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ELWYN SIMONS: A SEARCH FOR ORIGINS

Edited by John G. Fleagle and Christopher C. Gilbert

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Elwyn Simons: A Search for Origins

 Springer

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Preface

For over five decades, Elwyn Simons has dominated the field of primate evolution through his paleontological expeditions throughout the world, his exceptional record of publications and his role as mentor to hundreds of students in the classrooms at Yale and Duke as well as at the Duke University Primate Center or on his field expeditions. His boundless energy and larger than life personality have always left their mark on anyone who has worked with him.

As a researcher in the field of primate evolution, his record is unparalleled. He has worked on the entire span of the primate fossil record, from early prosimians of North America and Europe, to early anthropoids of Africa and possibly Asia, fossil apes and monkeys from Africa and Eurasia, and fossil hominids. It is no exaggeration to say that through his masterful review papers from the 1960's he invented the field of primate evolution as we know it today. Moreover his ongoing work in subsequent decades has provided much of the new material, the inspiration, and the manpower to make this one of the most exciting areas of research in the scientific world. His role in instigating, inspiring and facilitating research and conservation on the living and fossil primate fauna of Madagascar are no less remarkable.

To mark the occasion of Elwyn's 75th birthday, many of his friends, family, colleagues and students got together on September 16 and 17, 2005, in Durham, North Carolina for two days of scientific presentations, tributes, parties and conversations to celebrate and honor his life and work thus far. These festivities were organized by Freddie and John Oakley and Friderun Ankel-Simons. The events were made possible by donations from the Oakley family, The Anne and Gordon Getty Foundation, Herbert Simons, Sarah and Dan Hrды, the Department of Biological Anthropology and Anatomy at Duke University and anonymous donors.

The papers in this volume are largely based on presentations delivered at the 2005 conference with a number of additional contributions by people who were unable to attend, but nonetheless wanted to participate in the tribute to Elwyn's life and work. Thus this volume offers not only a series of papers highlighting a small part of the breadth and personal influence of Elwyn's career on the field of paleontology and primatology, but also a record of the 2005 conference.

This volume reflects the efforts of many people. Each of the authors provided manuscripts more or less on schedule and many generously agreed to assist in reviewing other contributions. We also received reviews of the papers from numerous colleagues who did not contribute to the volume, among whom, Ann Yoder, James Rossie, Todd Rae, and Chris Heesy deserve special thanks. Marilyn Helms, Marty Meyer, Carl Vondra, and Jim Mead were especially helpful in our efforts to put together a photographic record of five decades of Fayum expeditions. At Springer, Andrea Macaluso, Lisa Tenaglia, and Cynthia Manzano have offered continue support along with the Series Editor Russ Tuttle and Sunayana Jain of Integra Software Services. Luci Betti-Nash designed the cover. Most of all, of course, this volume is the result of the tireless efforts of Elwyn Simons.

John Fleagle
Chris Gilbert

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Section 1

The Life of a Scientist

In the course of his first seventy-five years, Elwyn Simons has influenced the lives of many people in many ways. The papers in this section include a series of personal memories and tributes to Elwyn as a person as well as a short biography of one of his mentors. As such, they provide insight into some of the many facets of the man that are not evident to those who know Elwyn only through his many publications.

In the initial contribution, the “Introduction to the *Festschrift*”, Fredericka (“Freddie”) Oakley, the organizer of the 2005 Tribute, provides a brief outline of Elwyn’s early years and his education at Rice as an undergraduate, Princeton as a graduate student, and a postdoctoral Marshall Fellowship at Oxford University under the renowned anatomist Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark. This is followed by a joyous essay, “Elwyn LaVerne Simons—a Very Personal View”, by Friderun Ankel-Simons on life as Elwyn’s wife. Dr. David Pilbeam, probably Elwyn’s most distinguished student and long time colleague, recounts his days as a graduate and subsequently a faculty colleague in “A Personal Reminiscence of Elwyn”. Pilbeam’s contribution is followed by a short biography of one of Elwyn’s most influential mentors, Le Gros Clark, by Bernard Wood. Wood’s essay, “Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark: The Making of a Paleanthropologist”, focuses in particular on Le Gros’s contributions to the study of human evolution, and especially the acceptance of *Australopithecus* as a human ancestor. The biography of Le Gros Clark is followed by an addendum, “Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark: Personal Recollections of Le Gros”, in which Elwyn recounts some of his own memories of his studies at Oxford and interactions with Le Gros Clark both at Oxford and later at Yale University where Le Gros Clark was a visiting professor in 1962. The final contribution in this section is a transcript of the presentation made by Dr. John Oakley, Professor of Law and Philosophy at the University of California at Davis, spouse of the organizer Freddie Oakley, and a close friend of the Simons family for nearly forty years. In this personal appreciation of Elwyn, “Human Evolution and the Challenge of Creationism”, Professor Oakley lays out his own views on the teaching of evolution in schools and the place of science and religion in human existence.

