

# THE NEWSLETTER FORMERLY KNOWN AS AWA

The Peace Corps Guinea Volunteer Magazine

September 1997

CONAK



In  
This  
Issue:

Shakespeare's  
Island...Being a freak...  
Trendspotting...Peace Corps  
Paris...Top Ten Lists...Free MOBEL  
Supplement...Handy Reusable City Map...  
Hunter S. Thompson

in this issue we go

# Conakr-AZY!

Special "Welcome to Guinea" Edition!

# Mailbag

**Editor's note:** As the Newsletter Formerly Known as AWA has yet to receive any actual correspondence, this special "Welcome to Guinea" Mailbag necessarily features excerpts from some of the staff's personal correspondence.

Please feel free to let us know how you feel about anything. Add your letter to those below, remembering to save when you are finished. Letters may be edited for length, clarity and style, or they may be ignored altogether. Thank you for writing.

M. Johnson--

Do they celebrate Christmas or Kwanzaa or both where you are? One thing for certain, it is not going to be a white Christmas in West Africa. That is, except for you, my burdened, missionary friend. For what it is worth coming from a Jew to a Peace Corps hippie-type in some God-forsaken jungle, merry Christmas. This time of year always makes me think about the life of Jesus. In art especially, why do we only see Christ as a baby or as an adult? What was the adolescence of Jesus like?

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I imagine it being similar to St. Augustine's except more self-conscious -- like John Updike meets C.S. Lewis in Gabriel Garcia-Marquez's old neighborhood.

I've been thinking a lot about the West African postal system. I still have yet to receive any confirmation that you have received any of my letters. Are you reading this letter? Do you know I have a job? Do you know I'm in love? Do you still think of me when you listen to Leonard Cohen? How typically male of me to think of you in terms of me.

In your last letter you mentioned something about lesson plans! What about tigers? Please give me a "10-40" good buddy.

Merry I'wanzaa,  
Rob

Correspondence and other contributions to The News... Formerly Known As AWA can be typed and saved on the newsletter disk in the computer room or left in Josh Johnson's box in the office. According to Article Four, Section Nine, Paragraph 13 of the new Peace Corps-Guinea charter (see Ted for more information and a free "Welcome to Guinea" personal copy) each volunteer is "required to submit one (1) piece of writing to the volunteer magazine within their two years of service. Failure to do so will result in delays in the receiving of re-adjustment allowances and the completion of other COS formalities, accompanied by the application of a wet rattan cane as speeds faster than you can fucking believe to the buttocks of volunteers who remain in non-compliance with said ordinance, man. COS-ing volunteers MUST present a copy of their published work before they will be given a plane ticket home, or anywhere else for that matter."

Hi Josh

I have written you twice since you moved to Conakry, which I thought was "Conakry" -- from your fucking writing. Get a parrot for me. I want an old male that doesn't talk too much, but offers sage advice whenever he opens his beak. A grey one sounds good. We'll call him Ponder. I must admit writing to

Mailbag continued on page 7



Special "Welcome to Guinea"  
Lit Crit!

A Fateful Trip Through Hell



Gilligan vacationing with the author in Mali

By Jeremy Eggleton

The plot and situational structures of "Gilligan's Island" and *The Tempest* exhibit many obvious parallels, but a closer critical examination of the two -- looking specifically at *GI* in the light cast by Shakespeare's masterpiece -- will help us better to understand the thematic complexities of the former.

It is obvious *The Tempest* served as inspiration for the television show, both generally and with regards to specific episodes. Compare, for instance, Ferdinand's log arranging and Miranda's talk of setting them ablaze ( Act III, scene i) with the *GI* episode where the castaways try to spell "Help" with burning logs to signal a passing spaceship (to no avail -- Gilligan fucks it up).

These are similar characters in a similar situation: Trying to get off an uncharted desert isle and back to Milan/Honolulu -- places where the characters were once greatly honored and respected. As such, we see the facets of Prospero's character (sorcerer and nobleman in exile) borne by two characters in the sitcom: Mr. Howell, whose financial empire is but a memory, and the professor, by whose machinations the castaways presume to eventually leave the island.

Miranda, as the only woman on the island, is split on the TV show into the three alternative representations of Woman, or the Feminine. We see the embryonic Mrs. Howell, the Ur-Lovey, if you will, in Miranda's memory search for any vision of the life she once knew:

Tis far off,  
and rather like a dream than an assurance  
that my remembrance warrants. Had I not Four,  
or Five, women that once tended me?

So, in the television show, there is this slightly incestuous link to the play: Miranda is Prospero's daughter, but at least one facet of her character represents the conjugal link with his lost nobility. She is at once daughter and "Lovey" to Prospero's Mr. Howell. It is a sinister and subversive undercurrent to what, at first glance, appears to be conventional fluff. Miranda's virginity, like that of all Shakespeare's "available" young woman, is assured late in the play when Prospero warns Ferdinand against "breaking her virgin knot." The Mary Anne parallel is thus assured, strengthened by her selflessness in pleading Ferdinand to let her bear his burden.

