa, but immediately reentered the architecture program upon my return to Michigan.

When a new Rural Development group was being trained in the summer of 1968, I was invited to join a few others in my cohort to be trainers. It was easy to agree, since I would be off from my classes at the University of Michigan, the training would be in the Virgin Islands, and we would be paid well for our services. It was interesting to try to transfer our own personal experiences, which were still quite fresh, and offer advice to a group that had little idea what they would be facing over the course of two years in upcountry Sierra Leone. We focused much of our time on relevant construction skills, even setting up a simulated Lebanese store where the trainees would need to buy their construction materials based on a Local Purchase Order.

A trainee ordering materials at the simulated "Holloway and Yazbek" Lebanese store

The most interesting part of this particular training program was when we took the trainees individually to remote areas of various Caribbean islands and let them experience living for a few days on their own. I flew with two trainees to the island of Granada. I rented a vehicle and took them to the far end of the island, leaving them in a small settlement with no food or money, telling them to find a place to stay and a way to get along on their own by asking for help from others. They both found a church to give them shelter and then "begged" for food. Meanwhile, I spent my days at the pool and the bar of the Islander Hotel in the beautiful capital city of St. George's. I felt guilty enjoying myself so much while they were struggling for a bare existence, but this was part of the training that had been set up by the Peace Corps training staff. The experience was meant to fully
challenge the abilities of each trainee to cope in very difficult circumstances, but was soon considered too extreme; it was soon dropped as a training policy by the Peace Corps.

In the fall I returned to my studies with a class of 40 architecture students. It was in an Architecture Studio class where I first met Ilene Rogers, the only female in the class. I was entranced with her, although she barely noticed me, someone who was just one of the boys in class. Fortunately, she also had a "do-gooder" strain in her personality and was interested in social and community issues in architecture.

Along with a third classmate, Ilene and I decided to travel to New York City to attend the first national conference of the National Association of Student Planners and Architects, a new organization focused on community redevelopment. There were architecture and planning students attending from all over the country. At the conference hotel Ilene and I happened to be roomed together Joe Meadowbrooks, an African-American planning student from Florida. Most of that night the three of us sat on our beds and discussed urban problems at that time gripping so many inner cities in America. Joe challenged us, at first confusing us by questioning our dedication to changing things. When I mentioned I had spent two years in West Africa, his response was that if we really wanted to make a difference in our communities, we should not try to do it in Africa, or in an urban ghetto, but we needed to do it in our own communities in small-town Michigan. He argued that attitudes there were as big of a problem as in any large city, and it is there we could best make a difference.

Ilene and I developed a bond from that experience, and in the final two years of studies we grew together in our relationship, our trust in each other, and our common goals on how to orient our professional careers. We married a few weeks after graduation.

Throughout that time, Ilene had listened to stories of my experiences in the Peace Corps. She said she was interested in having a similar experience. In 1970 we applied to the VISTA program, a similar program where Volunteers had a placement in the U.S. rather than overseas. We readily accepted the offer for a placement in Baltimore, primarily because we wanted to become community activists, but also as a strategy to avoid the draft for a while longer. (This is a long story in itself that I will not go into here.) Our one-year tenure in Baltimore extended into almost two years as we worked for the Neighborhood Design Center. The N.D.C. is an organization established by architects and planners to be able to offer professional services pro bono to low-income neighborhoods in the city and surrounding communities. In spite of what Joe Meadowbrooks had told us years before, we were thrilled to be living in a townhouse adjacent to the city's ghetto. Our job was to facilitate funding and implementation for a variety of community projects that would likely not be realized without professional assistance—projects such as neighborhood health centers, halfway houses, playgrounds, and planning renewal studies. We coordinated the volunteer services of over 40 professionals from our small office, and helped establish a community advocacy non-profit that we proudly remain members of to this day, although from a distance.
Working in the Fairfield neighborhood of Baltimore, now surrounded by industrial development

After the intense daily experiences in Baltimore, Ilene and I returned to live for a while with my parents in Michigan. We were able to use that time as young marrieds to be recruiters for the Peace Corps and VISTA, now combined into the common ACTION agency. We truly enjoyed traveling to college campuses across the Midwest, spending an afternoon or two at each campus meeting with architecture and planning students who might be interested in having an experience similar to our own. The ACTION agency office said because of our enthusiasm we were two of their best recruiters, which gave us satisfaction during this period.