Introduction to the *Festschrift*

Fredericka B. Oakley

In the year of his 75th birthday, colleagues, friends, students and family of Elwyn Simons gathered near Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, for three days of conferences and gatherings celebrating his life and work. It was a wonderful time of scholarship and comradeship, and a great tribute to the man and scholar who has shaped many lives and much science in the more than a half century, to date, of his professional life.

Elwyn LaVerne Simons was born July 14, 1930, at Lawrence, Kansas, a son of Verne Franklin Simons and Verna Irene Cuddeback. A Kansas native and the descendent of pioneers, Verne Franklin Simons spent his career as a professor of accounting and financial advisor, first at the University of Kansas, and from 1929 onward, at Rice University in Houston, Texas, where Elwyn and his younger brother, Herbert were raised. Verna Cuddeback Simons, Elwyn's mother, was herself the descendant of a pioneering Kansas family, and was an art student when she met Elwyn's father. She devoted herself to family and beauty throughout her long life.

Elwyn's particular genius for original thinking about the natural world was evident very early in his life. His mother preserved many stories and artistic renderings centered on nature and animals that he began producing at around three years of age.

Reading these stories, one is struck by the precocious evidence for a natural-born natural scientist. Elwyn appreciated very early the importance of preserving the history of his family gleaned both from written records and from oral histories. These amazing and entertaining stories have been a great delight to hear told and retold, and the recordings Elwyn made as a youngster, of his grandparents singing folk songs on the porch of their farmhouse in their final years, are a true treasure of American history (see <http://www.ils.unc.edu/dpr/archives/folksongs/>).

Elwyn Simons attended public schools in the West University neighborhood of Houston. He received a B.S. degree from W. M. Rice University in 1953. He received a M.A. degree from Princeton University in 1955, a Ph.D.

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from Princeton University in 1956, a D.Phil. from University College, Oxford in 1959, an Honorary M.A. from Yale University in 1967 and a D.Sc. degree from University College, Oxford, in 1995. He has held too many academic appointments to detail, but his career has been spent chiefly at Princeton University (1953–1956), Oxford University (1956–1959), the University of Pennsylvania (1959–1961), and for many years at Yale University (1960–1977) and most recently at Duke University (1977–present).

Simons has, likewise, received nearly countless awards and fellowships, including a Fulbright Fellowship, the Alexander von Humboldt Senior Scientist's Award, membership in the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the Charles R. Darwin award of the American Association of Physical Anthropology, the Founders Award of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and many, many more. Elwyn remembers with particular humor and affection his years as a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University.

Elwyn and Friderun Ankel-Simons have been married for more than 35 years. They have two children, Cornelia Simons Seiffert and Verne Simons. Elwyn is also the father of David Brenton Simons.

Elwyn Simons has conducted fieldwork in paleontology and primate conservation all over the globe, from Wyoming to Egypt to Madagascar, with many stops in between. The contributions in this volume speak to his broad range of interests and to the incredible appetite for science and the preservation of the natural world that he has communicated to his many distinguished



Fig. 1 The Oakley and Simons families in Wyoming 1985 in front of the Shasta. From left: John Oakley, Cornelia, Friderun, Verne, Elwyn, Freddie Oakley, Adélie and Antonia

students. As the sole author, and as a coauthor with many of his colleagues and students, Elwyn has written well over 300 scholarly books and articles.

