



Discovering Alesi: A Timeline

ISAIAH NENGO, LEAKEY FOUNDATION GRANTEE, TURKANA BASIN INSTITUTE, STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Once, now-extinct relatives of hippos, rhinos, elephants, carnivores belonging to the bear-dog family, distant relatives of antelopes, and ancient apes roamed under a thick forest canopy. 13 million years ago, a massive volcano erupts, spewing lava. The forest is buried in a rain of volcanic ash, a blanket tens of meters thick. Tree trunks, roots buried and deprived of oxygen, snap or keel over. Buried along with all the other different kinds of mammals is the tiny, fragile body of an infant ape. Flesh on the bodies of the buried animals disintegrates. Rain dissolves minerals in the ash, the solution permeating bones of animals and buried tree trunks, turning all of it into fossils. Millions of years later, a savannah teeming with more modern African animals and early hominids sits on top of the buried forest. Savannah turns into semi-desert. Today, in an area about the size of Manhattan, a hard-scrabble and desolate environment is sparsely inhabited by the semi-nomadic Turkana people.

For almost five decades, Koobi Fora Research Project (KFRP) teams organized by Richard Leakey, Meave Leakey, and Louise Leakey criss-crossed the vast Turkana Basin landscape in search of fossils. Their remarkable discoveries in this basin are from the Plio-Pleistocene



Alesi after attached sandstone rock was partially removed at the Turkana Basin Institute, near Lodwar, Kenya. © Isaiah Nengo, Photo by Christopher Kiarie.

era, from approximately five million to 11,000 years ago. In the same place, elusive deposits from earlier times can be found. The Napudet foothill deposits are from the Mid-Miocene (between 23 Ma to 5 Ma is considered the Miocene period). In 1990, a team led by legendary fossil hunter Kamoya Kimeu stumbled upon volcanic ash deposits preserving the forest and found the lower canine of an ape. In 2013, I went back to Napudet with a team and successfully relocated the site. In the summer 2014, with a grant from Leakey Foundation trustee Gordon Getty, I put together a small team of six African fossil hunters for

a three-week mission through volcanic rock and grit to find more ape fossils. On September 4, 2014, at about 5:30 PM, after a solid day of screening for fossils and finding absolutely nothing, John Ekusi discovered Alesi, the most complete ape skull ever known.

Improbable is how I would describe my career path preceding and leading to the discovery of Alesi. I was introduced to paleontology as a 17-year-old student on a school trip to the National Museums of Kenya to hear Richard Leakey give a talk. Six years later, still mesmerized by his stories of long gone, fantastic creatures, I wrote a letter to

[continued on page <?>]

The mission of The Leakey Foundation is to increase scientific knowledge, education, and public understanding of human origins, evolution, behavior, and survival.

Awarded Grants:
Spring 2017
Cycle

pages 4

In Memoriam:
Francis H. Brown

pages 8

Q&A With John
Ekusi

page 8

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Gordon P. Getty
Chairman

Camilla M. Smith
President

Nina L. Carroll
Alice Corning
Don Dana
Carolyn Farris
J. Michael Gallagher
Chester T. Kamin
Matthew Kaser
Julie M. LaNasa
Anne Maggioncalda
Diana McSherry
Jeanne Newman
William P. Richards, Jr.
Naoma Tate
Cole Thomson
Spencer Wells
William M. Wirthlin, Jr.

SCIENTIFIC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Dr. John Fleagle
Chairman
Dr. Alexander Harcourt
Baldwin Advisor

Dr. Brenda Bradley
Dr. Kristin Hawkes
Dr. Nina Jablonski
Dr. Richard Klein
Dr. Steven Kuhn
Dr. Meave Leakey
Dr. Daniel Lieberman
Dr. John Mitani
Dr. Martin Muller
Dr. Tom Plum
Dr. Robert Seyfarth
Dr. Joan Silk
Dr. Anne Stone
Dr. Carol Ward

STAFF

Sharal Camisa
Executive Director
Kristin Berger
Development Director
H. Gregory
Grantee Engagement Officer
Arielle Johnson
Outreach Coordinator
Meredith Johnson
Communications Director
Jenine Marquez
Administrative Assistant
Paddy Moore
Grants Officer
Rachel Roberts
Finance Manager

Letter from the President: We Are All Using New Tools

We live in a new media age. I think of it as a Gutenberg moment. Before the invention of moveable type, books had to be hand-written by monks in monasteries. The general public did not have access to learning and few were literate. When printing became widespread, people could learn to read and interpret information themselves; they could become educated. Libraries were established to store information and make it available to the public, but people were limited to visiting the library and looking up the information.

