

Jan. 28th. – Sunday – Mary

Last night, Richard, GV coordinator for Ghana, picked up three team members – Rita, Mary and Brittany from the Accra airport and had them driven to the Airport View Hotel, spacious AC rooms. We had a chance to debrief Chris, a member of the GV team in New Akraide before us. And finally we could retire to dark, quiet rooms and very welcome beds.

A leisurely morning. After breakfast we met the elusive 4th member of our team, Jeanne, who it turns out was here for over a day. Relieved, we left Accra in 2 cars to drive north to our destination, the village of New Akraide, pop. 3500.

Some details of the trip: women walking with impressive head loads, good roads, building projects, piles of handmade building blocks, churches like Great Miracle Faith Center as well as preachers leading worship services outdoors, thatched roofs, wooden shed structures and many vendors and people walking or biking along the road, roadside monkeys, goats and cattle, mango orchards, herbal healing centers, land areas suffering from drought, rocky hills.

At the St. James Guesthouse, we moved in and made ourselves comfortable. We had a tasty lunch at 1:30pm with Richard. The food staff consists of Florence, Christy and Monica.

Then we got down to business:

- A review of the GV philosophy of service.
 - 1) We work under the direction of local people; we do what we are asked to do.
 - 2) We are servant learners; we are not here to solve what we view as problems.
 - 3) We work along side locals.
- These help toward the objectives of building foundations for peace and justice in the world.
- - We set team goals of building relationships with locals and team, of experiencing Ghanaian culture, of serving the community and of having fun.
- We identified a dozen team characteristics: good communication, humor, patience, compassion, listening, flexibility, accepting local traditions/culture, curiosity, respect, tolerance, cooperation, being team players.
- Richard also reviewed GV policies & guidelines regarding gifts & personal behavior.
- He also provided a language lesson of some Twi words & phrases and then listed some leisure time options. The daily schedule for meals is breakfast at 7:00, lunch at 1:30 and dinner at 7:00.

Team job assignments are water person is Jeanne; food, health & safety, Rita; free time Brittany & Mary; and journal for today, Mary.

At 5:00pm, we met with 10 members of the school and community, we had a review of GV accomplishments in the community, and we were able to chat with our local co-workers about tasks we may share.

Today we covered much ground, and already the people who were complete strangers less than 24 hours ago are becoming friends to work, live and laugh with.

Quote for day:

"Proceed as the way opens." - A Quaker saying

Jan. 29th. - Monday - Brittany

Our first full day in New Akra.

After a restful night for some and not so for others the team meet at the breakfast table. We enjoyed some hot porridge or oat porridge as they call it here a long with some bread and fruit. At breakfast unfortunately Rita announced she would be making a side trip to Tema. Tema is a city nearby where Rita had the opportunity to first hand experience a Ghanaian hospital. To say the least an experience that none of the rest of us would like to add to our scrap books.

After seeing off Rita & Richard, who drove her to Tema, the rest of the team was met by a few community members including the Mayor of the town, Samson. These members showed us the walking path that we will use each day in order to get to school. The walk is very refreshing as each person you pass has a smile on their face and is willing to stop in order to give you a short lesson in Twi. Before arriving at school we had the opportunity to see the market which the sweat of proceeding volunteers helped build.

Upon arriving at the school we first stopped at the Primary pre-school where all the small children were shouting with joy & amazement at the color of our skin. After meeting some of the primary school teachers we went to visit the headmaster of the Jr. High School. The headmaster's office built by previous volunteers is a definite upgrade from his old headquarters which use to be under a mango tree. The headmaster showed us to each class room where the students all stood to greet us. We then were shown to the teachers' lounge where we met some of the student teachers that are currently assigned to the school. Mary will be helping Michael to teach English, Jeanne will be helping John in environmental

science while I (Brittany) will help Emil teach French. Some of us graded papers, read text books and even got in our first lesson. Mary and Jeanne predominately spent the day in the teacher's lounge where they were able to discuss many issues with all of the teachers. Emil and I (Brittany) spent the majority of the day under the mango tree conversing mainly in French & swapping stories of our lives. At noon Samson came to pick us up from the school to return us back to the St. James guest house. On this walk home we had several mini adventures seeing a local Ghanaian church, a termite hill & tasting cocoa straight from the tree.

