

Travel Diary: AFRICA 1979
(January 28, 1979 – February 17, 1979)

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In Search of the Holy Pail !.... Looking for a map of Africa !!

The following are the daily journal / diary notes of a young fellow (27 years old) who travelled Europe and Africa in 1978 / 79 with only a canvas shoulder bag and a money belt. This excerpt of ten pages or twenty-one days of that total journey was selected because it included meeting Keiji Ichikawa ...who happened to randomly contact that 'young fellow' forty-three years later.

Over that forty years that 'young fellow' took many journeys, some long and some short, in total over 100 countries and regions. He was also fortunate to have a beautiful family and an a career that took him around the world. This is one archive of the places he stopped, the people he met, and the deeds he did. It is a forty year reflection on the differences between memory and experience.

Travel is at its most rewarding when it ceases to be about your reaching a destination and becomes indistinguishable from living your life. (Ghost Train) Paul Theroux

The sieve of life that allows memories to pass and saves only the experience...the experience is only possible with freedom. As one forgets memories, similarly one forgets the details of experiences and begins to live. They pass through the sieve of one's mind and become life.

Sunday, January 28, 1979 (Algiers)

Up at 8:00. Shaved and washed up, put on clean "Consulate" shirt and underwear – feel good. It's Sunday but business as usual. Friday is religious day. Out for coffee at 8:30 and walked to new city. Found national Tourist Office, very helpful with maps and info. Walked up terrace to Niger Embassy. Left passports, photos and forms. Must return on Tuesday at 10:00. Met Steven (American Born and German raised – drives trucks from Algiers to Agadez – good info. We walked to Nigerian Embassy and filled forms. Must get passport there on Tuesday so hopefully can pick up visa on Thursday. Appears that I am stuck in Algiers for four more days. Walked miles over hills and around corners to get to Canadian Embassy. Arrived 11:30. No messages – good. Signed in and read Globe and Mail (not very homesick). Walked back to centre of Hydra (suburb) and waited 1 1/2 hour for bus (first experience on Algerian bus-sardines). Got back to new city and watched workers try to repair guard Slowly wandered back to my area. Stopped for coke. Algiers definitely not a tourist city. Bought a new diary in an Algerian department store (interesting and beautiful). Not many products, but other stores have. Bought air mail paper and checked Steve's hotel – not in. Returned to hotel at 5:00. Paid one more night, organized and wrote. Will probably write a lot of letters and sit on lots of benches in next few days. Out for supper 6:00. Stopped at same cafe and met a Japanese (Keiji) and an Aussi (Mike who travelled S.A.). It is strange that I have been looking for REAL travellers for last four weeks and start find them in Algeria (off the tourist path). Had supper and talked. Went to their bath house hotel and got involved in Algerian rip-off over room for three with no key. The two fellows got screwed (so it goes). Never left until 8:30 then went over to Steve's hotel and visited for awhile. Really lucky meeting him – good info on desert. Really excited

and encouraged. Returned to hotel at 9:15 and wrote. To bed at 10:30. Algerians, like Moroccans are really nice people if not involved with tourist.

Monday, January 29, 1979 (Algiers)

Up around 8:30 to Mike and Keiji. Realized that I must accept time if I am going to cross desert. Fellows left bags in my room. Cleaned up then out for coffee with Keiji. Mike went to phone London and we started looking for a cheaper hotel for all 3 of us – no luck. Everything is full. Returned to my hotel at 11:30 to meet all three. Found a room for three in same hotel for 10dinar/each – Great. Moved stuff to another room. Very suspicious, waiting for scam. Ecstatic, cheap hotel living (unusual for Algiers). Fellows left for Niger Embassy and I stayed in hotel to read Mike's B.I.T guide book. (On photocopy sheets a real backpackers guide to Africa). Left around 1:30 and walked uptown. Rather cool breeze off the Mediterranean and streets are buzzing. Stopped at P.O. and telephone office. Tried to put in a call to Canada (last chance) – no luck, too long for a line. Mailed letters and met Mike and Keiji went for coffee. Keiji and I walked around department store (amazing) – bought a spoon. Stopped at Steve's hotel and picked him up. Returned to old city for coffee and snack. Returned to hotel with Steve and Keiji to read and talk about travel. Mike in 6:00 and decided to return to same cafe for supper. Sat and talked. Keiji and I returned to hotel to get stoned and talk. (Great time talking about various cultures). Fellow in Oujda said there was a Japanese fellow with some grams and I found him. Mike returned around 12:00 and re-ran the process. Fine evening with good people. Very relaxing and useful. Record of activity being maintained – another experience from another perspective. Bed at 2:00.