Now that knowledge is created, stored, and disseminated digitally, we have much wider access to information. Most of us carry powerful computers called “smart phones” with us. When we don’t know the answer to questions, we can look them up on the internet immediately.

Take the subject of paleoanthropology, for example. If one goes to leakeyfoundation.org on the internet, he or she learns what scientist is lecturing in a nearby venue. If people cannot make it to the event, they can listen and watch the video of the event on the Leakey Foundation website shortly after. One can watch Robert Sapolsky talking about stress, Tania Lombrozo explaining storytelling, or David Puts speaking of sex....And they can watch or listen at their own time and convenience.

Or they can listen to a growing collection of podcast episodes called *Origin Stories*, which are available online, with world renowned scientists explaining subject matter ranging from “Neanderthals,” to “Al-



truism.” They can subscribe to these free podcasts or listen on the website. If they would rather read, they can download the transcripts of these same podcasts.

If a person has always wanted to go on a research expedition, he or she can read the blogs of scientists working in the field and in the laboratory. We have 26 pages of them so far with more being added all the time.

Paleoanthropology is a new cutting-edge science that is just being documented. Therefore, The Leakey Foundation’s history is important—just click on the word ‘History’ in the website menu, and you can read about the Leakey family and their early finds being made when the Foundation was just beginning.

Now everyone can learn about human origins discoveries. Our new tools foster more widespread knowledge.

Visit leakeyfoundation.org today!

Camilla Smith
President, The Leakey Foundation

Support Science!

Your gift will help fund scientific research and educational outreach. Your donation will be doubled up to one million dollars.

See page 11 or visit
leakeyfoundation.org/donate

Discovering Alesi: A Timeline (continued from front page)



Akai Ekes and John Ekusi watch as Isaiah Nengo lifts the sandstone block with Alesi after four hours of excavation. © Isaiah Nengo.

persuade him to hire me. When they wouldn't hire me, I volunteered. Two months later, Meave and Richard did hire me, a freshly minted graduate of the University of Nairobi. In two months, I found myself in the back of a truck for five days of traveling rough roads with a team looking for fossils in the Turkana Basin. A year later, with the Leakeys' support I was at Harvard University in Cambridge pursuing a PhD in biological anthropology. In summer seasons, I led my own Leakey Foundation funded expeditions to Miocene sites in Western Kenya. With a PhD in 1994, I taught at UC Berkeley then colleges in California and Ohio while continuing to do fieldwork in Western Kenya with grant support from The Leakey Foundation. Changing course, I made the decision, almost fatal to my career as a paleontologist, to head back to California to teach 10th grade biology at an inner-city high school in East Oakland. Two years later, I began a 15 year stint preaching the value and significance of the fossil record while teaching anthropology at De Anza Community College in Cupertino.

Louise Leakey, visiting De Anza on a public lecture circuit in 2010, urged me to go back to doing field research in Kenya. I received a Fulbright to teach at Nairobi University and study fossils I had collected from Western Kenya, and I was on the mission to relocate the Napudet site.

The excavation took all of four hours under a small shade we constructed in the blazing Turkana sun. The cleaning, which took about three months, revealed just how spectacularly well-preserved Alesi is. From the open sutures, we could tell that we had a fossil baby. All the cranial elements are there except for the erupted baby teeth that had broken and were lost. A medical CT scan revealed the presence of unerupted teeth inside the skull. I traveled to Grenoble, France, at the end of the field season in 2015 to have Alesi scanned for ten days, using some of the brightest x-ray light available in the world. The scans show the internal morphology in stunning detail. Two years later, we (myself and 12 collaborators) introduced Alesi to the world

in an article published in *Nature*. I am heading back in January to Napudet to lead an excavation in search of more of a partial ape skeleton we discovered in 2015. In March of 2018, a team of 16 specialists on various aspects of the skull will meet to plan a 2nd tier analysis. Alesi (the name is a Latinized version of the word for ancestor, "ales" in the Turkana language) is an extraordinary find and a reason for all of us, and future generations to come, to appreciate our place in nature and our common ancestry and to wonder at our survival and our very long evolution on a fragile planet.



**Listen to Isaiah Nengo's
story on our Origin
Stories podcast
at
[leakeyfoundation.org/
originstories](https://leakeyfoundation.org/originstories)**

Awarded Grants

Fall 2017



Behavioral

Laura Abondano, University of Texas at Austin

Mating strategies of female lowland woolly monkeys in Amazonian Ecuador

Iulia Badescu, Yale University

Infant feeding and nutritional development correlates of fitness components in wild chimpanzees

Joel Bray, ASU Foundation for A New American University

Social relationships in male chimpanzees: Form, function, and development



Joel Bray at Gombe National Park, Tanzania

Elaine Gomez Guevara, Yale University

Epigenetics of primate longevity

Sean Lee, The George Washington University

The ontogeny of social behavior and facial form in Pan



Laura Abondano radio-tracking monkeys in Ecuador.

