

MY ZAIRE ZAGA - THE COMPLETE TEXT

SATURDAY FEB. 17, 1996
DAY ONE

I had an uneventful drive to Minneapolis and flight to Chicago on United Airlines. In similar manner the flight from Chicago to London on British Airways was also routine. British Airways (BA) fed us perhaps the best Airlines meal I have ever tasted. It was a beef dish with all the trimmings. They also showed us three feature length movies and the time of flying was about 9 1/2 hours. I got very little sleep. Seeing how I left Chicago at about 10:30 pm and London is 6 hours ahead in time we got into London on Sunday afternoon.

SUNDAY FEB. 18
DAY TWO

As I was trying to find the Posthouse Hotel shuttle, I found this young man with a Pakistan background who was driving a Van with a "Posthouse Hotel" sign painted on the side of the Van. He told me he wasn't supposed to pick me up because I was first supposed to take a bus to terminal No. 3 and he would pick me up there. I didn't understand the logic and I looked quite forlorn so he said he would take me to the hotel anyway. His name was Jerry and we became friends.

I met up with Martin, Joe and Gary Hultman at the Posthouse Hotel in suburban London just next to Heathrow International Airport, terminal Number 4. The weather was great, about 60 degrees above. We had dinner at the hotel restaurant and it was very good. I discovered that the British eat pork and beans at about every meal. We went to bed at about 10:00pm.

MONDAY FEB. 19
DAY THREE

Martin and I shared a room (I got about 4 hr. of sleep) and we got up and met Joe and Gary at the hotel restaurant at 9:00 am for breakfast. After breakfast we went to our room and had a sharing time and read some scripture and prayed. After prayer Martin suggested we sing a chorus and he promptly began singing something that the rest of us had never heard. He proceeded to sing all by himself and we therefore dubbed him our choir leader for the remainder of the tour.

As we looked outside we saw that the weather had turned very bad. It was snowing and sleeting on and off and became very cold. We were told this was quite unusual for London this time of year. At checkout time of 2:00 pm, we took the shuttle once again back to Heathrow to continue our flight on to Nairobi, Kenya. The shuttle driver was Jerry once again and we are now lifetime buddies, anyway he thinks so.

As we neared the Airport the weather was turning really bad. It had now snowed and sleeted about 3 inches. Now this was absolutely unheard of this time of year in London. The airport maintenance crews were not prepared for anything like this. We found out that they had only one de-icer for all the planes at terminal No. 4 and only one snow plow to clean the runways.

We went through customs and at 10:30 pm we boarded our BA 747 Jetliner and proceeded to sit there in the plane for about 3 1/2 hours during which time they fed us our dinner and showed us two feature length movies. At 2:00 am we were informed that the flight had been cancelled and rescheduled for the next day at 6:00 pm. So they herded us off the plane, we picked up our luggage and went through customs and immigration once again. We were then dumped in the departure terminal. It was now after 2:30 am and the BA personnel proceeded to bid us a fond "good evening" and they all disappeared. Of course, we had no way of getting out of that terminal because we had no visa's to get anywhere in England at that time and or way to get to a hotel. So we slept (?) on the concrete floor of the terminal. Those gracious BA people did provide us with an airplane blanket and pillow. During the night a message kept coming over the terminal loudspeaker telling us to call a certain number to reschedule our flight the next day (it was already the next day !!). Joe called the number and the BA office in New York City answered and wondered why we were calling them.

TUESDAY FEB. 20
DAY FOUR

At about 9:00 am we are informed by the loudspeaker that our flight had been rescheduled for 7:00 pm so we "cooled" our heels for the day. Those gracious BA folks did give us 8 pounds sterling worth of money vouchers so we could eat during the day. I decided to call Ardis and tell her of our delay and found that she had been in the hospital with a broken arm and it apparently was a nasty break. We begin to wonder if this trip was God's idea after all. During the afternoon the fire alarm went off and we are all asked to move to the far end of the terminal. While we were in London, the Irish IRA decided to blow things up again and we began to wonder if the airport was next.

Promptly at 6:00 pm we boarded the plane once again after going through customs and immigration and the plane took off at 7:00 pm as scheduled. They fed us and started to show us a movie. About 2 1/2 hours and 1,100 miles south of London, the pilot came on the intercom and told us that we were flying at 29,000 ft. and we should be at 37,000 feet but couldn't get that high because we had lost an engine and would be turning around and going back to London once again. A nasty confrontation began to loom between some of the passengers and crew because we all had visions of having to sleep on the concrete floor of Heathrow International Airport terminal Number 4 once again. That prospect did not delight any of us.

