Report on Kandis Fossil Site, Kenya

by Dr. Emma Mbua
National Museums of Kenya

In September 2012, members of The Leakey Foundation Board of Trustees and Fellows had a unique opportunity to visit grantee Emma Mbua’s ongoing excavation at Kandis Fossil Site near Nairobi. This report highlights field activities at a newly discovered palaeontological site on the outskirts of Nairobi.

Kandis Fossil Site (KFS), located on the slopes of the Ngong escarpment, was discovered in 2009. This is a Pliocene site, east of Ngong Hills near a small suburb known as Ongata Rongai, with an elevation of 1,746 meters high. To date, the site has yielded 1,100 mammalian fossils.

The objective and focus of the 2012 fieldwork research was to carry out excavations aimed at recovering additional Pliocene faunal remains. Through generous financial awards from The Leakey Foundation and Palaeontological Scientific Trust (PAST) in 2010, two field excursions were undertaken, resulting in 800 mammalian remains represented by various body elements. The richness of the site is clearly demonstrated by the large number of fossils recovered in 2010 and 2011.

The 2012 field season recorded tremendous success in the number of faunal remains collected, totalling 150 elements, including two hominin baby teeth and a proximal ulna.

A second objective was to carry out a microstratigraphical study of the geology around the excavation site and adjacent environs. A graduate geologist from the University of Nairobi has provided a detailed survey of the geology within the region and compared results with published information on the broader Nairobi area published by Saggerson in 1965. KFS is associated with ultra basic lava from Ngoroi volcanic eruptive centre. Three distinct fossil bearing beds, designated levels 1-3, were identified. The sediments within the levels are described as gravels, silts and conglomerates. Several generation faults associated with rift faulting were identified in the broader study region. The Kandis valley is dominated by cross fault which are minor rift faults associated with Ngoroi volcano.

The proximity and expansion of Ongata Rongai, a fast growing town near the site, pose a great threat to the conservation of the site and fossil bearing sediments. Although the site is located on government-owned riparian land, much of the surrounding area is privately owned and homes are springing up, threatening long term conservation and future work at the site. This years’ fieldwork extended the excavated area by 7x6 meters and recorded great success in recovery of a great number of fossils including: a complete rhino mandible with dentition; four partially complete Hippo skeletons;
Dear Friends of The Leakey Foundation,

Throughout history, the advancement of science has largely depended on the support of its patrons.

During the 15th Century, scientific disciplines like astronomy relied almost solely on the patronage of a few individuals. Galileo relied on the generous support of the Medicis in Florence, and in a fitting tribute to the magnitude of their support, Galileo named the moons of Jupiter after the family.

In 1960, Louis Leakey secured the initial funding for Jane Goodall, to study chimpanzees, from businessman and philanthropist Leighton Wilkie. (Wilkie and his brothers manufactured machine tools, with their professional work leading them to an interest in the history of tool making.) At one point in time, there were chimpanzees named Leakey and Wilkie (the most proficient tool-making chimp) roaming the hills of Gombe Stream in Tanzania.

In extraordinary cases, the name of a patron becomes synonymous with the scientific discipline they fund, and such is the case with Gordon Getty. At the 40th anniversary celebration for Getty’s leadership of The Leakey Foundation, Paul Pelosi (husband of Leakey Foundation Life Trustee, Nancy) described Getty’s long-standing and incomparable intellectual curiosity about human origins. Paul shared the story of he and Nancy attending a lecture by Louis Leakey, with Getty and his wife, and after the lecture they approached Louis to invite him to dinner. A few years later Getty (and Nancy Pelosi) joined the Board of the newly founded Leakey Foundation.

Looking back over the last 40 years, no person has contributed more to the science of human origins than Gordon Getty. Not only has Getty funded and led The Leakey Foundation, but he has also provided critical leadership and support to: the Center for Human Evolutionary Studies at Rutgers University; HERC at University of California, Berkeley; Paleontological Scientific Trust, at University of Witwatersrand, South Africa; The Berkeley Geochronology Lab at University of California, Berkeley; and The Stone Age Institute at University of Indiana.

Today, despite the fact that foundations, societies, clubs and even online “crowd-sourcing” exist to fund research not being funded by universities, corporations or the government, the importance of private philanthropy cannot be overstated.