At lunchtime, Rita returned and we all exchanged the day's adventures. After lunch everyone showered, cooled off and relaxed until dinner. After dinner we did some free time planning which Mary and I are in charge of, deciding that on Friday we will be leaving for Cape Coast. To find more out about these adventures you'll just have to keep reading.

Quote of the day

["To be humble in success and without bitterness in defeat" – This describes the Ghanaian people and way of life.](#)

Jan. 30th. – Tuesday – Rita

Yet another warm, and sunny day in Ghana. Breakfast was once again delicious, though the fried eggs don't seem to be very popular. Samson arrives almost on cue as Mary reads an entry about him from the journal. We are quickly off to see the clinic as well as the Volta River. On the way we stop at the Senchi Chief's palace and meet with some officials. Sadly Senchi is a town that has lost many of its people and industry once they the bridge. Nevertheless the remaining people are friendly and engaging. So many photo ops, I can't wait to come back with my camera. I don't think it is possible to take a bad picture of a Ghanaian. After our rather long sight seeing detour we arrive at the school. Mary, Brittany and Jeanne are off to the classrooms to inspire young minds...well probably not, but it sounds good. I am introduced to Peter by Martin. He will be the young man assisting me with the painting of the school. 12:30 finds us heading home with Ebenezer, Cornelius and Richmond. After another tasty lunch we wait for Martin to take us to the Cedi bead factory. After a couple of wrong turns we finally reach our destination. I for one have a whole new appreciation of beads. The beads are made from old bottles that are ground and have pigment added. The design process is similar to the old sand designs you did as a child but on a much smaller scale. After we learn the process it is time to shop. The beads are beautiful and your inclination

is to buy them all, but decisions must be made. Four very happy customers walked away. The drive back was uneventful until we pulled into the gates of the guest house. There was an overturned truck halfway up the embankment with a crushed car beneath it. We now understand why it is not safe to walk even on the shoulder of the road. Well lights out came a bit early. A brief blackout before dinner plunged everyone in darkness. Within five minutes power was restored, excitement over. Dinner was pleasant but it was followed by the dreaded language lesson. We seem to exhibit no talent for learning this language. Heck, we basically stink at it. Fortunately we are not being graded as we would all certainly fail. Lights out for real this time. Some well needed sleep a head.

Quote for the day.

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." - Anne Frank

Jan. 31st. - Wednesday - Jeanne

After breakfast we headed off to church! All school children attend church on Wednesday morning, with students actively participating in running the program. All the students crowd into one of two rooms. The service commences with group singing which evolves into dancing. Mary, Brittany and I joined the dance line, but we are not as adept as the students. Prayers are lead by the Headmaster and one of the teachers, then a girl preached a sermon, followed by prayers led by girls in each form. Service concludes with more singing, supported by students beating the rhythm on desks, a drum, and the school bell. Rita misses all this, she is off painting.

Teaching time - Mary and I grade papers while Brittany assists a student teacher. Perceptions of science students - not much interest in very basic physics, but very good in environmental science. Free time discussions with teachers answer some questions.

- Teachers are permitted to hit students with a stick because it is advised and permitted in the Bible as discipline to develop character.
- All girls in school must have short hair so that there is no competition in hair styling which would differentiate richer from poor students. Like the student uniforms, this promotes equality of all students
- Student teachers wear a uniform also, white shirt or blouse with navy blue skirts/trousers.

- Colors of school buildings, brown & tan were chosen to match the uniform colors, but now the school has new uniform colors.

The market comes to the St. James! A woman came with beautiful batik fabrics to sell to us.

Brittan, Mary & Rita walked to Lake Volta with Ernest this afternoon. They saw dugout canoes on the lake with some people fishing. They spent the afternoon there; having drinks at the local resort and watching life go by. They noted that a new resort is being built on the island. Jeanne stayed in her room.

Conversation at dinner regarding the images and expectations that people have of the United States - myth versus reality!

[Quote for the day.](#)

["Developing a more flexible way of seeing things helps us cultivate a more balanced mental attitude." - His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama](#)

Feb. 1st. - Thursday - Mary

Recently Rita asked Richard about all of the chickens, turkeys and ducks (especially chickens) that we see roaming freely. To whom do they belong? He said, "They wander all day but return home at night." - or simply, "The chickens come home to roost."