Stefano Carlo Lucchesi, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Role of ecology in intercommunity relations in bonobos, Kokolopori, DRC

Carrie Miller, University of Minnesota

Does paternity certainty elicit protection and support of offspring by male gelada monkeys?

Sam Patterson, Arizona State University

Maternal predictors of infant developmental trajectories in olive baboons

Megan Petersdorf, New York University

*The reproductive ecology of the little-known Kinda baboon (*Papio kindae*)*

David Samson, Duke University

What drives sleep flexibility? A comparative investigation of circumpolar and equatorial hunter-gatherers

Paleoanthropology

Irisa Arney, University of Michigan:

East African Miocene evolutionary ecology

Amy Bauernfeind, Washington University

Comparative gene expression of primate cerebellum

Aly Baumgartner, Baylor University



Carrie Miller with gelada monkey at Guassa, Ethiopia

Paleoclimatic reconstruction of the Miocene on Rusinga Island, Kenya

Marianne Brasil, University of California, Berkeley
*Skeletal morphology of early *Homo sapiens* from Middle Awash, Ethiopia*

Lucia Carbone, Oregon Health & Science University
Investigating how the LAVA retroelement shaped the gibbon transcriptome

Marco Cherin, University of Perugia
Exploring Site S: New bipedal footprints at Laetoli (Tanzania)

Susanne Cote, University of Calgary
Excavation of an exceptionally preserved Miocene catarrhine at Moruorot, Kenya

Harold Dibble, University of Pennsylvania
A micro-contextual approach to Neandertal fire use at Pech de l'Azé IV (France)

Tamara Dogandzic, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology
Late Middle and Early Upper Paleolithic in the Balkans

Emma Finestone, Graduate Center, City University of New York
Examining the Oldowan through time on the Homa Peninsula

Mae Goder-Goldberger, University of Ben Gurion in the Negev
The site of Far'ah II, western Negev, and the MP-UP transition

Andres Gomez, J. Craig Venter Institute
Host-microbe interactions in the primate gut: Implications for human origins

Jason Kamilar, University of Massachusetts Amherst
The evolutionary ecology of primate hair and skin microbiomes

Elaine Kozma, Graduate Center, City University of New York
Climbing performance in African apes

Shannon McFarlin, The George Washington University
Skeletal recovery and research of Bwindi mountain gorillas, Uganda

Enquye Negash, The George Washington University
Modelling vegetation structure in modern ecosystems; Implications for hominin ecospace

Thomas Plummer, Queens College, City University of New York
Excavation of ca. 2.6 Ma Oldowan sites at Nyayanga, Kenya

Christian Tryon, Harvard University
Archaeology and modern human origins: Investigations of the Late Pleistocene Nyanza Rift, Kenya

Deming Yang, Stony Brook University
Isotopic variability among Plio-Pleistocene Turkana suids: Paleoenvironments and hominin evolution



Deming Yang holding Oldowan core in Turkana, Kenya

**Read more about
 Leakey Foundation
 Grantees
 at
leakeyfoundation.org/blog**

THANK YOU

To Our Donors

Amit Abraham
Dr. Frank Brown
Ms. Sandra Ackerman
Dr. Mercedes M. Agogino
Dr. Alan J. Almquist
Mr. David Anderson
Ms. Sue Anschutz-Rodgers
Dr. Susan C. Anton
and Dr. Carl C. Swisher
Ms. Lauren Arenson
Mr. and Mrs. Ray Auel
Bain Capital
Ms. Elizabeth Babcock
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen W. Baird
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas D. Barber
Mr. Aaron Bastian
and Dr. Catherine Foo
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Baumann
Linda and Keith Beaty
Dr. Anna K. Behrensmeyer
Mr. and Mrs. Ken Kaye
Linda and Richard Bennett
Kristin and Tom Berger
Ms. Carol Berman
Nancy and Allan Bernard
Ms. Abigail Bernhardt
Ms. Leslie Berriman
Mr. and Mrs. Randy Best
Ms. Ria Boner
Mr. and Mrs. James E. Boyden
Kathleen Boyles
Dr. Ann L. Bragdon
Dr. Dennis M. Bramble
Mr. and Mrs. Lowell P. Braxton
Dr. Lynne Brewer
Ms. Kilbee C. Brittain
Mrs. Carol Broderick
Ms. Theresa Brown
Ms. Elise Brown and Mr. Kasim Ersoy
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred G. Camisa
Ms. Sharal A. Camisa
Mr. Don Carlson
Mrs. Nina Carroll
Mr. Jim Carty and Ms. Pat Randall
Ms. Sally Carty
and Mr. Barry Schaitkin
Mr. and Mrs. David Chapman
Mr. and Mrs. Bruce S. Chelberg
Ms. Carol Copp

