

# **The Accidental Anthropologist**

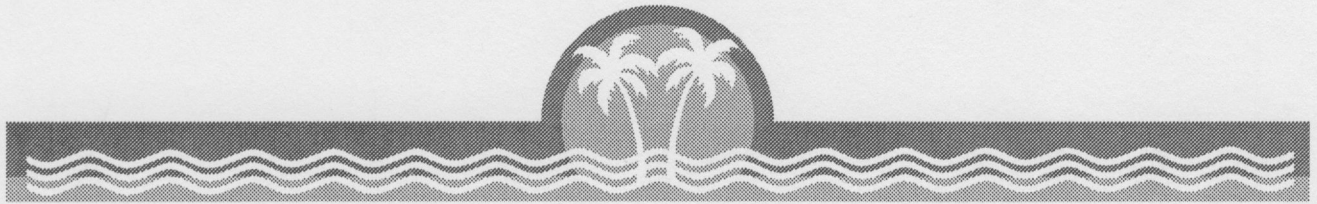
**Michael Boivin, Ph.D.**

**A Fulbright scholar unloads his cultural baggage in Zaire**





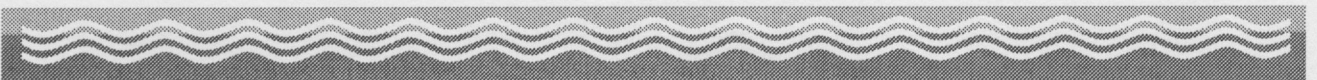




# **The Accidental Anthropologist**

Michael Boivin, Ph.D.

**Spring Arbor College Press**  
Spring Arbor, MI 49283









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*Because of the kindness and understanding of our Zairian friends, our year in Zaire will always be treasured.*

*In particular, my research colleagues Kisoki, Makakala, Kafuti, Odille, and Jan deserve special recognition. They were capable and dependable research assistants, cultural and linguistic mediators, and faithful friends.*

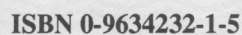
*My wife's parents, Dr. Norm and Jean Abell, made this experience possible for us as a family through their many preparations and sacrifices, and we are deeply grateful to them.*

*But the willingness of my wife Grace and our children, Monique, Daniel, Marjorie, and Matthew, to plunge into this cultural adventure with courage and resilience allowed us to go and to thrive as a family of accidental anthropologists.*

*That is why this book is dedicated to them.*









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*Grace and I were tired before we started. In the Detroit airport waiting for departure to Zaire, I took my turn with the kids—Monique (9), Daniel (7), Marjorie (3), and Matthew (1).*

## Leaving Home

I can still recall the fatigue and sense of relief which overwhelmed my wife, Grace, and me in September 1990, as we buckled our four children into their seats on the Pan American flight out of Detroit Metro Airport. We were bound for London and our connecting Swissair flights through Geneva and on to Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire. The 10 days before our departure were a blur of frantic packing and preparations.

The summer had been a string of unexpected detours and discouragements, and occasional unexpected encouragements. It began with a phone call in June, the





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night I arrived in Washington, D.C. for a three day orientation with other Fulbright research scholars preparing to go to Africa. Grace's words hit me like a sledgehammer: "Your mother has had a heart attack."

I couldn't believe it. I hadn't even told Mom I was planning to cart my family off to Africa for a year to live on a medical mission station in the bush to study cognitive developmental effects of public health intervention in village children. I had wanted to wait until I could see her in person so she *wouldn't* have a heart attack. I thought of her all through the conference, doubting whether we should be going at all in view of my mother's condition.

It was discouraging, especially when I considered the time and emotional investment that had culminated in that moment. There were late nights at my office developing a research proposal, completing forms, and soliciting letters of recommendation. Then in January I received news that I and two others had been nominated for the research position for Zaire, but only one would be accepted. Finally, the April phone call from the United States Information Agency (USIA) office in Washington, D.C. told me that I had been awarded the opportunity. My daughter Monique did cartwheels across the floor. Daniel, less enthusiastic about the prospect of a year in Africa, asked if he could live with our neighbors.

All of the kids became less enthusiastic as they endured inoculations, blood tests, physical exams, and bitter medications for the prevention of malaria. Then there were the painstaking efforts of getting visas at the Zairian embassy in Washington, D.C. and getting letters and research proposals translated into French for my research clearance from the Zairian Ministry of University Education and Research at a time when its government was in virtual chaos. There were repeated calls to USIA's foreign office and the USIS office at the American embassy in Kinshasa to get updates on our medical and research clearances. There were hundreds of little things to be done when leaving a house and a job for a year. And, in the midst of all this, we made a trip to Quebec to be with my mother through coronary triple-bypass surgery and three weeks of intensive care.

Yet here we were, finally, on a plane bound for Zaire and what was to become for our family the best year of our lives. The change in perspective that we underwent as we lived, worked, played, and worshipped with Zairians in the interior was just the first of the rewards.

By December our two older children, Monique (9) and Daniel (7), were fluent in Kituba, and by April they were singing in the children's choir at church—in French. They

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experienced life at a different level as they played with the local children or traveled with me to nearby villages. Whether it was watching Zairians butcher a goat at the local market, harvest palm nuts 50 feet up in a palm tree, bathe or wash clothes in the nearby river, or prepare a meager meal of *luku* (manioc dough) and *saka saka* (sauce made from the leaves) beside their thatched huts over a small fire, our children witnessed things most of their friends will never see.

Grace coped with the frustration—and adventure—of making a home without the many things we took for granted in the United States. I still vividly recall our fear as we considered medical evacuation by plane for Grace as she lay sick and pale from malaria, or, on a separate occasion, with me in severe pain from kidney stones.

Less excruciating, but still traumatic, were my monthly trips by jeep to the capital, over tortuous roads, to report on my research at the embassy and pick up medical supplies and food. Then there were the daily challenges, like haggling with vendors who came to the door over prices for fruit, vegetables, and an occasional wild antelope, supervising the small army of household workers we employed to do the tasks machines did for us back in the U.S. Finally, there was the incessant and overwhelming human need that pulled us at every turn. Almost every day people came to us because they were in need and I was a “rich” American.

The research went better than I could have hoped and, for me personally, it was the most rewarding aspect of the year. I found five Zairian school teachers living at our mission center who were very capable and motivated. We became a cohesive research team, doing the cognitive evaluations and supervising the medical assessments for hundreds of children locally and in outlying villages. Through the work and travel that Kisoki (Sam), Makakala, Odille, Kafuti, Kibungu (Jan) and I shared, we became close friends. They were my primary window into Zairian culture and society, and I, likewise, for their view into American life.

I shaped and directed the project, but they were, without question, its backbone and often its heart as well. They recruited children, interviewed families and evaluated home conditions, collected stool specimens for evaluations for intestinal parasites, evaluated village water sources, administered worm cures and anti-malarials, and brought hundreds of children to the center for laboratory tests and physical exams. Finally, they each spent hundreds and hundreds of hours engaged in comprehensive one-on-one evaluations of cognitive ability with children in the villages and at the center school. The project worked only because



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they worked, believing that this was the most significant endeavor of which they had ever been a part.

We worked with all types of children, but perhaps the group of kids that touched me most were those HIV infected children born to infected mothers in the more heavily populated region of lower Zaire. During a one-week period in July 1991, we worked with Dr. Steve Green, a British missionary physician who was head of the pediatrics unit of a large medical center at Kimpese. We attempted to follow-up on the developmental progress of a number of these children. He had followed a large group of HIV-positive children through their first two years after birth, and it was our intention to find as many of these children as possible and evaluate their degree of cognitive and motor development.

I learned so much from these kids and their families—kids like Mbala Seyana, who, when I found him, had been in the pediatrics ward at the medical institute in Kimpese for two months. His mother had lived by his hospital bed almost the entire time, wiping dried green mucous from around his nose and mouth, and trying to get him to eat and drink a little. His breathing was irregular, and every now and then a cough would wrack his emaciated little body as he gazed weakly about.

When I saw him my initial thought was, “I might as well forget the cognitive and motor evaluation business; this child would be lucky to live the night.” But he did live through that night, and the next night, and the next one after that. Almost every night that I was in Kimpese over the next week, I would visit him, and, miraculously, he gradually became stronger and more alert.

I don't know if Mbala is still alive or not. For a child with AIDS in Africa, it seems that sooner or later the miracles always run out. But Mbala taught me something. Despite the most heroic efforts of medical science, neither I nor anyone else could have any measurable impact on his life and times. He was simply one more helpless and innocent victim of complex factors in this tragic epidemic which is devastating the people of Central and West Africa. But I came to realize that little Mbala was in the Lord's hand. Every day that he continued to live, and even get stronger, was a fresh reminder that the importance of medical science, collaborative research, Fulbright awards, academic accolades and professional publications are insignificant in the face of one little African child and his little day-by-day miracle.

Children like Mbala changed things for me, far more than I expect to ever be able to change things for them. The doctor and professor became the patient and learner as again

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and again the world was turned upside down. That time and place now seems distant and almost surreal; the only reality of Zaire that persists are the experiences and memories we seized as a family. These, however, do remain strong and clear, and will forever be a gift from the Lord in our lives.

These journal entries chronicle those experiences which changed us in subtle and dramatic ways. Included in these pages is a personal account of the humorous, the tragic, the significant, and the mundane. But more than that, these memoirs tell of the people we knew, of what Africa became to us, and of what we have become and are becoming.



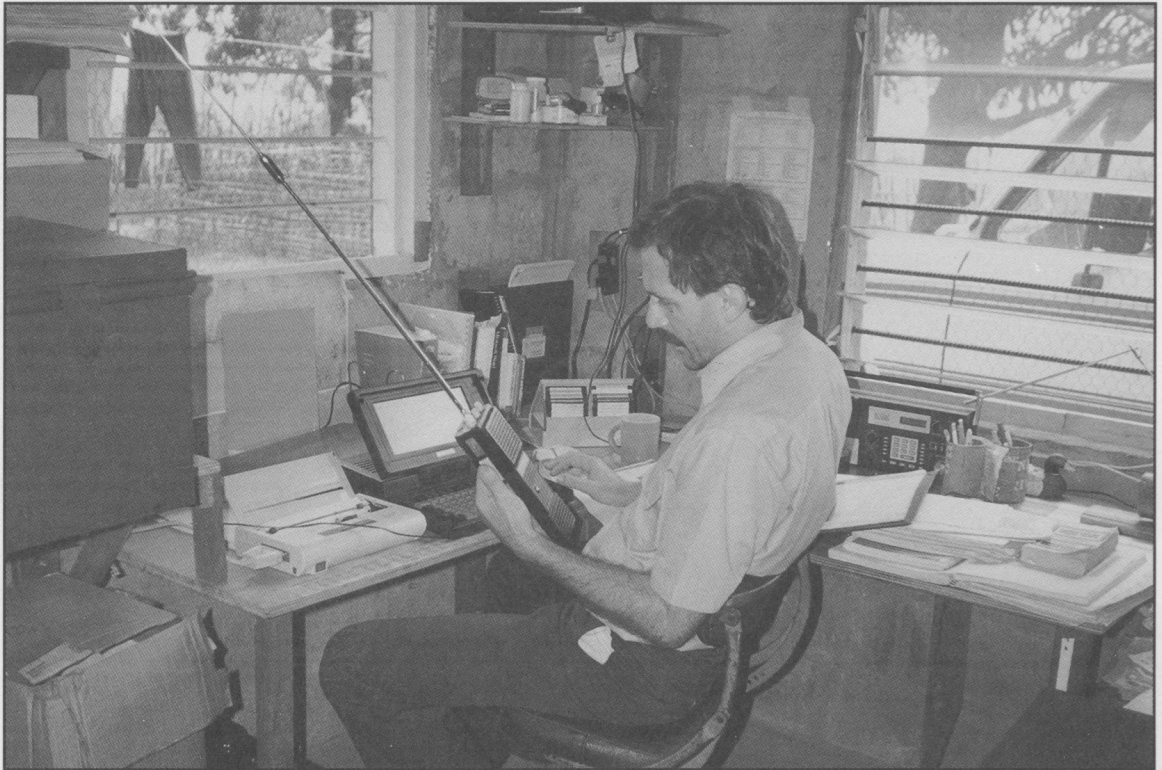
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*Staying in touch with the rest of the world was  
important to me, especially at the beginning.*



## Culture Shock

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*September 17, 1990 -*

Tomorrow will mark our second week in Zaire; although it seems much longer. Our journey began eventfully enough, with the Pan Am flight out of Detroit being delayed for several hours making it uncertain as to whether we would make our Swissair connection in London. This presented a real problem since missing that connection would mean missing the Geneva-Kinshasa flight which only travels once each week.

We finally decided to chance the Detroit-London flight in the hopes of somehow making the connection with our

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luggage to follow later. Grace and I were so stressed out that we were oblivious to the very real possibility of missing the connection. We simply sat back, tried to get the kids to sleep a little, and trusted that things would work out somehow.

At London Heathrow, a Pan Am representative met our family, hustled us into an airport security vehicle, across the airport complex directly to the Swissair gate, and deposited us there before hurrying the others to their connections. As it turned out, the Swissair flight was 10 minutes behind schedule (unusual for them), giving us just enough time to get on the plane before they secured the doors. After an uneventful connection in Geneva, we arrived in Kinshasa Tuesday evening, frazzled after being cooped up with the kids in planes and airports for 24 hours.

When we arrived, the chauffeurs from USIS, the USIA embassy branch, took us across town to the CBZO (Western Zaire Baptist Community) compound, where I was provided with the keys to an empty and spacious house right on the Zaire River, vacated by retired missionaries a few months before.

We fell asleep around 6:00 a.m., and I woke up at 10:15 a.m., 15 minutes before the USIS chauffeurs were scheduled to pick us up for an appointment at their offices. We dressed the kids while they were still half asleep, loaded them into the embassy Suburban without breakfast, and arrived at the USIS/USAID offices downtown through dense midmorning Kinshasa traffic. Since the USIS cultural affairs officer was on vacation, the USIS Cultural Center Director from Lubumbashi met with us. He had just arrived back in Zaire on the Lufthansa flight two hours before us and was still adjusting to the changes, so we were immediately at ease and able to find humor in the whole set of circumstances.

Over the next week, Peter Piness, Christine Harrington, and others at USIS were very helpful getting our visa extensions underway and making transportation and chauffeurs available to us so that we could accomplish our myriad errands around Kinshasa.

Several evenings after our arrival, a Zairian USIS employee and I met the next Swissair flight arriving from Zurich, and retrieved all of our luggage except our solar panels, which they are still trying to track. I was very relieved since I wasn't sure how we would manage solely with our carry-on luggage for the next year!

Jane Goodall, a world-renowned naturalist who has made a career of the study of the chimpanzees at the Gombe Preserve in Tanzania, arrived in Zaire the day before we did.





She came to evaluate the conditions of captive chimps and to meet with President Mobutu in the hopes of encouraging Zaire to work more constructively towards the preservation of endangered species.

My daughter Monique and I attended a presentation Goodall gave at the USIS Cultural Center in Kinshasa the afternoon after we arrived. Back in Michigan, Monique had watched my videotapes of the National Geographic special on Jane Goodall, so she was familiar with her research and absolutely thrilled to hear her speak. After the presentation, Monique went up to Jane Goodall, introduced herself, and told her that she wanted to do all she could to help her in her work to save the chimps. I think Monique scored a few points on that one.

During our first couple of days here, we also met a husband and wife research team who are here with a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to study pygmy chimps up in the equator region of Zaire. They happened to be in Kinshasa for a few weeks when we arrived, but they spent most of their time operating out of a remote base camp deep in the rain forest of that region. As it turns out, they are associates of the Yale doctoral student I met during the Sub-Saharan Africa orientation in Washington, D.C. who is working on the ecology and preservation of lowland gorillas in the Central African Republic.

A week after we arrived, Grace, the kids, and most of our luggage left by plane for the CBZO mission in Kikongo. I stayed behind, intending to finish shopping for our food supplies and follow with the rest of our baggage the following Thursday on a truck carrying building supplies to Kikongo.

Unfortunately, it is now Monday and we are still waiting for the truck to arrive. It didn't come Thursday because the messenger to the Catholic mission where CBZO is renting the truck got sick, and the message didn't get through. It didn't come Friday, supposedly because students were protesting out near Ndjili airport, blocking traffic and overturning vehicles so the truck couldn't get through. We aren't sure why it didn't come Saturday or Sunday. One hypothesis is that the drivers took the advance money and used it to try to squeeze in another short trip somewhere and perhaps broke down in the process.

At any rate, it looks like I'll be taking the flight to Kikongo tomorrow and our supplies will simply have to follow on this or another truck someday. In response to these circumstances, the CBZO folks keep telling me, "Welcome to life in Zaire; you're getting the authentic experience." Although true, these words are less than comforting.



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Fortunately, with additional days here in Kinshasa, I've been able to begin studying Kituba, the local language in the Bandundu region where I will begin my testing. I've been able to accompany the CBZO folks on a number of excursions and make a number of contacts that should help in my work. Yesterday, for example, I had the opportunity to tour Mama Yemo Hospital with a Zairian physician I met through CBZO. He is involved with the extensive AIDS research program based at this hospital and sponsored through USAID, the USCDC, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The largest hospital in Zaire, Mama Yemo is the primary city hospital for the common folk of Kinshasa. Anyone who is used to hospital conditions in the United States would find the conditions at Mama Yemo shocking and deplorable.

The hospital was originally built by the Belgians during the colonial era, and concerted efforts were made to attract top medical specialists from Europe. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mama Yemo, named after President Mobutu's mother, had the reputation as one of the premier medical centers in Black Africa. However, largely as a result of declining funding, mismanagement, and frustration with the working conditions, most expatriate physicians eventually left. Conditions in most of the wards of the hospital have continued to deteriorate, with broken and outdated equipment and underpaid staff serving the overwhelming health care needs of the millions of Zairians in the city.

On most of the wards, the nurses sit in small groups and talk to each other while the families of the patients provide the direct personal care, washing the patients, emptying bed pans, treating sores, preparing food, feeding the patients, and so forth. In the courtyards outside of the single-story cement ward buildings, families of patients do their laundry by hand, drawing their water from a single community faucet and basin. They deposit their human wastes and that of the patient in a single community latrine enclosed in a small cement-block structure I could smell clear across the courtyard. Assuming I was a hospital official, one woman doing her laundry told me we should fix the faucet.

The floors are generally dirty, with used medicinal packages, hypodermic syringe needles, or soiled clothes strewn about here and there. Since bed linen is not provided on most of the wards, the family uses their own clothes, which may or may not have been cleaned and are certainly not sterilized. Secondary infections are common.

At Mama Yemo, patients have to pay each step of the way for every service provided. They have to pay the gatekeeper





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200-300Z to get onto the hospital grounds. They have to pay the admissions staff 2000-3000Z to process them (except at night when it's 7000Z). They have to pay the physician 5000Z directly for a consultation. They have to pay for the blood and lab work (2000-3000Z), and they have to pay for medications, which are generally overprescribed and expensive.

A Zairian in the city with a child terribly sick and anemic from malaria can count on spending at least 15,000Z for all the aspects of basic treatment, barring any complications. That's about \$300, but for many working Zairians without medical coverage this can amount to a couple of months wages. What often happens is that the extended family gets the patient into a bed at Mama Yemo, but unable to afford the medications, the patient goes untreated and dies. A fourth-year student working pediatrics that evening told me this aspect of working at Mama Yemo bothered her the most. Unfortunately, the need is so great there, and death and suffering are so commonplace, that most of the doctors and nurses have become pretty calloused.

One incident typifies the situation. A young missionary family we've gotten to know had a two-year-old daughter afflicted with meningitis. Although initially treated at the Zairian-American health clinic, which is a good clinic where most non-embassy expatriates go, she continued to get worse and had to be taken to Johannesburg, South Africa for hospitalization. At a critical phase of treatment before she left, they needed to do a CAT scan. Although there was a scanner at the University of Kinshasa that was sometimes operational, there was no one qualified to operate it or interpret the scans. While returning to Zaire through Ndjili airport, they met a Zairian whose daughter had also recently been sick with meningitis. She was in a ward at Mama Yemo with 12 other pediatric meningitis cases, and although she recovered, 11 of the 12 other children died while she was there.

The extensive bribery that exists for all essential services at Mama Yemo (and virtually every other aspect of civic service in Zaire) is easily understood. Inflation is out of control largely because of extensive economic mismanagement and a huge foreign debt. The official rate for a U.S. dollar in 1989 was about 290 zaires, while today it is around 675 and climbing weekly. While the cost of everything in Kinshasa continues to climb (especially imported commodities), salaries, which are controlled by the government, have not increased very much. The result is that middle class Zairians have lost substantial ground in

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their earning power while the poor are beginning to go hungry. Inflation has essentially eliminated the middle class.

Consequently, those providing essential human or civic services are forced to increase their salaries through extortion or strikes, and a combination of both is being widely used. This includes the constant hassling of the people by the *gendarmes* (police/soldiers), who extort bribes on charges contrived daily to supplement their meager wages. I watched one group of *gendarmes* suddenly decide to stop all of the cars at one intersection to check the papers of the drivers, undoubtedly as a pretext for getting money for their lunches, since it was the noon hour.

This past year, the doctors, nurses, teachers, and government staff and office workers have all gone on strike in turn, disrupting their respective realms of service. The government is strapped for cash to simply pay the interest on its foreign debt because of white elephant projects such as the inoperative Inga-Shaba power line, an incredible project by the Americans and Italians involving the construction of the longest DC high voltage power line in the world. Mobutu intended to make Shaba province dependent for its power on the Kinshasa controlled Inga dam. It essentially broke the back of the Zairian economy. Whether by intent or default, the government has allowed this payola system for all essential public services to abound. Although a useful stopgap measure for its immediate fiscal crisis, the people who are most harmed and frustrated by it all are the common people, and their anger at the economic conditions and extortion continues to build. There are some economically-induced social storms brewing on the horizon.

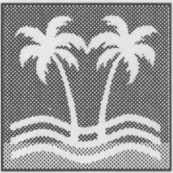
With respect to Mama Yemo hospital, there are some exceptions among the wards. Civitan funds were used to refurbish the pediatrics internal medicine ward, and until the past year it was under the supervision of a Belgian physician. It was evident that this ward was better maintained, organized, and equipped; although my physician/host said that he could see some signs of slippage in the sanitation and care level over the past year.

The neonatal intensive care unit for infants born outside the hospital (including newborns abandoned in the city) was also exceptional. After we arrived, the two nurses immediately began checking on the infants in the incubator, and they gowned me up before I entered the unit. The incubators were old and some were non-functional. Because of a shortage of incubators, triplets were in one incubator, while newborn twins were in another. An American



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physician and her husband are presently supervising that ward. The burn unit was also of interest. They are using an innovative and inexpensive treatment, using the membrane from birth placenta to cover and facilitate the healing of burns.

Although Mama Yemo is the largest hospital in Kinshasa and does have some trained surgical specialists, it lacks the medical equipment to do anything more than relatively minor surgery. The most frequently performed surgical interventions are C-sections and removal of appendix for appendicitis. For open-heart surgery, for example, a Zairian must have the money to go to Europe, unless he or she can go to South Africa.

By far the best facilities at Mama Yemo are those attached to the AIDS research center and laboratories, and the cooperative program with West Germany for the hospital blood bank. Although the AIDS center is on the grounds of Mama Yemo, it is basically a separate, self-contained entity with its own administrative, medical, and embassy security staff. The largest project of this sort in Africa, the center employs trained Zairian medical technicians and physicians for the AIDS research program. In broad terms this includes screening the blood bank donors for HIV-positive subjects, selection for follow-up in longitudinal cohort studies, educational intervention and family testing, and monthly follow-up on the health-care status of the participants.

There is no shortage of HIV-positive and AIDS patients. Roughly 25 percent of the younger adult patients who have blood work done at the lab are HIV-positive, in comparison to an estimate of about 10 to 15 percent in the general population of Kinshasa. Initial screening is done with the Dupont blot test with confirmation done using ELISA, the recombinant DNA enzyme-linked immunoassay test for HIV infection. After evaluating a number of different blood screening tests for HIV infection, the technicians at the blood bank decided on the Dupont, and subsequently received death threats from some of the representatives acting as suppliers for the pharmaceutical companies with competitive tests.

About 40 percent of the patients are dying from AIDS-related diseases, generally dysentery and pneumonia. I don't think I'll ever forget the look of despair on the face of one older woman as she fanned flies away from the body of a terribly emaciated woman dying from AIDS. When we asked her how she knew the person she was caring for, she replied "*mwana na ngai*," which in Lingala means "child of mine."

After touring Mama Yemo, my host and I walked next



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door to the zoological park. He told me that as a child he used to enjoy going to the zoo many Sundays when the park was beautifully maintained, and crowds of people came to see the animals, now kept in pitiful conditions. The wire-mesh cages housing the baboons, macaques, and predator birds were filthy, rusted, and cramped. The barriers to the water buffalo, elephant, and brown bear enclosures were broken down. It would be easy to reach over and touch those animals; although, I wouldn't recommend it.

The animals are poorly fed because a good portion of the food purchased for the animals is kept by the keepers for their own families, understandably so. One thin and agitated lion paced restlessly behind its bars, staring intently at a group of Zairian boys watching it. I have no doubt what that lion was thinking about. The several chimps in somewhat larger cages were perhaps the most pitiful. Their expressions of despair were more easily read in their eyes, as they begged food with outstretched palms and used sticks to reach pieces of papaya tossed outside their cages.

Interestingly enough, the most unusual wildlife in Kinshasa is relatively safe from human incompetence and exploitation. Just below Kinshasa, a powerful set of rapids begin in the Zaire river and extend for over 300 kilometers to the seaport of Matadi. There is a long island in the midst of the raging water over about a 400 meter section of the rapids. The force of these awesome rapids is such that the island is essentially isolated, and numerous distinctive plant and reptilian species have continued to evolve there. During the late 1960s, a team of French naturalists landed by helicopter on this island to collect samples of the snakes, fruit bats, and plants.

By the edge of the currents off the mainland, we watched Zairian youths swim out to their fishing nets to check and reset them. Almost every year one of them is lost to drowning or crocodiles. Nearby sit the rusted hulks of two sunken river barges from the colonial era, their hulls filled with bags of cement intended for construction projects up the river before they broke free from their moorings and fell apart in the rapids.

The Makelele River, after meandering through Kinshasa, enters the Zaire River here. At its mouth are strewn the rusted remains of the debris from the torrential rains and flooding the last spring that drowned scores of people, destroyed neighborhoods all along the river, and washed away bridges and isolated sections of the city. People are gradually rebuilding all along the river.

Over the weekend I took a trip with Glen Chapman and





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several CBZO pastors. We traveled by pickup truck to the Bateke Plateau region, several hours east of Kinshasa, for the installation of the first CBZO pastor in that impoverished region. I went along to evaluate the extent the village region had been penetrated by educational or public health programs.

After several hours along the main paved road, which was in terrible disrepair with washouts and potholes, we followed a series of rough two-track dirt roads to the southern boundary of the plateau along the Nsele River valley. After four hours of driving along these roads to get to the river valley edge, the view through the mist to the dense forests beyond was one of the most memorable I've ever seen.

We stayed in the tiny village of Lisia, which consists of about a dozen thatched dwellings inhabited by an extended family network. For three days we lived in the village, eating their food (but drinking the water we brought), interacting with the villagers, and trying to encourage the pastor whom we were about to install and leave in that village. He was fearful that the villages in the region would not be able to adequately support him.

The two CBZO audio-visual men set up a white sheet on two poles, a diesel generator, an ancient film projector and sound system, and showed double feature movies both Friday and Saturday night. Villagers came from the entire area to see the first films ever shown in that region. (Two women I talked to had walked about 40 kilometers Saturday to get to Lisia.) It was pretty remarkable to sit by a camp fire as the cool winds whipped through the night air on the plateau, and watch Cecil B. DeMille's classic *King of Kings* with a patchwork Kikongo soundtrack.

We walked down to a stream in the river valley where I saw my first African wildlife, an antelope bounding from the savanna into the forest. During the day, the pastors held classes in the "chapel" for the catechists (Christian layleaders from the surrounding villages) while I poked around, trying to get a feel for the people, language, and culture.

There were virtually no medicines or public health initiatives, with the nearest dispensary at about a 20-kilometers walk. The water source for the village was an earthen pit well that was greenish in color, and the children in the area were not well-fed. Cultivation in the immediate area was very limited (a few manioc fields in the river valley, but no corn, soy, or peanuts), as well as livestock (goats and chickens), which were poorly cared for. The CBZO folks brought clothes donated by Zairian Christians from the Bas Zaire region for the villagers and catechists.

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In the evening, we would sit together in a hut with a small kerosene lantern waiting for the *luku* and fish sauce to be brought to us around 9 p.m. Glen would pull out a transistor radio and we would listen to Radio Moscow's transmission in French (to West Africa), the BBC West Africa transmission, or Voice of Zaire. In the morning I would wash out of a small basin, eat a small loaf of bread (one for each person in our group), and practice a little Kituba with anyone who was willing to put up with me. Although the *luku* and fish sauce got a little old, I never got tired of listening to the Zairians who were with us talk about their frustrations and aspirations. I was thankful for those who could translate my French into the local languages, enabling me to communicate with those not educated in French.

On the way back, we picked up a number of villagers who had come out to the plateau to buy food and charcoal (fuel for their cooking fires), stopped to pick up a few cocoa nuts for our driver to chew on (very high caffeine level), bought manioc for some of the CBZO sentinels, and tried to keep the truck in one piece over the roads. We arrived back in Kinshasa Sunday night, after avoiding trucks with no headlights, stalled cars and trucks by the side of the roads, and streams of people walking into town at night.

There were soldiers on virtually every street corner of the major avenues because of Nelson Mandela's visit to Kinshasa. On our way back to CBZO, we drove by the "Palace of the People," an elaborate reception hall and auditorium for visiting dignitaries and heads of state. Smartly dressed troops were everywhere, the fountains ran, and flags flew. The festivities were well underway to receive Mandela that evening with a special welcome.

It was quite a contrast to the Zaire we had experienced up on the Bateke.



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*Women  
from the  
village  
came to  
our home  
to sell us  
fresh  
vegetables.*



## Moving In

*September 24, 1990 -*

A week ago I was still waiting for the truck that was to travel with building supplies to Kikongo. The next day I flew in a Cessna 206 to Kikongo, departing Kinshasa within an hour after the truck's departure.

The drivers finally arrived at the Kinshasa CBZO compound, claiming to have set out Friday only to have been commandeered by a military officer who ordered them to drive a group of arrested students (from a student demonstration that took place that day) to a military prison near Ndjili. After arriving at the prison, the men tried

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unsuccessfully to get their truck released, and after coming back the next day and missing the commander, they returned to the Catholic mission and hired another truck. The CBZO supplier who financed this truck trip, John Kirkpatrick, said the story is so unlikely that it is probably true. It's been his experience that it's the plausible stories you have to be careful about.

Anyway, I arrived in Kikongo by plane an hour after departure, while the truck arrived 24 hours later with the last of our personal effects and initial food supplies. It was a tremendous relief to finally rejoin my family and to get a good look at our home for the next 11 months.

Before I left Kinshasa, however, I had a chance to visit a fishing village with Glen, located just beyond the cement block walls of the guest house where we stayed. The dozen or so family dwellings in this village are constructed of abandoned scrap metal pieces on wooden frames lashed together out of scrap lumber. They are about six foot high and eight foot square, and very rough in appearance.

Just outside the dwellings the family members were hunched over small cooking fires, preparing their sauces, small fish, and *luku* (manioc) meals. Children were seated here and there, working in their school notebooks or engaged in household chores such as sweeping the smooth packed soil around and within each of the dwellings. The fishermen were at the bank of the river beside their *pirogues* (small dugout canoes), mending their nets and baiting their stringers of fishing hooks for the evening fishing.

It was amazing to me to see such a simple and primitive little village nestled along the river in the midst of the churning metropolis of Kinshasa. Glen told me that the fishermen manage to make a pretty decent living compared to the myriad of other subsistence occupations that millions engage in each day in this city.

Glen has gotten to know the fishermen in this village, being fluent in the Kikongo language of the Bas Zaire region where many of them are from, and he can borrow a *pirogue* from them whenever he wants to take his children for a short canoe trip. While Glen took his children out on the river, I sat on a log by one of the fishermen and listened as he talked in French about aspects of effective fishing and canoeing on this part of the river. I told him about my experiences fly fishing for trout on the streams of northeastern Quebec. No matter what the culture, fishermen like to exchange embellished accounts of their remarkable catches.

Afterwards, Glen took me out on the *pirogue* to the edge



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of the currents, about a third of the way out on the river. He stood precariously balanced at the very back of the canoe with a long paddle, guiding us along the river while I sat as low as I could and hung on tightly to this remarkably tippy vessel.

As a high school senior, Glen and his brother took a *pirogue* from Kikongo all the way to Kinshasa via the Wamba, Kwilu, and Zaire rivers, in an epic 10-day journey that included hippos who chased after them, curious villagers who offered them hospitality, and irate villagers who thought they must be mercenaries. They were buzzed by a Zairian Air Force jet and overcame dangerous rapids. They are the only expatriates I know who have managed to complete such a foolhardy adventure. Glen refers to the trip as their "rite of manhood."

Sadly enough, there isn't much traffic of any kind up and down the rivers of Zaire any more. Although the river system made up the transportation arteries of the region for hundreds of years, the river boat companies were nationalized shortly after independence and have declined to the point where the entire infrastructure of river transportation has collapsed.

