



Photo by Kofi Lomotey

The smiling faces of children in Accra, the capital of Ghana, are among the memories of a group of East Palo Altans.

A trip that changed their lives

'Everywhere I looked, I saw people that looked just like me.'

By Chris Kenrick
Times Tribune staff

EAST PALO ALTO — Like most black Americans, Barbara Mouton and Carmaleit Oakes of East Palo Alto can't trace their roots back more than one or two generations.

The 18th and 19th century slave trade meant the separation of countless African families who were never reunited.

"For most of us," Mouton said, "there was a break, and we have no idea where we came from."

But on a 3-week trip to Ghana last month, Mouton, Oakes and 11 other East Palo Alto resi-

dents learned a bit more about from where their ancestors came, and they say the experience has changed their lives.

"I call it my trip home," said Mouton, who is mayor of East Palo Alto. "Everywhere I looked, I saw people that looked just like me. The man who drove a car for us was the spitting image of my grandson, Joseph."

Oakes said, "I've come back a stronger person and a more forgiving person, because I saw an entire country that was run by the black majority. I can see with my own eyes the marvelous changes that have occurred in Ghana."

Mouton and Oakes, who are both active in the movement to incorporate East Palo Alto, say the

trip has renewed their faith in black-run governments.

"This trip has given my belief system the shot of adrenalin it so badly needed," Mouton said. "I hadn't had a vacation in six years, and I was frustrated by the negative images of blacks projected here. In Africa I saw people who know they have within themselves the intellectual capacity to make correct, informed decisions for themselves."

Mouton and Oakes admit that not everything they saw was perfect.

Ghana, which in 1957 became the first of Bri-

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The Peninsula Times Tribune

Published in Palo Alto, California, for Santa Clara and San Mateo counties

Final stocks
—Pages D-2, 3

25 Cents

Tuesday, September 7, 1982

★★★ Mid-Peninsula Edition

Congress to vote on veto

Social issues top controversial agenda



Israel threatens renewed violence

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon today demanded that Lebanon sign a peace treaty with Israel amid threats of renewed Mid-

• U.S. Marines bored in Beirut — A-4

GHANA

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tain's Africa possessions to gain freedom, has gone through five military coups, the most recent one Dec. 31. Economic development has been slow, with problems of lagging production, staple shortages, expensive petroleum imports and depressed prices for the country's chief product, cocoa.

But the East Palo Alto women said that from what they saw of Ghana, the country works.

"The grass is just as green as in Palo Alto," Oakes said. "People weren't hungry, though they didn't have much of anything else. In the villages they had food and a place to sleep, and they seemed relatively happy."

One thing that made a major impression on Mouton and Oakes was the apparent mood of the Ghanaian people.

"You'd see young black males walking down the street with their head high, and their every step seemed to say, 'This is my world and the sky's the limit.' This is in direct contrast to the young men we see on the streets here who are slouching, dejected and fearful," Mouton said.

Mouton believes that one reason Chicano children seem to have greater self-esteem than black children is that they can go to Mexico and see an entire country run by people like themselves. Because Africa is so far away (Mouton estimates her trip cost her about \$3,000), American black children seldom have that chance.

"I wish I could pick up everyone here in East Palo Alto and take them there," Oakes said.

Oakes noted that in the Ghanaian capital city of Accra, the outside of all the buses had billboards carrying slogans such as "Do good and save your life," "Why Worry?" and "God is Forever."

"When you read something like that it puts you in a good frame of mind," she said.

Mouton was particularly impressed when she went to a large marketplace, almost as big as the whole area of East Palo Alto.

"There were wall-to-wall people, all black, all selling things, and no arguments," she said.

Both women said they were disappointed to see some shoddy American-made goods for sale at the markets in Accra.

Oakes believes that the power of multinational corporations has been so strong in Ghana that it has slowed the country from becoming self-sufficient. The companies export so many raw materials that there is little left for the Ghanaian people themselves, she said.

"Cocoa should have been common, but it wasn't," she said. "Coffee was hard to get, too."

Although they found some good Chinese restaurants in Accra, both women said the typical Ghanaian diet is a bit tiresome.

"We had rice every single day until it was coming out of our ears," Mouton said.

Oakes said, "I lost a little weight, but I needed to."

In addition to rice, Ghanaians eat large amounts of casaba root, and corn and tomatoes frequently are used to make sauces. The women said they tasted excellent pineapples and bananas.

