

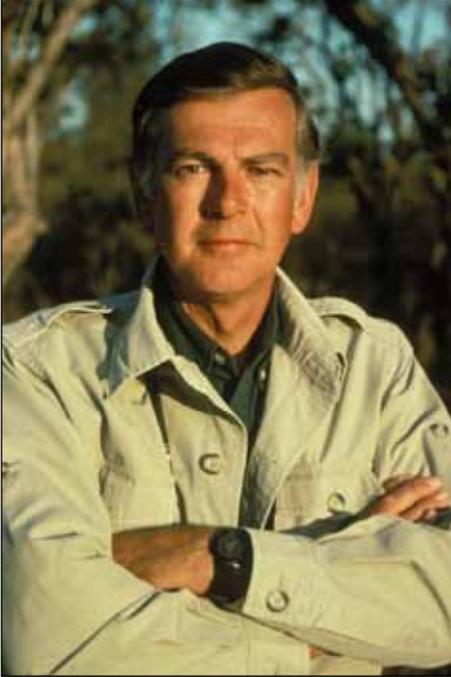
# The Explorers Club

## Northern California Chapter

September 2010

In color at our web site: <http://www.explorersnorca.org>

Note venues and dates with care.  
**San Francisco, CA**  
Our next meeting is at 6:30 on  
Sept 17, a **FRIDAY** evening,  
at the University Club.



## Lucy and Our African Origins

### Prof. Don Johanson FN76

### San Francisco — September 17, 2010

*“Lucy is a 3.2-million-year-old skeleton who has become the spokeswoman for human evolution. She is perhaps the best known and most studied fossil hominid of the twentieth century, the benchmark by which other discoveries of human ancestors are judged.”—From *Lucy’s Legacy**

In his New York Times bestseller, *Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind*, renowned paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson told the incredible story of his discovery of a partial female skeleton that revolutionized the study of human origins. Lucy literally changed our understanding of our world and who we come from. Since that dramatic find in 1974, there has been heated debate and—most important—more groundbreaking discoveries that have further transformed our understanding of when and how humans evolved.

In *Lucy’s Legacy*, Johanson takes readers on a fascinating tour of the last three decades of study—the most exciting period of paleoanthropologic investigation thus far. In that time, Johanson and his colleagues have uncovered a total of 363 specimens of *Australopithecus afarensis* (Lucy’s species, a transitional creature between apes and humans), spanning 400,000 years. As a result, we now have a unique fossil record of one branch of our family tree—that family being humanity—a tree that is believed to date back a staggering 7 million years.

Focusing on dramatic new fossil finds and breakthrough advances in DNA research, Johanson provides the latest answers that post-Lucy paleoanthropologists are finding to questions such as: How did *Homo sapiens* evolve? When and where did our species originate? What separates hominids from the apes? What was the nature of Neandertal and modern human encounters? What mysteries about human evolution remain to be solved?

