

# FEATURES

## Out of Africa

### Two African students find life in America similar to back home

By Renee Knight

**E**dde Traore and Mamadou "Papy" Ka aren't your typical ECSU students.

Edde speaks five languages, for example, and Papy speaks six.

Edde, a native of Mali in western Africa, speaks French, English, German, his tribal language, Senoufo, as well as his national language, Bambara.

Papy, a native of Senegal, speaks French, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Arabic and his native language, Wolof.

Both students explain that in their native Africa, learning different languages is mandatory.

Although they've come from another continent for an education at ECSU, the school's two African students say that they find many similarities between this country and their homeland.

"The clothes are basically the same," says Edde. "We also wear Nike, Reeboks and Levis." The only real difference, adds Edde, is that "clothes are more expensive here."

Edde, a freshman majoring in business administration, said that the foods are basically the same, too. "My favorite foods include french fries, rice, and beef."

Papy, a freshman business major, agrees that the clothes and food in Senegal are similar to the U.S. But Papy said he finds living in the U.S. more boring than Africa.

"At dances everyone is just standing around," he said. "I'm used to people going to dances with a partner

and dancing. I also listen to more reggae music, especially Bob Marley, rather than rap."

Papy said that ECSU students go home on weekends and "there isn't much to do."

Despite the similarities, ECSU's African students said there are profound differences between the U.S. and their native Africa.

In Mali, the dominant religion is Islam, for example, and there is a taboo against drinking and eating pork.

There is also a stronger emphasis on tradition, and respect for authority in Mali.

"In Africa, you have to be respectful when talking to parents, and very obedient," said Edde. "But here, when I hear students talking on the phone to their parents, they say things like, 'What's up, mom?'"

Relations between the sexes are also dramatically different, says Edde. "In America, a girl can date lots of different guys," he said, "but in Africa, a girl has to date only one guy at a time."

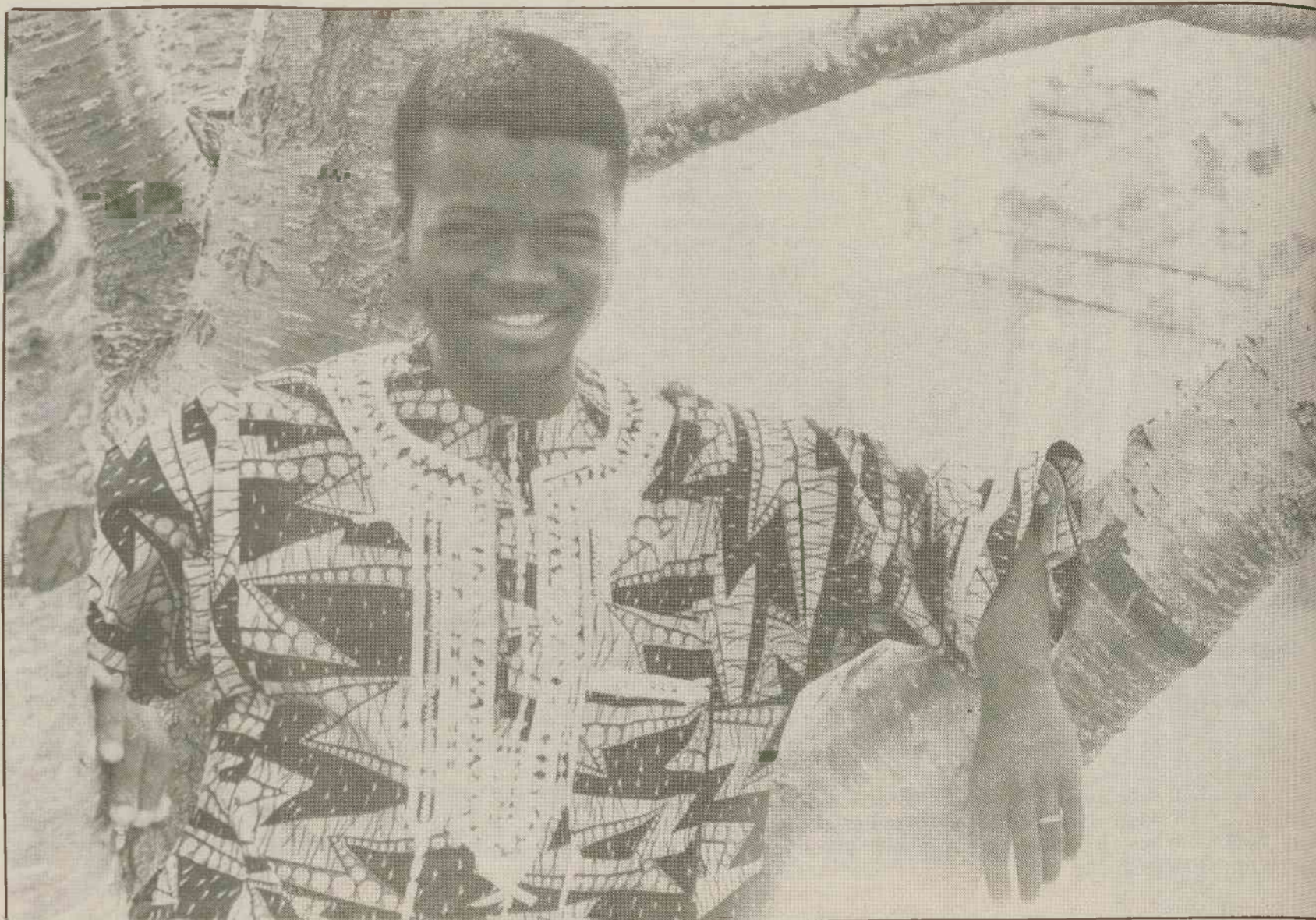
This does not apply to men, however, says Edde. "They can date up to five at a time." Men are less competitive with each other, too.

