

Let's Salute Our Ghanaian Employees

By George Plohn – article dedicated to the Ghanaian good men and women, employees of Esplanade at Palisades.

The occasion: **March 6** is Ghana's Independence Day – the 57th.



I have already published this article several years ago, but now this updated version is presented as in the meantime we have many new residents and also some new Ghanaian personnel.

We all know that Ghana is a faraway African country, somewhere on the other side of the Great Ditch. That much everybody knows, but I guess, not much more. So let's take this occasion and talk about that country and its hard working people.

Ghana is located in West Africa, east of where the west coast of the continent takes an abrupt sharp turn eastward.



Its next door neighbors are Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) at west, Togo at east and Burkina Faso (formerly the French colony Upper Volta) at north, with the Atlantic Ocean (Gulf of Guinea) at its south coast.

Located only a few degrees north of the Equator, its climate is warm and there are only two main seasons: the wet season and the dry season.

Ghana encompasses plains, waterfalls, low hills, rivers, Lake Volta, which is the world's largest artificial lake (completed in 1965) with a dam that provides

electricity for much of the country, as well as for export to Togo, Benin, and other nearby countries.



Ghana's history goes back many millennia, with the first permanent organized state dating back to the 11th century. Numerous kingdoms and empires emerged there over the centuries, of which the most powerful was the Kingdom of Ashanti, one of the most influential states in Sub-Saharan Africa prior to the onset of colonialism. Early European contacts started with the Portuguese, who came to the region in the 15th century, attracted by the extensive availability of **gold**. By 1598, the Dutch have joined in establishing the Dutch Gold Coast. Other European traders looking for the gold resources came by the mid-17th century, most notably the Swedes establishing the Swedish Gold Coast and Denmark-Norway, establishing the Danish Gold Coast. Even the Germans established the German Gold Coast. All these were, however, poorly organized, interested only in getting their hand on the gold of the region. Gold Coast had long been a name used by Europeans for this region because of the large gold resources found in the area, alongside with amply resources for the shameful slave trade. The last conqueror to follow was the British Empire. The British Gold Coast came into being in 1867, after the British seized all privately held lands along the coast. They also took over the remaining interests of the other European countries, purchasing and incorporating the Danish Gold Coast in 1850 and the Dutch Gold Coast in 1872. Britain steadily expanded its colony through invasion of the local kingdoms as well, particularly the Ashanti and Fante confederacies. Under the terms of the 1844 arrangement, the British assumed to provide security to the coastal areas and thus an informal protectorate came into being. The Ashanti people had controlled much of the territory of Ghana before the Europeans arrived and were often in conflict with them. They are the largest ethnic community in Ghana. Four wars, the so-called Anglo-Ashanti Wars, were fought between the Ashanti and the British. At the end, in 1901, the Ashanti lost their independence, they became a British protectorate and by the following year all of the Gold Coast was a British colony under the name of British Gold Coast Colony. The British exported a variety

of natural resources such as gold, metal ores, diamonds, ivory, pepper, timber, grain and cocoa. On the other hand, the British built railways and the complex transport infrastructure which formed the basis for the economy of modern-day Ghana. They also imposed their language and built Western-style hospitals and schools to provide modern amenities to the country. Today the official language of the country is English but there are other eleven local languages which are considered as unofficial but government-sponsored languages.

By 1945, the native population was demanding more autonomy in the wake of the end of the Second World War and the beginnings of the decolonization process across the world. Ghana had reached a level of political maturity unequalled anywhere in colonial Africa. The constitution did not, however, grant full self-government. Executive power remained in the hands of the British governor, to whom the local Legislative Council was responsible. World War II had just ended, and many Gold Coast veterans who had served loyally in British overseas expeditions returned to a country beset with shortages, inflation, and unemployment. Their veterans, along with discontented urban elements, formed a nucleus of malcontent ripe for disruptive action. A long period of disturbances and riots against the British colonial rule followed, which brought into forefront Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, a US and British educated powerful personality, who by 1949 had a mass following. Under his political leadership the struggle for gaining independence continued with further riots. Finally, in August of 1956, the local assembly passed a motion authorizing the government to request independence within the British Commonwealth. The British government, by now bent to start decolonization, accepted this motion and so the British set the date of **March 6, 1957**, the 113th anniversary of the British Imperial Bond of 1844, an agreement that extended British protection to the entire Gold Coast area, as the date when the former British colony of the Gold Coast was to become the independent state of



Ghana, and the nation's Legislative Assembly was to become the National Assembly with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as prime minister and Queen Elizabeth II as the monarch, represented in the former colony by a governor general. This status of Ghana as a member of the British Commonwealth would continue until 1960, when after a national referendum, Ghana was declared a republic, with Dr. Nkrumah as

its first president.

Ghana favors international and regional political and economic co-operation, and is an active member of the United Nations and the African Union.

Ghana has a great relationship with the United States, and all of the last three U.S. presidents - Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama - have made diplomatic trips to Ghana. Many Ghanaian diplomats and politicians are holding positions in international organizations. These include, first and foremost the Ghanaian diplomat and former Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan.

With a surface area of 92,000 miles, Ghana is twice as large as the state of Pennsylvania. Known for its wealth of minerals, Ghana is the world's 7th largest producer of gold, producing over 102 metric tons of gold. Ghana has the 9th largest reserves of diamonds in the world and is the 9th largest producer of diamonds in the world. Ghana is exporting gold, silver, timber, oil and gas, diamonds, bauxite, and manganese. With all these natural riches, the country could be a better place for its citizens, but unfortunately it is not so and the country is classified by the U.N.'s Committee for Development Policy as a member of the group of least developed countries, a status which is conferred upon the poorest countries in the world. This is the reason why many Ghanaians go abroad seeking employment. Presently the population of Ghana is 24 million, but the Ghanaian diaspora numbers 4 million Ghanaians in different foreign countries, most of them working in the Republic of South Africa (2 million), Brazil (400,000), US (116,000) and in other countries. Even in Israel there are 3000 Ghanaian workers. As for their religious belief, Ghanaians are: 63% Christians, 16% Muslims and 21% with indigenous beliefs.

In conclusion, let me tell you a very wise saying by the well-known all-African hero and Nobel Prize winner Nelson Mandela. He once famously said, and I quote:

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If, however, you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart".

With this in mind, I would like to suggest to you, my fellow residents at Esplanade, to learn some of everyday greetings in our Ghanaian employees' mother tongue, which is the language Twi (pronounced as *ch-wee*). I learned these myself and am using it in my every day chitchat with them. So let's do it:

Good morning	Ma-tzée	Rhymes with Hawaii
Good afternoon	Ma-há	Rhymes with Omaha
Good evening	Ma-dgió	Rhymes with video
Good night	Da-ee-yéh	
How are you?	Ahtzitzáy?	Rhymes with delay
Thank you	Maydáhseh	
Yes	Áhny	Rhymes with Benny
No	Debby	Rhymes with ready

If I could do it, you can do it too, OK?

Having said that, in conclusion let me mention here that our much beloved Shirley Temple was the US ambassador to Ghana from 1974 to 1976, appointed by President Gerald Ford.