Tuesday, January 30, 1979 (Algiers)

Rather uncomfortable bed, but adequate. Up 8:00 washed up and dressed. Keiji and I walked to Steve's hotel by 9:00. Stopped for coffee. Steve and I walked to Niger Consulate and picked up visas. Met British fellow and on to Nigerian Consulate.. Left passport to be picked-up tomorrow. Met Mike and the three of us walked back to city centre. Stopped for coffee and returned to hotel at 1:00 to relax. At 2:00 went half way downtown and had photos taken (12/18dinar) for visas and passport. Returned to hotel to meet Mike then to market to buy groceries. I bought bag for mail and returned to hotel at 4:30. Mike cooked supper (good/hot) – Steve came over and we had a feast. Sat around the room all night and smoked dope and played chess with Mike. Washed dishes, shirt and wrote. Getting act together for Sahara. Very comfortable environment with Mike and Keiji – but will change soon. Find I am spending more time indoors because Algiers closes up early. (5 weeks since Winnipeg. Spent 100.00/wk. (\$ 14.30/day leaves \$ 1,059.00). Did books, talked, watched Mike saw and bed by 12:00.

Wednesday, January 31, 1979 (Algiers)

Up 9:00 (very slow day). Well another day of veils and high heels. Washed up and had breakfast in room. Mike got bread and milk so we did well. I prepared a parcel to mail (heavy – may cost a lot but worth to get rid of) Left hotel around 12:00. Stopped for coffee then to main post office to mail cards home. Walked up to Nigerian Consulate to pick up visa (16 dinar) and passport. Security means having your passport back in your possession. Walked back downtown to cash cheques. Waited in front of Dept. Store until it opened to buy sardines for the trip – wrong store. Picked up photos (12) and back to hotel at 3:00. Talked to Keiji and Steve popped in. Went for coffee and bite then back to hotel at 6:00. Steve and I went for soup and bought bread, then returned to another of Mike's great suppers. Sat around and talked till 11:00. Wrote and got organized. A very nice and

comfortable situation here, but time to leave on a new experience. Very excited about Sahara, but feel it may be easier than expected...wait and see. Feel that I am as prepared as possible at this point – further preparation as I get further south. Packed, organized, wrote – bed at 11:30.

Thursday, February 1, 1979 (Algiers)

Up at 9:00. Good sleep. Washed hair and cleaned up. Had bite to eat and Keiji and I out for coffee. Walked to bus station and bought tickets (62dinar) for 8:00pm bus to Ghardia. Walked to main post office and mailed parcel to Canada (50dinar) with Mike's help. Walked to department store and bought biscuits and sardines for the trip south. Returned to hotel at 12:00 – packed and checked out. Left bags in Mike's room. Went to park and watched ships in harbour (beautiful) and city continue as per usual. Sun warm / feel fine. 3:00 walked over and got Steve, bought pastry and had afternoon coffee. Talked politics - a very good group it has been, a nice 6 days in Algiers, but feel restless. Walked to Department Store for 3 dinar of candy and plastic bags. Bought a whole chicken and bread for Keiji, Steve and I. Had supper in very luxurious salon room of Steve's hotel – nice to have solid meat. Met Mike at 7:00 said good-bye to Steve and had coffee. Mike escorted me and Keiji (Tokyo Cabbie) to bus. On board after luggage check and out of Algiers at 8:15pm. Sorry to say good-bye to Steve and Mike, but hopefully we will meet again in Agadez. Feel like I am finally starting my trip. Heading south into desert, excited and feeling great. Passed through mountains and onto ERG (elevated rocky plateau). Cold as hell, never slept. Memories of train from Urani, Bolivia. After completing business in Algiers, feel prepared and have time in perspective.