Ms. Alice Corning
Dr. Robert Corruccini
Mr. Bret Corum
Mr. and Mrs. Wilson D. Crook
Mr. and Mrs. Donald E. Dana
Patricia De Bono
Dr. Bruno Delagneau
and Ms. Jennifer Mitchell
Ms. Mary Ellen Didier
Mrs. Allison C. DiNardo
Mrs. Joan C. Donner
Dr. Holly Dunsworth
and Dr. Kevin Dunsworth
Hadley E. Dyer
Mrs. Ellen L. Ebert
Liz Elkind
Dr. Melissa Emery Thompson
Mr. Sigo Falk
Mrs. Carolyn Farris
Dr. Craig S. Feibel
Mr. Dennis Fenwick
and Ms. Martha J. Lewis
Dr. Reid Ferring
Ms. Judith Flynn
Dr. and Mrs. Barry Fong
Ms. Linda Fountain
Dr. and Mrs. Franciscus
Mr. Steven Frautschi
Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Gaddis
Dr. and Mrs. David Gailani
Mr. and Mrs. J. Michael Gallagher
William Garfinkel
Ms. Mary L. Garnett
Mr. and Mrs. Gordon P. Getty
Mr. Dennis M. Gill
Mr. Thomas H. Gillespie Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. James H. Gillilan
Mr. Matt Glenwright
Mr. Jeff Gough
Mr. H. B. Gregory
Ms. Lucy L. Grimm
Abel Grosjean
Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Gruber
Francis B. Gulate
Dr. Greg F. Gunnell
Haight Booksmith
Dr. Denise Su
and Dr. Yohannes Haile-Selassie
Ms. Gretchen R. Hall

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Hamilton
Dr. Alexander Harcourt
and Dr. Kelly Stewart
Mr. and Mrs. William R. Harp
Mr. Jim Harris
Dr. Kristen Hawkes
Mr. and Mrs. Victor Hebert
Christopher Heesy
Dr. William M. Heffron
Ms. Sandra Herrick
Nicole Herzog
Professor and Mrs. Donald Heyneman
Mr. and Mrs. John Higgins
Mr. Jerre Hitz
Dr. R. W. Hoellworth, M.D.
Mrs. Diana B. Holt
Ms. Amanda Hoogestraat
David B. Hull
Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Hunt
Dr. Lynne Isbell
Dr. Rebecca Jabbour
and Dr. Gary Richards
Dr. Nina Jablonski
and Dr. George Chaplin
Donna and Gerald Jacobi
Mr. and Mrs. Duggan Jensen
Miss. M. Mateel Johnson
Ms. Anne Johnson
and Mr. Chris Hepp
Mr. Mark Jordan
and Ms. Jennifer Gomersall
Mr. Bond Griffin
and Ms. Rebeca Jovin
Mr. Chet Kamin
and Ms. Nancy Schaefer
Dr. Matthew Kaser
and Dr. Cynthia Wikler
Ms. Debra Katz
Charlotte Kellogg
and Wendy McIlvain
Ms. Juanita Kempe
Mr. Donald Kendall Jr.
Lori Kennedy
Mr. Paul D. Kervin
Keegan King
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph E. Kinstle
Kalin Kipling
Ms. Deborah Kleinwachter
Ms. Sally Knudsen

The Leakey Foundation's success is due, in large part, to the generous financial contributions we have received from our donors. We are proud to recognize our donors and would like to offer our sincere thanks for your loyalty and commitment to the mission of The Leakey Foundation

Philip Kong
Mr. Steve Kover
Mr. and Mrs. John Kronholm
Ms. Julie M. LaNasa
and Mr. John Kunzweiler
Anja Landsmann
Ms. Ann Laurenson
Nat Leakey
Dr. Maurice D. Lebowitz
Mr. and Mrs. Jorge Leis
Mr. Eugene Leonov
Mr. and Mrs. Greg S. LeRoy
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Linder
Mrs. Marie O. G. Lipman
Ms. and Mr. Nancy Livingston-Mills
Mr. Dixon Long
Laura Longo
Ms. Karla Loring
Dr. Carol E. MacLeod
Dr. Linda Marchant
Dr. Mary W. Marzke
Victoria Mason
Mr. Nion McEvoy
Mr. John McFarland
Dr. Kieran McNulty
Dr. Diana H. McSherry
and Mr. Patrick Poe
Mr. and Mrs. Mike O'Hara
Ms. Susan Messinger
Ms. Sharon Metzler-Dow
Ms. Nancy Michael
Mr. Fred A. Middleton
Mr. and Ms. James I. Mills
Dr. John Mitani
Mr. Bob Moore
Dr. James J. Moore
Ms. Paddy Moore-Goodhart
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Muehlhauser
Dr. Martin N. Muller
Ms. Mary M. Myers
Chad Naylor
Ms. Jeanne Newman
Mr. William K. Nisbet
Dr. John W. Olsen
Traci M. Ostertag
Mr. James Pasik
Mrs. Dottie J. Patterson
Ms. Mary Pellerito
and Mr. William Hartley