It is a great honor to count myself among Elwyn's former students, and to know him and his wife, Friderun Ankel-Simons (an important scholar in her own right) as very dear friends of more than 35 years, and our families have been close for many years (Fig. 1). When I was inspired, in 2004, to organize this conference honoring the life and work of Elwyn LaVerne Simons in the year of his 75th birthday, I was confident that I would receive the cooperation of many busy people whose dedication to scholarship and conservation he inspired. I was not disappointed. In the year of planning and preparation for these events, I was helped and supported, in particular, by Friderun Ankel-Simons, by the faculty and staff of the Duke University Department of Anatomy and Biological Anthropology, and by the editors of this volume, John G. Fleagle and Christopher C. Gilbert.

Most particular thanks are due to the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, which provided extraordinary support for the conference, allowing many to attend who would otherwise not, and providing meals and meeting rooms for the entire conference. The gala dinner that concluded the conference was provided chiefly by the generosity of Herbert Simons and John Oakley.

It is a profound honor to introduce this *Festschrift* for Elwyn Simons. I conclude with this encouragement from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, which Elwyn has often quoted, and which, I believe, says much about his character and his life.

*"Let us then, be up and doing. With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labor and to wait."*

Freddie Oakley
Davis, California
May 18, 2006

Elwyn LaVerne Simons

A Very Personal View

Friderun Ankel-Simons

This is the most unlikely story to ever have happened—a young German biologist went to Yale University in January of 1971 to work at the Division of Fossil Vertebrates of Yale University's Peabody Museum for one year—and one year only, not a day longer—and to learn as much as she could about fossil primates.

She learned much about vertebrate and primate fossils and in the bargain she unexpectedly found the man who would be the love of her life: Elwyn Simons, perhaps one of the last Renaissance men, who is the most complex, knowledgeable, caring, responsible and wonderful human being imaginable (Fig. 1). Some of his unusual qualities are: prudent consensus seeker, diplomat, visionary for the future, honorary Aye-aye—nobody else understands like Elwyn how to make a displaced lemur feel at home—*Exempla gratia*: By helping an Aye-aye, that just had arrived from its homeland Madagascar, to build its first nest in a strange new world at the Duke Primate Center, or grooming a lonely *Propithecus* named Nigel on a regular basis. Being married to Elwyn since December 2nd, 1972 I am likely to be biased. But this doesn't matter as I am trying to be realistic.

What does it mean to be Married to Elwyn?

It means continuously going to distant and daunting places where he is finding spectacular fossils. These may be expeditions to the stunning Badlands of Wyoming (Fig. 2), to the arid and overwhelmingly gorgeous and vast Fayum Desert in Egypt (Fig. 3), or to the magical Mecca of any naturalist, the island world of Madagascar. It means vehicles getting stuck in sand or mud, or running out of gas on the highway (Fig. 4); sleeping in tents (Fig. 5) in magical places and seeing more stars than one ever imagined existed; hearing

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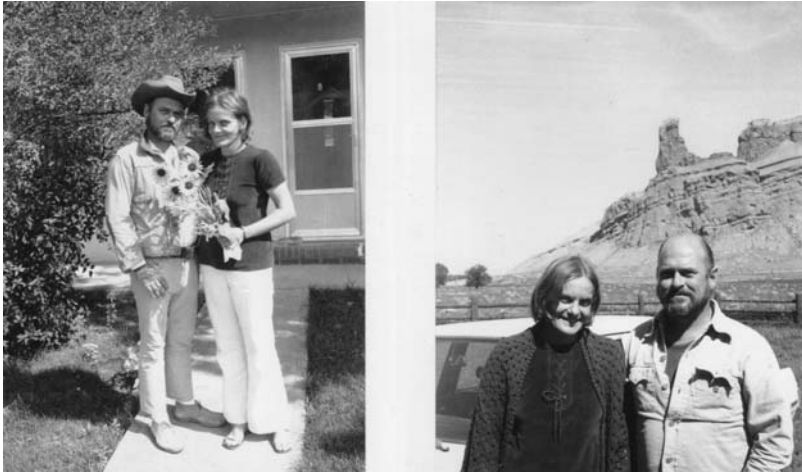