Deciding to head off trouble, the pilot began talking to the management of BA and they decided to put us up in hotels for the remainder of the night. We got into the terminal at about 11:30 pm and dutifully went through customs once again, picked up our luggage and waited in the luggage area until a bus came for us to transport us to our hotel. It was now after midnight when we got to the Airport Radisson. We no sooner got into the hotel when the manager announced that there was "No room in the Inn". They had not planned for an extra 100 guests for the night. Not to worry says the manager, the BA people would send another bus for us and take us to another "nearby" hotel.

WEDNESDAY FEB. 21
DAY FIVE

The bus arrives at 2:30 am and we drove for almost 1 1/2 hours to this "nearby" hotel. This place was a nice resort hotel about 60 miles south of Heathrow near the Gatwick airport. We got to bed at 4:00 am and collapsed.

Promptly at 9:00 am, our in room phone rings and informs us that breakfast would be served in 15 minutes and that at 10:30 am our bus would arrive to return us to the airport. They also informed us that our plane would be departing at 1:30 pm. We got to the airport as scheduled and boarded the plane after going through customs and immigration once again. The BA staff gave each of us a form letter from the customer service manager telling us how sorry they were for treating us so shabby. It had a form on the bottom to fill out so they could communicate with us. We took off without a hitch this time and while enroute to Nairobi the pilot came on the intercom and told us that BA would be reimbursing all of us the price of our tickets (I assumed that meant the London to Nairobi portion).

THURSDAY FEB. 22
DAY SIX

We arrived in Nairobi International Airport at 2:00 am which is 9 hours ahead of Minneapolis time. We got through customs and immigration with apparent ease and picked up our luggage. Dave Eernisse of SIL, from Wisconsin, met us and shuttled us to the SIL compound and we got into bed at 4:00 am. We got about 3 hours of sleep. In the morning, we were taken around to various SIL entities and introduced. We also went to the Zaire embassy to get our visa's so we could enter that country.

At noon we had lunch with Don and Jackie Beuler. Don is the EZG (Eastern Zaire Group) financial person. Jackie had made some homemade pizza so we had pizza and coke for lunch. That evening we met with most of the Nairobi based EZG contingent for sharing and prayer at the home of Paul Koenig who is the EZG electronics guy. We got to bed at 10:00 pm at the SIL guest house.

FRIDAY FEB. 23
DAY SEVEN

Our plan was to leave Wilson airport in Nairobi by AIM Air (African Inland Missions) at 7:30 am. However, the pilot had brought three Sudanese refugees with him and the country of Kenya would not accept them. They were two catholic nuns and an older man. The Kenya government holds airplane pilots responsible for all their passengers so we had to take these refugees with us. The AIM pilot flew first to Entebbe, Uganda and dropped the refugees there. He negotiated with the local Entebbe officials to accept them. Uganda is a beautiful country and Entebbe is situated on the shores of lake Victoria. Uganda is slowly recovering from the devastation caused by the dictator Ede Amin. We then proceeded on the Bunia, Zaire which would be our first stop.

We would spend two days there and meet the EZG leadership because Bunia is the headquarters for the EZG branch. We stayed in the AIM guesthouse while in Bunia. When we first arrived in Bunia, the local government custom officials went through our luggage and equipment with a fine tooth comb. As an official went through my small satchel, he asked what was in a sizeable plastic bag. I told him that my dirty underwear was inside and would he like to look at them? He closed that bag so fast he almost broke his arm doing it.

Zaire is a beautiful country. It was colonized about 150 years ago by Belgium. They built a prosperous country and then left about 35 years ago when Zaire (then known as the Belgium Congo) demanded their independence. Everything has fallen apart since then. There is no central telephone system, practically no electricity and the roads are atrocious. The only way a person can travel any distance is by Airplane and that is expensive.

We had a prayer meeting with the SIL leadership and some translation teams that were in Bunia for some much needed rest. The next day we travelled around the city to meet with various government officials. We were escorted by Mike McCord, the EZG branch director.

SATURDAY FEB. 24
DAY EIGHT

We took off out of Bunia on an MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) airplane and flew about 150 miles northwest to another city called Isiro. We will meet and stay with the translation team of Ken and Sue Sawka working among the Mayogo people. Ken met us at the airstrip and took us around to visit all the government officials. The main guy for the state lives here and he is the "Commissar". He welcomed us warmly, but admonished us not to take pictures of any military installations, prisons, airports or government buildings.