Friday, February 2, 1979 (Ghardia)

Arrived Ghardia 5:30am. COLD. Walked to only open cafe for coffee. Watched beautiful sunrise and walked around town. Checked out bath houses and finally found hotel (30dinar/2). Fell asleep till 11:30 – really tired and cold. Up and got act together. While Keiji slept I went downtown for coffee. Real desert town, almost culture shock from Algiers. Amazing number of foreign companies and workers in the area (Japan, U.S., British, French). Talked to a few people and walked what there was of the town. Sun very hot – hottest day I have had. Dusty and dirty, must wonder about future desert towns. Got lost in Casbah (amazing). Filthy and confusing. This is the start of desert oasis. Bought tomatoes and bread and back to wake Keiji at 1:30. Made sandwiches and had my first beer since Paris and just sat in the afternoon scorching desert sun. Flies are the bravest I have ever encountered. They stay with the bread until it hits your mouth. Interesting story of the scorpion and crocodile in Africa. Returned to room and got a few things organized while Keiji slept. Coming down with a slight cold or maybe just the dust. With every gust of wind 4lbs. Of dust. Went for another walk uptown in warm sun. Have not seen a woman between ages of 12 – 50 in whole town. Must really be a problem between old and new generations. Found myself in marketplace (men only). Scene much the same as S.A., only costumes different. Met Simon (English fellow I met earlier in Algiers). Showed him to Hammam (bath house) and returned to hotel 5:30. Simon came over and we all went out for supper. Keiji and I took a walk around town (we saw it wake up and close up). Returned to hotel at 9:00, Simon stayed the night with us / so only 10dinar each. Bed by 9:30 – tired. Anxious to be moving again in morning.

Saturday, February 3, 1979 (Ghardia / El Golea / Sahara)

Up around 7:30, organized and out by 8:30. Walked toward road to El Golea. Stopped for coffee then on to bank. Simon left to hitch-hike., Keiji went for groceries and I waited for the bank to open. – never did. Decided to leave anyways. Walked down road and tried hitch-hiking. Made lunch and

got a ride about ½ hour later with a Pakistani fellow. Found Simon on the road and picked him up. Got let off at intersection about 30km south of Ghardia. Three of us waited in rather desolate area for another ride. Sky overcast, slight shower and strong winds - Pulled out winter parka, gloves and toque. Waited about 1 hour, damn cold. Got ride with French Group (Expedition Terre) Mali / a massive yellow, four wheel drive, Mercedes Benz oil drilling pumper truck with a trailer. We rode into Sahara on top of all the heavy equipment in rain and wind. No hell for my cold. Stopped for lunch in desert oasis. Unbelievable landscape – thousands of miles of nothing but stone and hills. Some scrub brush that disappeared as we got into sand dunes. AMAZING. So this is the start of the Sahara – what a fine way to start the trip. Intermittent sunny periods, feel great. Arrived in desert oasis town of El Golea 5:00pm. Hot and sunny. Said good-bye to our French taxi as they headed in different direction into desert. Walked to centre of town for coffee. Couldn't check into local Hammam (bath-house) until 7:00 because women were using. Walked around town. Nothing but dust, sand and palm trees. Sat around then had supper. Returned to bath-house and told to come back at 9:00. Went for tea then back at 8:00 for hot bath (interesting experience). Wrote and relaxed. Dorm style sleeping so forced to sleep at 10:00. Dead tired. Very amazing first day in desert and amazing transportation. 11 weeks on the road and into wherever life takes me. Definitely out of the I and moving with the moment and experience.

Sunday, February 4, 1979 (El Golea / In Salah) (27th hotel)

Very rough night, very cramped and poor value for 7 dinar. Up around 4:30am with fear of shits. Back to very deep sleep. Woken up at 7:00. Got organized and had coffee on the house. Left Hammam 8:00 and down to local cafe for coffee. Simon walked to road and Keiji and I waited for bank to cash cheques (hopefully last). Walked out to road and met Simon. Had bite to eat and walked in very hot sun trying to get a ride –no luck because no traffic. People very poor and complexion getting darker as we head south. At 10:30 we flagged down a bus (30dinar for In Salah. Last three seats on bus . Amazing seven hour ride through desert over Plateau du Tademaït. Amazed at the different forms a desert can have. Started with flat gravel plain (thousands of miles of flat land) into voodoo type mountains and deep canyons and eventually sand dunes. Hot sun and nothingness that always remains the same. Odd little oasis or water hole in the middle of no-where. Arrived In Salah at 4:00pm. Red sun dried brick and very dark complexions. One of the most dissolute places I have been. Had coffee and contemplated situation. Met Italian fellows and got tickets for 4:00am bus to Tamanrasset Bought a few groceries (bread and tomato) and sat on the street and got organized. God ! Imagine living in the middle of nothingness (sand, dust and sun) and not be able to see the lights of Time Square. Took my first malaria pills (2) - start regiment now and continue 2 every Sunday until out of area. Cold seems to be improving – hopefully. Around 6:30 to restaurant, only one in town. What have I got myself into?? Just think, this place will probably be the last semblance of civilization for awhile. Supper was a rip off. After supper, we three and the Italians went for a walk around town (5 minutes). Sat on edge of road and looked out over sand dunes of the Sahara. Beautiful clear night with Mosque in distance and sound of a muezzin chanting the Islamic call to prayer - adhaan (good picture). Returned to main street and bunked down in patio of abandon house. My first night outside in blanket I traded my transistor radio for in Marrakesh (good trade). My cold is moving into my chest. Don't feel well. Terrible place for a foreigner to die.