We give thanks to people like Gordon Getty, and all of you who contribute to the study of human origins through The Leakey Foundation. Individuals truly make a difference!

Warmly,
Don Dana
President, The Leakey Foundation

Our 2014 Fellow’s trip is now full! We are considering forming a second tour with the same itinerary: leakeyfoundation.org/travel
If interested, please call 415.561.4646 or email us info@leakeyfoundation.org
skeletons; primates including a well-preserved *Paracolubus* mandible; Hominin baby molars; and a *Parapapio* skull.

KFS is a strategic site with a location so near to Nairobi city that it offers a good opportunity for teaching young Kenyans excavation techniques and fossil recovery. A survey of the area was successfully done to map out and establish access to the site by students.

**Study and Publication**

Faunal experts including René Bobe, Jean Renaud Boisserie, Denis Geraads, Yutaka Kunimatsu, and Masato Nakatsukasa studied KFS fauna this past summer. We hope to publish a preliminary report on KFS fauna in 2013.

*Trustees, Fellows and staff of The Leakey Foundation visit KFS, outside of Nairobi. Photo: The Leakey Foundation*

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**A Story of The Leakey Foundation’s Success**

by Bill Richards  
*Leakey Foundation Trustee*

The early years of The Leakey Foundation were characterized by the efforts of a small group of dedicated Trustees who enjoyed close personal relationships with Louis Leakey. They were operating on money they donated personally or received from periodic fund raising efforts.

In addition to the Trustees, there was important financial support from Southern California entertainment and corporate contributors. Early support came from actors such as Jimmy Stewart, Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra. There were many generous business people involved including Walter Annenberg, Justin Dart and Fred Hartley.

In those days, research grants were given by the Foundation in large part to people whose projects were being sponsored, and at times, supported personally by Louis Leakey. As most of us know, the earliest beneficiaries included Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey and Birutė Galdikas. An early Leakey Foundation Trustee, who was also a Trustee at Cal Tech, arranged the use of Pasadena office space by the Foundation for many years. When that lease ended, the Foundation moved for a short time to Jack London Square in Oakland. Finally, in 1997, the office was relocated to the Presidio of San Francisco.

The Leakey Foundation has gone through many adaptations and evolutions over the years. There have been parallels between the evolution of The Leakey Foundation and the evolution of our own species. Both have adapted successfully to changing conditions. Both have had false starts. And both evolutions have produced successful organisms that continue to grow and prosper with time.

In my opinion, there have been three major events that were critical to producing The Leakey Foundation as we know it today. The first major event was Gordon’s endowment funding generosity and his commitment to match contributions by other Trustees. This fortuitous event was like the discovery of fire in the course of human evolution. Once it happened, the world changed, and things were never the same again. Because of this, we now have an endowment fund that produces a steady stream of significant, ongoing income.
Paleoanthropology

Ms. Ashley Bales, New York University
The phylogenetic position of Proconsul and ancestral morphotypes within Anthropoidea

Ms. Emily Beverly, Baylor University
Paleoenvironmental context of Pleistocene archaeology in Kenya’s Lake Victoria basin

Mr. Daniel Garcia Martinez
Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales CSIC, Spain
Comparative thoracic anatomy of the El Sidrón Neanderthals

Dr. Denis Geraads
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Late Miocene hominids in Morocco: Survey in Ouarzazate basin

Dr. John Hoffecker, University of Colorado, Boulder
Modern human dispersal on the southern plain of Eastern Europe

Dr. Ofer Marder, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Upper Palaeolithic, anatomically modern human and paleoenvironment at Manot Cave, Israel

Dr. Emma Mbua, National Museums of Kenya
Highland fauna from Kandis fossil site, a new Pliocene site near Nairobi, Kenya

Dr. Lindsay McHenry, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
Identifying, dating, and characterizing Olduvai Bed II tuff source volcanoes

Ms. Emily Middleton, New York University
Ecogeographical influences on trunk modularity in recent humans

Dr. Ellen Miller, Wake Forest University
Paleontological exploration & excavation at Buluk, early Miocene

Mr. Jackson Njau, Indiana University
Curatorial Rescue of Mary Leakey’s Excavated Fossils at Olduvai

