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News and Views

Early Man: a tribute to the late career of F. Clark Howell

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F. Clark Howell was a pivotal figure in the development of paleoanthropology in the 20th century. He was interested in evolutionary processes in nearly all times and places, and he produced or sponsored a vast number of important scientific works with no continent in preference. Beyond his scientific contributions, Clark Howell was actively committed to science education throughout his long career. He served as advisor on national education panels, taught in two of the most important graduate programs in the United States, and fostered the careers of countless young professionals.

Many readers of this journal will have vivid memories of a Time-Life® Nature series volume entitled “Early Man”, a riveting and richly illustrated publication on human evolution that came out in 1965. This slim volume by F. Clark Howell and M. Edey (1965) ignited the interest of children throughout the English-speaking world in the great questions of human origins. The “Early Man” volume was unprecedented for its scope and message, making the record of human ancestry seem simultaneously rich, mysterious, and scientifically accessible.

During his years at the University of Chicago and later at the University of California–Berkeley, Clark Howell trained or helped to train many of the major figures currently active in the field of paleoanthropology. However, his influence as mentor and advisor extended even more broadly. Clark was instrumental in the professional development of dozens of researchers from other countries and other institutions.

Clark was extraordinary for his confidence about what was important and from where key information and insights might come. He knew that moving the science of paleoanthropology forward must involve the efforts of a great diversity of individuals, and he believed that there was everything to be gained by listening to well-informed and differently-informed opinions no matter where they originated. Clark’s intellectual catholicism and generosity stemmed from two fundamental qualities. The first of these

was a deep and abiding curiosity about the human past. Anyone who had the opportunity to speak with Clark in the last years of his life saw immediately that, despite a long and uniquely distinguished career, he felt that he had a lot left to learn. The second quality that set Clark apart was his ability to grasp the essentials of virtually any subject. This was the basis of his commitment to multidisciplinary science.

Clark’s curiosity and breadth made him a scholar in the truest sense. His intellectual commitment was evident in everything from his working notes and field journals to the publications he produced. He read nearly everything and he cited nearly everything. Clark was not finished with a research or writing project until he had explored every avenue, run down every reference, and checked with every expert on the topic, sometimes to the dismay of less patient colleagues.

When Journal of Human Evolution joint editor Susan Antón asked us to contribute a commentary on F. Clark Howell and his legacy for paleoanthropology, we understood the objective to be one of providing the viewpoint of someone who was not a student of Clark but who nonetheless felt his influence deeply. We first got to know Clark as we were completing our doctorates at the University of New Mexico, and we began to work with him the year after he retired (in 1991) from Berkeley. Up to that point, Clark had been a figure of near-mythic status to us. We later learned that he had been tracking our research in Italy, in part because of his own formative experiences working with A. C. Blanc and other scholars there during the 1950s and 1960s.

As many friends and students are aware, Clark Howell did not slow his pace of research late in his career, or after he retired from teaching, for that matter. If anything, he became more active in consulting on and promoting projects around the world. One of Clark’s later projects was expanding knowledge of the paleontology and Paleolithic archaeology of Turkey. In the 1980s he struck up a collaboration with Güven Arsebük (Fig. 1), a former student from the University of Chicago, to excavate the middle Pleistocene deposits of Yarımburgaz Cave (Figs. 2 and 3; Arsebük et al., 1992; Kuhn et al., 1996; Stiner et al., 1996; Arsebük and Özbaşaran, 1999). Upon completion of the fieldwork he assembled an international team of specialists to continue study of the materials from the site. This group included long-standing collaborators such as William Farrant (geologist) and Wighart von Koenigswald (paleontologist), and younger researchers such as Mihriban Özbaşaran (archaeologist) and Evangelia Tsoukala (paleontologist and expert on cave bears). In 1992, Clark asked us to join the Yarımburgaz project specifically to work on the vertebrate taphonomy and lithic

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Fig. 1. F. Clark Howell with colleagues at the Yarımburgaz Cave excavations in Turkey, 1988 (photo courtesy of A. Boratav). Upper left to right: S. Erinc (geomorphologist, hand raised and speaking), Howell (wearing baseball cap), Oğuz Erol (geomorphologist); in lower foreground, Güven Arsebük on left (with glasses) and Mehmet Özdoğan on right.

technology, respectively. His uncannily well-timed invitation provided much-needed encouragement during a period of post-doctoral unemployment. It also began for us an involvement with Paleolithic research in Turkey that continues to this day.

For Clark, too, the Yarımburgaz project set the stage other research endeavors and adventures in Turkey. He was keenly aware of the scientific potential of Miocene fossil beds of Anatolia for understanding hominoid evolution. He was equally fascinated by the vast ‘empty patch’ represented by Asia Minor in the Paleolithic archaeological and human fossil records. Throughout the late 1990s and into the current millennium, Clark worked with Erksin Güleç and other colleagues from Ankara University and the Turkish Geological Service in surveys and excavations of late Miocene fossil localities on the Anatolian Plateau. In the mid-1990s he collaborated with Güleç, Tim White, and Garniss Curtis from Berkeley, and

others in investigating lower Pleistocene deposits in the Dursunlu lignite quarry near Konya (Güleç, et al., 1999, in press). The assemblage of stone tools and cut-marked bones from Dursunlu remains, at this writing, the oldest securely-dated evidence for hominid presence in Turkey.

Lauded for his career in physical anthropology, Clark was also a renowned paleontologist of mammals and biochronology more generally (see Antón, 2007). He was passionately interested in many things, but one of his most abiding interests was fossil carnivores. This is exemplified by a collaborative study of a unique fossil mandible of *Lycaon* (a relative of the cape hunting dog of Africa) that was discovered in an early Middle Paleolithic layer in Hayonim Cave, Israel. This enigmatic dog was a surprise for everyone. Working with us were Eitan Tchernov of Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Bienvenido Martínez-Navarro of Universitat



Fig. 2. The multiple entrances of Yarımburgaz Cave in western Turkey (photo courtesy of A. Boratav).



Fig. 3. Excavations of the middle Pleistocene deposits in Yarımburgaz Cave, 1988–1990 (photo courtesy of A. Boratav).

Rovira i Vergili, Spain. Clark's keen interest and attention to the fossil was typical and, in this instance, grew from his earlier investigations of quite distinct canids from Yarımburgaz Cave and the Balkans more generally. The *Lycaon* fossil was published in 2001 and is the only example of the genus recorded outside of the African continent for any period (Stiner et al., 2001).

Fond stories of Clark abound and the pleasures of working with him were many. His vision and deep imagination left a unique and lasting signature on the discipline of paleoanthropology. His record of fundamental research is unparalleled. His imprint on the practitioners of paleoanthropology is equally profound. He was mentor to countless individuals, in all conditions and in all seasons, motivated by his desire to put science of human origins at the forefront of science globally. Like a mythical bird, Clark would, for reasons only he could tell, swoop in to provide timely assistance or direction. There was no noise of flapping wings or trumpeting of deeds done—only the actions that make a lasting difference. We would all do well to emulate Clark Howell's commitment, vision, and generosity of spirit, though few of us could aspire to match it.

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