Initially following the forced nationalization of the European companies that operated the river transportation system, the boats were used to ship food and supplies to the military bases in the interior. Because the boats were not properly kept up or repaired, nor the riverways cleared and dredged, the majority of the boats are no longer useful. In fact, next to the fishing village is a drydock that could be used for larger shipping but has not been because of failure to dredge the river.

Near that dock a large hospital boat is anchored. Named after the President's first wife, it is the Mama Mobutu that formerly traveled up and down the Zaire River, providing medical care for the river villages. It had a full complement of physicians and specialists and even hosted a surgical facility.

After the President remarried following the death of his first wife, the families of the two wives got into a dispute over the ownership of the boat, primarily because they viewed it as a potentially lucrative enterprise. Because of this dispute, it rots away near drydock instead of providing much needed medical service on the river routes. The failure to utilize the river for transport is especially tragic in light of the continued deterioration of the roadways into the interior. What is really needed is an effective way to build smaller craft out of local materials that can be used by independent operators to

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transport goods as a means of livelihood.

Well, so much for solving all of the problems of Zaire. In terms of our living situation in Kikongo, we are very fortunate to have Grace's folk's house for the next month or so during the initial adjustment period. Her missionary parents vacated a two bedroom cement home for our use, choosing to inhabit a smaller vacant house until they leave.

The electrical system for our house is a 12 volt DC circuit that operates off a bank of deep-cycle batteries charged by two solar panels. Once Swissair finds the solar panels that were with our luggage, we can install the additional units and have plenty of DC power for our daily use. At present, the electrical system can recharge the batteries we use in our radios and for my laptop computer and printer. It also operates the lights we have for each room and the CB radio that is the major communication link among our family and the other missionary families on the station. A separate solar unit powers the shortwave radio that is the only link for the mission station to the outside world. There is no telephone service except in Kinshasa. Some would dispute the extent to which those telephones are functional.

Grace's father rigged up this electrical system when the house was first built in 1985, and it works very well. We simply have to be careful not to allow our usage to outstrip the solar capacity for recharge. Before he leaves, however, we'll need to rewire the main connections to a more permanent circuit board, a project we've already started.

Our water source is a cement cistern that receives rain water from our roof gutters. The rainy season started in earnest about a week ago, and already we've collected enough water to supply our bathroom and kitchen faucets through a gravity feed pipework. We boil a couple of pails of this water each day for drinking and washing dishes. We ought to be able to gather enough water in the cistern through the next eight months or so to get us through the dry season.

We typically don't drain any of the dirty bath or sink water, but leave the drain plugs in so that we can scoop the water into smaller storage pails to flush our toilet, but only after bowel movements. Each morning we fill and set out two solar shower bags so that they can heat sufficiently to provide us with warm water for our showers each evening. A pair of one and a half gallon bags is just enough for our family.

Every food related waste product that decomposes goes into a compost heap in our back yard, and every tin can and plastic bag is washed and reused. Virtually everything here



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that we would consider trash back home is saved for some kind of use. Old wax paper is placed in envelopes so the glue won't stick in the humidity. Used wooden matches are saved to light additional burners off already lit burners. Even dead vehicle batteries are saved by the Zairians so that they can dig out the lead and use it to make pellets for their homemade shotgun shells. I don't think I've ever felt so ecologically wholesome in my life.

Our refrigerator is a rather fussy Aladdin kerosene unit that has to be cleaned, nursed along, and prayed for on a weekly basis. So far it keeps our water somewhat cool, although most things in the freezer won't freeze and whatever leftovers in the fridge have to be eaten within a day or so. Likewise, our stove is an older unit that operates off of a butane fuel tank that has to be replaced every couple of months. Since most fuel has to be brought in by truck over very difficult roads from Kinshasa, and since we can only expect a truck every month or so, we have to plan ahead.

There is so much to learn in such a short time before Grace's parents leave. Just this week Grace's father and I tested the DC circuitry in terms of its suitability for the inverter for my computer, built a desk-top area and shelves for my office in the adjacent storage room, and drove and checked the Isuzu Trooper. We reviewed refrigerator cleaning and maintenance, daily considerations for food preparation and use, the water system, basics of the electrical circuits, and discussed management of the household help.

In addition, I accompanied him this past Tuesday and Wednesday to several different public health outposts as he checked on the practicum supervision of the student nurses who are in the nursing school here in Kikongo. Tuesday we went to the Catholic mission station of Kingala Matele to meet with the director, an American missionary nurse. She has served both in the Republic of Cameroon and Zaire for the past 25 years, and has become so acculturated that she now speaks English with a French accent, although she's American born and raised.

I shared with her in broad terms about my proposed neuropsychological assessment project with children, and she talked about her hope of doing a comprehensive public health survey of all of the children at the nearby mission school. As part of her survey, she hopes to evaluate each child in terms of general health status and administer a vermifuge (medicinal treatment for intestinal parasites, preferably Decaris). We discussed plans for a cooperative project in which I would help in the initial health status screening and evaluation.

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We would then use her evaluation as a means of categorizing each child in good, fair, or poor health status groups, from which I would randomly select a sample from each group for neuropsychological assessment. We'll also try to evaluate the nutritional and drinking water resources for each child's family in the home villages. We'll then administer the vermifuge and do a follow-up assessment for both health status and neuropsychological function a few weeks later.

We're both pretty excited about the project since it should help each of us accomplish and go beyond our individual original goals. I'm going to enjoy working with her; she seems like a very dedicated and capable person.

I also had a chance to meet with the secondary school director, who seemed much more helpful after I showed him the letter of research permission from the Government of Zaire Ministry of Higher Education and Research. A parting present of an official Spring Arbor College chrome letter opener, my personal card, and a firm handshake solidified his cooperation. The primary school director was out working his fields, but the nurse will talk to him for me.

On Wednesday we traveled to the CBZO public health outpost of Kimbai, where we met some of the local public health workers and school teachers. While driving there, I encountered my first poisonous snake of this tour, a pit viper about three feet long and several inches thick slithering across the road in front of our vehicle. I stopped just shy of the snake to get a good look at it. Unfortunately, when I went to run it over, it was alarmed enough to easily avoid my front tires so I failed to kill it. I wasn't about to get out of the vehicle to finish the job. Later, when I told my son Daniel about the incident, he explained to me that I should have run over the snake immediately, and then stopped to get a good look at it. Leave it to a kid to explain the smart strategy.

At Kimbai, we also met the regional government clerk from Fatundu who came to motivate the village men to repair the roof of the local school that had blown off in a storm several months ago. The typical government clerk travels about to a given village, lives off the local hospitality for awhile, and makes some progress in soliciting efforts from the men for some community project under threat of fines for nonparticipation. After a week or two he tires of the village and lack of progress, and moves on to some other village for a different project. If he manages his itinerary properly, he can get by during the course of a year with minimal living expenses.



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Unfortunately, this clerk was accompanied by a rather dour looking soldier from the military barracks at Fatundu, so the soldiers there will learn that there is a new American family in Kikongo working there under some kind of American government project. That may not be a problem, but with the military, particularly the exploitive barracks at Fatundu, one wants to keep as low a profile as possible.

The immediate priority is to determine an initial neuropsychological protocol and train a research and assessment assistant/interpreter who can help me. With respect to the second item, I have a prime candidate who is scheduled to meet with me tomorrow afternoon for his final interview.

He is a gentleman who was born and raised in Kikongo and has taught school here for the past 16 years. He has taught all the primary grade levels, and initially approached me about my project, ostensibly because of a sincere interest in pedagogical psychology. Since he did not ask me to acquire a camera for him back in the U.S. within the first 30 minutes of our encounter, I have no reason to doubt his sincerity. At any rate, after talking to the local pastor (Pastor Koba), the primary school director (Mr. Kibungu), and the senior missionary elder statesman (Orville Chapman), I think I've obtained the appropriate confirmations for the nomination of Mr. Kisoki as my chief neuropsychological research assistant (and local interpreter) for Kikongo.

If I can work out a satisfactory wage, I hope to have him tutor me in Kituba for an hour each afternoon (he teaches only in the mornings), with the next hour each day dedicated to training him in various aspects of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, the Matrix Analogies Test, the Tactual Performance Task, and other basic motor function measures.

It has been a real adjustment for us as a family. The kids have had to get used to a vastly limited menu (including fresh bread each day which the cook can't always get to rise, though she is getting better with practice), local children who overcome the language barrier in communicating their intents by hitting and shoving Monique and Dan, heat (94 degrees Fahrenheit) and humidity all the time, marauding stinging insects, continual forays of tiny ants on the kitchen floor and counters, and frequent admonishments of the children in Kituba by Tengu and Suzanne, our household kitchen helpers. They aren't quite what you would consider the ideal nannies, but thus far they've been a big help.

Fortunately, there have been enough positive features to this new experience to outweigh the negative ones. These

include cool rainstorms and the thrill of crackling skies of lightning in the distance, a beautiful view of the Wamba river valley and surrounding forests and *nseke* grasslands from our back door, climbing the nearby mango trees, never wearing shoes as they romp about outdoors, swimming in a nearby stream, fun home schooling sessions with Grandma and Marilyn Foster (wife of the missionary who is supervising the hospital construction), pet lizards who live in the window sill openings and above the walls, baby kittens born to our cat "Purpose," and a homemade bow and arrow set constructed by Lukwama, our household laundry person. Although there are difficult times, I believe the kids are going to really thrive.

*Beno kwenda mbote, ye bikala mbote.* Go ye well, and stay well.



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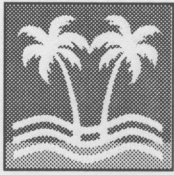


On the  
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snack.

## Rites of Passage

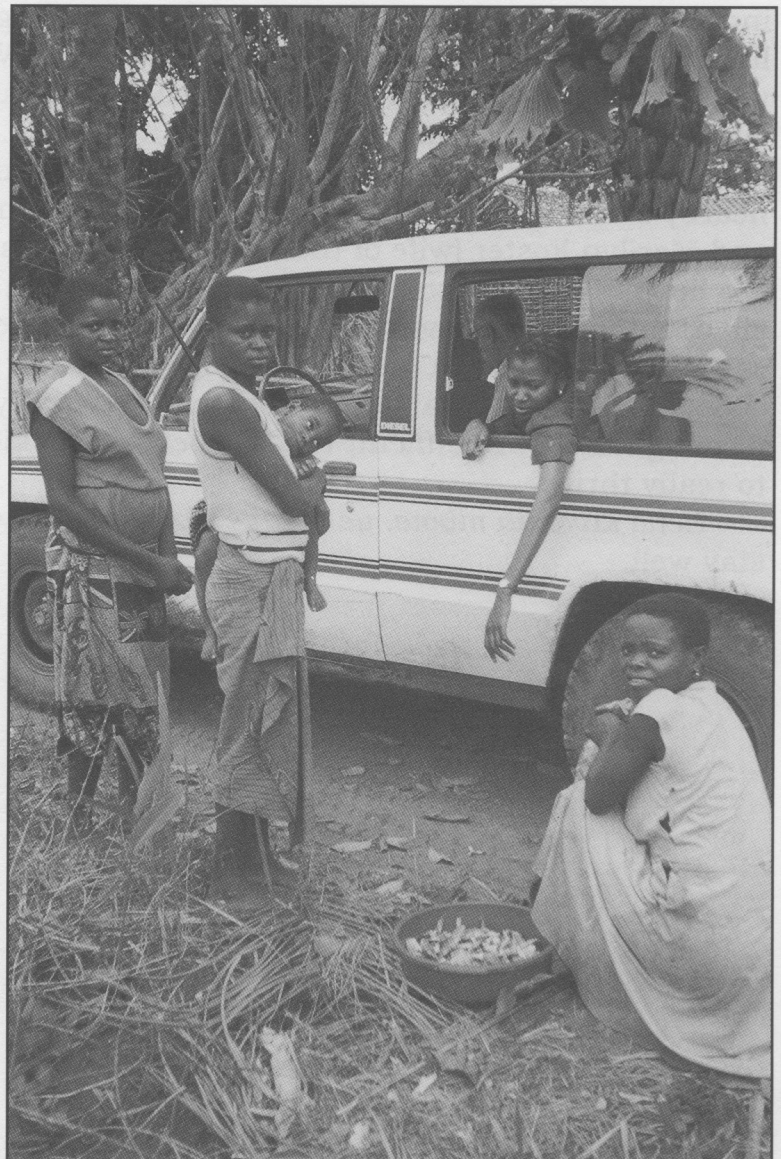
October 10, 1990  
I returned to Kikongo yesterday after a week in Kinshasa with Grace's father, Dr. Norman Abell. We left for Kinshasa over a week ago, making the 330 kilometer trip by jeep in just over 10 hours, with Grace's brother Jim and I driving most of the way. Jim had flown up to be with us in Kikongo for his vacation.  
The first 100 kilometers from Kikongo are very rough secondary dirt roads, through deep sand and potholes. After detours across the bush around weathens and gullies, we getting to the main east-west road just west of Kikongo.





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## Rites of Passage

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The first 100 kilometers from Kikongo are very rough secondary dirt roads, through deep sand and periodic detours across the bush around washouts and gullies. After getting to the main east-west road just west of Kenge, we



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drove the remaining leg of our journey on the deteriorating asphalt of the major road through the Bandundu region, weaving between potholes and washouts, as well as overloaded trucks and transport vehicles. We passed endless small villages, stranded vehicles, markets selling fuel in individual liter bottles, roadside stands with every imaginable type of produce, and hordes of school children and villagers walking to their daily tasks along the hot, dusty byways.

The only things that stand sure and strong along this deteriorating and dilapidated transportation route are the bridges. These steel girder, cement-topped structures—built by the Belgians after World War II—are usually decorated with a couple of soldiers leaning against the side rails cradling automatic weapons. The bridges straddle the successive north-south tributaries of the Zaire River, serving as road demarcations and regional boundaries along the only primary east-west route, stretching from Idiofa and Kikwit all the way to Kinshasa.

As you travel west to Kinshasa, you cross in succession the Lonzo, Kwango, Lusini, the beautiful Mai-Ndombe (or Black), Mbombo, and finally the Nsele rivers. You descend about a thousand feet in elevation off the Bateke Plateau as you come to the Nsele river valley, and in the distance looms the wondrous Zaire River. Along the Zaire River you drive alongside thousands of acres of presidential preserve, the brand new multi-million dollar golf course near the President's estate at Nsele, and eventually come to the crowds and masses of trucks and vehicles at the commerce and transportation centers of Ndjili and Pascal (the capital of thieves) as you glide down Lumumba Avenue into the city proper.

Two things immediately strike visitors when they enter the city. The first is the ubiquitous presence of soldiers—white helmeted *gendarmes*, favored green beret troops, out-of-favor red beret troops, and the less common special presidential body guard black and brown beret—rumored to have been trained by Nicolai Ceaucescu's Securitate in Romania.

The second thing is the ferocious traffic of the city. Incredibly, relatively few accidents take place, despite the narrow and unmarked lanes, incessant speeding, darting little yellow taxis manned by grimacing and threatening drivers, tangled intersections loosely directed by vulturous *gendarmes*, plodding handcarts pushed along by panting and sweating porters, and lurching buses and taxi vans crammed with people hopping on and off as they meander in





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and out of traffic. It's worse than it sounds.

The fact that accidental injury and death isn't a commonplace occurrence in the midst of Kinshasa traffic can only be attributed to what I refer to as the Zairois sixth sense. Any expatriate who has lived in this country and worked among the people for any length of time will attest to it. Zairians seem to have a heightened sense of social gestalt in the midst of what would simply strike us as complete chaos. They intuitively read subtle gestures, expressions, and movements and seem to sense what your mood and intention are. Consequently, irrespective of language barriers or physical distance, and whether at the market, a crowded traffic intersection, or a quiet gathering, it does not take them long to sense who and what you are, what you want, and whether you can be cowed or enticed.

One senior missionary remarked, "Despite how backward or uneducated a villager may seem to be, never underestimate his or her social and perceptual acuity and prowess." They must survive by their wits and intuition, whether it's by stepping over a column of unseen driver ants across the path in the dead of night, or hustling a living from an unsuspecting newcomer on a street corner in Kinshasa. They are absolute masters at reading your mood and interjecting the right emotional response or bodily gesture to achieve their goals.

Middle-class, well-intentioned white Americans particularly seem to learn this the hard way. They tend to be trusting, concerned, and non-astute, having been nurtured in an affluent lifestyle and well-ordered society of mutual cooperation. In fact, the use of emotional appeal as a means of aggravating a sense of shame or humanitarian obligation, or the use of intimidation and fear from social threat are rather commonplace in Zairian interactions. This is true whether within the context of the extended family, formal business transactions, or among complete strangers.

Americans are often left stunned or confused in response to this kind of social manipulation and coercion. We tend to accept people's words and behavior at face value and will readily personalize an accusation or threat, not realizing, that, for the Zairian, this is simply an accepted and normal part of trying to get what you want. Zairians will beg, bargain, or threaten (in that order) for the moon, fully expecting to get only a little piece of the earth here and now.

We are usually ill-equipped to read these social interactions with the same acuity and perceptiveness that Zairians normally demonstrate. As a result, we tend to shake our heads in disbelief at the irrationality of their

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arguments or requests, when in fact they are not meant to be a means of arriving at an equitable and just solution. They are simply ploys to achieve a desired end. As a concerned expatriate, you simply have to learn, adapt, and maintain your sense of perspective. These are people doing what they feel they have to do to survive within a social order and economy that is very difficult.

At any rate, having arrived at the security and familiarity of the CBZO compound, we settled in for the challenges of navigating the city over the next several days. Grace's dad and I ran numerous errands, picking up foodstuffs, electrical supplies, medical supplies, and contacting key people for their advice with respect to my research efforts. I also had an opportunity to get a few of my items of business in order at USIS, including the scheduling of my presentation on Positron Emission Tomography (PET) brain/behavior research at the USIS American Embassy Cultural Center on November 26. I had planned to propose a similar presentation at the cultural center in Rwanda when I go to Bukavu, Zaire, in March, but with the recent tribal conflicts and fighting in Rwanda between the Hutu and the Tutsi, I decided to put that one on hold.

Also while in Kinshasa, I underwent two rites of passage for the expatriate in the city. The first was getting hassled by my first *gendarme*, who let us go after surmising that we were missionaries from the interior. I was posing under false pretenses, but I wasn't about to correct his misconception right at that moment. The second was being victimized by my first thief. Grace's dad and I parked in a busy area right on the main boulevard downtown so he could pick up a canister of Freon gas for medical use back at Kikongo. I stayed to guard the vehicle. While I usually kept my gray shoulder bag with me, I left it between the front seats of the locked vehicle since I planned to stand right beside it.

After a few minutes, I strolled about 30 feet from the vehicle to get a better look at a destitute woman begging with her child on the boulevard. I was strolling back when a teenager ran up to me shouting in Lingala about a thief and pointing in the opposite direction. Fortunately, I did the unreasonable thing in this situation, which was to ignore the youth, and quickened my pace back to the vehicle. The passenger side door was ajar and my shoulder bag was gone.

Looking around, I noticed everybody nearby was strolling about their business as if nothing had happened. Some men were getting into a taxi parked next to the vehicle, so I leaned in the window and asked one of the passengers where my shoulder bag was. He pointed towards the front of our



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Izuzu, and, although I didn't see anything at first, just beyond the front of the vehicle behind a small bush was my shoulder bag, dumped in a heap. Even though all the zippers and flaps in the bag were open, nothing was missing. Since I was only away from the vehicle about 20 seconds, this was apparently the work of real professionals. Seeing no envelope containing a large stack of 1000Z and 5000Z bills, a necessity for any shopping in Kinshasa's inflation-racked economy, they dumped the bag and sauntered off to avoid attracting attention.

My initial surge of relief was followed by a renewed appreciation for the thieves of Kinshasa, a breed apart from the drug-crazed, smash-and-grab-it types of American inner cities. Clutching my shoulder bag, I struck up some conversations with sympathetic bystanders who a moment before had seemed oblivious to the theft. When I mentioned how incredibly fast these thieves had worked, one of the bystanders called over to two sharply dressed and groomed men standing nearby and repeated my comment to them. They responded in impeccable French: "Of course, they are professionals."

I realized instantly that these two men were the overseers of the theft network for that particular commercial intersection, and that a number of the various youths, bystanders, and businessmen nearby were fully aware of—if not accomplices in—this network. As I looked across the activity of the intersection, the social pattern took on a whole new gestalt. From the moment we pulled off the boulevard into the parking lot, the whole subsequent series of events were part of a well-tuned machine providing livelihood for all participants. It was a very fitting educational welcome for an American to Kinshasa. When Grace's dad returned, I shook the hand of my casual acquaintance. I told him to thank the thieves for leaving my bag, that they work well and fast, but that I wished they might find another line of work that would provide for them for all eternity. I'm sure the message was communicated.

Another aspect of Zairian culture that has been firmly impressed on me is the centrality of the spiritual dimension as people interpret the day-to-day circumstances in their lives. Take one's attempt to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between a medical condition and its accompanying symptoms and effects. One might explain the genetic and physiological basis of diabetes, the subsequent effect on blood sugar level, the necessity of diet and treatment, and the subsequent effects of the disease on the health and well being of the individual. Consequently, we

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might assume that we have provided for a reasonable account of the disease. While the Zairian may understand and accept this physiological cause and effect account, he or she will usually seek to insert one additional step in the whole process: the spiritual cause underlying the subsequent physical cause and effect.

To explain an event in natural terms is not really explaining its cause to a Zairian since that always originates in the metaphysical realm. Hence, any death other than dying of old age is never a "natural" death or a death understood solely in medical terms or natural circumstance. The natural events have been mediated by a spiritual force, inspired by someone else either for harm or for good. The death of a child or a young adult is often accompanied by attempts on the part of family and friends to discern who inspired the tragedy through the use of *kindoki* (magic). While it might be difficult for us to take such accusations seriously, they are viewed with the utmost seriousness by Zairians.

Formal accusations of *kindoki* in someone's death are usually accompanied by witch doctor testimony or confirmation, fines and threats of retaliation if such fines are not paid, or even periodic instances of outright vigilante justice. In fact, in Zaire, an individual can be brought to civil trial solely on the testimony of a spiritist who claims he has used *kindoki* to bring harm to someone else. Tragic though it may be, close family members or spouses of a dead person often not only have to cope with the grief of losing the loved one, but must also contend with accusations and fines from other related families.

The spiritualist component to interpreting the events of life is deeply imbedded in the thinking of even well-educated individuals since it tends to be such a ubiquitous component of a child's upbringing in this country. The fear of *kindoki* and appeal to spiritual healers and witch doctors is also common even among very sincere and committed Christians, though usually only under circumstances of extreme duress, when other medical and church-related avenues have failed.

A few years ago, the CBZO medical mission at Vanga experienced a tragedy when a group of missionary children and volunteers were attacked by a family of hippos while tubing down a nearby river. A volunteer medical student from Haiti named Lilian was killed in the attack. An eight-year-old child would have been also, were it not for the heroic efforts of a missionary pilot who held onto her when she was dragged down and then freed her leg from the mouth of a hippo at the bottom of the river.



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The people had inadvertently disturbed a male and female, who attacked to protect their pup. However, some of the local village leaders surmised that the missionary medical doctor in charge at Vanga, Dan Fountain, had changed into a hippo and attacked and killed the medical student out of envy and fear that she would displace him. The fact that Dan Fountain often deterred the villagers from killing the few remaining hippos in that part of the river further confirmed this accusation since he was obviously protecting the hippos to protect himself in his periodic forays as a hippo.

In African superstition, solitary predatory creatures almost certainly represent a human being who has adopted that form to accomplish his purposes. The strength of this belief surprised me when I overheard two intelligent and capable *CBZO* Zairian pastors speculate about who the person was behind the lion attacks near Kikongo some years back. It was only the staunch defense of Dan by his Zairian medical colleagues and other mission station leaders that prevented this hippo tragedy from being further compounded.

We had a chance to meet a number of interesting people in Kinshasa. Grace's dad was often stopped on the street by acquaintances who knew him from his time in Bas Zaire or in Bandundu. They greeted him warmly and seemed to sense this was the last time they would see him in Zaire, even though he hadn't mentioned his impending retirement. In Kinshasa, speaking Kituba immediately identifies you as a missionary from the Bandundu interior. Since so many in the city are originally from the interior and homesick, many doors open for Grace's dad.

Such meetings included lunch with an artist who signs his work "Pico Pico." Grace's dad had helped him through a chronic medical depression as a youth at Sona Bata, and in his present manic state the artist shared about his frenzied output of popular tourist art and his present success. Another lunch-time acquaintance was a young lawyer, just starting out in private practice, who talked about the difficulty of practicing law in a legal system where there is no justice, and where bribery and payoffs are the rule. Regarding recent student riots in the city, he shared in hushed tones that the populace in general was beginning to join them in striking out against the oppressive economic conditions in the country and the stalling on political reform towards a true multi-party system.

I met with Drs. Richard and Judith Green, medical researchers who have conducted extensive nutritional research in the Bandundu region and who are presently at

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Kananga initiating several different AIDS research and educational intervention projects. They came to Kinshasa to present some of their work at the international AIDS conference. I also had a chance encounter with Larry Sthreshley, a Presbyterian missionary working in a city-wide public health program called *Sante Pour Tous* (Health for All). He is establishing small dispensaries in each of the 24 health zones for the entire city.

I also spent time with John Scott, a CBZO missionary who formerly supervised all of the CBZO building projects in Bandundu. His father was a pioneer missionary pilot and general contractor in the interior. John grew up here, and is an experienced and street-wise person. Along with a recently certified Zairian physician applying for a position at Kikongo, Dr. Ibi, John Scott and I drove from Kinshasa all the way to Kikongo, talking nonstop the entire time. He had more experiences to share and advice to divulge than ten people combined, and the eight-hour trip passed quickly.

John's trip to Kikongo with me was necessitated by a medical crisis my father-in-law experienced the day before our scheduled departure from Kinshasa. Grace's dad and I temporarily used an apartment belonging to a missionary family away for the weekend, so that we could have a comfortable area to get some paperwork done. Because he wasn't feeling well, I went to church while he stayed in the apartment to rest and finish up a letter he was working on. John and I returned to the apartment at noon so he could use the phone. When Grace's dad got up to unlock the door, he collapsed on the floor, unable to get up. John, a person of rugged pioneer missionary stock and a builder by trade, had to bulldoze his way through the back door.

A short time later Bob Cutillo, the CBZO Kinshasa medical doctor, joined us to check Grace's dad over thoroughly. As near as we could figure, his extreme dizziness and weakness was caused by some kind of drug interaction between both cold and anti-malarial medications he had taken that morning. Thankfully, he improved dramatically by the next day. Although he was still not at his normal strength, he was well enough by Tuesday to take the MAF flight back to Kikongo while we drove the Izuzu back with our supplies. Actually, I find myself wondering if, with the *gendarme* hassles, thieves, and illness, we aren't being pursued by a bit of bad magic.

Back at home, the kids recently enjoyed watching a worker dress the meat and eggs out of a six-foot black tree snake he killed near the hospital. Grace killed her first scorpion in our house and, of all places, it was right on our



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bed. It had apparently staggered out onto the bed after she had sprayed our room for insects. In its drugged condition, it fell easy prey to Grace's sandal.

They butchered a goat and a cow on successive weeks down at the local market, giving us the rare opportunity of purchasing fresh meat. Incredibly, the same day a hunter came to our door with wild antelope, which he had killed jacking with a flashlight and homemade gun the night before. Having purchased both antelope and beef that day, we suffered from "an embarrassment of riches." I had to give half the antelope to our workers to assuage my guilt for spending as much on that antelope as I would have spent on one month's salary for one of them.

Kisoki Ndanga (Sam for short), chief neuropsychology assistant for Kikongo, and I finished translating the first two portions of the Kaufman Assessment Battery. Grace's mother worked with him in adapting portions of the final achievement section of the assessment while I was in Kinshasa. We are now ready to begin preliminary testing of a sample of area children in the eight-to-nine-year-old range. While in Kinshasa, we managed to acquire the vermifuge medication for our public health intervention at Kingala Matele.

I brought back new pairs of sandals from Kinshasa as gifts for each of our workers, and one of them subsequently asked for a watch. My assessment colleague asked me to buy him a camera that he would pay me for upon my return to Kikongo. What do you think my response was? Remember: ask for the moon and expect only a little of the earth right now. At any rate, things are progressing well, the family is reasonably happy and healthy, and my computer is working. What more could I ask for?

Never assume anything. When Grace asked one of our kitchen helpers to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, she put the peanut butter on one side of an individual slice of bread and jelly on the other side. The kids graciously held the bread by the crust as they ate it. At another meal, I asked our worker to bring the salt to the table, and she brought a handful of salt without the shaker. Coming from the village environment into the home of a *mundele* (white person) is a bigger leap than I had realized. The other night Grace was mumbling household instructions in Kituba in her sleep.

Our kids can now say "hello," "no!" and "go away" in Kituba, unfortunately their most frequently used words with the local children. My own meager attempts to use a phrase in Kituba here and there are still met with laughter, while my

French is now only occasionally corrected.

I've heard so many snake stories from the other missionaries here that we hunted high and low throughout Kinshasa to find a 9-volt replacement battery for an electrical snake-bite zapper we're keeping on hand. Life here is always an adjustment. We have to keep a sense of humor about it all.



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My assistant,  
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## Village Scandals

October 19, 1990

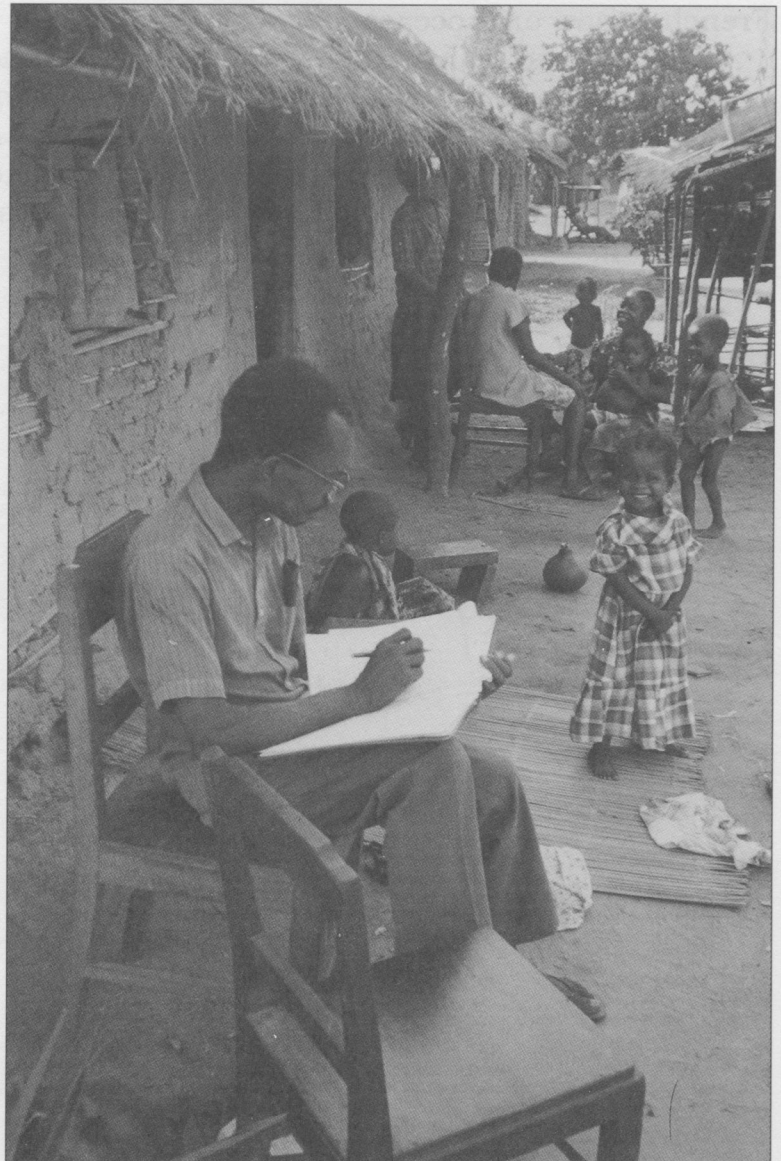
This week we started two new phases for the data collection. I developed an interview for the parents of each child in the study, which allows us to gather information on the social, economic, and nutritional resources of the family household as well as a brief medical history of the child. It has been a sobering experience for me, though, to sit with my assistant Kisaki, the parents, and the children in front of their clay houses with thatched roofs, and ask them about their meager finances, inability to afford sufficient food, and various medical problems for the child and the





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family. I'm quickly realizing these people struggle with many of the same family issues as I do, and yet have far fewer material resources at their disposal to help them cope. I am amazed at the resiliency of these people.

As valuable as the interviews have been, I can't dedicate the time necessary to both the interviews and the other aspects of the project. Therefore Kisoki has recruited and begun training a reliable colleague who teaches the fourth grade class at his school to do these interviews for us so we can do more testing.

We have also begun the health evaluations. Yesterday Kisoki and I took our first three children down to the mission medical center for an evaluation of intestinal parasites (stool specimen analysis), blood hemoglobin count and trophozoite (malaria) check, and a physical exam of heart, lungs, neck, liver, and spleen as a means of evaluating overall physical health.

