

A Moment In Time

The Life of Ray Alf

Outline for a Biography

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“What will you do with your moment in time?”

Raymond M. Alf

Chronological Outline

1870

William Robert “Sawney” Webb founds the Webb School in Bell Buckle Tennessee.

1887

Thompson Webb is born, the youngest of eight children.

1905

Raymond Alf is born in Canton, China on December 10th to missionary parents from Iowa. He would later provide his usual dramatic flourish to his birth date observing, “It happened just below the Tropic of Cancer, on the south bank of the Chiu Kiang ninety miles from the blending of its muddy contents with the clear blue waters of the South Pacific. There floated on the Chu Kiang, or Pearl River, countless house boats, sampans, junks, and many other kinds of boats in which lived a large part of the population of the metropolis of Canton, China.”

It was the final years of the Qing Dynasty which had ruled China for 250 years and it was traditional to clear evil spirits away for the entrance of a new person into the world. As Ray recalls, “There were demons in the river, and to cope with the dangers posed by them, a dragon boat came to the rescue. It was manned by some thirty men with paddles. The long sleek canoe-like vessel, on the bow of which was carved a dragon’s head, shot through the water with incredible speed. At appropriate moments, drums beat, cymbals clanged and the men shouted vociferously and gone were the evil spirits of the water.”

Besides the water, the land also had to be cleansed of evil spirits. Ray recalls that “A large lion’s head built of paper and bamboo, brightly colored and manipulated by a man inside and followed by a throng of men holding its long tail, went in and out of the winding streets gobbling up the unseen demons.”

The air also had to be purified of evil spirits and this was accomplished by a massive, deafening roar of firecrackers.

After water, land and air were cleared of evil spirits Ray was born. A son to missionary parents from Iowa. But to the people of China, he was just another “Fan Qui Tsai” or foreign devil boy. The early 1900s were turbulent times in China and missionaries were often thought of as “foreign devils.”

* * *

His second language was Cantonese. Throughout life, he would often recite *The Lord's Prayer* in Cantonese. His earliest memories were of the deep ditches of dung that surrounded the rice paddies. He had nightmares about falling into them, long after he came back to the States.

He spent his first 11 years living with his parents, two brothers and three sisters in various missionary compounds and homes along the banks of the Pearl River. Like many missionary children, Ray was home-schooled and often played alone.

The weather presented great challenges as there were many tropical storms and typhoons bringing torrential rains. Ray recalls that on one occasion, "the sky became black and there followed precipitation of such magnitude that the great Pearl River could not contain the waters, and there resulted one of the most devastating floods of south China." The muddy waters attained a depth ten or twelve feet in their yard and the family, with their pets and chickens, were forced to seek shelter in the upstairs part of their two-story home where they were marooned for two weeks.

During this great flood, Ray decided to get away from being stranded in the house and commandeered an old washtub as a boat to escape. However, it had no rudder or keel and was quickly swept away from the house with Ray in it. The fear of drifting away and not coming back was a frightening thought to the young Ray. Luckily, though, a clump of bamboo trees nearby trapped the drifting tub and Ray figured out a way to get home.

1906

San Francisco fire and earthquake occurs on April 18.

1907

Thompson Webb graduates from Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee.

1911

Thompson Webb graduates from the University of North Carolina.

1912

Ray witnessed the final death of the old China and the birth of a new China as he grew up in an incredibly revolutionary time in China. The revolution ended on February 12. It was the final years of the Qing Dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China that had ruled

China from 1644. The Qing Dynasty was being replaced by the Republic of China. The young Ray Alf often heard gunfire in the distance and an occasional stray bullet would strike one of the missionary homes.

The revolutionary Sun Yat-sen was fighting Eun Chi Kai. Sun became the first president and founding father of the Republic of China or Nationalist China. As the foremost pioneer of Republic of China, Sun later was referred to as the “Father of the Nation” and the “forerunner of democratic revolution in the People’s Republic of China. Sun played an instrumental role in the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty during the years leading up to the Double Ten Revolution.

Ray recalls these last years of the old China in a number of vivid short images that would remain with him all through his life. The old red, yellow, blue, white and black flag was replaced by a new one. The binding of the feet of baby girls was abolished and men no longer had to wear long pigtailed queues. Sampans, junks and houseboats plying the muddy waters of the Pearl River. Pagodas, idols, incense, instruments to help propitiate the gods. Carambolas, guavas, rose apples, fruits to placate the gustatory sense. Narcissus, magnolias, lantanas, flowers to perfume the air. Water buffaloes pulling through the soil. The American gunboats *Wilmington*, *Helena* and *Elkcano*. Rickshaws for transportation. His family of eight sitting around the dinner table, holding hands, and singing grace.

And behind these flashes of memory, the Paak Wang Shan or White Cloud Mountains looming high against the sky, “seeming to give a benediction to the villages below.”

* * *

On the night of April 14, the Titanic hits an iceberg and sinks

1914

On 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria is assassinated in Sarajevo leading to the beginning of WWI.

1915

Thompson Webb marries Vivian Howell, the 20-year-old daughter of a Los Angeles Methodist minister on June 22, 1915. She joined him in farming. During the next few years, The Webb’s farm together and increase their farm holdings.

* * *

Thousands of miles away from southern California in China, young Ray Alf was surrounded by the world of an old China just beginning to come into the modern world. He has many vivid memories of these first years of his life over there.

“The missionary compound I remember most vividly,” he recalls, “was on Ho Nam, an island mass surrounded by the waters of the Pearl River. There we lived in a two-story brick building with spacious upstairs and downstairs verandas. The yard was completely fenced in, and the entrance gate was usually locked.”

Ray recalls that the compound was bounded on one side by a large cemetery that “seemed as old as China itself” and on another side by a village that extended a long way to the river’s edge. “The dark, damp, smelly streets were narrow and winding, a condition that would frustrate evil spirits, should they have malice in their hearts in visiting the inhabitants in their dwelling places.”

