

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 Hrdy, 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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