Food: In the teachers' lounge this morning Michael's breakfast: kenkey (ground maize cooked in a corn husk) in a large bowl with hot sauce and a couple dried fish. Mid-morning Jemina, John, and Sandra invited me to share their ground nut soup in a bowl with a piece of chicken and a mound of baneo (cooked ground maize & cassava). It was very good. Samuel had maize soup - a large lump of cooked corn meal in a bowl of hot sauce and a chunk of meat. Jeanne and I tasted it; it was good but the sauce was blazing. Emil had a bowl of rice soup sprinkled with ground nuts. Women from the community come to the school grounds with food cooked at home to sell to teachers and students. Later, Richard reminded us that the way the food was cooked could not be controlled, and so we should avoid such tasting in the future.

Work: I taught 2 classes; Jeanne graded; Brittany taught in 2 different places and helped Rita paint. When Richard discovered Rita painting alone, he stopped her until someone from the community could join her.

A fabric vendor displayed her wares near the mango tree. Jeanne succumbed, bought enough fabric for a dress, and discovered that Christian's wife would sew it for her.

For lunch we had a large dumpling rice ball called Motuo in a bowl of ground nut soup. It was excellent. Later, Martin gave us an informative tour to see the graceful Adone suspension bridge over the Volta River, built in 1955-56. We traveled through the company town of Akosombo to see the impressive Akosombo Dam, the place where people can catch a ferry boat for pleasure trips to Dodi Island the port area on Volta Lake where ships deliver goods from northern Ghana, especially cocoa, and petroleum products are sent back. Martin also drove us to an extensive Thursday market near Akosombo – a dazzling array of goods, foods, fabrics, beautiful children, and eager vendors.

[Quote for the day.](#)

[“Adventure is putting into motion one's ignorance.” – From River Horse by Wm Least Heat-Moon.](#)

Feb. 2nd. – Friday – Brittany

Today as usual we meet at the breakfast table over another bowl of oat porridge. When we reach the school we each check in with our respective teachers as Rita heads off with Martin. Rita is now adding the second coat to the building. Around noon Brittany stops by to help. Mary spends the day with Michael in the teacher lounge. Jeanne spent the day under the mango tree showing the teachers the book she brought along about New York. We leave school early as the children only have a half day on Fridays.

After returning to St. James we pack for our trip to Cape Coast and grab a quick bite to eat before leaving. We meet Kennedy, a man who we met at the airport, who will be taking us to the coast for the weekend. We set off on our journey which goes fairly smoothly until we hit the traffic of Accra where vendors selling their goods in the street bring the traffic to a mere crawl. This lasts for about an hour before the roads begin to open up. After 5 hours of quality time with one another we arrive in Elmina at the Coconut Grove Resort. The resort has beautiful grounds

of well tailored grass and palm trees. The rooms each have uniquely carved doors with large interiors. After settling in our rooms we head out for the hotel restaurant. Here we enjoy the view of the ocean and some music.

Quote of the day.

“Remember that happiness is a way of travel – not a destination.”

Feb. 3rd. – Saturday – Rita

Since this is our vacation weekend I'm going to keep this brief. Breakfast was great since there was some much needed variety. The croissants were a big hit. Before heading to Kakum we needed to find a place for Mary and Brittany to exchange money. The front desk had no Cedis, but they suggested we try a black market exchange by the Coconut Grove Bridge House. Admittedly we were a bit nervous about this, but desperate times require deperate measures. Heck, we were 3 tough Obronis after all. Fortunately all went well. In a shabby shack over a pile of multi-hued sandals, Mary and Brittany completed their transaction. We were soon on our way to Kakum National Park. After 45 minutes we reached our destination as did 80 high school kids from a church group. We let the kids go first before doing a short upward climb to the start of the canopy walk. The suspension bridge consisted of on single plank, probably 15" in width. The sides were net like and made of heavy duty rope and cable. There were 7 bridges in total. The 80 kids made it with only about 6 tearful kids turning back. Now it was our turn. I went first with Mary behind me and Brittany bringing up the rear. I quickly realized I was out of my comfort zone and needed to get off this thing as quickly as possible. I proceeded to race walk thru the bridges while Mary and Brittany walked slowly and observed their surroundings. With that behind us it was time to head back to the Coconut Grove. A few stops for pictures on the way back. Kennedy (our driver) deftly got us out of a situation where a man was asking for payment for a picture I took of a house. He quite simply asked, "How do I know it is your house?" Back at the resort Brittany and Rita hit the pool while Mary and Jean had lunch. A very leisurely afternoon was had by all. Mary and Jean headed back in to town to go to the fish market and the castle. Cocktails poolside when they returned. Yet another great dinner served up by the very sweet Scholastica finished off the evening.