Monday, February 5, 1979 (In Salah / Tamanrasset)

Woke up around 2:30am. Very rough and uncomfortable sleepless night. Other fellows up at 3:30.

Packed and to local restaurant for coffee and wait for 5:00 bus to Tamanrasset. Bus a Mercedes “Trans – Sahara” bus with massive tires etc.. Ugliest bus driver I have ever had. Left at 5:30am, roughest ride I have ever had. Drove non-stop (pee break only) for 11 hours. Wanted to say something about desert but what can you say about varied desolation, vastness and consistent burning sun. Amazing mud houses along the route. Curious way of building marker to designate highway with stones piled and caged in wire (piste). Felt awful, could not sleep because of bumps and seats. Saw my first camels and drivers – in middle of nowhere. Arrived Tamanrasset 4:30pm. Bigger city but still made of dust and sand. Camels in regular use. Stopped for coffee and checked out hotel, campgrounds etc. Checked into campground “rush hut” 14 dinars, three cots but O.K. Made coffee, relaxed and got act together. Feel shitty but need sleep and medication. Out for supper 7:00. Now into Hoggar Region – very interesting mountain rock formations. Walked uptown looking for cigs. – no luck. Returned to hut 8:30 to dubbin shoes, write and doctor myself. (My problem is my sinuses). Bed by :30. Saw a beautiful sun-rise over the Sahara today.

Tuesday, February 6, 1979 (Tamanrasset / Sahara)

Up at 7:30. Good night sleep. Simon made coffee so coffee and toast in bed. Morning rather cool (just above freezing) but hot by 9:30. Up and organized. Washed clothes and relaxed. Clothes dried by 12:00. Cleaned up and headed uptown. –strange place. Walked around in dust and heat inquiring about police station and ride to Agadez. Town closed for lunch so we headed back to campground for coffee. Stopped and talked to an English couple. After coffee Italian fellow (George) came with Keiji and I to check customs for possible truck to Agadez. No one seemed interested so we left. When back at hut we were approached by the English girl (Jane) who said they had an extra place in the truck to Agadez – free. The three of us drew straws and Keiji won (damn). We accompanied them to police station to see the process. Pakistani truck driver (Mohammed) was delivering a Black Mercedes 810s Sedan in a new 5 ton Mercedes box truck, that he bought and brought from Marseille, France, to Niger to sell. He said we could all go if we thought there was room. Great, had passports stamped and all set. English couple and we 3, went grocery shopping for six people for four days in the desert. Bought groceries 10 gallon water jug and Durban for sun. Town closed up early (tomorrow election for president) so never got cigs or bread. Returned to hut at 8:00 for cold shower (last water for awhile) and very good supper. (must get rid of dinars). Returned to hut at 8:30 to watch Italians and Algerians sell Adidas and bargain. Anxious about tomorrow. If customs are open and we get on our way it will be a good deal – free to Agadez. Will be an odd assortment ..Pakistani truck driver, Japanese cabbie, three Englishmen and one Canadian. Must try to get rid of dinars I was keeping to pay for a ride. Feel organized and ready for 3-4 days in desert. Bed by 11:30. If everything goes well, trip will only cost 32 dinars for food and 8 dinars for water jug = 40 dinars. Spent a lot of money today but may not spend a dime for next four days in desert. Six weeks since Winnipeg. Spent \$ 143.00 this week (travel and parcel mailed in Algiers, and preparation for next 4 days). Leaves \$ 915.00