If you will set it down  
I'll bear your logs the while. Pray give me that,  
I'll carry it in the pile

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(Continued from page 2)

Ginger's seductress completes the primordial feminine triad of Crone, Sister, Whore, which Miranda, in all her splendor, represents. Recall from the two-hour CBS special, "Escape from Gilligan's Island," the castaways' arrival in a disco-era Hawaii caught in the throes of sexual revolution. For Ginger it is the reflowering of her sexual bush, so to speak. She is reawakened, alive -- it is spring again after a frigid and sterile "winter" isolation. Compare this with Miranda's exclamation upon contemplating just such a reentry into the fecund world of quattrocento Italy with its intrigues and passions:

O wonder!  
How many godly creatures are there here!  
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world  
That has such people in't!

The character of the skipper is, despite the obvious parallel, not the simple shipmaster whose "Boatswain!" jars the audience into electrified attention to start the play. Rather he represents the multitude of individuals who advance and recede with the ebb and flow of events during the story: Alonzo, Ferdinand, Sebastian, Adrian, Francisco and, of course, the "honest old counselor" Gonzalo. Like them, the skipper never guides events, but he also rarely suffers their consequences. In his Act Five plea for clemency from whatever ruinous force has stranded them on the island, Gonzalo exclaims:

All torment, trouble, wonder and amusement  
Inhabits here. Some heavenly power guide us  
Out of this fearful country!

Like the skipper, he is powerless to affect his situation for better or worse, and can only hope that when the waters finally recede he will be left high and dry.

Of course, the most telling character parallel between the TV show and the play is between Gilligan and Caliban. They are Base Man, Undeveloped Man, the Cro-Magnons. On the surface, Caliban is perhaps of a sharper tongue and a more vindictive nature, but they both represent the badly or underdeveloped intellect. They are the subhumans. They are incapable of mixing in human society -- inferior and therefore jealous. In an exchange at the end of the play Alonzo and Prospero could easily be discussing a certain red-shirted first mate:

Alonzo: This is a strange thing as e'er I looked on  
(pointing at Caliban)

Prospero: He is as disproportioned in his manners  
As in his shape.

Thematically, there are several interesting concurrences. The play can help illuminate the truly powerful dilemma of crime and punishment, good and evil, liberty and imprisonment, which in fact lie behind the TV show's airy exterior and with which its characters must wrestle.

Take for instance Gilligan's bumbling. If at first it seems a series of zany coincidences

## Special "Welcome to Guinea" Top

### Ten List!

#### Top Ten Signs You're a Bad Teacher

10. Infrequent arrivals at school greeted by colleagues jeering, "Hey, here comes gin-boy!"
9. APCD comes to observe your classes, has to show you where school is.
8. Yesterday wasn't the first time you tried to illustrate "volume" to your math class with suggestion "Let's see how many students we can fit in my pants."
7.  $20 = A$ .
6. Valuable lesson-planning time dedicated to writing stupid top ten lists.
5. Class rule number one: No shirt, no shoes... no problem!
4. You have a dream that you're asleep having a dream that you're asleep having a dream that you're asleep dreaming of not being ready for class, and then you wake up and you're not ready for class but it's only a dream, and you wake up and you're not ready for class.
3. You don't put no stock in book learnin'.
2. Constantly bothered by pesky proviseur trying to put an end to your International Woman's Day student swimsuit competition.
1. Students refer you affectionately as "Mr. Shakes."

and wacky errors that sabotage the professor's efforts to get the castaways off the island, a closer look at the play reveals the hidden malice implicit in these actions. Caliban's hatred for Prospero, and the concomitant Freudian assumptions one can draw from that, do a great deal to illuminate Gilligan's relationship to the professor. Caliban would kill Prospero, because he is authoritarianism and protection, loved and despised, father and oppressor. A sexual dynamic exists insofar as the passionate emotions of hate and love often commingle with the sex act. Similarly, Gilligan's hidden (concealed even from himself) desire for the professor leads him on an unwitting rampage to undermine all the professor's efforts to liberate the group from their palm-fronded prison. He, on some level, does not want them to escape. He wants the professor for himself for all eternity, just as Caliban, through the murder of Prospero, would "possess" him forever.

In Act Three, the spirit Ariel levels scathing charges against the castaways. Ariel is the spiritual "embodiment" of the invisible forces which move events on Gilligan's Island and which, in some fashion, the professor is trying to harness as Prospero controls Ariel. In crashing thunder and lightning, Ariel hisses:

You are...men of sin, whom Destiny,  
That hath to instrument this lower world  
And what is in't, the never-surfeited sea  
Hath caus'd to belch up you; and on this island  
Where man doth not inhabit - you 'mongst men  
Being most unfit to live.

But remember  
(For that's my business to you) that you three  
From Milan did supplant good Prospero  
Exposed unto the sea (which has requit it)  
Him, and his innocent child, for which foul deed  
The pow'rs, delaying (not forgetting), have  
Incens'd the seas and shores - Yea, all the creatures,  
Against your peace.