As it turned out, one of the children was positive for two intestinal parasites, *ankylostome* (hookworm) and *anguillule* (whipworm). This child, as well as a second one, also tested positive for trophozoite (malaria parasite). We started the children on medications to treat these parasites, and intend to do a follow-up physical exam and cognitive performance evaluation in three to four weeks. I'm not sure what kinds of changes we'll find, but I'm sure that the overall health and nutritional status of these kids will be significantly related to some of the sequential and simultaneous reasoning processes we're quantifying. At any rate, there's no point in counting our eggs (be they ascaris or ankolostome parasites) before they hatch.

One bit of excitement was a sudden thunder storm. I had the camcorder with me to videotape some of the medical procedures. The storm arrived during a lull in the proceedings, so I began taping the monsoon-type rains that started just as a lightning bolt struck next to one of the buildings on the mission station. Minutes later, some of the hospital construction workers carried in a man who had been right next to the lightning strike. The poor fellow was in a semi-conscious, quivering, moaning state of physical shock. Since there were no apparent burns, and his breathing and vital signs were stable, there really wasn't much to be done for him except to keep him under medical surveillance. Yet, as he was lying on the cement floor of the reception office with family members and medical staff crowded all around, one of the nurses poured quite a significant amount of Coramine (circulatory stimulant) down the throat of this quaking and moaning man.

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I later recounted this series of events to my chief medical consultant, Grace's father. He said the main reason for giving this drug was probably because it was a tangible sign to the family members that something was actually being done for him, and not because the drug was really necessary. We'll have to go back and look at the video footage, but as near as we can tell, the poor fellow's big challenge won't be to recover from the lightning strike, but to recover from the amount of Coramine they gave him.

That evening, I gave Grace a firm admonition that if they ever take me to that center for emergency medical care, I want the director, nurse/surgeon Nsini, right there before they give me anything. Also, Grace is to provide any necessary syringes from our own medical supplies. Nsini has held this center together for 27 years while other people have come and gone. Although he's a grade 1 nurse rather than a physician, he's about as competent a person as you will find out here, or anywhere, given what he has to work with.

One really nice thing about the project, now that we've started the medical phase, is that I can come back from the hospital in the afternoon with a certain sense of having accomplished a little something of direct and practical benefit for the children. Even if it's only paying for the kids' physical exams, it helps justify some of the time, effort, and inconvenience. It sure beats the old "for the advance of science, the furtherance of our understanding, and the greater good of humanity" song and dance that junior researchers are fond of doling out to their research/design classes in justification of basic research. I'd much rather spend my money on these kids than on greasing the skids for some local official.

The big village scandal this week has been the suicide of the chief of the nearby village of Kimbwo. About two weeks ago at the Kikongo hospital, a newborn died, then the mother died the next day. Back at the home village during the wake, one of the deceased mother's sons accused a local sorcerer of using *kindoki* to kill his mother and tried to shove the sorcerer into a campfire. The sorcerer barely escaped and fled in terror to another village where some soldiers were visiting from the military barracks at Fatundu.

He registered a complaint to the soldiers concerning the attack on his life, and formally accused the wife of the village chief of having killed the woman. The accusation was based on the fact that while the villagers were carrying the casket through the village, it jarred suddenly as they went by the chief's wife's home and bumped against the house, as if the dead woman was trying to implicate that household.

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Taking the accusation seriously, the soldiers arrested and fined the wife of the chief, took her off to another village until the fine was paid, and then released her. Her husband, in serious debt now and in despair at the whole incident, went off into a field and hung himself.

Meanwhile, his wife and relatives searched frantically for three days for him, until his decomposing body was finally discovered by a woman on the way to her fields. At last report, the wife of the dead chief has formally accused the military tribunal that levied the fine as being responsible for her husband's death, and a military judge at the next higher level of local government will soon decide who to levy fines against.

And so, the vicious cycle of superstition, fear, accusation, injustice, bribery, and renewed accusation continues. It is truly a tragedy that, through malevolence and fear, the villagers often compound the misery of their already difficult lives. The vindictiveness usually occurs at their expense and to the financial benefit of local civil and military officials who are all too willing to exploit such disputes.

On a brighter note, our family enjoyed a nice outing with the family next door, the Fosters, last Saturday. We packed picnic lunches and spent the afternoon swimming off a sand bar on the Wamba River. We swam and bathed, scared each other with crocodile stories, searched in vain for tsetse flies, gathered water lilies and water hyacinth, ate a precious bag of M & M peanut candies, and generally had a wonderful time. That section of the Wamba is sandy, shallow, sheltered, and perfect for the children.

Each Friday night is game night, during which the missionary and Fulbright research families get together for an evening of fellowship and entertainment. We take turns with the Fosters in entertaining the seven children between us, and last night was Grace's and my turn to leave the kids behind and go off with the adults. We watched a video recording of *The Inspector General*, starring Danny Kaye, on a video player running (just barely) on a solar charged 12-volt DC battery. We enjoyed a couple of hours of laughing at the antics of Danny Kaye, sipping papaya fruit drink, and generally forgetting about the frustrations and difficulties of the week.

As the movie was ending, Mayuyu, one of Grace's parents' workers, knocked at the door. I had sent Mayuyu off on a special errand that morning to hand-carry a letter to Sister Agnes Marie Gallagher, the American Catholic missionary nun who is director of the public health work at Kingala Matele.



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Kisoki and I had originally planned to travel by bicycle to Kingala Matele to finalize our protocol for the physical health exams and cognitive assessments of the children at her mission station. However, after talking it over with Grace, I decided to postpone our trip until the first weekend in November, right after Grace's folks are scheduled to leave.

Since Sister Agnes was expecting us, I had to get a message to her, and the only way to do so was to send Mayuyu on foot (he doesn't ride a bike) 30 kilometers to Kingala Matele to deliver my letter. I still can't get used to the idea of sending someone on foot 30 kilometers to do what we could do in a five-minute phone call back home.

Anyway, before setting out, Mayuyu's friend and fellow employee, Matsasu, solemnly informed me that I should provide food and a raincoat for Mayuyu's journey.

"Fair enough," I said. "What's a reasonable amount?"

"Oh, about 3000 zaires," said Matsasu.

After I managed to get myself up off the floor and contain my laughter, I realized that I should have known better than to expect an honest answer. I called Grace's father on the CB radio and asked him how much I should give for food money. He said that typically they gave their public health workers about 500 zaires (75 cents) for roadside food on an overnight trip. I ended up giving Mayuyu 500 zaires, a can of tuna, a thick slice of bread, a small jar of mango jam, and a raincoat.

However, Mayuyu was not beyond one last ditch effort.

"The least you could do is give me 1000 zaires for food!" he said.

I acted hurt and indignant (I'm beginning to catch on to this culture), and told him that beyond the usual 500 zaires, I had given him extra food and my wife's raincoat, and that I couldn't believe that he would be so unkind as to ask for more. With that, I bid him good-bye, good luck, the good fortune to avoid snakes and soldiers (not necessarily in that order), and a firm admonition to not return tomorrow before getting a written response from Sister Agnes to my letter.

It had never even occurred to me that Mayuyu would try to make the return trip that same day.

And yet, there he was, that very night, dead tired and shivering in the dark from the rain, clutching a return letter for me from Sister Agnes. I was so certain that he would have the good sense to spend the night at Kingala Matele that at first I thought he must be an apparition come to haunt me for not giving him the 1000 zaires.

I got Grace's folks to ask him where he lived and if he would try to get home that night. He said he lived right across the river from Kikongo, and had planned to go home

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except that someone crossed the river with his dugout. He was stuck on this side and would probably just curl up beside some relative's hut and sleep.

By this time, I was totally wracked with guilt at my ruthless exploitation of his physical stamina, although it wasn't my fault he decided to walk back through the rain and difficult forest trails in the dead of a moonless night. In partial penance, I took him to our house, gave him two aspirin, fed him a meal, lent him a blanket, then sent him over to Grace's folks where they had set up a bedding mat for him in the outdoor kitchen. The next day when I saw him, he gave me a big smile, so I suppose my ruthless exploitation didn't do him any permanent harm.

Two weeks ago, the village was in a very festive mood, celebrating the news that all of this year's high school seniors had passed their state exams for their high school diplomas. They received the news by courier about midafternoon, and immediately the high-pitched warbling cries of the women could be heard echoing across the station. Joyous cries of "Oyé, Oyé!" could be heard late into the night, along with singing by the light of distant camp fires. Zairians know how to endure hardship, but they also know how to celebrate when the occasion arises.

It struck me as peculiar, though, that every single student who took the exam passed, so I asked one of the teachers about the success rate of the past few years. As it turns out, only a few students passed each of the last two years. Not a single student passed several years ago. Puzzled by the variability of these results, and unable to get any straight answers from the teacher, I asked one of the missionaries what he thought might account for the dramatic improvement this year. He said it was simple: the Zairian station council had paid off the examination board at the regional center and it was Kikongo's turn this year to have a high percentage of graduates. The results were guaranteed.

Apparently, the parents pay off the teachers each year for their children's promotion irrespective of how the child did academically. Parents of high school students also pay money into an "account" which is designated for the *matabish* (bribes) of the regional officials for the state exam. Each year the bribes are paid, but the various secondary schools must take turns to have the high percentage of graduates that year, so that the total number from the region stays consistent year to year. Thus, a particular high school might go several years with only a few students passing the state exams, followed by a year when everyone passes. A number of students will fail the state exam for several years



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in a row, until it is their school's turn to be favored.

For example, our household helper, Tengu, has an older brother at Kikongo who finally passed the state exam this year, after his fourth try. Apparently, some of the private schools catering to the elite (mostly in Kinshasa) don't participate in this system, but by and large, that is how education works around here. Consequently, over the past 20 years the overall level of education has diminished considerably, and it can't be assured that a high school graduate has any academic competency whatsoever.

It's sad to see how early the tendency towards incompetency starts in the schools here. The Kaufman Assessment Battery we have been administering to second year primary students includes an academic achievement portion that Kisoki and I modified to be a bit more culturally relevant.

Part of this section measures reading expression and comprehension. All of the children so far are unable to read the simplest words and even some letters in Kituba, yet, when I point to the day's lesson still up on the blackboard in their classroom, they can read the words that they reviewed that day by rote memory. It's evident that their lessons in reading consist of rote memorization of a list of words written by the teacher on the blackboard, and not the phonetic pronunciation or grammatical analysis of the language. Furthermore, although that same blackboard lesson has the students subtracting numbers in multiples of 10, the children are unable to tell me which number comes after 29, or even to read the number 29.

As a rule, the teachers adhere rigidly to the structured lesson plans presented from a chalk blackboard to 60 children crammed (three kids to a three-foot bench) into a 15 by 30 foot mud-walled classroom with little or no writing materials or books. Whether or not the kids are actually learning is inconsequential, as long as the teacher strictly follows the lesson plan, keeps discipline in the classroom, and collects his or her paycheck each month.

Most of the kids quickly get lost in this classroom environment, never really catching on to what is being presented. The sad thing is that a lot of these kids are really bright, as is abundantly clear when a half-dozen of them connive their way into getting you to pay them to shell peanuts. They eat most of the peanuts anyway, then get you to give them permission to climb your mango tree for fresh fruit to wash down your peanuts.

More seriously, one child I tested had a spatial memory on the Kaufman that wouldn't quit (96th percentile American

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norms) and, I discovered later, built excellent replicas of Isuzu jeeps and Cessna airplanes out of balsa wood scraps to sell to missionary children. Unless by some miracle they get up and out of this academic system, most of the kids like this don't have a chance of realizing their potential.

As for our kids, Monique is thoroughly enjoying home schooling with Grandma, climbing trees, repotting plants, collecting insects, and supervising her siblings. Daniel enjoys busting through his morning home schooling assignments at a record pace so that he can enjoy that much more time each day galloping about the station with the Foster boys, playing in an African style hut in the Fosters' yard that serves as a clubhouse, knocking down ripe mangos with sticks, playing soccer with the local boys, and stalking chickens with his little bow and arrow set.

Marjorie spends her days copying after Daniel as he completes his home schooling assignments, tagging along behind him as he plays with the Foster boys, screaming in terror every time Lucky, the little dog next door, sniffs his way near her, running up and down the little hill in front of the house, staring sullenly every time one of the household helpers greets her, and eating everything in sight at the meal table. Unfortunately, Matthew spends a good part of his day wanting to be held and rubbing at some kind of rash that is everywhere on his body. Overall, his mood has been good when he's feeling well, but I can tell that the climate and minor illnesses have been hard on him.

There isn't a day that goes by that I'm not grateful for Grace's command of Kituba and frustrated by my own lack in this language. A typical day for Grace consists of getting up around 5:30 a.m. to have some quiet time, feeding the kids by 7:00, taking turns with me to attend morning chapel, then being back by 7:30 to get the household help started on laundry, dishes, boiling water over the wood burning stove, sweeping, holding Matthew, trips to the market, and empathizing with a worker as one of them asks to take a sick son or daughter to the medical center. (We cover all of their medical needs as part of their employment package.)

During this initial surge of supervisory activity, Grace somehow manages to get Daniel started on his home schooling (fortunately, he's quick to understand and complete his assignments), get Monique bundled off to Grandma's for her schooling, take a morning exercise walk from 8:15 to 8:45 with Marilyn Foster, and get Tengu set up for an afternoon of baking bread, cookies, and today for the first time, cinnamon rolls.

After lunch, Grace tries to rest for about an hour, and



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then prepares for the series of afternoon vendors who come to our door selling their produce as they come back from the fields. After a local boy brings firewood, she tries to get supper started around 4:30 p.m., followed in the evening by baths, reading stories, brushing teeth, praying with the children, getting them asleep, and then collapsing.

If Grace gets sick, we've had it.



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*Kisoki and I traveled 32 kilometers by bike in 100 degree weather to the medical center at Kingala. After 25 kilometers, I began to see optical illusions of clear and cold Quebec lakes and ice-capped mountains.*



## Caterpillar Season

November 8, 1990 -

It is now caterpillar season in Kikongo.

Early this morning, scores of village women hiked out to the surrounding forests to gather buckets of caterpillars. Most of the afternoon, children sat beside their huts squeezing the intestines out of them. This evening, most of the families of Kikongo had boiled caterpillars to eat with their *luku*, providing a rare opportunity to enjoy a nutritional protein at little or no cost.

One of the women brought us a bowl of squirming caterpillars so that we wouldn't be left out, and our kitchen





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help promptly set about cleaning them. Grace and the kids were pretty game about it all, eating one or two of the shriveled little beasts before switching to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

I was left with most of the bowl to myself, and engaged in the awkward task of trying to munch on these shriveled and salted little delicacies without thinking about what I was eating. It was certainly one of the more interesting (if less savory) meals I've ever enjoyed. At the conclusion of our meal, I told Grace that next week it's fried flying termites (without the wings) for the *spécialité du jour*.

Last weekend I had another authentic experience, bicycling for hours along sandy eroded roads to get to a distant village. My research assistant, Kisoki, and I traveled to Kingala Matele to meet with Sister Agnes Marie Gallagher and finalize preparations for research we will be conducting at her medical center. After a morning of preparation, Kisoki and I set off beneath the scorching midday sun in what must have been 100 degree weather.

I never noticed it when I went to Kingala by jeep, but it became quickly and painfully evident that most of the road from Kikongo to Kingala is uphill. By the time we came to the village of Cinq, which is five kilometers from Kikongo, I realized I had gotten myself in over my head.

At 10 kilometers I was thinking about the missionary who has our Isuzu Trooper on loan, cursing his good fortune with as much breath as remained in my tortured lungs.

At 15 kilometers, Kisoki and I sat amidst a circle of curious children at a roadside village, eating bananas, drinking water (from my canteen) and praying for an eclipse to relieve us from the sun.

At 20 kilometers, I found blessed distraction by getting into a heated discussion with Kisoki on Zairian government and politics, a topic which I expounded on despite (or perhaps because of) a sunstroke delirium as we pedaled along.

At 25 kilometers, I began to see optical illusions of clear and cold Quebec lakes and ice-capped mountains.

At 32 kilometers, we lurched into Kingala Matele (actually Kisoki pedaled, I lurched) to a group of bemused and hospitable nuns who took one look at us and promptly brought us lemonade.

While we gulped our lemonade, Sister Agnes showed me a notebook listing the results of a physical exam administered to about 100 first- and second-year primary school children. From this sampling frame, we agreed that Sister Agnes should select 15 of the more anemic children in poorer health

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and 15 of the healthier children, all in the 7 to 8 year range. These children will undergo a more thorough physical exam, including lab analysis for intestinal parasites and blood analysis for sickle cell anemia. Kisoki and I, and possibly the two other members of our team, will return next week for several days to complete cognitive assessment of those children. We hired a recent high school graduate recommended by Sister Agnes, a Zairian woman from Kingala named Espérance, to begin the detailed family interviews for each of the children in the study.

Kisoki and I were very encouraged by our visit. Sister Agnes has obviously taken great interest and initiative in the project, and with her watchcare, I am very optimistic about the quality and reliability of the information we will gather at Kingala.

Furthermore, the sisters at the convent were most gracious. We had the best *luku* and *saka saka* the region could offer, along with bread rolls and coffee with a little piece of chocolate for breakfast. The small guest house we stayed in was comfortable, except we had to make up our own beds because the sisters were afraid of the bats they discovered inhabiting the mattresses. The sisters even arranged to repair one of our bicycle's flat tires. I hope I can offer them hospitality in the future.

Since the return was mostly downhill, we were able to maintain an easier pace. Kisoki insisted on stopping every two hundred meters to greet either a local clan elder, pastor, teacher, relative, friend, acquaintance, land chief or other notable. As we pulled up on our bikes, the children at these stops would scamper about excitedly shouting "*Mundele, mundele* (white person)," the elder would offer us palm wine, while extended family standing about would ask where had we been, why, how long had we been there, why was this *mundele* riding a bicycle rather than a jeep, what was the news regarding various acquaintances and friends at Kingala, and when would we be returning that way so they could feed us and greet us properly. I probably shook more hands and greeted more children than a politician on the campaign trail. Always, the people were very warm and friendly. I came home with a renewed appreciation for the close social bonds and networks these people maintain within their clan and tribal groups.

Despite being saddle sore for about two days, we continued our project with the children here. It is going well; although, I wish that we could be doing more kids more quickly. Each afternoon my assistant Makakala (accent on the second syllable) spends about three hours administering



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the entire Kaufman Assessment Battery (adapted to Kituba) to a new child in the study.

At the same time, Kafuti, a friendly and capable woman who is a recent high school graduate here in Kikongo, conducts an interview with the family of the child at their home. The interview consists of questions pertaining to the economic, nutritional, social, housing, and educational resources available to the family. Also, Kafuti evaluates their water source and gets a brief medical history on the child from the parents or guardians.

Kisoki and I distribute our time between periodic observations and feedback on Makakala and Kafuti's methods, and forays to the hospital with groups of three children for the physical exams and lab tests for parasites. We also work together scoring the test forms, and I have begun familiarizing myself with the statistical package called SYSTAT, which I have installed on my laptop computer to compile and evaluate the various measures we are gathering.

So far, about two thirds of our children have tested positive for *ankylostome*, and about half have tested positive on the blood test for *trophozoite* (malaria) parasites. We've begun medicinal intervention on these kids and will begin a one-month follow-up cognitive testing and lab exam on all of the children.

With only one new child being added to the project each day, our sample size growth has been painfully slow. However, the people working on the project for me are developing their skills nicely and taking quite a bit of pride and ownership in this endeavor. I gave each of them a Spring Arbor College patch and chrome letter opener. Each afternoon they come to work proudly wearing their badge pinned to a shirt or *nlele* (a woman's wrap-around cloth), and I've even seen them wearing their patches to church. I have special little gold Spring Arbor College pins for each of them after we've completed our 50th child. I can only imagine the use those will get. Back in the U.S. my research assistants would probably wear such pins in their ears.

The community seems to appreciate the project. Almost daily, Kisoki gets requests from parents who want to have their children tested. They seem eager to have free medical exams and medications provided for their children. In contrast to the difficulty of securing parental consent for such research back in the U.S., it's all I can do to keep Kisoki from charging parents a fee for entering their child into the project.

Of course, some of the administrators and workers at the hospital haven't missed this opportunity to try to make a

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little extra on the side, and I've had to stomp down to their offices several times to straighten out hidden overcharges and extra fees. Still, all in all, the efforts so far have been well worth it, if only for the sense that we're giving the children a little something beyond their use in a research study.

Another exciting development has been my success at tracking down a rat frequenting our storeroom. After discovering solid evidence (droppings) of the intruder confirmed by several direct sightings by Grace and the kitchen help, I took definitive action by blocking all entrance holes, securing all foodstuffs and setting the only mousetrap I could find on the station. However, despite this economic blockade, the rat maintained its position that it had annexed our storeroom as its 19th province, and that the Boivin storeroom would forever be a part of its domain.

Military action followed to dislodge the usurper. I awoke to the sound of the trap being sprung and a harsh squealing. Thinking that at last I had trapped my elusive prey, I hopped out of bed and bounded off to the storage room, only to find the rat standing beside the sprung trap, flexing its muscles and grimacing at me before scampering off.

Had it not been for a drastic turn of events, chemical warfare would have ensued. One morning our worker Suzanne rushed in, excitedly encouraging me to come quickly and bring a club. She had just seen the rat in the storeroom and told our laundry person, Lukwama, about it.

When I arrived, Lukwama was removing everything on an upper shelf beside a box harboring the rat. I stood on a chair, trying to get a better look at his hiding place, when suddenly his little nose peeked out from behind the cardboard box. I promptly crushed that corner of the box with my club, giving the rat a major concussion. Holding it up by its tail as it convulsed in the throes of death, I danced about, giving a victorious war hoop and beating my fist against my chest.

Glancing at the startled faces of our household help, I realized that they were probably a bit taken aback by my less than civilized—if not absolutely savage—display. But I didn't care; I would not be denied the sweet savor of victory simply to maintain my posture of dignity. In fact, if I had had the Isuzu, I would probably have strapped the rat carcass spread-eagle on the hood of the vehicle and driven around the mission station several times, honking my horn to the cries of "*oyé, oyé*" by the admiring villagers.

Instead, I gave the rat to our cat, Purpose, who immediately used it as a prop for a didactic interchange with



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her four kittens on the proper technique for savoring the carcass of storeroom usurpers. The kittens were deeply grateful.

Grace's parents left for the U.S. last week where they will spend several months on deputation before retiring after 35 years of missionary service. There were several *fêtes* in their honor; it was a moving, yet difficult experience. It was hard for them to grasp the reality of finally leaving Zaire after having invested their entire professional lives here. Arriving in 1956 when this was still the Belgian Congo, Grace's folks weathered the turbulent times following independence, civil wars and attempts by various provinces to secede (with evacuations in 1961, 1964, 1965), the move to nationalization (1972), and the economic decline of the country throughout the 1980s. I am grateful we were able to be with them for the last couple months; I have a far deeper appreciation for their sacrifices, skills, and adaptability.

Not having them around here has been a difficult adjustment for Grace and Monique particularly, but a couple of the missionary families have gone out of their way to let us know that we aren't alone or abandoned. We're also beginning to cultivate some friendships among Zairian acquaintances here. We've started hosting a Zairian couple each week for dinner, which has opened things up considerably.

We've begun running low on butane gas canisters for our stove. Fuel of this sort is becoming increasingly difficult to find, so we've switched to an old wood stove for boiling our water and cooking some of our food.

The rainy season is now in full swing, and we've had the opportunity to enjoy several beautiful lightning shows against the silhouette of overcast skies to the north and east.

Grace's father and I managed to finish installing the household solar panel the very morning he left. I've redone some of the bedroom wiring, which was just begging for a dead short, and finished the wiring, shelves, and windows for my office in the old workshop adjacent to the house.

I am really pleased with how my office has been set up here. I enjoy mornings working on my computer, listening to the worldwide BBC network, running my little fan and sipping my Zairian coffee (brewed first thing each morning over my wood fire). The only thing I am missing is a personal secretary and a sign for my door saying "Central Office for Kikongo Child Research Center — Knock Before Entering." There are times when I'd rather be here than anywhere.



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*Crossing the Wamba River by pirogue is  
sometimes a treacherous and difficult proposition.*



## Song and Dance

*December 2, 1990 -*

I just returned last Thursday from 10 days in Kinshasa, and I am still contemplating what I observed.

Along the main boulevard, the hubbub of activity seems to indicate business as usual. Yet, within the countless streets, neighborhoods, and squatter slums of the city, the situation is becoming desperate. Life has always been difficult for the poor of Kinshasa, but the recent economic tailspin, coupled with soaring inflation and almost daily devaluation of the currency, has threatened the very survival of the poor.





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Though the Gulf crisis has negatively impacted fuel prices, interest rates, and economic growth in the U.S., the economy there is robust enough to absorb the impact. However, take a tenuous third-world economy that has been declining for 10 years, introduce a fuel crisis coupled with a deteriorating transportation infrastructure, add rampant corruption in the centralized management and distribution of fuel reserves for the country, as well as exploitation and opportunism at the level of local suppliers, and then mix in the inability of smaller independent trucking outfits to find and afford fuel, and you have a formula for disaster. You can no longer get food and fuel into a city of four million people at a price the poor can afford.

The day I left Kinshasa the going rate for a sack of manioc, the basic staple of the general population, was 35,000Z, compared to a price of 20,000Z only a month ago. Three or four families must pool their money to buy a single bag, divide it in equal portions among extended families that average about 10 members, and limit themselves to one meal a day with little money left over for meat, fish, or other nutritional supplements. A public health researcher I talked to said several development agencies fully expect they will have to petition for world relief funding within the next year.

As certain as night follows day, economic decline and general hunger bring social and political unrest and turmoil. Comparatively speaking, Zairians are a pretty tolerant and long-suffering people. They have demonstrated a tremendous resiliency in the face of continued difficulty. This is in contrast to Americans, who they privately view as being rather soft, childish and weak in terms of their ability to cope with continued hardship and frustration. However, every veteran missionary I talked to agrees that not since independence, have they ever seen such widespread discontent and open demand for political change.

For the first time, there is rumor of the potential necessity of opposition to the army and central government with force, a suggestion which, prior to this time, was simply unheard of. The economic situation has become desperate, and whether social turmoil and a great deal of human suffering can be averted will depend on how President Mobutu and his staff respond to this crisis and the demands for economic and political change. We are witnessing a critical juncture in Zaire's history. Hopefully, it can avert the course followed by Uganda and, more recently, Rwanda.

In terms of my personal experiences on the trip to Kinshasa, from the time that my assistant Sam and I stepped off the Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) flight at Ndolo

airport until the time we arrived at the CBZO/Kinshasa compound, we became somewhat different persons. The images of hoards of hustling people in every sector competing for their daily bread, the traffic jams compounded by long gas lines and vehicle breakdowns, the ubiquitous presence of military troops and *gendarmes* at every corner stopping vehicles at a whim, and the overall intensified social gestalt of every situation bombarded our senses and forced us to a heightened vigilance and precaution. As we ventured out to fill my supplies list, Sam was constantly at my side, watching, directing, critiquing, chiding, and generally schooling me as to how to avoid being exploited and used as an “easy mark” *mundele*.

Our motto during this trip was, “What new adventure will this day bring?” Indeed, each day did bring some new situation or conflict that I had to cope with and learn from. These included chasing off teenagers trying to steal my back tire while I was stuck in a gas line for two hours in Kintambo; accompanying a porter as he wheeled a 45-kilo sack of flour for me to my vehicle amidst swerving taxis and buses; fending off pickpockets and scams while buying cloth for our household helpers at the *Grand Marché* (market).

I felt incredible relief one evening to finally get enough fuel to drive my recently reacquired vehicle from Kinshasa back to Kikongo, then incredible frustration after realizing later that I had been swindled at the pump. There was also the irritating social phenomenon of having several young men drift within my immediate proximity and inconspicuously evaluate me for economic opportunity whenever I stopped anywhere in the city for more than a minute or two. If I sound more than a little paranoid, you would too if you found yourself to be the only *mundele* on a street in a city with millions of unemployed and desperate people.

But there were other, lighter moments also. There were grateful smiles of the mamas from whom we would buy our mealtime bread and bananas in various quarters of the city, or the occasional opportunity to relish a cold Coke (unheard of in the interior) near a street corner stand and watch city life unfold around us. Or watch Sam's pride in his brand new (though poorly constructed) pair of leather shoes that he bought and wore in the city with the salary he earned on my project and see his stature increase before my eyes when I introduce him while picking up mail and photocopying project materials. Christine Harrington and I were amused as he ate his first American cheeseburger during a lunch time foray to the American Employees Recreational and



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Welfare Association (AERWA) cafeteria, and with the utmost seriousness with which he took his responsibilities videotaping my presentation on "Positron Emission Tomography Brain Scanning and Neuropsychological Research" at the U.S. embassy cultural center.

Then there was the sweet irony of the ubiquitous street-corner *kadafis* or military wives hawking liter bottles of diesel fuel to taxis and drivers from supplies that their husbands drained from military vehicles the night before. The groups of school children playing and singing were an eternal sign of hope and renewal in the midst of frustration and despair.

The week before my trip to Kinshasa, I spent four days testing children at the Catholic mission of Kingala Matele with Sam, Makakala, Kafuti, and Espérance. When we arrived to begin testing the 30 seven- to eight-year-old children selected for the project, the entire community was out to meet us. Groups of parents and villagers gathered to observe this historic event, the first psychological study ever in their region.

That morning, several village women had scraped out a brand new path to the small classroom building that was designated as our testing site. All 30 children stood in two lines, boys on the right and girls on the left, ordered from shortest to tallest, with arms folded as a sign of respect.

Soon after we arrived, the children were marched, double-file and in coordinated step, into the classroom where I was then introduced as "the American doctor" who would be testing them. I introduced myself and our project through an interpreter. The children were in an obvious state of awe, fear, and trembling, having probably been threatened by their parents with all sorts of unspeakable *mundele* horrors if they misbehaved. It took quite a while—and several reports from peers who had survived the procedure—before the children were relaxed and unafraid.

Despite a slow and awkward start, by mid-afternoon of the first day we were a well-tuned machine. My evaluators worked in four separate stations, each testing a child with the Kaufman-ABC battery while I juggled sections from our two sets of materials between the examiners as they had need, weighed and measured new children right before testing, compiled the medical information for each child from Sister Agnes Marie's records, took over for individual evaluators to give them a periodic toilet break, and generally tried to keep our cognitive evaluation assembly line moving.

I kept them so busy they commented that my research assistants back in the United States must be very happy to have me away in Zaire for awhile. In three days time we were

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able to extend our sample to almost 50 children and compile most of the medical information for them. The rate of progress allowed us to relax on our fourth day, Sunday. We enjoyed a leisurely lunch with the sisters in the convent after morning mass, before the public health zone vehicle picked us up to go back to Kikongo.

Overall, our time at Kingala Matele was busy, but satisfactory. The entire team felt as if we were accomplishing a lot, and we took a good deal of pride in that. The nuns were most gracious, and such good cooks that I actually enjoyed some of the *luku* meals. The first morning we were there we met a villager who had just had a successful antelope hunt the night before, so we were able to purchase enough meat (at *mundele* prices) to treat both us and the sisters for a couple of days. The parents and elders of the village felt honored to have been selected for the project, and we had to cope with a number of parental requests to have their children admitted into the study.

Each evening while waiting for our evening meal in the still, soft light of our single kerosene lamp, my Zairian assistants and I talked about many facets of Zairian life: the sense of pride and identity among the tribal groups, the importance of the ancestral lands for each clan and family as well as the "village of origin" for a family, and the difficulty of life in Zaire today and the deep desire for change to bring about justice and prosperity for the people.

We also talked about why the belief in *kindoki* (spiritual powers to bring about good and evil) was so deeply held among Zairians, as Sam recounted instances of the supernatural and paranormal that he had witnessed firsthand among spiritualists. While walking back to the guest house one evening, Sam suddenly stopped and pointed into the distant night. At first I didn't know what the problem was, until Sam quieted me so that I could hear distant music. This, Sam explained, was the sound of young men dancing to folklore, and he asked me if I wanted to go and see it.

Within a few minutes, Sam, Kafuti, and I approached the edge of a wood fire casting an eerie light on a group of young men moving in a choreographed chant around a tom-tom percussionist and African stringed-instrument player. They sang and danced in this circle with incredible precision, vigor, and energy. Sam explained that they were singing stories and oral traditions about their lives and that of the village, and a natural part of this was dancing as they recounted the oral tradition. I couldn't believe the ease with which they coordinated their song and dance.



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Apparently, these *steles*, as they are called, sometimes continue much of the night, with the young men dancing themselves to the point of exhaustion. Sometimes the *bambuta* or elders of the village have their own *steles*, as do the mamas and children. In traditional tribal culture, the *stèle* was the means by which the younger generation was taught moral lessons, the history of the village and clan, and the ancestral heritage. When the villagers underwent this form of "schooling," their rhythm, senses, and physique were fully involved, an altogether different vehicle for learning than the Western European-style classroom pedagogy.

*Steles* do not occur near most mission stations today because the early missionaries forbade them as sinful. The Catholics, however, tend to be a bit more liberal in the area of acculturation. But witnessing these *steles* gave me a direct glimpse and a deeper understanding into the archetypal basis to much of the rhythm and energy that Blacks have contributed to American culture, albeit in a form that has evolved and changed over the generations.

