Field Season in Ethiopia Under Way

The 1999 paleoanthropological field season at Hadar, Ethiopia, is currently in progress. An international team of approximately 25 people will be working from October to December in IHO's research permit area in the Afar Depression of northern Ethiopia.

Previous expeditions to Hadar, starting in the 1970's, recovered the largest sample, approximately 250 specimens, of the species *Australopithecus afarensis* from rocks dated to about 3.4 to 2.9 million years old. In the 1990's, IHO-sponsored expeditions have continued to find dozens of important new specimens of *A. afarensis* (such as the largely complete adult male skull from site A.L. 444) and to explore geologically younger deposits in the region (about 2 to 3 million years old; see Newsletters 23 and 25).

This season's fieldwork has several main foci. The field crew will continue exploration of deposits younger than 3 million years in the Makaamitalu region, where one of the earliest fossils of *Homo* has been found, looking for archaeological sites as well as new fossils. Geological survey and correlation will refine knowledge of the age of these deposits. Excavation will also resume at previously known sites in search of additional hominid and other fossil remains. We will report the results of the 1999 season in future newsletters.

The Hadar region of Ethiopia contains extensive exposures of fossil-bearing sediments, such as the A.L. 444 site seen at the beginning of excavation (Photo by D. Johanson).

Science Director William H. Kimbel will be returning from the field in Ethiopia in time to attend IHO's Annual New York Dinner on November 8. This year's dinner honors Charles Darwin and features Richard Milner's original multimedia performance tracing Darwin's career.
1998-99 Chairman’s Report

BY JEFFERY W. MEYER

As I write my last comments as Chairman of IHO’s Board of Directors, I’m looking forward to remaining on the board and to seeing a new chairman selected in November. In recent years we have elected some strong new board members who are fully capable of taking leadership roles in IHO, and they should be encouraged to do so.

We currently have a research team in Ethiopia, in the Hadar region. The first half of the campaign is being led by Dr. William Kimbel and the second half by Dr. Donald Johanson. This is IHO’s first Hadar field season under the banner of Arizona State University. We are very proud to carry their flag into the field, accompanied by post-docs and graduate students from the university.

During my four-year tenure as chairman, I’m pleased that we have enjoyed financial strength; have forged a great alliance with ASU; conducted field work in Ethiopia, Israel, and Eritrea; inaugurated IHO’s first endowed fund; brought three post-doctoral fellows to IHO (two of whom have been invited to join ASU’s anthropology faculty upon completion of their fellowships). We also honored three truly outstanding leaders at our popular New York dinner: Bernard Wood, Yves Coppens, and IHO’s own Bill Kimbel. I began my term as chairman around the time the Institute announced the A.L. 666 Homo jaw associated with stone tools that the team had discovered at Hadar. I can only wish that my successor will begin his term of office with similar good fortune as I turn my attention to helping IHO in other ways.

Our private fund-raising remains on target. The President’s Circle drew 35 members during the past 12 months, compared to 34 in the 18-month period prior. We had 342 donors who gave a total of $650,288 between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999. Those gifts helped pay for Kaye Reed’s work as co-leader of the South African summer field school, for our post-doctoral fellowships, field work in Israel, and our symposium and lecture series, among other important programs. A portion of the year’s total came from Mrs. George Ullman, matched by ASU, to support three graduate fellowships.

It remains a pleasure to be associated with IHO. I look forward to helping the Institute raise funds for important projects like “Hunt for Human Origins”, a major touring museum exhibit that the board has been discussing for some time. Along those lines, we welcome new members at any level. I hope you will join us in the search to learn much more about how we became human. I’ll be doing all I can to continue support for this great effort.

At the Institute

IHO has a new Administrative Assistant. Kim Stout, a graduate student in the Anthropology Department at Arizona State University (ASU), began this part-time position in July, 1999.

Three new graduate students in ASU’s Anthropology Department are the first recipients of IHO’s “Graduate Fellowships in Paleoanthropology”. Marc Jacofsky (a graduate of SUNY Binghamton), Faye Lemieux (Montana State University, Bozeman), and Debra Simpson (University of South Florida), are enrolled in the physical anthropology program and will be working with IHO as well as other Anthropology Department faculty. Each fellowship provides three years of support and has been made possible in part by a generous gift from Mrs. George Ullman.
Donor Honor Roll for 1998-1999

The Institute of Human Origins is supported by private gifts and grants, and foundation or government grants. Each year, IHO turns to its friends for contributions that will support research and public awareness programs. In the period July, 1998 to June, 1999, 342 contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, and government agencies provided approximately $650,000 for Institute projects and programs. The list on this page honors private (non-government agency) donors to IHO for 1998-99.

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IHO Board Profile: Joan Travis

Joan Travis studied economics at Stanford and geography at UCLA, where she earned a master's degree. She is married to Arnold Travis, and the two of them have been on IHO’s Board of Directors since its founding in 1981. Joan is an Honorary Life Trustee of the L.S.B. Leakey Foundation, a member of the Board of Overseers of the Pacific Asia Museum, and an active supporter of the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum.

Q: You have had a remarkable number of friendships with the leading figures in modern paleoanthropology and primatology, among them Louis and Mary Leakey, Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas. How did that come about?

