

Wednesday, September 18, 1991

Incredible African experience comes to an end

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Hello again from Aba, Zaire. I've been here for about two months now. It's a very peaceful Sunday afternoon with the temperature at a comfortable 25 degrees C. In the midst of the rainy season, we've had a fairly significant 2 week dry spell. It ended with a fairly harsh hail storm a few days ago.

Hail stones, the size of large marbles crashed to the ground causing much damage to the corn fields. A house just down the hill from my house had a wall almost collapse. We figure the winds were close to a hurricane level. Thankfully, I haven't heard of anyone being hurt from the storm.

The Aba Hospital Water Pro-

ject is still being worked on. We hope to mount our solar panels up next week on top of a 7 metre high platform.

An insufficient supply of cement is slowing our progress a little. It also takes some time to break up the rocks to make gravel. However, our 35,000 litre water tank was completed this week. A small amount of damage was caused to it by the hail but it was easily repaired. My three weeks left in Zaire will go quickly but I am encouraged to our recent progress and I think we will be pumping water with the sun before I go.

Perhaps it's time to learn more Bengala. After saying your greetings "Mbote", (for how are you doing?) you might ask "Nsango Nini?" which means

"What's new?" If the news is good, you say "Nsango Malumu!" Otherwise "Nsango Mabe" (the news is bad). The remainder of my Bengala vocabulary consists of a lot of nouns.

It's very difficult to pick up a language so quickly. I'm limited in how to express myself and usually jump into French, then English and then some sort of sign language. I've had several instances when I thought I got my idea across and then the person does the exact opposite. The experience builds character if not a lot of patience.

You might have heard of the civil war problems in the country of Sudan. Being so close to the Sudan border, this area has several Sudan refugee camps.

Some of the Sudanese have lived longer in Zaire than in Sudan because of the severe problems they encounter in their home country. Insufficient food supplies are always a problem in these refugee camps. A number of the missionary agencies have tried to provide rice and peanuts to some of the more needy refugees. I shared a plane in Zaire with a member from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UN HCR) who was investigating the situation in this area of the country. It's very strange to be so near the problems that you usually see on the six o'clock news.

Food that is available in the local area ranges from the familiar to the very "exotic." We enjoy many meals here con-