Fig. 1 Elwyn and Friderun Simons in Wyoming, 1972



Fig. 2 Simons Family in front of Goldtooth MacDonal's Cabin, Wyoming 1979. From left: David Brenton, Elwyn, Cornelia, Friderun holding Verne



Fig. 3 The Simons Family in Sakkara, Egypt 1985. From left: Egyptian Guide, Elwyn, Verne and Cornelia on the Camel, Friderun



Fig. 4 1995, the Simons Family on the Road to the Ankarana, northern Madagascar: fun and games!

the desert fox calling or the lemurs quarrel in the middle of the night. It means long evenings of lively discussions and conversations about the world, about fossils, about genealogy, the history of Christianity, the ear region of the



Fig. 5 1995, Ankarana Camp. Friderun emerging from her tent

primate genus *Tarsius*, about students and children, the Pharaohs of Egypt, about living prosimians, primates and wild life conservation, about bee keeping, the meaning of life, art, agonizing about politics gone wrong that are more often than not based in the uniquely human dilemma known as religion. It is an endless series of fond but hilarious anecdotes about Frank Goto, the paleontology preparator at Princeton University. It is mourning the loss of family members and friends. It is sharing the triumphs of receiving scientific awards, being knighted by the country of Madagascar, or being elected to scholarly societies. It is proudly seeing students succeed in their lives.

Being married to Elwyn means wonderful meals, gardening, restoring beautiful handmade quilts and paintings, trips to India or Europe, months living in Germany and Paris, France, vacations in the Caribbean, visits to Houston, Texas, pulling weeds, planting roses and palm trees, visits to Yellowstone Park, glaciers, mountains and geysers, Simons family reunion in the Ozarks, drives through New England or Kansas, all the way across the continent to the American West. It means Art and Natural History Museums, country music, being in Colorado, Montana and taking the road over the Beartooth Mountains, singing lullabies, camp songs and telling stories. Smelling flowers and watching humming birds, washing dishes, a kitchen sticky all over with delectable honey, watering plants, going for walks. Life with Elwyn is never, ever boring.

It also means limitless trust, love, warmth, responsibility and adding the next generation to our union, David Brenton, Cornelia and Verne. It means having wonderful, loving and trusting lifelong friends and family members.

All of them true friends indeed. It means never ending support, generosity, understanding and allowing each other to grow. It means flower bouquets, orchids blooming, caterpillars and butterflies, pyramids and running creeks, picking up sticks, looking for fossils, sitting around camp fires and giving parties. It is writing papers and books, proofreading manuscripts and grant proposals, discussing ideas.

There have been complicated times, both familial and professional. There have been crosscurrents caused by envious, misleading or even devious people, uncomprehending administrators, senseless minions, misunderstandings, but Elwyn stands tall above any confusion and hurdle that life entails.

This is what it means to be married to Elwyn.

A Personal Reminiscence of Elwyn

David Pilbeam

I met Elwyn for the first time in the Natural History Museum in London sometime during the early spring of 1963. I had applied to Yale as a prospective graduate student in Geology and Geophysics and Elwyn interviewed me (as did, on another occasion that spring, John Buettner-Janusch who was then in the Yale Anthropology Department). I had applied to Yale to work with Elwyn because, one day almost a year previously, my teacher in physical anthropology at Cambridge, Jack Trevor, had said to me: “David, my boy, there’s a brilliant young American paleontologist named Elwyn Simons who is interested in human origins; why don’t you go and work with him.” So I did.