Ms. Alejandra Ortiz Rivarola, New York University
Development, morphology and homology: A comprehensive examination of hominin molars

Mr. Philip Slater, University of Illinois
Planning & technological organization in the Kenyan MSA & LSA

Dr. Teresa Steele, University of California, Davis
Varsche Rivier 003: A new Middle Stone Age site; Namaqualand

Mr. John Willman, Washington University in Saint Louis
Non-masticatory use of anterior teeth by Late Pleistocene humans

Dr. Nicolas Zwyns, University of California, Davis
On the trail of the Initial Upper Paleolithic in Northeast Asia: the Tolbor 16 site; Northern Mongolia

Behavioral

Dr. Michelle Brown, Universitat Zurich
Novel correlates of intergroup aggression by redtail monkeys

Ms. Pamela Heidi Douglas
Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology
Female mate choice and mating strategies in wild bonobos

Dr. Dorothy Fragaszy, University of Georgia
How bearded capuchin monkeys process cashew nuts

Ms. Adeelia Goffe, German Primate Centre
Social networks & variability in stress hormone output in female Guinea baboons
Behavioral [continued]

Ms. Elizabeth Johnson, University of Michigan  
A test of the vocal grooming hypothesis in the gelada

Mr. Paul Kuchenbuch  
Max Planck Institute for Ornithology  
Development of gestural communication in bonobos in the wild

Dr. Rebecca Lewis, University of Texas, Austin  
Behavioral and morphological influences on paternity distribution in Verreaux’s sifaka

Dr. Shannon McFarlin, The George Washington University  
Growth and life history of wild mountain and western gorillas: Rwanda and Congo

Dr. Elizabeth Quinn, Washington University, St. Louis  
Milk with altitude: Investigations of milk composition in ethnic Tibetans

Ms. Amanda Tan, Nanyang Technological University  
Ontogenetic and social influences on macaque stone-tool use skill development

Ms. Kara Walker, Duke University  
Costs & benefits of female transfer in the Gombe chimpanzees

Announcing: The Gordon Getty Grant

2013 marks the 40th anniversary of Gordon Getty joining The Leakey Foundation Board. To commemorate this special milestone we have created the Gordon Getty Grant Fund.

Each year, the Foundation will award the Gordon Getty Grant to a researcher who shows extraordinary originality and dedication in their intellectual and professional pursuits, while exemplifying a multidisciplinary approach to human origins research.

This grant will provide an enduring legacy to the understanding of human origins, while acknowledging Mr. Getty’s special relationship to The Leakey Foundation.

To create a fund that provides this grant in perpetuity, the Foundation’s goal is to raise $400,000. This money, once invested in the endowment, will generate an additional $20,000 annually to offer a grant named in his honor.

Getty’s involvement and philanthropic support has brought times of growth and increasing prominence for human origins research. The Leakey Foundation believes that no other single person can be credited for advancing human origins research more significantly.

If you would like to honor our Chairman by making a gift to the Gordon Getty Grant Fund, visit leakeyfoundation.org/getty or mail the form on page 11.

The Gordon Getty Grant Fund Donors  
(Donations made between April 15 and August 15, 2013)

Dr. Susan Alberts  
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Mr. & Mrs. Marsh Andersen  
Mr. & Mrs. Ray Auel

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Dr. R. W. Hoellworth  
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& Mr. Peter Robinson  
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Mrs. Diane B. Wilsey  
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A Celebration of Philanthropy

In April,
The Leakey Foundation celebrated two important milestones in the history of the organization; forty-five years of funding human origins research, and forty years of leadership and generosity from the Chairman of the Board, Gordon Getty.

Four days of events were organized to honor Mr. Getty’s achievements. The theme of each event featured one of Mr. Getty’s passions: economics, wine, and music. Each theme was explored though the lens of human origins.

The Foundation kicked off the celebration with a public lecture in San Francisco at the California Academy of Sciences on the subject of Neuroeconomics, with Dr. Michael Platt of Duke University.