Life in Kikongo remains a blend of placid tranquillity interspersed with occasional tragedy. The man who operated a one person *piroque* (dugout canoe) service transporting folks across the Wamba River recently fell into the river not far from shore and drowned. They found his body two days later about 20 kilometers downstream. He left behind a wife and two small children. He had made his living transporting people for 10 years even though he didn't know how to swim. One of our worker's sons almost died from a malarial-induced seizure, scaring all of us. We continue to see men in their 30s dying from tuberculosis or pulmonary complications related to AIDS, including some school teachers.

On a brighter note, the children are happy and healthy. Monique found a wasp nest which a worker sprayed and dissected for her. She read a children's encyclopedia article on wasps and was thrilled to see the larvae being exhumed from the nests in various stages of development.

Daniel and about a dozen local boys he plays soccer with organized a club to purchase another ball. The leaders wrote down everyone's name and had them contribute 100Z each, which was just enough to get a new ball from an area merchant. They then brought the ball to Grace and solemnly informed her that they had elected her president of the club, and she could keep the ball in our house when it wasn't being used. Otherwise, if any one of them brought it to his hut, it would be confiscated by an older brother since older siblings typically have the authority to take anything they

wish from younger siblings.

Matthew now says "*Mbote, mbote*" to Zairians and "Hi" to Americans. Marjorie is writing her letters and painting with water colors during Daniel's home schooling time. The most recent big project was when Monique organized her siblings and the Foster children to build a couple of tepees out of palm branches.



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## A Zairian Christmas

December 18, 1990

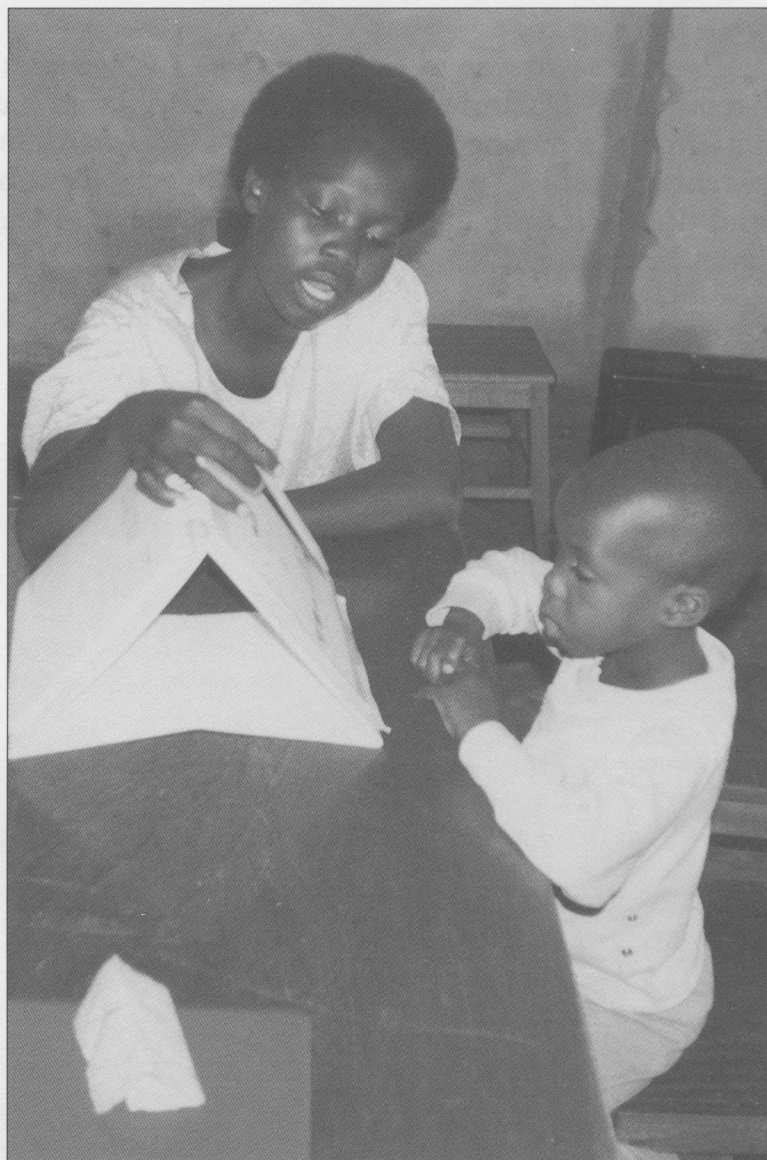
It sure doesn't seem like Christmas this year without snow and shopping malls. Actually, it's been nice not to be subject to the tyranny of American consumerism. I've always wanted to drop out of America's brand of commercialized Christmas, but lacked the fortitude to do so. This year I can sit back with my family in splendid isolation here in Kikongo and consider afresh how to celebrate Christmas without all of the cultural trappings that I've grown to despise. The sweetest part is that I couldn't do any Christmas shopping here in Kikongo for anywhere within about 200





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*The staff at  
the Catholic  
Mission in  
Kingala  
Matele  
assisted us  
in testing the  
reasoning  
ability of  
children  
served by  
their clinic.*



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## A Zairian Christmas

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*December 18, 1990 -*

It sure doesn't seem like Christmas this year without snow and shopping malls. Actually, it's been nice not to be subject to the tyranny of American consumerism. I've always wanted to drop out of America's brand of commercialized Christmas, but lacked the fortitude to do so. This year I can sit back with my family in splendid isolation here in Kikongo and consider afresh how to celebrate Christmas without all of the cultural trappings that I've grown to despise.

The sweetest part is that I couldn't do any Christmas shopping here in Kikongo (or anywhere within about 200

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miles) even if I wanted to. The Zairians are so busy simply surviving that they really don't have the luxury of anticipating Christmas too much or getting into the whole gifts and presents routine.

So as not to be a complete heretic, I did do some Christmas shopping for the family when I was in Kinshasa back in October. During one of my trips with Grace's father, he and I visited a little handicrafts store operated by the handicapped center of Kinshasa. Handicapped adults, mostly people crippled by polio, earn a living by crafting items for sale in a very nice gift boutique and by operating one of the nicest moderate-price-range restaurants in Kinshasa. They also make hand-pedaled tricycles which paraplegic adults wheel around the city.

I bought my girls some beautiful handcrafted Zairian dolls, a very clever toy helicopter fabricated out of aluminum wire for Daniel, and a little stuffed elephant for Matthew. Grace will receive a colorful *nlele* (traditional Zairian dress) for Christmas. With this dress, I'm confident she will "knock their socks off" some Saturday evening when we "put on the ritz" in downtown Kikongo.

In fact, I even had American music while I did my Christmas shopping, with the proprietor placing his only English music cassette into his player for my benefit. Ah, Christmas time in the city.

Lest the season be totally devoid of special anticipation, the children's Sunday school class put on a little impromptu pageant of sorts. After Mary, Joseph, the angels, soldiers, wise men, and shepherds were picked, they chose our children to be sheep, since sheep have to be white. One Zairian child was also selected as a sheep, so there was one black sheep, appropriately enough.

Christmas pageants of this sort are an annual affair in most churches across Zaire, and they mark the highlight of the Christmas season for the mission communities. Curiously enough, one of the most popular roles in these pageants are those of the soldiers, with both adults and children often vying for the role. During the play, they enter into character—complete with suit coat, dark glasses, homemade hunting shotgun and machete. It's a little frightening how readily they adapt the role of Roman military oppressors in ancient Palestine to President Mobutu's special security elite driving about in their black Mercedes in Kinshasa.

Grace's brother, Jim, had an opportunity to meet a few of these men a couple of years ago when he and several MAF pilots were arrested for using a video camera in the city as



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they taped their trip to the airport one morning. Fortunately, they are Americans, and very fortunately, they didn't happen to have any Zairians in the car with them to be targeted for further interrogation. They did get their car back after a month, but they never got the camera back.

I'm not sure how I got from the topic of Christmas pageants to Jim's arrest two years ago, but I suppose it has something to do with oppression, occupation, and the promised coming of a Messiah to deliver His people and initiate an eternal Kingdom based on truth and justice.

One evening Gary Foster came to the door and told us he had just gotten word that his truck, full of fuel and building supplies on its way to Kikongo from Kinshasa, had tipped over on a rough section of road only about four kilometers outside of Kikongo. We had had heavy rains the day before which had made that section of road particularly treacherous. So, for the next couple of hours, the Land Cruiser belonging to the agricultural project and the Isuzu we're using made runs to the scene of the accident to recover the food stuffs and butane canisters. Trucks of this sort are always overloaded and carry numerous passengers on top of the load, so it was a miracle no one was seriously hurt or killed. One of our workers and two of his friends slept with the truck that night, chasing off some would-be thieves at three in the morning.

The next day another truck came, hauling a load of wood from Kinshasa which Gary had ordered for the hospital construction. Gary noticed that the truck was only carrying about a fourth of the load he had ordered. After checking the manifest, he discovered the chauffeurs had failed to check the shipping order and set off from Kinshasa with only a portion of the load, essentially wasting a trip. To add insult to injury, when Gary asked them to take part of the load from the tipped truck the rest of the way into Kikongo they wanted 300,000 zaires. I told Gary to quit messing around, fire bomb their truck, and ride these jokers out of town on a rail. Fortunately, Gary is more forbearing than I am, and he simply told them no thanks.

His men spent the next hour carving a section out of the embankment next to the accident so that the renegade truck could get by. Gary then got about 30 men out to the spilled truck, and after unloading it and taking off the mangled upper bracket, they jacked up the truck enough to get the men under it. They then hefted the thing upright with one incredible push. I was amazed to see what can still be done with only brute manpower. Unfortunately, a fan belt had been severed and the acid had drained out of both batteries,

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so it took a couple of hours of additional work before they finally got the truck started, reloaded, and rolling again. At nightfall the truck came rolling into Kikongo filled with festive workers and villagers singing a joyous song in Kituba. I've grown to appreciate their tendency to joyfully savor the little victories of life.

The Gentrys, the agricultural missionary couple for this region, have taken on a new responsibility. About a week ago the pastor asked them if they would be willing to temporarily care for a 10-month-old baby dying of malnutrition; the child weighed only seven pounds. The child's mother died a few months ago, the father left, and the grandmother didn't want it. So, the Gentrys are now foster parents for this little child.

At first, the child was terribly anemic and couldn't even hold its head up. After only three days of almost nonstop eating and sleeping, I can't believe the difference. "Jordan," as they call him, can hold his head up, and he eats ravenously while making cooing sounds the entire time. He is also much more aware of and responsive to his surroundings. He still suffers from periodic high fevers, so we started him on anti-malarials and then switched to a second-line antibiotic when that didn't work. I think he'll make it, but he still has a long way to go.

The research is progressing well. We recently hired and trained another teacher for the research team, a young, bright woman who teaches the first-year primary school and also happens to be the daughter of the school director at Kikongo. (Am I adapting to the culture or what?)

Each afternoon at 1:30, the four members of the research team arrive at my "office," sit down at our worktable, where I serve them cold water and fruit, and take a half hour or so to confirm which children are scheduled for the hospital medical evaluation, which ones are scheduled for cognitive retesting, which kids have been recruited for initial testing and evaluation, and which parents should be interviewed that day. At that point, Kisoki typically sets off to supervise the medical evaluations, Kafuti and Makakala go to the school to administer the Kaufman exams, and "Jan" Kibungu, the newest member of the team, goes off to complete the family interviews.

I usually continue working at my office, either scoring test results, encoding them into the laptop computer, doing some statistical number crunching, reviewing some of the research literature, or writing. Periodically, I'll take a break and walk over to the hospital or school to see how things are going. About 5:00 p.m., members of the team start arriving



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back at the office and, after checking over their materials and seeing how things went, I record their hours in the "Red Book," where we keep track of our finances.

Saturdays we set aside for testing children from the outlying villages. To test them during a weekday, they would start back so late in the afternoon that they would end up arriving home through forest trails after dark. So, after school ends at 10:00 a.m., we keep a group of four children from one of the villages and each member of the team tests a child. By early afternoon, the children complete the testing and walk back to their village together with plenty of daylight left. Then on Sunday afternoon, the research team and I travel with the Isuzu Trooper to that village, or walk by trail if it is not near a road, to complete the family interviews (after greeting the chief and engaging in some casual conversation with the *bambuta* or elders). I've really enjoyed these Sunday afternoon trips to the villages with the research team since they often include village hospitality and lively conversation.

On the economic front, the situation continues to deteriorate in Kinshasa. The exchange rate is now over 2000Z for the American dollar, and prices continue to climb daily. The hospital here is having a difficult time affording medicines and meeting its salary obligations. Consequently, we've been delving more into the medical supplies we brought for our family to help the workers with things that the hospital has temporarily run out of.

I recently picked up an interesting piece of information from a missionary physician who knows one of the officials for Sabena Airlines. Sabena makes two cargo flights weekly into Kinshasa, each carrying about two tons of freshly-printed Zairian currency (10,000Z bills) that are used to meet the government payroll, which includes all the teachers, medical staff, civil servants, soldiers, and government clerks nationwide. Calculating the weight of a freshly printed and sealed packet of one thousand bills, we estimate the government is bringing about forty billion zaires (or about twenty million dollars) of new currency into the country each week to meet payroll.

This means that the government is presently "floating" the economy of Zaire on paper and contributing substantially to the soaring inflation rate and devaluation of the zaire. The tragedy is that the short-term solution of printing more paper is leading to the long-term economic disintegration of the country and the suffering of people who cannot hope to have their income keep up with prices.

For the time being, the civil disorder—including violence and looting in Kinshasa—has subsided; although, the general

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situation is still tense. Several demonstrations were severely repressed and there were rumors of the arrest of political opposition leaders. Mobutu's major political rival, Etienne Tsisekedi, is back in Zaire after a visit to the United States, where he lobbied Congress to cut off all economic aid to Zaire until a truly multi-party democratic system is instituted. Right now people are sitting tight, awaiting a national congress which is supposed to be convened this spring. Although the Catholic Church has taken a very strong stand for political and economic reform, the Protestant Church (*Eglise du Christ au Zaire*) has not. The opinion here is that the E.C.Z. Bishop, a long-time Mobutu acquaintance, has essentially opted for the status quo.

This is tragic because if there was ever a time for the church to take a redemptive, prophetic stand, the time is now. Change will come soon, but whether it will be accompanied by a great deal of disorder and suffering depends on what types of voices arise to rally and direct the people. My own sense is that most of the Protestant churches are themselves so full of graft, corruption, and sin that they are rendered spiritually powerless to be an effective instrument of change. The president of CBZO, Pastor Muzau, is a man of integrity and courage who has asked for a private audience with President Mobutu to share his concerns for the country's future. However, he is head of a church which is spiritually impotent, as are most of the established churches in Zaire. I'm afraid prophetic voices are going to have to arise from elsewhere.

The family remains well. Monique had fabricated some adorable Christmas mobiles from cardboard and coat hangers, including a special one for Jordan's crib. The kids have learned some songs in Kituba; Marjorie seems to pick them up quickest. Although I still have to periodically chase off the local kids when they get to be too much, our children have learned better how to play with them.

Grace takes a walk each morning with Marilyn Foster for some important woman to woman support. She then puts a "Do not disturb!" sign in Kituba on the door and home schools the kids for the entire morning. Thursday afternoon she attends a Zairian women's Bible study, for which she even has assigned readings in Kituba.



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*The child  
looked like it  
had been  
burned, but  
the mother  
told us she  
had been born  
this way.  
They had  
never sought  
medical  
attention  
because they  
didn't have  
the money.*



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## Social Insight

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*December 31, 1990 -*

Since my last entry, my big adventure was an overnight trip to a distant village with one of my research assistants, Makakala. He had received word that his mother-in-law was very ill, so he requested a couple of days off to travel to the village to check on her condition. I asked to accompany him because it seemed like a good opportunity to travel on foot to an isolated village.

At 6:00 a.m. Makakala, Lukwama, and I set off on our 34-kilometer journey. Lukwama is one of our household workers whose home village is in the same region, and he

knows the area well. After about a half-hour walk we crossed the Wamba River by *pirogue*, a rather tricky affair as Makakala balanced a bicycle upright in our very tippy craft and the high waters of the rainy season swirled around us while we crossed this very wide river.

Having crossed the Wamba, we climbed out of the river valley and spent the next four hours trudging our way across the Yelenge Nseke. Along the narrow sandy trails snaking across this seemingly endless grassland are small wooded patches. Makakala and Lukwama often pointed out features of the terrain or sights along the trail that I would not have otherwise noticed. I had a chance to study and photograph several different types of antelope snares and traps, to see different types of trees and shrubs from which various species of caterpillars would "rain down" and be harvested, and to identify tracks of the savage Cape buffalo.

I was amazed at how tuned their senses were to the sights, sounds, and smells around them. Lukwama would sniff the air and point to the probable location of a dead animal some distance away. Makakala would point to a tree in the distance and identify it as a good fruit tree. They would pick various types of plant and shrubs and describe their medicinal use, or identify a particular parrot or bird call. It seemed that at each bend in the trail they would show me something new.

Makakala pointed out some type of metallic ore trailings not far from the Konzi River as we reached the far side of the *nseke*, and he described how their tribe (the Bambala) had learned the art of metallurgy from the Bachoke tribe, fabricating jewelry and small statues from this ore for many centuries. Unfortunately, the tradition has died out in all but a few Bambala villages.

As we walked along, Makakala also talked about regional folklore and tribal history. Regions to the west along the Zaire River had been contested between the Bateke and Bambala tribes for seven hundred years, with periodic warfare continuing up until the mid-1800s. The Bateke, originated from the Bantu peoples of the forested Congo basin, became accomplished hunters and fishermen, and migrated up the river system. The Bambala, on the other hand, were more advanced in agricultural practices. It's interesting to see the tribal differences and distinctions persisting up to the present day, with the Bateke villages typically located near the rivers and the Bambala villages near the major land routes.

The land chief of the *nseke* we crossed is a Bateke named Fakamba. Polygamy tends to be a bit more common among



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the Bateke; yet, this particular chief is exceptional in that he has at least 12 wives (though some estimates range as high as 30) and over 100 children. He apparently has half a village dedicated solely to houses and fields for his wives and children.

This chief is also reputed to be a powerful *nganga* (sorcerer) who assumes the form of different animals to survey and protect his territory. In fact, Makakala and Lukwama recounted to me with the utmost seriousness an incident where Fakamba had changed into a large serpent to rescue a drowning boy in the Konzi River. It's amazing how widespread and deeply entrenched is the belief among Zairians regarding the ability of certain persons to transform into forest creatures to accomplish their purposes. Even Christian pastors occasionally discuss among themselves, not whether such transformations occur, but the theological ramifications of such transformations. For example, what happens to the soul of a person who dies while in a transformed physical state of a forest animal?

After crossing the Yelenge Nseke, we descended into the river valley of the Konzi River, a very pretty river that runs narrower and deeper than the Wamba. It is not uncommon to see hippos and smaller fish-eating crocodiles on the Konzi. After crossing the Konzi, we continued east past a string of small villages with hordes of curious people and frightened children scampering off shouting "*mundele, mundele*." Many of the children had never seen a *mundele*.

As we stopped to greet people and briefly tell them who we were and where we were going, the village folks never failed to express astonishment that I was actually walking that distance. They would gently chide Makakala and Lukwama for forcing this poor *mundele* to walk instead of at least pushing him along on a bicycle. I started teasing my companions for neglecting to bring a *tshimpoyi* for me, which is a seat suspended between two poles used by villagers to transport dignitaries.

At the first village we came to after crossing the Konzi, I saw what had to be one of the most pitiful medical cases I had ever encountered. I just happened to stop to take a photo of some children stringing tobacco leaves to dry, when a mother came out of her hut carrying this child and calling to me. The child looked as if the skin over its entire body had been burned: it was cracked, shriveled, and open from head to toe.

The mother told us that the child had been born this way, the fourth consecutive child that she had given birth to with this condition after giving birth to three normal



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children. The previous three children with this condition had all died before a year, but the child we saw was now six years old. Her mother held the child to her side as the girl looked at us through large, frightened eyes. Her mother explained that when it was warm and sunny, the girl would cry almost constantly from the skin condition.

They had never sought medical attention for her, since they didn't have the money and thought she would probably die soon anyway, as had the others. The girl, though, not only still lives, but talks normally, can see and hear adequately, walks, and has a good appetite.

On our return trip the next day, we met with the mother, maternal uncle (who has final authority over matters pertaining to the child), and father and suggested to them that if they would bring her to the hospital at Kikongo, I would pay for a complete physical examination and any treatment we could initiate to help the child. They agreed, and in gratitude gave me a gift of two chicken eggs from one of their hens. They have agreed to bring the child to the hospital on January 8. I took some pictures to send to my father-in-law for his evaluation. As we left, I shook the girl's shriveled little hand and looked once more into her frightened face.

We continued walking east for several more hours, occasionally stopping for a snack of fresh roasted corn offered as a gift of hospitality by villagers. We had stopped for lunch, eating in the hut of an extended family member of Lukwama's, when we met one woman with a one-week-old newborn and another woman with twins a month old. When a young man came into the hut, he was introduced as their husband, that is, the husband of both women. Makakala explained to me later that it is not uncommon for a Bateke man to have two wives. Apparently, the practice continues to the present even near mission stations and schools, although the Zairians are more discreet about it in those areas.

About midafternoon, we stopped in the village of Kimbuku so that Makakala could buy some shotgun shells from a local gunsmith and examine the progress on a hunting gun he is having made. It was incredible to see some rather nice handcrafted shotguns being fabricated under the most primitive conditions out of scrap metal parts and pipe. Under a primitive outdoor grass and stick pavilion with a metal anvil, charcoal fire, and assortment of hand tools, this gunsmith shapes the gun stalk and barrel, assembles the trigger mechanism, and puts together a perfectly functional firearm.





Leaving Kimbuku, it was only two more kilometers to our destination village of Ngonzi. Halfway there we came to a beautiful clear small stream with a sandy bottom where we bathed and changed our clothes. We then hiked the final kilometer into the village, arriving after eight hours of travel by foot that day.

Makakala's clan by marriage treated us like royalty. After the traditional greetings, a woman from a neighboring hut (essentially bare breasted) came over with two rattles and a huge smile; she spent the next 15 minutes dancing and singing a greeting to us. I tried hard to smile appreciatively and stare at Makakala the whole time. Makakala then presented the gifts he had carted on the bicycle for his in-laws, including soap and canned food for his mother-in-law and six bottles of Skoal beer for the maternal uncle. The uncle had tears in his eyes as he spent the next five minutes praising the Lord for this gift and thanking Makakala.

That evening, we ate alone in our own hut (a special honor) a meal of *luku* and chicken sauce. Normally I'm not partial to *luku*, but I was so hungry after our walk that day that I even kept up with the Zairians on my *luku* consumption, which I have never done before. After our meal, we sat with the extended family by a campfire while they sang songs in Kiteke and I mellowed out, falling asleep for a while. I slept that evening traditional Zairian style, on a mat over a stick frame bed four inches too short for me. Even though it wasn't a Holiday Inn, it was free and came with some of the most gracious hospitality you'll find anywhere.

Although his mother-in-law had been very sick, she was doing better when we arrived, so Makakala was much relieved. He encouraged her to seek treatment at the nearby medical center of Bonga Yasa since the problem seemed to be a recurring one. After a breakfast of more *luku* and fish sauce, they captured a chicken, tied it on the back of the bicycle with vines, and posed for me as I took numerous family photos for them with my camera. There were many cheery farewells during which they solemnly informed me that I was always welcome there as a friend of Makakala and, therefore, a child of their village.

The hike back passed quickly since we talked all the way. Makakala asked me why the Americans in the Peace Corps were in Zaire, such as Adam King, a young man from Washington who recently moved into a hut in Kikongo to begin working on area water projects. I explained the commitment of the Corps to live and travel as the local people did. Makakala said the leaders in Kikongo had formulated a theory that Peace Corps youths had committed some sort of

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crime back in the States and had been sent to work in Zaire as punishment. They figured this had to be some sort of punishment since they lived in thatched huts as the Zairians did and traveled by foot or bicycle, and didn't live in houses as the missionaries or have much to do with them.

Makakala told me that for an American to live as the Zairians, he or she must be doing so out of some sort of penance. I laughed so hard that I had to stop walking for a while.

Two days after our return from Ndonzi, the four project members and I traveled in the Isuzu to Kingala Matele to do the follow-up testing of the 47 children in the project there. We had completed the initial Kaufman assessment and medical evaluation a month ago, at which time half of the children positive for intestinal parasites had received a vermifuge and half of the severely anemic children had received iron supplements. We returned to the Catholic medical mission and school of Kinglala Matele to do our post-treatment assessment and initiate treatment for the remaining children.

The testing went well. We had set aside three days to complete the assessment, and it only took us a day and a half. The four team members each tested a child while I processed additional children in preparation for testing. As soon as one child was completed, another was brought in, and we continued that process like a well-oiled machine the entire day.

In the evening, we ate together in the little guest parlor outside the convent enclosure, playing Congo jazz on my cassette player, exchanging funny stories and laughing. My favorite was shared while we were eating a chicken sauce with our *luku* and they noticed that I wasn't eating my bones. Zairians typically crack and eat the chicken bones.

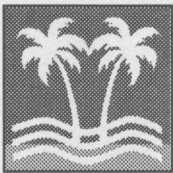
As the story goes, one Zairian pastor was visiting his brother who was studying at a university in Europe. They were invited to a very nice dinner where roasted chicken was being served, and the student, realizing his brother would likely scandalize their hosts by cracking and eating the bones, asked if he could say the prayer before the meal. He offered to give thanks in his native African tongue. His European hosts graciously agreed, and the Zairian student began "praying" in Kimbala, using the opportunity to directly tell his brother not to chew the chicken bones during the meal and advising him on other forms of etiquette. He then concluded the prayer with an amen.

The afternoon of our second day, we completed testing of all but three kids in our original sample, all three of whom



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were away during the Christmas/New Year vacation. I spent about an hour and a half helping the Catholic sisters by working on a couple of 12 volt lights that no longer functioned at the hospital. Then we started back to Kikongo.

Because of a rain storm the previous night, there were some serious washouts in the road, and one in particular gave us a pretty bad scare, almost flipping the vehicle. We eventually got to the village of Miti Mitano, about 15 kilometers from Kikongo, where the villagers nurture and care for the worst mud hole between here and Kenge. I say nurture because that is precisely what they do, refusing to drain or improve this section of road so vehicles will get stuck there and have to pay the villagers to push the vehicle out of the mud trap. Mission correspondent Glen Chapman had gotten stuck there just three days earlier, while traveling from Kinshasa to Kikongo with his family for the Christmas holiday. Because of the heavy rains, I knew this mud hole would be worse than ever. I decided we wouldn't chance it, but would instead carve a detour through the adjacent forest trail and circumvent the mud trap.

Despite the disgruntled protests of a couple of village elders, we borrowed a couple of machetes and spent forty minutes widening a nearby foot trail sufficiently to get the vehicle through. Our detour worked; although, the villagers promised to block the alternate route as soon as we passed through. Maybe I could suggest that they save everyone a lot of time and effort and simply charge a toll to use the detour.

I was feeling a bit down in the dumps Christmas Eve, thinking back on past Christmases growing up and missing family and friends. Then, about 9:00 p.m., one of the missionaries stopped by with some mail which had arrived with the Chapmans from Kinshasa, and in the packet were letters from the Etters family, good friends of ours in Jackson, Michigan. Getting news from friends cheered up our Christmas Eve. Monique read and reread her friend Sarah Etters' letter out loud until she fell asleep on our bed. Grace was also excited to receive news from home.

That Christmas Eve we lit our fourth Advent candle and read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke. I then read from a little book of Christmas poems one of the nuns at Kingala Matele sent to me. All the poems revolved around the theme of a cozy family Christmas by the hearth with snow gently falling outside and presents under the tree. That didn't help my depression any. However, we prayed for some folks, including the little girl with the terrible skin condition. This little kid sort of became the embodiment of the Christ child for me. I then wrapped a few presents with Grace, we

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placed them under our Christmas palm branch, and it felt a little more like Christmas.

Christmas morning we had a very heavy rain, so the church service was delayed several hours, allowing us a very nice relaxed time as a family after opening our presents. We lit the center candle in our Advent wreath, representing the Christ child. Then, Monique and Marjorie each received one present, a Zairian hand-crafted doll, but they displayed as much enthusiasm and enjoyment with that present as if they had received a whole store full. Daniel received the little aluminum wire helicopter which he is still busy playing with today. We had a very long and rowdy church service, portions of which I videotaped for our continued enjoyment. Zairians celebrate with much vigor, noise, and enthusiasm. That evening we got together with the missionaries and area Peace Corps worker for a traditional Christmas dinner. We sang Christmas carols and I read the Christmas story again. It turned out to be one of the nicer Christmases for us; although, we missed friends and family.

The past couple of weeks have been difficult for all the kids except Daniel. Marjorie had a fever one day of 105 degrees Fahrenheit and we had to cool her down with both Tylenol and a sponge bath before starting her on antibiotics and an anti-malarial cure simultaneously. Fortunately, she responded well and was back to normal in a couple of days, except for a volatile emotional state and troubled sleeping. Monique has laid low all day with an ear infection, and Matthew has been periodically cranky with a heat rash.

Despite the health problems, the kids enjoyed three consecutive days of swimming in the Wamba River as we took family outings with the Chapmans and Fosters. A couple of Zairian boys took Monique, Daniel, and the Foster children on little excursions in their *piroque*, and Daniel and Matt Foster even got to practice steering it a little. While we were swimming, we saw some wild parrots calling and flying freely in the distance.

Some boys brought a baby antelope (a dyckert) to the door, and Gary Foster and I bought it, hoping the kids could nurse it back to health as a pet. Unfortunately, it was just too young and we didn't have the resources to really care for it adequately so it died a few days later. In the short time we had it, the kids did learn more about this animal. They also learned, however, that wild animals are best left in the wild if they are really going to thrive. Our workers told us that we would have better luck with a baby monkey, and they assured us that they would be on the lookout for one.

On New Year's Eve, Grace was cutting my hair on the



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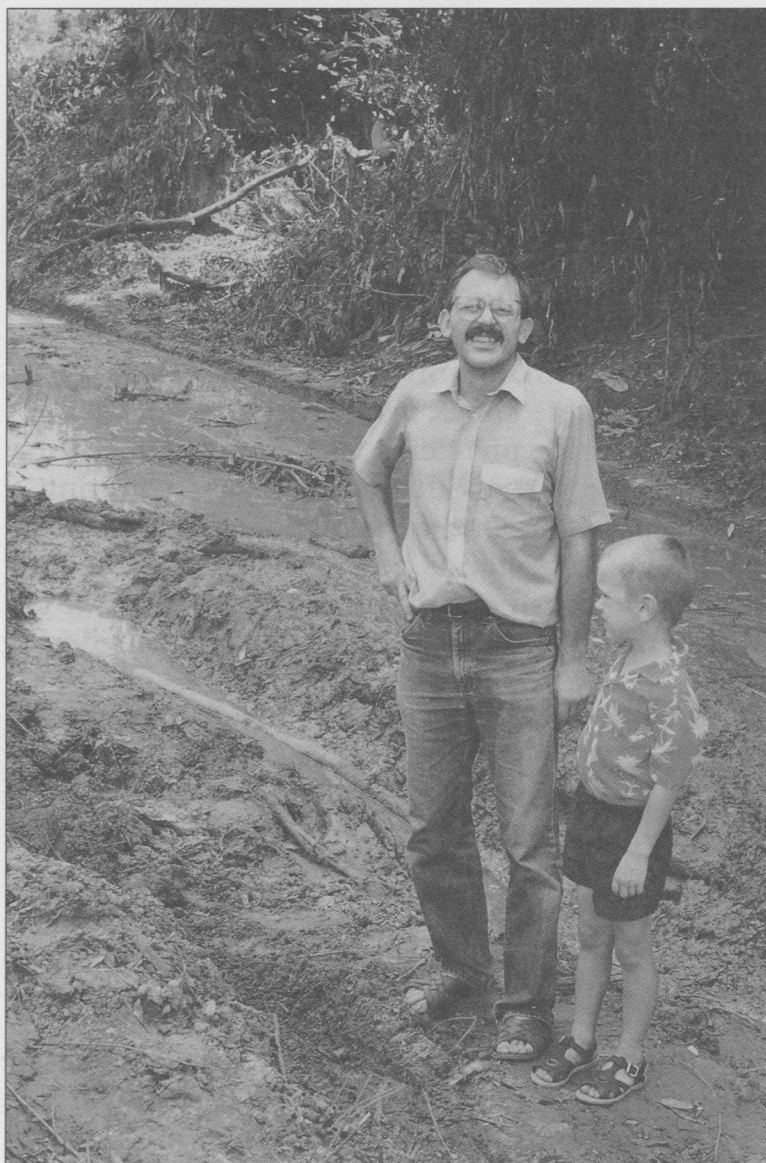


back porch with the kids playing nearby, when our kitchen helper Tengu came out to examine my hair cut. Suddenly she started jumping up and down shouting in Kimbala, and the next thing I knew, Lukwama came running over with a piece of wood to where Tengu was pointing. He clubbed to death a 20-inch viper called a *kimbanda nzila*, which means "it wanders the paths," since this snake is typically found near trails in the fields. It is a fairly poisonous snake and the Bambala even have a song and a dance dedicated to this particular species. When I thought about the kids playing on the back porch the entire morning without incident, while this viper hid in a corner behind some old plant pottery, I'm very grateful for the Lord's protection.

