

Sherwood Larned Washburn

Sherwood Larned Washburn, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology in the University of California (Berkeley), is one of the most senior and most distinguished figures in the field of physical anthropology in the United States and, indeed, in the world; and his applications of primatological insights to hominid evolution have revolutionized the study of fossil man. How fitting it is that he be the recipient of the degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa* of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Sherry Washburn was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 26 November 1911, as the second son of Henry Bradford Washburn, Dean of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge. He was educated at Groton School, Harvard College and Harvard University, where he obtained his degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1940. From 1939 to 1947 he was instructor and thereafter Assistant Professor in the Department of Anatomy at Columbia University Medical School. He then moved to the University of Chicago's Department of Anthropology, where he served as Associate Professor, Professor and Chairman, over the years 1947 to 1958. During this time his reputation as a great teacher of anthropology and primatology became established. He gathered about him an illustrious group of research students and protégés. Some of these went with him to the University of California (Berkeley) when he became Professor of Anthropology there in 1958. For twenty years he was Professor at Berkeley and served, as well, as Chairman of the Department of Anthropology.

During the vicennium 1958 to 1978, Washburn made the Anthropology Department at Berkeley one of the world's leading centres for the study of hominid evolution and all aspects of palaeo-anthropology. There he gathered about him many distinguished colleagues, including F Clark Howell, Glynn Isaac and Desmond Clark. In a previous generation, the high aspiration of a young physical-anthropological neophyte was to achieve a doctorate under the great Earnest Hooton at Harvard - as Washburn had done. At Washburn's hands Berkeley came to rival Harvard in its claim to be the leading centre in this field.

The foundations for Washburn's lifelong concern with Primates, in the field and the laboratory, were laid when he participated in the Asiatic Primate Expedition to Ceylon, Siam and Borneo in 1936-7. His other field-work was focused on Africa, and he enjoyed spells of it in East and South Africa in 1948, 1955 and 1959.

Washburn, through his lectures, his academic and professional leadership and his more than 200 publications, made seminal contributions to primatology (morphology, behaviour, methodology, applications), to physical anthropology (race, sex differences, education), to morphology (novel experimental approaches, unusual comparative studies, conceptual advances) and to hominid evolution (behaviour, communication, methodology, philosophy).

At various times he served as President of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, President of the American Anthropological Association, Director of the Society for the Study of Human Evolution, and Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences, Stanford. He has been consultant to the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Primate Study Committee (which established the seven regional primate centres in the United States), the Department of Education of Los Angeles and of the State of California, the Wenner Gren Foundation and the L S B Leakey Foundation.

Professor Washburn's eminence and outstanding contributions have been recognized in many ways. He has received the Viking Fund Medal and Award (1960), the Ciba Foundation Medal (1965), the Huxley Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1967), the Walker Prize of the Museum of Science, Boston (1978), and the Distinguished Service Award of the American Anthropological Association (1983). In addition, there have been conferred upon him Fellowships of the California Academy of Sciences, the Animal Behaviour Society, the American Academy of Art and Science, and the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr Washburn's close links with South Africa and with this university have subsisted since his first visit in 1948, when he worked on the human skeletal collection in the Department of Anatomy. His balanced and objective, though always imaginative, contributions to the interpretation of the African hominid fossil record have been behind much of the interest displayed by generations of younger American scientists who have entered the field of African palaeo-anthropology.

We are indeed privileged to have attracted Emeritus Professor Washburn to visit South Africa to participate in the Taung Diamond Jubilee International Symposium and to deliver the 23rd Raymond Dart Lecture under the auspices of the University of the Witwatersrand and of the Institute for the Study of Man in Africa.

In conferring on Sherwood Washburn the degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa* this university will be adding a lustrous name to the roll of its honoured and honorary graduates.