

# Africa not infested with crocs and alligators

By AFAM OGBECHIE

As far as recorded history goes, people have always known that on the south end of the Mediterranean sea lies a high land mass. Although there were many tales about what lay further inland, early stories told of a beautiful stretch of land beyond the Sahara desert. A land where it was nice and warm twelve months a year, a land blessed with rich green fields, a land of cool springs and deep blue lakes. A land of powerful kingdoms — the Great Pharaohs of Egypt, the prosperous kingdoms of Ethiopia, Timbucto, Benin and the Ashanti.

The continent of Africa does not therefore enjoy that special privilege of having been discovered at a particular point in time by a particular hero. Obviously, it is difficult to think about China without recalling a name like Marco Polo — just as it is equally impossible to think about the American continent without recalling Christopher Columbus. But so far, no person has claimed discovery of the huge African continent.

The Phoenicians were known to have sailed to the West African Coast many centuries B.C. but all records speak of a "visit" by the Phoenicians. Later visits were made by the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the British, and more recently the Americans and the Canadians.

The early visitors to Africa found a highly structured way of life among the African peoples. A life pattern tightly knit together by customs and traditions. Today, some of these traditions still exist although much of it have given way as the years rolled by. The African way of life is very difficult to understand from the outside. Basically, it is a very simple natural way of life built on friendliness and openmindedness. It is a system in which everybody is supposed to be his brother's keeper. Hospitality is therefore a major corner stone in African cultural life. Unfriendly members of the community are often treated with contempt and open resentment and are eventually ostracized.

Traditionally, strangers are always welcome. In fact, except for some aspects of Eskimo hospitality (where I understand the host gives his wife to his guest), African hospitality stands unsurpassable. The Bible story has it that the baby Jesus was rushed to safety in Egypt when his life was threatened by King Herod. Why Egypt? Perhaps it was this same African friendliness that was recognized almost 2000 years ago by Mary and Joseph — or more accurately by the Angel of God.

Anyway, open hospitality distinguishes the African Society from most others. For example, in an African community a stranger is welcomed and automatically accepted into the group until by his actions he shows he is not a friend. In most Western Societies, however, it is the other way round. A stranger is kept at arm's length and regarded with suspicion (sometimes even regarded as a crook) until he proves otherwise.

Several top African scholars attribute the ravage of African culture over the years, and to some extent to the hideous racial situations in certain parts of Africa to the fact that the African was not only his brother's keeper, but also



tried to be everybody else's keeper. It is true that this was vital for a society that operates extensively on an extended family system. But, it is also true that this doesn't leave much safeguards for the security of the people as a group.

It is surprising how little most people outside the continent know about Africa. Most outsiders sit back and expect the African to come forward and publicize himself. But the African has a different view altogether. "It's you who is ignorant," he says. "It's you who should come forward. I'll be glad to educate you anytime."

Because of this widespread ignorance, a lot of people (sometimes highly educated folks) go about with very wild ideas about Africa. To them Africa is huge jungles, dark impenetrable rain forests infested with crocodiles and ugly man-eating alligators.

This kind of fairy tale is abundant everywhere and it takes some knowledge to dispel these "facts". A few years ago I stopped over in London on my way to Canada. Then I ran into an American who claimed he knew an awful lot about Canada. After I told him I was going to New Brunswick, he advised me among other things to buy myself a bunch of bells. He told me I'll find the bells very useful for scaring away the polar bears as I skate to class in the morning!

Today, it is becoming very difficult, if not impossible to be a somebody. Out here life has been programmed into a steady rush. The 24 hours do not seem to be enough anymore. One must rush, rush, and rush. People spend all the time rushing and hurrying, and

before they realize it, they are already senior citizens.

Not so with the average African. True the rush fever of the 20th century has taken a considerable grip, but Africans still find time to relax. Time to sit in the abundant sunshine, time to swim the blue waters of the long sandy beaches, time to plunge the fresh unpolluted rivers, time to walk the vast green fields, time to see nature as it really is.

## Candidate thanks campaigners

Dear Sir:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who helped me in my election campaign. The support I received from my co-campaign managers and campaign committee was tremendous. I appreciate their help and hope that someday I will be able to return the favour.

I would also like to thank all those people who voted for me in the election. Their confidence in me is to say the least gratifying.

I congratulate Peter on his victory and I am confident he will make a fine President. I urge him to take a look at some of the fine ideas presented by Daryl Hay and Dave Kent in their campaign. I also hope that both these candidates offer their services to Peter in an effort to give the President of the SRC the support he deserves. Thank you.

Yours respectfully,  
John Malcolm

## French Culture Center is ridiculous

Dear Sir:

To most New Brunswickers, \$2,800,000.00 means a lot of hard work and sweat! But to our Government, \$2,800,000.00 means NOTHING! Our Government plans to spend \$2,800,000.00 in the city of Fredericton in the near future.

IS IT FOR  
-a much needed bridge across the St. John River???  
-a greatly needed High School on the north side of the River???

-subsidies to offset the high cost of gas and heating fuel in the city???

-providing jobs for many of the Fredericton area's unemployed???

NO!!!  
Our Government (in all of its wisdom) is going to spend \$2,800,000.00 foolishly on something as ridiculous and useless as a French Culture Center!!

It is projects such as this that are dividing this great Nation and costing the working man and woman countless millions of dollars in needless taxation each year!

PLEASE get involved and stop this bilingual farce before it ruins your chances of promotion, before it affects your child's education and future, or before it costs BILLIONS more!

Write your MP, your MLA, and your Councillor; and tell them you are sick and tired of YOUR money being wasted (after all, money is too hard to come by these days).

Furthermore, we, the undersigned protest the building of this French Culture Center. We demand that this building NOT be constructed at the cost of the taxpayer. We also demand that bilingual services not be implemented in the city of Fredericton.

If you agree with the stand we have taken, please sign your name to this and send it to us. Thank you very much.

Signed:  
The Executive  
DOMINION OF CANADA  
ENGLISH SPEAKING ASSOCIATION  
Fredericton Branch No. 6  
P. O. Box 1431  
Fredericton, N.B.

## Reader wants fair play

Dear Sir:

In last week's Brunswickan, the headline on the last page, that is the sports page read: "Red Devils whip ass off Blue Eagles, win 5-2". That, old boy, was last week.

This past Sunday, those same Blue Eagles gave the Red Devils a lesson in how the game of hockey should be played. If you believe in good journalism, and in the expression: Turnabout is fair play.

Continued on page 9

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