I woke up Purpose, our cat, and her four kittens, scolded them for laying down on the job, and showed them the snake they missed. I reminded them that the primary purpose I took them in was so that they could keep such beasts away; they looked rather embarrassed and made a half-hearted attempt to claw at the dead reptile's body. I ended with a solemn warning that one more screw-up like this, and I was firing them and taking on a pet mongoose instead.

Later that day the members of the research project pooled their finances and efforts to arrange for a big dinner at Kisoki's house for our entire family. We ate a traditional Zairian celebration meal at a long table dimly lit with two lanterns. Perhaps it was just as well that we couldn't see the food very well. It was, however, delicious. We ate boiled *luku*, *tskwanga* (dense *luku* paste), *saka saka* (boiled manioc leaves), rice, duck sauce, beef sauce, corn on the cob, pineapple slices, and boiled peanuts in their shells, all of which we ate with our fingers. The only child who really ate his fill was Matthew, who thoroughly enjoyed reaching into every available bowl with his hands, grabbing and eating whatever came out.

After the meal, we dropped my family off at home and the project members took me out to celebrate my first, and perhaps my last, Zairian New Year in authentic style. Apparently, the New Year is the biggest holiday of the year, and they celebrate all night long with singing, dancing, and eating. We started our evening festivities about 15 kilometers away in the village of Kinkosi, and ended up about 3:30 a.m. at the village of Kikwilu Cinq, about 5 kilometers from Kikongo, before calling it an evening. It took me pretty much all the next day to recover. Zairians do everything with exuberance.



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*The trip was routine until Daniel and I got to the infamous "black hole" of Miti Mitano, the mud pit villagers nurture to trap passing vehicles. We got good and stuck — and no amount of motorized gymnastics in four-wheel drive could get us out.*

## Muddy Justice

January 30, 1991 -

These past two weeks have been difficult for all of us.

Following the outbreak of the Gulf War, Grace came down with a fairly severe case of malaria. I think it was her way of protesting the outbreak of hostilities. At any rate, she spent most of the next five days in bed suffering from fever, chills, nausea, lower back pain, and headache—usually all at the same time. After five days on a chloroquine cure, she finally began to get better and is now back to normal, much to the relief of her forlorn family, which had to fend for itself.

As if on cue, immediately after Grace's recovery, it was





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my turn to have malaria, although my bout was much less severe.

When I was almost out of the woods, I was hit at two in the morning with a kidney stone attack. I've had a couple of bouts with these, so when I woke up with the focused, uncomfortable dull ache in my right lower back, I knew I was in for a rough ride. Within an hour, the dull ache had gradually intensified into an intolerable wrenching pain. I began to try to think through, logistically, how I would get to Kinshasa and from there to Johannesburg for surgery, without going into complete shock from the pain.

Grace retrieved the only physician in Kikongo, Dr. Kwata, who arrived at our place just about the time I was vomiting from the pain. He started in with an injection of papaverine, which worked for all of 10 seconds before the pain started in again. He then followed with an injection of navalgine, which hurt about as much as the kidney stone. He was considering morphine as a chaser, but by that time, I was in a semiconscious state, drifting off to sleep in a semidelirious state, mumbling something about our Swissair tickets secured at the U.S. Embassy.

I woke up several hours later, passed a kidney stone in my reddish-tinged urine, and fell asleep again for several more hours. When I woke again, I felt like I had a mild hangover from the narcotics, but otherwise I was all right. I saved the kidney stone to show all of our Zairian household workers and recount to them the trauma that I had endured. They were all suitably impressed and very empathetic as they rolled the abrasive, dark, tiny pebble between their fingers.

My other major trauma came on another trip to Kingala Matele. Makakala and I had originally planned to go by bicycle to finish the testing, but we had to go by jeep after I seriously bruised my foot playing soccer with the local boys. Since we were going by vehicle, I decided to bring my son Daniel along. We set off with several students and a patient recovering from surgery at Kikongo, who needed a ride back to Matele.

The trip was routine until we got to the infamous "black hole" of Miti Mitano, the mud pit the villagers protect and care for expressly to trap unsuspecting vehicles. I wasn't worried because we had cut a bypass through the forest to avoid it on the return from our last trip. Much to my shock and irritation, however, the villagers had cut down a large tree and blocked the bypass, leaving the only option right through the mud pit on the main route. With no other option but to try to plow through, we promptly buried the jeep up to the axles in soft mud and found ourselves, not just stuck,

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but completely and irrevocably *stuck*. In other words, good and stuck, and no amount of motorized gymnastics in four-wheel drive could get us out.

I climbed out of the jeep muttering every dark and sinister epithet I could muster in French and English; I even came up with a few new ones in Kituba. The Peace Corps worker Adam King, Makakala, a smattering of unenthusiastic villagers, and I spent the next three hours sloshing around thigh-deep in mud and water (with my bruised foot), trying every conceivable strategy to get us out.

Throughout this time, Daniel swatted an occasional biting ant, whimpered and cried, and emitted an occasional open sob as he insisted that we leave this place right now and walk (25 kilometers) home to Mom, and if we could continue on back to the U.S. in the process, he wouldn't mind it one bit.

There was too much mud to jack up the vehicle to get wood beneath the wheels, and our feeble, half-hearted attempts to lift the rear wheels onto supports succeeded only in wrenching my back. We tried digging out the four individual tires, but got nowhere because the axles were resting on impacted mud, and because of the water, we couldn't get beneath the vehicle to dig out the axles.

After numerous false starts, with the villagers almost constantly discussing and arguing among themselves about how we should proceed, a few of the men finally suggested we simply leave the vehicle; they would get it out and bill me. At this point, I was conjuring up images of what an F-18 fighter jet could do to this village, and whether it would be possible to hire one for a single mission. But the men finally sauntered off, leaving only the children to continue their amusement at the plight of these wet and dirty *mundeles* in mud up to their rear ends.

Just when we had hit our lowest possible point, I said a little prayer with Daniel for the Lord to help us out, mostly in an attempt to help calm Daniel's fears since my own faith was at a pretty low and unbenevolent ebb. Not long after that, a Zairian, who was walking by on his way to Mopene, stopped to help up out. He started building a little dam around the deep side of the vehicle, using as much of the mud from beneath it as we could reach. After a reasonable dam was built, we scooped out the water and began digging out underneath the vehicle until the wheels were on firmer soil and the axles were free. In front of the front tires, we then built a rough ramp of logs laid lengthwise to guide the vehicle up and out.

These efforts took a long time and a lot of patience, but



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we finally gained enough traction to get out of there. I don't know if I've ever before experienced such a sense of relief, and I know Daniel hadn't. After a final, controlled, calm, and deadly serious admonishment to be conveyed to whomever had cut the tree down (of course, none of the villagers had any idea who had), we continued on to Matele, arriving just before nightfall. We were a very tired, muddy, humorous sight for the Catholic sisters there.

After cleaning up, we went to the school director's home for supper and sat outside relaxing beneath open stars while the food was prepared. We built a little campfire to cheer up and warm Daniel, and he was soon asleep—awakening only with great difficulty when we retired to an outdoor circular parlor for our meal. By the time we got to the little empty guest house, Daniel was pretty much over his trauma as he climbed into bed with me. We drifted off to sleep watching a large spider on the wall and listening to the fluttering of an occasional bat in the rafters.

Early the next morning, Daniel got up and promptly informed me that a small rat was climbing up the sheet onto the bed. When I asked if he was serious, he replied that he wasn't really sure if it was a rat since all he could see now was its tail. Before I could blink, I was up and out of that bed and getting a start on the day.

We devoured a filling breakfast of *chikwanga* (pressed manioc dough), canned tuna, and treasured coffee from my thermos, while listening to the news on Radio South Africa pertaining to the second day of the Gulf War. By 7:00 a.m., we were rounding up the final few kids for cognitive testing. Then I picked up the remaining interviews and medical measures, finishing just in time for Sunday morning Mass.

The sisters arranged a nice lunch for us while we had a serious meeting with the "*chef de groupement*," or regional land chief. Chief Fansaka is head over all of the village chiefs in that region, and it is he who makes the decisions concerning who can use what land for what purpose. He happens to live in the nearby village of Mbaka and also happened to be at Mass that morning, so we made it a point to sit near him and greet him. We told him we had an important matter to discuss and invited him into the outdoor guest parlor just outside the convent enclosure.

First he heard about the injustice that had been perpetrated by the blockage of our bypass and the use of that mud pit for exploitation. He then had all this confirmed by the Catholic sisters, who had suffered a broken rear shock in their vehicle in a similar incident the week before. After a fairly eloquent speech on my part about the importance of

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transportation infrastructure for commerce, health zone work, education, and everything else important for the development of the region and the people, Fansaka agreed to accompany us to the scene of the "crime."

I still have to smile when I reflect back on the look of the villagers' faces when we arrived with the land chief in tow. Evidently, these guys may not fear God, but they surely fear a Bateke land chief, and within just a few minutes he had virtually every man in the village out there chopping out the tree and clearing the bypass. Realizing that it would not be terribly spiritual of me to gloat, I exercised the utmost self-restraint, but I think I ended up gloating anyway.

When the land chief asked them why they had cut the tree down to block the bypass, they claimed the *greffier* at Kindundu (a local government official) had told them to cut it down so more sunlight would get through to dry out the mud pit in the road. That the tree had blocked the bypass, they claimed, was just an accident. I had to hand it to them for their brazen cheek; I couldn't have come up with a better story myself.

At any rate, this group of grumbling, sweating, embarrassed, and entirely guilty village men had the bypass cleared in 15 minutes. After having them carry the cut pieces of wood to fill in some of the little gullies in our bypass (talk about adding insult to injury), we drove through without a hitch and without even switching out of two-wheel drive. Justice is so sweet! After we got home, Daniel recounted all of his adventures to his sister and friends, telling them about how he had bravely endured the mud trap, saved me from the rat, helped us in the testing, and sat by a campfire. Childhood memory is a wonderfully positive, if albeit selective, faculty for reconstructing experiences.

The "*chef de collectivité*" (government official from this region) recently visited Kikongo for a couple of days. Generally, he has the reputation of being a fair individual who is not exploiting his position to the extent that his predecessor did. He gave a two-hour, open-air address to the entire station in the afternoon, using as his main text "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." As part of the speech, he reiterated the new policy of paying small yearly taxes for each radio, dog, cat, goat, or other domestic animal that Zairians possessed.

He also characterized involvement in opposition political parties as premature and inappropriate, saying that since we presently have a president (Mobutu), we shouldn't talk about having a new president unless we already have a new



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president. As he explained it, this is like talking about getting a new wife while you still have the old one. Therefore, government employees (which means teachers, hospital workers, health zone workers, civil staff) should not be involved in any opposition political parties since their salary is being paid by their present president. Somehow, this sort of logic appeals to the village mentality, but it escapes reason entirely.

Despite my recent illness, the research team continues to move the study along at a reasonable pace. With the completion of the Matele project and the first sample group at Kikongo, we now have the completed protocol and data for about 100 children. I am working up the preliminary statistical analysis for a brief paper on our initial results.

Daniel has taken up with the endeavors of the local boys to hunt birds with a slingshot. The local boys manage to kill a bird and eat it now and then, and they have given Daniel his own slingshot to join in the pursuit. Monique was scandalized at her brother's ecological crimes, and after some long walks and talks with him, they finally worked out a compromise: he would only try to shoot the short ugly birds (which are too fast for him anyway) and not the slower pretty birds with the long colored tails.

Matthew and Marjorie are both growing a lot and doing reasonably well, although Marjorie tends to scream at the slightest provocation or frustration, which is just about driving us all crazy. I am amazed at the ability of the two older kids to converse in Kituba with the local children. They are really putting me to shame in their command of the language.

The Gulf crisis has us all concerned, although there seems to be no immediate terrorist threat here in Zaire. There are no known Iraqis, and although there are a number of Lebanese and Pakistanis, there has been no evidence of strong fundamentalist Islamic support for Hussein, unlike the northern African states, Nigeria, and Tanzania. The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa had a security briefing for missionaries recently which was circulated to all of us affiliated with CBZO, and although they've advised caution, there is no need to be unduly concerned.



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*The road to Kinshasa is little more than a well-traveled rut. These girls are returning to Kikongo from nearby gardens.*



## Rough Roads

March 6, 1991 -

Several major occurrences in Kikongo have livened things up a bit.

The most positive of these was a visit by Dr. Richard Charlick, a dentist with a large private practice in Brighton, Michigan. Dr. Charlick has conducted a number of primary dental care training institutes through mission organizations in Columbia, Peru, Zimbabwe and, most recently, Zaire. Two of his sons and a daughter are graduates of Spring Arbor College and presently involved in dentistry.

During his two weeks in Zaire, he trained physicians and





nurses at four CBZO medical centers in techniques for extracting teeth. Some of the Zairians from whom he extracted teeth in Kikongo had been having dental problems and discomfort for years; they had never had the opportunity for dental treatment until Dr. Charlick's visit. A lot of folks here were extremely grateful for his time. He trained and supervised our local physician and health zone director, Dr. Kwata, in the extraction of teeth and gave him the necessary tools and equipment so that at least some primary dental care would continue to be available.

While Dr. Charlick was here, the church had a *matondo* (thanksgiving offering) of the first fruits of the people's labor. It was amazing to see almost all of Kikongo dancing up to the front of the church, amidst jubilant singing, to deliver a portion of their produce or livestock as an offering to the Lord. There were mounds of manioc, corn, peanuts, tied chickens and geese, and sugar cane piled in front of the church as the people sang and danced to their hearts' content.

Unfortunately, the other major event since my last journal entry was much less positive. While Gary Foster and I were in Kinshasa several weeks ago, a violent brawl broke out among a group of men here in Kikongo that resulted in a number of fractures, serious cuts, and four individuals being hospitalized. Apparently, a worker who had been hired to do some ironing accidentally burned a hole in the pants of another temporary resident. The owner of the pants demanded 99,000Z (about \$33) in compensation, which was obviously ridiculous, so the transgressor said that he would take the matter to the Kikongo Executive Council to arbitrate the matter. The owner decided to extract penance for his pants immediately, and a huge fight broke out.

Although I wasn't there to see it, the description reminds me of one of those barroom brawl scenes from a Western movie. Anyway, the military barracks at Fatundu got wind of the incident, and they sent a couple of soldiers down to arrest the two men who started the fight and take them to jail. Fortunately, Pastor Koba managed to convince (or bribe) the soldiers to let the matter stay in-house so the Kikongo Executive Council could arbitrate it.

Normally the incident would have stopped there, but one of the men injured in the brawl decided to become vindictive and took the issue to the regional government headquarters in Bulungu, which means big fines for Kikongo. Whenever these situations come to the attention of the local (and especially regional) government, fines are imposed, and the higher up it goes, the greater the fines. Since the guilty

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individuals rarely have much money, fines are always imposed on the entire community. If Kikongo fails to pay the fine, then it is the community leader (chief or pastor) who goes to jail until the fine is paid, and not the guilty party.

I know it sounds absolutely crazy, but that is how it works here. If someone is hurt or killed, someone must be blamed and punished, even if the accused had no direct involvement in the incident. Typically, the person blamed and punished is the person in direct or indirect authority, regardless of any personal involvement. The "responsible" individual is taken to jail and subjected to occasional (or regular) beatings, and the only way to escape punishment or blame is for exorbitant fines to be paid to whoever has jurisdiction in the matter.

A case in point: Gary Foster and I were driving back from Kinshasa. About 40 kilometers from Kikongo, we went through the village of Fangulu and stopped to give a message to the director of the CBZO school there. The pastor informed us that a 17-year-old boy was missing, following a work day when all of the school children were cutting grass and cleaning up the school area. A day or so later, they found the body of the boy, who somehow had fallen into the pit of an abandoned latrine and died from his injuries.

Because the school director had organized the work day, the villagers blamed him for the death although he had nothing to do with the accident. The villagers proceeded to ransack and burn his house, after stealing all of his possessions and money, and they might very well have killed him as an expression of their vigilante justice had he not been warned shortly beforehand and fled into the forest.

Such a system of "justice" seems incredible to us, simply because personal culpability is of little or no importance in these matters. Money, though, is of absolute importance. In Zaire, there is no crime you cannot buy your way out of with enough money. I apologize if I paint a negative picture of the culture. There are things I greatly admire about these people, and I have tried to be open about those. However, there are other aspects I deplore, and I have tried to be open about those as well.

Our most recent trip to Kinshasa turned into quite an ordeal. We started out from Kikongo with eight people packed into the Isuzu, including a Bateke woman recovering from a hysterectomy and her mother, who was caring for her. I was reluctant to take them, but finally I relented at the urging of the assistant pastor. Despite an attempt to be extra cautious over the rough washouts in the road, the patient began vaginal bleeding about three hours outside of



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Kikongo. We were all concerned because of the risk of hemorrhage. We also realized she shouldn't have been traveling so soon after the surgery; although, that realization didn't do us much good at the time.

We continued on *slowly* for several more hours to the hardtop road running east-west from Kikwit to Kinshasa, and then we immediately went to a small medical center run by a couple of nuns at Bukongoloso. They examined her, gave her an injection of an abdominal vasoconstrictor and an antibiotic, then some vitamins, pain medication, and absorbent pads, and pronounced her fit to resume her travels. Again I was reluctant, but it quickly became apparent that the woman and her mother would rather take the risk of bleeding in route than remain at a strange hospital in a strange region.

Then we began having trouble with the fuel system. The motor began to starve for diesel, and our progress would slow almost to a crawl, particularly up hills. We stopped, cleaned the filters, and flushed the fuel lines as best we could. But eventually the problem returned, and we spent the remainder of the trip crawling along between 5 and 30 kilometers per hour, stopping every 20 kilometers or so to siphon the system for a temporary improvement.

What would normally be a nine-hour trip turned into a 16-hour marathon, leaving me tense and exhausted. As I collapsed on the guest house bed, I commented to Gary that everything in this country is twice as difficult as back in the U.S. He laughed, noting that I didn't know the meaning of the word difficult. He then proceeded to recount one horrific trip to Kinshasa he had a year ago with the hospital construction truck, in which they experienced a series of mishaps and breakdowns and didn't arrive until 4:00 a.m., towed by a dump truck.

An interesting insight into the local economy came when we took the kids on a field trip to visit the annual tobacco market at the British-American Tobacco Company (BAC-Zaire) warehouse in Fatundu. The company provides the essential tools, fertilizer, and training for local farmers to grow tobacco. Once a year, the company sends large trucks around to all the villages in the region to pick up the farmers and their tobacco for the annual market. The tobacco is graded and weighed, and the farmers are paid for their crop after the fertilizer and equipment costs are taken out. Aside from manioc, tobacco is the only real cash crop for the region since the price of coffee crashed on the world market.

Two major tobacco firms, including BAC-Zaire, are pushing tobacco products with advertising and marketing

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strategies in Kinshasa and other major cities. I suspect that with the health-motivated pressures on tobacco companies in industrial nations such as the U.S., there has been a big push on the part of some of these companies to expand their production and sales into third-world markets. I'm not sure our kids gleaned all of these macro-economic insights from our field trip, but they enjoyed themselves anyway.

While we were at the market, one of the tobacco truck chauffeurs told Lukwama that Lukwama's father had died two weeks ago. This is often how word of such events eventually gets back to a close relative. Someone shouts the news to passengers riding on top of a truck while it is passing through a village, and they tell the chauffeur who in turn passes the word on to other villagers or drivers who happen to be going to that area or village. Incredibly, the news usually gets back to the concerned family member, although certainly much later than it would by phone or postal service.

Lukwama was heartbroken, although he was very stoic and continued to work for us for the remainder of that day. Grace and I talked it over and decided to give Lukwama a week of paid vacation so he could travel back to his home village and pay his respects at his father's gravesite and before the extended family.

The next day we gave him an advance on his salary for that month, and a white cloth which he had specifically requested. The oldest son is supposed to provide a burial cloth for his father. Since Lukwama's father had already been buried, Lukwama would visit the grave site with his small white cloth and bury it a foot or so beneath the surface while talking to his father, telling him he had come to pay his respects and fulfill his obligations. Although not immediately present, dead relatives for the Zairian are always "near" and continue to merit respect and the fulfillment of obligations. Before he left, Lukwama re-enacted for us the small ceremony he would perform at his father's grave so we could understand a little of what he was obligated to do. The ceremony was so simple in its reverence and sincerity that it brought tears to our eyes.

He was able to catch a ride to his home region with one of the tobacco trucks, and from there he walked another day to arrive at his home village, feverish and tired. After walking for several days to get back to Kikongo, he spent an entire day in bed recovering and was finally back at work today. Although exhausted, he seemed peaceful and content as he explained to us that all that remains now for him to do is gather his closest friends together for a brief ceremony,



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where he will pour a special palm wine on the ground and touch the moist ground in honor of his father. Then, by virtue of his respect, the strength of his dead father will enter into him via the moist ground and give him more strength and endurance for his life. I have a vague, general sense of the significance of these things, but it is virtually impossible for me to really understand them.

We had another sad event a few days ago. A boy, familiar to all of us, was brought back to his home village a few weeks ago to die, and he finally passed away a couple of days ago. Tulweki was a 14-year-old boy who was terribly thin from a chronic kidney infection that was beyond the medical resources of either Kikongo or Vanga. I had talked to Grace's father months ago about the possibility of sending him to Kinshasa for specialized treatment. Unfortunately, the condition had continued for so long the kidneys were abscessed and irreparably damaged.

Because his condition was so pitiful, his parents would often send him to the various missionary homes to beg for rice and milk, which they never refused. Although they knew that his family would eat most of it, he would receive at least a portion of their gift. Shortly before they took him to the village, he was very weak and unable to stand. The Chapmans, a missionary couple who teach at the Pastoral Institute here in Kikongo, used to bring him homemade ice cream. He really loved this treat, saying that cold food felt so good for his hot chest.

Despite the fact that he almost always felt poorly, he was one of the nicest and most positive little guys I ever met. His family lives in one of the storage rooms near the shop where the cement blocks and wooden frames are formed for the hospital construction, ostensibly to provide a 24-hour guard for these materials. The missionaries would sometimes see Tulweki run out to greet his father after he would return from an extended trip buying and selling at other villages, and his father would sweep Tulweki up into his arms in a display of affection, which is very rare for Zairian fathers. His passing left me tinged with sadness. I am relieved that his affliction is at an end and that he was swept up in the arms of his heavenly Father. Yet I wonder if I could have done more for him while he was still here.

I should close this installment now. Grace beckons for my assistance as we try to bake a cake for Marjorie's birthday (her fourth). The Foster family and our local Peace Corps volunteer Adam King are supposed to come over this evening for cake. Monique and Daniel fabricated a little bow and arrow to give Marjorie as a gift, while Grace commissioned

some of the local teens to make a little wooden Isuzu Trooper. Monique also dyed some dried corn and strung a necklace and bracelet from them for Marjorie.

Our household worker, Suzanne, sampled some red Kool-Aid. She liked the flavor and commented in earnest that this would give her more blood in her body. I considered for a moment whether this was an appropriate time for an introductory lesson in human circulatory physiology for Suzanne, but thought better of it and let the moment slip by.

In all, it promises to be a memorable birthday for our little Marjorie.



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## Jungle Journey

April 9, 1991

Guest Monique and I returned last Saturday from a three-week trip to the Kariakoo province of eastern Zaire. The trip was a fantastic experience. The biggest problem is how to share all the new experiences in a single entry. We were unsure as to whether we could even make the trip. The Zaires had agreed to care for our three youngest, so we were confident they were in good hands. The problem was that significant amounts of Zairian cash were difficult to find, even in Kinshasa. Several rumors have been circulating as to the cause for the severe cash shortage, one being that





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*After we left the game preserve, a half-dozen men managed to pole a leaking, rusted catamaran to our side of the river and load our Land Rover.*



## Jungle Journey

*April 9, 1991 -*

Grace, Monique and I returned last Saturday from a three-week trip to the Kivu province of eastern Zaire. The trip was a fantastic experience. The biggest problem is how to share all the new experiences in a single entry.

We were unsure as to whether we could even make the trip. The Fosters had agreed to care for our three youngest, so we were confident they were in good hands. The problem was that significant amounts of Zairian cash were difficult to find, even in Kinshasa. Several rumors have been circulating as to the cause for the severe cash shortage, one being that

the German company printing the currency has stopped because Zaire hadn't been paying its bills. Others claim Mobutu ordered large currency notes to be pulled from all of the major banks to arrest the spiraling devaluation rate by starving the economy for currency. Fueling these concerns was the fear that Zaire was about to change its currency standard, placing millions of people in the interior at risk of losing their life savings. This happened in the mid-1970s when most were unable to change their money in the banks during the designated three-day period.

Whatever the reason, we didn't want to chance the trip to Bukavu with anything less than a million zaires in hand, and we couldn't find sufficient currency anywhere, banks included. We finally did find a source in Kinshasa; they were to hold the cash until Monday afternoon before our flight to Bukavu on Tuesday. But when we arrived, they had no cash left. Fortunately, someone else happened to be there who had extra cash, and made it available at the official bank rate, so we were able to make the trip. You probably get the sense, though, that travel in Zaire is not as easy as dropping into your AAA travel office and getting some traveler's checks.

The MAF Caravan took off Tuesday morning as scheduled, with the three Boivins, a Canadian school teacher from Vanga named Bobbi, and a UNESCO official with the French Embassy. The UNESCO official was traveling to northern Kivu to coordinate medical supplies and intervention efforts to stop a measles epidemic that was killing many children in the region. Bobbi was traveling to a mission station not far from Butembo to visit a friend.

Leaving Kinshasa we flew over the Bandundu region, landing in Vanga, and then continued on over the Kasai region of central Zaire. We deposited supplies at a small isolated mission near Yasa that gets maybe one flight every three months. The single missionary family there seemed very happy to see us.

We then made a refueling stop at Lodja and continued on for the next couple of hours over an endless expanse of tropical rain forest, interrupted only by rivers and the tiny spirals of smoke from the campfires of some of the isolated villages hidden below. As we approached Bukavu by midafternoon, we could see several ranges of mountains in the distance, bordering the southwestern edge of Lake Kivu, and a range beyond, denoting the Rwanda border with Zaire. It was really a beautiful sight.

We landed at the small airport of Bukavu, located about 40 minutes from the town along the western edge of the lake, and managed to get through customs and immigration



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without an inordinate amount of trouble, thanks to the Swahili-speaking efforts of our MAF pilot, Robert Taylor. As we walked to the MAF hanger across the airport, we drank in the cool air and the panorama of mountain scenery. It felt as if we were in a completely different country.

That evening I located the home of Dr. Bikayi, director of the *Institut Supérieur Pédagogique (ISP)* of Bukavu. I had met Dr. Bikayi in New Orleans while on a tour of university programs. At that time I had shared with him my research project proposal for this year and he had agreed to write a letter of support for me to the Zairian Ministry of Research and University Education in Kinshasa.

My trip to Bukavu was in response to his invitation during our time together in New Orleans. Although I had written him last October letting him know I would try to come to Bukavu in March, I had been unable to communicate an exact date and had not received a response back from him. Trusting that things would work out, we arrived at his home only to find that he had left that very day to accompany the Peace Corps director from Washington, D.C., on a trip to Burundi. It was Tuesday evening and Bikayi was not due back until Sunday evening.

Discouraged by this sad twist of fate (in Africa we never blame poor planning for our misfortunes), we were taken to the home of another MAF pilot, where we were fed a wonderful meal, complete with strawberries and ice cream for dessert.

Over supper we discussed our options: we could hang around Bukavu until Bikayi got back or continue on the Caravan flight the next morning to explore new regions of the Kivu and return that next week to see Bikayi. We decided to travel with the Caravan the next morning and got off about 300 kilometers to the north at Beni, where a missionary whom Grace grew up with, Tim Stabell, was working with Africa Inland Mission (AIM). Grace hadn't seen Tim in 16 years, and although I had written him in January about the possibility of our coming, I hadn't received any response.

The next morning the UNESCO Frenchman, Bobbi, and my family enjoyed a beautiful flight north, along the entire length of Lake Kivu. We saw several volcanic mountains north of Goma, shrouded in the mist and towering out over the surrounding plain like some vague apparition of Olympus. Of the three volcanoes (Nyamuragira, Nyirangongo, and the 14,000 ft. Karisimbi), only Nyirangongo is purported to be active.

Continuing north, we traveled the length of Lake Edward, seeing the frontier of Uganda beyond the lake for the first

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time. Then we landed at the trading crossroads of Butembo to deposit Bobbi.

Butembo is a vibrant, rapidly growing frontier town. It is the main crossroads for trade coming from the river system and Kisangani (to the west) including gold from clandestine mines in the region just west of Butembo, the lush produce cultivated in the rich volcanic loam to the north and south, and the myriad of licit and illicit commodities coming across the border from Uganda (to the east). It is also home to a military barrack of bandits who occasionally pose as soldiers, and whose main occupation is extortion and robbery of common citizens by night.

From Butembo, it was only another 15 minutes by air (although a full day by truck on terrible roads) to Beni, and just beyond, the renowned Ituri forests of the Pygmies and okapi. I don't think I'll ever forget that flight, just for the sheer variety and novelty of the terrain below, with mountain villages, terraced fields, endless groves of banana trees (most of which are dedicated to the thriving liquor industry of the region), rivers and occasional waterfalls, and tiny fishing boats on the vast expanse of the great lakes in the region. The land here is wild, rugged and beautiful.

At Beni, the immigration officer took one look at our *Protocol D'état* visas (compliments U.S. consulate, Kinshasa), asked if we were embassy—to which I grunted an incoherent reply—and begrudgingly handed our passports back to us without a hassle. Fortunately, a Zairian colleague of Tim's met the Caravan to pick up mail and, believing my plaintive pleas that we were forlorn long-lost relatives of Tim and family, took his motorbike to retrieve Tim's car to drive us to his house. Not until Tim greeted us at his front gate did he realize we were coming, or that we were even in Zaire. As it turned out, the letter I had written to him arrived through the regular Zairian postal system that very afternoon, so that I had the privilege of handing him the very letter I had mailed to him several months before.

We had arrived only an hour before Tim was scheduled to leave on a trip to Mwenda (who needs planning when fate is on your side) on the northern face of the Ruwenzori mountain range. There he would teach in a seminar for Zairian pastors and lay leaders. Because of our arrival, Tim decided to send the truck on without him and follow by motorcycle the next morning. We spent a great evening with them, getting to know his wife (a former missionary to the Sudan) and three children, and also learning about their work.

Later, we went swimming in the private outdoor pool of



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the gorgeous home and yard of personal friends of theirs, Victor and Bridgette Ngezaya, who own a coffee processing plant and small air company, as well as nice hotels all over Zaire (including the Okapi Hotel in Kinshasa). As we luxuriated about in their pool, a pet colebus monkey chattered overhead and several crested cranes graced the poolside. I concluded that God truly does go with fools and children as they venture out where angels fear to tread.

Our impromptu reunion with the Stabells was interrupted by the rather sudden arrival of the worst tropical winds and storm I had ever witnessed. Although the storm lasted only about an hour, during one especially violent three-minute span, the winds tore off the roofs of about a dozen homes in Beni, collapsed a few others, and tore all ten solar panels off of the AIM clinic/dispensary, shattering nine of them.

The next morning Tim took off for Mwenda on his motorcycle, with me hanging on for dear life. For the next three hours I had an opportunity to sample the roads of eastern Zaire which, I've concluded, are as bad as the roads of western Zaire. Although the road we traveled is the major east-west commerce route to Uganda, the condition of the road was hopeless. We passed about a dozen trucks, stranded or blocked at several especially bad mud holes and washouts, including one truck that overturned at a bridge.

Apparently, the roads in Uganda (and Rwanda) are beautiful smooth tarmac right up until you hit the Zairian border, and then it's every four-wheeler for himself as fuel tankers, tractor-trailers, and double trailers sometimes take several days to inch their way across approximately 50 kilometers of rocky washout and muddy pits to Beni. The Kivu region has unbelievable agricultural, fishery, and mineral potential, but it is economically strangled because of an absolutely terrible transportation infrastructure. Fortunately, Canadian-Aid and German aid through the EEC (European Economic Community) has started work on some of the roads, invited by private interests and some Zairian government initiatives that have given up on Zaire's own *Office de Routes* which keeps eating the funding it's supposed to be using for the road work.

We arrived at Mutuanga, the once-thriving Belgian resort from which tourists would depart on their five-day climb up and down the snow-capped Margherita Peak of the Ruwenzori Range. Now Mutuanga is a dusty, sleepy town with few Belgians and fewer tourists. A few expatriates still come to make the climb now and then, as well as Peace Corps or missionary types who happen to be in the area, and also the occasional professional mountaineer from Europe who would

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like to add one more exotic climb to his or her portfolio.

But for those willing to endure the rigors of Zaire to see this range, it is really worth it. These mountains, with their peaks frequently shrouded in turbulent cumulus clouds that only occasionally reveal jagged snow-capped peaks above the lush tropical plain, are truly an alpine glory in the heart of Africa. Unlike its volcanic cousins to the south, the Ruwenzori is an igneous fault range that emerged from the surrounding sedentary mass and has firmly withstood the erosion of time.

From Mutuanga Tim and I turned north along a narrow and rocky two-track lane; we arrived 30 minutes later in Mwenda, nestled at the northern base of the range. An older Conservative Baptist mission couple from Butembo, Paul and Faye Hurlbert, recently built a nice little stone and wooden lodge near Mwenda, complete with trails up into the lower slopes of the range and little payouts (thatched rest shelters) along the way.