But for the Chinese, the real evil spirits were the Americans living over their like the missionaries. Ray recalls that it was not uncommon, as they made their way through those streets, that a crowd of women and children would follow them shouting “Foreign devils. Look at the foreign devils!”

On another side of the missionary compound was farmland where water farmers directed buffaloes over the land preparing it for planting rice and vegetables.

The days were unstructured. Ray recalls he had few playmates and there was not any daily schooling in respect to the disciplines of reading, writing and arithmetic. “Most of the time I was alone,” he recalls, “and learned to entertain myself.”

One of his favorite activities he did to entertain himself was to climb in a great banyan tree in a corner of the yard. The branches and roots of the tree “formed a forest-like network of amazing complexity.” As Ray later observes in his special perspective, “Here was the answer to satisfy the instinctive call to recapitulate the activities of our simian ancestry.” The surface of the tree’s main trunk was a “composite of hand-like roots and branches woven together to make the ascent one of ease.”

Ray would crawl up the trunk to “large horizontal branches of such magnitude that one could run along one and leap to another, then swing on a dangling rope to another.” He spent much of his time in the great tree and it made him ponder monkeys, mankind’s closest relatives in the animal kingdom. As he recalls, “Once there, my thoughts germinated even as they must have done eons ago in the primitive mind of arboreal *Aegyptopithecus*.”

The first race that Ray remembers winning in his long career as a world-class sprinter was on the occasion of a gathering of American missionaries in Canton, China to celebrate the 4th of July. Ray recalls “There was a feeling of true patriotism as we sang praises to the country we loved, and this feeling was only intensified by being so far from home and so far south as to be below the Tropic of Cancer.”

On that particular day, there was a potato race. The rules of the race involved running to potatoes and moving them to a basket. Ray won the event that day noting later, “I did not let my gustatory preference for rice over potatoes deter me from entering the contest with vim, vigor and vitality and the result was victory.” As a token of his win, Ray received a silk fan on which was printed the following”

July 4th, 1917
Paak Hok Tung
Boys Potato Race
First Prize

Ray Alf and his family board a ship and sails for the United States. They first settled in Des Moines, Iowa where Ray entered the 6th grade. Then they moved to Mayville, North Dakota to a farm with relatives and Ray’s father became a minister in the Congregational Church in nearby Garrison.

1918

Ray entered school in the 7th grade in Mayville, North Dakota. It was in North Dakota that he later recalls that his early character established in China was “reformed and reshaped” and that “manhood crystalized” here in North Dakota.

In addition to his father’s work as a minister, the family had a small farm and cultivated wheat, oats and hay. Ray recalls getting up early in the mornings to work on the farm in his amazingly embellished language that was his trademark through his life. It was a language so garnished with Biblical references that it often takes deciphering and study to understand the simple things it describes.

For example, Ray describes having to get up early on the farm with the following amazing description. “The summer dawn broke early at the northern latitude and there were times when an internal cry would beg Joshua of old to command the sun and the moon to stand still so that the evening could be prolonged. But alas, there were chores to perform. The alarm was the whinny of our beasts of burden anxious for their can of oats and manger of hay.”

The family had five horses and Ray remembers harnessing them to pull a plow in a process called summer fallowing. Ray recalls sitting on the plow behind the horses, alone on the vast prairie with his thoughts.

“Hour after hour passed,” he recalls. “The beasts adapted themselves to the routine and needed little attention once the plowing started so that alone in the broad prairie I could live with my thoughts as I sat peacefully on the plow dreaming of the future. Once in a while, the plow would strike a glacial boulder flinging me off the plow with a suddenness that brought reality back into my thoughts.”

Ray recalls the nights in North Dakota in his dramatic manner. “The northern lights illuminated the night with bright streamers alternating in their attempt to reach the zenith and then withdrawing into the infinity of darkness and the darkness made more desolate by the crying of the distant coyotes. A chill wind murmured a reminder of time thrown back across the deserts of millennia when this, the Red River Valley of North Dakota, was formed, sculptured and shaped by the power of a continental glacier.”

* * *

A diseased onion crop wipes out all of Thompson and Vivian Webb’s savings. Broke and carrying high debt, they do not have the capital to farm and - because the country was involved in WWI - he is unable to sell his land.

1919

Ray in school in Mayville, North Dakota.

Thompson Webb returns to Tennessee, where Webb School Bell Buckle is experiencing a shortage of male teachers (due to the war) that threatens the school’s existence. Thompson Webb works as an instructor at the school for four years.

1920

Ray in school in Mayville, North Dakota.

* * *

United States prohibits use of alcoholic beverages

1921

Alf family moves to Petersburg, Nebraska where Ray’s father continued to practice ministry.

1922

Situated in the gently rolling hills of eastern Nebraska is Petersburg. In the summer of 1922, Ray's family moved from farming in the Red River Valley of eastern North Dakota to Petersburg where his parents continued their work as Congregational ministers.

Ray is enrolled in Petersburg High School. It was not an easy acceptance for him into the new school. As he recalls, "I found myself earmarked as the minister's little son with all the connotations associated with that appellation."

At Petersburg, Ray rediscovers his love and ability as a runner perhaps first noticed in 1917 during the "Potato Race" in Canton, China. In the fall, at the end of the harvest season, Petersburg hosted a community festival on main street. A highlight of the celebration was a 100-yard dash on the unpaved street to see who the fastest man in town was. The unpaved streets were roped off and all were invited to challenge the town's baseball payers who wore shoes with cleats. Ray took off his shoes and rolled up his pants and ran barefoot and won the race.

Spurred by his success, Ray entered another 100-yard dash competition at the Boon County Fair where 2,000 spectators were gathered in a large grandstand set up to view the horse races but human races were part of the event. Many of the runners had spiked cleats and wore track uniforms. Again, Ray ran barefoot and won the race, something that dismayed the guys in the fancy running gear. To show it was no fluke, Ray did it again the next day.

