

Exp. No. 18 (his last): TRIP TO EGYPT – 1994 (JRH is 76 years old, his handwriting is getting a little shaky)

The reason for his Expedition was given in a letter response to a letter from Mr. & Mrs. T. Akazawa, Japan, dated June 26, 1994, with handwritten response. Akazawa's letter is just to get Jack caught up on activities in a nearly 2 year silence. In Jack's response he says: "In February and March I camped on the Western Desert of Egypt with Fred Wendorf, Angela Close, the Polish culeogram(?), students & assistance and some Egyptian counterparts. They had been working on archeology of the region for some years. I was brought along because they had found some sorghum seeds c 8,000 years old and needed an interpretation." He said that this is the driest place in the Sahara. They burn wood sticking up out of the sand for fuel. Some of the sticks are alive on the bottom side. It is said that it rained in 1979 and the desert bloomed. Jack Harlan is 76 years old on this, his last exploration trip.

Jan 23 (Sun) Big mix-up with the plane tickets and missed flight.

Jan 24-25 Flew to Egypt: there was a long saga about his bed roll but everything finally got there.

Jan 26: Early flight of just ½ hour. When he got off the plane, he realized that he left the ticket in the pocket of the seat in front of him and he had to wait until everyone else had deplaned to get it. By then he almost missed his contact, Fred, but not quite. I think he lost his hat somewhere. So, finally he and Fred are off in a land cruiser for a 100 km trip across the desert. They arrived about 1 pm, had lunch and Jack developed a bad nose bleed. He took a 2-hour nap. After he got up "some of us gathered about 6 pm for a ration of beer – ½ bottle/person/day. I nipped on my scotch, but it will be gone soon & I will have to dry out – good for me. Water is also in short supply. Bed time was declared to be 8:00 pm & we all sent to our tents. Full moon very bright. A few more nips & into the sleeping bag. Roomy & warm it is a good one."

Jan 27 Up at 7 & out at 8 AM. Fred drove like mad, to keep from getting stuck in the sand: 6-7 miles to Fred's site. He is digging up lots of blades and grinding stones. "Wood and sticks suggested tavorack and acacia. Took samples that could probably be identified. I took a hike and found a piece of ivory (?) carved like a small penis (?) If so, circumcised. Find of the day. Nose bleed again, but not so severe." There is a little description of the two pints of gin someone brought and the ½ bottle of beer.

Jan 28 Fri Up & "out by 8 AM to site E 92, a very large area studded with 'hearths'." He collected some charcoal to be analyzed. Took a hike to a nearby dune and found animal (fox) transfer? & dried skeletons of some kind of shrub." After lunch tried to id the charcoal, also "one or two possible seeds." "that's all, 1/2 bottle beer, supper 7 to bed 8:20."

Jan 29 Sat He went up to another area being worked by Alex and he describes it. Then he went back "& plugged into the hearth samples. Fruitless task. Decided to screen & throw out most of the sample: seeds & charcoal should be retained. It is dirty work; everything gets black & not much water to wash with. Quit ca 4 pm & had a "martini" from baby bottle – it won't last long & I will be weaned. ½ bottle of beer supper & to bed. The weather cool and breezy & very pleasant in the tent, but not for the folks on the dig."

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Jan 30 Sun A mini sandstorm & everyone stayed in the tents. He did some homework “& spent the day getting black from charcoal & finding nothing.”

Jan 31 Mon “A better day for the folks on the dig, but cold. I got dirty & found nothing. Gave a bed-time story about the tomato.”

Feb 1 Tue “Start of the last 4 weeks cold, breezy, no seeds as usual. Gave bed-time story about crops of West Africa. Took up to 8:00 pm which is bed time here.”

Feb 2 Wed “Long boring day on hearth samples. Nada! This was booze day and Jan had brought a bottle of polish Vodka. I had shown lettuce and sycamore to Fred & he asked me to talk about it in eve. – over vodka. Went ok. Dinner & to bed. Cold.”

Feb 3 Thursday “Went with workman to get firewood.” And then he describes that. “A relief from grimy seed hunting. The usual eve with long silence between supper & 8:00 pm.

Feb 4 Fri “More charcoal & seed hunting. Getting very dull & misuse of my time. I am not a seed person anyway. After 4:00 went to tent, poured penultimate drink from baby bottle & flopped on my aching back. Big commotion at 5:00. Ramon Schild had arrived. Noisy greetings & all that. I thought I was unnecessary, but a little before gathering time, I went to Fred’s tent to greet him. Dinner was more lively than before.” So, the usual bed time, but flashlight was not working.

Feb 5 Sat He goes off with Fred & Romom and then Helena (the new people) and look at some interesting sites. After lunch he took a walk with Halls and she showed him some stuff. “Hike a struggle for me so I am writing these notes to rest.”

Feb. 6 Sat He is just hiking around the sand dunes. “Wrote Meg a letter. Bed time story on crops of E. Africa & ?? agriculture.

Feb 7 Mon Hiked around and worked some cross word puzzles. Booze night & we consumed my liter of scotch. Better than ½ bottle of beer. To bed at 8:00 Angelasand w songs & was ____ as usual. All jointed in the ???

Feb 8 Tuesday He goes off with Fred and some others in front of a sand storm. They drop him off at a hotel and there he gets a bath etc. “I was about to go to bed at 8:00 & they came back ‘To see if I was, alright’. Can’t imagine why, but I am afraid I was not very gracious. The place loaded with German tour group. The room like a Circle 6 with Holiday Inn prices. Food not nearly as good as camp food. But water scalding hot & plumbing & AC/heater & beer is not rationed.” [Note: JRH is 76 years old and he had retired some 11 years previously, the days of roughing it are somewhat passed. He is showing that he, after all he has been through, enjoys the modern amenities. As I write this (2013) I am 66 years old & I think this camp he has been on would be pretty grueling for me and he is 10 years older. HVH2]

Feb 9 Wed Loafed around and went on a tour with the tourists. He put a note on the side of the page “Called Meg a little after 9:00 or 4:00 am CST, Could not do it before. Good to hear her voice.”