While Tim taught in the seminar over the next couple of days, I hiked to a nearby waterfall in a beautiful glacial-fed stream and climbed up on the lower slopes approaching the northern face of the Ruwenzori. Lest you think that my hikes near Mwenda were straight out of an exotic travel catalogue, one daylong trek with a local Zairian was especially telling.

Upon our departure, we were approached by the Hurlberts' hound, Siba, whom I allowed to accompany us because I thought she might help clear the path ahead of any mambas or cobras. Or, in case we encountered a marauding leopard, I reasoned the leopard might eat her and give us an opportunity to escape. Instead, she stayed at my heels the entire time, and I had to literally carry her over several difficult sections of trail, squirming and whining the whole time. So much for the African adventurer accompanied by his fearless and noble hound.

After my Zairian guide glided up the lower well-groomed paths with me panting and wheezing close behind, we began following a very old, overgrown blazed trail used by primates no more than 30 inches tall. We spent a good deal of time either hacking through vines and branches or crawling on our hands and knees beneath overgrowth and thorny plants. During one of these crawling sprees I spotted a footprint 15 inches from my nose in the soft moss and mud, shaped like a thin and twisted human hand. It was the footprint of a chimpanzee; they inhabit that region, but are difficult to see because they are so ruthlessly poached by local hunters. Realizing that I was crawling along the paths recently trod by



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a troop of chimps, I gazed on my surroundings with new appreciation.

Later we came to a small clearing of crushed grass decorated by several large piles of fecal mass. After puzzling over the scene for a minute or so, it suddenly dawned on my guide that this was elephant sign. Once more I was in awe of my surroundings and the marvels it hid. On a separate hike, I saw two different troops of colobus monkeys swinging through the branches and, across a ravine, a larger dark-haired primate that might have been a chimpanzee or else a very large baboon disappearing behind some bushes.

We trudged on for another four hours until we had gained sufficient elevation to enter a different ecosystem. The air was now moist, cooler, and fragrant with the scent of cypress and pine. Having long since emptied my canteen, we were so thirsty we squeezed out handfuls of water from moist knee-deep moss along the trail. It was either die of microbes or die of thirst, so I took my chances with the microbes, figuring that anything that had adapted to an ecosystem this similar to the mountains of Quebec couldn't be all bad. I even found what I'm sure is a close relative to the blueberry plant; although, I wasn't confident enough of my botanical ability to eat many of them.

The view of the glacial river valley beside us and the plains to the west below us was magnificent. With great reluctance, I had us turn back after climbing for six hours, and we made it back to the Hurlberts as the sun was disappearing over the smaller mountain range near Beni to the west.

Although it was dark by this time, I took my towel and flashlight and went for my bath near the waterfall of the glacial river, drinking deeply from the frigid pool between rinsings. Let me tell you, frigid glacial-melt pools taste better than moss-squeeze any day of the week.

In all, my time in Mwenda was an opportunity for both emotional and spiritual renewal. During my solitary walks to the nearby waterfall or climbing up the ridges along the trail, I sensed I was at the right place at the right time, and that the presence of the Lord was near. It was a good balance to the rather constant press of human need in the Bandundu.

That evening, I noticed the Hurlberts' cook had his teeth filed to points. Apparently this has been a longstanding tradition among his particular clan within the Wanandi tribe. He explained that they began doing this hundreds of years ago, when Arab slave traders used to ravage the region. Any blemish or deformity made it less likely that the slave traders would take them, so entire tribes began blemishing

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themselves in some way, including filing teeth and deforming the head with tight bands in childhood. The practice continued even after the slave trade ended.

I was planning to return to Beni with Tim Stabell's truck (after a few days in Mwenda), and from there try to organize a trip with Grace and Monique to somehow see some of the wildlife in the Virunga National Park, possibly at Rwindi. However, vehicle leasing and flights to Rwindi via Goma on either SCIBE or VAC airlines were very expensive. We were running out of options when the Ngezayas graciously offered to send their Land Cruiser and chauffeur with Grace and Monique to pick me up in Mwenda and from there, continue on to Butembo by way of Ishango, a wildlife station in the Virunga Park on the northern shore of Lake Edward. Since they had to send some wardrobes on the truck to their hotel in Butembo, we could split the expenses of the trip and see the wildlife at the same time.

The plan worked out beautifully, except that the roads were so bad between Beni and Mwenda that Monique was in tears and emotionally traumatized. She simply clung to me saying "Daddy, Daddy!" after they pulled up to the Hurlberts' lodge, and continued hugging me for a full five minutes before beginning to recount their exploits in getting to Mwenda. Fortunately, Tim and I had rice prepared and a meat sauce simmering on the stove when they arrived, so after a hearty meal the chauffeur fell asleep in his chair, Monique fell asleep in her bed, and Grace, Tim and I chatted on for a while.

The next morning, Palm Sunday, Tim prepared his sermon while Grace, Monique, the chauffeur and I hiked over to the waterfall and up the scenic trail so they could get a view of the region. After breakfast we said good-bye to Tim, loaded up the Land Cruiser and started off for Ishango. Along the way we passed numerous villagers walking to church with braided palm branches and flowers fashioned into decorative crosses.

When we got near the park, we saw two large troops of monkeys crossing the road directly in front of our vehicle, and we began seeing small groups of antelope. After passing a checkpoint and several guards at the entrance of the park, we also saw numerous groups of Ugandan kob (an orange-brown antelope), some reed bucks hiding in the tall grass, and some majestic groups of long-horned bush bucks. Monique was thrilled by the grace and beauty of these creatures as they bounded off in front of our vehicle.

A little further on, we saw two female lions sauntering along beside the road through the tall grass, and I was so



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excited that I leaped out beside the vehicle to get a clear shot with the camcorder. This rash act threw Monique and Grace into a complete panic as they pleaded, threatened, and cajoled me to get back into the vehicle. I felt bad when I realized how frightened Monique was, and I promised her I would not get out of the vehicle any more.

Once we arrived in Ishango, we looked up the legendary Leo, who at the age of 32, quit a construction job in the U.S. and spent the next eight years with the Peace Corps in several parts of Zaire. He now works for the European Economic Community (EEC) Africa development program building a tourist lodge in the Virunga. Leo built several of the overnight shelters I saw on the Ruwenzori climb, and he had a pretty good start on a four-unit lodge at Ishango before funding ran out.

When we pulled up outside of his ranch-style frame house near a bluff overlooking the Semleeki River, Leo was awaiting a renewal in funding, recovering from both amoebas and malaria, and contemplating taking another job as a builder with the Okapi Research Center, near Epulu in the Ituri forest. After we explained who we were—and that Grace and Monique were afraid to sleep in our tent because they didn't want to get stepped on by hippos during the night—Leo promptly kicked his sleeping "Swahili teacher" out of a side guest room and told us we could spend the night there. Although the Swahili teacher was a bit disgruntled, we were delighted; we proceeded to break out our secret store of Skippy peanut butter and applesauce, much to Leo's amazement and wonder.

Within the hour, we were following Leo down to the sandy shores of the Semleeki River where it originates from Lake Edward. We had a wonderful swim, although I couldn't get used to the idea of swimming while hippos snorted and splashed just a hundred yards away. For two days Leo served as our guide, and we had a great time. Growing up as a kid in New York, Leo had always dreamed of living among wild animals, so Ishango was a dream come true for him.

That evening he woke us up so that we could see a hippo outside our window. At night scores of them come up out of the river and graze on the grass around Ishango through the early morning hours. We also could hear hyenas at the outskirts of the clearing, and Leo solemnly warned us not to walk the 40 yards to the outhouse after dark because of possible attack by lions. Grace and I argued half the night over whether we should leave the window open or not, with me desperate for the fresh air and Grace afraid of lions coming in. Leo told us the next morning that a Canadian

woman who had stayed in our room a year ago had had her hat swiped by a genet (similar to a raccoon) through the open window during the night.

After breakfast, Leo took us out to scare up some animals. We saw numerous exotic birds including the yellow-billed egret, the African fish eagle, cormorants, gray herons, Goliath herons, black-headed gonolek, white pelicans, and several types of storks. We saw numerous antelope, a couple of mangy Cape buffalo, and some wart hogs.

Leo showed us the carcass of a recently killed Cape buffalo that lions had captured. Several Zairian soldiers, whose sole responsibility is to guard a nearby air strip used only occasionally by EEC planes, tried to scare off the lions in order to claim the meat, but the lions stood their ground. I guess it's not surprising to learn that the soldiers here not only steal from the people, but from the animals as well. Unfortunately, both the soldiers stationed in the region and the park guards run a poaching business, smuggling hippo meat, and occasionally ivory, for sale to outside buyers. As a result elephants are in short supply, and we didn't see any during our time there.

We also didn't see any leopards. Leo told us about a recent anthrax outbreak at Rwindi that had wiped out about half of the hippos there. A number of park guards and their families were also killed after eating the tainted meat of the dead hippos; although, news of this was not being released by the government.

Leo showed us his collection of prehistoric harpoon heads, quartz cutting tools, beads, and pottery shards. He has assisted in several major archaeological digs in the area and has become quite knowledgeable about the ancient history of the region. He even has a complete human skeleton with wooden and metal bracelets that washed up on shore after being uncovered by the erosion of a nearby ancient burial site.

After lunch we said good-bye and drove to the ferry crossing a few kilometers away. After a 30-minute wait, a half-dozen men finally managed to pole a leaking, rusty catamaran raft to our side of the river, and we loaded the Land Cruiser.

After crossing the river, we drove to the fishing village of Kavinyonge. We were amazed by the sight of about 30 sleeping hippos piled together on the beach next to about a hundred fishing boats which provide the primary livelihood for a village of close to 2500 people. The dusty narrow streets of the village were crowded with women and children,



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while men mended and organized their nets on the beach beside their boats. Nearby, government officers registered the catches of the returning boats and extracted their tax. Everywhere, Maribu storks pranced about, swiping fish from the villagers as they laid them out to dry or carried them from the boats in baskets. We bought several large, charcoal-broiled *tilapia* from a fisherman and resumed our journey away from Lake Edward and through the mountains to Butembo.

We drove by mountain villages dispersed along the terraces of incredibly steep slopes. The air was cool and moist and, in the steep sloping plots of ground among the huts, villagers tended crops of cabbage, corn, bananas, and Arabica coffee, as opposed to the more bitter and potent Robustica coffee that grows in the Bandundu and revs my physiological engines most mornings. All along the sharply climbing roads, women hauled large bundles of produce to market on their backs, while men, accompanied by boys, pushed bicycles piled high with produce.

On this trip we encountered the only stretch of road in decent repair during our entire time in the Kivu. Not long after crossing the equator (although the mountain air made the temperatures the coolest we had experienced in Zaire), we came to the large Catholic mission hospital of Kyondo. The 30-kilometer stretch of road leading to and from the mission is private; any vehicle has to pay to travel on it. The access fees are used to maintain the road, so the entire region enjoys ready access by trucks hauling produce to Butembo. The final stretch of road leading right to Butembo was in excellent condition as well, thanks to a Canadian-Aid road project.

As we descended the mountain range and approached Butembo, we passed through the Baptist mission of Katwa, where our teacher-friend from Vanga, Bobbi, was supposed to be staying with a missionary family. We were alarmed to discover, however, that Katwa was virtually deserted; although, it is a large community with a mission hospital and school. The only activity in the town was a couple of military vehicles and several dozen soldiers milling about, so we knew there had been some serious trouble. We were concerned about Bobbi and the other missionaries. After talking to a couple of soldiers, we found out that the missionaries had left, so we continued on to Butembo, hoping to find out more information from the Hurlberts.

The Hurlberts gave us a brief overview regarding the trouble in Katwa a few days before. Just after Bobbi arrived, trouble broke out between members of the Baptist church in

Katwa and a rival group whose leader had just been arrested by the military for some disorder he had instigated the week before. After the renegade leader was seized, a gang of about 20 of his followers started a small scale riot in Katwa, and the two missionary families there spent the entire evening packing their belongings. Bobbi was able to help comfort the kids and offer support to the mother, who was, understandably, very frightened.

The next morning they left, and that evening the real trouble began with the looting and burning of forty-two houses, along with the attacking and beating of church leaders. Two of the church leaders later died of their injuries. The renegades then went into Butembo and attacked the businesses and vehicles of a number of merchants who were supporters and members of the Baptist church there. Later, the military took into custody 18 of the men involved in the violence, but rumor has it that they are afraid to transport them to the prison in Goma for fear of reprisal.

At any rate, the missionary families, with Bobbi in tow, finally arrived in Goma. Meanwhile, everyone else in Katwa packed their belongings on their bikes and backs and left for fear of harassment when the military moved in. It's sad. The missionary families are planning to leave, and it is unlikely that the hospital and school work in Katwa will resume for quite some time, if at all.

After arriving in Butembo, I got sick again with both malaria and some kind of intestinal disorder, so I was feeling pretty lousy for a couple of days. Fortunately, my Halfan malaria cure and tetracycline purge worked wonders, and I was in good enough shape to travel back to Bukavu on the MAF flight by Wednesday, although not before a Zairian official at the airport in Butembo hit us with a contrived "airport tax" of 20,000 zaires each (Monique included) before we boarded the plane. I wanted to dig in my heels and argue for a while, but the MAF pilot was already two hours behind schedule, so he asked me to bite the bullet and pay it.

The flight from Butembo to Bukavu was uneventful, except for a brief landing at the mission outpost of Rwanguba in the hills north of Goma. The folks at Rwanguba told us that since the insurgency began across the Ugandan border into Rwanda last September, they could occasionally hear artillery fire at night across the foothills to the east. The insurgents were reported to be slaughtering the gorillas in Rwanda's national park to destroy the multi-million dollar tourist industry. (This is the same region Diane Fosse worked in as depicted in the film *Gorillas in the Mist*.) Zaire is now the only country in the world where tourists can



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go to see gorillas in their natural habitat.

Arriving back in Bukavu, Joe and Becky Hartt, an MAF family, graciously took us in for a week, despite their hectic schedules. They coordinated the MAF retreat for eastern Zaire, at the same time preparing for their family vacation immediately afterwards in Mombasa, Kenya. The Hartts rent a splendid old Belgian duplex at the top of a hill that, from one side of their yard, offers one of the best views of Lake Kivu in all of Bukavu. They also have a great view across the valley into Rwanda (5 minutes walk) from the other side of their yard. Monique thoroughly enjoyed our stay there, playing on the swings, chumming around with the 10-year-old-son of Free Methodist missionaries next door (Gary and Jann Allen), and enjoying the view of the lake and mountains from her cloistered sanctuary at the Hartts.

The morning after our arrival, I walked down to the main road and grabbed a taxi to ISP to find Bikayi. We finally met later that morning, and I was encouraged by the hospitality and friendliness with which he greeted our arrival. He and his wife hosted us for a couple of excellent traditional Zairian meals, and I came to appreciate our time with them. Bikayi didn't hesitate to drive me wherever I needed to go; although, most of the time I took a taxi so as not to impose on him.

As he was driving me from his house to the Hartts, we passed by a young chimpanzee, in shorts, ambling down the side of the road by itself. Bikayi seemed hardly to notice. When I asked him about the animal, he commented rather matter-of-factly that it belonged to a neighbor of his and often went out for short walks by itself. I just shook my head in amazement.

When I mentioned that I was open to doing several professional seminars for the faculty while in Bukavu, Bikayi immediately called in the director of the *Centre de Recherches Universitaires du Kivu (CERUKI)*, a Dr. Magabe, to organize the logistics, facilities, and radio advertising for the presentations for the next week.

I ended up doing two slide presentations the following Wednesday to a group of about 50 Zairian professors from both ISP and *Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural (ISDR)*. The first one was on PET scan technology and neuropsychology research, and the second was on the preliminary research I did nearly two years ago on the neuropsychological assessment of Zairian children at the medical mission of Moanza.

Although I was really apprehensive about it, I agreed to do the presentations in French. I spent the next several days translating and reviewing some of the key technical terms

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and phrases, with Grace's help, before the scheduled date. Despite my limitations in the language, the presentations came off pretty well (according to Grace); although, I did pick up an occasional smile or outright snicker at some of my pronunciations.

I did the third presentation to a group of about 30 students and faculty on Friday, focusing on a brief history of intelligence testing with American children and reviewing the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC), its cultural adaptability, and my medical and assessment protocol which we are presently pursuing for the project in Kikongo. One especially enthusiastic scholar in attendance was the co-director of *CERUKI*, Dr. Tshimanga Mwanza, who is a psychologist with a Belgian Ph.D. in tests and measures. An Austrian foundation is funding a resident treatment program at a nearby hospital for infants and children suffering from severe malnutrition. Dr. Tshimanga was keen on getting a look at our assessment protocol and research method. He asked if I could make available a copy of the K-ABC for him, as well as score and statistically evaluate their cognitive assessment data and compare their measures with what we're getting in the Bandundu.

The Thursday after my presentation, we accompanied Bobbi (who arrived safely from her refuge in Goma) and the MAF Caravan pilot who had just arrived from Kinshasa, on an excursion to the Kahuzi-Biega National Park to see the gorillas. There are four gorilla families in the park that are habituated to tourists, and park rangers will take only one group of eight visitors to visit each family once a day.

After about a 20-minute walk, we came upon a family back in the brush, lounging about in the trees and bushes and munching on luscious growth. The male silverback who ruled this group was reclining in a small clearing, stripping leaves from the surrounding shrubs while several females and offspring sat dispersed among the trees in the immediate vicinity. Except for a few of the youngsters climbing about in some of the nearby branches and making rude noises, the family as a whole was not terribly active, and seemed completely at ease in the presence of our group of visitors.

After we watched the silverback and company for 40 minutes, the large male aroused himself and sauntered off through some bushes, making a couple of half charges and threatening postures when we tried to inconspicuously follow him. He didn't have to worry about us too much, though, because our visit was quickly terminated when we encountered a scattered column of driver ants that quickly



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drove us from the bush back onto the main trail. I'll never forget the sensation of trying not to miss the rare opportunity to tape the silverback's threats and feints with the camcorder, while at the same time desperately swatting at the driver ants climbing up and biting my legs. The park guides got a pretty good laugh at that sight. I don't think I'll ever forget our close encounter with the gorillas in their natural habitat. I also won't forget my very close encounter with the driver ants.

For our last several days in Bukavu, we moved to the Free Methodist Guest House. One group of folks who were happy to see us was the local artists and craftsmen. About a dozen of them set up an impromptu display of their items for sale up and down the entire length of the driveway, solely for Grace's benefit. She ended up buying a number of nicely done wood carvings and malachite jewelry, although we refused to look at the ivory pieces out of principle.

During our time in Bukavu, some of the missionaries were struggling with a serious problem which, in some ways, typifies the difficulty of working in Zaire. I can't be very specific, but about 18 million zaires (US \$5,000) was stolen from a mission-sponsored development project, and somehow the military authorities got wind of it. They came to investigate and immediately arrested the three Zairian administrators employed by the project, even though the mission was confident these individuals were not involved in the theft. However, since it was convenient to simply arrest those responsible for the program, they were arrested. The officers demanded over a million zaires from the missionaries to insure that the Zairian administrators would not be beaten and abused in jail.

One final experience while we were in Bukavu was both interesting and distressing. Grace, Monique, and I had the opportunity to accompany a missionary, Carolyn Butler, on a visit into the government prison in Bukavu during their weekly feeding program. Twice a week, a group of Zairian church women and several missionaries enter the prison to feed all of the residents, and twice a week the Catholics do the same thing. They also hold worship services, and sponsor a nurse to come in on a weekly basis and treat the prisoners for illness. The program was started about ten years ago, when about half a dozen prisoners out of 300 were dying each week from starvation and related illness. Prison authorities do not provide any food or medical services to the inmates, and their only provision is brought in either by their families or the missionaries.

Since the missionaries began the feeding program, other

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minor reforms and improvements have taken place. A room has been set aside as a permanent chapel for worship services, and a pastor is allowed to come in freely. As of about four months ago, prisoners convicted of crimes involving the use of weapons are no long kept in shackles day and night. Also, the frequency of beatings by the "captains," or fellow prisoners responsible for order and discipline inside the walls, has diminished appreciably. There are no soldiers or guards actually inside the prison. They control the main gate and the outside of the walled enclosure. Custody within the walls is under the direct control and responsibility of the prisoner captains, who have their own private rooms and privileges as long as they keep order.

The actual living conditions for the prisoners, however, are still deplorable. Inmates awaiting sentencing are crowded 70 to a single, large, dark, cement-slab room, with damp, lice-infested bedding placed side to side. Long-term inmates live in less-crowded cement rooms, and they seem to have readier access to visitors and supplies from the outside; although, every privilege comes with a price tag. In the section reserved for about 30 or so military prisoners, however, the conditions are really pitiful. They are cramped into small, dirty, cement rooms next to the communal showers. They don't have any bed frames or elevated cement slabs, so their bedding is laid right on the floor, which is damp from the adjacent showers.

During the worship service, which was prior to the distribution of beans cooked in palm oil and served with avocado slices, Grace and Monique sang a song in French (based on Mt. 6:33) for the inmates. The worship was directed by a well-dressed inmate who serves as the elder of the Protestant congregation. He was under a death sentence for murder, but recently he had his sentence commuted to life in prison. His shackles were removed only four months ago. His wife is one of the women who participates in the feeding program each week.

We saw a couple of boys who couldn't have been more than 11; although, according to the authorities, no one is incarcerated who is younger than 15 (in keeping with Amnesty International guidelines). The Catholic priest who operates the feeding program, however, has political connections and often manages to get the incarcerated children out.

Grace spent the remainder of the day bleaching (to disinfect) and cleaning strawberries to bring back as a special treat for our friends in Kikongo. Saturday we took off



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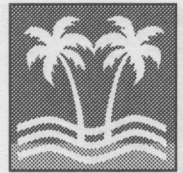
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in the Caravan for our return, landing on the airstrip beside our house late afternoon after an uneventful trip with clear weather. To our surprise, all of our workers and the project team were at the airstrip to greet us, and they had decorated the entrance to our yard and our house with braided palm branches and flowers.

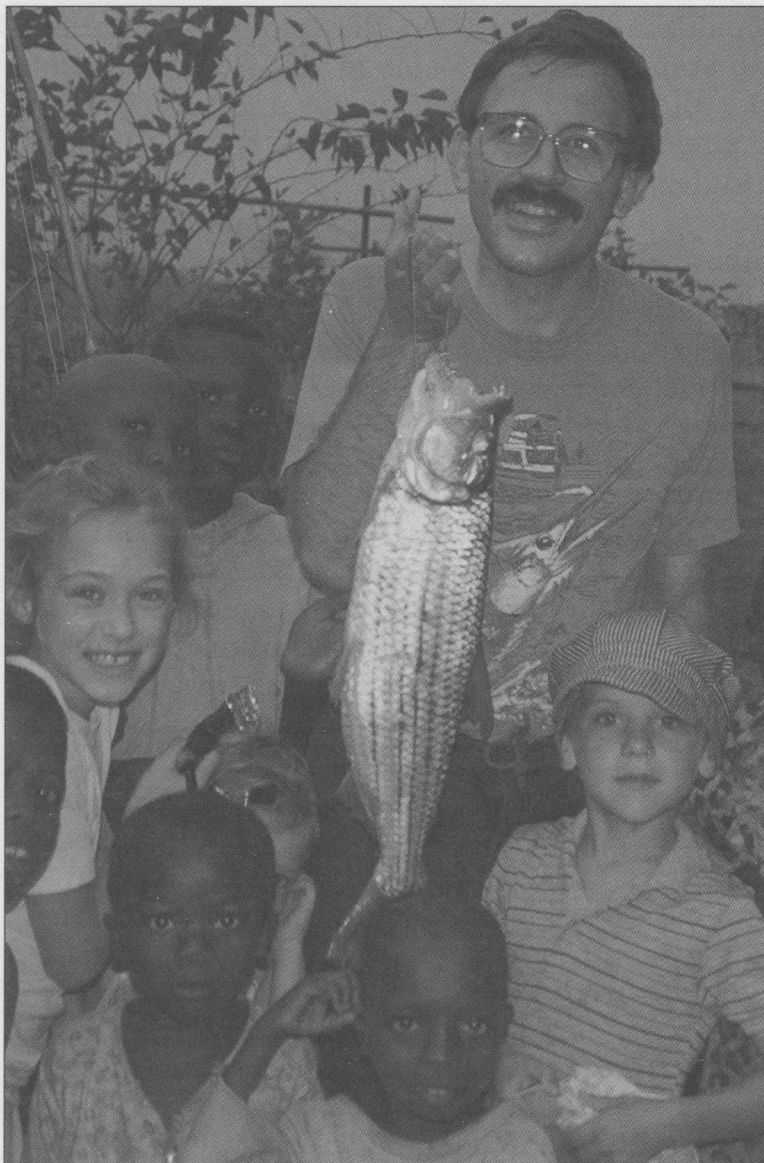
Despite Grace's fears—which extended into her dream life some nights prior to our return—Matthew still remembered her and called her Mama. Daniel and Marjorie both were very happy to see us after three weeks; although, they both claimed to like living with the Foster family.

The house was in good shape, and one of our workers had served as a sentinel each evening in our absence, sleeping beside the house near a small campfire to prevent theft, occasionally accompanied by Daniel and the Foster boys and their dog Lucky. Despite the marvels of the Kivu, it was nice to get settled back into our familiar routine here.

During my three-week absence, the project team completed a short-term assessment project, administering the K-ABC, Tactual Performance Task, and Matrix Analogies Test to 96 kids in the 10- to 12-year range. After we complete the scoring and computer compilation of these data, we'll use the Early Screening Profile Battery to assess the effects of a long-term nutritional and malarial prophylactic intervention on a group of young children (3 to 4 years old) whose parents are in the Pastoral Training Institute here. In June, I hope to use the K-ABC to assess a group of HIV-positive children in the AIDS follow-up project in Bas Zaire; although, I still haven't received a formal response from the directing physician.



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*I felt like a  
conquering  
hero as I  
trudged back  
to Kikongo  
with an  
entourage of  
local children  
trotting behind  
me, recounting  
to an admiring  
village my epic  
struggle with  
the tiger fish.*

## Moral Questions

June 4, 1991 -

Today I received news that I've lost a friend and colleague. Dr. Diawaku dia Nseyila died at Mama Yemu Hospital in Kinshasa, after being there for over two months with kidney problems and a bleeding ulcer. He was a professor of developmental and educational psychology at the *Institut Pédagogique National (IPN)* in Kinshasa, and one of the two Zairian professors who had written letters of support for me to the Ministry of University Education and Research with respect to my Fulbright research appointment.





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When I visited him last week, Dr. Diawaku was gaunt and weak, unable to stand and barely able to sit. He was in a lot of pain. Despite all this, he was responsive and courteous and seemed to sincerely appreciate our being there. His wife looked tired and deeply worried, having spent two weeks sleeping at night on a small foam mattress beside his bed. I talked a little about the research project in Kikongo, and also about visiting him again in August, before my departure when he would be at his home and in better health. That was the last time I saw him.

If I had been in his place, I would have been evacuated on the next flight to the United States, and I probably would have received the best medical technology and care available at University Hospital in Ann Arbor. As it was, Diawaku stayed at Mama Yemu and died a lingering death under the care of a Zairian physician doing the best he could in a third-world medical infrastructure. And so my Zairian colleague and friend dies, while my American colleagues, who face similar catastrophic illness, usually live long enough to enjoy their retirement benefits.

It's hard to see someone like Diawaku pass on; there are so few good men like him left in positions of scholarship and influence here in Zaire. Diawaku was a product of the old school, when education still meant something in Zaire. His primary schooling was under the old Belgian system, strict and exacting, yet effective in teaching students the basics. He completed his secondary schooling at the CBZO-founded *Ecole de Pasteurs Instituteurs* (EPI) in Kimpese, directing a choir of young men that eventually went to the World's Fair to perform. He completed a master's degree at UCLA, and later was one of four scholars CBZO supported for doctoral work in the United States. Diawaku did his doctoral work in educational psychology at UCLA, living with his wife and kids in the United States for four years. These were also the days when Zairian scholars would actually return to help build their country after completing graduate work overseas.

He eventually took a post as rector at the University in Kisangani. After it was nationalized, Diawaku was recalled to Kinshasa to serve as the Protestant representative (*Eglise au Christ du Zaire*) to President Mobutu's Central Committee. Through these responsibilities, he gained a reputation for performing his administrative duties responsibly and with integrity. Unfortunately, that is not the kind of reputation that will carry one far politically in Zaire, and since he couldn't be bought or bullied, he was effectively shelved. He eventually ended up as a professor at IPN, which is when I met him.

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It's ironic that he should pass on during some of the worst student disorder and violence ever seen at IPN. Students had been mounting road blocks, stoning buses and commandeering private vehicles. Aggravating the general climate of unrest was the fact that many students lost their scholarship stipends in a recent pyramid gambling swindle called "Bindo." Angry that they had lost their money in this get-rich-quick scheme, they blamed a government plot rather than their own greed and began stopping and attacking vehicles driving near the campus.

One of the vehicles was that of the Secretary of University Education and Research, Isala Isange, a woman who was formerly a *Commissaire de Peuple* and advocate for the students. During the inquiries into the massacre at Lubumbashi, she was known as "Mama Courage" for her vocal support of the students. More recently, however, she came to be viewed as a sellout by virtue of her government appointment and lack of support for the political opposition. They raped and brutalized her, leaving her half-dead before she was rescued and evacuated to a hospital in Johannesburg. We later heard a rumor that she died.

About that same time, students at the technical institute drove back a contingent of military police, captured one soldier and burned him alive right on the street. That same week, students attacked the homes of several of the professors on the main campus and beat the rector. The university campuses are closed down, probably for the remainder of the year.

Diawaku would have been greatly saddened to see the tactics that the university students are using to bring about change in Zaire. This was not what he had in mind when he returned from the U.S. to help build a better Zaire. The everyday working person now fears the students more than the military, which carries a hint of tragic irony considering that these students presumably carry with them the hopes and future of this country.

Despite all this, we managed to get quite a bit accomplished. Gary and I traveled about the city purchasing supplies and running errands while I distributed my research paper (pertaining to the first phase of my project) to anyone I could find who expressed even a mild interest. Gary's chauffeur accompanied us, doing an excellent job navigating the treacherous Kinshasa traffic with the exception of one incident. Nearing the Boulevard 30 Juin, Mwamba suddenly realized that the side street we were on was one-way. Because one-way streets are not marked, drivers simply have to know which streets are one-way.



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We pulled into a parking lot and immediately looked for a clearing to back up and go the other way, when a *gendarme* came strolling up to the vehicle, reached into the open window and pulled out the ignition keys. He then demanded the chauffeur's driver's license and the vehicle papers, items which are virtually irreplaceable in Kinshasa and provide the policeman/soldier with considerable bargaining leverage. In other words, you are stuck until he decides to hand you back your papers. No doubt about it, this vulture had us cold.

Gary and I left the chauffeur on his own to begin the bargaining process, while we wandered about that section of the boulevard looking for a place to eat. After about 30 minutes we decided it was too expensive to eat in any of the boulevard restaurants nearby, so we returned to the vehicle, bought soft drinks for ourselves, the original *gendarme*, and the second *gendarme* who had now left his post directing traffic and entered into the negotiations.

While another 30 minutes or so of small talk ensued, Gary learned more about where these soldiers were from (Mbandaka, in the Equator region, like many of the military), their tribe (same as Mobutu's), their home village, life in the city, the fact that the central Post Office across the street from us was closed down on strike, and so forth. We offered to buy them lunch, which they declined, saying that if the *Commandant* drove by and saw them away from their posts, they would be history (a pleasant prospect, I thought to myself). They then courteously informed us that going the wrong way down a one-way street was a "serious" offense here in Kinshasa, and we would pay a lot of money if they had to present our ticket and papers at the office. So we would be better off paying them 150,000Z up front.

Gary and I looked at each other, realizing this was going to take a considerable length of time. We left Mwamba to the second round of negotiations. I set off down the boulevard to check on my August flight reservations, while Gary sauntered off to a nearby hardware store to price electrical wire. It was best if the soldiers realized we were in no hurry, and that the chauffeur was on his own. In other words, they would have to settle at a Zairian rather than a *mundele* price.

I got back about an hour later to find Mwamba and the two *gendarmes* leaning against the vehicle chatting amiably about the merits of manioc grown in the equator region, and Mwamba informed me that things were settled and we could go pick up Gary at the hardware store. The *gendarmes* shook my hand and let me know that they were always at this corner of the boulevard, so that I knew where to find

them if I ever needed their services. I thanked them, smiling, and commented how nice it was to have two new *gendarme* friends here and feeling more than a little hypocritical while saying it. Mwamba had ended up settling for 30,000Z, which worked out to about three dollars apiece for Gary and me. A real bargain for this city.

Other aspects of our trip were much more positive. The Austrian embassy sponsored a commemorative musical event in honor of Mozart, and virtually the entire diplomatic, business, and missionary communities showed up for the big event. I also attended the year-end high school choral and band concert at the American School of Kinshasa, regretting that Grace could not be there to relive her own memories from that school. I've attended many band concerts of this sort, but listening to the choir do a medley from the hit musical *Les Miserables* was a poignant experience for me. The French Revolution theme of the oppressed masses rising up to cast off their chains juxtaposed against the present political backdrop in Zaire stirred up some striking images, particularly as I thought about the young people back in the interior villages, and the future they had to look forward to.