* * *

Through a proposal to I.W. Baughman, real estate broker for the Claremont property. Thompson Webb strikes a deal that gets him the school mentioned by Thacher in 1922. Webb School of California becomes a reality.

1923

Ray graduates from Petersburg High School as Valedictorian. He works for a year to support his sister Winifred's education at Hastings College in Nebraska.

In the summer another opportunity to race presented itself to Ray at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. He recalls that it was at the end of activities during Citizen's Military Training Camp at the fort. A day was declared for competitive sports and Ray volunteered to run for Company G in the 100-yard dash competing against sprinters from the other companies. Ray entered and ran in his bare feet again like he had done in the past. As Ray

recalls in his usual manner, “There was a moment of silence as I petitioned the gods for the Wings of Mercury to be attached to my stocking feet. It worked. I won the race and my first gold medal.” Ray adds, “This ended the sage of competitive running without the aid of shoes.”

1924

In the fall of the year, Ray and his brother Bill enter Doane College in Crete, Nebraska. 20 miles SW of Lincoln. Doane, established in 1872, was Nebraska’s first private liberal arts and sciences college. At Doane, Ray is on the school track team and distinguishes himself as a world-class sprinter.

Times were tough and Ray worked in the summer to support his education. Being a minister’s son, Ray was fortunate to only have to pay half of Doane’s usual tuition. In addition, he received a \$25 annual scholarship for being valedictorian from Petersburg High School. His big sister Winifred also helped by taking off from school to work and pay Ray back for his earlier efforts.

Ray is initiated into a program of track training by his coach Ward Haylett at Doane. As Ray recalls, “Over the four-year college period, there was a gradual improvement in the art of sprinting, culminating in an exciting senior year.” But training in the cold Nebraska winter weather was a challenge for Ray. “Winter weather in Nebraska,” he recalls, “can be severe, stormy, harsh and without mercy. Without indoor facilities for training, one had no choice but to bundle up and accept the challenge of the inclement weather and try to get in shape for competition.”

* * *

Thompson and Vivian Webb return to California to open his own private residential school.

The first suggestion that Thompson Webb start a school in California came from Sherman Thacher founder of the Thacher School in Ojai, California. Thacher tells Webb that his school was turning down dozens of qualified students every year and that an empty school near Claremont in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. was for sale. If Thompson opened a school there, Thacher agrees to refer his overflow applicants to Thacher to Webb.

1926

Ray’s first experience collecting fossils occurred in the summer of this year when he was toiling in the fields of Kansas harvesting wheat. Ray recalls, “The hot Kansas sun mercilessly beat down on a few of us who were in a header barge, frantically trying to

keep up with a machine as it harvested the golden grain from the wheat fields of that prairie state.”

On a half-day break from the hot, dusty work, Ray and a few others hiked to some nearby hills where outcrops of limestone were exposed. Upon close examination they discovered the rocks contained fossils of extinct types of life, Cretaceous cephalopods and pelecypods. Because of their beauty, Ray collected a few specimens and kept them with him for the rest of his life.

1927

Track was not the only sport that Ray excelled in at Doane College. He was also a star athlete on the Doane College football team. He recalls that in his first game the team was soundly thrashed but this type of thrashing never happened again. Ray remembers the expression on the face of their coach and the words of another coach. “We do not want men who will lie down and proudly die. We want men who will fight to live.”

The football team continued to improve. He recalls that in one season, the Doane College goal-line was uncrossed. Among their victories were their defeat of Central College 46 to 0, Omaha University 76 to 0 and York College 85 to 0.

The game with Omaha University served as the basis for a story that Ray would tell a number of times through his life. “On one kickoff my brother executed the boot from the 50 yard line. I got a flying start and was on-side and reached the end zone at the same time as the ball, falling on it for the fastest touchdown from kick-off in the history of football.” Perhaps Ray exaggerated somewhat. But he was a world-class runner playing football and his claim just might be right.

Ray was somewhat of an oddity playing football as he was a small man in a big man’s sport. As Ray recalls, “I was suffering then, as I still do, from the terrible truth that a good big man is better than a good little man.” But his success on the football field and around the track, as well as his success in other endeavors, were demonstrating an important truth to him. As Ray put it, “The compensatory drive for the surmounting of limitations is a dynamic force.” Ray observes, “It took me a long time to get a glimpse of the real truth. No matter whether you are big or small the simple formula that will enable you to become your best, or at times, better than your best, is Prayer and the Fighting Heart.”

* * *

In the summer of 1927, Ray worked as a railroad section hand, working nine hours a day for 39 cents an hour. His job was to tamp ties, working with a team of three other men.

Another team jacked up the ties and aligned the rails. Then, the tie tampers with shovels would put new ballast under the ties.

Ray recalls his work that summer on the railroad in Colorado. “The shining rails of the Rock Island Railroad glistened in the early morning sun and stretched out to the horizon, seemingly to converge at the edge of space. This is how it appeared in the wide-open plains of eastern Colorado. It was time for the 6:30 am train, but nothing was in sight. I crouched down put my ear to the rail and listened. The rhythmic rumble of the far off mechanical marvel was audible. Soon a speck appeared in the distance, and in moment the most beautiful and anthropomorphic of steam engines huffed and puffed by with a rising crescendo and then suddenly faded by Doppler’s principle. It was time to go back to work to keep the rails in perfect shape, so that train after train could speed by in safety.”

1928

In his senior year at Doane College, Ray journeys east to the University of Illinois Relays where athletes from across the nation assembled in attempts to make the United States Olympic Track team. He comes within one place of making the Olympic team. In a conference meet he ran first in the 100, 220, 440 and 220 low hurdles.

Ray graduates from Doane College with an A.B. in Math with minors in both physics and English.

Ray gets his first teaching high school in Fairmont, Nebraska. He teaches chemistry and math and coaches football, basketball and track. He also organized Sunday school, two choirs and Boy Scouts. His annual salary was \$1,500.

