proverbial "experts" but just practical,improving idealists left to their own work. In fact, this task was a pleasure to work on, for there was a great level of autonomy--there were no bosses to pay note of, and ideas and initiative had to come from within. Of course, the Gourmas had their expectations, but they just left me to work it out in the main.

(***I have to add, that my attitude at the time was somewhat over-deferrential. Thinking that most Western ideas and projects failed because they were culturally insensitive, depended on outside capital, or whatever, I downplayed myself and my ideas. However, Pastor Paul, Wombo, Telford Ruten and others supported and encouraged me a lot. They wanted my ideas. Shall we say that I had unbounded cautious optimism and ideas? The project went very well, and this was certified by Martha Phelps when she passed through in the summer of 1986. I learned some very valuable lessons. I had something to offer them (honey-house reorganisation and ideas). They too had something to offer me (African beekeeping and many, many other ideas and experiences). SUCESSFUL RURAL DEVELOPMENT OCCURS WHEN PEOPLE, AS EQUALS, SHARE WITH EACH OTHER WHAT THEY KNOW. Never forget this.***)

With just a few days to fill before moving on to Mahadaga for a visit, there is no real time to continue the bee-project by seeing the local beekeepers; instead, there is a little work to be done with the Gourma pastor's garden (Pastor Paul). At present it is a cluster of young fruit trees and weeds on subsoil. Just something to do! Thinking on the work here reveals a certain irony. All of the work done so far--and the garden--is just what the Gourmas asked the residing missionary to do, so far without any results; and I suspect more than just incidental tension between the two parties exists. Not a lot of fun, you say. . . Yet again, one is thrown in the middle of a potential fire-fight.

Friday, 20th July, 1984--

I am now in Mahadaga, still waiting for that visa to Niger and wondering if it will ever come. The nurses at the dispensary have much to be done, but since they were not expecting me, there is "nothing" set aside in terms of projects. One still needs inventiveness here.

The last few days in Fada were hard; every day one expected to move on and out, but sucessive delays kept on holding up the works. There was no concern on the part of the Fada missionaries, who are used to delays. However, a lesson in patience had to be learned. That is what should have been done, but in desperation I could only find succour in digging trenches, and and fell into exhaustion at the end of the day. It was a hard lesson, alright. (***I reached a stage when doing something just to be busy and not accepting the fact that I had to simply wait it out patiently became an end in itself. It became more important than resting and waiting, of being aware that this American drive, this urge to do something, no matter how vain in the short term, was not helping my image in the eyes of the Africans passing by. Oh well, at that time I acted like an impatient young fool, and did not care. I sought escape from the frustration of delay--and other things--through work and exhaustion. I hope I have learned better by now.***)

In any case, the trip to Mahadaga came, and with it the chance to see my friends Elizabeth and Sonja there. However, this is where this pen falters. In the days here, there transpired a sharing of experiences, a talking and caring that cannot be recorded, for to do so would be an insult to the art of writing. Suffice to say, that the rigours of African life had worn us all, and this time of talking together rebuilt and strengthened us. I now see how friends in need can pull each other up. To spend all the time alone would drive one mad, especially in a strange place of the soul, let alone country.

While doing fix-it jobs at the dispensary, there was the chance to see how medical missionaries work. It is a bit gruesome. I do not wish to work as a medic, after seeing the raw ruggedness of this dispensary. The long lines of stoic Africans, all with their multifarious diseases. You name it--it was there. V.D., leprosy, hernias, and death. It was here that I saw the mother carry her dead child, a victim of hunger and sickness. What to say about this? While fixing cabinets and walls, tiptoing amoungst the filth and misery, and seeing the same needles going into fifty-odd arms, it was all one could do to keep sane. Those nurses are truly brave.

Yet in the midst of this place of death was to be found one person who performed her work unflinchingly, loved her patients, smiled when babies within her arms fouled her dress or face, and examined skin-snips and pap-smears with joy. . . The essense of the past Florence Nightingale lives on in Mahadaga in the present woman, whom you all know. (***That is, Elizabeth Latimer.***)

(***During this time at Mahadaga I talked with Elizabeth Latimer and Sonja Payne, worked in the dispensary for Pauline Clarke, learned much from Betty Eichhorst, and had one of the best times of my life. One funny pasttime which Elizabeth, Sonja and I loved to do was tell "snake stories" in which some pulpy romance novel character wanders into a dark room alone and gets bitten by a snake, usually a puff-adder. For us, it was a way of being children in the face of our own pain and questions, of drawing closer together. I would trade that week and a bit with them for very little else.***)

????? July, 1984--

The stay in Mahadaga was brought to an abrupt end (***during a haircut!***) when the SIM plane buzzed dispensary, landed, and took me back to Niamey, in Niger. The six weeks in Upper Volta were ended, but it is only the beginning--the call has never been stronger to return in a few years, for many years, as a missionary beekeeper/gardener. It remains to be seen how eight and a half months in Maradi, Niger will change that, as well as the next few years. . .

Friday, 27th July, 1984--

The last few days have been heavy. Looking over the last few entries, I see that not a lot has been said; yet there has been much transpiring within. Yes, this is Maradi, and the honeymoon in the bush is over for the moment; with the move to a town-based compound there arise interpersonal strains and woes. Somehow, the world that was viewed through the wide-angle lenses in Fada n' Gourma has been supplanted by the slit of the mental pillbox. The voices of sharing at Mahadaga are snuffed out, and I find myself a spectator and

stranger to that which happens in the run of missionary life. How to account for this? Here, it is so easy to be irratated and upset over the actions and attitudes of those around me: not that they are to blame, either. It is just the quarters. There is enough foundation here for real squabbles to arise, and I am sure that veteran missionaries know what I mean here. Oh for the wings of a dove! Then I would flee to a desert place. Dead right, David. However, this is hard in a part of Niger that is heavily populated.