Visiting the Sawka's was very interesting. Ken built his own house and it was partially thatched roof and partially conventional roofed. There is no running water or electricity in this area either so Ken has fixed up his own water system and electrical unit. He is very clever! They live in the primitive village occupied by a tribe of Mayogo people. Sue shared her supply of dried, roasted and salted termites. They taste a little like almond chips if you can get by the beady little eyes.

This part of Africa was evangelized years ago by WEC (World Evangelism Conference) which was initially founded by C.T. Studd of England over 100 years ago. He is buried nearby and there are still some WEC churches in the vicinity. There are now three main Christian groups here, Protestant Evangelical, Assembly of God and Catholic.

SUNDAY FEB. 25
DAY NINE

Ken and Sue informed us that this morning a local church was having an ordination ceremony for 4 native pastors, one of whom has worked for quite some time with our SIL teams in the area of literacy. WOW! Was that a church service! They had singing, dancing, preaching and praying. Now these folks know how to have church. The service started at about 8:00 am and lasted until well into the late afternoon. We didn't get there until 9:00 am and although the place was filled to capacity, they had saved some seats for us up front so we could do some video taping and because we were honored guests.

About 1:00 pm all of us "dignitaries" were herded off to a nearby building for a noon feast even though the church service continued on. We had three different meat dishes; fried chicken (I think they first boiled it in palm oil and then fried it), boiled goat and boiled lamb. We also had gravy, foo foo (a combination of ground millet and sago), roasted bananas, a lettuce, tomato and cucumber salad, boiled white rice, coffee and sweetened tea. The gravy was made from chicken broth with peanut butter added for a thickener. It was quite good if you could get by the very peanutty taste.

As we left the "food court", we met up with a young native pastor that Ken knew and we interviewed him on video. Joe asked him what the translation of the scriptures meant to him and his people. He said when he reads the scriptures in Lingala, the local trade language, it is like those words are for someone else. But, when he reads it in Mayogo, his mother tongue, God's word "cuts my heart". He followed by saying that it is this way for all his people.

We then went to another area of the church compound to record a church choir. We intend to use the hymn "Tell me the Story of Jesus" as our theme song in the Metro program video. This church choir sang that hymn for us in their mother tongue. Powerful!

In this village of Mayogo, the ancient tradition of the "drummer" continues. Each evening a villager schooled in this art gets on his drum and begins to tell every one in hearing distance the latest news. They also use the drums to send emergency messages. Sue Sawka told me that the guy who drummed the first night we were there didn't know how to spell very well, in other words he must have been a beginner. The next few nights the drummer was really good. We have some of this on video footage as well.

Sue is about 3 months pregnant and is suffering from T.B. which she contacted here in the village. T.B., malaria, meningitis and hepatitis are endemic in the area. She also said they would be taking a 16 month furlough beginning this coming May first. She said she would be happy to get back to the states because her little 3 years old girl, Sarah, was not learning English very well. Sarah was quite fluent in Lingala and Mayogo, but didn't have any friends she played with who spoke English. Sarah also was conversant in French.

About 7:00 pm all of the missionaries and their children in the area gathered at the Sawka home for a time of sharing, singing and prayer. About 12 adults came along with an equal number of children. In addition to the SIL contingent in the area, there are also some WEC missionaries and Assembly of God people as well. Two weeks before we came here, the Assemblies of God church celebrated their 75th years of ministry in Zaire. Many of their missionaries who worked here in the past years came back for the celebration. One of these couples, Rev. Melvin and Mrs. Eleanor Torgenson, were still here and came to the sharing time at the Sawkas. I found out that in their retirement they live about 10 blocks from our daughter Cathy in the south suburbs of Minneapolis and Pastor Torgenson has preached in the little Assemblies of God church in Ellendale, Minnesota where our other daughter, Beth and her family attend. Small world!

MONDAY FEB. 26
DAY 10

Our schedule today called for us to fly about 100 miles north and east to the small village of Todro where we will spend the next four days with the translation team of Doug and Beth Wright. These folks are living with the Logo people and working on the Logoti language project. It is here that we will do the bulk of the video taping work. This is the hot, dry season here in central Africa along the equator and the daily daytime temperatures range from about 95 degrees to 105 degrees and will rain only periodically. The temperatures sometimes will drop into the 70's at night.

We left Isiro about 12:00 noon and made a stop at a large game park to let off 4 missionary ladies (one was a literacy worker with SIL) that planned to spend the next 10 days camping and fishing at the park. As we flew into the park we saw a small herd of elephants, a large herd of gazelle, some water buffalo and a few hippo's in the river. There were also lions and wildebeest in the area but we didn't spot any. This part of Africa is just out of the rain forest in and area the locals call the "Savannah". It is quite hilly, lots of tall grass, and much outcropping of rocks. It was very spectacular flying over this area and I got a first hand description from the copilots seat by the MAF pilot.

