

# Experience

Feature by CUSO

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construction in and around the town. At the town's market, shopping Nigerian style was a new experience for Martha and Vince. They had to learn the skill of bargaining for their purchases. Here you could buy fresh meat and various exotic as well as every day varieties of vegetables and fruits. Also available were all types of dry goods, household items and a variety of services.

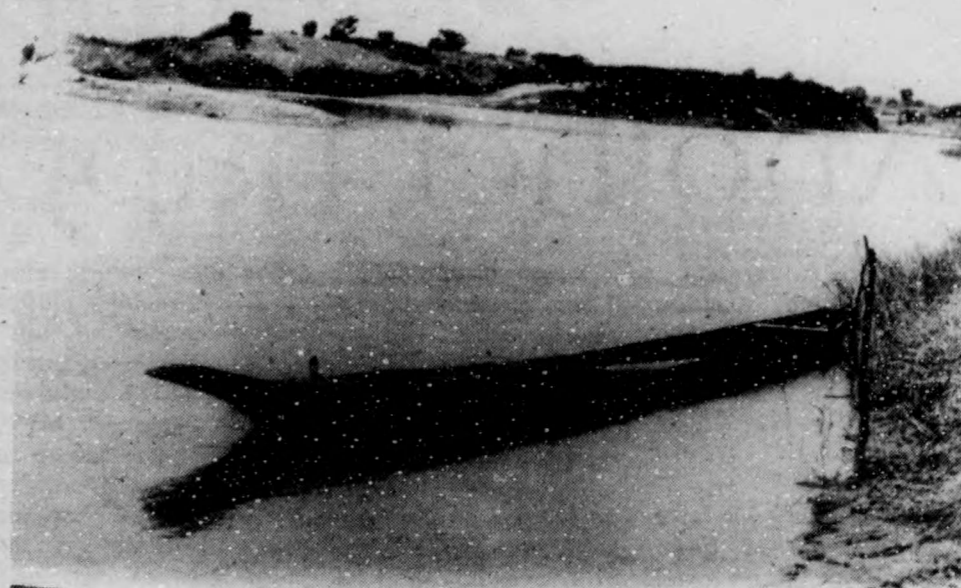
After one year of Otukpo's 'hustle and bustle' they decided to transfer to the smaller community of Naka, a more remote town, 40 km. from Makurdi, reachable via a sometimes dusty, sometimes muddy dirt road. In Naka, conditions were more basic than in Otukpo as the small house they now lived in had no electricity or running water (it had to be fetched by hand from a creek). Conditions were more arduous here with bad roads, water shortages and little fresh food available but work was definitely more challenging and interesting. If medical problems developed, they knew CUSO would care for them by arranging medical attention and paying any medical expenses.

At the school there was a shortage of staff as Vince and Martha were two of only 11 teachers in charge of over 700 boys and girls. All the teachers, except Martha and Vince, were Nigerians. In addition to regular teaching duties, they participated in extra-curricular activities such as clubs and sports. Despite the language problems, equipment shortages and generally different attitudes of the Nigerians to time, they adjusted quickly. They became acquainted

with most of the local personalities and shared holidays and other special festivities with the people. As mobility in this remote area was important, they had a motorcycle to go to Makurdi or Otukpo for supplies and to visit friends and other CUSO volunteers in other postings. As well, they used their motorcycle for a 5500 km. backpacking tour into the neighboring francophone countries of Niger, Benin and Togo as well as into most parts of Nigeria. Too quickly, their two years were over and they headed back to Canada via Europe.

In summary of their two years, Vince and Martha said they had "experienced firsthand the tremendous cultural diversity of Nigeria and of West Africa, a fact not easily appreciated from the outside". They also "gained valuable work experience in a situation where they had much responsibility for the day-to-day functioning of the school". Another aspect of the experience was that "you learn to amuse yourself by reading, music, etc...since you have a lot of time on your hands."

Martha and Vince are only two of the over 400 teachers, doctors, nurses, agriculturalists, trades people, technicians, etc. sent yearly to developing countries around the world. To recruit people for this programme, CUSO has a network of representatives and offices across Canada where inquiries are encouraged and information is available. There is now a CUSO office at the University of New Brunswick, in room 3 of the Alumni Memorial Building. The office is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and can be reached at 453-3562.



Niger river Shintaka, Benue State



Martha in front of a termite hill.



Otobi, Benue State - village people.