This is a powerful indictment of Antonio, who deposed his brother from his throne in Milan and sent him to founder at sea in an unsafe boat. As in many of Shakespeare's

plays, the theme of power gained through scandal or intrigue - particularly the usurping of a throne - is punished by Fate. MacBeth, of course, springs to mind, but also Lear - maneuvered from the throne by his daughter's wiles - and Caesar. The characters in *The Tempest* are stranded on this desert isle as penance for their crime, which goes against the natural order.

Considering this, the stranding of the castaways on their desert isle assumes a new significance. They are being punished. They end up on the island due to Gilligan's removal and disposal of the ship's compass. The Minnow is as directionless as the ship of state whose head has been removed by force or subterfuge. But this is only a superficial "crime," adding to the many-layered significance of the TV show; it speaks to a much larger and more profound transgression.

Consider that Gilligan and company are on a tropical island - a place of ample fruit, nuts, meats of all kind, fish, thousands of useful palm trees. There are lagoons with coral reefs which embarrass man's capacity to create beauty; volcanoes, crashing surf, fresh water for drinking and hot springs for bathing. It is truly paradise. It is an island "where man doth not inhabit," where he is "unfit" to live, in the words of Ariel. It is an Eden which man, tainted by Original Sin, cannot inhabit.

The crime for which Gilligan and his friends are being punished is, in fact, the Fall. Man left the Garden, by his own choice, through his own misguided - but all too human - desires and ambitions. Gilligan and his friends have been sent back to be reminded, as punishment, of what man has left behind in rash and ill-considered decision. It is an imprisonment in a paradise of which they can never be a part. It is a terrible punishment to be forced to watch: the endless attempt to leave paradise. It is a mistake constantly repeated, a nightmare relived again and again, a Sisyphian torture that the souls of these wretches - and the soul of Man through them - are forced to endure for that first, most terrible crime. Gilligan's Island is the

punishment of the soul, Hell's most exquisite and ironic penance.

## Top Ten Ways to Annoy French People While Vacationing In Paris

10. Speak in French
9. Remind them of 1944
8. Wear a beret, roll a cigarette, inquire after the pernot, and ask if "Hemingway frequented this cafe":
7. Remind them of 1917
6. Spell "pernot" with a "t"
5. Get a job as a truck driver. Go on strike.
4. Call an early election. Lose it.
3. Tell them Quebec is just like the USA
2. Chill the red
1. Shave their backs-- oh wait, that's how to annoy French poodles



# Special "Welcome to Guinea" Free English Lesson!

The greatest gift that you can give an incoming volunteer is an introduction to how you lived and worked at your site. Setting goals can be one of the toughest things about being a new volunteer. Why not help them out by setting goals for them? The higher they are the better, so a bit of embellishment may be in order. To get your students into this welcoming game will take only a nudge. They will take to it like cockroaches to a latrine. This has been laid out as a supplement to MOBEL. You may want to insert it in place of one of your least favourite readings. It can be adapted to any level so you'll always be able to leave a little legacy for the incoming volunteer. After all, providing for your fellow Peace Corps volunteers is more important than whether or not your students cover the material for the BACC. And of course, the central idea isn't TEFL or education project specific. If you are a departing health volunteer, why not organize a community group with a collective memory of your accomplishments?

## Unit ???

**Summary:** Students will write a letter about their departing PCV teacher's accomplishments to an incoming volunteer.

**Language:** Structures learned, hyperbole, bald-faced lies

**Presentation:** Reading a dialogue about fictitious accomplishments

1. Write this dialogue on the board. (Clearly it will need to be adapted for classes younger than **Terminale** although my 12<sup>eme</sup> kids handled it fine since I'm brilliant.)

**Alpha:** Hi, Binta. You appear morose. Is it because Mr. Kifer has left?

**Binta:** Yes. He was a saint. He was a fully integrated part of our community and a fabulous teacher to boot.

**Alpha:** I know. He spoke fluent Su-su, Malinke, and Pular. Further, everyone in my class passed the BACC with flying colors as a result of his incomparable pedagogy and tireless dedication.

**Binta:** I think his most important and sustainable contribution to our humble community was the modern hospital he built.

**Alpha:** I disagree. I think the high school/library/community center he constructed was utterly phenomenal.

**Binta:** Be that as it may, no one could replace him.

**Alpha:** Damn straight.

2. Ask a series of questions to check for comprehension.  
E.g. Why did these students love me so much?

**Pre-Task** Making lists of things the teacher may or may not have done

1. Put a series of categories on the board.  
E.g. Native languages of Guinea, Construction projects, Gifts I would like to receive, Acts of great kindness, Positive character traits...
2. Students brainstorm words or phrases that fit the categories.  
E.g. Gifts I would like to receive: candy, a bicycle, a car, money, school supplies, a visa, a new house...