When we landed at Todro, the airstrip was lined with about 100 men, women and children. As we disembarked we shook hands with at least half of them. They had a singing group there that consisted of about 12 ladies all decked out in their colorful native dress, each carrying a bouquet of fresh flowers. They would weave back and forth with their flowers as they sang and they were GOOD! Doug Wright later told us they had written the spiritual songs they had sung and did it especially because we were there to help them and Doug and Beth. The local church leaders and pastors then officially greeted us and prayed for our protection while we were there. They obviously knew we were a bunch wimps when it came to living in the bush.

That evening the local church people had prepared a "banquet" for us in a large building they use as a community center. We ate about 6:30 pm and because it gets dark at 6:00 pm at the equator, we ate by kerosine lantern, one lantern for the whole big building. The menu consisted of boiled goat, fried chicken, boiled rice, roasted bananas, boiled yams, foo foo and termites. These termites weren't salted so they didn't taste as good as the ones Sue Sawka gave us. All the while we ate, a church Choir serenaded us and they sang like professionals. Again, they wrote all these spiritual songs just for this occasion. The words to the songs glorified God and thanked Him for bringing us there safely. The food had been donated by the church people and Doug said very likely most of the families donating the food will go without anything to eat today just to feed us. They would be very offended if we didn't eat heartily. The meal lasted about 1 1/2 hours and concluded with prayer by then "oldest" pastor.

We will be staying with the Wrights in their home on cots under mesquite netting. The toilet is outside about 100 feet from the house. They do have a bath tub without running water. The procedure is to stand in the tub, lather up and then pour warm water from a bucket over the head and rinse off, which we did and it worked ok. I don't intend to change my habits at home however, I still like my shower better.

The toilet outside is an interesting attraction. It is a little brick building with a cement floor and thatched roof. The cement floor has an oblong slit in the middle where business is transacted. There is a heavy wooden block covering the slit when the building is empty. No doubt the block is there to keep unwanted smells from emanating throughout the building. Beth Wright said it also keeps the snake population in the pit under the floor to a minimum.

On the walls inside this little building are some small lizards. Beth said they like to have those little critters inhabit the building because they feast on the insect population that seem to be attracted to such establishments. Along the path to the building on the outside are poles on each side of the path about 15 feet from the building. The top of those poles have been notched to accommodate a horizontal bamboo pole. When the biffy is in use, one merely places the horizontal pole in place across the two vertical poles to alert any other potential users that the place is occupied.

One day I overheard a couple of my travelling companions discuss the proper direction to squat over the slit in the floor. One opinion was that it is would only be proper to face the door. The other said there was no way he would squat facing the door and give those lizards free rein to his back side. So much for intellectual conversation.

Doug has a solar electric system to provide power for his computers and lighting at night. There is no municipal power system in Todro. He has a number of lead acid batteries to provide storage when night comes or there are successive days with a minimum of sunshine. They also use the sun to heat their water for bathing purposes. They do have charcoal pots used to heat water as well in the event the sun can't keep up with demand.

A few days before we got to Todro another translation team, David and Karen Bradley also arrived. They will be working among the Kaliko people some fifty miles to the east. They are in Todro learning the trade language, Bangala, a dialect of the more prevalent Lingala that is spoken among the Logo people and the Kalikos as well. David is a Wycliffe MK, he grew up in Mexico where his parents did a translation among an indigenous group in that country. Karen grew up in neighboring Kenya with her parents. They have two small children and are looking forward to beginning their work among the Kaliko people.

TUESDAY FEB. 27
DAY ELEVEN

The morning began with a nice rain shower and it was really cool and pleasant outside. For breakfast, Beth fed us a delicious rice porridge along with fresh sweet bananas and pineapple plus nice hot locally grown coffee and sweet tea. Our schedule for the day will be a taped interview with Doug and Beth and then tape a literacy class being conducted locally.

As we concluded our breakfast, we had a time of sharing. We laughed as both Doug and Beth shared some of the interesting things that happen in this foreign culture. Beth wept as she shared the almost overwhelming loneliness and isolation. They shared that Beth was in the village 97% of the time last year. She continued to weep as she told us that they seldom get to see their 11 and 13 year old children attending the AIM missions school about 175 miles away. The only way to get there is to fly and the cost is nearly prohibitive. The native people look upon the Wrights as saviors of a sort and constantly look to them for financial and medical help. In addition, they are asked to help pay the salaries of the translation helpers and literacy workers. In this village the local church is supposed to be financially responsible, but they are in a mode of stark poverty themselves so it doesn't work too well.

