This week marks my one year anniversary in Ghana.

I have learned so much on this journey I decided to dedicate this column to the top 10 things I have learned since moving across the Atlantic. I shall list them in descending order.

10. Being Practical Does Not Make Sense - At age 30 I learned I could do whatever I wanted to do, no matter how impractical it seemed to the outside world. Now, since I live without the restrictions of logic the grass does seem a little greener. In fact, the mantra of my life has now become, “Eh, why not?” 9. Advantage of a United States Passport- Before living in another country, I never appreciated the restriction-free travel my American passport gave me. Then I moved to Ghana, where people line up outside of embassies for hours trying to get approved to enter into places such as the U.S. and the United Kingdom. As I watch them suffer in the African sun, I must admit, I am happy to have a passport that advances me directly to go.

8. Make Happy Yourself - This is a popular saying in Ghana, which means you have to do what makes you happy in life. Since moving, I have realized that happiness truly is a personal thing. The only real challenge, to this, is putting your happiness first.

7. Play the Guitar - What more needs to be said? Everyone knows that playing the guitar is one of the coolest talents ever. Yes, ever.

6. Live Without Running Water - When I moved to Accra I knew there was a water issue. Therefore, one of my worst fears was living some place where I had to fetch water every day. Now I am proud to say that I have not had to fetch water every day, but I have had to fetch water. In the past year, I learned more about water pumps and poly tanks than any non-professional should ever know. I’ve learned to self-flush a toilet and bathe from a small rubber tub. Water conservationists would be proud of my adaptation. In fact, if life worked liked the Girl Scouts, I would definitely be receiving a badge for mastering water storage.

5. Six Degrees of Separation; True Theory - I moved to Accra knowing no one in my peer group. Now it seems like I know everyone in Accra. And if I take it one step further, I am amazed at how many of my friends here know people that I know in the States. The number of

connections that my past and current lives have is astounding. Sometimes it just feels like I am just in another city and not another country. I guess the old saying is true, “Birds of a feather flock together;” no matter what part of the world in which they are.

4. Lights Out Does Not Mean Lights Out - That’s right, folks, a person can still live life with no electricity, if that person has learned to play the guitar. Just remember not to open the refrigerator.

3. Respect Immigrants - Becoming an immigrant has given me an entirely new respect for immigrants in the U.S. I must go on the record and say that immigrating to another country is, by far, one of the most challenging things an individual can do; especially if he or she is financially responsible for his or her own relocation. Being a foreigner can make even the strongest person feel vulnerable and brings out a humility only seen under the most extreme pressure. It can be overwhelming learning the new cultural norms and acceptable behavior and even more challenging conforming to them all. It is definitely a challenge that only the best of the best can handle. After this experience I definitely think any individual who can go to another country and successfully restart his or her life, should be entitled to the same rights as people who are natural born citizens of that country; especially if that person is actively contributing to the economy.

2. I love the Internet - Coming to Ghana has reaffirmed that I cannot live without the internet. In fact, I will sacrifice both running water and power for a strong and steady internet connection. I am not ashamed.

1. It Is Worth Writing a Book - That’s right, the blog, www.goneiighana.blogspot.com has done incredibly well. So I have decided to write a full manuscript about the experience. “Gone to Ghana” will appear on a bookshelf nearby in 2013. After all, how could I not share this colorful journey with the world?

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