**Class Task** Writing letters to the new volunteer

1. Write a sample letter on the board with blanks for the students to fill in. The students fill in

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:  
Welcome to \_\_\_\_\_. I hope you are as \_\_\_\_\_ as my old teacher \_\_\_\_\_. He/She adapted perfectly to our culture here and spoke \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ fluently. Everyone in our town loved him/her. She/He always gave all the students and children \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The American Ambassador and the President came to town to inaugurate the \_\_\_\_\_ she/he built. He/she said that the next volunteer would know how to get us all visas to visit the United States. I hope that your time here will be as wonderful for us as his/hers.

Sincerely,

2. Collect the letters and send them to Conakry for the incoming volunteer.

In stage it was often difficult to develop creative Applications for practice school lessons. Luckily this lesson lends itself easily to real life situations. Emphasize to your students that a new volunteer may be very lonely upon arrival. He or she should be visited often and for extended periods of time. Practising English is fine but it is more important to develop the conversational skills of the incoming volunteer. If you are a departing health volunteer, why not organize a community group with a collective memory of your accomplishments.

# Special "Welcome to Guinea" Article!

By Joshua Johnson

PARIS -- Sarah Campbell doesn't look like a foreigner. Sitting on a plastic chair in the sun at the bustling sidewalk cafe she calls to a passing waiter in flawless French: "On a quelles bieres en pression? What sort of beer do you have on tap? The waiter speaks rapidly, a long list of imported beers. Campbell orders quickly and he disappears.

"It took me a while to be able to do that," she says. "At first, as soon as I opened my mouth they knew I was American, and it was like they wouldn't even listen to me."

It's summer in Paris, the time of year when locals here flee to the countryside or the coast in an effort to avoid the annual trans-Atlantic tide of tourists. But Campbell, 26, is not a gawking visitor. She's an American Peace Corps volunteer living and working in the capital of France, a country in Western Europe about the size of Texas.

After 10 weeks of training in neighboring Switzerland, Campbell spent two years in the Bordeaux region of France, working with small-scale wine producers to create more efficient grape-growing systems.

She admits it was a challenge. "The French have been making wine for centuries. They didn't feel they needed any help." But she persevered. "Learning the local language was a big help. After I could get by on my own in French I got a lot more respect. It really strengthened my credibility."

Campbell is one of a few volunteers who asked to stay in France for a third year. Many volunteers who extend their service are placed with private organizations based in larger cities. Campbell was assigned to Euro-Disney. Her duties include improving Disney awareness on the Continent, where European apathy has proved an embarrassment to the American family entertainment giant.

"It's difficult," she says, "Europeans -- the French in particular -- don't really understand Disney. They think it's all sort of silly. And I really try to understand their indifference. I mean -- the Magic Kingdom. There are already lots of castles in France."

She pointed across the Boulevard St. Michel to a brightly-colored billboard depicting a naked man and woman in a carnal embrace, an advertisement for the film *Kama Sutra*. "They think that stuff is OK," she said.

"But, in general, they seem to see Disney and Americans as kind of vulgar. I guess when I joined the Peace Corps I knew it would be a challenge."

The Peace Corps, a volunteer organization that attracts thousands of young Americans each year to work in jobs ranging from secondary education to health care, has been sending volunteers around the world since 1961. The organization has been in France since 1978, when then-President Jimmy Carter swore in 45 trainees in a special ceremony on the White House lawn.

The Peace Corps was expelled from the country during a tiff with the Reagan Administration, shortly after the 1984 U.S. bombing raid on Libya. It started programs again in 1994 and had been in the country ever since.

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PCV Campbell relaxing at the Jerry Lewis Library, American Cultural Center, Paris

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"A lot of people thought it was sort of wierd, sending volunteers to France," said Alistair Fox, the first Peace Corps director for France. "A lot of Carter critics thought he was doing it just so his mom would get a cushy assignment."

Ironically, perhaps, Carter's mother, then 83, was sent to India, where she toiled in a medical center on the Asian subcontinent.

The criticism hasn't abated over the years. "What the hell is the Peace Corps doing in France?" said U.S. Senate Foreign Relations committee chairman and frequent foreign aid critic Jesse Helms, R-N.C. "It's bad enough we're paying for our youngsters to go waste time in Africa. Wearing sandals and those shirts, playing guitar. Now we've got

them in Paris. We didn't do enough for that country in World War Two?"

George Armstrong, current director of Peace Corps France, admits that the idea of volunteers in France isn't an easy one to get used to.

"Let's face it, the French can already do a lot of things for themselves," he said, adding that his country offers none of the usual Peace Corps education and health programs. "Citizens of this country are no strangers to book learning. After the Italians, the French find the most to do with the return to classical thought that ended the Dark Ages. I mean, *Renaissance* -- that sounds like a French word to me!

"I think their biggest problem, though, is their insistance on remaining so, you know, *French*."

Alain Deschamps, a first-year student at Rene Descartes College in Paris, remembers the first foreigner he ever met, a Peace Corps volunteer stationed in his small home town in south of France. It was an important influence, he says, adding that since then he has watched himself become more accepting of American values.

"I always loved Jerry Lewis, but until I met Mr. Steve all I really thought about was bicycle racing and footba -- I mean, soccer," he said in English. "Now I'm pretty into the NFL. The Baltimore Ravens, they rule man!" ♦

"Let's face it,  
the French can  
already do a lot  
of things for  
themselves...I  
mean Renaissance  
-- that sounds  
like a French word  
to me!"

