

Memories of Jay Quade
Naomi Levin, University of Michigan

I was a MS student at U of A between 2000 and 2002. I started field work in the Afar with Jay in January 2001 as part of paleoanthropological project where Jay was tasked with establishing the geological and environmental context for the early human fossil finds. I've continued to work with Jay ever since. He was a critical member of my dissertation committee, and I've always felt as though I was under his tutelage, long after getting my degrees. While Jay taught me fundamental lessons about lab work, data analysis, writing, and collaborations, I probably learned the most as an apprentice to him in the field. Sometimes this involved working alongside Jay, but it was mostly behind him as I hustled to keep pace with him physically and intellectually. I was always speed-walking and running every couple of strides to keep up.

The four field seasons I spent with Jay in the Afar, between 2001 and 2006, were fundamental to shaping my approach to science and life. While Jay would sometimes give explicit instruction, I mostly learned by trying to follow his lead. He was thorough, a stickler for details, and had amazing clarity of focus. He took excellent notes and always made time to draw sketches and draft sections – my field notes were always better when I was working with him. He savored solving geological puzzles and testing hypotheses with fieldwork. He truly let data, not his initial notions, govern his work. He was constantly studying disciplines outside his own with an intense curiosity. Nothing was out-of-lane scientifically.

I struggled to write this memorial as there are so many good stories to tell and ways that I value Jay, but I'll use this space to give a couple of windows into field work in the Afar. Jay was known always being off somewhere else, exploring. He hated the inertia of large groups and just wanted to be moving. The local Afar with whom we worked were very social and liked to keep tabs on everyone. Making sure they didn't lose one of us was also their job. Being assigned to Jay was equivalent to picking the short straw; the Afar found it impossible to keep track of him. The classic line became *Ankay Jay? Where is Jay?* And when the usual answer was a shrug, he quickly became known as *Yonguli Mao* or *Hyena Food*. It was the running joke and Jay loved it - he soaked it all up with his self-deprecating sense of humor.

Jay was intensely interested in the Afar people and did his best to learn the Afar language so he could converse, plan our days, and joke around. In 2005, on a day-long traverse across flood-basalts on the western margin of the Afar, we didn't have much time to linger anywhere if we were to make it back to camp in the light. But we passed an old Afar man. We expected him to greet us in Afar, but instead he asked if we spoke French. Of course, Jay did. We found a spot in the shade and had a leisurely conversation about this man's exploits in Djibouti and throughout the Horn of Africa. Jay soaked up every minute of it.

Jay loved the thrill of working in the Afar. He particularly enjoyed the tradition of shooting AK47s when someone found a hominin fossil. We were often working away from the paleontological crew, but when we heard shots, we would quickly freeze and look at each other. Was it a hominin? Or fighting with the nearby Issa? The shots were always isolated, a clear sign of a hominin find and not conflict; Jay would quickly pack up and bound across the badlands, in his signature Teva's. He would then be intensely interested in learning about the fossil and what

it could mean. He had a real joy in the sense of discovery and then wanted to understand the science. He normalized a bad-ass enthusiasm for knowledge.

There were also moments when threats of the conflict were real. During one season, we needed to collect paleomagnetic samples to constrain the age of *Homo erectus* fossil. The locality was in the no-man's land of the Afar-Issa conflict. We were camping far away from that portion of the project area for that season. But collecting the data was mission-critical, so we convinced the Ethiopian army to accompany us to the key section and stand guard on the local hilltops while we sampled. It was tense but all was going smoothly, until someone spotted a lone figure in the distance and told us to take cover. We all did. It felt too much like an Indiana Jones movie. But it was a false alarm. A young Afar soldier from the front lines had seen our vehicle and was seeking food and water. Nothing like geologic sampling with a little adrenaline pumping. Jay loved it. He was all in.

Although there are many stories of adventures with Jay, most days were filled with a lot of walking, detailed note taking, measuring stratigraphic sections, sample collection, and occasional conversation. All we needed were a couple liters of water, a grapefruit each, and room in our packs for collecting plenty of samples. That was it.

I continued to work with Jay on projects in the Afar and elsewhere. I had active collaborations with him and data that I needed to share. I know he was antsy to do much more. Some of my last substantive interactions with Jay involved working together to assemble the materials for Thure Cerling's retirement celebration last Spring. Thure was PhD advisor to both of us. I relished the time on the phone with him as he recalled the early days as a PhD student in the Siwaliks and working out the soil CO₂ system. And then sitting next to him while we celebrated Thure. Jay was so full of humility, insight, and humor.

I'll miss Jay tremendously. There was no one like him. He had a huge influence on scientific knowledge, but almost more importantly was his influence on the people with whom he interacted and on how we do science. I know he'd want us all to keep going with detailed-oriented, creative work, while taking care of the people around us. We will try to keep pace, Jay.



/Jay.with.Afar.friends.Ali_Monda.and.Hamadu?8667



8j.With Ali_Monda and other Afars waiting for the day to get going



3_Jay.with.all.the.gear.he.needed;Afar.fgiraf.(AK03).and.hand.lens*



0.Naomi.and.Jay.at.the.WM●sw.Ardipithecus.ramidus.hominin.locality?8667



1. Checking out hominin fossils found earlier in the day with Scott Simpson;



📍.Sampling.for.paleomag2866📍



with.Thure.Cerling.and.Naomi.Levin?GSA.867