Wednesday, February 7, 1979 (Tamanrasset / Sahara) PICTURE OF ME

Up at 8:00. (cold). Cleaned up and organized. Met Jane and Doug (English couple) for coffee at cafe 8:00. Mohammed (Paki) appeared and said we would leave Tamanrasset today. Bought more bread and cigs. Returned to hut at 9:00. Hauling a 1978 Mercedes 810s car and lots of water to wait for Mo.. Today is election day so many things not open. Mo showed up at 10:30. Loaded truck and to customs office to get checked out – no hassle. Stopped for gas and to deflate tires on outskirts of town. On the road to Agadez by 1:00. Very rough corduroy road for first 100kms. Heading south

across Sahara desert with Englishman, Japanese cab driver and Pakistani businessman. Hauling an 810s Mercedes car and lots of water. HOT. Arrived at first well km 70 – refreshing. Reloaded water and continued. Had actually developed a job list with Brits doing meals, Keiji responsible for mechanical and me looking after the “bakshish”. The trunk of the 810s Mercedes was full of 5 lb. bags of macaroni and cartoons of Marlborough cigarettes. When we stopped for police, customs or any official security check, I on Mo’s command, would jump onto back of truck, open trunk of Mercedes and magically produce the bakshish (gift). I managed the bribe and Mohammed did the negotiating. My other job (as the only one who knew where we were going) was to tell Mohammed which direction was East so he could face Mecca for his 5-times-a-day Muslim prayer ritual. Slowly passed out of Hoggar region into very flat and sandy area. Watched beautiful sunset. Drove til 7:30 when to dark to see the “piste” Stopped in middle of desert and made supper by lights of truck. Sat and smoked a couple of joints – great trip. Absolutely nothingness, no trees, no motion, and no noise. To bed by 10:30 . I slept in extended cab of truck with Mohammed because others had big sleeping bags. Left lights on all night for other travellers. Very amazed that some people actually live in this no-man’s land. Covered about 150km today – not bad.

Thursday, February 8, 1979 (Sahara)

Up at 6:00. Freezing cold. Watched sun rise over flat desert. Made coffee and headed out by 7:30 to beat the heat. More sand, sun and abandon vehicles (usually in bad spots). Like Manitoba after a snow storm. Piste only marked by rock cairns or old car parts (encouraging). First 100km good, then we hit sand. Used sand ladders about 6 times before lunch and made about 5 kms in two hours. Now I know why Mohammed wanted all of us to come on the trip...he needed us to shovel sand. Saw Turigs on camels heading for Tamanrasset (20kms/day). Helped out by German tour group. (Germans pay big bucks to go across Sahara in Mercedes bus pulling a large trailer with camping equipment). It was funny to see our rag-tag gang watching the German tourists in latest fashions and camping gear. Stopped for lunch at 1:00. HOT. Into very sandy area (worst). Simon reminds me of Greg Dudar (tolerable). Spent the rest of the day driving and shovelling. FUCK THE SAHARA. I’ve had enough of sand ladders, sand and sun. Hard work in payment for a journey. Got stuck about six times. Finally arrived at In Gassam at 7:00 (280kms today). Mud huts, camels, Turigs and strange and isolated customs outpost. Mohammed is friends with them – I hope. Amazing how the ground retains heat then loses just before sun up. Well 7 days from Algiers to Niger border – heart of the Sahara. In Gassam comparable to Bolivian towns on the altiplano (isolated). Having read and heard stories about tourist being raped at these isolated outposts, we decided to have Keiji, who knew nothing about karate but was a great Bruce Lee Japanese look-alike, do a karate and kung-fu demonstration (I guess) for the benefit of the customs guys. Seemed to work, we had no issues.

Friday, February 9, 1979 (In Gassam / Sahara)