-George Armstrong,  
director, Peace  
Corps France.

Dear Josh,

Right now it's Saturday and I am at work again. But I'm not working. I am playing. This place is an adult toy store, totally loaded with computer gadgetry. Right now I have opened two Web browsers and am watching live video shots of Bourbon Street on one, and a squirrel feeder on the other. Needless to say, the Bourbon Street one is far more exciting. It is 4 p.m. in Singapore, so that makes it 3 a.m. there, and the place is packed with people who look very fucked up and dangerous. Cop cars are going by. The camera is placed at the intersection of Bourbon and St. Peter Streets right outside the "Cat's Meow." The squirrel cam is in a tree.

Russell

Hi Josh

I think this is the first letter I have written in 40 years. So bear with me. First let me say how proud I am of you for doing this assignment. If more people would get some hands on experience with other peoples of the world maybe things would run a little

smoother. My life on the ranch is quite dull so I have very little news to pass on. I hope this finds you well and that you are enjoying your stay.

Best of Luck,  
Uncle Ron

Special "Welcome to Guinea" Mailbag!

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you sometimes feels sort of like writing a message in a bottle and dropping it in Gull Lake. Remember when you stayed at our lake house up there? You always went and took a shit when it was time to do the dishes. My

om hypothesized that it was because your colon was really small and you could only hold one meal at a time. But it was because you don't like to do dishes.

ing Regards,  
Matt



# on being a Lazy[childless] Husbandless freak

by Ann Ingraham

In my village, Kanfarande, women's roles are so confining they make Victorian American society look liberated. Women work all day taking care of the children, preparing rice, and generally keeping the house or hut and family together (as often is the case all over the world, only in America there's microwaves and jobs outside the home). There are two midwives, The Excisor, The Blue Gum Tattooer, fish smokers, clay pot makers, traditional healers, lots of market ladies, but almost all women are, first and foremost, childbearer and caretaker, food preparer, and wife. I not only am none of these, I happen to be the only white American within my sous-prefecture (besides the missionaries on a faraway island that I've never seen). So as much as I kiss babies and suffer the consequences of holding diaperless infants and gently stuff rice into their scantily toothed mouths and coo and scold toddlers and shuffle them out of my hut and keep babies from eating rocks and dirt and zip pants and button shirts and tickle---I'm not a mother. I'm not a wife, and let's face it---I'm a freak.

And I can't really talk about it because my Soso is that of a rich child. I can buy everything at the market in Soso, but ask me to describe how I feel and I'm like my boyfriend when I ask him, "Tell me what you're thinking?" The blank look, the confusion, are all there and I just put my head in my hands and cry invisible silent tears. I watch as my head explodes and then piece together the jagged, slippery, bony pieces.

Sometimes I pretend to be a Guinean mother. I strap a baby to my back and swing my hips and pound rice (for a minute until my hands bleed) and furiously scrub my clothes on the washboard, but after awhile I'm bored and it all seems silly and I have no husband to feed. So I sit and wonder what to do with myself---the lazy, childless, husbandless freak. I'll look around and see a big group of women in bright, flowing, colorful clothes. They're always laughing and talking boisterously. They're always animated and adamant speaking in Soso. It's all so important and I understand as many words as a well trained dog. "Blah blah blah

blah money blah blah Fatou blah blah blah that's not good blah blah blah hair blah hair black teeth blah blah Mohammed Keita blah blah." It goes on and on. Or they'll be laughing and braiding each other's hair or pounding rice or preparing sauce. They are together happily working and my

hair is too slippery to braid and I can't cook and my Soso is stilted and limited. So I sit and smile for awhile, maybe put some Maggi in the sauce or hold a baby.

Sometimes I feel like an uninvited girl at a junior high slumber party that is tolerated because your mom said to be nice. Briefly she's a conversation piece. She's got on weird shoes or some brand from K-mart or something equally appalling. But, eventually the group grows bored with the mockery and goes back to making prank calls.

It would be easier to disregard my freaky status if I could just delve into my work. Maybe shut myself in an office with a computer, but this sorta goes against the Peace Corps idea. My job is a strange flowing thing I'm to create and mold like clay provided by my village. But, sometimes they provide me no material and sometimes there's no material to provide and sometimes I don't want to buy the clay myself. So I sit and wait for the next lump to be thrown my way for me to observe and help handle and shape and fire and hope it won't crack and explode in the oven.

So, sometimes I'm just "hanging out." You know, bonding with the villagers and I feel all the women looking at me queerly. Other times I feel the epitome of 70's women's liberation---a single woman forging her way alone in a hostile universe, braless, my sandals flapping determinedly forward through the tall grass, my long natural hair flowing in the sea breeze, and I stretch out my arms and my voice spills out more beautiful than Barbara Streisand's and I sing "The Woman In The Moon." Then I realize it's 1997, the end of the millennium, and I'm living in a village where female liberation means letting your wife choose what sauce she wants to prepare and I feel like a man if I wear pants and nobody's read a book by Gloria Steinem or any book for that matter, or even a street sign, let alone driven a car with the windows down and Courtney Love yelling, "I WANT TO BE THE GIRL WITH THE MOST CAKE!" from the CD player.

