

# Maiduguri

1968 – 2008

40 Years different, but still  
the same.

Now you can't go back.

## Notes:

Maiduguri was the original headquarters of Boko Haram. Back before the Sambisa Forest, back before it became a powerful, geography-taking force. Boko Haram was founded in 2002, but still in 2008 it was not a major force. In 2009 its leader was executed while in jail, and that led to an intensification of the movement. Since then it has increasingly been a disaster for northeastern Nigeria.

# The Maiduguri Gate



## Notes:

In 2008 before the start of the Nigeria tour, we visited Maiduguri, and it was quite pleasant. Originally, Mike + Tomako Malaghan were going to visit Maiduguri with my wife Barbie + me, but the airport was under repair, and they did not choose to make the 350 mile trip from Kano by car. So we were on our own. The car ride out was an adventure, but the subject of a different story. Here is the Maiduguri gate. Sannuku da zuwa means Greetings on your coming.

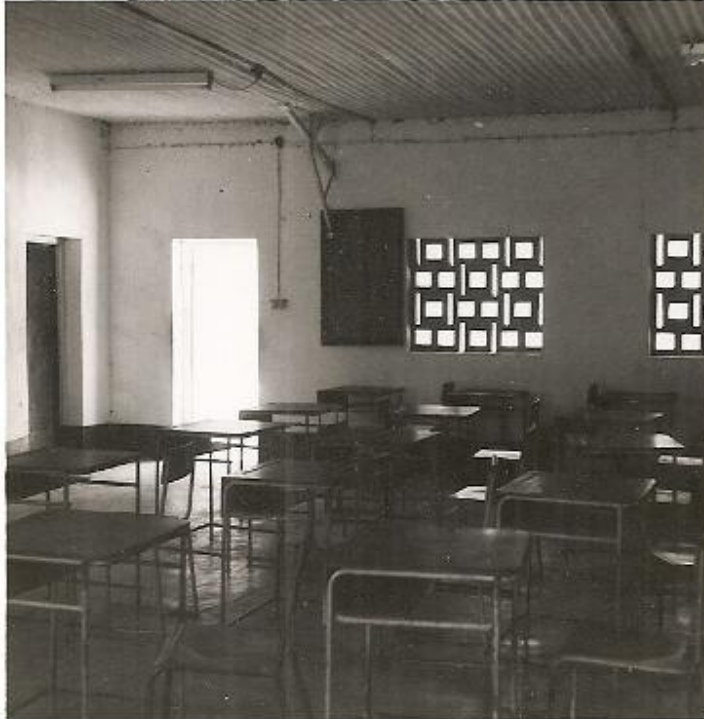
## Back in the Day



### Notes:

We stayed in a 5-story hotel on the side of Maiduguri where the main schools were. That is to say on the main road to Kano. I went running the next morning, so I set out to find my school and my classroom. Here is an old photo of me and some students. We had a copy in our kitchen, and a visitor once asked my wife, “Which one is your husband?”