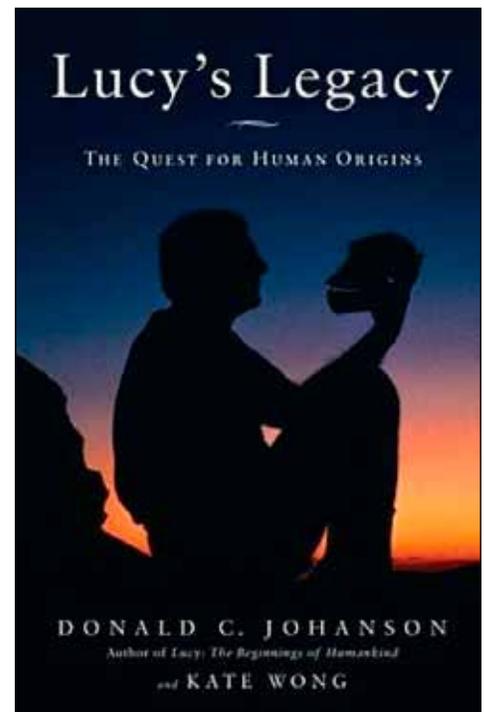
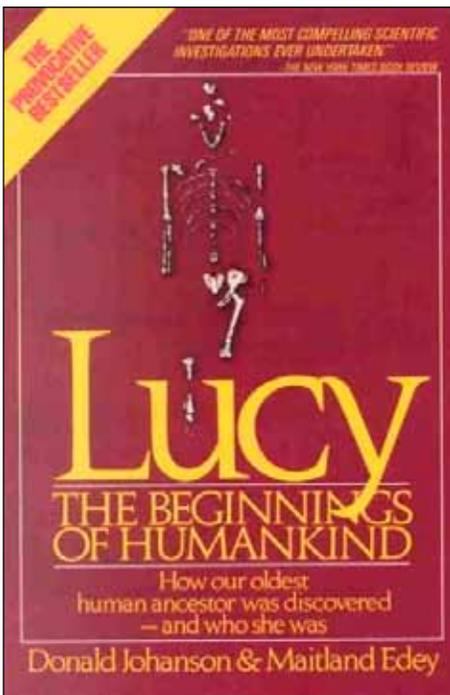
Donald Johanson is a passionate guide on an extraordinary journey from the ancient landscape of Hadar, Ethiopia—where Lucy was unearthed and where many other exciting fossil discoveries have since been made—to a seaside cave in South Africa that once sheltered early members of our own species, and many other significant sites. Thirty-

five years after Lucy, Johanson continues to enthusiastically probe the origins of our species and what it means to be human.

—courtesy Random House

Don is a Fellow of the Club and has recently returned to the Bay Area as a chapter member; he was presented *The Explorers Medal* this year, our highest honor. He is an engaging speaker and remains high on the list of experts on the origin of our species.

For members, a preview of the topic can be viewed at The Explorers Club web site in the members section, watching Don’s talk(s) as part of the ECAD proceedings last March.



LANCASH



The Explorers Club and The Dendrology Society gathered at San Francisco's University Club for an evening of conversation and to learn about how Europeans impacted upon California's redwoods. We had a surprise birthday cake for Lady Virginia Storey whose day it just happened to be!

Marcel Robischon, our speaker (left), and John Palmer, IDS tour organizer.

## Tree-mendous Reception

### San Francisco

July 1 was unusual for the Northern California Chapter: the San Francisco weather was unseasonably clear, even warm; we enjoyed a Summer dinner meeting; we hosted a traveling group of tree lovers: The International Dendrology Society. Our guests, from around the world, were in town to begin a marvelous fortnight tour of the tallest, greatest girth and oldest trees known. A mutual member, Professor Marcel Robischon of Frieberg University, who belonged to our chapter when doing post-doctoral work with the U. S. Forest Service, had proposed this good idea two years earlier.

Sir Richard Storey, Chairman of the dendrologists, offered kind words and, to our delight, a living tree to mark the event. The California Academy of Science has planted the Oregon Crabapple (*Magnus fusca*) near by the researcher's entrance in Golden Gate Park with a small plaque of commemoration.

Marcel provided the evening lecture, on exploring the discovery and understanding of

the California redwoods by the Western mind. His first observation: the ancient cultures that lived on our lands are gone with all of their inherent details, yet the trees remain as they have always been. These giants have lived for millennia. He noted, as was the case with the early Spanish explorers (and perhaps earlier visitors from across the Pacific), that the sequoias were new tree discoveries. Academia had never known them before. (Even today new trees are still found, for example, the Vietnamese Golden Cypress. It is a rare event, however.) The coastal redwoods leaped at the early visitors along the Pacific coast. The humidity and cool of the coastal mountain valleys were filled with these tall giants. As was the tradition, there were attempts to take samples home to Europe; most failed.

It was around the Gold Rush that the islands of the mountain sequoia were discovered. Nearly as high as their coastal siblings but much greater mass, these enormous trees were initially treated like freaks in the circus: they were cut to provide dance platforms, tunnels were cut through their trunks to charge passing wagons or early autos, attempts to use them for lumber failed: they were simply too big to move and the interior wood was soft. In recent times both the *Sequoia sempervirus* (coastal) and *Sequoia gigantea* (sierra) have regained respect and are held in the awe they deserve.

