

# Student gains friends, learns lessons in Africa

**Giselle Pole**  
A&E Editor

Mirrett spent January studying Ghanaian history, attending tribal ceremonies, visiting historical sites and walking through rainforests. One of her most thrilling feats was to walk on the rainforest canopy 400 feet off the ground.

"It was a challenge," she said, "but it was well worth it."

Mirrett was not able to study abroad for a semester due to her Environmental Studies major, so she decided to travel during the winter.

"I wanted to go to a place that was different," she said. "London was too common of a place for

me... when I read about Ghana, that was a place that I had never heard or knew anything about."

Mirrett got more than a classroom lecture; she learned the life and culture of the Ghanians firsthand. She said that one of the coolest things she learned was that natives are named depending on the day they were born.

"The boys' names all begin with a 'K,'" she said. "Since I was born on a Thursday, I'd be called Yaa."

She learned the religion of other tribal groups as well. One tribe worships a golden stool, which they believed fell out of the sky and landed in their midst.

She saw other fascinating things as well. Men and women walking through markets balancing things on their head.

Some of her experiences were not all that "awesome," she recalled. She remembered walking around the town feeling "strange being a minority." When the group attended a ceremony, being the only whites there was "a huge culture shock."

The students were overwhelmed by the natives at the beach and around the town, who kept coming up to them and talking with them.

Nevertheless, she found the people "friendly and fun."

"They seem to have so much happiness and family-oriented lifestyles," she said.

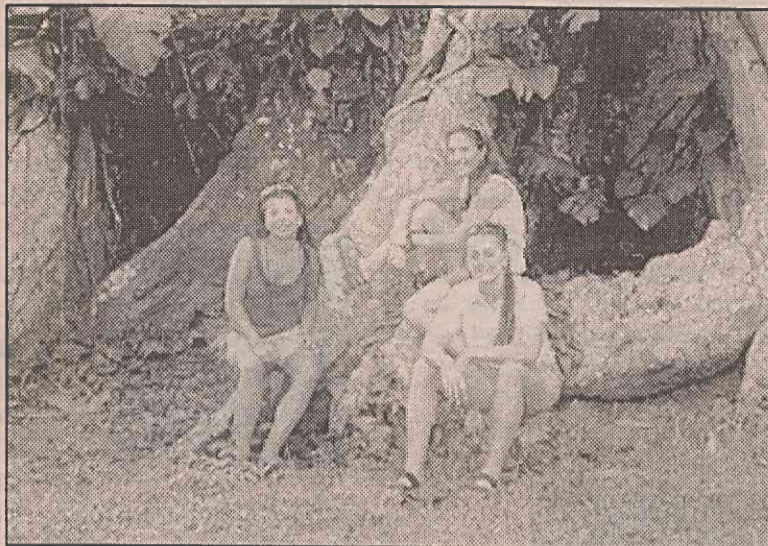
Mirrett had to keep a journal chronicling her experiences in Ghana. The journal was presented for a grade.

The trip is being offered again this winter, and Mirrett offers some advice.

"People should prepare themselves for the shock they will receive in some kind of way.... they don't realize that they are coming to a Third World country, surrounded by a different culture, and many may take it hard."

Mirrett also suggests that people come prepared to learn from the new cultures they will encounter.

"People need to have an open mind; it's not for everyone... they must have a willingness to learn."



Sitting on her living room couch, she leafs through a huge photo album containing pictures of her recent trip.

This wasn't a family vacation; she traveled with 22 other people she didn't know at all. It was a three-week visit to another country on a different continent.

Senior Erin Mirrett spent last winter term in Ghana, West Africa. Her experience was one she felt could not be matched.

"It was awesome," she said. "I want to go again."

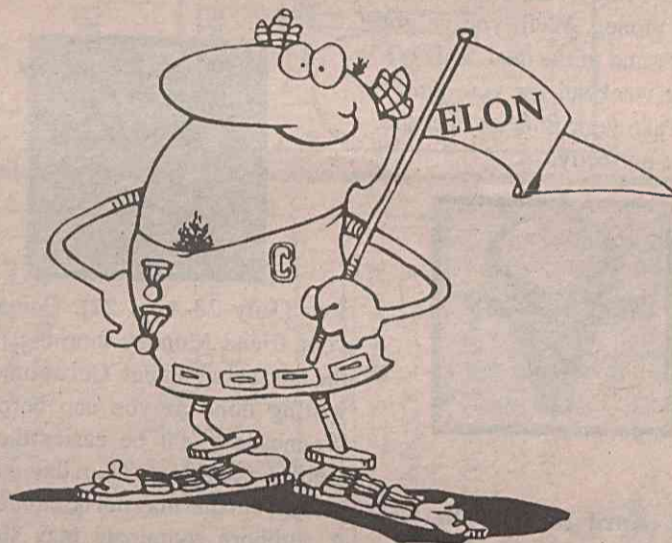


Photos courtesy of Erin Mirrett

Above: Erin Mirrett, Kim Briggs and Mara Birnbaum hang out with the Rastafarians.

Above, right: Mirrett and friends show just how large Ghana's rubber trees are; they are sitting on part of its trunk.

## WHERE THE TOGA PARTY BEGAN!

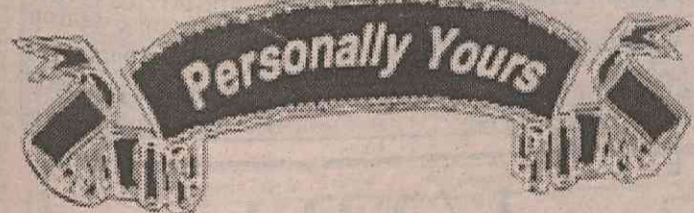


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