The ministry that SIM has set up here is a bit curious, but still necessary. There is every chance that the bee work of Fada will not be repeated here, for the work is all repair-handyman-maintenance. In Africa, things break down all the time; in the Maradi (Central) station, there has been no repairman for two and a half years. This is the case at the local farm-school too; either there are no repairmen, or all available men have other ministries to follow. The bottom line is that all the wiring, plumbing, carpentry, glazing, (arc-welding), well digging etc. falls to . . . me. Yes, I am a novice, but then short-termers in the medical fields have done things that would have them sued in America. Is this a dead end? No, for it is very necessary for the others here, and in any case, it is a wonderful chance to learn skills that are hard and expensive to learn back home. This is a truth about Africa--if something is banned in America, it is sure to be here. This runs from bad drugs, to milk powder, to quack doctors, to cars that fail inspection. The lot. . . Given that, people cope very well, considering they have some justification to be upset. Life here is one great improvisation, and I suspect this job will be full of it.

So much for life within the walls; as for Maradi, there are two animals that are unforgettable. The first is the local red goat, whose skins are seen all over Europe. Why so famous? Yet they wander everywhere and eat the rubbish off the streets. The other animal is the fruit bat--the "flying fox." I must be the only person in Maradi--certainly in SIM--that likes them, for they are rampant fruit destroyers and carriers of rabies. Yet they are so beautiful, (in a way. . .) About the size of a crow, they can be seen best at the parting of the daylight when they return to roost. Looking just like a bird they approach, and one still thinks they are birds--until they fly past. Their sideways profile is just like that of a barn-storming fox.

(Ended here, as a missionary was going back to the US today.)

13th August, 1984.

For some reason, procrastination has set in, so this entry will be limited. The past few weeks have been likeXX the landscape--flat and hazy, with the heat waves hindering vision. Work at the mission-yard has been varied, it is true; however, it has bred the same sort of dust that arises to obscure the broad vision. On the one hand, the work is necessary for the others here, and it is good training. In the past time, the mission has turned me loose on plumbing, wiring, woodwork, etc that would be hard to do back home, what with all the codes, standards, and expectations. Here, there is the dubious institution of "Afro-engineering", (or "Missionary engineering"), that allows all sorts of ventures. One has heard of the pre-meds who do things unheard of in American hospitals--the same is true in this field. Due to a lack of professional tradesmen, the mission takes on all comers to fix it. The work done is a form of ministry, discovery and trial-and-error; it helps here, but would get me sued back home. Oh well. However, there is a facet to this repair work that grinds one down, and could lead to problems. Life is tied down to action on the compound, and this is too limiting; after all one comes out here to rub elbows with more than the few nationals who come within the walls. Every trip to the market is a breath of fresh air--new faces! Those days in the bush of Upper Volta were beautiful for the living with the Gourmas, and the restricted presence of white people, with all their baggage. Life here could become a spectacle, as in the day's work, I strut and fret my hours on a sandy stage in an avian cage, gazed at by those who pass by. That is the grand paradox--in serving someone elses needs for an important end, one finds the high aspiration somehow transformed to a state of being that could be termed commonplace. Therefore, the solution is plain; get out of the yard, and into the town.

In terms of exercise, this was fortunate. There is a swimming pool in the old part of town which used to be run by the governing French expatriates, but which now harbours those who remained behind, Peace-Corps volunteers, and the missionaries. Amoungst the old and chipping whitewash, surrounded by vestigial tennis courts and flanked by mosaic courtyards lies this swimming pool. One is amazed! Here, in the middle of this dessicated land, lies the remains of what once was. I feel like I am transposed to another age, and keep expecting to see the Foreign Legion commandant burping over his Pernod. They even serve Perrier here, or rather, something rebottled in those XXXXXXX demilitres. Still, the pool is there, works well, and is great for burning off parts that the sun cannot reach.

There is something strange about the pool, and the reasons one goes there. One could well argue that such practice is a real abomination in a land that is drying up so fast, with people who are following suit. Yet, it is intensly therapeutic; to live too long on the cutting edge of life here is an invitation to turning dull and callous, or mad and errant. One jumps into the water to flee, yet the return is allways imminant. The pool is the vortex that divides the reality from the fantasy, and under the waves, one forgets. Maybe this is why one can see expatriates and volunteers alike at this place, which is almost a century out of XXXX alignment with reality.

20th August, 1984.

There is something about these past days that defies a complete recording; perhaps it is only now that one is forced to admit that this journal is finite. Like the rain here, it is spasmodic. This is a bump back down to earth, for in those early weeks, it seemed that

everything was recordable; now, I wonder. Even in this past week, with the predictable run of maintenance work, there has been a great amount of looking ahead, planning, and also dreaming. Yes, the semi-desert makes one do that anyway, but there is more to it this time. This week has been loaded with vision.

Ever since leaving Upper Volta and the bees, I have wanted to go back; not because Niger is terrible or upsetting, but because those six weeks are a watershed. In short, there is every reason to believe that the bee-ministry amoungst the Gourmas is where God would have me work; it is also a task that I wish to follow myself, for there is the challenge of establishing beekeeping in a hitherto underhived area. How does one explain this to the readers back home, who range from the profoundly evangelical to the profoundly skeptical? To the former group, there is nothing out of the ordinary, and this account makes sense. But the latter, and their ilk. . . . Just a few days before leaving for Africa, someone came out boldly and said, "You really are not going out there for the bees--in fact, I wonder if you know for what you are going out at all. I hope you find it, whatever it is." How perceptive of you, friend! Indeed, I went out in a daze of sorts, but have found that which has eluded me for too long; some call it a calling, some call it a sense of direction, and a few call it "the big issue." The ultimate irony lies in the fact that the bees were in it; how hilarious that the person who asked me that question was the one who gave me a nameless book on a man in search of a golden queen-bee.