1929

The stock market crashes in October.

* * *

During his first year teaching in Fairmont, Nebraska, Ray kept in fairly good shape by jogging along the country roads. The AAU national track meet was taking place in Denver in July after his year of teaching. He had done well in his first teaching job but missed his running.

He went to Denver to train with the Denver Athletic Club and ran for them setting a new record in the event. But more important than the gold medal he received was an invitation from the Los Angeles Athletic Club to run for them. The invitation included a free ride for Ray to the west coast and he accepted it.

In Los Angeles, Ray picked up some more gold medals running for the LA Athletic Club. But the running did not pay the bills and in July, at the end of the track season, Ray realized he needed a job if he was to stay in the area. He did not want to seek a teaching job again as he felt it was too demanding but after applying for many jobs and being turned down for all of them, on August 7th he registered with the Boyington Teachers Agency, an employment firm for teachers. His recommendation letter stated “A remarkable young man” with “no bad habits” who is “persistent and thorough” and “always alert” who “wins friends” and is “a wonderful student, athlete and gentleman.” But still, he was turned down by three schools in his search for a teaching job.

Then, Ray boarded a red electric train car in downtown Los Angeles and headed east to into the San Gabriel Valley. As Ray recalls the electric car went through the orange and lemon groves that formed most of the valley in those years. “The fragrance of the citrus blossoms made sweet the clear air that bathed the majestic range of mountains paralleling the route.”

The electric car stopped at a little country town called Claremont and began walking to his destination, a small school called Webb nestled in the hills of the San Gabriel Mountains. As Ray recalls, “Between the narrow two-lane thoroughfare called Foothill Boulevard and the foothills to the north stretched the chaparral flora of Southern California, unchanged since Jedediah Smith passed this way one hundred years before. The pungent aroma of sage permeated the air and was made intense by the mercilessly hot sun.”

The school was two miles away and the walk was difficult in the heat and even the track star had to stop once at a local ranch house and ask for a glass of water. When he arrived at Webb School he was warmly greeted by Headmaster Thompson Webb. As Ray recalls, “We walked around the campus, a little island of man-made domiciles surrounded by an ocean of scrub oak, black and white sage and a plethora of wild flowers, remnants of a time when this was still a desert. I glanced up into the hills and for a moment envied the coyote, stabilized without worry in its ecological niche, in contrast to the unstabilizing agony of choice that consumed me. Should there be a continuing of an offering to sacrifice myself on the burning altar of education?”

Dr. Webb was also interviewing another man for the same job that day. Ray was quiet and reserved during the campus tour and interview while the other man talked all the time. Ray recalls him as a “blabbermouth.” The interview was short and Ray feared that he would have to add another failure to his job search.

After the tour and interview, Dr. Webb drove Ray back to the red electric car in Claremont for his trip back to Los Angeles, fifty miles to the west.

Ray remembers Dr. Webb's parting remark. It was a surprise to him. "I think you have the job," Dr. Webb told Ray.

1930

Ray was excited to finally get a job. However, it was not really a full time teaching job but rather only to tutor a student at Webb named Jackson in geometry for one year. His employment letter from Thompson Webb said in part, "School opens September 16, for you we provide a room with bed, mattress, bureau, table and chair. Each faculty member supplies his own cover, linen, pillow and towels."

Although Ray had a year of teaching in Nebraska, he was far from being a real teacher so Thompson Webb asked an experienced teacher named Anna Pearl Wright to help Ray sharpen his teaching skills. Anna was from Oakland, California and was employed in Mrs. Webb's Country Day School for young students.

Ray recalls seeing her coming down the road to help him for the first time. "I looked out of my window, and there coming down the road was Miss Wright sparkling with an aura of pulchritude. My pounding heart tattooed a string about my vocal chords immobilizing them for the utterance of words. My French horn came to the rescue. I pressed the horn to my lips, and my soul through that instrument sent forth a truly mellifluous harmony, whose tones of vibrations would hopefully arouse sympathetic vibrations from her heart strings."

Ray began working with Pearl and learned much about teaching from her. As Ray observes, "She was that kind of teacher who engraves on young minds etchings of goodness, truth and beauty, that grow and glow to illuminate the sign posts along the highway of life."

Soon they fell in love. Ray describes Pearl with a few beautiful, elegant sentences. "Ceylon, India and the Persian Gulf have produced the finest pearls and jewels of iridescent beauty that have warmed the hearts of those for whom the gems elicit a special grace and charm. But California produced a Pearl, whose aura of the sparkling quintessence of all that is good, true, and beautiful, made the molluscan beads fade by comparison. This native daughter lifted my spirits so high I could drink dew drops of glory from the top of tall trees."

Pearl had similar feelings for Ray and not long after Ray's serenade with the French horn, the two were married on April 27th at the home of the Webbs. The occasion was one of pageantry coordinated by Vivian Webb who put together an outdoor community celebration for their marriage. Ray recalls "The Webb garden was flower-bright in springtime embrace. The student body stood at dress parade, punctuated by the faculty

and their wives. Dr. and Mrs. Webb proudly escorted us to the minister who performed the sacred rite of making us man and wife.”

After the wedding, the two drove to Corona del Mar in their Model A Ford and stayed for a three-day honeymoon at the Webb beach house.

* * *

Although his marriage was a wonderful thing for Ray, there was a crisis at hand by the end of the school year as the Jackson student that Ray was hired to tutor had greatly improved and no longer needed a tutor and there were no new openings for a math teacher at Webb. Thompson and Ray discussed the situation and Thompson told Ray that the only job open the following year was in biology. Ray responded that he had no experience in biology and Thompson Webb told him, “Take it or leave it.”

Although overwhelmed somewhat, Ray decided to take the offer. He hatched a plan to gain some training in biology over the summer by auditing some courses at the University of Colorado at Boulder. His parents had relocated and now lived near Boulder and the new couple could live with them over the summer while Ray studied at the University of Colorado.

