

20 July 2009

In May or perhaps June of 2009, I realized that a major anniversary of the first moon landing was approaching. About the same time, I heard of the Peace Corps' project to collect stories from RPCVs for the Fiftieth Anniversary, and eventually, the moon landing became a more personal story.

I initially put the idea of submitting a story aside; but several weeks later while waiting for my shower water to heat up, I surprisingly thought about the cold-water showers I took as a PCV-trainee while staying with my host family in Freetown, Sierra Leone. This triggered my remembrances of the first moon landing, so I decided to look for the journal I kept during my stay in Sierra Leone, 1969-1971, so I could read my entries from July 1969.

At this time, my roommate and I had just moved in for a month's stay with a Krio family in Freetown on July, 19, 1969. The following day, we gathered with the extended family in their parlor and listened to the moon landing on the radio. There was no television, and I only remember being excited to hear such a major event while in West Africa.

After the broadcast, we had dinner and talked with some of the family and they showed us how they plaited their hair and tied their headties. It was only our second day with the family, but I wrote in my journal that we were feeling more relaxed and at ease. I also wrote that I thought living with the family would be a good learning experience and that we were improving our Krio language skills.

The next day, one class period at the summer school where we practiced teaching was canceled so all the students and staff could see a movie on Apollo 10, the mission prior to the moon landing.

At a later time, a contagious eye infection was given the name Apollo, as some felt the moon landing caused the ailment.

And, ironically, my journal also revealed that the moon-landing day was also the day of my first bucket bath—a cold water bath taken in a wooden house in the backyard. The circle, at least in the bathing department, was complete.

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Sierra Leone 1969-1971