These are definite dividing walls, with cracks. As happily independent and single as I am, I can't help loving babies. Okay, puke. And I feel left out with all the women flaunting their lactating breasts. (Mine don't do that!) And then having that thing feeding off my body to live. I like the idea of playing God. Creating. I mean man, the things I make you feel like I am. I love the way you taste. "I want to lick you and suck you." "You're yummy." I could go on,

(continued on next page)

Special "Welcome to Guinea" Essay!

but I'll spare you. It is a powerful feeling. Like you are capable of satisfying them or putting them to bed without supper. But, it's all quite figurative. They'll live without you. If you give them the boot, they'll buy a pizza and a 6-pack of Bud and watch the Tyson match and be fine tomorrow. But, when a baby is growing inside you, you can't give it the boot so easily. Inside you, it feeds off of everything you feel, do, and consume. When it's born, you create its food in your body and sustain it. This amazes me. And I wonder if I never have a child can I ever be that close to playing God? Can I ever have that much power over another human being? And do I even want to, really? As fun as it sounds in the short term. A child is for as long as you or it lives. That could be the rest of your life. Fuck! (...or maybe not.)

Guinean little girls tie rocks to their backs to simulate babies or even more disturbingly, they strap their small school chalk boards to their backs. Chalk boards that they should be writing sums and words on, instead they tie them to their backs like a baby. That's the question, damn it! Do you have to sacrifice professional/artistic/personal achievement to have a child? Can you create as breathtakingly beautiful poetry on the chalkboard during the day if you have to strap it on your back at night? What's unfortunate is that when you want that child strapped to your back to become a chalkboard---it won't. It's a baby on your back forever until eventually you switch positions and your baby suddenly is carrying you. Too many girls give up their school chalkboards altogether to tie a real baby on their back.

But, I digress. Back to me. For the moment I'm childless. But, I love babies with their rosebud mouths and beautiful tiny fingers and toes. I admire the women flaunting bellies like watermelons under their skirts. With them I feel like a barren toad...like I should just shave my head, grab

a black leather jacket, a motorcycle, a pack of chew, a switchblade, and join the Hell's Angels. Okay, so I just don't feel very womanly by Guinean standards sometimes. But, I keep getting approached by Guinean men.

The underlying reasons could be scrutinized while drinking many bottles of Skol. I'll just scratch the surface here. Maybe...could it be...VISA...not American sex...my huge Peace Corps salary...no, my mom always said, ---it's my charming personality! Anyway, I'm constantly bombarded with "fun" innuendoes by the leaders of the village. "I'll spend the night in your hut tonight. Prepare the bed." "Oooh...look at those hips!" "Tell your boyfriend if he comes, I will beat him up." "You don't want me to come tonight? A man is a man!" With my strangeness comes lots of attention. I, that look the quintessential little wholesome midwestern girl next door who likes poetry, (sorta like Molly McButter in a black turtleneck) am suddenly exotic. Something I've always wanted to be since being called cute from birth until the present. Suddenly I'm exotic and the random love letters and pictures I've been sent and propositions and declarations of love and pleading men has just been flowing towards me nonstop. It's like I'm trapped in a shower stall with a video camera on me and someone else has control of the water. The water keeps flowing and flowing and sometimes it's freezing cold and sometimes it's boiling hot and sometimes it's warm and comforting, but through it all there's that strange connaissance that you are being watched naked and wincing or screaming or cooing with pleasure or cursing and grimacing and jerking awkwardly by a huge group of random people. Sometimes, I want to get out of the shower, put on my robe, and watch 90210 alone with a towel turban on my head and a cup of Bosco. My boyfriend has none of this. Women call him "Mista" and maybe ask him for mayonnaise once in a while. It's not easy being a lazy, childless, husbandless, freak. ♦

## Special "Welcome to Guinea" Trendspotting!

### IN

pumps  
gris-gris  
Marine guards  
seedy  
bauxite  
George  
market women  
Out of America  
the 1930s  
The Economist  
scag  
bush rats  
Bamako  
Yassa  
M'Mah Modou  
London  
Pernod

### OUT

wellis  
small-small  
Peace Corps Volunteers  
grungy  
plastics  
Kingo  
market trends  
Out of Africa  
the 1970s  
Newsweek  
crank  
bush taxis  
Abidjan  
Lassa  
Mamadou  
Gladstone  
Pastis

plaint on a dirt track which no convention  
 navigate.  
 We rumbled into Maicao at the  
 dropped me at the airport, where  
 searched by a savage-looking  
 on the plane for Ba-  
 other search at "why  
 they apply  
 know."  
 "Well come to Guinea  
 Special Reproduction of  
 Hunter Thompson!"  
 "Unauthorized reproduction of  
 Hunter Thompson, August 6, 1962"

## Why Anti-Gringo Winds Often Blow South of the Border

One of my most vivid memories of South America is that of  
 a man with a golf club—a five-iron, if memory serves—driv-  
 ing golf balls off a penthouse terrace in Cali, Colombia. He  
 was a tall Britisher, and had what the British call "a stylish  
 get" instead of a waitline. Beside him on a small patio table  
 was a long gin-and- tonic, which he refilled from time to time  
 at the nearby bar.