A: My father-in-law had taken a class with Louis at UC Riverside in 1963. In 1965, when Louis came to California on a fund raising trip, Arnold’s parents were too ill to host him, so they asked us to put him up. I remember him from those days — white hair, crumpled cap, and bulging briefcase. He was raising funds for ‘Ubeidiya [a site in Israel], not even his own dig, but he believed it was so important. As time went by, it got so that Louis would call at any time of the day or night to ask me to contact possible donors on his behalf. In 1967, a group of his friends led by Allen O’Brien, whose idea it was, urged him to let them start a foundation to bring more financial security to his work. It became the L.S.B. Leakey Foundation, and Allen and I became founding members of the board.

It was through Louis that I met Jane and the others. The Leakey Foundation wanted Jane to give a lecture, and Louis put us in touch. I wound up setting up lectures — Arnold says it got to be over 150 a year — for many scientists, most of whom were associated with the Foundation. If they were in Los Angeles, they would stay at our house to save costs. Louis stayed in touch with Jane, Dian, and Biruté as a mentor. I remember him once clutching a telegram he’d received from Dian and saying, “Digit just touched her hand!”

Q: Why was Leakey so interested in primatology?

A: He had the idea that if you could demonstrate a kinship between the great apes and Homo, you could learn something relevant about the “missing links.” As it happens, the work of those three women has inspired an untold amount of research into language, learning, social behavior...even DNA studies today.

Q: So, how did you meet Don Johanson?

A: I had arranged for Mary Leakey to give a lecture in Philadelphia but she had to cancel at the last moment. I asked her who we should try to get as a replacement, and she said, “Well, there’s a young man just coming into prominence.” He had just found a knee joint in Africa and was getting ready for that fateful 1974 season when he and the team found “Lucy”. Little did we know!
Two Years at the IHO Field School

BY ANTHONY KEGLEY

In 1997, I was sailing down the Nile. Ancient history was my academic focus. As the river rolled away, questions interrupted my focus on the night’s beauty. Where did these ancient peoples come from? Where do humans come from? On my return, I visited the American Museum of Natural History. The Hall of Human Biology and Evolution exhibit there inspired my odyssey away from “ancient” history and into human origins.

The next year at ASU I acquired a background in human evolution, further sparking my curiosity. On April 20, 1998, Dr. Kaye Reed stopped me at the Anthropology building with the news I had been desperately awaiting: my acceptance into the IHO/University of the Witwatersrand paleoanthropology field school in South Africa. Doing everything in my power not to tackle her with excitement, I thanked Dr. Reed and started making plans.

After what felt like a 48 hour flight, I arrived in South Africa. Following preliminary lectures, we visited the sites of Swartkrans, Sterkfontein, Kromdraai, and Drimolen, which were absolutely breathtaking. We received an amazing presentation of the famous Taung fossil from Professor Phillip Tobias, as well as astonishing stories of Raymond Dart, Robert Broom, and others; we were transported back through history. At the Transvaal Museum, Dr. Francis Thackeray showed us many key South African hominids.

Then we made for Makapansgat. As we entered the valley local farmers waved. Vervet monkeys filled the trees. A troop of baboons crossed the road. We drove along a narrow dirt road, hugging the side of a cliff. At an old house we set up camp.

Over the next few weeks, we excavated at Buffalo Cave with co-director Dr. Kevin Kuykendall, worked at the Limeworks australopithecine site, and explored the valley’s ecology. Finally, we visited Kruger National Park. I had just completed the greatest experience of my life.

Then this year, Dr. Reed offered me a staff position with the 1999 field school. I couldn’t believe my ears. I was going back to South Africa! We arrived two weeks before the students, to prepare. One day Dr. Reed, Scott Burnett, and I were sorting through the 1998 fossils when I heard her say “this ulna has teeth,” and then, “Australopithecus africanus.” I jumped up and ran to see what they had. Dr. Reed was laughing, “Now you come over.” Apparently they had been trying to get my attention for some time. Among the “ulna fragments” she had found a fossil hominid, which had evaded us the first season.

The students this year enjoyed every minute of their Makapansgat experience. This was easy to do with prospective hominids popping up every so often. They learned site excavation at Buffalo Cave; identification, sorting, and preparation techniques at the Limeworks; and ecology throughout the valley. New and interesting fossils were recovered. There is a good chance that some will be identified as hominids. The summer ended again at Kruger National Park with lion kills, hyena kills, and a night drive.

My second field season was even better than the first. I only hope to be a part of more great experiences. Thank you, Kaye. Anthony Kegley is an undergraduate at Arizona State University. He took part in the 1998 and 1999 field schools in South Africa.
In March, 2000, the Institute will host a symposium in Tempe, Arizona entitled “First Cousins: Chimpanzees and Human Origins”. This all-day event, intended for the general public as well as a campus community audience, will feature a series of talks by well-known researchers on chimpanzees and their close relatives, bonobos (also called “pygmy chimps”). Living apes, such as chimpanzees, are not our ancestors. However, they have been commonly used as “models” of the ape-human common ancestor (which may have lived about 5 to 6 million years ago), of the first members of the human lineage, or of early human relatives generally. After more than four decades of increasingly intensive field and laboratory studies, we now have more and better data than ever about living chimpanzees and bonobos. In what ways should the behaviors and functional anatomy of living chimpanzees influence our thinking about human origins and evolution? In what ways can they be misleading or unproductive? Of course, other apes, other primates, and other mammals are also relevant in trying to understand our origins and evolution. However, the symposium will focus on chimpanzees and bonobos because of their genetic closeness to humans and their continuing popularity as models.

For more information, contact the Institute. Symposium brochures will be sent to those on IHO’s mailing list later this year.