I went (up) to Cambridge in 1959 to read (study) Natural Sciences as the first half of a medical degree (then, as now, the pre-clinical portion of medical training made up a significant part of a Cambridge undergraduate degree), but decided after two years that medicine and I were not for each other. I ended up taking the second part of my bachelors degree in physical anthropology. At Cambridge, physical anthropology was a quiet little backwater of a sub-department, with two instructors, one of them the aforementioned Jack Trevor. Jack had been born in Tanzania and had begun making a splash as a rising star before the Second World War. But by the time I met him, his star had faded and he had become something of a recluse, although still a brilliant one, and for me, an inspiring teacher. Jack did no lecturing but instead taught through weekly supervisions (tutorials) which involved (sometimes) critical reading of my essays, but as frequently meandered across a dozen different topics. This style of teaching gave me plenty of time to sit in libraries, and in particular to browse restlessly. It was during one session in the library of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, sometime in the 1961–1962 academic year, that I came across Elwyn’s 1961 paper on *Ramapithecus* in what was to me an obscure journal, *Postilla*, of the Yale Peabody Museum. I then tracked down his various papers published between 1959 and 1961 on the Fayum primates discovered earlier in the century by Richard Markgraf, and his report in 1962 of the first new primates from

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Egypt, fruits of the first full season in the Fayum. I became intrigued with hominoid evolution and hominid origins and with the Oligocene and (particularly) Miocene, to the point of obsession.

In the spring of 1962, Jack took me to a meeting at the London Zoo sponsored by the Zoological Society of London. Among the talks was one by a young primatologist who had just reported seeing chimps make tools—Jane Goodall. Few of us realized that we were present at the birth of studies of great ape behavioral ecology, which are now so important in making sense of the ape and human fossil record. I got to meet many of the then movers and shakers in the field—Neil Tappen, John Napier, Charles Oxnard, and George “Erik” Erikson among the morphologists and primatologists, along with several behaviorists and geneticists. Only much later, looking back at the publication that came from that meeting (Napier, 1963), did I realize that there were already strong hints from genetic comparisons that humans and apes were very similar.

I received a graduate fellowship in Geology and Geophysics that began in 1963. It paid \$2000/year, which was enough to live on and even run a car (I bought Elwyn’s fading VW Beetle). When I arrived at Yale, hominids were still thought to be very old by almost all morphologists and paleontologists: the great apes were believed monophyletic and the earliest human ancestors were traced back into the early Miocene or even earlier. The great phenotypic differences between humans and apes were thought to reflect great phylogenetic depth. More genetic comparisons among hominoids were just beginning to surface, but they were ignored by almost all morphologists unless they corresponded to the then conventional wisdom on branching times. The value of primate field studies was stated but not truly understood and they were certainly not valued in the ways they are today.

Once I had adjusted to Yale, the United States, and to Elwyn, whose teaching style, to be fair, was not that different from Jack’s, and very compatible with my learning style, I fell into a regular rhythm. My office was in the newly built Kline Geology Laboratories, less than a minute’s walk from Elwyn’s (who was right next door to John Ostrom). Grant Meyer was the chief lab tech and preparator. I had a few courses to take in my first year there, but not enough to keep me from being a regular occupant of Elwyn’s kingdom.

Rather quickly I was drawn into Elwyn’s research projects, and in particular those involving Oligocene primates and the dryopithecines. After a brief visit to Egypt in 1960, Elwyn had been able to raise funds to begin in 1961 what has turned out to be a quite extraordinarily successful series of field seasons in the Oligocene and Eocene of the Fayum. I arrived just before Elwyn left for the third field season, which yielded important new primates including *Aegyptopithecus* mandibles. I was privileged to be able to participate as a very junior “learner” in the discussions and analyses of the new material. I was also becoming increasingly involved in another of Elwyn’s major projects, taxonomic revision of the Neogene apes known collectively as the dryopithecines, after the type genus

Dryopithecus (described by Lartet in the mid-1800's and mentioned by Darwin in the *Descent of Man*).

At that time, the record of Miocene and Pliocene apes (the boundary between them still sat at what is now the Middle/Upper Miocene boundary) consisted almost entirely of scrappy jaws and isolated teeth (an exception being the *Proconsul* partial skeleton), to which were attached a multitude of names (over twenty generic names, as I recall). We attacked this morass with great zeal, which resulted in what can now (given a greatly expanded Miocene fossil ape record) be recognized as excessive nomenclatural parsimony. We ended up with just two Miocene genera: *Ramapithecus*, the hominid, and *Dryopithecus* for the rest, with barely more than a half dozen species. However, we did assign geographically-based subgeneric names, for the European, Asian, and African species groups. The study was completed by late 1964, and published in 1965 (see Simons and Pilbeam, 1965).