Quote of the day.

[Dream as if you'll live forever, live as if you'll die today – James Dean](#)

Feb. 4th. – Sunday – Jeanne

This morning we visited Cape Coast Castle after a quick financial visit to Barclays Bank.

Cape Coast was an experience, seeing the conditions under which the slaves lived before departure. However, I found the visit to Elmina Castle on Saturday a more meaningful experience. Mary and I disagree about our impressions of each – she believes they are equivalent; I found Elmina left a much stronger experience. I felt it was much more realistic, and our guide more honest and passionate about the horrors of what it was like, whereas Cape Coast was cleaned up, whitewash, lights, movies etc...

The drive back was easier than the trip out because it was the Sabbath. There were not as many trucks or commuter traffic. Kennedy and I chatted about life in Ghana and the political events and history. Kennedy is Ashanti and very proud of his heritage and the role the Ashanti people played in Ghana's history and politics. Interesting geological features on the road from Tema to New Akra – small rocky hills emerge from the flatlands. There are many large boulders around them. They resemble man made mounds with the large boulders around them, but Kennedy assured us they were natural. Nothing regarding geology in the guidebook so I must remember to find out more when I have access to libraries and the internet.

Ghana University is beautiful. The class buildings are one or two stories high and white washed with brown trim. 18,000 students and still expanding. The library architecture is magnificent, with steeple, layered roof and corners rooflines slightly pointed and curved ala Chinese roof lines

[Quote of the day](#)

["He who did evil to others, harms himself." – Milarepa](#)

Feb. 5th. – Monday – Mary

On my morning walk around the Guesthouse, I chatted with Ernest, our security man. He went through my TWI phrase cards, drilling me on pronunciation. Earnest

is fifty-eight, has worked here eleven years, but cannot pay secondary school fees for several of his eight children.

The students were still assembled in formation rows for opening exercises when we arrive at school – flag raising, singing, prayers, and announcements. One group was scolded for some infraction and made to kneel on the stony ground with hands over heads for maybe a minute.

Jeanne, Brittan, and I spent several hours proctoring practice national exams. The 9th graders do a practice run now, than again in March, and the final test in April. Rita continued painting.

After an early lunch, we walked to the home of a teacher's wife to make fufu in an outdoor kitchen. Samson escorted us – well, he cut in on Monica who had been leading us. The cooking crew consisted of: Sarah, Cecilia & Josephine. The outdoor cooking area was covered with a high tarp, three charcoal fires were available, and a pleasant breeze kept us comfortable. How to make fufu? Here's a crude approximation: Cook palm nuts. Pound these in a large mortar using a pestle pole 5' long & 2" in diameter. The palm nuts become a golden (like turmeric) fibrous mass. Take handfuls, squeeze out the juices, and then strain to get the soup stock. Inside the palm nut kernel is a nut from which to extract candle oil. The fiber is dried to make tinder. The peeled and chopped cassava and plantain are boiled. Meanwhile peel ginger, garlic, and onion. Grind in another mortar and pestle and add to soup pots. In one pot put chunks of beef and dried fish. In the veggie soup pot put cooked legumes. Add fresh tomato, tomato paste, dried hot peppers, okra, and rubbery cow skin. Let the soup pots simmer.

Then pound the cooked cassava and plantain in a wide mortar using the same heavy pole pestle. While one person pounds, another keeps folding the mashed fufu over until it becomes a white elastic substance. Eventually we were server bowls of soup with a lump of fufu in the middle. We were instructed on how to pinch off a gob of fufu, and try to convey it to your mouth along with some of the soup – a bit messy but fun to attempt. Jeanne was praised for her technique. (Spoons were also kindly provided. A pleasant excursion, especially seeing the neighborhood that some of our students come from. There were lots of children around, chickens, goats and friendly neighbors.

[Quote of the day.](#)

If many little people
At many little places
Do many little things,
They will change the face of the world. – An African proverb

Feb. 6th. – Tuesday – Brittany

This morning we follow our traditional routine of meeting for breakfast and then quickly heading to school. The oldest children in the school continue with their examinations as the other two grades of children squeeze in two classrooms. Rita and Brittany finishing painting the KG building and begin painting the inside of the classrooms. Today we depart early from school to return to St. James so that we can prepare for our afternoon trip. After a quick lunch, we hop into Kennedy's all too familiar car. We take about an hour before we reach the Botanical Gardens. Here we pay for a guide to tour us around the various lawns. There are ten different lawns each with a unique theme some include: a Presidential lawn, a children's lawn, a lovers lawn and a spice lawn among others. After touring the lawns we find to our disappointment that the craft market is closed, so we return home.