The next morning, however, I was brought back to reality by magic of a different sort. An American missionary staying next door to Gary and me at the CBZO Hostel was stopped by two soldiers in a jeep. They claimed to be with immigration and even showed him identification. While one of the men reviewed his passport, the other insisted on looking into Paul's personal pouch, ostensibly because of a report of a concealed weapon. After they left, Paul discovered all of his money missing from his pouch (700,000Z or about \$200). Paul took it well, but the rest of us were mad as heck for him. Gary and I moved about the city with renewed caution.

Then there was the counterfeit money incident. The morning after Paul was robbed, Mwamba informed me that there had been an announcement on the radio to beware of counterfeit 5,000Z notes, easily identified by the green inner corners rather than the original brown. I looked at my packets of 5,000Z notes obtained directly from the City Bank, and I realized that about half of my 1,000,000 zaires had the telltale green inner edge, essentially all of the newer bills.

I was in a real quandary. Taking them back to the bank to get "legitimate" ones was out of the question since that was where I had gotten them in the first place. I could simply use them for shopping or to pay salaries back in Kikongo, but that would involve knowingly passing on



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counterfeit notes. I asked a CBZO pastor and a missionary wife what to do. They both agreed that I shouldn't even worry about it since there were warnings about counterfeit money almost weekly on the radio for all of the large printed notes, including 10,000Z and the recently released 50,000Z notes. Rumor had it that these "tainted" notes had actually been printed by one of the government offices to finance the Bindo scam. Finally, all of the notes, legitimate or counterfeit, weren't worth the paper they were printed on anyway.

This reminds me of the *mazout* (diesel fuel) moral wars Gary and I fought with each other. During the fuel crisis last November, Gary arranged for the purchase of several barrels of diesel fuel through a *kadafi*, a non-legitimate middleman who arranges for the sale of fuel stolen from military depots. He didn't know that *kadafis* sold stolen fuel, though he did wonder how they managed to undersell the pump price and have fuel available when no one else did. I told him quite bluntly that stolen fuel is always cheaper since it's easier to make a profit. Once Gary found out the true sources the *kadafis* used, he wrestled with his conscience as to whether one could justify purchasing fuel this way in order that the hospital construction work could continue, especially when no other sources were available to ship to the interior by barrel. I rode Gary pretty hard on this one in a good-natured, teasing sort of way.

Then Gary found out that I had given one of the station attendants a little "present" to fill my 20-liter fuel canisters after he had filled the vehicle. Although I paid for all of the fuel, it's illegal to pump fuel into a stand-alone container in Zaire (to discourage fuel hoarding). We needed the extra fuel to make it back to Kikongo in case we had to detour from road blocks or blocked bridges. There are no service stations between Kinshasa and Kenge, 260 kilometers east. There's hardly even a road anymore. Anyway, Gary exacted moral penance with a vengeance when he found out about that one, and so we both struck up an agreement—he wouldn't use *kadafis* anymore and I would siphon the *mazout* from my vehicle to the holding canisters by myself. Witness, however, the moral difficulties that can accompany getting even the simplest things done in Zaire.

Despite our moral struggles in the big city, the project continues to progress well. I finished writing a 54-page research manuscript on the first study we completed last December, and I have submitted that paper to an APA psychology journal for publication. We're now busy compiling all of the data and results for the three other

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brief studies that we've completed since then. All the while, my project team members keep testing more kids, almost drowning me in data each time I come back from a trip.

One weekend we went to Fatundu, visiting the Catholic mission and giving a presentation on the project and findings thus far. The four team members each demonstrated the testing procedures for a portion of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children and the Early Screening Profile for preschool children. Following the presentation and refreshments, we hurried from Fatundu back on foot to the river, where we had to cross by *pirogue* and walk the two kilometers to the village where we left the vehicle.

I'll never forget crossing the rain-swollen Wamba River at night, with a storm coming out of the northeast and lightning etching eerie patterns over the night sky. If there was ever a time when I didn't want the *pirogue* to tip, that was it. I was very glad to get back to the vehicle after slipping over muddy clay paths in the dark. My Zairian companions made the walk effortlessly without a flashlight.

We started testing the children of the families at the Pastoral Institute. They are receiving a milk supplement daily as well as participating in a "Head Start" sort of educational enrichment program. A few days after we started, the director of the Institute arrived to witness the testing procedure. One of the children decided to get sick that day. While completing the Tactual Performance Task (TPT), in which the child is blindfolded and must rely on sense of touch to correctly place the wooden blocks, the little girl suddenly stood up and vomited all over the testing area. The director was less than impressed, and he asked us if the TPT often made kids throw up. I told him that in over 200 children we've tested this year, this was the first time any of them had gotten sick. My explanations must have seemed a little weak in light of the potent evidence spread before us.

All of this was swept aside by the time we were scheduled to fly to Kinshasa to attend the CBZO retreat. Leaving the local Peace Corps volunteer to house-sit for us, eight adults and eight children piled into the MAF Caravan and flew to Kinshasa. There we joined CBZO missionaries and affiliates gathered at the Catholic retreat center of Manresa, just southwest of Kinshasa off of the Bas Zaire road.

While in Kinshasa for the retreat, we received a package of goodies from the Etters family, our good friends from Jackson, Michigan. Among little treasures and letters for all of the kids and Grace, were candy bars for me. Not just any



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sort of candy bars, but my very favorite, Coffee Crisp and Aero milk chocolate, produced by the Rowntree Candy Co. and sold only in Canada. Dave Etters, knowing my affinity for this brand, had purchased them for me while on a trip to Toronto. After considering for a moment how to ration portions of this candy so that it would last for our remaining months here, I opted instead for the traditional approach of, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may well be evacuated!" The kids and I had them finished off in a week.

The day after the retreat, the Kikongo contingent piled into the Caravan again. We took off from Ndolo airport and flew above a rainstorm. As we approached our area, the pilot descended through the rain clouds, thankfully breaking cloud cover while we were still at about 800 feet above ground level. He located the Wamba River and snaked our way north along the river at about 500 feet, until we came to Kikongo: a real example of bush flying! Since more dark clouds and rain were approaching from the northeast, the pilot took off again less than 15 minutes after landing, veering westward toward Kinshasa to pick up the Vanga contingent and take them home.

The family remains reasonably healthy and happy, although the kids are starting to talk more about going home. The other day during her rest time, Monique drew and colored a picture of an American flag and put it on her bedroom wall. Personally, I'm ambivalent about the prospect. This year has been so interesting and different, very rich in terms of sheer variety and novelty of experience, that it'll be hard to leave.

While at the embassy health center in Kinshasa in March, I happened to meet Ambassador Harrop's wife, who was also waiting for a medical appointment. News had just leaked out that Ambassador Harrop had been designated as the next U.S. ambassador to Israel, so I asked Mrs. Harrop how she felt about the new appointment. She said that although their time in Zaire had been positive overall, she was very much looking forward to the historical and cultural enrichment that their appointment to Israel would provide. This was one of the lessons I've begun to learn during our time here—the importance of recognizing opportunities and seizing the moment, so as to more fully glean from them the challenges and enrichment that they have to offer.



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*Chief  
Fakamba, one  
of the last great  
Bateke chiefs,  
had a necklace  
of leopard teeth  
draped around  
his neck. The  
necklace has  
rare and  
special  
significance in  
terms of both  
his stature as a  
territorial chief  
and his powers  
of witchcraft.*

## A Delicate Balance

July 23, 1991 -

As we prepare for our departure in three weeks, I am frantically trying to organize all of my data and wrap up the assessment projects still in progress. The most recent, and perhaps the most interesting, of these began about a month ago when my assessment team (Kisoki, Makakala, Kafuti, Odille), chauffeur (Mwamba), and I traveled to Kimpese in Bas Zaire to complete cognitive and motor development follow-up testing on young children in an AIDS research project. The AIDS research project at IME involves identifying HIV-positive women about to give birth, then





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pursuing a comprehensive longitudinal medical assessment of the child (about 40% of whom will be born HIV-positive) and mother for a two-year period.

I suggested we try to find as many of the HIV-positive children as possible who were beyond two years of age and no longer being monitored. For as many of these children we could find still living, I hoped to complete a cognitive and motor development assessment to evaluate the effect of congenital HIV-infection. After written correspondence and an extended shortwave radio rendezvous with Dr. Steve Green, the director, we finally got a collaborative research effort organized. The teaching responsibilities of my assessment members at the Kikongo primary school ended July 2, so early the next morning we set off for Kimpese, about a 12-hour trip.

Our enthusiasm for the endeavor was dampened when we witnessed the aftermath of a serious accident along the main road. We were delayed about two hours at a road construction detour near Mbankana (near the Bateke Plateau) because a truck loaded with corn had missed the detour and capsized, killing four of the people riding on top of the load and seriously injuring six others. A long line of trucks and other vehicles was stopped because the capsized vehicle had completely blocked the detour.

The injured had already been rushed off to Kinshasa (two hours away) in a Land Rover, and the corpses of those who had died in the accident were laid neatly in a row beside the truck, heads and torsos covered with a blanket. Meanwhile, a road grader tried in vain to pull the truck upright with a cable. Three of the four who died were children whose mother had been among the seriously injured. It was sobering to see how in a moment's time a family had been devastated.

Aside from the irregular, crowded, and expensive Kenge-Kinshasa bus, the only means of travel from the Bandundu to Kinshasa is by paying to ride on top of a produce truck. These trucks break down at least once *en route* because they are overloaded and poorly maintained, so it is not unusual for travelers to get stranded for days on the open *nseke* (savanna grasslands) beside a broken-down truck. Seeing the bodies of those children beside the road reminded me that, for most Zairians, extended travel in their country is not only expensive, capricious, wearisome, and difficult—it is also dangerous.

At the accident site, an *Office de Routes* bulldozer was finally brought in to clear a path around the capsized vehicle, and we continued on our way. I think this was the first time

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I had ever seen a piece of equipment from the government road maintenance branch actually doing any work.

We finally arrived in Kinshasa late that afternoon, stopping at CBZO to drop off mail and leave messages for people. We were surprised to see Steve Green and his wife. They had driven to Kinshasa that morning and were just getting ready to head back to Kimpese to prepare for our arrival. Apparently, the regional supervisor in charge of the water service for Kimpese had cut off the water to IME the evening before because the hospital was appealing a water bill from the previous month for 36,000,000 zaires, an outrageous amount for which there was no reasonable justification.

I could hardly believe that a local government official would have the audacity to cut off the water supply to the major medical hospital for all of Bas Zaire and force them to submit to a thinly disguised act of blatant extortion. What was particularly galling was that the hospital had originally installed its own water system, only to have control of it usurped by the regional water authority. Steve had spent the entire day in Kinshasa trying to see the *Commissaire sous Régionale* to overturn the decision and get the hospital water turned back on.

Shortly after Steve left, we also started off for Kimpese, first deciding to try to refill our vehicle with diesel. We couldn't find diesel fuel anywhere. We tried every single fuel station in that area of Kinshasa (about a dozen in all) and not one of them was selling fuel. Word had gotten out that the government was about to raise the price of fuel, and the service station managers refused to sell another drop until they got the new official price, which would not come until the next morning.

Meanwhile, we were stuck without enough fuel to get to Kimpese and no room for us to stay at CBZO/Kinshasa that evening. The chauffeur and I sat down and tried to estimate how much diesel it would take to get us to Kimpese. We decided that in addition to the 20 liters in our one remaining jerry can, if we could find another 5 to 10 liters on the parallel market we could probably make it to Kimpese. In short order, we had the additional fuel (at an outrageous price but cheaper than spending the night in Kinshasa), and were on our way again just as it was getting dark.

This was my first time driving the Bas Zaire road, and the first thing I learned about this road is that I don't want to drive it at night if I can possibly avoid it. The reason is simple—it's a great road to be killed on. The first 100 kilometers is in fairly good condition so large trucks tend to



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speed along it. This wouldn't be so bad, except that this section of Bas Zaire is very hilly, so the road weaves and bends and dips and turns every few hundred meters, leaving the driver with little time to react to sudden emergencies. This wouldn't be so bad, except that many of the trucks travel at night without adequate lights or not even using their lights at all until they notice an oncoming vehicle. This also wouldn't be so bad, except for truck maintenance being what it is in Zaire, it is not uncommon to suddenly come upon a truck broken down right in the middle of the road since there is little room to park a stalled vehicle beside the road.

Furthermore, the condition of the road becomes appreciably poorer over the second hundred kilometers to Kimpese, with yawning potholes suddenly emerging in the night to swallow up entire tires or even front axle systems. If drivers swerve to avoid a pothole as they zoom along, they stand a good chance of picking off one of the numerous pedestrians who are always along the Bas Zaire road at night in this densely populated region of Zaire. Last and probably least, virtually every town along the Bas Zaire road has a gendarme post with its faithful crew, often working late into the night stopping any trucks or vehicles they can get to slow down to evaluate the likelihood of that vehicle contributing to their livelihood.

By virtue of a few guardian angels and a chauffeur with an uncanny ability to swerve around potholes, pedestrians, stalled vehicles, and ominously signaling *gendarmes*, we arrived at the IME guest house about 8:00 p.m. The IME guest house is managed by Steve Green's wife, Carolyn, who runs a tight and tidy ship (English style). The room and board available there is about as good as you'll find anywhere in Zaire in a non-tourist setting. Although the cost was relatively expensive by Zairian standards (about US \$9 for three meals and room per day), it was well worth it. This was because it allowed us to live right on the grounds of the hospital, so that we didn't waste a lot of time traveling and scrounging for our food. Although the room quality would have only been comparable in America to a very modest economy class motel (without hot water), this was by far the best living circumstance that my project members had ever experienced in their lives. We had running water, Western-style beds and mattresses, and electricity. For me it was just okay, but for them it was a virtual resort. With these kinds of perks, they would have been willing to do a motor and cognitive evaluation on King Kong if I had asked them to.

The next morning, the crew and I met with Steve and his chief nurse at the small building that houses the AIDS



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research project, as well as a project sponsored by Bayer Pharmaceuticals for the field testing of a new drug to treat salmonella infection. The “research center” basically consisted of a small room with four laptop microcomputer stations networked to two printers. This room was staffed by a couple of Zairian nurses entering medical and interview information into a database. The second room was a reasonably equipped medical laboratory where two other nurses did most of the blood testing pertaining to the AIDS project. In addition, there was a small office for Steve, an examination room for physical medical examinations, and a tiny bathroom which was out of service because the hospital still had no water.

The facility didn’t exactly compare to the WHO-funded Project *SIDA* (AIDS research) center at Mama Yemu Hospital in Kinshasa, the largest AIDS research facility in Africa. But aside from Project *SIDA*, Steve’s Project *Nkebolo* (meaning “care”) was the first active research facility I had seen in Zaire. Although it was modest, it was home, and for the next week this small building served as the base of operations for my crew and me as we pursued our assessment efforts.

Steve Green and I developed a real kinship. Not only did I find him to be a personable and deeply committed Christian, but also a dedicated and exceedingly capable physician. He is the first missionary physician I have ever met with a real interest and capability in basic research. In fact, he is conducting these field-based medical studies in collaboration with the medical department at Edinburgh University in Scotland.

Many of the mothers in Steve’s study lived in Matadi, the major port city of Zaire located about 100 kilometers down-river, with a population of several hundred thousand people. The widespread infiltration of AIDS to Matadi is of particularly concern because the city is the major commercial link with the rest of western Africa.

Because we only had a short time, we decided to try to find only those children in Steve’s project located in Kimpese and the immediate surrounding village areas. It quickly became evident that the most difficult aspect of our work would simply be tracking down and finding the children. The hospital records were often not very specific; we were usually lucky if we even had so much as a street address.

Furthermore, there is no rhyme or reason to street address and numbers in Kimpese and most urban sections of Zaire. Streets are not labeled with signs, and houses are not numbered in a visible manner. We simply had to go to a given section of the city and ask around until we located a





given street, and then ask around until we located a given family. The surname of the child may or may not be the same as the mother or father, and may instead be that of a maternal uncle, grandparent, or other relative since they all pretty much rate as immediate or nuclear family. If we didn't have the name of the mother, we pretty much gave up finding the location of the child.

Finally, once we turned off of the main thoroughfare, the side streets were virtually impassable by vehicle, so we had to proceed on foot to track down a given residence. The footpaths snaked through residential areas in a non-geometrical manner.

Fortunately, neighbors keep tabs on everyone else's personal affairs, so if we could simply get to the right section of the city and ask around enough, we could usually locate the house of the mother whose child had often been to IME. Of the children originally in the Kimpese area, about a third had moved to be with family in other towns because one or both parents had died from AIDS. Of the children whose residences we were able to locate, about a third had already died, usually from either overwhelming systemic infection, pneumonia, or malnutrition and weakness brought about by tuberculosis. Another third were either at home (and too sick to test) or untestable because they were not sufficiently verbal due to retarded development.

That left about a third of our hard-earned sample that was testable, and when we managed to find these children, we guarded them like a protective mother hen until we could get the mother and child back to IME for evaluation. After a week's worth of 10-hour days, we managed to find and test 13 HIV-positive children and 13 HIV-negative children born to infected mothers. The research/design purist may scoff at these sample sizes, but no sampling methodology textbook I have ever studied could have prepared us for the manner in which we had to sift our way through hospital records, and then the Kimpese back alleys and outlying village sections, to hunt up these sick kids and their noninfected counterparts.

During these outings I was often touched with a combination of sadness, humor, and irony. Sadness for the medical and human tragedy that we were encountering firsthand, as sick mothers would answer the door only to inform us that the child we were looking for had died two months before and the husband was presently at IME undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. Humor at the amazing efforts and resourcefulness my project folks would use to solicit mother and child to cooperate with an American *mundele* "doctor," especially one who wanted the child to do a

lot of silly and culturally nonsensical tasks like repeat a series of words or numbers from memory, or make triangle patterns out of color blocks. Finally, irony at the set of circumstances and events over the last year that had ultimately brought my life and theirs together for this brief time. It may not have been the most technically sophisticated, eloquent, or methodologically commendable research effort that I had ever been involved in, but it was certainly the most personally moving and meaningful.

The final evening before our scheduled departure, Steve Green and I were up in his computer lab until midnight. We put the longitudinal medical information available from Steve's study of the children on a floppy disk. As I returned to the room I shared with the two other fellows on the assessment team, I had a real sense of satisfaction as I clutched the cognitive and motor evaluation sheets under one arm, and the computerized printouts and floppy disk from the longitudinal comprehensive medical data in the other hand.

I was very excited at the prospect of getting this information back to Kikongo, where I could mount it on my own laptop system and integrate both the cognitive neuropsychological and medical data into a single statistical file. Then I could analyze the data on these 26 very special children to my heart's content, until some worthwhile research papers or even grant funding proposals emerged. However, my scientific enthusiasm was eventually tempered by the nagging realization that, whereas those kids had given me some special memories and some very useful information in terms of my professional endeavors, I was not able to give them much of anything in return, particularly those unlucky 13 in my computer file who were denoted "GROUP HIV-POSITIVE." Each corner I turn in Zaire, I am again reminded how often life can be so unfair.

Such was the case with one prospective child in our sample, a three-year old boy named Mbala Seyana. Unlike the other children in the study, Mbala wasn't difficult to find; he had spent the last two months in the pediatrics ward at IME with his mother virtually living at his bedside. When I located him, he was lying on the hospital bed beside her, gasping and wheezing as she tried in vain to get him to eat and drink a little.

The child was emaciated. Green mucous was dried and caked around the edge of a small intubation tube up his nose. Occasionally he gazed weakly about. Forget the cognitive and motor evaluation, this child would be fortunate to survive the night. Had this child been back in the U.S.,



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his condition might have been improved somewhat with either frequent gamma globulin or AZT treatment combined with a stiff regimen of antibiotics. The expense of those treatments, however, made them out of the question for Mbala and every other sick child from Steve's project we encountered. All they could do at IME was give him what antibiotics they had and hope the child could weather this crisis until the next one hit.

Miraculously, the child did live through that night, and each succeeding night after that while we were there at Kimpese. Nearly each day I would stop by for a few minutes to see him and talk a bit with the mother. She had a drawn and chronically tired look, worn out from both the stress of being at hospital with a sick child for months on end and from her lowered resistance in response to her own infection. While my collaboration with Steve represented the professional excitement of the new things that I was learning and experiencing, little Mbala and his mother brought home the human dimension of AIDS in Africa.

The day we were scheduled to leave Kimpese, we worked frantically until noon to finish up the assessment on the last couple of children. After a farewell lunch, we started for Kinshasa, stopping for several hours along the way at the administrative Bas Zaire capital of Mbanza Ngungu. We wanted to try to find two additional project children purported to be living there. Amazingly, we found both residences, only to discover that one child had already died and the other was virtually untestable because of retarded development.

Arriving back at CBZO/Kinshasa, my Zairian colleagues and I had to adjust to the CBZO guest house, which was much cheaper (\$1 U.S. per day) but a real come-down in cleanliness and quality compared to the accommodations we had enjoyed in Kimpese. Staying at the guest house apartment at the same time, however, was Charlie, one of the most interesting individuals I met in Zaire.

Charlie is a 58-year-old ceramic specialist from Missouri. He has an open and winsome manner—and a Southern accent when he speaks Kituba. He has been working on and off (mostly on) in Zaire since 1987 for Habitat for Humanity, Jimmy Carter's pet special interest project. Habitat is committed to mobilizing poor communities worldwide to provide decent housing for themselves. In Zaire, one critical aspect of decent permanent-structure housing is metal roofing in place of the thatch that must be replaced every other year. Zaire opened its own metal roofing production facility a few years ago, but the factory was in operation for

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only a month before closing down due to lack of essential raw materials. So, all of Zaire's roofing has to be brought in from either South Africa or overseas. The continued decline of the zaire against other hard currencies has resulted in roofing metal now being a virtual impossibility for the vast majority of Zairians.

Charlie, however, has been from one end of Zaire to the other, studying and exploring the use of indigenous red clays to make roofing tiles and developing intermediate technologies for baking ceramic for roofing and clay brick for floors and sidewalks. He is one of the world's foremost (and few remaining) experts in the fabrication of Scotch kilns, ceramic kilns which take low energy fuels like wood and obtain the high temperatures needed for ceramic (1400 degrees Fahrenheit) through an updraft, high-efficiency ventilation system. He learned his craft as a boy working with his father to repair the coke (processed coal residue) furnaces of West Virginia. He made an excellent living as a repairman of these special kilns for many years, before deciding late in life to use his skills on the mission field.

Over the past several years, Charlie has designed and built a number of Scotch kilns completely out of local material and baked ceramic roofing tiles for Habitat houses. Unfortunately, there is no systematic way of disseminating this technology to the village level, and most tribal regions that Charlie has worked with have been slow to adopt the "new" technology. When we met, Charlie was at the CBZO guest house, waiting for his Swissair flight that Friday out of Kinshasa and back to Habitat headquarters in Americus, Georgia. He was preparing for possible reassignment to Latin America, where new ideas and intermediate technologies tend to spread like wildfire.

When I shook Charlie's hand good-bye, I noticed one other aspect of his sacrificial life that merits comment. The entire length of his arm was badly scarred, as if he had major reconstructive surgery on it. When I asked him about it, he explained that his arm had been crushed when his chauffeur had driven their jeep off the side of a steep embankment several years ago. It was only the grace of God and immediate emergency medical evacuation via MAF and Lufthansa Airlines that allowed for the emergency reconstructive surgery that saved Charlie's arm. I realized how little sacrifice I've actually had to make over the course of this past year.

After our week in Kimpese, we spent a couple of days in Kinshasa before starting back to Kikongo. I had to laugh when some of the CBZO folks told me how phone services



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downtown and in Kintambo had been cut off some weeks before. When CBZO representatives went to the phone service offices to find out why their service had been cut, they were informed that it was because they hadn't paid their phone bills. When the customers informed the company clerks that they hadn't received any phone bills in months, the clerks responded that they were aware of that. Because their billing and mailing system was so hopelessly snarled, they decided to simply cut off everyone's service so people would be forced to come in and pay their bills to have their service reinstated. I had to admit that this was an entirely novel approach to customer service.

The kids are doing fairly well but are very anxious to return to the U.S. Daniel was recently complaining of cramping and stomach pains, so we had him checked out at Kikongo hospital, and they discovered trichocephalus (whipworm). Daniel gets to chalk up one more parasite to the varied list that he has served as host to this year (roundworm, tinea, whipworm, pinworm). As he cavorts about Kikongo each day with his horde of little Zairian buddies, they share just about everything, including, unfortunately, their parasites. That aspect of Zairian life I won't miss.

In addition to the Kimpese trip, another big adventure for me was my first fishing outing since coming to Zaire. Daniel had been after me for weeks to take him fishing down in the Wamba River. I felt sufficiently disoriented and groggy after a Sunday afternoon nap to actually grab my fishing rod and venture down to the river with him. I didn't expect to catch anything, but I thought at least it would give Daniel and me an excuse for a little outing together.

Within 10 minutes of casting a purple worm along the bank of the river, something struck the end of my line like a sledge hammer. For the next 15 minutes I fought a thick, silver fish with reddish-tinged fins and a jagged set of teeth like those of a cat. I was able to get a good look at my quarry because it broke water and danced on the surface at least four times, trying to shake the hook. This magnificent fighter is known as a tiger fish. This one weighed about six pounds and was 23 inches in length, actually rather small by local standards.

Catching this fish was a real thrill for both Daniel and me, and I felt like a conquering hero as I trudged back to Kikongo about an hour later, with an entire entourage of local children trotting along behind me, recounting in rapid-fire Kituba to an admiring village community my epic struggle with the foe of the red fin and tiger teeth.



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Grace had an opportunity to vanquish a foe of a different sort. One evening, as I was listening to the BBC in our bedroom, I heard a sudden *plat-plat* in the kid's bedroom. Grace was trying to dispatch a large cockroach with her sandal. She called for me to come and identify some sort of new exotic species writhing on the cement. What we observed was a very long and thin parasite that had apparently been expelled from the intestines of the cockroach when Grace split it open with her sandal. The incredibly thin worm was squirming cobra-like in a manner unlike any terrestrial worms we had ever observed. Grace and I watched in fascination for about a minute, before I dispatched this vermin as well with the lethal sandal. Later, it struck me just how much our sense of entertainment had changed during our time in Zaire.

For Monique, the major drama over the past few months was when I accidentally stepped on one of the kittens in the dark. I seriously damaged the neck and spine of the kitten, and it was immobilized in great pain. I felt absolutely awful and was thankful the kids were asleep. I took the creature next door to Dr. Kwata, asking him if he thought there was any hope for it. If not, would he put it to sleep with an injection. He didn't feel that there was any hope for the paralyzed and trembling creature, but he didn't have any drug to put it to sleep.

I took the kitten out back, dug a hole, laid the kitten in the hole and raised my shovel to deliver the lethal blow. Suddenly, the kitten began crying and writhing about in the dirt; I just couldn't bring myself to kill it. I gently retrieved it, wrapped it in a towel, and laid it in a box on our bedroom desk. The next morning, I broke the news to the kids as gently as I could and prepared them for the kitten's inevitable demise.

Monique, however, insisted on praying for the Lord to either take the kitten away painlessly that day or else heal it. Later that morning the kitten was still listless and panting, when it heard its mother calling to come and nurse. The transformation was unbelievable. Its eyes suddenly widened, it cried out, rolled upright, and struggled mightily in the direction of its mother's call. It dragged itself across the box on three limbs, with the right front shoulder and leg dangling limply.

Over the next several days the kitten gradually regained more and more mobility and balance, until eventually the injured kitten, whom Monique named Perseverance, was able to walk about stiffly. After about a week, she was even able to join the other kittens up on the furniture by climbing





straight up the upholstery. As far as Monique was concerned, this was nothing short of a miracle. Despite its remarkable progress, however, the kitten never did really thrive or eat well, and it would occasionally have seizures. While I was in Kimpese, Perseverance died following one of her seizures. By that time Monique was prepared for it. She preferred that the kitten pass on rather than continue through life debilitated and suffering, especially since we were soon to leave Zaire and there wouldn't be anyone to take care of it.

My own major trauma was another excruciating bout with kidney stones. This time the ordeal persisted for two and a half days, and I wouldn't have made it through were it not for the periodic injections of papaverine (antispasmodic), novalgine (analgesic), and piperazine adipate (a uric acid dissolvent). Dr. Ibi, a young Zairian doctor who has recently arrived in Kikongo, made himself available day and night. He was a real angel of mercy. After the second day, we began to doubt whether the stone would pass, and Grace began trying to arrange for an MAF evacuation to Kinshasa, with a probable early return to the U.S. for treatment or surgery. However, the stone did pass and I was able to stay on in Kikongo.

After recovering from the kidney stone, I decided to embark on an adventure to the Konzi River for an overnight fishing expedition. Ever since landing that tiger fish, I longed to do battle with another one of these finned fighters. Although 15 kilometers away, the Konzi River was particularly inviting; narrower and deeper than the Wamba, with hippos and crocodiles still plying its waters, it had the reputation of being an excellent fishing river. I had visions of camping in the bush overnight, cooking fish over a campfire, a tropical variation of the trout-fishing excursions in northern Quebec that I enjoyed each summer as a kid. As it turned out, the trip was far more of a lesson in tribal governance and judicial arbitration.

Accompanied by two avid outdoorsmen, my research assistant, Makakala, and one of our household workers, Lukwamba, I crossed the nearby Wamba River by *pirogue* early in the morning, and then we set out on foot for the Konzi. We came several hours later to the home of the "game warden," who had been appointed by the land chief Fakamba to insure that the region was not hunted or fished by other tribal groups.

At the home of the warden, we met one of the hospital workers at Kikongo. He was returning from a meeting with Fakamba carrying a small, snout-nosed crocodile missing a



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back leg. He had killed the crocodile on the Wamba River, and he had carried the creature all the way to the village of Chief Fakamba, some 30 kilometers away. According to custom in that region, all crocodiles killed in Chief Fakamba's territory had to be presented to him because most of the local Zairians, including Makakala and Lukwama, believed Fakamba could transform himself into a crocodile to aid friends and challenge foes. If a crocodile was killed, it had to be presented to Fakamba so he could have first choice over the portions to be eaten. As was his habit, Fakamba had cut off a rear leg quarter and left the remainder of the animal for the hospital worker to take back to his family for food.

I was intrigued by Chief Fakamba, one of the last of a generation of grand old chiefs whose reputation carried the awe and significance of territorial rule, justice, wisdom, and magical power. I never expected to meet him.

We explained to the warden our desire to fish on the Konzi River, and we obtained his permission to do so. After a cordial visit, we descended into the rain forest by the banks of the Konzi. While Makakala and Lukwama scooped the mud along the banks for worms, I waited by a small creek emptying into the river and took in the variety of sounds and sights in this lush forest environment. In the treetops I could see a monkey climbing about, while various species of parrots circled overhead.

About a half-hour later, Makakala and Lukwama returned. We were just beginning to fish along the river when we heard a chorus of angry and excited voices. Carrying machetes and a couple of homemade shotguns, about six men quickly surrounded us and angrily accused us of poaching and trespassing. These men were so angry and animated that Makakala and Lukwama were very quiet and compliant, and I was very nervous. Makakala handed over his shotgun, and they escorted us out of the forest back to the main trail. From there, the angry accusations and discussions continued along the trail all the way back to the river, across the Konzi River by *pirogue*, and to a sheltered hut beside the river where we sat down with our accusers. Joining us were the chief of the small village the men were from and the game warden, who had been quickly summoned by a local boy at Makakala's request.

Our accusers had decided that as a *mundele* I was basically outside the dispute, so I should head on back to Kikongo and leave Makakala and Lukwama to negotiate what fines the village would ultimately impose for poaching and trespassing. Since they were holding Makala's gun





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hostage, they had a certain degree of bargaining power. That we had the warden's permission didn't matter, since they viewed themselves as having equal jurisdiction in guarding the fishing and hunting privileges of the territory. The men, including Makakala and Lukwama, sat in a tight circle in the shelter, discussing and disputing, while I sat on a log outside, trying very hard to understand what was happening.

Over the course of the next hour and a half, several dynamics gradually became apparent to me. The local chief felt ties to the hospital mission at Kikongo and wanted to forget the whole dispute, give Makakala back his gun, and send us on our way. Of course, that was also the perspective of the game warden. Several of the younger village men, however, were clearly adopting a much harsher and confrontational perspective. One of the young men seemed especially bitter and resentful towards the mission, and he wanted to make life as difficult as possible for us. The two others were driven more by whether they could intimidate us enough to extract a financial payment, as well as making this one more incident aimed at undermining the local chief's authority. We were caught in the middle of a local political battle.

My fishing expedition had turned into a cultural nightmare, and it was very tempting to take up the suggestion of our tormentors and trudge on back to Kikongo alone, leaving Makakala and Lukwama to work out this difficulty. Though tempting, this option didn't sit right with me. Makakala and Lukwama had made this trip for my benefit—to abandon them would seem weak on my part. Secondly, since our tormentors were trying to exclude me, it might be to our advantage for me to stay, if only because they were suggesting it. They probably thought that without me present, Makakala and Lukwama would be far more vulnerable, and that I would end up indirectly paying for whatever fines they managed to extort. Furthermore, with the *mundele* influence absent, our accusers' account of the events would likely prevail over that of Makakala and Lukwama when the incident eventually reached the ears of Fakamba.

I decided to take a more offensive approach. I joined the inner circle and told the group we should present our cases to land chief Fakamba directly. The fear I noted in the eyes of several of our accusers encouraged me, and I pursued my newfound strategy with the tenacity of a pit bull. I became all the more insistent that we set off at once to do so.