Elwyn's work patterns were simple: work constantly, and always have at least one and preferably two or three manuscripts in preparation at any one time. I did my best to keep up with the work rate, although I have never been able to match his level of productivity. All I can say is that this arrangement was enormous fun, exhilarating, and a terrific way to learn.

As a lowly graduate student I quickly became aware of the way in which Elwyn and my association with him opened doors for me. Through Elwyn I was able to meet many of the greats. A couple of months after my arrival at Yale, Elwyn took me to New York, to the American Museum of Natural History where I met Malcolm McKenna and Ned Colbert. I remember that day well because it was November 22, 1963, the day Kennedy was assassinated. I subsequently met George Gaylord Simpson. Louis Leakey came to Yale to deliver the Silliman Lectures in the spring of 1964. I believe he was invited mainly through contacts with John Buettner-Janusch, and Elwyn arranged for me to talk with the grand old man. I visited him in his lodgings (somewhere on the Yale Old Campus), as did Elwyn, and Louis was extremely generous in showing us casts of published as well as unpublished hominids. I remember seeing OH13, "Cinderella", and other *Homo habilis* material but have no recollection of the lectures themselves.

I went home to England for a few weeks in the summer of 1964 and while there took a side trip to Sabadell in Catalonia to see Miguel Crusafont Pairo's Miocene apes. I enjoyed his generosity in showing me the material as well as his great hospitality; with his wife, we enjoyed a subversive toast to "Free Catalonia" (Franco was still alive). After finishing the dryopithecine revision and sending the manuscript to Adolph Schultz in Zurich (editor of *Folia Primatologica*), I headed off to Cairo in November to join the fourth Fayum field season. I overlapped for several weeks with Elwyn, learning the ropes of desert collecting, and stayed in the field after he returned to the States. In January I moved on to Nairobi and was able to see the Miocene material there, thanks to the graciousness of Louis Leakey once again. Thence to South Africa where I was most kindly treated by Phillip Tobias and Raymond Dart, and from there on

again to Zurich and a chance to meet the great Adolph Schultz. During my stay in Switzerland I had the pleasure of meeting Schultz's young research assistant, Friderun Ankel. Before returning to the States I had one last research stop in Paris, meeting one of the rising stars of French paleontology, Yves Coppens. All this was ultimately made possible by Elwyn, and through my association with him.

Elwyn's generosity made my PhD dissertation possible. Bill Bishop had recovered some interesting Early Miocene ape fossils in Uganda when he was with the Geological Survey there, and had asked Elwyn to describe them. With Bill's agreement, Elwyn arranged to turn the material over to me, and as I headed back to Cambridge I was able to take the specimens with me. During the summer of 1965, while preparing for what I had planned to be my third and final dissertation-writing year at Yale, I received an unexpected phone call from Jack Trevor in Cambridge offering me the junior physical anthropology position there. Describing those Ugandan fossil apes led me to meet Alan Walker and Mike Rose, and to join them in a couple of seasons of field work in Uganda. I also met Andrew Hill at around this time. Despite a very heavy teaching load at Cambridge I did manage to finish my dissertation. I also managed a semester's sabbatical at Yale in early 1968, and while there, was offered a job in the Anthropology Department. This coincided with my failure to be appointed to Jack Trevor's position at Cambridge (Jack had died a year earlier). I jumped at the chance, having found Cambridge after my return much less palatable than I had anticipated; to steal an old Mort Sahl joke, it was a place that didn't believe in doing anything for the first time—and I was spoiled by American attitudes and ways of getting things done.