They continued to share that the life span of this group of people is less than 35 years of age. We saw very few people with gray hair as only the strongest survive. They have very little concept of hygiene and health measures. Each family tries to have as many children as possible because over half of them die either in child birth or as youngsters. The disease and accidental death rate is very high considering the almost zero medical facilities. Doug shared that just within the past couple of weeks two babies had died shortly after being born because the midwives had used dirty instruments to cut the umbilical cord and death by tetanus was the result.

Our visit and taping session with the literacy class was interesting. These people are sharp and they want very much to learn their own language. They conducted the class in one of the local churches. The seats were long logs only about a foot off the floor. The building had a thatched roof and had no doors or windows. The teacher was a native lady who had been taught literacy techniques by our SIL literacy specialists. She had a class of 20 men and women who will in turn become teachers of their own people. After the taping session, the church ladies served us another feast. The fare was basically the same as all the other food. It never got easier to eat this food considering that many of the natives gave up their food for the day so we could eat.

Whenever and wherever we have gone to meet local people, it is cultural to shake everyone's hand. As the women shake the hand of a man, they bend slightly at the waist. When a younger man shakes the hand of an older man, he crosses his left arm over his stomach and touches his right arm as he is shaking. Both of these customs are gestures of respect. Our society could learn from these people.

We returned to Todro about 5:00 pm and had some homemade vegetable beef soup that Beth had prepared. It was SO good to have some western type food for a change. There is no beef raised in this part of Africa so Doug and Beth had brought it over from Kenya. We collapsed and went to bed about 8:00 pm. It gets dark right at 6:00 pm and Doug didn't want to drain his batteries because the sun didn't shine much today and he needs the juice for the computers tomorrow. So, we went to bed early and it felt good.

At 2:00 am some wild animals were prowling around outside the house, growling and making all kinds of strange noises. Our doors were locked tight! No one knew what they were and no one was brave enough (or dumb enough) to go out and look. To ease our anxieties the next day we all decided it was a pack of wild dogs.

WEDNESDAY FEB. 28
DAY TWELVE

Even though this is supposed to be the hot, dry season here in the Savannah area on the equator of central Africa, it has been raining almost every day and has kept things much cooler than normal. The normal temperatures are supposed to hover between 95 and 105 degrees during the daytime and 85 to 95 degrees at night. As a result of the cool rains the temperatures have been 10 to 15 degrees cooler. Thank you Lord!

Today we will visit another Logo village across a wide river with no bridge. The local people built a ferry and it was quite unique in its structure. The platform of the ferry was made of nice thick mahogany planks with a sturdy rail on the two sides. That was the good news! The bad news was the floatation method. This consisted of 4 dugout canoes placed crosswise intertwined with some old rusty 50 gallon drums. All of these things leaked like a sieve. We did manage to get across and back without incidence. The ferry operators bailed out the canoes before we started out each time. The road to the river was horrible. The road on the other side of the river to the village was hideous. There were steep hills to climb and then to go back down. The roads over these hills had deep ruts in the middle some of them at least 3 to 5 feet deep. To top it off there were a number of streams to cross and the local people had laid logs across them so as to be able to walk across. We drove across them! Well we made that venture also. We have all of this on video and I will be interested in seeing just how bad those roads look on the screen.

When we got back to Todro, the churches again treated us to another banquet complete with boiled goat, peanut butter gravy, foo foo, roasted termites and the same church choir. After dinner we went over to the choir and thanked them for their great ministry to us. They use all home made instruments. I asked them if they would consider selling one of those instruments to us. They said before we left they would GIVE us one of them. We dragged ourselves into bed about 9:00 pm.

THURSDAY FEB. 29
DAY THIRTEEN

This is my dad's 22nd birthday. He is 88 years old, born on leap year day in 1908.

I usually wake up at about 5:00 am every morning and this day was no exception. Doug and Beth's home is situated on a small hill overlooking a big valley. The valley extends about 50 miles to a series of ever increasing mountain ranges. In the valley are many native thatched roof huts. When I looked out the east window this morning after I got up, I saw one of the most awesome sunrise scenes ever. As I looked out, the valley was entirely filled with fog with only the tree tops and hills showing. Behind the valley were the mountains and just above them at the horizon were some thin horizontal clouds. The sun was beginning to break through in a soft pink and rose colored hue. Spectacular!