Enough of bee riddles. The net result is that several of the past XXXXXX days have been spent dreaming, and the nights writing up a proposal to the mission and the Gourma church over a bee-project. You will find it enclosed, I hope. This document is a substantial synthesis of the past weeks, just like some term papers can be, especially those during finals week. There is something ominous about writing up such a document; it is the drafting of potential future history. However, the upcoming meeting of church and mission in November will prove the issue to be real or vapid.

A thought strikes at this point. This account is obviously limited to certain anecdotes, so those of you who wonder about the unrecorded things have just to ask. Memory X Experience=Story.

Monday, 2nd September, 1984.

Death arrived with the morning and returned in the evening, each time in a a new guise. It was hard to believe it had two faces.

For some days, there had been a pulling to visit the local abbatoir on market day, so as to see how the animals ended up and where their carcaces went. Having worked and visited other slaughter-houses, this visit was not motivated by the macabre or ghoulish, but by a desire to see now the Hausas ran these affairs. I was not at all ready for what happened.

Maradi at six in the morning was cool for once, and the air was slightly damp. People wandered to and fro, passing sonambulist goats and guinea-hens, who photographed their world from rawhide tethers. Here, the silence was due to the owlishness of those who were arising, and not the walled reserve of the more conscious daytime. Even the taxi driver was reserved, as he drove out to the abbatoir. The few street-lights were being dimmed as the sun arose amoungst them, all being weakened by the rising vapours. It was hardly the day to see an abbatoir, but still. . .

there were two open-air buildings--just a concrete floor, and a heavy tin roof, about the side of a tennis court each. If I were a USDA meat inspector, I do not know what would have happened, but then, this is their culture. It was straight out of Apocalypse Now, or worse. Lines of small farmers beside the deathyard, selling their last few animals before the drought and famine wiped them out; they would have loved to have kept them, but could not.

The roof was adorned in cobwebs, but the floorwas covered in red. There is no description--just snapshots, a furious taking in of particulars. The grinning and laughter of the older men, and the scurrying about of the apprentices, carrying water XX to the carnage like Nelson's powder-monkey's to the 24-pounders. The gasp of cut throats and arteries; one could have been whale-watching if one shut off vision and dreamed hard. Twisted necks, dangling legs, swirming bodies, no concern, as work continued. People wading in red, all barefoot; the flashing of curved knives being sharpened by hand, or by running past a cement wall and skipping the blade on the top. The silence of the sheep, whatever their state. The mind numbed, set in shock. Men with woodcutting axes cleaving the cattle in twain. On top of this, the psychotic and dissonnant screach of the hand-powered lift, which raised up the cattle to a workable height; that sound was incidental, but could have been adopted as special effects, were it in a film. Reality was nowhere, orientation had fled. Outside, the discarded parts--hoofs, goat heads, and others all thrown in a trash-heap or arranged with pride. Why the distinction? The grinning of a camel's head on a cement slab. Chickens and Muscovy ducks wading about, and nibbling; the vultures waiting patiently. Behind the building, the few who processed the tripe and stomachs--like old sacks with winged fungus growing off it. An old man with a shovel, clearing the Via Dolorosa of the animals, onto the manure-heap. That was bearable, but behind him, a woman washing her baby in it--why!? Why? The workers just went on and slaughtered, cut, and marketed, with no second thoughts; here, it was the pondering one who would curl up under his own vexed questions. The steady flow of bicycles leaving the abbatoir, with a goat, sheep, or half a bull slung accross the rear rack. The diminuendo of the sheep's tails ping-pinging on the bicycle spokes as they dissappeared from view.

The rest of the day was passed in fog--the demiworld of post-operation anaesthesia. There are no comments, no recriminations, yet an etching has occured. The screech of the hacksaw or banging of the hammer is mechanical, yet for some reason the mind is still able to smile over the ribbons of wood leaping forth from the plane like shorn locks to the ground.

That evening, the day died too, but it was different. There is a slab of concrete behind one of the offices, and from there one can sit and ponder. Whereas the abbatoir was violently blatant to the inner perception, here on this slab, overlooking the valley and behind it the dying day, the view was outward. It was a still-shot, mellowing out under the long exposure of dripping seconds, as the sun departed. As the egrets made wing to rooky wood and the shadows arose, the bats came forth; the flying mice somersaulting after insects, and the flying foxes crashing into the fruit trees. Gazing out into this entr'acte, on the edge of the finite, there was the immesurabe comfort of knowing the infinite that had made this sunset possible. Was I really in the place of slaughter this day? That hour of sound and fury really did signify nothing, but these moments of departure trickeled away in peace; there was the knowing that the sun would rise, enthroned in gold, as Homer says so well. With that hope, there was release--and sleep.

4-9
(27)

??? September, 1984--

I took a short break from the maintenance work just to get away from it all, but also went to Niamey to see the powers that be in SIM to discuss the bee project in Upper Volta. The first part of the trip was in a missionary's car and the last in a bush taxi; although the two ways of travel were different, the impressions gained from looking at the land were the same.

The journey was a filmstrip of changing colours and shapes, yet again the impressions were the same; as with the trip to the abbatoir one could do little but photograph with the eyes. The car left Maradi and the police checkpoint as the vaunting heavens above changed colour, as one sees sped up in a planetarium. Below, the policeman, shrouded in a black cape with hood and looking just like a Spanish Moor on contract to the Inquisition, merely blinked at us and let down the wire. The road was black but paved in drifting sand: straight and deserted, it could have been the haunt of The Nightrider or Mad Max. The trees should have appeared green, yet they were without leaves and frosted with egrets; sometimes as we passed, they shed their dandruff as the birds took off.