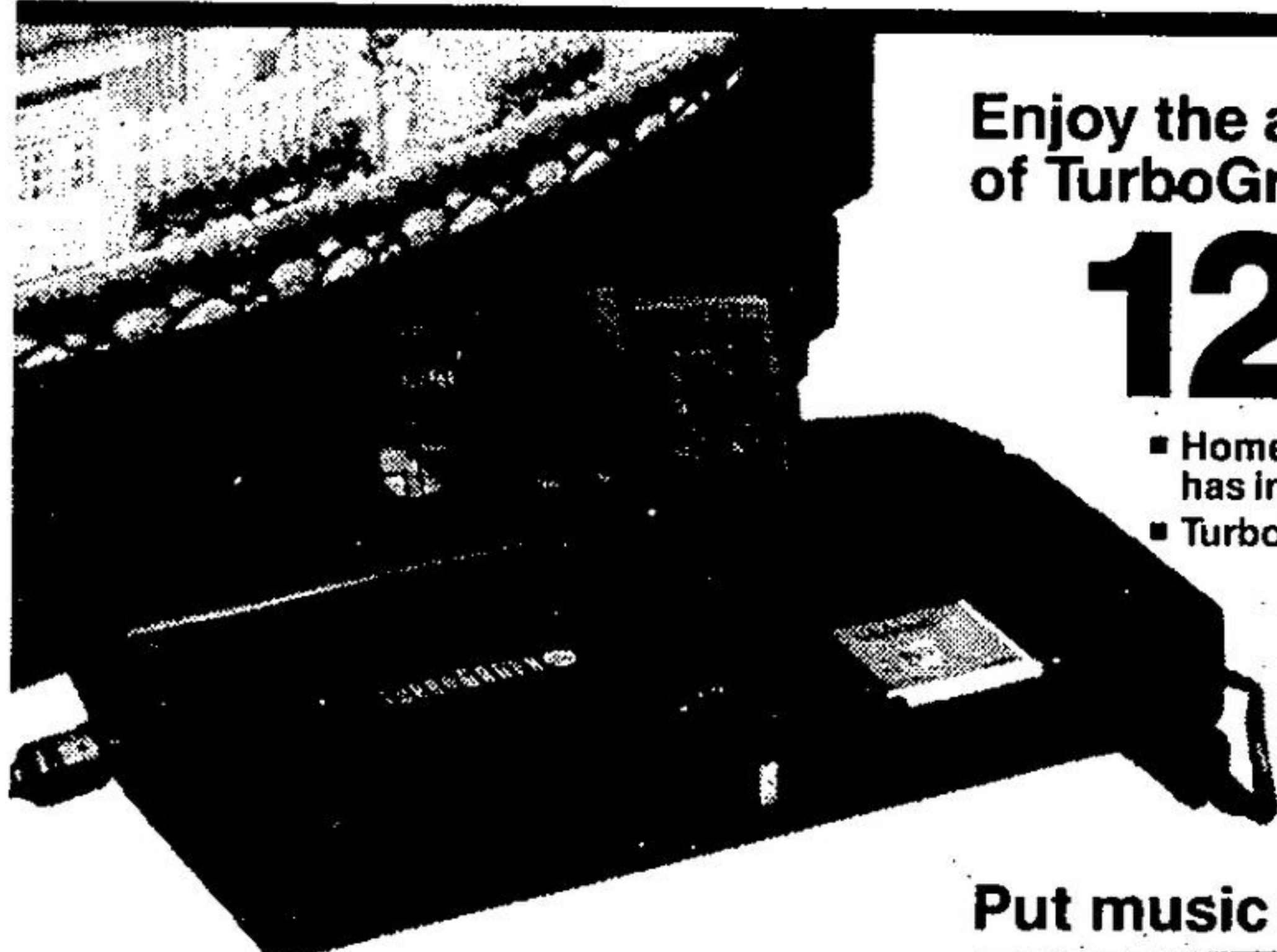
sisting of variations of rice, beans, corn, chicken, goat and potatoes. There are many tropical fruits to be picked nearby such as mangos, bananas, pineapple, cur de boef and lemons. Local specialties that include monkey meat, cooked termites and fu-fu (a flour paste) require a bit more of an adventurous stomach.

I have learned and gained much as I struggled with and enjoyed these last two months. With 5 stop-overs and 2 weeks to travel home, I'll have some time to fully reflect on my time here.

Thankyou to my friends who filled me in on the baseball and hockey situation in this week's mail.

Happy 30th anniversary, Mom and Dad, and I guess I'll see you in about a month.

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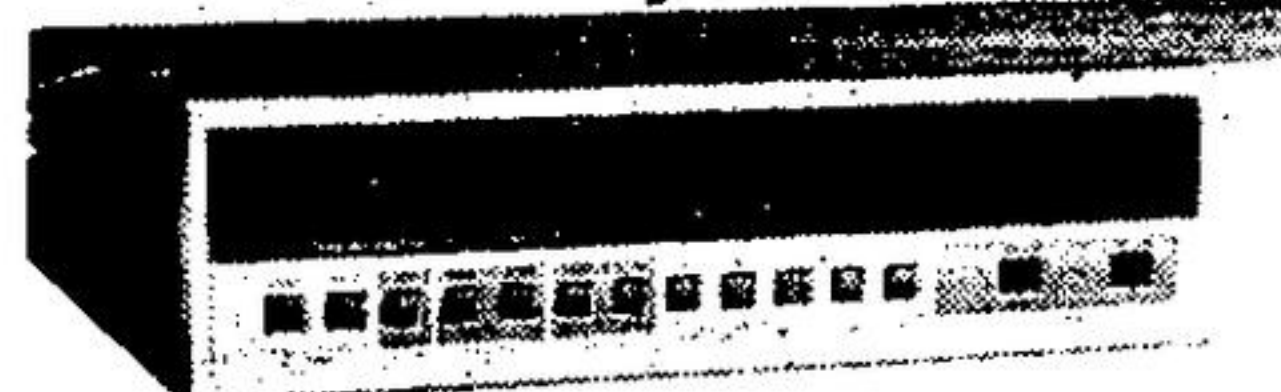
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