Before couples get married, they must live together first, and act as if they are married.

"If the man doesn't want to marry her, he doesn't have to," he added.

Men can have up to four wives, said Edde. If a man wants to marry a woman, he must obtain permission from each set of parents.

"Wives are complimentary in my country," says Papy. "When you marry



Edde Traore, an ECSU freshman and native of Mali in Western Africa, sports his native clothes during a recent afternoon on campus. Traore, one of two African students now attending ECSU, says his favorite foods include french fries, rice, and beef. Despite the differences between Africa and the United States, Traore says he sees many similarities between the two nations. However, African students are more respectful to their elders, and relations between the sexes are dramatically different. In Africa, a man can have up to four wives, with different wives being used for different functions. Although he admires the U.S., Edde plans to return to his home after graduation.

*"I won't stay here [in the U.S.]. It's too expensive. Also, American women are crazy."*

**Edde Traore**

*"Americans are cool, but they love possessions."*

**Mamadou "Papy" Ka**

more than one you have them for different duties. One can be used for management, one for budgeting the household, and so on. Personally, I choose to have only one."

Although he plans to get married and have at least three children, Edde said he doesn't want to stay in the U.S. "I won't stay here," he said. "It's too expensive. Also, American women are crazy."

Edde said he is happy living in the

U.S. for now. Edde thinks that girls at ECSU are generous but he doesn't have a girlfriend. Edde is quick to add, however, that this works out for him because it allows him more time to study.

Papy said that he finds American women "very attractive," but adds, "I don't think I would want to marry one. They're too materialistic."

Papy said he likes Americans in general, however. "Americans are

cool, but they love possessions."

Papy also praised his teachers at ECSU. "I like the way they teach."

Sometimes the African students have trouble with the English language since there are a great many words they don't know.

ECSU instructors have been patient and understanding, however.

Both students said they liked the way they could go to their instructors and talk to them "one on one," and get help from them in understanding the subject.

Both students said they admired many things about America.

"I like the U.S. because it's a free country," said Papy. "To succeed in this country it's up to you, if you have the heart to succeed."

The U.S. is also a much more politically stable country than many areas in Africa. Mali's leader, General Moussa Traore, for example, was recently overthrown.

Edde said he thought the leader's overthrow is "a bad event, because

many people have been killed, including my best friend." He said he has spoken to his parents since the overthrow of the government, and he doesn't know a lot of what's going on in the country. Edde added, however, that the turmoil has created "much trouble in the economy of the country."

Edde said that although the people of Mali may have considered General Traore a military leader, he was actually a peaceful man who was against war.

"The people have appointed a prime minister until January," he said, "when they select a president in Mali. The people want a civilian leader."

Despite the problems in Mali, Edde said he wants to return to his homeland after finishing his education in America.

"There is a great need there for educated people for the country to prosper," he said. "There's enough intelligent people in this country. Africa needs a lot of help."

## Faith in God a 'vital part' of Reverend Charles Foster's life

By Sharon Chappell

**H**He'd been shot in the leg and in the face. It was dark and cold. He needed to move but he couldn't. The Chinese were scrambling over the hill, all around him. What if one of them found him—an American? He had to move! But he couldn't—all he could do was wait.

Never before had he felt so alone. Never before had his faith been so low. God had always seemed so close.

Ever since he was a little boy, growing up in the mining town of Logan, West Virginia, faith in God had been such a vital part of his life.