Along the roadside, the fields gave their own sad account--millet and guinea-corn for miles on end were standing burnt, yellow, dry, headed and empty of seed. It was the precursor of famine, one that has not been experienced for decades. In many places the ground sprouted plants of six inches or less. Everything was yellow, bent over, and still. The only water to be seen constantly was the mirage upon the piste as it fled from us into the sky.

The land changed towards Galmi, but not so the impressions. The soil became stony and the form mountainous. For all I know, the Viking spacecraft could have dropped upon Galmi and not Mars, for those famous pictures match Galmi perfectly. Truly, it was unreal! Thatched houses sat upon a slight slope in solitude--there were only stones underfoot and wind without and sky above. It would have been enrapturing if it were the wilderness, yet this was an abode where people tried to live. The distant islands of green in the valley were pecariously mounted in their frame of red stone and vast distances.

After Galmi the land changed once again, the surface becoming flat, but dotted with miniature mountains--it was like driving amoungst extinct volcanoes, except that past flash-floods had worn them down. Yet still the millet was dead and the air hot and still. A silent requiem.

Thus it continued, all the way to Niamey. The usually loud bush-taxi was subdued for miles, save at pick-up points or at the frequent police roadchecks. It was very different from that bush-taxi ride from Ouagadougou to Fada n' Gourma, where people frollicked and gabbled without end. The observation is endless yet the provoked thought and interpretation of that which was seen is very nigh infinate. Such vision is the seedbed of theodicy, and I have not figured out why yet; it is too vast and frightening. It was a relief to see the bush-taxi arrive in the Niamey marketplace, where the vastness of open space and contemplation was sucked into the black hole of peering faces, the fleeing from street hawkers, and the return to the mission guest house.

There is a malaise of sorts which is coming upon this mission station. From the inside view point of the maintenance work, one can see the cracks appearing in buildings and fences, but also in the people--their attitudes, actions, and relations. With the onset of the October hot-season, life in these parts is showing up the nastier side of all of us. (28)

However, there are reasons; after the time spent in the bush-stations of Gourmantché, one can see how a busy yard at Maradi can become a rat's nest. To live here is similar to being a fly which rests at the point of focus of a large parabolic mirror on a hot, sunny day--not only do you burn up, you see it happening in a warped 3-D magnification. The image of being in the trying-pot, the fulcrum, the scales, the focus is everywhere; however, I am wondering if anybody else sees it thus here, for they run about under pressure, bleeding off steam and verbal vapour.

The land is a trying-pot. Daily, it is chastised by the sun, even though the latter has broken and destroyed the millet filds. People are smitten as well. There is the language of hatred in the way the land speaks to the soul; although it is flat and has trees on it, the relief makes one feel hemmed in--almost claustrophobic. I cannot figure this paradox out, how a great land closes about one's very being. It is incessant in reminding one of its hostility; this was brought about during a walk in a large grove of nim trees. These trees were planted in rows to help stop the desertification of the area, yet being in them was a paradox. Their green closeness wrapped the senses--all was well, yet underfoot was sparseness and the buzzing of flies, for people would use the grove to releive themselves. Morbid egrets stalked under the trees, and ate the flies, and through the breaks in the trees one could see the few remaining heads of millet, all turned brown or black and void of grain. The disparity is shocking to the senses, yet the land is always silent.

The image of being in the focus is never stronger than when walking accross the courtyard at noon. The surrounding buildings have been given new paint, and the glare is fierce. Like Don Quixote surrounded by flashing mirrors, one walks in, on, and through light to the welcome dimness of the toolshed. I know we should walk in the light, but. . . The exterior appearance of the mission buildings and grounds has never been better, yet within itself, there is delapidation and strife. We are all set in sun-spun limbo--am I the only one who sees this? In the daily task and temperament of each day, in the relative internal isolation that is the lot of a station maintenanceman, one notices this and others. The taste of sweat and the saltiness of someones sarcasm. The clinking of a chain being dragged over steel, and two forceful characters argue. None but the typewriter's rapid rattle, or the demented shriek of a mud-wasp as it welds mud to nest, only to have it broken up when the cleaning maid returns. The beautiful work of a spider, with the guyropes to the web four feet long--all dismissed as passing by some, or passed by and dismissed by others. The <u>basso continuo</u> of the Maradi town generator in the murky air--reality in time and sound from without this, our demiworld.

Yea, though I descend into the uttermost parts of the earth, thou art there also. After two months of life above, the cap to the well was opened, and the well-crew went in to deepen the shaft, for the table had fallen a metre or two. The cemented casements fell for two seconds, so to speak, yet even there, one was hemmed in and tested. The bottom was hidden in darkness, dusted from careless stones above, and full of dead air. Now, I respect miners! At the depth of the earth, one did not escape

feeling really small, as I had within the vastness above. You are a part of me. . . it said.

I did not try to think about the quality of the rope ladder; some of the rungs were missing and all one was able to do was "chimney" up and down the shaft. Life at the bottom was a test. The pipes from the former digging were embedded in the mud and would not be pulled. There was only room for two--and the other man only spoke Hausa. Try communicating in such circumstances. . . it is hard. Two totally different people, in the bowels of sand, foot deep in water--a conditional intimacy. In this place the strain grinds you down, and the air is such that upon emerging you feel cold, clammy, shivering and weary. Down under you laugh at anything--you must. Farts brought ripples of joy from those above, for the shaft amplified everything. In this place I wonder, what does it mean? In this place of filth and testing, of soaking shoes and saturated clothes, underground, with a stranger for fellowship, what does it mean to learn patience and forebearance? Everyone in the mission station has undergone stress and frustration in many different ways, and they are under pressure to burst assunder. The mystery, and yet the tragedy, is that one holds out well when under great pressure from forces that cannot be readily put down, and then blows up at the slightest subsequent provocation, and from a fellow at that. We come out here to do the world's most noble dirty work--and blow it! We give our bodies to be burned by the sun and the comments of others yet, not having love, we are accounted as nothing. Therefore at this time one sees a group of people together, yet not together. Some bicker openly, and other pull apart into isolation and fret in silence. It is in this drawing within that we are changed; from this metamorphosis comes a stunting of life--in relations, work, and above all in prayer meets. "Seven days without prayer makes one weak" yet seven days with stunted prayer makes one warped. This seems to be (part of) the malaise of Maradi Central these days.