There are a few redwoods growing under care in Europe—surprisingly some are older than the written record reflects. How did they arrive? Marcel's research shows some early miners enclosed seeds in letters home—one way! His current research involves using DNA to determine if it is possible to locate the source groves of the existing European trees. In the case of the Sierra locations, each separated grove has evolved a unique signature. We wish him success in this exploration!

The *Magnus fusca* has found its place just outside the California Academy; it is to your right as you walk in the rear entrance of the museum.



Sir Richard, in a nice letter thanking us, noted that their "California tour continued to be a most astonishing adventure through your great dendrological wealth led by experts at every turn from universities, botanical gardens and personal individuals of immense merit, expertise and experience." It was a most pleasant opportunity to meet these exploration-oriented visitors who so whole-heartedly appreciate our treasury of trees. It was contagious.

Alan Nichols, Chapter Chair (left) and Sir Richard Storey, IDS Chair, admire the tree given at our dinner.



Alan Good



**NorCA Chapter Contributors**

Susan Anderson  
 Guitty Azarpay  
 Mort Beebe  
 Barbara Berg  
 Don Bessey  
 Marion Blumberg  
 Barry Boothe  
 Joan Boothe  
 Eugene Boudreau  
 Cheryl Ione Brown  
 Jay Cassell  
 H. Keith Chase  
 Nonna Cheatham  
 Norden "Dan" Cheatham  
 A. Roy Cleghorn  
 Nicholas Clinch  
 Graham Creasey  
 Wendy Crowder  
 Don Dana  
 Mike Diggles  
 David Dolan  
 Susan Dutcher  
 Palmer Dyal  
 Gerry Elkus  
 Sue Estey  
 Lesley Ewing  
 Art Ford  
 Anna Freitas  
 Paul Freitas  
 Charles Geraci  
 Tom Hall  
 William Heydorn  
 Don Heyneman  
 Louise Heyneman  
 Laura Lee Holmes  
 Judd Howell  
 James Hurson  
 Yvonne Hurson  
 Alan Hutchison  
 Ann Hutchison  
 Bill Isherwood  
 John Jackson  
 Kaye Jackson  
 Krist Jake  
 Anders Jepsen  
 Kathy Jepsen  
 Jean Kenyon  
 Margot Komarmy  
 Bill Kruse  
 Dida (Candida) Kutz  
 Keith Kvensvolden  
 Lee Langan  
 Leo LeBon  
 Dan Leibowitz  
 Elgen Long  
 Scot Macbeth  
 Milton Matter  
 George & Karen McCown  
 Brian McPhail  
 Charles Merdinger  
 Elizabeth Murphy  
 Nancy Nenow  
 Lisa Marie Newman  
 Alan Nichols  
 Max Nichols  
 Diana Pickworth  
 Jim Prigoff  
 Elsa Roscoe  
 Colonel John Roush  
 Becky (Nichols) Rygh  
 Charlotte Rygh  
 Rick Saber  
 Bob Schmieder  
 Sara Shoemaker  
 Richard Sideman  
 Hank Skade  
 Mark A. Smith  
 Stephen Smith  
 Eric Stackpole  
 Zach Stewart  
 Alan Wayne Tamarelli  
 Jennifer Tuck  
 Joel Tuttle  
 Edward Von der Porten  
 Don Walsh  
 James Weil

**The Corner Chair**— Our Membership Chair **Bob Higgins** is working hard to make us "winners"...the National Club is offering a generous prize for the Chapter who can recruit the most members by mid-October... **Philosophy 101**: The Explorers Club provides exceptional opportunities for those interested in exploration, but in my opinion we are too busy and self-absorbed to make the effort to be more inclusive. That's what this membership drive is intended to do—to lead the way in encouraging others to join us. Don't listen to the voices of those who claim to oppose on the basis we may "lower membership standards" or "cheapen membership". The standards of membership are still the same—you must have been on an expedition—but, with almost no effort, most of us know at least one person who can qualify. It's time to share!