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Feb 10 Th A very poor day. He must be getting depressed. “Very boring with nothing to read. I should have been writing, but overcome with lethargy. Camp is better. C 4:00 went to have my beer. A C 6:00 my double whiskey & 7:00 dinner. I was the only one there. TV works only some of the time and so to bed, a day lost.”

Feb 11 Fri “Goofed off morning & C noon took cameras to temple (mosque?) to photograph them. Had no flash & flash prohibited inside anyway. Tried a 1 sec exposure wide open for min his lectures, but have dim hopes. The usual beer at 4:00 and whisky at 6:00. This time a lovely little waif of a child (girl type) ate alone at a nearby table. Her father didn’t or couldn’t come to the table. This hotel is going broke unless gov’t picks up the tab.

Feb 12 Sat This was supposed to be market day and he went down to the market, but no one there. He walked around and found a greess (?) grocer with some stuff. “There was a baker with bread, a fish store with no fish...” (This is getting bad.) On way back he ran into Atege (one of the people who had come midway to the camp), who got him in a car to get ticket out of there.

Feb 13 Sun “Must be Sue’s birthday and I don’t know if I did anything about it before I left NO. Try to remember when I get back.” The rest of the day is boring and nothing to do.

Feb 14 Mon Called Meg. They had an ice storm in Memphis and electricity had been off for 2 days.

Feb. 15 Tue Happy Mardi Gras

Feb. 16 Wed Lent begins, Ramadan began on Friday. He seems to be back at the camp. Everyone now gets a full bottle of beer. He was at a dig and he dug down into the sand at about 10-15 cm down found the sand to be quite cold. He checked this at another dune and said: “They could cool their beer in the dune if they wanted. Seems I am the entertainer of the group.” Then he reviews all the various lectures (bed-time stories) he has told them.

Feb 17 Thu. Hiked to the horizon, saw some stuff, finished the book he was reading and then he lists some plants he saw. On next page Hala N. Beraket spelled out neatly her address.

Feb 18 Fri Nothing much., then the names of Romauld Schild and his address.

Feb 19 Sat Spent most of the day reading a book. “Getting to be dull here.”

Feb 20 Sun “Spent morning picking out charcoal from two bags of Fred’s materials. “then they told me they had recalculated the beer & we must go on ½ bottle ration for two days. Why did they bring a plant person to a place with – no plants?”

Feb 21 Mon. He went out with Roman to see wells ... (the text here is kind of weak & I can’t read it), but at the end he says something about the Nile Valley – so I think they are in the Nile Valley.

Feb 22 Tues. “A sand storm... read a who-done-it from the camp library. Read Meg’s poem & very well received raise.

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Feb 23 Wed. He hiked to a place he had been to before to take pictures. Then returned and “reading a novel about Russia before the revolution & something snapped. I think, perhaps, a small stroke. I could not remember the simplest things for a while, but felt perfectly lucid and analyzing the situation. Gradually I seemed to come out of it, testing my memory on various lines I had once memorized – Macbeth, Kipling, etc. & by supper felt I was back to normal state of forgetfulness.” (that ½ bottle of beer ration got to him) “We were back on full bottle of beer ration, having done our penance.” They provided a little entertainment and “I had tea and smoked the first cigarette in ca 25 years. Not bad, but not tempting either. Entertainment did not last long and so to bed.”

Feb 24 Thurs. He packs up and heads home. “Left bed roll with Fred (he’ll use it for himself) & water jug off after breakfast with thankfully short goodbys. Ride to Abu Shimbel especially rough & dusty, but only c 2 hrs. Room at Nefertari (Hotel) & hot shower & good hour digging out of the dust. I think my case must not have been completely closed. Now, a beer on the terrace overlooking Lake Nasser and a letter from Meg. I’ve started my way home!” (Note this entry his hand is very steady.)

Feb 25 Fri “Up at 6:00 to pack everything. Breakfast at 7:00 w/checkout. Expensive but is the east Time.” (Meaning the center of power is shifting from the West to the East?) took a bus to the airport. Short flight to Aswan. They dropped me at the Cleopatra Hotel. The bar had no alcohol. Bed seems to have neither springs nor mattress (his handwriting is now pretty bad.) (This is Ramadan, remember.)

Feb 26 Sat Went to a hotel at the airport. Things just as dry, and he is all out of local money. At least he got a room “with a small balcony & can see the Nile c 2 blocks away.”

Feb 27 Sun Now he wanted to go to the West Bank of the Nile, but fell into the hands of a couple of pirates who wanted to get his money. So, he signed up with them and went to the west bank and visited the Valley of the Queens and the Valley of the Kings and all and spent all his money.

Feb 28 Mon Did not try to do much this day. Walked over to a nearby field and made some comments on what they were growing there. I think his hotel may be Etop. He went to a bank and got some more money.

Mar 1 Tue Now he’s got some time to kill. He traded a book he had for another book and read it. Got plans to Courier & Novatel (Hotel booking). Tried to call Meg but Nada.

Mar 2 Wed Checked out and plane was no hassle (for a change). Flew to Athens. Signed up for a tour to Corinth & one to Delphi.

Mar 3 Thr Went on Corinth tour; did a little shopping.

Mar 4 Fri Went on Delphi tour.

That is the last entry I have. I assume he gets back to New Orleans.