It was during this summer in Colorado that Ray had his second experience collecting fossils after his first one in Kansas in the summer of 1926. Ray and Pearl stopped overnight at a motel in Florissant, Colorado. The motel owner showed them a nearby ditch where Oligocene fossils could be found. Soon, Ray and Pearl were in the ditch splitting open the soft shale with their bare hands to expose magnificently preserved impressions of leaves and insects. (Today, this area is the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument).

* * *

During his early years of teaching, Ray was constantly learning and reading. As he recalls, “During the nascent period of teaching, the insatiable hunger and thirst for an increment of learning sufficient to keep me a step ahead of my pupils, was partially satisfied by purchasing and then surreptitiously in the pre-dawn hour of the morning delving into the wisdom of the ages by way of *Webster’s New International Dictionary*, *The Harvard Classics* and a new set of the *National Encyclopedia*. This nourished the seed of liberal education firmly established during my years at Doane College and germinated a want to specialize in some field of learning as an accouterment to the liberal arts foundation.”

* * *

Ray runs for the Los Angeles Athletic Club and is the national junior 220 yard dash champion.

1931

Ray and Pearl's daughter Janet is born on April 15th.

1932

Ray continued his track workouts during his early years at Webb School. The Olympic Track Team was holding their trails in southern California and Ray worked towards a goal of earning a spot on the team. He fitted in a demanding training schedule around his commitments as a father of a new baby girl and a full-time teacher at Webb who was deeply involved with his students. The final trails for the Olympic Team were in Long Beach and Ray barely missed making the team.

1933

Ray and Pearl's daughter Mimi is born on August 30th. Ray writes about the arrival of the couple's two daughters. "Their arrival elicited the daylight of joy to break upon us, and their constant love has been a guiding light through the long journey from a beginning partnership to the steady full blooming art of maturation. We have been blessed for they have been continuously giving us a strong incentive to become complete persons unified in a true spiritual experience. They keep us alert to the wonder that there will always be buds that we can nourish to full bloom. It is never too late to take root and grow."

* * *

After a few years at Webb, Thompson Webb saw something special in Ray and gave him much of the school's teaching and coaching responsibilities. In 1933, after the birth of his second daughter, Ray had his hands full as a new father and with his responsibilities at Webb teaching biology, geometry and English as well as coaching football and track.

* * *

Ray is in the play "Remote Control" at the Padua Hills Playhouse. The mystery drama was a great success. (Jan. 1933 B&G)

* * *

"The other day Mr. Alf was seen running across the campus, leaping hedges, stone walls, and Pittman's Austin. Right behind the fleeing man about half a dozen small boys, apparently giving chase, were running, dashing madly around hedges, climbing stone

wall's and going through Pittman's Austin. The race was later investigated and revealed that the peewee football letter sweaters had arrived in the store just after school, and, consequently, when the peewee stars found this out, they proceeded to attempt to enter the store. Mr. Alf, when he was asked, said that he was busy and could not get the sweaters. The boys begged and begged to be let into the store. Finally, Mr. Alf fled from his apartment in search of peace and quiet. The peewees followed him shouting and yelling for their sweaters. Finally, the teacher found refuge in the bell-tower of the gym. The boys got their sweaters the next day." (Jan 1933 B&G)

* * *

"Mr. Alf, a famous sprinter himself, is out every afternoon to lend any assistance he can to his protégés, Kauffman and Sutphen. Much credit is due to Mr. Alf for devoting so much of his time to assisting prospective trackmen." (Jan 1933 B&G)

"Last Tuesday terminated the career of one of our most celebrated track stars – Ray Alf. In looking over his achievements, we find these exceptional marks: 100 yard dash, 9.6 seconds; 220 yard dash, 21.1 seconds; 440 yard dash, 48.3 seconds. Mr. Alf also holds the unofficial world record for the 300 yard dash in 30 seconds flat. Although timed by six A.A.U. officials, his time for this distance was not officially adopted." (May 1933 B&G)

1934

Ray becomes interested in astronomy and decides to build his own telescope. He researches how telescopes work and the components required to build one and builds one in his spare time. It is a powerful telescope and gains Ray so much notoriety that his telescope is featured in *Popular Astronomy* magazine. A proper setting was needed for the telescope so a low circular wall at the top of Webb's Alamo Dorm was built for it. On the wall were the signs of the Zodiac and in front of the telescope a sundial was positioned.

Ray recalls this magic moment when he first used his telescope. "Never will I forget the excitement one evening of assembling the parts, carefully adjusting the mirrors, focusing the eye piece, and then – there in the crystal clear view was Jupiter embraced by the four moons, Io, Europa, Ganameda and Callisto."

As Ray remembers, "This breathtaking, beautiful experience was later followed by observations of star clusters, nebulae, galaxies and as the instrument penetrated deeper and deeper into the immensity of distance, the light from the edge of space seemed to diminish the size of planet earth to a speck of dust in a cold and infinite void."

It was an important moment in the life of the thirty-year-old Ray Alf. "A real question of meaning took shape," he recalls. "Was this all life amounted to? A moment of nothingness existing on a grain of sand floating through eternal darkness?"

Ray's answer to the question was to return to earth from these rather disheartening thoughts. A biblical perspective was called forth to help show him the way back to earth. Ray recalls that he heard a "still small voice whisper" within him, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

As Ray says, "I decided to get back to the earth, and with geologic hammer in hand went hither and thither looking for rocks. Sparks flew, and the ringing sound of steel against stone echoed from hill to hill, and as rock after rock was shattered or cleaved, a story emerged."

* * *

The third exposure of Ray to fossil hunting that laid the foundation for his life work in paleontology occurred when Ray, Pearl and their two young daughters Mimi and Janet went to visit Pearl's uncle in Westmoreland, California over the Thanksgiving holiday.

