

Life in Africa

By JANET REIHM

heat so you never feel muggy, just hot!!
 been draught for two to three years, there
 vegetation remaining, and what there is is
 eaten by hungry goats, cows, donkeys,
 the occasional dog. People's years consist
 with the occasional tree. Grass lawns are
 unheard of in most areas.

Food staples are sorghum and maize. The
 grains as a mealie meal porridge in the
 by lunch its consistency has changed to a
 even though there is a big cattle industry,
 om eaten by the majority of people. It is
 e for the average worker who may only
 er month in the rural areas. A typical lunch
 g portion of mealie meal with some beef
 iled cabbage and onions. A treat might be
 eat and perhaps rice or samp (a white type
 tituted for mealie meal. Fruits are in abun-
 are favored for snacks as they are quite in-

Education system is based on the British one. A
 to the Standard grades 1-7 hoping of pass-
 ns that will enable him or her to enter
 ol. Form school consists of Forms 1-5.
 for exams after Form 3. Then Cambridge
 are given at the end of Form 5. Some
 schools are government operated and some
 School fees are levied for all students with
 ol fees being higher. Consequently,
 places are at a premium. Uniforms are
 n boys and girls. Since independence, the
 has channelled many funds for education
 consider one of their most important future
 Many post-secondary institutions such as
 y of Botswana, Botswana Agricultural Col-
 lial health Institute, and National Center
 raining are only a few of the centers having
 ished to meet the demand for more trained
 There is even a department for non-formal
 and Botswana Extension College which
 set up to help older students who didn't
 nce when they were young to receive an

ally Botswana's male workforce between
 20-40 went to South Africa to work in the
 It was hard work, poor living conditions
 re only allotted a 2-week leave once a year.
 uld go to South Africa to work as domestic
 ctory workers and other low paying jobs.
 endence and the decrease in South African
 r a migrant labor force, many more
 residents of Botswana) have taken up jobs
 economy. Agriculture still plays a major
 economy as does cattle herding. The
 t, through their efforts to increase self-
 created many misistries such as educa-
 ry, and commerce, health, water affairs and
 administration.

Molepolole, a large village 50 km. from the
 Gaborone (pronounced Ha-bo-ron-e). The
 representative from Crossroads in Botswana
 in a rural development agency where there
 different kinds of units: experimental,
 l, and commercial. I worked in a commer-
 ical which sold building supplies. I was responsi-
 ble for the bookkeeping for the store. I gained
 business experience as I had never worked with
 an accounting system before. I learned much
 business practices and local social customs
 people who I worked with as well as
 who came into the store. There had been
 Crossroaders who had worked there, and the
 s very pleased to have another Crossroaders

In my free time, I made many small excur-
 sioning villages where there were often
 fairs on the weekends. The opportunity of



meeting many people from different villages enhanced
 my understanding of others in the world around us.
 some of my work duties involved going to Gaborone
 which was quite a contrast for me as I was able to view
 the cosmopolitan side of Botswana: tall buildings,
 numerous cars, shopping malls, a large variety of
 clothing and food services and even a movie theater.

Despite my excursions to Gaborone I really liked
 Molepolole because it was a small enough community
 to get to know many people. Everyone greeted me
 another when passing. People recognized me on the
 roads and frequently asked if I needed a lift
 somewhere. As I made daily trips to the bank making
 deposits I soon realized that this was a golden oppor-
 tunity to meet many people. Walking to work provided
 me with ample chance to meet many children sitting in
 their compounds. They all waved and said "Hello"; the
 only English word they knew!! Food shopping always
 proved to be interesting because it was necessary to
 go to many different shops to obtain all the required
 items. Life shifts into a lower gear--no rushing, time
 can be taken to get to know your neighbour, and no
 phones ringing. An interest in others replaced a North
 American philosophy of self-interest.

All was not work--I managed to go on a "Safari" into
 the Khutse Game Reserve which is in the southern part
 of the Kalahari desert. The reserve is noted for its
 small game and many varieties of birds. We saw many
 ostrich, springbok and duiker (small types of antelope),
 eland and gemsbok (like horses with horns), hares, and
 vultures. We camped out in the wilderness, totally
 vulnerable to climate and creatures. The sensual feel-
 ing of actually being in Africa suddenly came to me
 when I saw 10 ostrich running as if on air. A week later,
 I had a terrific opportunity to go to Victoria Falls in Zim-
 babwe. I went with another Crossroaders by train from
 Gaborone through Bulawayo to Victoria Falls, a train
 experience I will never forget. Victoria Falls are spec-
 tacular in that there is so much falling water. The
 volume of water that is continually going over the falls
 is staggering--120 million gallons per minute!!!

After my placement finished in August, I was for-
 tunate to get a ride to Northern Botswana to Chobe
 Game Reserve as public transportation is slow,
 unreliable and inaccessible to certain areas. We
 camped right beside a hippo mudhole, heard elephants
 crushing trees nearby and shuttered at the lions' roars
 at night. Sunrise and sunset saw us out cruising for
 fame, in our Land rover, as this is the best time of day
 to observe them at the watering holes. We saw herds
 of elephant, zebra, many types of buck, impala, Kudu (a
 type of antelope), leopard, water-buffalo, giraffe, hip-
 por, wart-hogs (wild pigs), and baboon. Unfortunately
 we didn't see lion or rhino.

I crowded enough experiences in 3 months to last a
 lifetime! The simple life of Molepolole, the big-city life
 of Gaborone, the natural beauty of the country, and the
 wild adventure of safaris made for memories that I will
 not soon forget.

In closing, my cross-cultural experience was a success
 in many ways. I had comfortable housing arrangements,
 good job placement, participation in local events, a
 varied social life, a bit of touristic travel and above all
 the opportunity to explain to my friends and commu-
 nity about my experiences and as a result increase
 understanding between citizens of Canada and
 Botswana.