Another day and another Dinar. Up at 7:00am. I got the people up and moving (my job). I made tea and got organized. Mo up at 8:00. Changed tire (over inflated/ stuck in sand). Waited for customs to open, then hassle. Algerian customs wanted to send me back to Tamanrasset because of their mistake on my money form – over 900dinar. Mohammed talked them out of it. Met other Canadians on tour, changed dinar for U.S. dollars. Bought groceries and finally left Algeria at 11:00am. (Customs officers real ass-holes). Drove 30kms over no-mans land to Niger customs. Made lunch while they processed forms. Picked up some Sahara sand. Left border at 2:00pm...what an isolated place. Into very flat desert, just sand and sky and, of course, sun. Stopped to have some camel milk (good) from Turig family camped in middle of no-where (what a life). Got stuck then punctured

saddle gas tank when the sand ladder, I was holding, popped up. MOHAMMEDS TRAVELLING CIRCUS has really become a comedy of errors – fuck the Sahara. Spent one hour transferring gas and fixing truck with parts and bolts that Keiji put together. While catching fuel in open gallon cans I put a full one to one side. Turned and saw a goat drinking the fuel. Life in the desert! Drove 240 km by days end. Very flat desert with some brush and trees further into Niger. Road good so no problems. People extremely poor. Arrived small village of mud-brick, dust and kids at 8:30pm. Poverty. Made supper with crowd of curious kids (dark) and flash lights. Had coffee while Mo got rid of his macaroni. He gave me hell because we were out of cartons of cigarettes (which I had told him yesterday). I said nothing but when it came time for his evening prayers I think I got my directions confused – on purpose (screw him). We may by-pass Agadez in order to save miles to Niamey (so it goes – I am into every day as it comes). Bed 10:00..Tired and extremely dirty. Getting bored with situation and English people.

Saturday, February 10, 1979 (Sahara)

Up at 7:00 and woke everyone. Sun rose in smog from modern uranium plant - miles away from absolute poverty. Tribal drums all night long. Made coffee with my audience and left village at 8:30. Good experience but poor. First dogs since Morocco. Followed camel tracks into the desert and found where we had marked the piste. The dust storm (haboob) moved the sand dunes so nothing looked the same. Everything had moved. I read Newsweek magazine during Sahara storm. I think Mohammed is short a few biscuits, but interesting. Arrived In Gall 12:00. Cold beer, groceries and cigs. Traded rest of dinars to French Tourists. Market very poor with more junk and luxuries unlike Algiers. Stopped on outskirts for water and lunch. Helped man draw water from well in return for wash. Tried to make friends with a camel, but very unfriendly. Drove 200kms on worst road I have ever been on – beats Potosi to Leon (Managua) run. Passed through a couple of small villages. Main truck route for hauling Uranium on dirt road with lots of holes. French Imperialism!! Arrived small village 9:00pm to cook supper (getting sick of sardines, and tomato and onion salads). Passed through scrubby savannah area today – region of bad draught 4-5 years ago. Had regular audience for supper – Mo scared them away. Smoked dope and sat and talked. Another day on Mohammed's Sahara Circus. Bed 11:30. Dirty and tired. –bored with life-style, but into it. Thought about Marilyn Genakis (??) and Julie a lot over last couple of days ! Finding my environment most receptive and friendly. No fear of environment as in Europe, etc.

Sunday, February 11, 1979 (Sahara)

Up 7:00 and woke the crew for coffee. 5th. Day on the road with mad Mohammed Saharian Circus. Abalak village about 150kms from Tahoua. On road by 8:00. Still rough. Passed through small villages with round thatched huts and bowl like grain bins. Saw ladies beating maize and more absolute poverty. Arrived Tahoua 1:00 and first asphalt road in 5 days and 1,700kms since Tamanrasset. Had good lunch then watched Mohammed sell sand ladders, shovels and Gerry cans etc. (I guess we are the next to go). Heat is unbearable and poverty unbelievable. Kids scramble to eat morsels of dried bread (khobz) splashed with diesel fuel that we swept out of the truck box. Very sad scene. Niger is definitely the poorest country I have seen so far. Don't know how long I can handle. Had pop and straightened out debts. Figure it cost me \$ 30.00 for food and cigs to cross Sahara and get to Ben n Konni. Arrived 8:00, had supper and another night in truck. I am so filthy I don't think I will ever see water again. 5 days no bed and no washing. Bed by 10:30. 3 kms from Nigerian border.