This will be a more relaxing day with some local sight seeing and very little video taping. We are about 90% complete with the video taping according to Joe. When we are completed we will have almost 7, two hour VHF video tapes. Just about everything talked about in this diary is on these videos.

After breakfast we decided to take a pleasure (?) drive out into the boondocks. I thought we were already in the boondocks! We have been complaining about the bad roads and Doug wanted to show us what REALLY bad roads were like.

Quite frankly, I have never seen anything like what we saw this day. One of the ruts we drove through was over 6 feet deep. As we drove through it I looked out the side window of the land rover and I couldn't see the top of the road. We drove for 5 or 6 miles until we came to a place where a big truck was buried up to its windows. We decided we had seen enough and turned around and went back.

When we came back into Todro we came upon the city market place. The place was teeming with activity. There must have been over 1,000 people milling around in the market including sightseers, sellers and the kids were having a ball. One of the things we wanted to see and video tape was a native Evangelist preaching to a group of natives in an outdoor setting. We had even thought about "staging" such an event for video purposes.

Well not to worry! God had this all well in hand. It was just as if He was saying, "You don't have to stage something as important as this". As we were walking around the marketplace and video taping various scenes, a young man stood to his feet waving a dogeared red bible and blowing a referees whistle. All at once every person in the market place sat down right where they were and the young man proceeded to preach a salvation message.

He preached in Bangala and Doug interpreted it for me. He said that some of those in the market place today would not be here tomorrow. He said just within the last week two very young babies had died and some people in this audience would probably die today. He asked the question, "If you died today where would you go?". Would you go to be with the evil spirits who we all fear greatly? Or would you go to be with God who loves you very much? He said it is very easy to go to be with God. I will show every one who would like to listen how they can know God and be with Him when they die. He said it's your choice, it's going to be one way or the other. I don't know about the crowd there, but I was sure moved. About 25 or 30 people followed him to a nearby clearing where the Evangelist spoke more about knowing God.

We got back to the Wrights at about 12:30 pm and Beth served us fresh fish taken from the local river. In additions we had french fries, a lettuce salad and freshly baked rolls. Halleluiah, real food! It was great. I decided to take a nap that afternoon. After 13 days of frantic activity that would feel good.

Not! I no sooner had laid down than one of the village men working on literacy came running to the house looking for Doug. It seemed that one of the 12 village boys had just been bitten by a deadly snake and in immediate need of medical attention. A few minutes later some other men came carrying the boy whose foot was now swelled up like a football. About that time Doug and Beth came roaring up to the house on their motorcycle because they had heard about the emergency also. Neither Doug nor Beth have had medical training but they are the only local source for that kind of thing. Doug however has a JARRS produced "Electronic Zapper" and after prayer applied the treatment. The instructions that come with the unit say if the swelling doesn't get worse and if the pain stops immediately, it worked. It quit swelling and the pain left. We never heard how the whole episode came out, but we probably would have heard if he didn't get better. In the past I have only read about things like this in missionary letters and here we were right in the midst of it. Praise God because He loves all men regardless of their race or station in life or where they live.

The climate in this part of the world is ideal the year around. The countryside and scenery is beautiful. This can be almost be described as a paradise - except for the abject poverty, nearly total isolation from the outside world, the endemic presence of malaria, meningitis, hepatitis and T.B., the constant threat of dysentery and ever present ameba and giardi parasites. Add all of that to zero medical facilities, wild animals, poisonous snakes, roads that almost swallow you up and the word PARADISE suddenly changes to PARANOIA. I intend to be a lot more careful walking around this place especially if I need the toilet in the middle of the night tonight and praise the Lord we fly back to Bunia tomorrow!

FRIDAY MARCH 1
DAY FOURTEEN

Martin and I will flying back to Bunia this morning and we'll be there for three days. Joe and Gary will take a separate plane and make a stop in Isiro to do some additional taping of Ken and Sue Sawka. As we have progressed with the taping it became apparent to Joe we needed some more footage of the Mayogo story through Ken and Sue. When they are completed they will meet up with us in Bunia later on this afternoon.

Our schedule calls for us to meet with the Eastern Zaire Group (EZG) Executive Committee (E.C.). We need to establish a formal working agreement so we can predict what the Metro program projects will be over the next 3 to 5 years. the reason we will be here so long is there are no planes scheduled flying back to Nairobi until next Tuesday.