Much was changing and had changed at Yale, with Kingman Brewster as President. Being able to work closely with Elwyn again was wonderful. The Egyptian field program had been stopped in 1967, and the famous red Dodge truck which had served so well in the Fayum was shipped for storage to Sabadell where Professor Crusafont Pairo generously gave it a home. Elwyn had also begun a field program in India, having decided to return to the Siwalik rocks from which *Ramapithecus* had been recovered many decades before. India became the venue because a future collaborator had responded to Elwyn's enquiry, while a similar request to the Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP) had gone unanswered. Elwyn took me with him to India in early 1969 where we had a chance to visit the collections of the Geological Society of India in Calcutta. But the project was not going well and soon finished.

The vertebrate paleontology section of the Geology Department was extremely lively at that time. Phil Gingerich and Rich Kay were among Elwyn's graduate students, as was a little later John Barry, and John Fleagle was an undergraduate; Glenn Conroy was nominally my graduate student. I remember those hectic and stimulating days with enormous pleasure (Fig. 1). Soon after I had returned to Yale, I began fieldwork in Spain, and then in Kenya, greatly

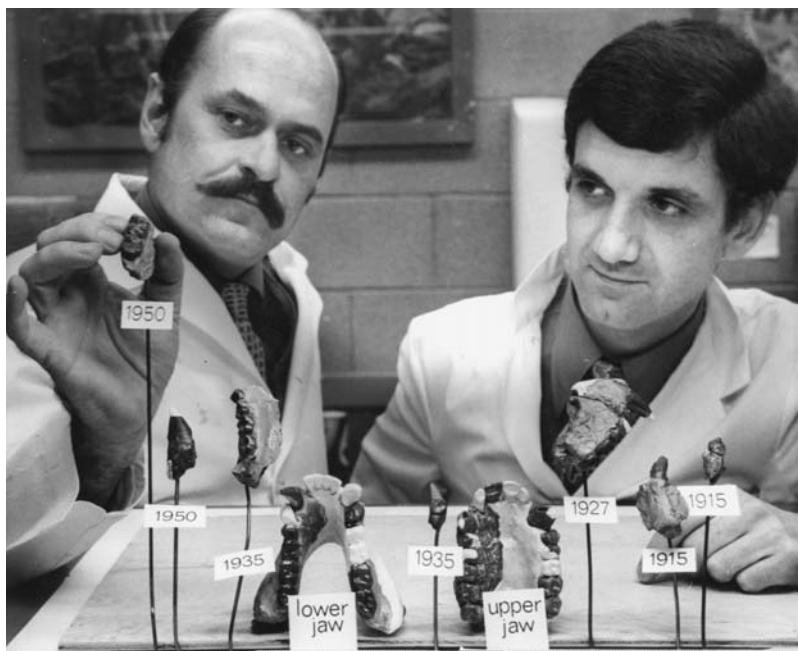


Fig. 1 Elwyn Simons and David Pilbeam revising dryopithecine fossils circa 1971

helped in both places by Grant Meyer as well as by Prithijit Chatrath (who had worked on the Indian Siwalik project for Elwyn and who had then moved to Yale to join Elwyn's lab).

I planned a field season for the summer of 1973 in Kenya. But earlier that year Elwyn had received a letter from the Geological Survey of Pakistan inviting him to visit. Once again, Elwyn's generosity made it possible for me to respond to the invitation. And so it was that in the fall of 1973, Grant Meyer and Glenn Conroy, who had spent the summer in Kenya, flew to Spain, picked up the red Dodge, and drove it across Eurasia to Pakistan (not something one could do today). Phil Gingerich joined them, as did Mahmood Raza who was the young GSP officer assigned to the project (and who later completed a PhD in Geology and Geophysics at Yale). Thus began the Yale (later Harvard)-GSP project—and it still continues 32 years later. The success of the project owes a great debt to Elwyn and to those few Yale greats and future greats who got the project rolling.

There followed four more years of close contact with Elwyn—much discussion and argument, and much laughter. After Elwyn moved to Duke, our contacts inevitably became fewer and less intense (Fig. 2). But fourteen years of more-or-less continuous and intense intellectual contact have left their



Fig. 2 David Pilbeam and Elwyn Simons at a conference in 1982

mark in more than memory. I owe a very great deal to Elwyn. I value our forty plus years of friendship, and salute a very great paleontologist. We are all in his debt.