Monday, February 12, 1979 (Sahara)

Up around 7:00 to perpetual crowd of beggars asking for gifts (cadeaux). Watched kids and other odd sorts scramble for breakfast in market. Woke up group and tried to cash travellers cheques. Didn't trust bank manager so borrowed money from Keiji. Had coffee and cleared up all debts with Mo. Swapped addresses (Mo is interested in starting up a Sahara tour –good idea to work on). Said good-bye to Mohammed, Simon and the Mercedes as they drove away in dust cloud. Doz, Jane, Keiji and I went to local brothel for beer at 10:00am. Said bye to kids then Keiji and I went to bus station to wait for bus to Niamey. Was to leave at noon, but they waited until bus filled up. 8 hours we waited in Beni n Konni (shit-hole) for that dam bus. It was easier crossing Sahara than going 437km on asphalt to Niamey. Dam frustrated and getting pissed off with people. They have no spirit left – why do they continue to exist?? Everyone waited 8 hours for a six hour bus ride and never said a word. Niger people very strange and frustrating. Maybe they deserve to be oppressed. Amazed at the level of ignorance. Bus finally left at 7:00 in evening – FULL. Cold ride because bus had no windows. Wrapped in blankets as we drove with a full moon. Amazed at lack of agricultural development in what appears to be fertile land. Niger is not under-developed, it is undeveloped. Running battle with man in front of me over one remaining window and his spitting. This place is crazy. Stopped at truck stop, of shorts, for coffee – another roadside attraction. Blisters from shovelling sand are breaking and so is my spirit. Frustrated with the people – some very deep political thinking. Another night without a shower or bed. That makes six – so it goes.

Tuesday, February 13, 1979 (Sahara / Niamey)

Arrived in Niamey at 4:00am. After numerous stops and police checks. Slept the rest of the night in the bus – thank God. Up at 8:00 to noise, dust and movement around the station. Feel like shit – dirty, tired and hungry (worst day I have had). Had coffee and started looking for a hotel with Keiji. Walked all over city (what a shit hole) – main street is dust and sand. No one of any help including tourist office – ignorance. My mood is volatile. Ran into Doz and Jane, they even beat us here – AH!. I am going to kill someone. Checked Canadian C.I.D.A. office - no help. Had coke with kids and relaxed. Found Maison de Jeuneness but they say no stay. Went to hotel for lunch, but no

cheap rooms available in Niamey. Returned to Maison de Jejuneness and took first shower and change of clothes in 7 days. Feel great and complete change of attitude. Waited around Maison de Jejuneness until 5:00. Director showed up and allowed us to stay in dorm one night.. Left our bags then downtown to get police stamp on passport, buy ass-wipe in supermarket and meet Doz and Jane on Terrace coffee shop of fine hotel over-looking Niger River and slums. Very strange feeling to sit there drinking cold Coke and looking out over slum. Went to Hotel Domingo for supper and spoke to Swiss fellow (Didot) who is into a Carlos Castaneda Trip. Very young and lots to learn. Back to Maison at 9:30 and bed by 10:30. First bed (of sorts) in seven days. Very tired after last night. Seven weeks since Winnipeg. Spent \$60.00 this week. Mohammed really helped (sorry I gave him wrong direction – hope Allah forgives me. Have about \$860.00 left. Start of Mosquito country.

Wednesday, February 14, 1979

(Niamey)

Valentines Day

Up at 7:30. Very drowsy and still tired. Lingered but finally got act together and left Maison at 8:30. Walked up to Hotel Domino with bags to have coffee. Hung around until someone checked out and got a room for \$ 5.50/each. Left bags and downtown. Got cab to Benin Embassy, filled out forms and left passports. Walked back downtown through nice European residential area. Swimming pools et. al. Stopped at small market to buy tomatoes, onions and gas for Keiji stove. Returned to hotel at 1:00. Relaxed then light lunch with Doz and Jane. . Returned to room and did laundry from one week in Sahara. I had to get into shower stall with clothes on, then walk on them to get clean. Relaxed, wrote and out by 4:30-5:00. Got cab back to Benin Embassy and picked up passports (helped them fill in info. they forgot) Cab driver got lost in Ritzy European area. – this city is crawling with Europeans. . Visited European Super-Market AHG ! One half the whites are here to help and the other half are here to exploit. Returned to hotel at 6:00. Went for supper to street vendor (good and cheap) with others. Eight in total. Back to Domino for a coke and back to room by 10:00. Sewed my shirt and to bed by 11:00. First hotel room in quite awhile. Really enjoying the luxury and getting organized. Shaved my beard off today – will start another.