Quote of the day

"God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas, but for scars." Elbert Hubbard

Feb. 7th. – Wednesday – Rita

Wow ! What a great start to the morning. Monica surprised us with blueberry pancakes, sausage and fruit salad. Wait, no, that was just a Malarone dream...Darn it, same old porridge, fruit and eggs. I should have stayed asleep. Off to school. Jeanne proctored, Mary taught and Brittany and I painted. Thought truth be told we spent a fair amount of time yelling at our 4 teenage helpers. Attention to detail was not one of their best attributes. It would have been better to have only one helper. Lunch time is nearing and Brittany and I are dreaming about our tomato sandwiches. Once Mary finishes up teaching we head back to the St. James, but not before I pour some water on Emil's head to wake him from his nap. These

teachers don't know how easy they have it. Well we didn't get our tomato sandwiches, but we did get tossed salad and toast. We ended up making salad bruchettas which were wonderful.

Three o'clock and it is off to see the Chief. Well what a disappointment the Chief is out of town. We had to make due with the Queen Mum. Lots of hand shaking and glad tidings. Richard presented our gift which was a bottle of Gin. Mary needed to be forcibly restrained as she was dying for a gin and tonic. Sadly the Queen Mum didn't offer us any libations. Brittany and Rita chose to walk back. When we got to the St. James we were faced with quite a large brush fire that was sending smoke and ash everywhere. Apparently fire is there answer to weeding. I don't think that is something that will catch on in the states. We got back to the guest house just in time. Within minutes of our return the skies opened up and shortly thereafter the power went out. Great dinner, not exactly sure what we were eating, but there was plenty of mangos and greens on the plate as well as pancakes for dessert. Maybe I wasn't dreaming after all.

Quote of the day.

["The rich must live more simply so the poor can simply live" - Ghandi](#)

Feb. 8th. - Thursday - Mary

Jeanne is under the weather and will remain at the guest house. Brittany taught French. Rita donned teaching clothes, with Texas and necklace to match, for her teaching debut - topic: "Intro to Painting" with terminology drill using Hangman. I checked student work from yesterday, and then tagged along with Jemima to attend a regularly scheduled PTA meeting held in the church. Over 30 parents (mostly women) came and many of the teachers. Jemima provided an English translation of what was said in Twi, as directed by the School Management Committee. Chair, Mr. Agyei - Addo, the Chief's brother.

Some of the items discussed are these:

- An addition to the kindergarten building.
- New toilets are needed.
- A committee is needed to raise funds for maintenance and development.
Question: What to do about parents who fail to pay the assessment for this fund?
- A watchman is needed for school security.

- The Mayor reminded parents that workers are needed to match Global Volunteers.
- A parent suggested a community meeting for people to sign up to help with GV projects.
- A teacher announced the upcoming Ghana wide government de-worming project in the schools.
- Someone asked about students' low performance on the 9th grade tests. Teachers to blame? John and other teachers spoke up, making the point that parents must encourage education from Grade 1 and up to achieve good results in Grade 9.

This afternoon, Martin escorted us to visit the home of a student named Cornelius. We were shown the fish smokers and the thatched outdoor kitchen with a kettle of banku bubbling over a fire. Cornelius showed us the house, his bedroom shared with 3 others, the beauty shop, bedrooms for the other 6 people in the house. The backyard had many useful trees – lemon, cacao, tangerine, mango, and plantain and date nut. Also a hen house and an enclosure for goats. Cornelius was a polite, poised young man.

Quote of the day.

["Be the kind of person upon whom nothing is lost." Henry James](#)

Feb. 9th. – Friday- Jeanne

Traipsing off for Rita's last day, with the rest of us here for another week. I had planned to move to my new assignment, pre-school/kindergarten next Monday but Richard saw me sitting under the mango tree with nothing to do, again, so he graciously tool me over to my new assignment, which I love. Actively working with the students, teaching them songs, the alphabet and correcting their school work. Two of the four teachers are absent, one out due to sickness and the other attending a funeral. So they were very pleased to get some extra help. Thrilled with my new assignment. Actually feeling for the first time that I am contributing, and the time flew by quickly much better than the other two weeks.