After a couple of years living in Michigan, Ilene and I realized it was time to make our own way in the world as professionals. We needed to ask what we wanted to do with ourselves? We decided a goal to try to establish a retreat for architects and planners, a place where practicing professionals could reflect on their practice, and encourage them to reorient their work away from the financial world of developers and more toward a community perspective. It was an idealistic goal, we recognized, but we wanted to give it a chance. We considered a variety of locations for such a retreat site—Seattle, northern Michigan, the Caribbean, but eventually settled on a 75-acre undeveloped rural site in Western Pennsylvania adjacent to Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater property. (We liked to note that some of the water for the iconic waterfall house came from a spring on our acreage.) It was our first chance to live alone together since being married, without either a roommate or family member in the next bedroom. We loved the opportunity to begin our professional lives at base zero We built a house from scratch on top of a ridge in the middle of our acreage, living in a sixteen-by-sixteen foot cube we had framed out that, during our first winter living in it, had only wheats of plastic on two walls, was heated by a wood-burning stove, had an outdoor latrine, and was serviced with rainwater from off the roof and a telephone attached to a nearby tree. We roughed it in the woods that first winter, and loved it.
Spending the first winter in our Pennsylvania home

We became involved in local issues. Pioneer Crafts Council was a new organization in the area, and we helped establish it as a resource for classes and promotion of mountain crafts. We taught summer workshops in "handcrafted construction," using natural or cast-off materials to build structures in a freestyle pattern. We also worked closely with Fern Colburn, a mentor to us who earlier in her life been an assistant to Eleanor Roosevelt. She lived just down the road and was very involved in the mountain community. We learned much about political strategies as we worked with her to oppose, and ultimately to kill, a proposal for the construction of a nearby nuclear power plant.

Eventually we realized our goal of establishing a retreat for professionals was not to be. Although our endeavor, now named "Roots Architecture," never became established enough to attract practicing professionals, it was a regular stop for architecture classes at Kent State and Syracuse University, whose students loved the back-to-the-land nature of it all.

We gradually morphed our goals into different types of involvement. We earned our architect licenses and formed Tyler/Tyler Architects. The firm's work typically was small in scale, but interesting. We began turning out residential designs for clients throughout western Pennsylvania, basing our designs on principles of contemporary design we had learned in school.

This changed radically when we decided to go to a statewide conference on historic preservation, a topic we had learned virtually nothing about at The University of Michigan. UM was a "modernist" school, and at that time nowhere in the curriculum was there a suggestion of the value of restoring older structures. The Pennsylvania conference opened our eyes and minds to this perspective for the first time. We were especially intrigued with how closely aligned preservation was with community renewal, something that remained central to our professional experiences.

Based on our very limited new knowledge of historic preservation, Tyler/Tyler Architects was selected to be architect/historians for nearby Uniontown, Pennsylvania. The city had been selected as a test community for the Main Street Program, created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to show how preservation could be a core element of downtown revitalization in older cities. We were thrilled to be given the responsibility or writing an architectural history of downtown
Uniontown, as well as a planning study illustrating how historic structures in this very significant, but overlooked, downtown could be used as a base for renewal.