The following day, guests headed north to Wine Country for a garden luncheon at Iron Horse Vineyards, hosted by Life Trustee Barry Sterling and his wife Audrey, with their daughter Joy Sterling, who is a Foundation Trustee. The Sterlings presented Mr. Getty with a one-of-a-kind jeroboam of Iron Horse sparkling wine with The Leakey Foundation’s logo and a salute to Mr. Getty that reads “Thank you for 40 years of leadership” etched into the green glass.

In the evening, the Foundation’s guests were welcomed to a wine tasting and barbecue at the Healdsburg home of Foundation President Don Dana and his wife Jeanne. (As a thank-you, staff presented the Danas with a Redwood sapling to plant on their property.) This event included a lecture on the origins of wine by Dr. Patrick McGovern.

One highlight of the evening was the presentation of a gift to Mr. Getty, by a member of the Scientific Executive Committee (SEC), Dr. John Mitani of the University of Michigan.

The Foundation assembled a portfolio of research papers, sent to us by scientists from all over the world whose research was funded by The Leakey Foundation. Our end result: two leather binders—both monumental in size—featuring over seventy published papers that would not have been possible without the support of our members and of Mr. Getty. This gift...
was a physical representation of the magnitude of Mr. Getty’s contributions to human origins research during the past forty years.

Saturday morning, Trustees, SEC and staff held the Granting Session and Board Meeting, where grants totalling $439,168 were approved. Five grants were recommended for funding, however the funds were not in the original budget. Through the generosity of the Trustees and Mr. Getty, an additional $68,200 was raised to fund those five additional grants.

On Saturday evening a celebration honoring Mr. Getty’s 40th Anniversary was also held at the Dana’s historic Queen Anne home on the Russian River. The natural beauty of the land, and the mild spring weather offered a perfect setting for the event, which was held outdoors under a festive canopy. A centerpiece of the party was a five-tier cake, designed to look like a stack of Mr. Getty’s favorite books. A string quartet of talented students from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music provided a musical backdrop to the evening, which was hosted by Joan Donner, Carolyn Farris, Bill and Debby Richards, and Kay Harrigan Woods.

Toasts and speeches in honor of Mr. Getty were made by Paul Pelosi, Leakey Foundation Treasurer Bill Richards, and SEC member Dr. John Fleagle. SEC Co-Chairman Dr. Frank Brown presented Mr. Getty with the Leakey Legacy Award, designed by Foundation Trustee Alice Corning. The plaque on the award reads, “for extraordinary dedication to the science of human origins.”

Leakey Foundation Director, Sharal Camisa, announced the founding of the Gordon Getty Grant which will be awarded annually to the grantee who most exemplifies a multi-disciplinary approach to human origins research.

That same evening, the annual silent auction raised funds totalling $21,550, with one hundred percent funding grants.

Sunday morning wrapped up the weekend of events with a brunch hosted by Nina Carroll, Austin and Sara Hills, Paul and Debbie Johnson, and Owen and Kris O’Donnell. This event was centered around music, and featured a fascinating lecture by Randall White (New York University) titled: The Expressive Culture of Early Humans–Music, Ornaments and Images.
It is my pleasure this evening to present the Chairman of The Leakey Foundation, Mr. Gordon Getty, with a special award from the Scientific Executive Committee of the Foundation.

As those of you who were here for the granting session today know, Gordon is not just an honorary Chairman, instead he is keenly aware of the science supported by the Foundation; alert, engaged, and above all comfortable. He is one of the members of the extended family that makes up this Foundation. Gordon, you know that the Trustees and Fellows appreciate you, and we want you to know that you are also deeply appreciated by the SEC—not just current members, but all members historically.

We considered many ways to show our appreciation—awarding the Leakey Prize, including you as an honorary member of the SEC, and so on. But on reflection about the latter we thought that, like Groucho Marx, you might refuse membership in any group that would accept you as a member. So instead, it is my honor and pleasure to present you with the first ever Leakey Legacy Award, authorized by the Board of Trustees of The Leakey Foundation, for extraordinary dedication to the science of human origins. You are a true friend and colleague, and definitely not ‘the patsy of last resort.’

Dr. Brown presents Mr. Getty with the award. Photo: J. Harris

On the Last 40 Years: great innovation or the stuff of science-fiction?

Remarks made by Dr. John Fleagle, member of The Leakey Foundation SEC.