The mystery of the vacant building is resolved-the Presbyterian Church is too small so they plan to move it to that building. They would like to build a new pre-K building since they have four classes squeezed into two small rooms so crowded that children must walk on the tables to move around the room. I mentioned this at

lunch, but Richard corrected me: since it is a school building, it cannot be made into a church.

Rainy season may be arriving early, for the past few afternoons it has rained late in the day, quite heavily for an hour or so, and then stops. Good thing! Ghana has been experiencing a drought. Another benefit, it washes the red dust off the vegetation and trees, making the beauty more apparent. If we are really, lucky maybe some flowers will bloom!

Rita, Mary and Brittany are going out to dinner at a Western style restaurant. I am probably not going, still a bit of tummy wobbles and want to recover by tomorrow so I can enjoy the weekend trip to Ho. Maybe they will have Fufu or Banku at the hotel, do not want to miss the opportunity.

Quote of the Day:

["Mental attitude is more important than external conditions" His Holiness the Dalai Lama](#)

Feb. 10th Saturday- Brittany

This morning we have a delayed breakfast, as there are no school children waiting for our arrival. After our typical meal, we finish packing for our weekend trip to Ho. Unfortunately before departing we have to say our goodbyes to Rita. We jump into Kennedy's car and off to Ho we go. Our first stop once reaching Ho is Chance's Hotel; where we settled into our rooms quickly. We then jump back in the car. The first stop we make is the African Craft market. Here we meet the "Craft Man" after looking around his shop he offers to take in to his workshop. We follow him down a dusty road. When we arrive at the workshop that is tucked away, we get to see two Kenti weavers working under a thatched roof with their yarn stretching down hill. Off to the left there is an old man making bricks. Just beyond the brick maker was the Craft man's workshop and home. This workshop seems to be straight out of a storybook, where there are paintings, carvings and sculptures completed by an alligator farm and a pet monkey. After looking around the shop, Craft Man decides that it would be fun to dress the three obroni's in traditional African dresses, this gives Kennedy and Craft Man a great laugh. After leaving here our new friend leads us to a boutique fabric store where Jeanne and Mary pick up some lovely patterns. From here we visit the nearby museum. After this quick stop we head to a small town Kopetoi Agotime where we visit a large Kenti weaving workshop. It is a large storage room with close to 20 looms and several beautiful

pieces to choose from. Leaving here we head back to the craft shop from some last minute gifts. After driving all around we head back to the hotel for a much-needed lunch to our disappointment however, our simple order turns into an hour and half wait. Needless to say lunch quickly turned into dinner. The remainder of the evening was simply spent relaxing.

Quote of the Day

[" When you cease to make a contribution you begin to die"- Eleanor Roosevelt](#)

Feb 11th Sunday- Jeanne

I am the only one down for breakfast of the three. Despite the large menu, the only thing available is toast and tea. About all I wanted!

Brittany and Mary take an early morning walk around the area while I head directly to the pool in the "shady" end to minimize the lobster look for this pale obroni skin. Brittany arrives to work on her tan, which despite her efforts does not materialize to her desired shade. Mary relaxes in her AC room. Great discovering-the internet service is running again, very slowly and with the occasional disconnect, but at least we are able to receive mail (and dump the spam).

Between the interminable delays, I am chatting with the Mercy Ship volunteers, part of a hospital ship staff of 350 from 30 countries working in West Africa. A donor has provided a free weekend for 150 workers, 75 each weekend, and they are enjoying the amenities. Tried to find out my background hoping to recruit me as an elementary school teacher, but I do not have the qualifications. Since they are doing a lot of gynecological surgeries I told them I would mention them to my GYN who is interested in this.

Meet some more of the Mercy Ship crew at the pool, they sign up for three-month terms but most have been doing this for years. In fact, they call their ship the Love boat because so many volunteers have married other crewmembers. Whole families live aboard. Volunteers we met have a variety of skills, administrative, medical, technical support. Wonderful group of people -one man said, his original term was for three months with his girlfriend and they have been with Mercy Ship for five years. To quote "It gets in your blood".

Another woman has done administrative work for nine years when she retired, she prayed and asked God what she should do and He sent her on this path. The longest term is a doctor on the ship-he started out helping during the 1984 Mexico City

earthquake and never left. Fell almost guilty telling them we are here for only three weeks.

