

January 2005

Tabaski

The Paris-Dakar rally ended in Dakar last Sunday. Well ... not exactly Paris-Dakar. The race started in Barcelona. It ended in Lac Rose, about 30 miles North of Dakar. But, what else could they call it? The Barcelona-Lac Rose Rally just doesn't have the same "exoticity" (new word). Sometimes it starts in Paris. Sometimes it ends in Cairo.

After the race everybody gathered at the Meridien Hotel, about five kms. from our house. A bunch of Americans staged a roadside beer party, complete with American flag. Who should stop by but Robbie Gordon, of NASCAR fame. Know of him? Neither did we. Had a few beers, posed for many photo ops. For two days the road outside our house looked and sounded like Lime Rock with race cars, trucks and motorcycles streaming by. Felt like I was at Watkins Glen all over again.

You can check out stories and photos [here](#).

20th

Two big news items here in Dakar, VERY loosely related. Anne finally got her golf clubs yesterday!!!! They were ordered in July, BUT whoever was working in the pouch mail room (for official US mail that we could use since Anne worked for Peace Corps) in Dulles, VA decided they were too long for the diplomatic pouch. Soooooo, they traveled 3 times across the US looking for someone to keep them for her. We had thought that Idy, a Senegalese friend, could hand carry them in September, but he never came until the middle of November. Since he was on stand-by the airline refused; so he mailed them. They finally arrived here, but the local Post Office wanted us to pay \$110 in duty tax, which we refused since we're diplomatic. So since BEFORE Thanksgiving, someone in shipping at the Embassy has been trying to get the tax waived. Finally all was settled yesterday, but we needed to pay a \$20 storage fee to the post office, since they were there so long – even though the Post Office officials were the ones that refused to release them!!!! Go figure. We have an expression here - WAWA - West Africa Wins Again.

Tomorrow is the major Muslim religious holiday of the year called Tabaski. (Anzie remembers it being celebrated in Tunisia when she was there as a Volunteer) It commemorates the Old Testament story of God telling Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, then God relents at the last minute and a sheep is sacrificed instead. (Interesting... it is the one of the few stories shared by all three major religions) So here, everyone goes out and gets a live sheep. It's a kick: on street corners all over the urban downtown and out in the neighborhoods, there are small (and large also) herds of sheep tied up for people to buy. These are not the puffball

wooly sheep that we're used to in the States. They look more like big goats with horns. It's a very happy time, like Thanksgiving with families gathering. The downside is that it is an incredibly expensive time. Though the Koran says that you don't need to buy a sheep if you're poor, everyone goes into debt to buy them anyway - keeping up with the neighbors and peer pressure. Sheep can cost from \$30 to a \$1000, depending on size, which is a huge amount of money here. All of our staff have hit us up for advances on their salaries and in addition we've given them large \$\$ gifts for the holiday. For gifts, new clothes are also given.

We have been invited to a PC staff (the head of the drivers so he hasn't much money) member's house to share in the meal. It's sweet of him. Chuck went there last year, but Anzie was in the states in training. He'll wear his African bou-bou and little fez cap and Anzie will wear some long African dress. We'll take pictures. Anyway, we'll go there in the late morning, then play golf with Anne's new clubs in the late afternoon and walk off all that mutton (note we did not say lamb!)

A la prochaine,

Chuck & Anzie