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Perkins
Dr. Briana Pobiner
Ms. Eva M. Ponce
Ralph Protsik
Dr. Anne Pusey
Mr. Rolf Quam
Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Reichardt
Mr. and Mrs. William P. Richards
Mr. and Mrs. Lee Rismiller
Mrs. Hazel M. Robertson
Jo and George Rodgers
Ms. Colleen Rooney
Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Rosenberg
Mr. Noel B. Rowe
Mr. and Mrs. Richard B. Ruge
Arnolfo Santoro
Dr. Margaret Scully-Linder
Mr. and Mrs. David Seigle
Jill Shannon
Ms. Nikki Shields
and Dr. Mark Shields
Mr. and Mrs. Clement Shute
Dr. Joan Silk
Ms. Andrea E. Singer
Mr. and Mrs. George D. Smith
Sarah Smith
Mr. Michael R. Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Smith-Donald
Mr. Daniel Spinazzola
and Mrs. Barbie Spinazzola
John Springer
Mr. Michael Stamets
Mr. Billie J. Stem
Mr. Earl G. Stokes
and Mr. Alex Kiforenko
Dr. Anne C. Stone
Mr. and Mrs. Rocky Stone
Mr. Randy Stotland
Dr. Lawrence Straus
Mrs. Pam Streitfeld
Ms. Linda B. Tabor-Beck
Mr. Peter R. Tarr
Ms. Naoma Tate
Ms. Abigail Terhune
Dr. David Thomas and Ms. Elizabeth Lockette, Thomas Family Foundation
Ms. Kathleen Thomas
Mr. Neil Thomas Bockoven
Ms. Judy Thomson and Mr. Cole

Thomson
Ms. Cheryl Ursin
and Dr. Cole T. Thomson, Jr.
Mrs. Kathleen K. Thomson
Dr. and Mrs. Chris Thorpe
Mr. David A. Thurm
Mr. Alan Tindell
Ms. Susan Toth
Mrs. Joan Travis
Ms. Natalie Uomini
Ms. Rosemary Urbigkeit
Dr. Paola Villa and Mr. Peter Robinson
Mr. Ed Waldrup
Mrs. Margo G. Walker
Mr. Patrick Welch
Dr. Spencer Wells
and Ms. Holly Morse
Dr. Adam Wetsman
Dr. Pamela R. Willoughby
Ms. Linda Wilshusen
Mr. and Mrs. Kurt E. Wilson
Mr. and Mrs. William M. Wirthlin II
Dr. John W. Wolf
Mrs. Kay Harrigan Woods
Dr. Mary Alice Yund
and Dr. E. William Yund

Organization Support

Adept Word Management
AmazonSmile
Bay Area Science Festival
The Brown Foundation, Inc.
Bundy Family Foundation
Chicago Council for Science and Technology
Google
Houston Museum of Natural Science
San Francisco Foundation
The Stewart Foundation
Wetherby Asset Management

Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you feel your name is missing in error or wish to update your information, please contact kristin@leakeyfoundation.org or call 415-561-4646 ext 16