Realizing they would be unable to stop this turn of events, our adversaries quickly dispatched the highest-



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ranking village member of their conspiracy. The warden told Makakala and Lukwama to stay with me; he would go present our case to Fakamba. I realized later he needed to get to Fakamba as quickly as possible, so that our accusers would not get the jump on us in presenting their version of the events: the warden probably feared I couldn't keep up on the brisk 10-kilometer walk to the land chief's village. The warden and accuser set off on their walk-race while Makakala, Lukwama and I retreated to the warden's home to await the outcome.

While we were waiting, one of the warden's older sons offered to take us to a spot close by on the river, where we could still do some fishing that evening. We set off with him and went a couple of kilometers upriver, away from the local village. While Makakala and Lukwama staked out their stringed array of baited hooks in the still shallows of the river, I tried spin casting with various bass-fishing jiggers I'm sure had never been viewed before by these Zairian fish.

A glum spirit hung over the whole endeavor, however. In the evening we gathered around a small campfire on a hill overlooking the river and talked about what to do next. Makakala and Lukwama hadn't caught anything, and I had missed one tiger fish strike and lost three lures. Although our original intent had been to fish into the night and sleep by the river, Lukwama and Makakala didn't feel that it would be safe to do so. If they didn't feel safe, I knew enough to know that I shouldn't feel safe either. So we started back for the warden's home at nightfall. I had brought a flashlight, but it was still tough going as we trudged our way in the dark through wooded trails and along the shallows of creeks in dense brush.

We finally made it back to the warden's home and, after settling in next to the cooking fire with a bit of *luku* to eat and a warm cup of tea, we all felt considerably better. Soon I was dozing off beside the fire, while my partners talked quietly with the warden's family about the events of the day and the local political dynamics. They escorted me to a small attachment to the family thatched hut and invited me to sleep there while Makakala and Lukwama slept by the fire. Although the wicker and wooden frame cot I slept on was too short for me to stretch out my feet, and I was chilly without any sheets or covers, I fell asleep almost immediately and awoke only briefly when I could hear voices accompanying the warden's return.

Early in the morning we sat huddled near the fire with our breakfast of peanuts, bananas, and some bread I had brought, while the warden recounted the outcome of his trip.





Despite difficulty keeping up the pace because of a bad back, the warden managed to arrive only 15 minutes after our accuser, soon enough to challenge his falsehoods and present our version of the events.

It took some time for both representatives in the dispute to fully present and challenge each other's accounts, but eventually Fakamba decided in our favor. He affirmed the warden's authority in granting us permission. He also noted that, while he had asked some of the men in the village to secure his lands against outside poachers, he did not mean they were to harass people from Kikongo, which had been supportive of him in the past and provided medical services to his family. Fakamba ordered the accuser to return Makakala's gun and apologize, which is a significantly humbling act for a Zairian. Fakamba even sent his chief administrator, a middle-aged Zairian in Western clothing, to accompany the warden and insure this issue would be resolved. Furthermore, Fakamba declared that we were always welcome to fish in his territory and to visit him whenever we wished.

I knew Makakala and Lukwama well enough to be able to tell that they were greatly relieved by this outcome. We had taken a big chance going directly to the seat of the land chief, but justice had prevailed. We had humbled our accusers and re-established the good name of Kikongo by allowing our version of the events to prevail. I was glad I had stayed.

Minutes after the warden had finished recounting these events, our accuser arrived with Makakala's gun, which he promptly returned accompanied by effusive apology. Clearly, he was doing everything he could to ingratiate himself to us and cut his losses. I readily accepted his apology, explaining that this was what Christ would have us do. Although Makakala and Lukwama did not clearly show it, they were mildly chagrined by how quickly I forgave him. They would rather have made him squirm a bit while we had the upper hand, perhaps even assessing him a punitive fine for all the grief he had caused us.

After a few moments of consideration, I asked Lukwama and Makakala what they thought of skipping fishing entirely that day and traveling to Fakamba's village to meet him and thank him for his just intervention. This suggestion surprised them somewhat, and inspired great concern in our accuser, since we could ask for even greater reparation by going to Fakamba. I explained that since I was leaving Zaire, this was probably my last opportunity to meet a great land chief. And, in light of the dramatic turn of events on our fishing trip, it was doubtful that the major purpose of this

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trip was ordained by Providence for fishing. The administrator considered it momentarily, then agreed that it was a reasonable suggestion, and said he would accompany us.

Leaving our packs and gear in the care of the warden, we set off towards the village of Fakamba, consisting of about a hundred people, almost all of whom were immediately family members through one of Fakamba's eight or so wives. After crossing the Konzi River in a dugout, we reached the home of the local chief who had wanted to let the whole incident pass the day before. We stopped and talked to him for a while.

He had already received word of Fakamba's decision, and he now took this opportunity to ask the administrator to speak to Fakamba about expelling one of our accusers from the territory. The ringleader (the individual I sensed was particularly embittered towards us and Kikongo) had moved to the area a couple of years ago and had been a constant source of trouble and challenge to the authority of the local chief. He apparently was an apprentice in *kindoki* as well, and was trying to use this to gain more sway among the local populace. The administrator assured the local chief that he would discuss the matter with Fakamba.

As we approached Fakamba's village, we passed several fish ponds which were the result of a Peace Corps volunteer's efforts in the area six or seven years before. Some of Fakamba's sons were still managing and cultivating the ponds, which further evidenced the traditional, yet progressive nature of his domain.

Arriving at the village, we were ushered into the hut of Fakamba's eldest son, where we were given food and palm wine as a sign of hospitality. Although our arrival had taken Fakamba somewhat by surprise, within an hour he was suitably prepared, and we were ushered into his presence.

Fakamba was seated outdoors in a large and stately wicker chair, beneath a low-hanging canopy surrounded by wives, sons, and village leaders. Despite the heat and humidity, he had a red (the color of chiefs) wool blanket draped over his legs, and he was dressed in an old Western-style suitcoat with a red shirt beneath. He had a knitted hat on his head with four protruding tufts, in the traditional style of chief headress. He also wore the silver medallion of the royal council of Congo chiefs, a rare and high position awarded by the Belgian colonial government in a bygone era. More significantly, however, he had a necklace of leopard teeth draped around his neck, of rare and special significance both in terms of his stature as a territorial chief, but also of his *kindoki* powers. Although obviously in frail



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health, Fakamba exuded a stately and noble presence, the last of the great Bateke chiefs in this region.

I had to squat down beside his chair because of the low-hanging canopy, so that he was seated above me, a fitting posture of respect for a great chief. His sons gathered to translate as we conversed since his voice was too weak for me to clearly understand and he spoke intermittently in Bateke. I thanked him for allowing us to fish in his territory, and then presented him with several of my best bass plug lures as a gift. I had Makakala take a number of pictures of us all together with Fakamba.

Then his administrator made a special request of us. Fakamba was often in great discomfort from arthritis in his knees and other joints, and aspirin was the only pain relief medication they could obtain from the hospital at Kikongo. They would be very appreciative if I could send any special medicines to help him. I promised him that I would. (Weeks later I was able to get some new high-potency arthritic medications, and I sent them to him. I included medical instructions translated into Kituba, along with copies of the pictures we had taken. The package went via embassy courier to the CBZO mission in Kinshasa, where it eventually went by MAF flight to Kikongo. Makakala returned to Fakamba on foot with the medicines and pictures, six weeks after my departure from Zaire.)

That afternoon we returned to the Konzi River, escorted much of the way by several of Fakamba's sons. After gathering our gear at the warden's house and leaving him the canned food, salt, soap, and fishing line I had brought, we started back for Kikongo. Makakala and Lukwama couldn't wait to get back and tell their friends and family about our meeting with Fakamba. This was sure to enhance their stature considerably.

Along the way I had another reminder of just how tough life in the interior of Zaire can be. As we crossed back over the Konzi, we encountered a sixteen-year-old girl along with her grandmother and mother. The grandmother was carrying the body of a tiny newborn wrapped in a rag. We had passed them on the trail the day before as we were walking east. The girl, who was pregnant at that time, was on her way to Kikongo to deliver the baby at the hospital. About a kilometer from Kikongo she went into intense labor. The baby was in a breech position, but somehow the mother and grandmother managed to deliver the baby in the grass beside the trail; they saved the life of the girl while losing the baby.

After the ordeal, they simply wrapped the stillborn in a

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rag and began walking the 20 kilometers back to their village. This sixteen-year-old girl had endured the pain and trauma of a breech delivery and loss of her baby, then just simply gathered herself up and began walking back to her village to bury the child.

The last incident of note involves an unexpected visit about a month ago: the maternal uncle and mother of the little girl with congenital skin disease I wrote about last Christmas. I had heard the girl died in March, but I hadn't received any further contact from the family. They brought another child to Kikongo for treatment (for a stomach disorder), and they stopped by to greet me.

After we offered them cookies and tea, they began to tell me about the last day of their daughter's life. During their December trip, I had given them some money to help purchase food and cover expenses for their trip. Their daughter insisted afterward that this gift from the *mundele* was for her, and she wanted them to buy her a dress with it. They did so, and this dress became her prized possession. She had to give up wearing it, though, as her skin infections worsened and she gradually became sicker and weaker.

The morning of her last day, she awoke feeling better and very hungry, and asked her mother to fix her a special meal. After her mother returned from the forest with some greens and fruit, the daughter ate and then asked her mother to put on her the special dress the *mundele* had bought her. About an hour later the girl died. Her parents simply stopped by to thank me for buying the dress.

Our time here has been worth it. I have learned a lot about these people. And I have learned a lot about myself. I will need to stop by again some time.

Just to say thanks.



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After we offered them cookies and tea, they began to tell me about the last day of their daughter's life. During their December trip, I had given them some money to help purchase food and cover expenses for their trip. Their daughter insisted afterward that this gift from the uncle was for her, and she wanted them to buy her a dress with it. They did so, and this dress became her prized possession. She had to give up wearing it, though, as her skin infections worsened and she gradually became sicker and weaker. The morning of her last day, she awoke feeling better and very hungry, and asked her mother to fix her a special meal. After her mother returned from the forest with some money and fruit, the daughter ate and then asked her mother to put on her the special dress the uncle had bought her. About an hour later the girl died. Her parents simply stopped by to thank me for buying the dress.

Our time here has been worth it. I have learned a lot about these people. And I have learned a lot about myself. I will need to stop by again some time. Just to say thanks.



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*I thanked the chief (shown here with some of his wives and children) for allowing us to fish in his territory, and then presented him with several of my best bass plug lures as a gift.*



## Looking Back

*June, 1995*

It has been five years since our family returned from Zaire, and by now many of the memories and emotions stemming from our experiences there have faded into the background of our lives.

Our two older children, Monique (14) and Daniel (11) have forgotten much of the African dialect, Kituba, in which they so readily became fluent. They rarely speak of the friends they knew there except when we look at the photographs or video that we help them organize for their occasional school presentations.





The two younger children, Marjorie (8) and Matthew (6), retain only very specific memories. For Marjorie, it is memories like riding on the back of our Zairian cook, Tengu, clinging secure and warm to her lower back, tucked beneath an African cloth wrapped around Tengu's waist as she baked bread in our kitchen. For Matthew, the memory of sliding down a grassy knoll on a greased sled of palm bark blends with the imaginary, fusing actual experiences with the fanciful reconstruction of a dim and faded past.

As for Grace and me, we have little time for the luxury of basking in the memories of Zaire. Sports practices, music lessons, church and school activities, teaching and work obligations—all crowd each middle-class American day with the vivid tyranny of the urgent deadline and the immediate schedule obligation. And yet, despite the hurried press that chains us to the here and now, Zaire still manages to find a way to intrude into our consciousness.

Usually the context is a tragic one, reminding us of the suffering the Zairian people endure. Sometimes it takes the form of bold newspaper headlines proclaiming the misery of Rwandan refugees fleeing the massacres and upheavals of their homeland only to endure the squalor, uncertainty, and despair of the refugee camps in the Kivu Province of Zaire.

Sometimes it is in the occasional letter from one of our Zairian teacher friends, sharing with us the difficulty of life in the rural village without regular government salary support, without ready access to basic necessities such as salt, soap, and kerosene. These are letters from our friends asking for us to help, reminding us that their lives continue—and have become appreciably more difficult.

Most often, however, it is in far more subtle and unexpected ways. The drone of a single-engine aircraft overhead on a hot summer day transports me in place and time to the grass airstrip where we anxiously waited to greet the approaching Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) flight with passengers, supplies, and precious mail from the States.

A brief construction detour over the dusty dirt shoulder of the road and suddenly I am back in Zaire in our Isuzu, crammed with passengers and luggage, bouncing along washed-out tracks through villages and countryside, weaving around goats and scurrying children on our way to Kinshasa to pick up supplies. I walk a busy street in an American city and suddenly I am in Kinshasa, pressed by people at the grand market, disputing, bargaining, stealing, and laughing in the churn of humanity.

Strolling in our backyard on a dark, humid summer night with moonlight and the chirping of crickets, I am suddenly

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overpowered by the sound of villagers talking and singing as they cook by their campfires, children playing in the moonlight, fruit bats fluttering from the nearby river forest into our mango trees, and the soft splash of dugout canoe paddles of fishermen returning on the river.

Zaire emerges in my consciousness as I observe my friends and neighbors water their lawns, impervious to a world where clean water is carried on the aching heads and backs of village women climbing up steep river valley trails in the hot sun. Or it emerges in the waiting room of our family doctor as we wait for our children to complete a physical examination, and I see in my mind the Zairian children as their lives ebb away. Or as I hear my friends discuss their investments, vacations, and retirement plans, I remember my teacher friend Kisoki who struggled and scraped to save enough money to buy sheet metal so in his declining years he would have a metal roof rather than a thatch one.

The effects of my time in Zaire, however, are probably most apparent in the quiet and somber moments when I find myself wondering why I am so discontented. Why can't I be happy with a secure and comfortable life teaching and raising a family amidst friends—friends who are good caring people, but have never had the opportunity to see life as we saw it?

Why do I have this incessant longing to escape my predictable, secure and comfortable surroundings and return to the village? Why does Africa continue to call me back to the stark reality of life and death amidst the children of her villages? Why is it that when I visualize the bleeding face of Jesus on his cross of sacrifice, I do not see reflected in his eyes my office, my classes, my title as professor of psychology. Instead, I see the thin, gaunt features of the young men and women of Kinshasa dying of AIDS, the frail features of dehydrated village children with incessant diarrhea from cholera, the broken bodies of young men crumpled in the streets of Kinshasa by Mobutu's security forces attacking a political opposition rally.

For those of us who call themselves by the name of Christ, those who have confronted a world of profound physical need, it is difficult to retreat to a place of security and comfort—even for the sake of our families—when those cries continue ringing in our ears.

For no other reason than for those longings alone, I know I have been deeply affected. As a family we have been changed, and the course of our lives has been altered in profound ways we have yet to comprehend.



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## Appendix A

# Zaire: An Overview

Compiled by Monique Boivin, age 13

### The Land

- Zaire's 2,345,409 square kilometers make it the size of the U.S. east of the Mississippi River.
- Tropical rain forests flourish around the equator in northern Zaire. Sunlight can rarely penetrate the thick foliage to touch the forests' floor. Hot and humid at 90 degrees Fahrenheit, the rain forest sees 80 inches of rainfall annually, mostly in heavy thunderstorms.
- Savannas cover most of southern Zaire and a strip north of the rain forests. Small groups of trees dot the grassy land and forests fill the valleys and follow the rivers. With an average temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit, the savannas receive around 48 inches of rainfall each year.
- Highlands run along the eastern and southern borders of Zaire. Part of the highlands in the Kivu Province are the Ruwenzori Mountains, home of Margherita Peak (16,762 ft.). Sometimes called the "Alps of Africa" for their beauty, these mountains are unique in the country for their snow. The temperature in the highlands is 70 degrees and the annual rainfall is 37 inches.
- Zaire's main river is the Zaire River. Its 2,900 flow mileage makes it the fifth longest river in the world, and the amount of water it carries puts it second behind the Amazon River.
- The okapi, a forest-dwelling animal related to the giraffe, but which looks more like a zebra, is the national symbol of the country and is only found there.
- Several wildlife parks have been created to preserve the wildlife. Ishango, one of the more famous parks, provides a home for antelope, hippos, elephants, hyenas, lions, leopards, buffalo, and warthogs. Guards have been hired to protect these animals against poachers, but will kill the animals themselves to feed their families.

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## The People



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- The estimated population in Zaire in 1991 was 37,145,000, with a density of 41 people per square mile. This figure is misleading, however, since 60 percent of the population is rural and 40 percent is urban. Few people live in the rain forests while people crowd in cities such as the capital of Kinshasa, which has a population of 2,250,000. With the slums, unofficial estimates reach up to 5,000,000.

- About three-fourths of all Zairians claim to be Christians. This Christian umbrella includes Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Kimbanguists, members of an independent church called The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth. The rest of the people are either Muslims or practice local African religions.

- By law, 6- to 12-year-old children must go to school, but this is not enforced. If the parents need the children to work in the home or don't have the money to pay the teacher for that day, the children stay home.

- Over 400 local languages are spoken in Zaire. Because Zaire used to be a Belgian colony, French is the official language. The educated speak French, but Lingala, the president's native tongue, is more popular, especially with the youth and the army.

There are also regional languages called trade languages, each a simplified combination of tribal languages in the area. Most people know at least one trade language.

- Zairians enjoy social gatherings with drums, music, dancing, and food. Soccer is the most popular sport. Men like to play checkers. Zaire is famous for its uniquely carved wooden statues and masks. Artists also produce many beautiful paintings. Modern jazz and traditional music are a main part of the Zairian culture.

- Most houses have walls made of mud and sticks, with a thatched roof and a dirt floor. Wealthier Zairians have houses with a concrete floor and walls and a tin roof.

- Men with important jobs wear plain-colored trousers with matching jackets that button at the neck. Male workers and farmers wear trousers, and a shirt if they can find one. Women wear a long cloth for a skirt, and a blouse. If a woman is married, she wears a second cloth around her waist. If she has young children, she wraps the second or a third cloth around her to secure the child to her back.





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- Zairians eat many different kinds of fruits and vegetables, including corn and rice. The main food is manioc, a thick sticky paste usually dipped into a sauce. Meat is scarce. Food is used to show goodwill and measure sincerity between people. Hosts expect their visitors to accept a meal when they offer one. Even if the visitor cannot eat, he or she at least takes a few bites to show his appreciation.

### History

- Many kingdoms flourished in Zaire until many of its inhabitants were carried off to the American colonies as slaves between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Without its most gifted people, the country, then called the Kongo, began to fall apart.

In 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium took over the Kongo and renamed it the Congo Free State. In 1908 it was renamed the Belgian Congo by the Belgian government. In 1960, the Belgian Congo gained its independence from Belgium.

### Government

- The national government consists of the president, twenty executive departments, and the national legislative council.
- Eight governmental regions make up Zaire, plus Kinshasa, the capital. Each region is divided into 30 sub-regions, and each sub-region is cut into 150 zones. Each zone is then divided into hundreds of collectives with a tribal chief ruling each collective. An administrator rules all other local government units.
- Zaire has a supreme court, as well as three appeals courts and many lower courts. The president appoints all members of the court.
- The current president, Joseph Mobutu, has taken almost complete control over the government. To keep this control, he pressures the Zairians to vote for him. In the 1975 elections, the people voted with red and green ballots. A green ballot said the voter wanted Mobutu to continue as president while the red ballot said the voter did not want him to remain president. Mobutu stationed monitors at the ballot stations to ensure voters handed in green ballots, putting voters in great danger if they did not. In many places red ballots were not even distributed.
- Although the law says a president can serve up to two five-year terms by election of the people, President Mobutu has been president of Zaire since 1965. A military unit of soldiers Mobutu uses for his personal protection also helps

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keep him in the presidential seat. Mainly from his home tribe, they are the best armed, best trained, and most loyal of all the military units in Zaire. Mobutu runs the other military units as well. All units total approximately 50,000 members.

## Economy

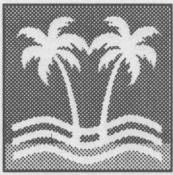
- Zaire's wealth lies in its mineral deposits and other natural resources, though it remains largely untapped. Most commonly mined is copper and diamonds. These two minerals, as well as cobalt, malachite, and oil, make up the majority of Zaire's chief exports. Silver, tin, gold, manganese, and zinc are also mined.
- Manufactured products include cement, processed foods, beer, soft drinks, steel, textiles, and tires. Most manufactured products are produced in very small amounts.
- Zaire grows cash crops and subsistence crops. Cash crops raised are cocoa, coffee, cotton, tea and tobacco, while bananas, cassava (manioc), corn, peanuts, and rice are grown as subsistence crops. Trees produce timber, palm wine, rubber, and palm oil, which is a chief export.
- The country has to import food, oil, textiles, and manufactured goods. Zaire does most of its trading with Belgium.
- A transportation system that has been deteriorating since Zaire's independence has hindered the country's economy. Unpaved roads with deep ruts make the road system one of the worst in the world.
- The Zairians travel the river in *pirogues*, hollowed-out hardwood trees that resemble canoes. One boat dominates the Zaire River. It pushes six barges on which over 5,000 people ride. More a town than a boat, it houses the only market, pharmacy, and clinic for hundreds of miles. It also drags about 150 visiting *pirogues* attached with vines.
- Railroads cross the southeastern part of Zaire connecting mining areas with river ports. Small planes are also used to travel from place to place throughout the country.
- Inflation is a constant crisis in Zaire. In 1971, one zaire (Z), the main form of currency, equaled two U.S. dollars. By the fall of 1990, 680 zaires were needed to equal one American dollar. A year later the zaire had fallen to 12,000 to one dollar, and in 1993 it plummeted to 2,500,000 against the dollar.



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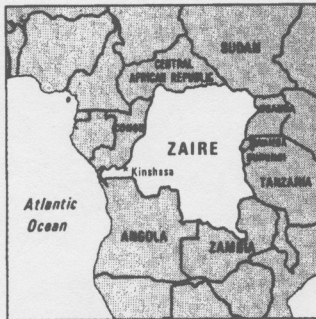


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## Appendix B

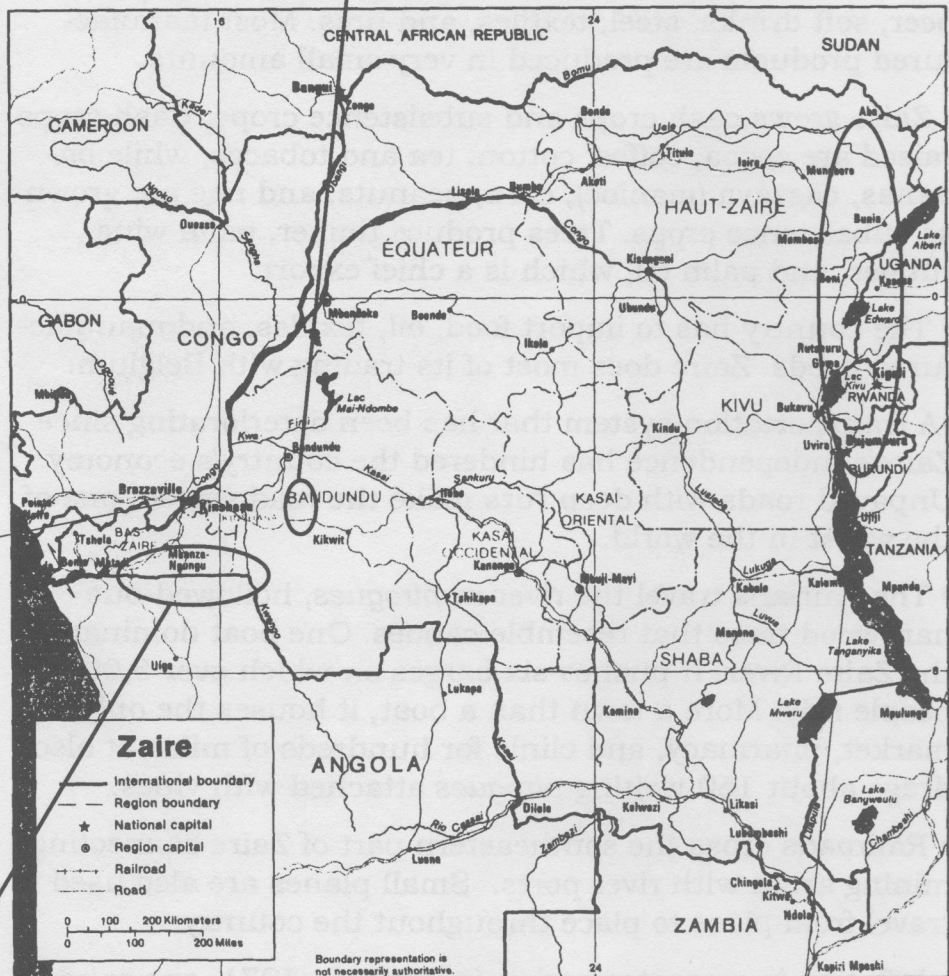
# Map of Zaire

*The CBZO mission station at Kikongo where we stayed and worked was in this area. Also the Catholic mission station where we collaborated with Sister Agnes Marie Gallagher.*



Official Name:  
Republic of Zaire

*Kinshasa, the capital city where I traveled frequently for supplies.*



*The region where Dr. Green and I did the study of HIV-positive children.*

*Area where we traveled into the mountains, rain forests, and game reserves. Riots broke out here among Zairian sects in Katwa.*

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## Appendix C

# Results of Research



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## Appendix D

# Glossary

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>AERWA</b>      | American Employees Recreational and Welfare Association. Organization which provides merchandise and recreational services for American embassy personnel and contract employees. |
| <b>AIDS</b>       | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.  |
| <b>AIM</b>        | Africa Inland Mission   |
| <b>AZT</b>        | Azidothymidine, an anti-retroviral drug used to delay the progress or onset of AIDS in HIV-infected persons.  |
| <b>BAC</b>        | (Zaire) British-American Tobacco Company  |
| <b>Bambuta</b>    | Village elders  |
| <b>BBC</b>        | British Broadcasting Company  |
| <b>Catechists</b> | Christian lay leaders from the surrounding villages   |
| <b>CAT scan</b>   | Computerized axial-tomography brain imaging   |
| <b>CBZO</b>       | French acronym for the Western Zaire Baptist Community ( <i>Communauté Baptiste du Zaire Ouest</i> )  |
| <b>CDC</b>        | Centers for Disease Control based in Atlanta, Georgia and involved worldwide in the effort to combat infectious diseases  |
| <b>CERUKI</b>     | French acronym for University research center for the Kivue province, Zaire ( <i>Centre de Recherches Universitaires du Kivu</i> )  |



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|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Chef de collectivité</b> | Government official   |
| <b>Chef de groupement</b>   | Regional tribal land chief  |
| <b>Chikwanga</b>            | Pressed manioc dough steam cooked to allow it to keep longer without spoiling   |
| <b>Coramine</b>             | (drug) Circulatory stimulant  |
| <b>Dyckert</b>              | Antelope species that is very small   |
| <b>ECZ</b>                  | French acronym for the Protestant church of Zaire ( <i>Eglise du Christ au Zaire</i> )  |
| <b>EEC</b>                  | European Economic Community   |
| <b>ELISA</b>                | Recombinant DNA enzyme-linked immunoassay test for HIV infection  |
| <b>EPI</b>                  | French acronym for pastors school and training institute sponsored by CBZO and located in Kikongo, Bandundu Province, Zaire ( <i>Ecole de Pasteurs Instituteurs</i> ) |
| <b>Fêtes</b>                | French word for celebration, party  |
| <b>Gendarmes</b>            | French word for police, which is a military police unit in Zaire  |
| <b>Grand Marché</b>         | The Grand or Central Market in Kinshasa   |
| <b>Greffier</b>             | Local government official   |
| <b>HIV</b>                  | Human immunno-deficiency virus  |
| <b>IME</b>                  | French acronym for the Evangelical Medical Institute (Hospital center) in Kimpese, lower Zaire ( <i>Institut Médical Evangélique</i> )                                |
| <b>IPN</b>                  | French acronym for National Teachers College in Kinshasa ( <i>Institut Pédagogique National</i> )   |

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| <b>ISDR</b>           | <i>Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural</i>  |
| <b>ISP</b>            | French acronym for Teachers College in Bukavu, Kivu Province, Zaire ( <i>Institut Supérieur Pédagogique</i> )   |
| <b>K-ABC</b>          | (Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children) Cognitive Assessment battery for children   |
| <b>Kadafis</b>        | Military wives or middlemen selling stolen fuel   |
| <b>Kimbanda nzila</b> | Poisonous viper common in Zaire whose name literally means "it wanders the paths"   |
| <b>Kindoki</b>        | Witchdoctor magic   |
| <b>Konzo</b>          | An irreversible partial paralysis brought about by subsisting off of cassava that has not been properly prepared so as to detoxify the cyanide residue in the plant |
| <b>Kituba</b>         | African trade language common to the western region of Zaire  |
| <b>Luku</b>           | Manioc dough  |
| <b>MAF</b>            | Missionary Aviation Fellowship  |
| <b>Mamba</b>          | A large aggressive poisonous snake found throughout Zaire   |
| <b>Matondo</b>        | Thanksgiving offering in a church service where Zairians offer to the church food, livestock, and household goods as well as money in thanksgiving to God           |
| <b>Mazut</b> (mazoot) | Diesel fuel   |
| <b>Mbote</b>          | Zairian greeting or "Hello"   |

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| <b>Mundele</b>       | Zairian term for a white person   |
| <b>Mwana na ngai</b> | referring to a son or daughter,<br>literally "child of mine"  |
| <b>Nganga</b>        | Sorcerer or witchdoctor   |
| <b>Nkebolo</b>       | Kikongo word for "care" or succor   |
| <b>Nlele</b>         | Woman's colorful African-style<br>wrap-around cloth commonly used<br>as a skirt   |
| <b>Nseke</b>         | Savanna grasslands  |
| <b>NSF</b>           | National Science Foundation   |
| <b>Oyé, oyé</b>      | a common Zairian cheer, "Yeah!"   |
| <b>PET scan</b>      | Positron Emission Tomography<br>(Brain scanning system)   |
| <b>Pirogue</b>       | Small dugout canoes   |
| <b>Saka Saka</b>     | Sauce made from the leaves of<br>Manioc bushes  |
| <b>SIDA</b>          | French acronym for AIDS ( <i>Syndrome<br/>Immuno-Déficience Acquise</i> )   |
| <b>Steles</b>        | Festive dance   |
| <b>SYSTAT</b>        | Statistical analysis program for DOS<br>computer systems  |
| <b>TPT</b>           | Tactile Performance Test<br>(Neuropsychological test)   |
| <b>Tshimpoyi</b>     | Elevated seat suspended between<br>two poles carried on the shoulders<br>of villagers and used to transport<br>dignitaries. |
| <b>Tskwanga</b>      | Dense luku paste  |
| <b>UNESCO</b>        | United Nations organization for the<br>care and well-being of children  |

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| <b>USAID</b>     | United States Agency for International Development  |
| <b>USIA</b>      | United States Information Agency. Public relations, information, and cultural exchange office of the United States Government |
| <b>USIS</b>      | Foreign office or embassy branch of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA)  |
| <b>Vermifuge</b> | Medical treatment for intestinal parasites, for example, the medicine Decaris   |
| <b>WHO</b>       | World Health Organization   |
| <b>Z (zaire)</b> | Basic monetary unit or currency of Zaire  |





# The Accidental Anthropologist

**ac•ci•den•tal**—adj. 1. Occurring unexpectedly and unintentionally.

**an•thro•pol•o•gist**—n. 1. One who studies the physical, social, and cultural development and behavior of man.

When Michael Boivin went to Zaire to study the cognitive development of village children, he found that “the doctor and the professor soon became the patient and the learner.” He worked with HIV-positive children along the overpopulated southern border and met one of the last great Bateke territorial chiefs. He tried to video a silverback gorilla while stamping out a column of

stinging driver ants and was shaken down by corrupt military police. He encountered witchcraft and wisdom, duplicity and integrity, sorrow and joy. In a series of humorous and honest letters to his friends, collected here as *The Accidental Anthropologist*, he shares what he learned about their culture—and his own. Here are some excerpts:

“That evening most of the families of Kikongo had boiled caterpillars to eat with their *luku*, providing a rare opportunity to enjoy a nutritional protein at little or no cost. One of the women brought us a bowl so that we wouldn’t be left out.”



“Zairians will beg, bargain, or threaten you for the moon, fully expecting to get only a little piece of the earth from you here and now. We are usually ill-equipped to read these social interactions with any acuity.”



“For a child with AIDS in Africa, it seems sooner or later the miracles always run out. But Mbala taught me that academic accolades and professional publications are insignificant in the face of one little African child and his day-to-day miracle.”



“Everything here that we would consider garbage back home is saved for some kind of use. I’ve never felt as ecologically wholesome as I do now.”

*Dr. Michael Boivin is professor of psychology at Spring Arbor College in Spring Arbor, Michigan. He has a Ph.D. from Western Michigan University for work in the experimental analysis of behavior and, more recently, a master’s degree in public health from the University of Michigan. An adjunct research investigator in neuropsychology at the University of*

*Michigan, he has also taught in the pediatric residency program at the University of Health Science in Vientiane, Laos (1995). He enjoys fly fishing in the Quebec wilderness, in addition to coaching and participating in wrestling, hockey, and soccer. He and his wife Grace live in Jackson, Michigan with their four children.*