Alas, the time arrives for all of us to checkout. Tuna sandwiches and fries for Mary and Brittany, Fufu for me. At lunch we discuss additional excursions for the day, but ultimately decide to return to St. James. Shops (for tourists) are closed on Sunday and other destinations are too far off the beaten track for us to make it back by 6. We decide to let the home crew have a light night-no cooking- we'll be happy with some sliced fruit. Looks like all of us will have some R&R.

So many quotes to choose two finalists, I can't decide

Quote of the day

"We are all here on earth to help others; what on earth the others are here for I don't know" W.H. Auden

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness I can show to my fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again" Attributed to Stephen Grellet

Insert:

Yesterday villagers were out cleaning streets of the town, cutting down brush and grass, picking up garbage as communal service. Once a month every able-bodied adult in the community will work on a Saturday to clean and tidy up the villages. On the way home, the villages were clean, neat and well maintained. Maybe we should do this in the US.

Feb. 12th Monday-Mary

Breakfast with just the three of us; we saved journal reading until lunch when Richard rejoined us.

Off to school- Jeanne to work with the kindergarten children, Brittany to drill students in French, and I thought a quick history of transportation to 9th graders along with new vocabulary.

Today is deworming day, a government sponsored program in which students line up for a pill, chased with a drink of water. Sounds innocent enough—after all a child with worms has her health and energy compromised.

But some students complained of stomach pain and nausea. Brittany said some of the dosages may have been calculated incorrectly or perhaps some took the pill on an empty stomach. There was talk about the death of two students at a nearby school. Brittany also heard the deworming pill should not be taken by someone who is pregnant, and she doubts that the authorities has checked for this. Many village parents showed up to check on their children or to take them home. School was canceled for the rest of the day. Later, at lunch, Richard speculated that politicians might have gone to places like China to beg for cheap drugs so they can boast of their accomplishments. Maybe the story will be clearer tomorrow. On our walk home today, we stopped at the fanciful ecumenical shrine that our footpaths skirts. Jeanne wanted a few photos, but the woman caretaker who asked us to identify ourselves stopped her. After we chatted, she said we could walk around and take pictures AND think about how we might contribute to the shrine. So we did. Over lunch we discussed a few trip options for our final week. The countdown begins.

Quote of the Day

"One thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to strive" Albert Schweitzer

Feb 13th Tuesday- Brittany

Today we meet over our familiar oat soup and plan for another day at school. Jeanne heads to the KG building to help the little ones learn their alphabet. Mary and I head for the JSS building. As soon as I get there I start inquiring about yesterday's scare of deworming. Thankfully, we find out that there have been no casualties and every child that complained of stomach pain was treated with several cups of water and then sent home. Today as I sit under the mango tree I notice that a class does not have a teacher so I start to sing and play games with them. The teachers are shocked by the Global Volunteers desire to be with the children because it is a sharp contrast compared to their seeming indifference. Up at the KG building Jeanne has her hands full as Agnes (her teacher) and her have had to combine four classes into one due to some other teachers' absences. After returning from school we enjoy lunch and find out that Richard will be leaving for the evening. Shortly after Richard leaves Mary and I meet Martin who takes us to the Riverside Hotel. Here we enjoy a drink and relax riverside. The evening was

finished off by Jeanne's fashion show modeling all the African dresses she has bought since arriving here.

Quote of the Day

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gifts from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy excitement and mystery of the world we live in" – Rachel Carson

Feb. 14th Wednesday-Jeanne

Off to school again, Madame Agnes is the only one of four pre-K/ KG teachers that shows up so we again combine all the classes into one. Needless to say with students at different levels, little teaching is done. Agnes gets called out to a meeting leaving me with what turns into a screaming horde, my main role is to break up the fights. Agnes returns and finally another teacher is assigned to take over the Kindergarten class. She is concerned because for two days there have been no Math or English lessons due to the absence of the other teachers.

After an early lunch, we depart for Pram Pram to visit the sites where Global Volunteers worked in the past. We saw the clinic hospital and school buildings that GV built and where volunteers taught and medical personnel worked. Next we went to the beach to watch the fishing boats come in, actually the smaller boats are used to bring crew members to shore, the big fishing boats are anchored off shore due to difficulties with current and sufficient available man power to drag the vessels onto the beach.