**Von Hurson, Becky Rygh, and Max Nichols** made it back alive from Mongolia with a triumphal discovery in Inner Mongolia...**Mort Beebe** loves cold weather, luckily since he's off in November on an all-expense-paid Flag expedition to Antarctica to make a documentary about returning to the 'ice' since his first trip as a Navy LtJG in 1957-58 with Admiral Dufek's Operation Deepfreeze...

*alohas* to us all—thanks to **Cam McNaughton** with the help of **Jonas and Elizabeth Feeney** we'll have our first outing in Hawaii, meeting on December 13 in Honolulu. Everyone in the Chapter is invited.

**Kay Schmieder** has agreed to put together another **Story Night**, this year with a new twist. See announcement below. The last Story Night drew the biggest gathering of members in the year thanks to Kay...Thank goodness our extraordinary SuperExplorer and former Chair **Bob Schmieder** is now home from the hospital and on the mend....

—Alan Nichols FN84

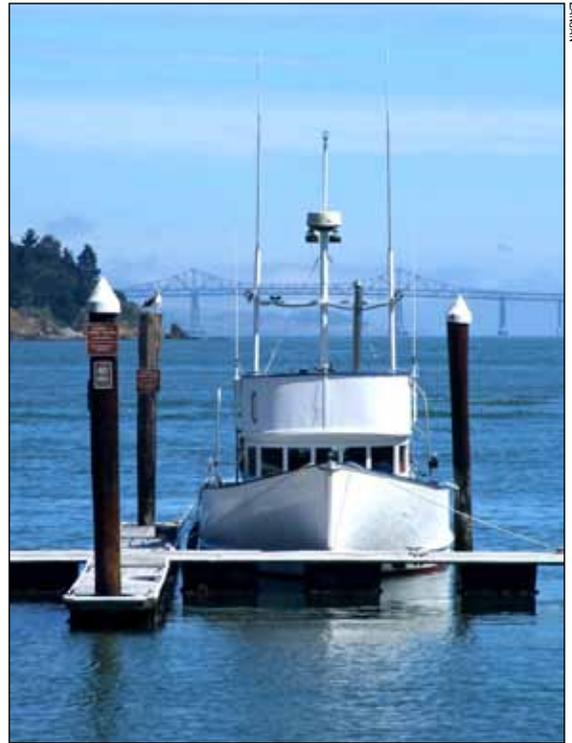
**WANTED STORYTELLERS**—We need members and sirdars to tell us a short story from their adventures and expeditions at our Story Night meeting January 21, 2011. If you're willing to join five or six others for this special night e-mail Kay Schmieder at [kericksonsttt@yahoo.com](mailto:kericksonsttt@yahoo.com).

**NorCA Explorers Picnic Angel Island & a Bay Tour**—

A cheerful Bob Schmieder, entrepreneur, explorer beneath-the-sea, Chair emeritus and captain of the *Cordell Explorer*, nosed her into a slip on Angel Island just minutes before the first ferry of the day. Thus, carefully planned, we got our choice space for picnicking and playing bocce ball on the green. The glorious sunny day soon filled all spots with weekend visitors. It was special weather allowing all to relish this treasure so often seen in the distant fog; the trails beckoned and most NorCA explorers chose to investigate the newly refurbished Immigration Center on the island's east side. Worth the while.

From the onset a new bocce ball set was plied into use, with 'champions' rising and falling through the day. Good fun. At 2:30 we slipped out of the slip and headed under the Golden Gate, then around the City to thread the Bay Bridge, passing by the Yerba Buena Coast Guard station, to observe the progress of the new eastern span. Upon docking the captain adjourned to the afterdeck to bask in appreciation, and all stayed to trade stories. It was a grand outing, capping our 2009-2010 season. Those of you who miss this annual event shouldn't!

(A **postscript**: The good Captain Schmieder went into the arms of medical treatment for an orthopedic patch only to be scared by a tumor on his pancreas (finally determined to be benign). He summered in intensive care but is home resting and mending. We offer best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.)