While on a hike with Pearl's uncle, ray spotted some large fossil Plio-Pleistocene oysters and collected a few of them. Ray was ecstatic as the specimens were about 10 inches long and were very well preserved. (These specimens are still on display on the "touch table" in the Alf Museum's Hall of Life).

1935

The small observatory that Ray Alf built was officially opened on Parent's Day. It is an eight-inch Newtonian reflector. "There is no definite schedule for observation, but on most Saturday and Sunday nights the observatory is at your service. Often you may make observations in the early evening before seven o'clock." (Oct. 1935 B&G)

A few months after the fossil collecting trip in Westmoreland, California, Ray was running errands in Claremont Village and visited a photo shop. There on a glass countertop was a small display of a beautiful fossilized horse jaw. Ray was enthralled with the specimen and its row of shiny, jet-black teeth aligned on top of a steel-gray colored jawbone. He enquired where he might find others like this one and learned that they could easily be found in the multi-colored sedimentary rocks exposed in an area called Rainbow Basin, around five miles north of Barstow, California.

On a weekend in the late part of the year, Ray gathers together some students and goes in search of fossils there with around ten Webb students including David Pinkham '37 and George Hoag '36. Not much was found on the trip except a few teeth and some bone fragments. But the trip really marked the first of what would be called Peccary Trips.

By now, Ray had also collected his first vertebrate fossil, a fragment of a horse bone. The fossil fascinated him so much that he mounted it on a pedestal and placed it on his desk so he could further contemplate the import of this small, seemingly insignificant record of life.

1936

The second Peccary trip occurred in April when Ray led twelve students of his zoology class to search for fossil invertebrates near Ojai, California in the mountains above Santa Barbara.

The third Peccary trip occurred in November of 1936 when Ray takes his Webb School class to the desert around Barstow. One of the students on the trip was Bill Webb, son of Webb School founder Thompson Webb.

Bored with the entire experience in the desert, Bill Webb spots an eroded hillside he thinks would make a terrific slide. Halfway down he hooks and tears his pants on a sharp protruding object. Climbing back to the spot, Webb finds a bone sticking out from the ground. After clearing away some dirt, he uncovers teeth and eventually a small skull.

Ray and Webb excavate the specimen and take it to paleontologist Chester Stock at the California Institute of Technology who identifies the find as a new species of Miocene-age peccary *Dyseohyus Fricki*, a new species of fossil pig.

This first summer Peccary Trip begins the long-standing museum tradition of offering annual summer trips to fossil-rich areas in western North America.

1937

The discovery of Billy Webb supplies a link in the evolution of the peccaries, the pig family that has inhabited the Western hemisphere. The fossil is approximately 20 million years old. The fossil is placed in the upper Miocene epoch of the tertiary period. The fossil is not only the connecting link in the evolution of the peccary family but also gives a detailed story of the geological and geographical conditions in the Great Basin during that period.

In May of 1937, Professor Chester Stock at the California Institute of Technology, the leading mammalian paleontologist in the nation, publishes a paper on the find of Bill Webb in 1936. The paper is published in the Balch Graduate School of the Geological Sciences Volume 23. The paper notes:

“It is a curious fact that peccaries of the Tertiary stage represented by the Barstow fauna are practically unknown from the North American area. When J. C.

Merriam published in 1919 the results of his comprehensive studies of the Tertiary faunas of the Mohave Desert, the only specimen representing the peccary group available from the Barstow beds was an astragalus. The newly discovered material fortunately permits a much more satisfactory identification and furnishes the basis for an interesting comparison with the lower Miocene *Desmathyus* and the Pliocene *Prosthennops*. It is a pleasure to name this new type specifically for Mr. Childs Frick, who in recent years has conducted extensive paleontological explorations in the Barstow deposits.”

The paper goes on to describe the find in the language of incredible technical language of paleontology.

Family Tayassuidae: *Dyseohyus fricki*, n.gen.and n.sp.

Type Specimen. No. 2039, Calif. Inst. Coll. Vert. Pale. A fragmentary skull and lower jaw with C, deciduous and permanent upper premolars, M1 to M3 and P2-P4, M2 and 3 Plate 1.

Locality and Age. Green Hills, west of Barstow, California, and locally NW of Saucer Butte near Rainbow Canyon. Upper Miocene.

Generic and Specific Characters. Rostral portion of skull slender and elongate; diastema between C and P2 similar in length to length of pre-molar series P2-P4 inclusive. Orbit situated not so far back as in *Prosthennops crassigenis*, but farther back than in *Desmathyus siouxensis*. Cranial length (as measured from level of posterior ends of third molar to posterior side of occipital condyles) similar to length of cheek-tooth series P2-M3 inclusive. Palate extends behind M3 for a distance slightly greater than length of third molar. Dentition, 3. In stage of acquisition of molar pattern, the premolars, particularly P4 are more advanced than in *Desmathyus*, less so than in *Prosthennops*. Crowns of molar teeth with inner cuspules and crenulations better developed than in *Prosthennops*. Lower premolars narrower and less molariform than in *Prosthennops*, resembling in their characters the comparable teeth in *Desmathyus* P4 with shorter heel than in latter genus.

Inspired by their 1936 discovery, Ray travels to Nebraska in the summer to hunt for fossils. Ray recalls the inspiration that sent him to Nebraska was a picture in a book. “A nascent urge to look for documents of life was activated once upon a time by observations of pictures in the book *Fossils* by Richard Swann Lull. Ray recalls that “one picture of Agate, Nebraska specimens burst the bonds of restraint and we were magnetically pulled to the famous quarry from which came the pictured bones.” Another book consulted by Ray that pointed to Agate as a good collecting place was *History of*

Land Mammals of the Western Hemisphere by William Berryman Scott.

Ray travelled to Agate, Nebraska with Webb students Bill Webb and Art Clokey (Webb '39.) They form the first members of the Peccary Society. Art's childhood was like something from a Dickens novel and he arrived at Webb School in a very interesting manner. He tragically lost his father in a car accident in Detroit when he was nine. After living in a home for abandoned boys for several years, he was adopted at the age of twelve by Joseph W. Clokey. Professor Clokey was a renaissance man who wrote over 200 pieces of original music and taught music at Pomona College. Joe and Art spent the summers going on adventures in Canada, Alaska, Siberia and the American West. They would explore, paint and film with their new camera.