We walked around the town with Michael, a sub-chief, who introduced us to the father of Ghana's Vice President and the keeper of the stools, the symbol of power. Brittany and Mary bought wooden pestles, used to mash flavorings for food. The salt factory was fascinating! Ten square miles of salt flats used to clean and evaporate salt, then machine processing rooms, hand cleaning, and packaging. Munir, the owner, said the plant has been in his family for 80 years-ago and his family moved here permanently during the Lebanese civil wars. Approximately 300-400 people work there, with the women primarily homeless from the streets of Accra. By working at the plant, it saves their morality and lives. He encourages all his workers to get an education and pays their college fees if they qualify and continue their education. We are given several large bags of salt as a gift. We end the day with a trip to the beach, watching the waves break on the shore as we have some refreshments.

Back to New Akraide and a candle light dinner for Valentine's Day, followed by a "campfire" story narrated by Mary.

Quote of the Day

"Knowledge is itself the basis of civilization any widening of the borders of our knowledge imposes an increased responsibility on individuals and nations through the possibilities it gives for shaping the conditions of human life"

-Niels Bohr

Feb. 15th Thursday-Mary

Usual breakfast. Usual hike to school. The air is fresh and pleasant today. Jeanne and Brittany both spent time with the young children, but the absence of teachers often leads to chaos. Besides grading daily work, I taught two classes. Our lesson was a traditional Ananse folktale, but the students were also invited to stand to tell other Ananse tales and did so cheerfully. They were also interested to hear my Ananse story from the West Indies.

After lunch, Brittany demonstrated for Richard how to play Twister.

It was a quiet afternoon to read and think about packing. I had a short nap. The pound-pound of the man-sized wooden pestle was what I heard when I woke up: Jeanne's wish came true. The kitchen crew was outside in the shade making Fufu, with the gardener boy wielding the pestle with a rhythmical beat while Florence turned the mixture as he pounded. Late afternoon Jeanne enjoyed the Fufu with its spicy stew. We also were able to fill containers from one of the large bags of sea salt we were given yesterday. A savory bit of Ghana to take home with us.

After dinner in response to questions about how we as volunteers could give additional help needy students, Richard told us that the GV organization is establishing a way for people to contribute funds to assist a particular program or even to sponsor a child.

Quote of the Day, especially for Brittany

"You have brain in your head

And feet in your shoes,

You can steer yourself and direction you choose" -Dr. Seuss

Feb. 16th Friday- Brittany

We all meet over breakfast, once again and everything is exactly the same as all the other days; but something feels different. Maybe it is the mixed emotions of

sorrow and excitement that our hearts feel that makes this day different. We soon trot off to school using the path that we now know like the back of our hand, yet each day never ceases to amaze us with its beautiful sight; goats milling about, chickens pecking, mothers bathing their babies and children shouting obroni, obroni! Upon arriving at school we all take our now well-established posts. Today the JSS is participating in a quiz bowl tournament. Mary is given the utmost important job as a timekeeper and I am deemed as the scorekeeper. The school children have elected three people from each house (a group including children from each grade level) to represent them in the quiz. As Michael announces the rules and rewards of the game, the children's eyes grow with excitement at the possibility that they might win a prize. The quiz bowl is efficiently run and fulfills its purpose as a motivator. Later in the morning I go to the KG building to visit the class I taught in the previous day. As I expected the class is without a teacher, so I start the lesson where I left off yesterday. Soon the little ones rush off to lunch and Jeanne and I head back to the JSS building to meet up with Mary. Here we learn that our schoolgirls are competing in a soccer match against a neighboring school. Mary and I decide to go cheer on the girls, while Jeanne decides it's just too hot and opts to return to the AC. When Mary and I arrive at this school it is quite evident that the children are much less accustomed to seeing obronis as our presence gets a mixed reaction of excitement, fear and awe. After a relentless effort from the Presby girls the match finished 0-0 but the girls will get another try next week when the schools meet for a rematch.

The rest of the afternoon is spent relaxing in order to prepare for our evening party. At seven several teachers (Michael, Emil, Jemima, Charity and Martin), the Assembly Man (Samson), as well as our country host (Richard) sit down for dinner. Here we are able to thank one another for all that we have given each other as well as the community. It is at the end of dinner that I think we all realize that although our surroundings are exactly the same as all the other days it is we ourselves that have changed and are the making a difference.

Quote of the Day

"The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a friendly party but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away" -Ralph Waldo Emerson