LANGAN



Peter Hemming

The 2010 Angel Island Picnic: bocce ball fever; many assembled after actual picnic; on board the Cordell Explorer, (docked above); at the Immigration Station (l-r) Hemming, Berg, Ewing, Patterson, Estey, , Briana Dema (visiting from Virgin Islands)



LANGAN (3)



September 2010



Chair: Alan Nichols  
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 nicholsalan9@gmail.com  
 Vice Chair: Anders Jepsen  
 925 254-3079  
 ajviking@aol.com  
 Treasurer: Sue Estey  
 510 526-2216  
 sestey@earthlink.net  
 Secretary: Stephen E. Smith  
 Webmaster: Mike Diggles  
 Newsletter: Lee Langan

Lucy's Impact — 17 September — University Club

**Northern California  
 Calendar of Events**

(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

**Our Next Event**

September 17 . . . Lucy and Our African Origins  
 Don Johanson. . . . . University Club

**Future Events**

October 29. . . . . Expeditions and the Media  
 Josh Bernstein . . . . . University Club  
 November 19. . . . . Poison Birds of New Guinea  
 Jack Dumbacher . . . . . University Club  
 December 5 . . . . . Alan & Becky Nichols  
 Chair's Member Reception Nichols home, Tiburon  
 December 13. . . . . Hawaiian sub-Chapter  
 Island members. . . . . Honolulu  
 January 21, 2011. . . . . Story Night  
 member tales. . . . . University Club  
 February 11 . . . . . planning  
 March 19 . . . . . ECAD  
 Maya Prophecies . . . . . Waldorf-Astoria  
 March 25 . . . . . planning  
 April 22 . . . . . planning  
 May 20 . . . . . planning

**Earlier Events (2010)**

January 29, 2010. . . . . several  
 Story Night . . . . . University Club  
 February 26 . . . . . Reginald Barrett  
 The Elusive Fisher. . . . . University Club  
 March 26 . . . . . Bob Richards  
 Odyssey Moon . . . . . University Club  
 April 30 . . . . . Seth Shostak  
 Are We Alone in Space? . . . . . University Club  
 May 8-9 . . . . . Seashore Field Trip/lunch  
 Point Lobos, Monterey Peninsula, Hick's home  
 May 21 . . . . . Left Bank/Rive Gauche  
 Music of the Antarctic Expeditions Stanford  
 June 5 . . . . . Angel Island Picnic  
 July 1 . . . . . Marcel Robischon  
 'Discovering the Redwoods. . . University Club

Send address changes and  
 corrections by email to Steve at  
[nauticos@oceanearth.org](mailto:nauticos@oceanearth.org)

**USE PAYPAL!**

**September 17: University Club, San Francisco**

**Date:** Friday September 17, 2010  
**Place:** University Club  
 Powell & California, San Francisco  
**Time:** 6:30 - reception  
 7:15 - dinner  
 8:00 - talk

**Cost:** \$49 in advance; \$60 on the 17th  
 Students: \$33. (Dues still \$25!)

Please mail information to Dr. Sue Estey,  
 216 Carmel Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530  
 or email [sestey@earthlink.net](mailto:sestey@earthlink.net)  
 or call (510) 526-2216

Reserve \_\_\_ spaces for  
 September 17, 2010  
 Lucy & Our African Origins  
 Cost: only \$49 (for members and sirdars)  
 \$33 for card-carrying students

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address (if changed): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Companion: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please reserve by Sep 14!**

**We have established a PayPal account.**

For those of you who have these accounts, you can sign up and remit dinner costs to the  
 NorCA Chapter by transferring money to:

[explorersnorca@gmail.com](mailto:explorersnorca@gmail.com)

There is also a PAYPAL BUTTON on our website ([www.explorersnorca.org](http://www.explorersnorca.org)): easy to use!



**University Club,  
 Atop Nob Hill  
 where the cable  
 cars cross**

The University Club has Valet Parking for \$20; **the Brocklebank Garage on Sacramento is only \$10!**  
 Other nearby garages are expensive. Some street parking. Muni (cable cars OR Sacramento #1) is very  
 near; BART & CalTrans connections are easy. Car pool! The University Club is wheel-chair accessible.