He had a good swing, and each of his shots carried low  
 and long out over the city. Where they fell, neither he nor I  
 nor anyone else on the terrace that day had the vaguest idea.  
 The penthouse, however, was in a residential section on the  
 edge of the Rio Cali, which runs through the middle of town.  
 Somewhere below us, in the narrow streets that are lined by  
 the white adobe blockhouses of the urban peasantry, a  
 strange hail was rattling on the roofs—golf balls, "old pre-  
 sence duds," so the Britisher told me, that were "hardly worth  
 driving away."

In the weeks that followed, when I became more aware of  
 404

the attitude a good many Colombians have towards that na-  
 tion's Anglo-Saxon population, I was glad nobody had traced  
 the source of those well-hit mashies. Colombians, along with  
 their Venezuelan neighbors, may well be the most violent  
 people on the continent, and a mixture of insult and injury  
 does not rank high as a national dish.

It is doubtful that the same man would drive golf balls off  
 a rooftop apartment in the middle of London. But is not real-  
 ly surprising to see it done in South America. There, where  
 the distance between the rich and the poor is so very great,  
 and where Anglo-Saxons are automatically among the elite,  
 the concept of noblesse oblige is subject to odd interpreta-  
 tions.

The attitude, however, does not go unnoticed; the natives  
 consider it bad form indeed for a foreigner to stand on a  
 rooftop and drive golf balls into their midst. Perhaps they  
 lack sporting blood, or maybe a sense of humor, but the fact  
 is that they resent it, and it is easy to see why they might go  
 to the polls at the next opportunity and vote for the man who  
 promises to rid the nation of "arrogant gringo imperialists."

Whether the candidate in question is a fool, a thief, a  
 Communist, or even all three does not matter much when  
 emotions run high—and few elections south of the Rio  
 Grande are won on the basis of anything but blatant appeals  
 to popular emotion.

The North American presence in South America is one of  
 the most emotional political questions on the continent. In  
 most countries, especially Argentina and Chile, there is a con-  
 siderable European presence as well. But with recent history  
 as it is, when the winds of anti-gringo opinion begin to blow,  
 they blow due north, toward the United States, which to the  
 Latin American is more easily identifiable with capitalism and  
 imperialism than any other country in the world.

With this in mind, a traveler in South America gets one  
 shock after another at the stance generally taken by his fel-  
 low gringos—and sometimes a worse shock at the stance he  
 takes himself. One young American put it this way: "I came  
 down here a real gung-ho liberal, I wanted to get close to  
 these people and help them—but in six months I turned into  
 a hardnose conservative. These people don't know what I'm  
 talking about, they won't help themselves, and all they want  
 is my money. All I want to do now is get out."



It is a sad fact that living for any length of time in any American country has a tendency to do this to many Americans. To avoid it takes tremendous adaptability, idealism, and faith in the common future.

Take the example of a young man named John, a representative in a Latin American country for an international relief organization. His work consists mainly in distributing surplus food to the poor. He works hard, often going out on field trips, for three or four days of rough driving, bad food, primitive living, and dysentery.

But the people he has to work with bother him. He can't understand why the principal of a back-country school will steal food earmarked for the pupils and sell it to speculators. He can't understand why his warehouse—lying in the middle of a district where food is distributed regularly—is constantly being looted by the very people who were standing in line last week before to get their regular share.

He broods on these things and wonders if he is really accomplishing anything, or just being taken for a sucker. Then one day when he is in a particularly bad mood over some new evidence of callousness or corruption, he hears below his window the shouting of a mob. A man is standing on the steps of a fountain, shouting hoarsely about "the rights of the people" and what should be done to secure them. And the crowd happily roars an answer—"down with the capitalists swine!"

Our man, standing at his window, suddenly loses his temper and shakes his fist. *Alojo del pueblo!* he yells. Meaning "Down with the people." Then he quickly ducks back inside. But the Latin family next door, standing at their window, hears the gringo abusing the crowd. Word gets around, and several days later our man is insulted as he walks to the corner *cantina* for a pack of *cigarillos*. He speaks good Spanish and curses back, not understanding why his neighbors are no longer friendly. But it makes him even more bitter, and one day the tide starts running in that direction, it is hard to reverse.

One day a new American appears in town, a trainee for one of the United States banks that have branches in South America. Our man John meets him at the Anglo-American Club and, in the course of conversation, tells him what to expect from the nationals—"a bunch of rotten ingrates, stupid and corrupt to the last man."

The newcomer hears other gringos say the same kind of

ing. At night, in his new and unfamiliar apartment, he begins to think the neighbors are making noise on purpose, to wear on his nerves. Soon he is as bitter as most of the others.