His grandmother and grandfather lived about eight houses down from his home. As a child, he spent a lot of time with them. His grandmother's Christian example infused him with faith and hope as well as love.

But on that hill near Seoul, South Korea, all the lessons of childhood seemed far away for Charles Foster. In fact, the whole experience was ironic.

Foster had enlisted in the Army, the 3rd Infantry, in 1950 so that he could receive financial assistance to go to college. Just three weeks later the Korean War broke out. And just one year later Foster was lying on that hill wondering if he would even make it home, let alone go to college.

He did make it to college, however, but not right away. It took one year and two months in a hospital to recover from the wounds he had received in Korea.

Upon discharge from the service in 1952, Foster started college at West Virginia State University. He attacked his educational program with zeal—taking 22 hours most of the time and graduating in three and one-half years.

With a Bachelor of Science degree and a double major in business education and pre-law, he went looking for work. All he could find was a job as a dishwasher at the Charleston, West Virginia Airport. Some of his friends

put him down; a man with a college degree should not be washing dishes.

"I knew it was temporary," said Foster. "I always had faith that God would later give me the type of job I desired. But he went beyond that. I had desired to teach on the high school level but God took me beyond that to the university level."

But before Foster reached either of these goals, he had two other jobs.

Finding out that he could make twice the money waxing cars, he left his job washing dishes. In fact, he made enough money that he bought himself a fairly new car. His boss took a look at his car and his college degree—and fired him.

It was 1957 and Foster had no job prospects. He needed to continue supporting his family and yet he had no idea what he was going to do. But once again God came through with help.

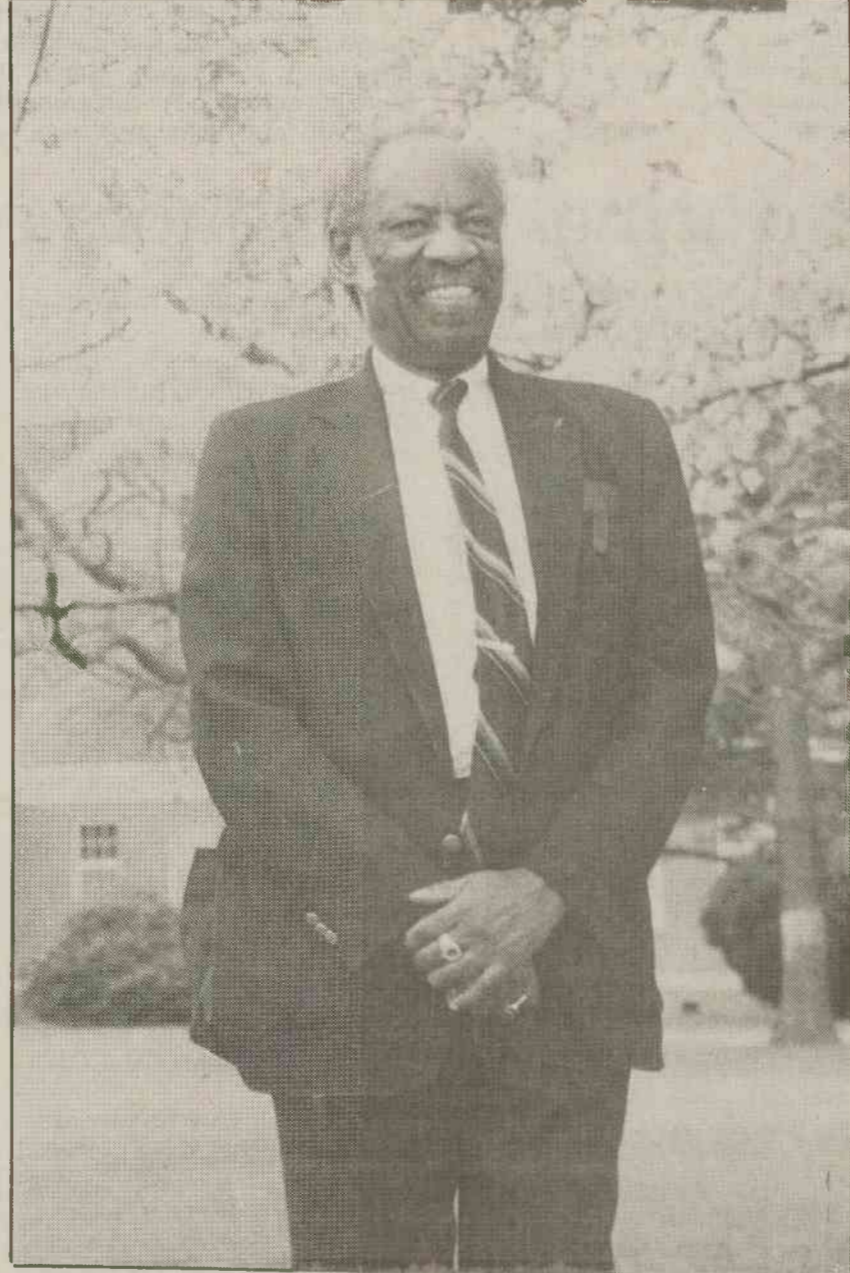
Foster's wife, Ruby, was working for a lawyer at the time and her boss gave Foster a sealed letter. He told Foster to take it to the postmaster in Cleveland, Ohio. When Foster did this, the postmaster immediately offered him a job, which Foster accepted.