It is in this time of bickering and withdrawal that the time in Mahadaga returned to mind as a balm--perhaps the lessons learned there could be applied to Maradi today. Although there was no bickering in Fada n' Gourma the pressures of circumstance were great and the spirit shrunken. All it needed was a time to talk (and pray) with two others who loved and cared; to this day, the time in Mahadaga stands as a thing of great beauty. I say this because nobody seems to talk much here, for many rest under a different blanket. Indeed, I was warned of the way of life here before arriving; however, that "firefly in the heart of darkness" is in danger of becoming the fly in the parabolic mirror and being scorched. Yes, life here is rough, but must there be all this bickering? For outside, the land laughs at us. . . There is no inpenetrable wall of jungle between us, but a wall nonetheless. In a sense I am beginning to feel like Marlowe (going up the river)--the similarities are becoming frightening.

17th October, 1984--

After three months (at Maradi Central) the Mission moved me to the Farm School, which is on the edge of town.

Looking back on the past month, I am very glad there were no

entries in this journal, for I was sick with serious introspection. The negativism, fear, worry and other garbage were just as effective as hepatitis or the like. However, a consideration of that time may be of use to those at home with a similar experience.

As can be gleaned, introspection came about by the isolation from open friends who were willing to comfort or challenge me, separation from those at home--and especially those of Mahadaga. Here, one has plenty of challenge in the daily maintenance work and one is amoungst others, but alone--blindfolded, groping, lost. The rest hours become very dangerous, since everyone retires within to sleep or read. It is then that the walls become too familiar and the floor worn with caged-in pacing. The mind, unable to speak or see without turns within, and encounters a dark and bottomless pit. Believe it; the journey up the river into the heart is just as Marlowe said it was.

All manner of questioning arises within--what did I do wrong? why so tough? what am I doing here? were the motive for coming here true and in the Spirit, or am I here otherwise? It is spiritual warfare, for in these times the enemy attacks and accuses with scorn; his aim is to keep one concentrating within, and not without at God. Spiritual siege stinks. Others in the mission compound comment on the dangers of such, but the questions continue to demand an answer--the beggars, food, anguish at others bickering, the meaning of life and the essence of true gratitude. . . when the world all about lives on uncaring, unsaved, unfed, ungrateful, unconscious and unquestioning. Woe to the soul who tries to search for such an answer on his own power! It can do little but drive one within, into a spiritual and mental black-hole, where all is compressed. It is a terrible place, but it is a valuable lesson from one who has been there. Do not go up the river.

In time, one realises that this inward analysis is rotting everything, for if taken to its final conclusion one is left with nothing but self, and its full revelation is brutal. (Thankfully I did not go that far.) The horror, the horror! This trip could only have occurred in Africa, away from the familiarity of Massachusetts and its people. Even now while at this table, I wonder why that happened--was I being "sifted as flour" and tested like Peter, or did God wish to show me the bankruptcy of the inward-looking life as a sort of lesson? Even Christians have to be reminded of the need to look up and out. It is to the grace of God that I owe the rescue from introscection, for He used an Australian missionary (Tony Rinaudo) and the writings of N.V. Peale to effect this. There are still questions and no visible answers, but at least the perspective is correct again. Enough said: I just wanted to tell you lot back home that missionaries are not unscathed. . . they are tested, then proofed.

During this time the yearning to return to Bourkina Faso has continued unabated, and the wish to work with the Gourmas and the bees likewise. Therefore I am taking Gourma language classes with one of the hundred or so Gourmas who live in Maradi (Lompo Larraba). Considering they are so rare here, I praise God that this tutor is from Fada, and a Christian too. . . (The Hausa language) never caught on due to lack of interest, but Gourma has been a pleasure to

study. This is helpful, for it is somewhat difficult, and the Gourmas speak even faster than Italians. Hopefully by December Monsieur Roger (Lompo Larraba) will have taught enough to be of use back at Fada with the bees.

Tuesday, 23rd October, 1984--

Oh God! Why did it happen? So sudden. So sudden. . . and so pointless. How is it that a death does such things to us?

I am not even sure how to write this, for reality has fled and the world has died in its tracks. The morning was hot and dusty, and action was lethargic. Work was done in limbo and the body was sullen to saw and pound nails. Lunch at Tony's was quiet and satisfying, with the children crying at table or throwing crumbs. . . yes, quiet it was. Young Benjamin and Mellissa were moved to the bedroom to talk with Tony, while Liz and I sat at table. In time a mission car came, and Liz went into the kitchen to talk.

There is an unmistakable fluttering of wings, a knowing when news of death is whispered in the next room. One knows, but one cannot hear the words: I thought it was news of a heart attack, but it was not.

The unfolding scene was fascinating to watch, but too sad, too sad. There were two halves to the house--the wrenching and the oblivious, the kitchen and the bedroom. In the middle lay the dining-room, the point of meeting, of seeing and hearing, of shocked observation, of a very sad paradox. In the kitchen Liz whispered to the unseen visitor, and the news froze the ears. Through the doorway to the bedroom, Tony could be seen with his two children reading a story, unaware of everything. My ears and eyes told contrary stories. When Liz came in the news was half-expected--but Tony! He too came in from reading stories and. . .