The Agate Springs site was part of the Cook Ranch owned by James Cook and his son Harold. James Cook had settled this part of western Nebraska back in the 1880s when the plains Indians had not yet been forced onto reservations and he had developed a close friendship with the great Sioux leader Red Cloud. Besides fossils, the Cooks had hundreds of Indian artifacts, some of them gifts of Red Cloud.

The Cooks extended a warm welcome to the Webb crew. Art Clokey brought along a movie camera and filmed the visit to the Cook Ranch. The film includes a picnic the Cooks hosted for the Webb crew showing James Cook.

After collecting at Agate Springs, the Cooks told Ray that he could find plenty of excellent vertebrate fossils in the badlands near Scenic, South Dakota. So, the three men traveled to Scenic, South Dakota.

* * *

Scenic was not much of a town. As Ray recalls, "There was a post office, two bars and a gas station." They stopped at the gas station and asked where to hunt for fossils. But the attendant only stared at them. Ray repeated his question saying that Clark had told them to come down here. He meant to say Cook but mistakenly said Clark. In one of the random coincidences that occur only a few times in one's life, there was a man named Clark hunting for fossils five miles south of town and the gas station attendant knew about Clark being there and told them about him.

They followed the directions of the gas station attendant and soon met John Clark who just happened to be a professor of Paleontology at the University of Colorado. Clark and his group were camped along Indian Creek a few miles down the road. Clark was studying mammals of the White River Group, a thick sequence of fossil-rich sediments about 35 million years old and part of the Late Eocene-Early Oligocene formation which formed the great rock exposures giving Badlands National Park its name. The three Webb men camped with Clark for a few days.

It was a turning point in Ray's life. As he recalls, "I was impressed by his indefatigable energy, enthusiasm and brilliance. I asked him if it were humanly possible for a man of my age, without any background in biology or geology to get a masters degree under his direction at the University of Colorado in one year." Professor Clark tells him yes, it was possible. This chance encounter inspires Ray to become a paleontologist.

* * *

In Claremont, with the help of a small cement mixer and two hired workers, Thompson Webb begins making 60-pound (27 kg) adobe bricks to build the Vivian Webb Chapel. They create 60,000 mission-style bricks and dry them for a year in the sun on the school's tennis courts.

1938

Thompson Webb begins building the chapel's foundation.

* * *

Over Spring break Ray made his first decent into the Grand Canyon with William Bumpus '38, DeWitt Barnett '36 and David Pinkham '37. They took the train out and hiked down with their camping equipment to Indian Springs.

* * *

Webb hosts a science round table discussion featuring science masters from six southern California private schools. Ray Alf, Mr. Vedder and Mr. Hooper represent Webb. Ray gave a talk on Friday night in the basement of the library titled "The Function of the Museum in the Teaching of Science."

* * *

In June, Ray and his family leave Webb and go to Boulder, Colorado so that Ray can complete his masters degree in geology at University of Colorado under his mentor Dr. John Clark. But when they got there a problem arose as it seemed that no one had ever tried to get a masters degree in one year and the admissions personnel said that it could not be done. But they relented and said that he could try.

Ray was up to the challenge of getting the usual two-year degree in one year. He took six geology courses and got all As. He quickly became a familiar face around the geology department, impressing everyone with his dedication and hard work. He was granted special permission to use the geology library and one of the professors even let Ray use his study. Ray was elected to Sigma Phi, the Phi Beta Kappa of paleontology.

His thesis, supervised by John Clark, centered on the study of dozens of Oligocene rhino skulls from northeast Colorado.

1939

Upon the completion of his degree in Colorado, Ray returns to Webb to teach biology. But Ray changed the course by developing the concept of “total biology” which was a combination of paleontology and regular biology that he melded into a unique course of his own. This really marked the beginning of the student paleontology program at Webb where paleontology became a part of the school. Fossil collecting trips would forever be known as Peccary Trips from this time onward.

He had made a huge step to become an academic paleontologist like his mentor John Clark. There is a growing interest for the peccary trips and this becomes the foundation of the student paleontology program at Webb.

* * *

That summer, Ray returns to Agate Springs, Nebraska with Bill Webb and Art Clokey for the second summer Peccary Trip. (Art Clokey graduates from Webb this year and goes on to become the creator of the iconic Gumby.) They also collect in Utah and Wyoming and South Dakota. They work a quarry at Agate Springs that was so full of mammal bones that they decided to remove a block of the rock and ship it home and prepare it back at Webb. Using a piece of barbed wire as a saw they cut a large block and jacketed it with burlap and plaster and built a crate around the block. The crate was shipped by train back to Webb.

On the trip, Ray, Webb and Clokey wrote the first verse of the *Peccary Song* and a few years later when Ramsey Harris wrote the second verse of the song he referred to the block from Agate Springs. At Webb, the Agate Springs block was cleaned and prepared over a period of five years by many students.

* * *

The first fossils found by the new Peccary Society in these first trips were displayed in Ray’s apartment in the upper dorm and later in his classroom in the basement of the lower dorm. From there the first trip fossils went to Ray’s classroom in the basement of the Thomas Jackson Library. This would be Ray’s classroom for the next 29 years until the Alf Museum was built.

* * *

The first brick for Vivian Webb Chapel is laid. The walls of the chapel began being built

with the help of students, parents, visitors, prospective students and even the governor of Tennessee.

The lower level of the Webb School's Thomas Jackson Library becomes Ray's museum and classroom. The classroom museum houses their collection of thousands of fossils and discoveries from the desert trips fill the shelves in Ray's classroom in the library basement.