As we flew from Todro to Bunia we stopped at the AIM Christian school at a place called Rethy. It is situated about 50 miles west of Bunia, 7,000 feet in elevation and when we landed it was a delightful 75 degrees and minimum humidity. It is here that Doug and Beths two children go to school. The land around the school is a large fertile plateau and it is heavily populated. The rich agricultural potential, nearly ideal climate and the lack of disease and animal problems make this a very desirable place to live. While we were flying from Rethy to Bunia we got a communication over the radio that the plane carrying Joe and Gary got hung up at the game park.

They had landed there to get some fuel but couldn't find the keys to the fuel tanks. The message was that they would be delayed in getting into Bunia about 2 hours later than anticipated. When we first came to Bunia 9 days ago I thought this place was so primitive and the AIM guest house was impossible. The electricity kept going off and there was never enough hot water etc. etc. Having been in Isiro and Todro for almost 10 days this place now looks elegant and the accommodations almost heavenly. All a matter of perspective! They have electricity sometimes, they have hot running water sometimes and innerspring mattresses. Those straw mat beds in Todro were the pits.

SATURDAY MARCH 2
DAY FIFTEEN

It rained much of the night and morning so it was nice and delightfully cool. However, I slept under an open window last night and woke up with a nasty sinus headache. The AIM guest house manager gave me some cold tablets and aspirin and this dried me up fast. In the early part of last night before the rains came we had a full moon. Usually here on the equator it is pitch dark so the city children take advantage of this to play. They must have kept it up until it started to rain at 3:00 am. Then to top it off, a bunch of dogs started to bay at the moon. It sounded like at least a dozen of them were competing for honors. It was tough sleeping last night.

After breakfast we spent about 1 hour talking to two USA State Department agents out of the US Embassy in the capital city of Kinshasa in western Zaire. They make periodic swings through the country looking for American citizens to ensure they are being treated well and to update them on our current relationship with the country of Zaire. They haven't been here for over a year and chose the time we were here to come. Interesting!

After this we toured the new SIL facilities in Bunia and met briefly with Mike McCord to rehearse when our meeting would be with the Executive Committee of the EZG on Monday. After that we returned to the AIM guesthouse for lunch and in the afternoon we heard a lot of talking out outside on the guesthouse grounds. A couple of local men were there selling small carvings made out of black ebony wood. I have been looking for some of these and this assortment was really nice so I purchased a dozen pieces for \$40.00 US funds. With the current state of high inflation with the Zairean money these people love US dollars. I am having Dave Eernisse send me an additional 100 similar pieces from Kenya directly to the USA to be used as gifts for the leaders of my Metro banquet program.

SUNDAY MARCH 3
DAY SIXTEEN

We got up at 6:30 am, showered and had a nice western breakfast of eggs, bacon and hot cereal. They do a good job of food preparation here at the AIM guesthouse. The church services in Bunia are in French, Swahili and Lingala. We did hear of one in English later on in the day but we did not peruse it. Instead, Joe, Gary, Martin and myself had a time of sharing, bible reading and praying. Martin did not offer to sing.

In the afternoon we went to one of the large marketplaces here in Bunia. It turned out to be a typical third world market full of everything imaginable. I often wonder where these people get all of this stuff. All of us bought something. I bought a 6 yard piece of colorful Zairean cloth for \$20.00 US funds. I intend to use it for coverings over my display tables at the Metro program events.

We then returned to the guesthouse and spent some time rehearsing our approach at the Executive Committee (E.C.) tomorrow. In each SIL branch around the world, the members elect an E.C. from among their peers and this group runs the show so to speak. So if WA is to have a good relationship with this group it will happen because the E.C. gives their approval. We have been having discussions with the Group leadership, but none of them are on the E.C. and you never know what the concerns are of each individual member. The meeting will start at 9:00 am in the morning.

MONDAY MARCH 4
DAY SEVENTEEN

Surprise, Surprise, Surprise! It is not unusual to wake up to no electricity here in Bunia but, this morning we woke up to nor water also. Oh well, who needs a shower or wash their face?

Our morning began with a time of prayer at 8:30 am. The entire SIL contingent in Bunia was present plus the four of us and that numbered over 20 people. After prayer we began the meetings with the E.C. and this lasted until 12:30 when we took a lunch break. The plan was to reconvene again at 2:00 pm.

After lunch I opted not to return to the meeting because most of the negotiations would be between the E.C. and Martin. When he returned to the guesthouse at about 4:30 pm and he was "hyped". The E.C. accepted our joint proposal excitedly that was put together by us and Mike McCord, the EZG branch director. Now all we have to do is go home and perform. "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible".