Our world is out of it. You know? The unreality of where we stand. Gordon (Bishop) was killed in the bottom of a well shaft, as a concrete well-ring fell down on him. Something tells me to write this, even so soon after the news. There is something very indescribable--known only to those who have seen it, or been seen by it.

Why write? It is worthless.

Wednesday, 31st October, 1984--

A week has passed since Gordon died at the well, and the intervening time has answered some questions--at least. Later on during that day, we learned the truth about his death. No, he was not in the well: he was under the large tripod that was being used to lower a one-ton concrete well-ring down the shaft. The tripod splayed apart like an overloaded giraffe, the well-ring fell down the shaft, and Gordon was crushed between the lip of the well and a tripod leg. Just like that.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." How true, Tertullian! They came from far and wide--missionaries and Africans--to say goodbye to Gordon. I forgot that burial in the tropics has to be quick; at that time I was shocked at the speed of it all. Under a few flourescent lights and surrounded by dozens of oil lamps, over a

hundred met together. "Why seek you the living amoungst the dead? He is gone." These words and more made this burial very unique, for in the midst of shock came an outlook that amazed the Muslim onlookers.

However, what was the more amazing was how this death united the Maradi missionaries. For too long there has been bickering and infighting within SIM, and it took a death to stem and end it. Old-timer missionaries were reduced by their tears and others walked as shell-shock victims. . . certain of that hope, but still shocked.

I watched the burial from within the crowd and will just give commentary--again, one can only record sight and sound, as at the abbatoir. The bright but local-lighting lamps, and the dim forms of the crowd behind. The thump-thump of the dirt on the coffin lid, and the agitated dust rising upwards. The strangeness of a nighttime burial. The unfamiliarity of the open buffet dinner that night--almost a wake?--and then the banquet at a local restaurant the week after on the widow's birthday. I dare not ask such questions here lest they turn on me, but pose them to you at home. How long will the orations hold this peace?

Enough of this. After much, delay the local government was able to give permission to the mission to deliver grain to the outlying villages. Acheiving that aim was a hard task for Tony, who is in charge of the grain work. There are endless papers to fill out, bureaus of authority to visit and permissions to gain--the complete runaround. Oh yuk. Tony had been doing this for weeks before the mission sent me to work for him, and he has been running about as a caged leopard. It was even quite a task to gain permission to borrow a Maradi DPW truck to transport the thirteen and a half tons of sorghum, milk powder, oil and sugar--but it was done. A few days ago it was carried to a certain village and under a large spreading thorn tree; there, representatives from the fifteen villages (that Tony serves on the tree-planting/conservation project) met with their ox-carts and took it off. What was a substantial pile of food vanished when set apart for each village. It was only good for one month or maybe two. Truly, it is mere dust in the scales when ranged against the need. These fifteen villages were lucky, since they are served by the chicken/well/tree project. . . otherwise, they would starve.

The attitude of these people is memorable. It is a trying but necessary duty to accept a chicken or a guinea-hen from the village chief or project agent. Even though they are near starving this goes on. (Sometimes there were no more than a handful of scrawny birds in the village, but the chief or agent gave Tony a cock out of respect and gratitude. Usually, Tony gave the bird to one of his men who passed it on to someone else in need.) During lunch it is a relief to eat in the agent's compound, and not have to brave the gazing eyes of the children without. There are so many questions raised that it is best to just forget them and keep on working--visiting villages, passing out food, and giving trees to the village agents for local reafforestation.

(Driving from village to village I saw what famine did to these people. The pasturage failed, and so did the grain crop. The men drove their herds to Maradi--one group even deep into Nigeria to the south--to try and sell them, and find whatever work was available.

Perhaps these were the people I saw lined up outside the abbatoir that morning a few weeks ago, who sold their livestock for pittance and then had to buy grain at greatly inflated prices--kept high in some cases by merchants who knew that hungry people would buy. Back in the villages the strength was going, if not gone with the men. Sometimes there was just the old chief, women and children . . . yes, the children too, living in a village surrounded by dead yellowed diminishing millet and ramshackle, collapsed granaries. No, this was not like the pictures of Ethiopia--in one case some impish children jumped onto the rear bumper of Tony's Datsun and hung on for the ride, and he stopped and really chewed them up--but it was famine. I do not know who lived and who died and became part of the dust.

One night Tony and his contact had a Hausa Bible study around a hurricane lamp and a few people listened in. Someone had real faith. The village was quiet then and the stars clear, so very bright! Perhaps you could say the nighttime hid the ugliness. . .)

The fifteen villages used to be just for the tree project; now, due to the famine, this has ceased. The government has refused mere food handouts, so these villages are now in the strange position of having to plant and maintain trees in order to be fed--and starvation level rations at that. It is here that one sees humanity at its rawest, and even though one is delivering grain in an effort to save, the image of mere delay is everywhere. Why, there are thousands of tons of grain to the south yet the border (to Nigeria) is resolutly closed. There are hills of grain in Maradi but high prices and other things hide it from the bush villages. Oh well. . .

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There is now more chance to continue work in the bush, as the Mission has asked me to drive the pick-up for the village evangelism team. This is a bit sobering as Gordon used to lead and drive for this group. Still, it is an open door for learning more about village evangelism, the nationals, and the bush. I am very grateful.

Finally, some beautiful news from Fada n' Gourma, where the bees are. One of the Gourmas there wrote a letter, dropping such hints as "wish you were back--we miss your work with the bees--my children ask after you a lot--Paul and I want you back," etc., etc. (Pastor) Paul is one of the Gourmas whose word makes or breaks this bee ministry proposal. Open doors? This seems to be very true, and I rejoice that God has shown me thus.

