

## 4. Member Spotlight: Cliff Maat, RPCV Ghana, 1987-1989

### 1) A short description of your Peace Corps service:

I was a chemistry and math teacher at Pope John Secondary School in Koforidua, Ghana. Ghanaian students must apply for admission, and their parents must pay tuition, to secondary schools, so my students were generally well motivated. The school was a former Catholic seminary which the government took over at independence.

Thinking that I could improve safety standards in a poor country's chemical laboratories, I brought over a box of safety goggles. The goggles were useless - the warm humidity fogged them up within seconds. The lab was reasonably well stocked with chemicals, though I frequently had to substitute some chemicals for others that were supposed to be in the curriculum. My Peace Corps predecessor teacher, Tom Verme, sent us a generous gift of silver nitrate (expensive!). The school headmaster kept it locked in his office.

The language of instruction was English, which made the job easier but hampered my motivation to learn Twi. Good classroom management was the toughest part of the job - it was a good thing most of my students wanted to learn. The headmaster applied to host two Peace Corps volunteers after I left, which was gratifying.



### 2) Fun fact about your host country:

2a. Ghana was the first former colony in Africa to gain independence, in 1957. The first president, Kwame Nkrumah, joked that they might build a monument to the Anopheles mosquito, which brought malaria and fear to would-be European colonizers for centuries.

2b. Ghana is home to a herd of wild elephants in a national park in a remote northern region. Elephants are common in East and Southern Africa but rare in West Africa.

### 3) Fun fact about your community:

My host community had been originally settled by refugees from a nineteenth century civil war in the western part of the country. Consequently they spoke a dialect of Twi somewhat different from that spoken in the surrounding countryside. Among my students were native speakers of Akwapim Twi, Asante Twi, Guan, Krobo, and Ewe.



### 4) Most unique part of your Peace Corps service:

Nothing I can take credit for, but my best chemistry student was studying to become a priest.

### 5) What are you up to now?

I am a chemical engineer at TPC Group (Texas Petrochemicals) and I hope to organize a track and field team to participate at the annual Houston Corporate Athletic Association Regional Track Meet in June.