In Memoriam: Francis H. Brown

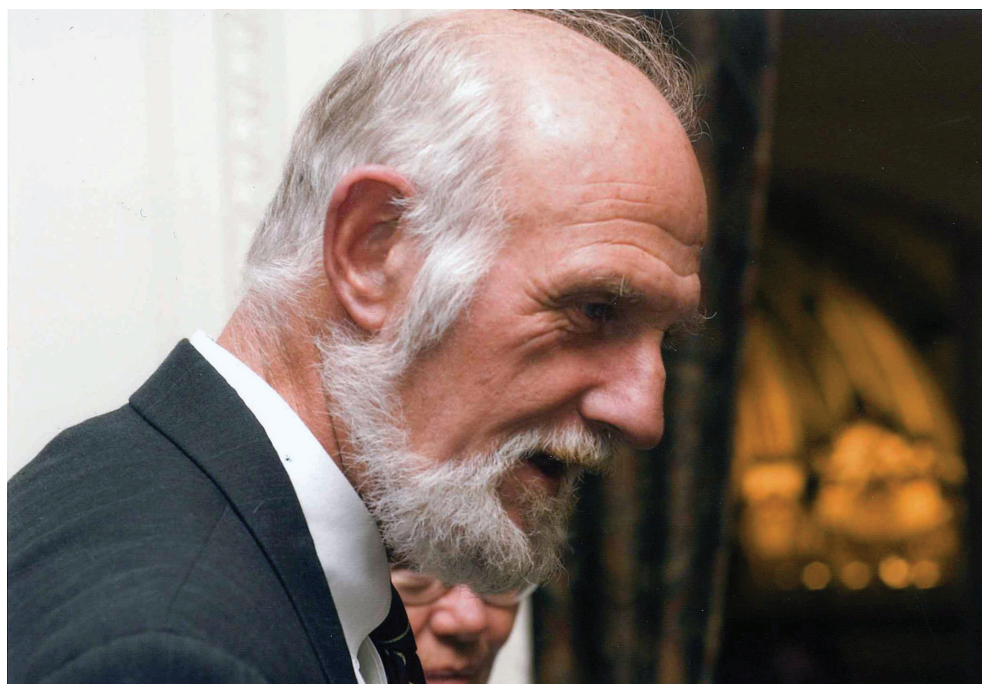
Frank Brown passed away on Saturday, September 30, 2017. He was 74 years old.

Frank Brown joined The Leakey Foundation Scientific Executive Committee in 1993 and became the Co-Chair in 1997. During his tenure, Frank provided over 800 internal application reviews and helped the Foundation award 1,270 research grants.

Frank was a fierce advocate for African scholars, and during his 24 years on the SEC he advised the Foundation on funding 145 Baldwin Fellows. Frank deeply understood the impact the Baldwin Fellowships have on the trajectory of a scientist's career. He knew many of these young scholars personally. Some worked alongside him in Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and China, and others lived with him in Utah as they pursued their education or conducted their own research at the University of Utah.

Many of Frank's students became scientific leaders in their home countries. He was a guiding presence in the life of Dr. Fredrick Kyalo Manthi, and today Fredrick is head of Palaeontology at the National Museums of Kenya. Dr. Bereket Haileab, now chair of Geology at Carleton College in Minnesota, completed his M.S. and doctoral degrees in Utah under Frank Brown's tutelage. Among many others, Frank provided mentorship to Robert Kamau, Fulbert Namwamba, and Patrick Gathogo who completed his B.S., M.S. and doctorate degrees at Utah.

Frank began his career at the University of Utah as an Assistant Professor in 1971. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1976 and to Professor in



1980. He became chair of his department in 1988 and Dean of the College of Mines and Earth Sciences in 1991, where he secured funding for several endowed funds and for the construction of the Frederick Albert Sutton Building, the home of the Department of Geology & Geophysics.

Frank's professional accolades were numerous, including the Rosenblatt Prize from the University of Utah in 2001, its highest honor. He received the Outstanding Teaching Award in the Department of Geology and Geophysics in 1981, 1984, 1986 and 1999. They also honored him with an Award for Outstanding Research in 1999. Frank was awarded the Rip Rapp Archaeological Geology Award in 1983 for outstanding contributions to the interdisciplinary field of archaeological geology.

Frank worked with many of the great minds of modern geology and paleoanthropology including Louis, Mary, Richard, Maeve, and Louise Leakey. Garniss Curtis and Dick Hay were

mentors and later, collaborators. He collected paleomagnetic samples from Olorgesailie and Kariandusi in Kenya and from Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. He worked with Desmond Clark conducting stratigraphic work at Nihewan Basin in China. In the 1980's, he began work at Koobi Fora with Thure Cerling, Naomi Levin, and Tesfaye Kidane. Since 1982, Frank partnered with Ian McDougall on the stratigraphy and geochronology of Miocene rocks in Canberra, Australia. He also worked closer to home on the diatomite quarries of Hazen, Nevada.

Frank was a ten-time Leakey Foundation grantee, receiving his first grant in 1972 to purchase two outboard motors to, as stated in his grant application abstract, "navigate the crocodile-infested Omo River." Frank's name wasn't always at the top of a grant application, but it is fair to say he provided his geological dating expertise on so many research projects that they are too numerous to count.