"It shows that it's not what you know, but who you know," said Foster.

Two years later in 1959, the placement office of West Virginia University, Foster's alma mater, contacted him about a vacancy at a high school in North Carolina. Foster applied for the teaching position and finally his initial goal of teaching high school became a reality at P. W. Moore High School in Elizabeth City.

Twelve years later, at a car wash, Foster just happened to talk to President Marion Thorpe of Elizabeth City State University. Thorpe asked Foster if he would be interested in the position of Assistant Director of Financial Aid at ECSU. Foster applied for and received this position in 1971. He held the position for four years.

Eighteen years later Foster applied



The Rev. Charles Foster poses on the ECSU campus during a recent spring afternoon. Foster, Director of the University's Career Placement Service, counsels students on job opportunities, and helps them find employment in their fields. He also helps students learn how to be interviewed and write resumes. The West Virginia native is known as a caring instructor who is sincerely interested in the welfare of the University's students.

Photo by Ursula McMillion

for and received the position of Director of the University Center in August of 1989. Foster held that position until a little over a year ago. When the

position of Director of Career Planning and Placement became available, he prayed and asked God for this new position. At first it looked like the

answer to that prayer was "no" because he received a letter saying that he had not been accepted for the position. But, shortly after receiving that notice, Chancellor Jimmy R. Jenkins stopped him on campus and told him that he *did* have the job.

This experience, as well as many others, has caused Foster to say, "Things that have happened are prayers answered...I don't look on any day as a bad day. I take the bitter with the sweet. I don't complain because I believe what the Bible says, 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.'"

This positive attitude helps Reverend Charles Foster in his current position as Director of Planning and Placement. Now he counsels students about job opportunities and the future of different majors. He also helps students prepare and apply for graduate school and teaches them how to sell themselves to future employers. And he plans and sponsors job fairs in all fields.

He has also sponsored seminars in residence halls and the University Center which help students learn how to be interviewed and how to write resumes. Foster's office also puts out a monthly newsletter which informs students about career opportunities.

In between all these activities Foster teaches World Civilization in the extended day program at ECSU.

"He's a very understanding person," said Pauline Harris, an ECSU student. "Very calm. He takes time with you, to help you. He cares whether you get your work done or not and whether you are doing well in class or not. He's a good teacher."

Foster is also the pastor of the Holy Trinity Community Church in Elizabeth City. And he has run for a few political offices.

Having run once for County Commissioner, he lost by only 44 votes. And he has run twice for a seat in the North Carolina House of Representatives.

"I've always studied politics. And a lot of politicians did not win the first time. It takes a while for a new name to become a household word."

Foster added that he comes from a family of politicians. His grandfather was "Mr. Democrat" in his home county.

"So many people think politics is for crooks. But government was not set up for crooks. Working for the government doesn't mean compromising my principles."

"For instance, I'm against a state lottery. There are other ways than gambling. I'd propose another way. But it would not be horse racing."

Even though Foster is busy, he tries to keep his life balanced.

"It's all a matter of budgeting your time," he said. So he carefully plans what he is going to do and when—even to laying out the clothes he will wear. And, of course, he budgets money, also.

"It's not how much you make but what you do with what you make," he said.

Foster and his wife, the former Ruby Mitchell, have raised seven children. Five are already university graduates. Three of these graduated from ECSU. His sixth child, a daughter, is in law school. His youngest, also a daughter, is a pre-med student here at ECSU.

Foster has two master's degrees—one in guidance counseling from Virginia State University and the other in divinity from Virginia Union Theological Seminary. He has also done work on a doctorate at Virginia Tech.

Foster manages to combine work, fun, and a strong sense of responsibility. "I'd like to say to young people enrolled in college: God will enable you to accomplish your goals. You must have patience and wait for God's timing, though. You will want things to happen. But if you persevere and have endurance, you will accomplish your goal. And you might even exceed it," said Foster.