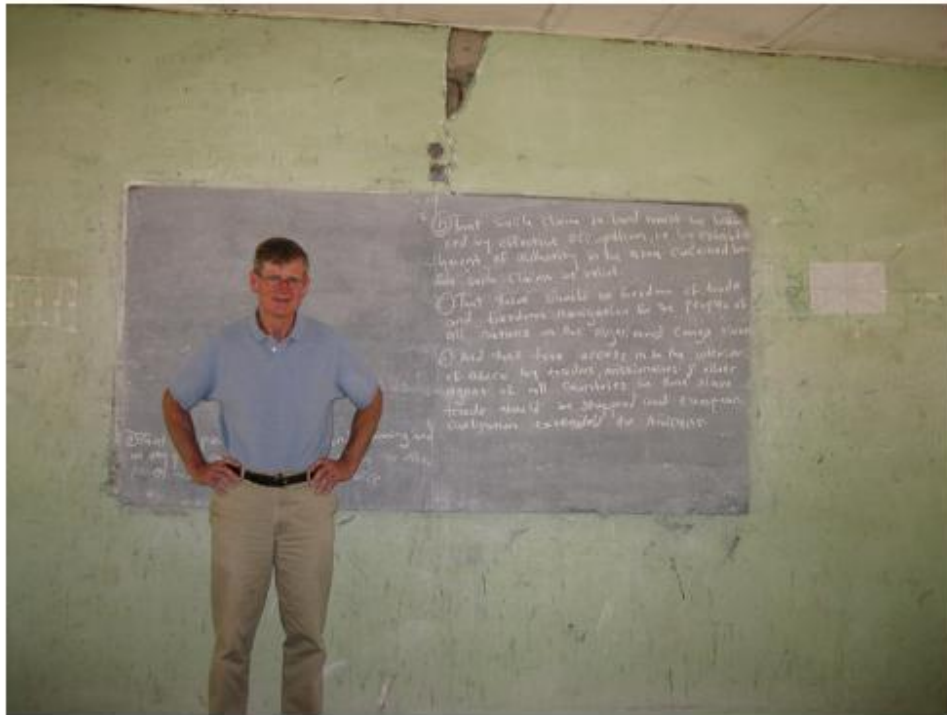
# My Classroom 1968



## Notes:

I did find a classroom that looked just like my classroom. Later that day, the hotel bursar, who was acting as our driver, took us to Government Craft School, which happened to be a completely different school than the one I found. Turns out that the Craft School was shut down in 1972 and later reopened as a girl's secondary school. Since it was a girl's school, it needed to be enclosed by a wall, which is why I ran right by it. Turns out the classroom I found was part of the original Boys Secondary School, 2 schools down from the Craft School.

# My Classroom 2008



## Notes:

The exact same blackboard, with maybe a bit more of a crack over it.

## Girl Students



### Notes:

Barbie discovered 3 girls who were staying at the school over the holiday break. Gorgeous girls, studying to become doctors. Note the label on the desk: Special Project 2003. I think that was also on the side of a set of classrooms (or dorms) added since I was there, probably an indication of the use of Oil money. That was the same time as my local town was rebuilding an elementary school for \$50 million. I wonder what \$50 million would buy in Nigeria (if it could ever actually get spent on something like schools)?

## GRA House



### **Notes:**

I actually lived in 2 different places in Maiduguri. Initially I was in the GRA (the Governmental Residential Area). A basic brick house.

I couldn't find that house because everything there had been replaced by mansions. Clearly rich people choose to live in what used to be the GRA. By the way, Maiduguri had changed tremendously in the 40 years since I was there. It used to be a provincial capital of 150,000 people. Now it has a population of 2.5 million – over 15 times as many people. Other than the hotels and the mansions, nothing is taller than the Shehu's palace, which is a 3-story building. So there is lots of sprawl. And it does not appear that infrastructure, such as running water or electricity necessarily precedes the sprawl. Tanker trucks go around dispensing water sucked up by pumps from the local river. The river looked pretty dry, and this was November, early in the dry season.

Another major change was no Baturis. We saw one Lebanese, who was running a restaurant. Otherwise, it was all Nigerians. We did stand out. The Club was still there, the old bastion of white privilege. Now all the patrons are Nigerian.

## House in Old City (Mufoni)



### Notes:

The second place I lived was in Mufoni, part of the old city. Luckily it was close to a main road that ran right by a race track, and the race track was still in place. So I was able to find my old house. Here it is, with its current occupant. The corrugated metal shed is an “improvement” added in a tasteful manner since I was there.



## Wife, Wife + Kids



## Steward inside the House



### Notes:

You can see why I never took many pictures. The unseen presence behind the lens in the current photos is my wife.

## Mukwabshi's Sister



### Notes:

Nobody that I knew 47 years ago is still alive. But my next door neighbor (mukwabshi) was a Shuwa Arab, and they have a very distinct appearance. A sister of mukwabshi was in the neighborhood, and she was not averse to having her picture taken.

# My Street



## Notes:

The street looks just the same with Neem trees, cement power poles, and a sewer running through parts of it. The biggest change is the trash. There used to be just as much trash, but the goats could eat it. The goats still pick it over, but they can't eat the plastic. So the plastic piles up.

## Neighborhood Kids



### Notes:

The local herd of kids was quite unchanged. The biggest change I noticed was the disappearance of flies. When I used to eat lunch, I would have a fly swatter and just randomly swat the table I ate at. At the start of the meal, I would easily get 10 flies per swat. But the end of the meal, I would have to aim to get 2 or 3. Flies used to be in the eyes of all the kids. No longer. Maybe they put in public toilets to prevent men from defecating in the fields. I never found out why the flies were gone. A major transformation.

## Major Players



### Notes:

Here is my neighbor's sister, the lady across the street (in orange) and the bursar who was driving us (in blue). Plus an assortment of kids.