His impact on the science of human

(1943-2017)

SHARAL CAMISA, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



Frank Brown crossing the Omo River accompanied by Ethiopian colleagues Tamrat Haile Mariam and Zmaneh Shugut. *Photo credit: John Fleagle*


origins is immeasurable. Former Leakey Foundation SEC Emeritus Member Dr. Desmond Clark once said, "Frank's contribution to paleoanthropology and Paleolithic archaeology in Africa is immense...some of the best in the 20th century." Frank's work made it possible for the Leakey family and others to assign dates to fossils of early human ancestors. Richard Leakey said in 1999, "Without Frank, we would have fossils but wouldn't know anything about their ages. He is incredibly important to our work." Richard Klein, who served with Frank as co-chair of The Leakey Foundation's SEC said, "Frank Brown devoted his career to developing the

necessary framework for placing fossils and artifacts in geochronologic order, and it is no exaggeration to say that the hard-won result underlies much of what we now know about early human evolution."

Over the past year, Frank focused much of his Leakey Foundation efforts

on establishing a fund to help young Kenyan and Ethiopian scholars pursue projects in the earth sciences and botany that have importance to the study of human origins. Frank personally contributed and raised over \$200,000 to start this program. We will work diligently to honor his intention to grow the Francis H. Brown African Scholarship Fund to \$1 million.

It is difficult for words to capture our feelings of grief, as Frank was more than a scientist to us. He was a mentor, nurturing the careers of so many people in Africa and around the world. He was a teacher, always sharing his knowledge with a patient voice that encouraged us to learn more. He was a friend, learning something personal about us and then surprising us months later with a special anecdote or gift. His kindness knew no boundaries and his sense of humor provided levity in a field of science often plagued by infighting. Frank remained above the fray, level headed with a clear focus on the work.

We will remember Frank as kind, funny, dedicated, and generous beyond measure. We already miss him greatly. 

To make a donation to the Francis H. Brown African Scholarship Fund please visit:

leakeyfoundation.org/frankbrown



Frank Brown and a Mursi warrior examine a sample of colored rock. *Photo credit: John Fleagle*

Q&A With: John Ekusi

John Ekusi Lochibal is a research assistant with the Turkana Basin Institute (TBI). He lives and works in Kenya. In 2014, Ekusi discovered the fossil nicknamed Alesi. The 13 million-year-old fossil is the skull of an infant, and it is the most complete extinct ape skull known in the fossil record.

Q: How did you first become interested in fossils?

A: I first got interested to fossils when I was in high school. I also come from the place where “Turkana Boy” or “Nariokotome Boy” was discovered, which is Nariokotome in Turkana, north along Lake Turkana. I used to go visit the place when I was a kid. In high school I built interest in evolution and fossils.

Q: Do you remember the first fossil you found?

A: The first fossil I found when I joined TBI was a molar. I was proud of it, and it gave me courage to prospect for more fossils. I have found lots of fossils since then.

Q: What is a typical day of fossil hunting like for you?

A: My typical day of fossil hunting begins at 6:00 am. I wake up and make sure that I have spread my bedroll well and my tent is zipped up to reduce the dust filling the tent during windy days. I make sure that I have everything that is needed with me in the field in my field bag. That’s water, GPS, camera, ziploc bags for bagging fossils, toilet paper for wrapping fossils, scale, a pick



Field crew of the Turkana Basin Institute when Alesi was discovered at Napudet in September 2014. From Left to right Abdala Ekuon, John Ekusi, Isaiah Nengo, Bernard Ewoi, Akai Ekes, and Cyprian Nyete. © Isaiah Nengo

for excavating buried fossils, brushes, notebook, a pen, betacryl solution for hardening very fragile bones, glue for joining broken fossils, and flags for marking locations. Then we have breakfast. By 7:00 am we are heading to the field. In the field there’s a lot of walking. You have to scour every inch of the ground because fossils on the ground look almost identical to the rocks or sediments. You need to have very good eye site. For every good fossil found, data is recorded, and the fossil is collected. We break at either 12:30 pm or 1:00 pm for lunch. We resume prospecting at 2:00 pm and work until 5:00 pm. Then we go back to camp.

Q: What did it feel like for you to find Alesi?

A: The discovery of Alesi made me proud. I didn’t sleep that night. Every fossil hunter together with Dr. Nengo was in a frenzy. Everyone was jumping high. My heart was leaping up and racing. Congratulatory remarks were showered on me. I remember the night we found Alesi, going to TBI to show

the pictures to Dr. Richard Leakey, and he told me, “Well, you are now great!” I was damn proud!

Q: What do you want people to know about the work you do?

A: What people should know is that fossil hunting is very tedious work, and you don’t often discover fossils as special as this one. It is a very proud day when you find something as important as Alesi. I am glad to help scientists search for these important fossils. I love this work, and I respect and cherish it.