References

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Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark

The Making of a Paleoanthropologist

Bernard Wood

Introduction

One of Elwyn Simons' many talents is mimicry. Mimicry can be cruel and devastating or kindly and respectful; Elwyn's imitations of Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark are transparently of the second variety. For many these imitations are the closest they will ever come to "seeing" Le Gros Clark "in the flesh." For Sir Wilfrid Le Gros Clark (henceforth I will refer to him as "Le Gros" for that is how he was almost universally referred to when he was alive) died on the 28th June 1971 aged 76, having retired from the Dr. Lee's Professorship of Anatomy at Oxford in 1962.

Elwyn was a graduate student of Le Gros' from September 1956 to 1959. By that time Le Gros had been a Fellow of the Royal Society (i.e., an FRS) for just over twenty years and he enjoyed an international reputation as a neuroscientist, a primatologist and as a paleoanthropologist. He had been elected President of the International Anatomical Congress in 1950, he was elected President of the Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1951 and in 1955 the first edition of *The Fossil Evidence for Human Evolution: an Introduction to the Study of Palaeoanthropology* had appeared. He was also firmly embedded into the British scientific establishment, for a year before Elwyn's arrival in Oxford Le Gros had been knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. Anatomists are only rarely recommended for a knighthood, but Le Gros had evidently made sufficient impact as a scientist to be honored in this way. In other words Elwyn interacted with Le Gros at the height of the latter's powers and influence.

But despite Le Gros' eminence remarkably little has been written about him. He wrote in a guarded way about himself in the form of ten autobiographical essays collected together in a book with the whimsical title *Chant of Pleasant Exploration* (Le Gros Clark, 1968) (when I quote from this I will refer to it as "CPE"). This was published by the Scottish publisher Livingstone as part of a

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rather dry series of biographies of distinguished medical men with names like Sir George Buckston Browne and Sir Arbuthnot Lane. I would be surprised if the print run of CPE had exceeded a few hundred copies. In an introduction to the book Le Gros writes that three of the essays are based on lectures he had given and he aptly describes CPE as a “medley of autobiographical fragments” (CPE, p. vi).

Despite his urbanity, Le Gros was a shy man. For example, although he had been associated with Hertford College in Oxford for 35 years, initially in 1934 as a Professorial Fellow (for some reason lost in the mists of time, since the 17th century, Dr. Lee’s Professors of Anatomy have always been made Professorial Fellows of Hertford College) and then as an Honorary Fellow from 1962 until his death, when I contacted the Fellows Librarian at Hertford College they could find no photograph, group or otherwise, that included Le Gros. There is information about his professional career in the official biography that is prepared for all recently deceased Fellows of the Royal Society, usually by another Fellow. Le Gros had the misfortune to have his obituary written by his nemesis, Solly Zuckerman. This was published two and half years after Le Gros’ death and it is fair to say that Zuckerman made the very best of the opportunity to “damn with faint praise” and the bibliography included in Zuckerman’s obituary is incomplete.

In this contribution I provide some biographical context for Le Gros’ interest in, and contributions to, primatology and paleoanthropology. I address the following questions. When and how did Le Gros become interested in human evolution? How central was this interest professionally? What were Le Gros’ views about human evolution and how did those views change over time?

Family Background

The family name “Le Gros Clark” is an amalgamation of the English family name “Clark” (it most likely originated because one, or more, of his ancestors had been “clerks”) and the name of a family that probably originated in Guernsey, for there is evidence of several “Le Gros” lineages in the Guernsey records. Wilfrid (whose namesake was sanctified for helping in the 7th century to introduce the practices of the Roman Catholic Church into Northeastern England) was born on the 5th June 1895, the youngest of three sons of the Reverend Travers Le Gros Clark, a Church of England clergyman. The three brothers were evidently a close-knit group, sharing common interests in natural history and in exploring the outdoors. Le Gros claimed his middle brother Cyril was the “practical” one (CPE, p. 244) and credited the eldest brother Bill with “the most acute intellect of us all” (CPE, p. 243). Curiously, we are only told the nickname given to his eldest brother during the First World War. The name “Bill” came about because Le Gros’ eldest brother sported a bushy moustache