When the inevitable bank strike comes along—as it does at regular intervals in most Latin American countries—our newcomer takes the advice of an older gringo employee and shows up at work with a pistol, which he puts on his desk like a paperweight to show the employees he means business. The reaction of the nationals hardly needs to be cataloged. Our trainee is chalked up as one more bit of two-legged evidence that gringos are vicious fools. The net result—as far as both John and the young banker are concerned—is a grievous setback for the hope that North and South America will come to understand each other, and thus avoid a split-up that would wreck the Western Hemisphere.

The young American in a Latin American country faces clear hazards. For one thing, he has to contend with the American colony that blooms in every city of any size.

Americans living in Latin American countries are often more snobbish than the Latins themselves. The typical American has quite a bit of money by Latin American standards, and he rarely sees a countryman who doesn't. An American businessman who would think nothing of being seen in a sport shirt on the streets of his home town will be shocked and offended at a suggestion that he appear in Rio de Janeiro, for instance, in anything but a coat and tie. The same man—often no more than 30 years old—might have been living in a prefabricated tract house in the States, but in Rio he will live on Copacabana beach with two maids, servants' quarters, and a balcony overlooking the sea.

Some people say that the American is fouling his own image in South America—that instead of being a showpiece for "democracy," he not only tends to ape the wealthy, anti-democratic Latins, but sometimes beats them at their own game. Suddenly finding himself among the elite, the nervous American is determined to hold his own—and, unlike the genuine aristocrat who never doubts his own worth, the newcomer to status seeks to prove it at every turn.

Others, though, repeat the old, familiar, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." In South America, so the thinking goes, the lower classes have no grasp of equality and take informality for weakness. So the only alternative is to make them respect you. "I know it's silly to shout at the maid every

time she makes a mistake," said one American housewife in Brazil. "But she's lazy and I want her to know I'm watching her. With these people, it's either discipline or anarchy."

Another problem that plagues the gringo is drink. Because he never really feels at home in a foreign language; because his income is usually embarrassingly large by local standards; because he worries continually about being cheated whenever he buys anything; because he never gets over the feeling that most upper-class Latins consider him a boob from a country where even the boobies are rich; and because he can never understand why people don't seem to like him for what he is—just a good guy who feels a bit out of place among these strange surroundings and customs—because of all these tensions and many more of the same kind, he tends to drink far more than he does at home.

"To relax" is the usual excuse, but sometimes there is most no choice. In Rio, for instance, the evening traffic jams are so bad that getting from the business district out to Copacabana—where "everybody" lives—is almost impossible between the hours of 5 and 8. One of the first things a new arrival is told is: "If you can't get out of town by five, forget about it and settle down to serious drinking until eight." This hiatus in the day is termed "the drinking hour."

With many people, the "drinking hour" soon becomes a necessary habit. Sometimes it leads to disaster. Often as American will arrive home broke and bleary-eyed at 3 or 4 in the morning, still lugging his briefcase and cursing the long-gone traffic.

Because of things like the drinking hour and other, purely local, situations, a man returning to the States after a stay in Latin America is often struck dumb by the question, "What can we do about that place?"

He has no idea, because he has never had time enough to relax and give it much thought. His concern has been survival. Objectivity is one of the first casualties of "culture shock"—a term for the malady that appears when a North American, with his heritage of Puritan pragmatism, suddenly finds himself in a world with different traditions and a different outlook on life.

It is an odd feeling to return from a year in South America and read a book by some expense-account politician who toured the continent in six weeks and spoke only of presidents, cabinet ministers, and other "leading figures" like

himself. The problems and the issues suddenly become quite clear—as they never were when you were right there in the midst of them.

Now, looking back on that man with the golf club, it is easy to see him as a fool and a beast. But I recall quite well how normal it seemed at the time, and how surprised I would have been if any of the dozen people on the terrace had jumped up to protest.

*National Observer*, August 19, 1963

## Democracy Dies in Peru, but Few Seem to Mourn Its Passing

The "death of democracy" has not left much of a vacuum in Peru. It was more like the death of somebody's old uncle, whose name had been familiar in the household for many years, but who died, where he had always lived, in some far-off town the family never quite-got around to visiting—although they had always meant to, or at least that's what they said.

If there is one profound reality in Peruvian politics it is the fact that this country has absolutely no democratic tradition, and any attempt to introduce one is going to meet violent opposition. The people who need democracy don't even know what the word means; the people who know what it means don't need it and they don't mind saying so. If the Alliance for Progress requires that democracy in Peru become a fact instead of just a pleasant word, then the Alliance is in for rough sledding too.

This is the basis of the current "misunderstanding" between Washington and Lima. If the Peruvian people were as concerned about democracy as is President Kennedy, this country would right now be in the throes of a violent civil war. What happened in Lima on July 18 was more than enough to touch off armed conflict in many countries of the world, but democracy has never been a reality in Peru, and for that reason it goes largely unmourned; especially in Lima, which voted heavily for the return of an ex-dictator.