When Sharal and Don asked if I would spend 5 minutes summarizing how the scientific work funded by The Leakey Foundation has changed in the 40 years since Gordon Getty first became a member, my first reaction was, "Are you out of your mind? Five minutes to summarize how the study of human origins has changed over the past 40 years?!”

However, when I had calmed down, I realized that in context, their request was actually quite normal, if not rational! This is The Leakey Foundation; we are always very frugal with our resources and extravagant in our expectations.

We are the people who give a graduate student $12,000 to go off into a jungle somewhere for a couple of years and find out everything about the behavior and ecology of a primate species that is totally unknown. Or we give an archeologist $15,000 to go to some godforsaken place in the middle of nowhere and try to discover what our human ancestors have been doing there for a million years or so. Remarkably enough, they usually come back with results.

Indeed, there have been few discoveries in paleoanthropology over the past four decades that haven’t been supported somewhere along the way by The Leakey Foundation. So, in that spirit, I guess it isn’t out of character to be asked to try to
summarize forty years of human origins research in the remaining four minutes, so here goes.

The Leakey Foundation funds research in two main areas: Primatology and Paleoanthropology. In 1973, Gordon’s first year with the Foundation, grants were awarded to Louis Leakey’s Trimates—Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Birutė Galdikas. In the 1970s primatology was mostly descriptive and consisted of recording, in great detail, how and where the animals move, what they ate and how they interact with one another. The basic equipment was boots, binoculars, and a notebook.

Today we are still funding studies of great apes, but at many localities throughout Africa and Asia, as well as studies of dozens of other species all over the world. While primatologists are still collecting data on primate movements, diet and social behaviors, the projects we fund, and the research they lead to are much more theoretical and aimed at a broader understanding of not just what living primates (including humans) do, but why they behave the way they do.

Boots, binoculars and notebooks are still important, but the technology available today enables primatologists to follow the movements of primates with radio collars and map them with computers, to study not just what foods they eat, but the physical and chemical properties of the individual food items. And they document not just how individuals interact with one another but how this is related to hormones and genetic relationships.

In 1973 most of our knowledge of early human evolution in Africa was from Olduvai Gorge and the caves of South Africa. A major area of debate was whether the gracile and robust taxa were a single species or two. The Omo project was active, and Don Johanson had begun work in Hadar (with Leakey support), but had not found Lucy. The Leakeys had begun work in Turkana, and had just published the 1470 skull (to much outcry), but had not yet found the many important fossils. The many sites and spectacular fossils in the Middle Awash were unknown and the extraordinary discoveries from Dmanisi, Chad, or Flores were unimagined.

In trying to put together this summary, I tried to imagine what the scientists evaluating research proposals in 1973 would make of the proposals we review today. I decided that some of the names of the taxa and the places would sound familiar, but most would not; and many of the questions being asked and the methods used to study them would sound like science-fiction.

On that note, I would like to emphasize that any review of the science funded by The Leakey Foundation over the past forty years would be incomplete without recognizing the extraordinarily important roles played by three people. Clark Howell was central to the Foundation from its beginning and chaired the granting program for decades. Irv DeVore, guided the studies of living and fossil primates for many decades.

The third person, who has been essential to the efforts of the SEC, is Gordon Getty. At the grants meetings, Gordon always asks more questions than anyone else, and he has a remarkable memory of all the previous work we have supported and an appreciation of how current grants relate to earlier grants.

But most significantly Gordon offers a perspective on the activities of The Leakey Foundation that we often lose sight of. In reviewing dozens of grants each session, it is very easy to get wrapped up in the way a proposal is written in an effort to win a large group of proposals down to a smaller number to meet the available funds. In contrast, Gordon always asks how we can afford not to fund a proposal when the request is so small and the potential benefit to our understanding of human origins is so large.

For this we are always grateful, because this is the perspective that makes The Leakey Foundation the wonderful organization that it is. Thank you, Gordon for 40 years of collegiality, support and vision.
While on safari, Mason Phelps was motivated by Louis Leakey to join The Leakey Foundation. Louis inspired Mason to ponder humankind’s deep evolutionary history. His commitment as a Trustee was to support Louis and the Foundation’s mission.