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END OF ORIGINAL JOURNAL. Left Maradi around the 20th December, 1984. Spent Christmas in Mahadaga, then worked on the beekeeping project near Fada n' Gourma until early January, 1985. Went to Ouagadougou, then took the "Gazelle" train to Abidjan. After a few days I flew to Nairobi, where I met my father and travelled with him for about two weeks in Kenya and Tanzania.

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Proposal for the establishment of Beekeeping in Gourmantche, Bourkina-Fas

Submitted to the leadership of the Sudan Interior Mission in Francophone West Africa, and the Gourma Church.

Contents: Introduction and Background - Aims - Method and Timescale - Costs - Problems - Conclusions.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

a) Perceived level of beekeeping in Gourmantche today.

At present, there is limited beekeeping in Gourmantche, to the extent that the few who keep bees have few hives (under ten). As a second income metier, any beekeeping is local, and privately run. The honey is usually sold locally, with the beeswax being sold to the bronzeworkers in Ouagadougou. Due to the scarcity of beekeepers, and the very local nature of the art, beekeeping in Gourmantche is relatively underused as a source of modest income, food and employment.

b) Private beekeepers' role.

There seem to be certain factors which contribute to the present role and condition of the small scale beekeeper. First, a lack of transport or high cost of same forces the selling beekeeper to the local market. In this way, the higher prices of wax and honey in Ouagadougou are lost to local merchants or middlemen, who themselves may be shaped by local market conditions. Second, the production and processing of honey and wax is hindered by a lack or shortage of resources, equipment, ideas and innovatic local support, and money. Third, there is the question of hive theft or vandalism. These all contribute to the underusing of beekeeping; however, it is my contention that these can all be removed in time.

c) The Gourma Church's role in beekeeping to date.

The main, and possibly only effort of the Gourma Church in beekeeping today is that of the Bible School near Fada n'Gourma. This bee project was set up in the 1970's by Mr. Richard Swanson, and at present provides an income

that helps operate the school. Honey and wax comes from the school's hives or from local beekeepers who sell their combs, which are then processed and sold at profit locally or in Ouagadougou.

In early June '84, I stayed in Fada for five weeks to investigate Gourma beekeeping and work with the honey project. However, after much observat and inquiry, it became very clear that the honey project in its present state is seriously flawed. I will therefore list what I saw and heard, record what was done to remedy many of these problems, and make recommendations as to what should be done to keep the project viable until I return in '88 to establish beekeeping in Gourmantche.

Observing the state of the project was simple. The honey house was in a rundown and insanitary state; the honey spinner was broken up, full of rubbish and thrown into a corner with all manner of junk. Old and torn pieces of wire mesh were used for honey straining. There was filth and old honey all over the cement floor. Honey barrels were used for storage without being washed. The honey house was also open to the bees themselves; it was a classic site for the spreading of American Foulbrood and other apian diseases. In the field, the hives were in a rundown state, though the drought is partly to blame for this, as well as severe waxmoth and ant ingestation.

What had led to this state of being? After more observation and talk, the following was discovered: the problem began when the expatriate beekeepers left, for it would appear they left behind no training in project management, labour use, how to run a clean and orderly honey house and above all a well-formed cadre of Gourma beekeepers. They seem to have bequeated equipment alone, so that when they left, most of the project went too.

Therefore in time the honey house became rundown, a team of five or more was needed to filter honey because the equipment was labour-intensive (this cost the project dearly in lost revenue) and the work was largely

dumped upon one man. Considering that Wombo is a millet farmer and father of six, it is a miracle that he was able to achieve this much at all. Due to circumstance, he was left with the role of project caretaker, and not project manager/organiser. This fact was not lost on Wombo and the Directors of the Bible School, for they sought a new managing beekeeper Unfortunately none applied, or those that did pursued other activities; in this matter, there was much unhappiness among the Gourmas. When one ends up with a cumulative situation like that, it is hardly surprising that the project gets into trouble.

This being so, my immediate objective during those weeks in June was to rehabilitate the project to full working order, especially in the honey house. The interior was cleaned out, all junk removed, the equipment was repaired and all spare parts stored up on shelves out of the way. The honey straining equipment was repaired and adapted, so that it could be operated attended by one man. A multitude of dirty honey jars were washed out and stored. The room next door, which used to be full of rubble was cleaned out, given a cement floor and plastered walls, and converted for hive building and storage. The porch outside was cemented for use as a washing area; the necessary hot water came from a batch solar heater (a bucket in a glazed tin-lined box, made with local materials). These and other tasks were carried out successfully.

In this way, I would consider the success of this venture as adequate proof that rehabilitation works, and that a bee project can be run by a skilled beekeeper, with much innovation and enthusiasm, and running on minimal funds. I also submit it as an example of my workmanship, since this is only the beginning of the proposed task that will see beekeeping establishe throughout Gourmantche.

However, with respect to the operation of the Fada Bible School project, there remains the question of continued successful management until such time as I return, which could be 1988. The weeks of repair in June must be supplemented by one or two months of follow-up in management, organisation of the honey house and field hives, and the finding of a second

beekeeper to apprentice to wombo. In short, the project has been repaired but has yet to become one that is managed and not run merely by caretakers. This I propose to do in January and February 1985; if left, the past advances will be lost, for the task is yet unfinished.

With this accomplished, I now propose the following with respect to the overall project in Gourmantche.

AIMS

The aims of this project are as follows:

a) to establish Gourmantche as a major producer of honey and beeswax within Bourkina Faso.

b) to rehabilitate the present bee project at Fada n'Gourma to the extent that it fully fulfils its purpose of financing part/all of the Bible School's needs, and that it is successful in establishing interested nationals as independent and smallscale beekeepers within the region surrounding Fad n'Gourma.

c) to use the Fada Bible School as a base from which to spread beekeeping across all Gourmantche. Quite simply, this means teaching beekeeping to interested Bible School students while they are attending school, and then letting them return to their home towns to practise beekeeping as well as their evangelical work.

