

REMAINS OF THE HOMESTEAD OUT ON THE SALT FLATS



THIS IS WHERE LUKE STOOD TO WATCH THE SUNSET. (THE COURTYARD HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN FILLED IN BY STORMTROOPERS).

wards Algeria than the homestead site, but as the sand rolled by I thought to myself, this one is the most unlikely yet. Who can tell one sand dune from another? Even our guide had only a vague recollection. We took the vehicle as far as it would go into the sand, then disembarked to proceed on foot. Our small expedition came upon some camels and desert Berbers, who (though surprised to see us) instantly produced trinkets and sand roses from the folds of their cloaks. Tourism, I reflected, is getting out of hand. But I queried them about my mission objectives. They were as mystified as most everyone else had been about my bizarre endeavor. Try explaining that you are in the Sahara looking for a particular group of sand dunes in broken Arabic and Berber and have it sound remotely sane. I got out my photos and went through it all, but only our guide had ever heard of the production. The escape pod or the krayt dragon skeleton would have been the only things to really mark the right location, but the one had probably been removed, and the other surely blown halfway to Egypt or buried by nineteen years of sandstorms.

I tried again to explain to some of the Berber kids, and emphasized the giant skeleton. A light dawned in the eyes of one of them, and he gestured East. He thought he remembered seeing something three or four years ago. The whole troupe of us set out: camels, kids, Berbers, our guide, me, and Ryan with the camera. Our parade marched up and down the landscape, crossing scenes that might have been from *Lawrence of Arabia*. We crested a

homestead had only been filmed yesterday. I imagined the sand-crawler pulled up there nearby, the landspeeder parked just behind the dome. Hedhi had come through.

Objectively, one might say, there was virtually nothing here. Why the heck had this idiot come halfway around the world to look at nothing in the middle of a huge expanse of nothing? But those crater rings were the threshold of another world for me, a nexus of dreams. Luke Skywalker, especially in that sunset scene, expressed for so many of us the longing for adventure that stirs our spirit. In a way I felt that I had fulfilled part of that longing that the movie crystallized for me so many years ago.

The harsh desert night was approaching. Time pressed, and pulled me away from this site, and all too quickly it was lost to view in the wide wastes. We were now headed out to find the Dune Sea. I knew that this lay farther out to-