Our other notable project during this period was to be selected as the architect and planner for a new town just outside Uniontown. The Institute for Man and Science, located in New York State, wanted to test innovative approaches to community planning. They were funded to coordinate planning efforts for a new community of about two hundred homes meant to show how future residents could successfully plan and build their own town. Although we never intended to live there ourselves, it was with a great sense of satisfaction that we were asked to be professional consultants for this significant and innovative project. The objectives established by the Institute included lower housing costs, reliance on solar orientation and renewable energy for all structures, conservation of land, social diversity, creation of local jobs, and most importantly, resident involvement in its planning and implementation. Residents were educated not only on how to design a town plan, but also how to bulldoze roads, lay water and sewer lines, and build structures using super-insulation panels and sweat equity.
After ten years living in rural Pennsylvania, in 1983 we knew it was time to bring our family, which now consisted of two young boys, back to Michigan, reconnecting with our family roots. We bought a house in Ann Arbor, the place where we first met. I returned to academics, focusing on historic preservation planning through research and teaching. Ilene was fortunate to gain a position with a young architectural firm, Quinn Evans Architects, primarily focused on preservation. Both roles represented new ways to continue our professional focus on community advocacy, and we found our involvements very satisfying. We also became members of what I still refer to as the "preservation mafia" of Ann Arbor, a dedicated cohort of individuals who for decades have stayed involved in trying to save the city from itself and from developers who often stay here only long
enough to get a new high-rise built, while ignoring and sometimes overpowerful in scale the
downtown's historic neighborhoods.

Ilene and I continue to fight the good fight. It has now been fifty years of community activism.
Both of us have been recognized by our professional communities, Ilene in becoming a member of
the College of Fellows with the American Institute of Architects (FAIA) and myself as a Fellow with
the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP). Interestingly, we both received these national
recognitions based primarily on the same factor—a history of community advocacy.

Ultimately, this narrative would have been much different if I had not applied and accepted a
placement as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1964. It opened my eyes to a whole new perspective on the
world, a perspective that is difficult for others to fully appreciate unless they have done something
similar. Now in my first year of retirement, I found it incredibly gratifying to still have the
handwritten diaries that had been waiting decades to be rediscovered in our attic. In following the
course of events, adventures, and challenges during those two years in Sierra Leone, I trust you have
been able to share the experiences, challenges, and rewards. As I reflect on those two years in West
Africa, I am reminded of the words of Sargent Shriver, director of the Peace Corps when it was first
established in 1961. He said, "The Peace Corps is guilty of enthusiasm and a crusading spirit. But
we're not apologetic about it."
End Notes

1 Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) was often called the domestic Peace Corps. It was eventually incorporated with the Peace Corps into the ACTION agency, and still provides volunteers to community organizations.


6 Benton Harbor Community College in Benton Harbor, Michigan, is now known as Lake Michigan College.

7 Map credit, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.

8 Photo public domain from web.

9 The Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (now the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE)) agency is a major international humanitarian agency currently working in 90 countries. First established in 1945 as a war relief agency, in 1961 it became involved with selecting and training the first Peace Corps volunteers. Bob Golding served as director of the Rural Development Program in Sierra Leone. There was also a Peace Corps Director, Donovan McClure, who oversaw the entire program in the country. However, his focus primarily was on the many Peace Corps teachers. By 1967 CARE had ended its partnership with the Peace Corps.

10 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury

11 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury

12 Trek is a term for an upcountry trip to villages, or the "bush." It may be for one day or multiple days.

13 Batter boards are horizontal boards attached to small posts placed in the ground just beyond the corners of a structure. Strings are attached to them and run the distance of the building to indicate the building perimeter. This gives guidance for pouring the foundation and building block walls until the structure is out of the ground.

14 Vimto is a soft drink originating in England. The original recipe was invented in 1908 by Noel Nichols. It was first manufactured as a health tonic, but then became a carbonated drink. It contains the juice of grapes, raspberries and blackcurrants, flavoured with herbs and spices.

15 Photo courtesy of Annika Diseth, YouTube video, 22 August 2013.

16 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury

17 Photo credit: Fae, Wikipedia Commons, 2014.

18 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury

19 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury

20 More Krio phrases can be found on the web, and are interesting to explore.

21 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury

23 Photo courtesy of Nils Gore, University of Kansas School of Architecture and Urban Design.

24 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury


26 The bracelet remains one of my favorite gifts from West Africa, which I eventually gave to my future partner in marriage, Ilene.


28 Little did we realize at the time that Schweitzer would die in Gabon during the next month.

29 Photo courtesy of Michael Ryley Bradbury

30 Note the chief's alternate spelling of the town's name.

31 The Rebells were the couple placed in Gorama Chiefdom as Peace Corps Volunteers as part of the next group.