Thursday, February 15, 1979

(Niamey)

Up for coffee and breakfast in bed (thanks to Keiji stove). Another hot and very humid day, but the one I have been waiting for to relax and get some writing done. Very good life-style. Travel then stop and get act together, then travel again. My concerns about not being productive are really frustrated in a country where un-productivity is a way of life not just a word. I come from a developed, industrialized culture where there is work and opportunity. I forget I am in a world where there is NO work or opportunity....so people sit. Similarly it is silly for me to say the locals are ignorant because of how they operate...En Shala (God willing) is their way of addressing issues and fixing situations. Self-initiative is not common. Washed some more things then out to the hotel courtyard by 11:00. Sat and wrote letter to Tourism staff and home. Drank cold pop and got sun-burnt. (My weight is 68kgs = 150lbs). Had lunch in room and spent afternoon writing. Doz and Jane dropped in around 4:00. Mohammed is in town so dropped in for coffee. Finished my letters and out for supper at 6:30. Very relaxing day. Ate at street vendor stall...much meat – good deal. Back to hotel for night cap with Mohammed. Returned to room 9:30 to write letters and post cards home (Japanese card to Tedford). Feel relatively good and organized. I am sure in another day or two I will be set to travel again. Read for awhile and bed by 11:30. Really getting fed up with arrogant Europeans and especially French.

Friday, February 16, 1979 (Niamey)

Up at 8:00. Life of leisure getting to easy. Doz and Jane came by for coffee and to scrounge what they could then left – not sorry. Had coffee and shaved. Swiss and German guys came over and hotel staff threw them out – great. Keiji and I went to check on bus then to Post Office to mail cards and letters. Cashed cheques and bought groceries. Returned to hotel at 12:30 to make lunch and relax. Spent afternoon relaxing, reading and writing. Easy life making it very difficult to get moving again. Very happy other travellers (Doz, Jane, Didot) out of our lives. Walked back to PO at 3:30 and mailed more cards. Returned to hotel to shower and wash more clothes. Relaxed, read and wrote good letter to Julie – will complete in Lagos. Well, I've done everything I had to do and feel very relaxed and ready to hit the road again (getting bored). Out for supper around 7:00 to local street vendor. Returned to hotel 8:00. Mohammed dropped in with Swiss and German fellows to leave their bags. Despite eruption with hotel boy, but Mo's charm shone thru once again. (For a Moslem who does not know where East is, he sure has a way with people.). By 10:00 everyone left us in peace and quiet. Read and listened to Hotel Domino on a Friday night (three rooms, a pool table and well worn records of "Marylou" and "The House of the Rising Sun". Bed by 10:30.

Saturday, February 17, 1979 (Niamey)

Up at 7:30. Shaved and got act together. Had coffee and breakfast in bed. Sad about saying goodbye to Keiji (good friend), but it must be. (When I met Keiji in Algiers, he had left Japan five years ago to work and travel around the world. Still planned on five more years to do Africa then over to S.A. and North America before returning to Japan). Left hotel with bag by 9:30 and on the road again – alone (first time in weeks). Will be interesting to see how I react. Walked to Lorry Park and got ticket to Goya (\$ 6.00). Waited until bus filled then they fuelled it and did 14 other little tasks before we left Niamey at 1:30. Haze over city and countryside – don't know if it is smog, humidity or dust. They packed the bus full (I think Niger bus are worst in world). Drove back to Dosso then south to Gaya. More poverty and mud huts with thatched roofs.. At one stop I watched how they put roof on – rather ingenious method of rolling it on. Area very dry – they need rain. . More wooded area and palm trees yet very dry. More camels (with muzzles) and kids with begging bowls. Getting into some very isolated and native areas. Nice view of afternoon moon thru haze. Made my only friend on the trip – a deaf mute (when language fails, humanity prevails). Felt bad about not writing poetry – but what can you write about poverty? Mood very good – I'm into travelling no matter the situation. Arrived Goya 7:00pm. Checked out local hotels but too much. Tried to get bus to Malanville but everyone raised prices because of night. Had coffee and supper (smiling and not worried). Asked bus man if I could sleep in bus (old T. Cheque trick), he said O.K. Had coke, smoked and on top of world. Activities in town never died until very late, but slept well anyway. Ingenuity always prevails. Really forming a hatred for Niger – glad to leave and never return. Hope other countries better. I think the basic problem is lack of education. Never been in a country where people so ignorant and un-organized. Portraying self-importance is not only a sign of ignorance, but also of alienation. To sleep 10:00. Feel good (strange not to talk to anyone all day and be only white guy in native town.