In the several universities and villages they visited, the East Palo Alto women were treated warmly, and special respect was paid to older members of the group.

In the village of Ndeum, the 72-year-old chief had nine wives, 158 children and so many grandchildren that he didn't even know the exact number.

Mouton, Oakes, and others who were on the Africa trip will share their photographs and experiences at an Oct. 17 fund-raiser for the Nairobi Secretariat, an East Palo Alto group. The event will be held at 3 p.m. at the Municipal Council Chambers, 2415 University Ave., East Palo Alto. Admission is \$2 for the general public and \$1.50 for senior citizens.

CO Benj found

WASHINGTON
Adam Benjamin Jr. Indiana Democrat, of apparently natural one-room Capitol Hill today, District of Columbia.

Benjamin, 47, was found aide, Peter Visclosky, 11 a.m. EDT, the police said.

Police Lt. Carl Alexa "It appears to be natural He added that the coroner was last seen on Saturday the time of death had not terminated.

The aide, who went to ment after he could not be congressman, called a and Benjamin was pronounced dead on the scene by medical examiner's office.

Neither police nor his immediately gave a cause of

An autopsy will be performed to determine the cause of death, police spokesman Gloria said.

Benjamin's office issued a terse written statement:

"Congressman Adam Benjamin Jr. died in his Washington apartment over the Labor Day weekend. He was born Aug. 6, 1928. His body will be flown to his home where funeral arrangements will be made."

An aide who declined to be identified said a more detailed statement would be released later today, once the cause of death had been determined.

Benjamin's office was closed and reporters were not admitted.

Benjamin was first elected to Congress in 1976 and reelected since then.

He was seeking a fourth term and had had no opposition in the primary.

BERN

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submachine guns. More officers were believed hiding within the embassy compound.

London's Standard newspaper reported that the British army's Special Air Service commando squad was sending men to Bern to "advise the Swiss police on how to set up listening devices and try to install a minuscule fisheye camera in the building to watch the gunmen."

The terrorists, who call themselves "The Polish Revolutionary Home Army," are holding eight junior Polish diplomatic personnel and a Polish national who was visiting the embassy when it was seized, Hubacher said.

Their leader, who gave his name only as Col. Wysocki, has said that if the demands are not met, he and his "anti-communist paramilitary squad" will blow up the embassy with 55 pounds of dynamite they claim to possess.

At first, Hubacher said there were 14 hostages, but later reports

of a pregnant woman Monday night and two other female hostages Tuesday. He did not provide their names.

Polish sources in Bern said the first released hostage was Malgorzata Luczak, a clerk-typist at the embassy, and the other two were Irene Matusiak and Stanislaw Antoniewicz, both in their 50s and wives of embassy employees.

The Polish news agency PAP quoted Mrs. Luczak's husband as saying she saw "four raiders" armed with "long weapons."

Luczak, whose first name was not given, was quoted as saying his wife "did not say much about the incident. She only said they had no chance to defend themselves."

The official Polish news media have blamed "Solidarity extremists" for the embassy attack. But Wysocki, who has conducted several telephone interviews with journalists, denied any connection with the suspended Polish labor union.

Exiled Solidarity leaders in Western Europe issued a formal statement condemning the takeover.

In an interview with the Vienna tabloid Neue Kronen Zeitung, Wysocki claimed "The Polish Revolutionary Home Army" includes an

FESTIVAL

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of the crew's living quarters — a huge, dirt-floored tent that its inhabitants called "the slave ship" — waiting for the Greyhound bus that would take them back to Santa Cruz.

"I can't wait to get home," said Phoebe Phables, 26, a Santa Cruz hairdresser. "I miss my bed, my shower, my everything. Still, this was fun. It toughened me up. There were a lot of people working here from middle-class families who do not know how to live like this."

For the staff of UNUSON, the San Jose-based corporation that organized the concert-cum-technology fair with \$12.5 million of Wozniak's money, Monday marked the end of months of work on an event that many people were wrongly convinced would be a disaster.

UNUSON staff members will stay at the site for another month or two to help restore the park. They will plant new grass in the amphitheater and new trees along

ISRAEL

morning and the leftists pulled out of four areas.

Women from balconies on army units as they deplored the hold of the Palestine Liberation Organization for the first time since the 1975-76

An Israeli army officer was deployed and shook hands with the commander after the Lebanese raised over the positions of the men of the Shiite Moslem