**Learn more
about Alesi at
[leakeyfoundation.org/
alesi](http://leakeyfoundation.org/alesi)**

From the Archive: Science for the People

MEREDITH JOHNSON, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

The Leakey Foundation archive holds a rich record of our organization's history and the history of science. In this installment of "From the Archive" Jo Rodgers explores the history of the Foundation's public programs.

Jo Rodgers is a Leakey Foundation Fellow who joined the Leakey Foundation as a student member in 1971 while studying anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley.

Rodgers is now an anthropology professor and a Leakey Foundation Fellow. She has been volunteering with the Foundation to help prepare our extensive archive for digitization. One of the collections she has found most fascinating is the archive of materials about the lectures and symposia produced by the Foundation over our nearly 50 year history.

As a student in the 70's, she attended every Leakey Foundation lecture and symposia she could. She said the speakers were "the who's who of human evolution and primate research. There would be one speaker after another, and you would sit in the auditorium and just be amazed." Rodgers said, "The Leakey Foundation was the organization that brought this science to the people, and at the time, it was the only way for people to get these big picture ideas directly from the researchers."

She recalled hearing Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey share stories and photos, and explain what was happening in their field sites "right then." She said, "Anyone could come and listen to this exciting science, and there was nothing else like it."

Rodgers said the "In Search of Man" symposium, held by The Leakey Foundation at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco in 1973, was the best program she's ever attended. She said, "I still tell my students about the time I was in

the same room as Raymond Dart." The presenters at the symposium were truly some of the giants in the field of human origins research. The two-day event had talks by Bernard Campbell, Desmond Clark, Raymond Dart, Dian Fossey, Jane Goodall, David Hamburg, Richard Hay, Clark Howell, Glynn Isaac, and Mary Leakey.

"IN SEARCH OF MAN"

Your guides on this exciting journey into the past and towards tomorrow will be...



THE L.S.B. LEAKEY FOUNDATION
PATRON — His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I. BOARD OF TRUSTEES — Dr. Edwin S. Munger, President; Robert M. Beck, Vice-President; William H. Burgess, Vice-President; Gordon P. Getty, Vice-President; Mrs. R. Hugh Caldwell, Jr., Secretary; Mrs. Arnold Travis, Treasurer; Mrs. B. E. Bensinger, III, Miss Fleur Cowles, Mrs. Justin Dart, Paul T. Guinn, Ed N. Harrison, Harned Pettus Hoose, George D. Jagels, Royal Little, Mason Phelps, Leighton A. Wilkie. SCIENCE AND GRANTS COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES — Dr. F. Clark Howell, Chairman; Harold J. Coolidge, Dr. Richard Foster Flint, Dr. Norton S. Ginsburg, David A. Hamburg, M. D., Dr. Edwin S. Munger, Dr. Boniface I. Obichere, Dr. Melvin M. Payne, Dr. Frederick Setz, Dr. Phillip V. Tobias.

Rodgers recalled that this symposium was one of the first times Dart, who described the famous Taung Child in the journal *Nature* in 1925, had received recognition at a public event, and the experience of being present the first time his work received accolades from a general audience "was just wonderful."

The Leakey Foundation's public programming over the years reflects the ways the field has evolved. The titles and topics of the lectures show what was relevant and exciting to the public at the time as well as the questions that researchers were interested in answering. Rodgers says it's been fascinating to read these documents and consider how

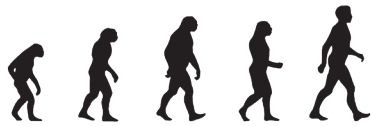
the questions have changed over time. "The ebb and flow of the questions show how our understanding of human origins has changed as more research and more data has filled in the gaps, and it's very exciting!"



Jo Rodgers and her fellow volunteer Carol Broderick are still working to prepare our archive for digitization. If you would like to help, please contact us by email at info@leakeyfoundation.org.

Thank you to Jim Carty and Pat Randall, and Sally Carty and Barry Schaitkin for their support of our archive digitization project.

**Help preserve the history of science.
leakeyfoundation.org/donate**



THE LEAKEY FOUNDATION
1003 B O'Reilly Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94129-0346
leakeyfoundation.org

LEAKEY FOUNDATION EVENTS AND PROGRAMS



03/07

NEW YORK CITY

Erin Vogel
American Museum of
Natural History
amnh.org



04/17

HOUSTON

John Mitani
Houston Museum of
Natural Science
hmns.org



05/02

SAN FRANCISCO

María Martín Torres
California Academy of
Sciences
calacademy.org



PODCAST

Origin Stories

Check out our
award-nominated
podcast!

Subscribe on iTunes or listen online:
leakeyfoundation.org/originstories

*See all of The Leakey Foundation's upcoming
events at leakeyfoundation.org/events*