With Jack Evernden and John Reynolds, Curtis pioneered the use of the potassium–argon (K/Ar) dating method and initiated its application to many hominid and hominoid sites. The result revolutionized our beliefs about the time span of human evolution, its pace, and its possible relationship to global climatic events.

Curtis’ accomplishments include establishing the 1.85 mya of Mary Leakey’s 1959 find of “Zinj”, which pushed back the age of the Pleistocene era by a million years, and the late 1990s discovery that Homo erectus survived in Asia until some 50,000 years ago. He also used argon–argon dating (a refinement of the K/Ar dating technique) to establish the age of the famous fossil “Lucy”.

Among his numerous honors were the Newcomb Cleveland Prize in 1962 and the Leakey Prize in 2001. Dr. Alan Almquist shared, “Garniss Curtis, besides being a remarkable scientist with so many irons in the fire over his long and distinguished career, was a special human being whose kindness and generosity were rarely matched by others. His death truly marks the end of an era that dramatically altered our understandings of human’s place in nature.”

A celebration to remember Dr. Curtis will be held on Sunday, September 29th at the U.C. Berkeley Faculty Club.

A website was created to honor his life garnisscurtis.net.

In Memorium: Mason Phelps
by William Wirthlin
Leakey Foundation Trustee

While on safari, Mason Phelps was motivated by Louis Leakey to join The Leakey Foundation. Louis inspired Mason to ponder humankind’s deep evolutionary history. His commitment as a Trustee was to support Louis and the Foundation’s mission.

As a seasoned executive, Mason played an important role during a critical phase of the Foundation. He was appointed President in 1988 and diligently applied his business-world skills to Foundation issues. Mason also initiated the move from Oakland to the Presidio, and later served on the finance committee. He was all about the fundamentals and learning, and was always quick with a warm handshake and a massive smile. His raucous laughter was frequent and infectious.

Mason was a true friend. He partnered well with his beloved wife, Liz, who was so important in his life. His seasoned wisdom and friendship will be missed.

The Leakey Foundation voted to make Mason a Life Trustee, in 2012, in appreciation of his valued leadership and service.

In Memorium: Garniss Curtis
by H. Gregory
The Leakey Foundation

December 18, 2012 witnessed the passing of Dr. Garnis H. Curtis, founder of the Berkeley Geochronology Center, professor emeritus of earth and planetary science at U.C. Berkeley, and a dear friend of The Leakey Foundation. He was 93.

With Jack Evernden and John Reynolds, Curtis pioneered the use of the potassium–argon (K/Ar) dating method and initiated its application to many hominid and hominoid sites. The result revolutionized our beliefs about the time span of human evolution, its pace, and its possible relationship to global climatic events. Curtis’ accomplishments include establishing the 1.85 mya of Mary Leakey’s 1959 find of “Zinj”, which pushed back the age of the Pleistocene era by a million years, and the late 1990s discovery that Homo erectus survived in Asia until some 50,000 years ago. He also used argon–argon dating (a refinement of the K/Ar dating technique) to establish the age of the famous fossil “Lucy”.

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A website was created to honor his life garnisscurtis.net.

A Story of Success

This has brought permanence and perpetuity to The Leakey Foundation. It has brought continuity to our ongoing research efforts.

The second major event in the evolution of the Foundation was the enhancement of the role of scientists in our activities. With Gordon’s encouragement, the Foundation expanded its capabilities by adding scientists in anthropology, primatology and other related fields. These structural changes produced our current Scientific Executive Committee and our remarkably effective granting process. Through the efforts of our scientists, we now enjoy the benefits of an international network of other top scientists at the best universities, museums and research institutions around the world.

The third major event in the evolution of The Leakey Foundation was the relocation of the Foundation office to the Presidio. Gordon played a leading role in this as well and the office is now located in a supportive, non-profit environment. We are close to the homes of many key Trustees. We have a facility and a staff that support our operations at a very high level of efficiency. It is clear now that The Leakey Foundation will be in business for a long, long time.

Please join me in saluting Gordon for his leadership in transforming The Leakey Foundation from its tentative beginnings into the magnificent and successful institution we see today.
Yes!

I want to support the work of The Leakey Foundation.

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American Museum of Natural History
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Randall White, New York University
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