There are several distinct advantages to this method of spreading beekeeping. First, all the beekeeping students are together in one place for much of the year, with a working bee project on their doorstep and a "field lab" all around them; they will be easy to teach. Second, although few Bible School students will join the classes and fewer set up in time as beekeepers, those who finally do spread beekeeping over Gourmantche will be really dedicated and sacrificial people. They will be far more valuable than untried or appointed or salaried beekeepers; the same force that leads them to reach and witness for Christ will ensure their persistence and success; mere monetary incentive can end in failure. Third, as evangelists and beekeepers who return to their home towns, they will have no trouble in establishing and developing the relations which lead to the acceptance of Christ and the establishment of some hives. Indeed, in the process of sharing the one, there is the chance to introduce the other;

Christians can be led to bees, or non-believers can be led to Christ by working with a Christian beekeeper. Fourth, they form a very satisfactory cadre of volunteers, who will be the lifeblood and leadership of this project when I leave. Fifth, in acting as "missionary beekeepers", so to speak, they will fulfil one of the Church's roles as catalyst for local development to all interested locals on a grassroots, no-frills level. In this way, beekeeping will be spread over Gourmantche in a low-key manne each year, as each year's graduating class is dispersed from Fada to the home towns or elsewhere.

d) to have all the bee work, in all places, ultimately run by the Gourmas. Therefore, handover is to be anticipated and prepared for. However, as the beekeepers will be also busy as "teachers and helpers" the principles of Acts 6: I - 4 will apply in who becomes a beekeeper. This is why I anticipate more lay workers from the Bible School students enrolling in the bee course than those destined to be pastors.

e) to establish a European market for beeswax candles.

f) to promote the value of honey as a fine food, and not just as a cash crop. Herein lies the underlying objective for this project: that Gourma families raise bees and use honey to the extent that they do millet

g) to vastly improve overall plant pollination; and to encourage the planting of bee-forage tree crops, such as Prosopis Juliflora, as part of anti-desert work. Naturally this will come about in time as the bee work advances.

METHODS AND TIMESCALE

This section will show how the aims are to be implemented, and over what period of time. It will be broken up into six main parts: the survey, initial work in Fada district, teaching, setting up volunteers, volunteer expansion and advanced training, and phaseout.

a - The Survey)

Getting information: before doing any teaching of bee work, it is necessary to be informed and educated as to present beekeeping in Gourmantch

This will involve learning the Gourma language and customs, a tour over much of the area to visit as many beekeepers as possible, and a survey of where the best honeyflowers are. If the project is to be local and grassroots, then so must be the survey. This could take a year or so, bu in view of future direction, I deem it absolutely essential. From this survey and education will come the material for the teaching and development syllabus. Naturally, before undertaking the survey, a more detailed list of aims will be drawn up than listed here.

b - Initial Work in the Fada District)

Once the survey is finished, the present honey project at the Fada Bible School will be brought to as full a potential as possible. New hives will be built and set out, and old ones cleaned up. It is hoped that each apiary will consist of 20 or so hives together, surrounded by planted wild thorn bushes. In addition, the techniques that are to be taught to future villagers and volunteers will be well experimented and tested. Hive building equipment will be installed; in effect, this means a home-made table saw in the present honey house. At the same time, the villager in the Fada locale will be approached, and those interested set up as private, independent beekeepers. Experiences here will be all digested, to emerge as part of the teaching syllabus. The actual process of spreading beekeeping to the Fada villagers will be similar to that practised by the Bible School volunteers, so it will be described in section e)

Note: Even though there are still some years until the re-establishment of the present honey project, I do not wish to infer that it will be left neglected. The present management will work well under direction, albeit distant.

By now the project should be in its second or third year.

c - Teaching)

If the stage on teaching seems delayed, it is deliberate. A sound syllabus grounded in the survey's information and the Fada district experience is necessary; otherwise bad practices will be spread all over Gourmantche. Although the syllabus is as yet unwritten, the course, selection of students, and pedogogy can be examined here.

I- The Course) This will be taught to available interested Bible School students during the school year. The aim is to teach beekeeping at basic levels, how to set up as a private and independent beekeeper, and how to teach and establish others as beekeepers in the neighbourhood. Course length will be up to one academic year.

II- Selection of Students) Even though few should enroll, there will have been a natural selection; namely, the lack of interest, a fear of bees, or other ministry commitments. Beekeeping is not noted for drawing the lukewarm!

III - Pedogogy) Teaching method is important, since the volunteers will have to teach others as well as learn themselves. The course will contain a minimum of lecturing, but will be heavy on audiovisuals, demonstrations dialogue, small personal experiments and field trips. There will not be classes as such, but short seminars over a span of time, or "planned experiences" which will link in with the academic and beekeeping year, if possible. Ideas and technology will be limited and rationed out, so as not to bombard the students with too much at once. A syllabus will be issued, so everyone knows what to expect and what to give. Classes will be reinforced by each student managing a few hives; in addition, grou will visit the local private beekeepers who were established by the honey project, inorder to see what "beekeeping outreach" is all about. Hence the course will be a prototype of their own efforts when they return home as newly-trained beekeepers.

Note: Here it should be added that the beekeeping course is a basic one; not everything is taught at once. A student is considered to have learnt basic beekeeping when he/she returns home and has taught it to others; this in itself is education. One is then ready for advanced education by ext nsion, visiting the new beekeeper at home to teach the finer points As can be seen, the course instructor is one step ahead of his students, who are over and above their own students. This avoids technological indigestion, and the wasted teaching of a dead-end student. Thus beekeeping can evolve in a freer way, from Kenya Top Bar hiv s to frame hives with as little pain as possible.