In the evening we all went to the "Greek Club" here in Bunia to celebrate. This is one of only two or three restaurants in this entire city of 150,000 people. It is located not far from the AIM guesthouse and it also serves as a night spot for those who can afford to eat out. In addition to meals they also serve snack, soft drinks and beer. There was LOUD background music but not the irritating rock kind, it was traditional Zairean music. About 15 of the SIL people came along with us four and we sealed our agreement over coke, fried cheese curds, cabbage salad and toast. That is what they eat here for snacks. It was a very special time.

We went to bed with the anxious anticipation that tomorrow we begin our trek home. Eighteen days on the road and 12 of them in Zaire is ENOUGH!

TUESDAY MARCH 5
DAY EIGHTEEN

Our plan is to fly out later this morning on an MAF airplane. We go to Nairobi, Kenya first. We plan to stay overnight tonight and then board British Airways out of Nairobi International airport tomorrow for London, stay overnight there and then fly home on Thursday.

Our departure out of Bunia went smoothly and that was a blessing because they usually give everyone the 3rd degree there. We ended up going through Entebbe, Uganda once again on our way to Nairobi. Our pilot had one passenger to drop off and one to pick up. We flew for the first time in a two engine, 12 passenger MAF airplane complete with pressurized cabin, airconditioning, refreshments and QUIET. We got into Nairobi about 3:00 pm and immediately went and had a hamburger. Other than a light snack at Entebbe, our only food for the day had been cold cereal at 7:00 am in the AIM guesthouse and we were famished.

We checked into the SIL guesthouse (this place is run by BTL, the Bible and Literacy League of Kenya). In the evening we four and two SIL people went to a large open air restaurant called the "Carnivor". It does have a roof over the top and right in the center of the place is a huge open pit barbecue complete with multiple spits. On each spit was a different chunk of meat. They had sausage, chicken, beef, pork, crocodile, zebra, giraffe, lamb and ostrich. For about \$15.00 US per person we got all we wanted to eat of these meats plus all the rest of the potatoes, salads, breads and the usual condiments. I see now why they call this place the Carnevor, you really have to be carnivorous in order to do this place justice. We got back to the guesthouse at about 9:30 pm.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 6
DAY NINETEEN

This morning I had breakfast with Hank and Elsie Cook. These two are JAARS personnel who are seconded to AIM Air to manage the DC 3 program. Hank and Elsie are from the Austin/Albert Lea area of southern Minnesota and I have known them for many years. Hanks mother lives adjacent to Willmar, Minnesota and has been on the banquet team there. After that George and Kathy Ellison showed up at our door. They are an SIL couple assigned to the East Africa Group and are stationed in Nairobi. They are also from the Austin/Albert Lea area of southern Minnesota. They have recently been formally asked to join the Ethiopia Branch and are seriously considering that position. We had a nice chat. George and Kathy's parents and brothers and sisters have been involved with the banquet program for many years. George and Kathy worked for the Peru branch until two years ago where George was in charge of the facilities at the Hinson house in Lima. Last spring they travelled with Ardis and I on the banquet tour through Minnesota and Wisconsin to boost their support to the level needed to go to Africa. I also made contact with Scott and Sue Lewis who are new WBT members assigned to Tanzania as a translation team. They have been here in Nairobi for a few months while Sue had her third baby. Scott and Sue also travelled with us last Spring and successfully raised the remaining 60% of their support in order to get out on the mission field. They are from the Faribault area of southern Minnesota and I have known Sues parents for over 20 years. Her dad is pastor of a large church in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, a far south suburb of Minneapolis.

Our plane left Nairobi about 1/2 hour late because one of the passengers was having trouble getting through customs. We got through without a hitch and that was a blessing because these African countries don't like it when us westerners take "artifacts" out of the continent. I was carrying the hand made 12 string harp the musical group gave me at Todro. I was flabbergasted that I didn't even have to pay anything for that privilege.

We got to London in 9 1/2 hours from Nairobi and arrived at 5:30 pm which is 3 hours behind Nairobi time. It took our shuttle driver about 1 hours worth of fiddling around to drive the 1/2 mile to our hotel. We ate some lunch and went to bed at 10:00 pm.

THURSDAY MARCH 7
DAY TWENTY

Our shuttle driver was Jerry, the guy from Pakistan and by now we are full bosom buddies. My flight from London to Chicago took 9 hours and it was uneventful. We had two full meals and three full length motion pictures. I arrived at Chicago Ohare at 4:00 pm and at 7:45 pm took a United Airlines flight to Minneapolis and arrived at 9:15 pm. Home at last. I kissed the ground at Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.