# Across the Street Son



## Notes:

The lady across the street remembered her husband telling the story of a white guy who rode a horse to work. I did that because I neglected to put oil in the Honda I inherited, and it died. Peace Corps didn't have any more budget for Hondas, but they did have budget for a horse. So I bought a horse and rode it daily the 2-3 miles to the Craft School. That was across bush, which has since become city sprawl. At any rate, she gave her husband a call on her cell phone, and he came home to greet me. He was 8 years old when I was there, living across the street. His father was someone I would sit with on a mat in front of his house at night, talking about things. His father is passed, and he now lives there. He works at Bornu Radio + TV. The next morning, my wife and I were interviewed on TV. Later that day, people passing on bicycles would call out that they had seen us on TV!

# Maiduguri Market



## Notes:

As an activity of real life, we decided to get a Nigerian dress made for Barbie. So we went to the Maiduguri Market. It is a sprawling place that has since been bombed by Boko Haram. Everything is for sale at the market, with several different shops specializing in fabric.



# IBO Cloth Seller



## Notes:

I never knew an Ibo when I was there because they were all driven out 3 weeks after we arrived. It must be an indication of how hard life is in Ibo land that they have migrated back to places where they were massacred in 1966.

## With Wife, a Seamstress



### Notes:

His wife, a seamstress came to the market, and took Barbie's measurements. Then she took the bolt of cloth, and agreed to have a dress ready the next day.

## The Final Product



### Notes:

So the next day we took motorcycle taxis out to their house, where his wife did the final adjustments on the dress. Here is the net result.

# Neighborhood Kids



## Notes:

Later that night we had dinner at the restaurant run by a Lebanese man. When we finished, it was dark. My wife wanted to call for a ride. I wanted to walk the quarter of a mile to a main road, and flag down a motorcycle taxi. It was a nice warm night, and we would have had to wait at least a quarter of an hour for a ride to arrive. We walked to the road, and our marriage barely survived. Barbie was convinced that we were going to be attacked by bandits or kidnapped for ransom. None of those happened, and we were soon surrounded by neighborhood kids practicing their English. Or I was practicing my long-out-of-use Hausa. In 10 minutes we were at the main road, which had lights. Most likely not overhead lights, but lanterns of roadside sellers. A motorcycle taxi soon stopped, and Barbie was glad that the seat for the second passenger (me) was not padded. The driver was probably not more than 14, and he drove very carefully. I remember going around a round-about, and there were very well dressed young people also on taxis going to their destinations. We made it back to the hotel without getting kidnapped. But the fact that the experience was benign does not mean it is not held against me in the court of marital discord.

## Lunch Across the Street



## Eating on the Floor



### Notes:

Much amusement was taken from the fact that I am not accustomed to sitting on the floor. I did eat with Mukwabshi for 2-3 months at the end of my tour, so I must have been able to bend enough for that when I was 22. My steward decided to solve a family problem by joining the army for the Biafra war. Instead of hiring a new steward, I asked my neighbor if I could eat dinners with him. I arranged for breakfast with other volunteers at the Boy's Secondary School. Who knows what I did for lunch. I thought I was eating authentic Nigerian food with Mukwabshi. Then one night I was supposed to meet a group of other volunteers (probably at the club for bridge). So I told Mukwabshi I would not be eating with him that night. But the arrangement fell through, so I arrived at home unannounced. Well, it turns out I was not eating authentic Nigerian food. I was eating mildly spiced Nigerian food with fresh ingredients. What they had that night was dried meat and enough spice to mask its flavor. I was crying before I had consumed 2 mouthfuls. I believe my voice stopped working. I don't think I ever sweat quite as much. It was just as bad the next morning.

## Our Hosts



### Notes:

A good looking couple.

## Me with the Kids of the Family





# The Kitchen



## Notes:

It was a delicious meal, all prepared in a very simple kitchen that Barbie discovered as she was coming back from the WC.

## Most of the Family



### Notes:

Next day we set off for Kano to join the rest of the tour. Everybody on the tour who was able to go to the place where they served had a very emotional experience. Funny how memories from what was then 40 years in the past came flooding back. Peace Corps Nigeria was certainly a major contributor to my life experience. Thanks to Mike Malaghan for organizing that trip in 2008. When Muhammadu Buhari straightens the country out, maybe we can organize another trip back.