* * *

Ray makes his second trip to the Grand Canyon and leads a hike down Kaibab Trail and up the Bright Angel Trail to Indian Springs. It is on this trip that Ray meets Edwin McKee, the man who spearheaded the first intensive geological investigation of the Grand Canyon. McKee tells Ray of a place near Seligman, Arizona where he could collect the tracks and trackways of small sized Permian reptiles.

This was the beginning of trips led by Ray during spring break on a loop route that made stops at Seligman, Grand Canyon, Cameron Junction, Kanab, Zion and Death Valley. These spring break Peccary Trips were trips that Ray would lead on an annual basis for the next 35 years until the mid-70s.

* * *

Beginning of World War II.

1940

Work on the Vivian Webb Chapel continues during the first years of the 1940s. Near completion of the structure, Webb learned that sculptor Alec Miller was in the United States because of World War II, and lacked the funds to return to his native Scotland. Miller was well known in England because of his carvings for the cathedral at Coventry. Thompson Webb hires the artist at a modest fee, plus room and board, to design the furnishings (Miller called them "fitments") for the chapel. Miller lives with the Webbs for three years while he designs the chapel's "fitments" and the insets for the chapel's entrance doors.

* * *

During World War II, gasoline became very scarce and this ended activities of the Peccary Society. But Ray kept busy teaching and coaching at Webb and auditing geology classes at Pomona College. He also taught geography to Army Air Corps personnel at Pomona College and made all the maps used in the course. His geology studies led him to investigate the nearby San Gabriel Mountains where he discovered a belt of highly

metamorphosed rocks called mylonites whose occurrence is a rare geological phenomenon. With the support of Shell Oil Company, Ray was able to fully investigate these rocks. His research paper on this would find publication in 1948 in the prestigious *Bulletin of the American Geological Society*.

1941

Lester Wegeforth (Webb '44) recalls the following incident. "Mr. Webb was showing some prospective parents around the school. When he opened the door to the new biology lab there was Mr. Alf standing on his head in a very large waste paper basket screaming at the top of his lungs about a mistake some poor student had made."

1942

Lester Wegeforth (Weggie) is in Ray Alf's biology class. He squashes a pod of a moss called Lichen and places it under a microscope. There were four beautiful seeds. Mr. Alf came over to look through the microscope. "Weggie, do you know what this is?" he asked. "No," Weggie said. "This was paramount to lighting a sky rocket. Mr. Alf ran around the table making 'un-sunderie' noises. Finally, after what seemed eternity with everyone staring at me he announced that in all the years of his biology research this was the first time that he had seen the seeds of this particular specimen."

1944

Allies invade Normandy on June 6.

* * *

The Vivian Webb Chapel is completed. The bell tower is added later. Vivian Webb Chapel completed.

1946

After the war, the trips were started up again and there was high interest in the Peccary Society leading to tremendous growth in paleontology at Webb. Looking back later in his life, Ray would refer to the years after WWII to the early 70s as his "Glory Years" as a number of Webb students during this time went on to become distinguished paleontologists such as Malcolm McKenna '48, Dwight Taylor '49, David Webb '53, Grant Meyer '53, Donald Kron '66 and Daniel Fisher '67. Other former students became professional geologists like Patrick Muffler '54, Ken De Nault '61, Bruce Parks '63, Tommy Thompson '64 and Robert Hefner '53 to name a few.

During the "Glory Years" of the Peccary Society students received several national science awards for their work and Ray earned wide recognition and many awards for his

teaching and fossil collecting activities. In addition, thousands of specimens were collected and soon outgrew the space in the basement of the Jackson Library requiring Ray to find places around the Webb campus to store all the fossils.

* * *

“The Webb School went into mourning for the 1930 Ford de Luxe roadster owned by Mr. and Mrs. Alf. It seems that it has had a very bad week since last Tuesday. To begin with, Mr. Alf drove for a great length of time Tuesday evening with a live short a few inches from the gas tank. He remedied this with the help of Mr. Jordan when he returned to the plantation. Mrs. Alf, Mimi and Janet had left the car in the garage Wednesday afternoon and had just reached the door, when they heard a loud crash. The car had rolled down the hill and hit the Quonset hut, bouncing five feet. Damage to the car: one broken baggage rack in the back, and a terrible list to the port side. Mrs. Alf, running down the hill, uttered a phrase destined to become famous: ‘It has never done that before.’ “ (Nov. 46 B&G)

1947

The seventeen-year-old Malcolm McKenna remembers joining Ray in the July for the first really long Peccary Trip of a new era. As McKenna recalls, “It was fun. It was exciting. It was even a little bit frightening but we all looked forward to exploring the unknown.” The route of the Peccary Trip was to become a familiar one: Utah, Wyoming, Nebraska and back to Webb.

The first post-war Peccary group McKenna recalls was small but it was made-up of students who had experience on shorter trips to the Mojave Desert. A few had already been given much responsibility by Ray. He had asked them to take over setting up camp or to see that fossils were put away properly. As McKenna remembers, “We were not along for the ride. Rather we were all included in the leadership. We were doing some of the planning and, like young circadas, we were definitely spreading our still-wet wings to dry in the sun and getting ready for later flights.”

There were five of them in Ray’s Chevy Suburban with the usual trailer-full of cots and greasy pans. The Peccary routine had already been established. In the morning they would have a “horrible cup of black coffee” known as Ray’s “shot of hot.” There were individual pans for each of them to cook various “disastrous versions of eggs. There was a brief get-together before setting off to find “Documents of Life” as Ray called the fossils they searched for.

McKenna remembers with particular clarity one late afternoon north of Crawford, Nebraska. The group stopped at an ordinary looking flat where they planned to camp for the evening. They had some time to search for fossils before night came and McKenna

followed Ray out into the barren land around their campsite. “There in the afternoon sun,” McKenna recalls, “was the rounded tip of a boney horn sticking about an inch or so out of the ground. Both of us knew instantly what we had found because we had read W.B. Scott’s History of Land Mammals in the Western Hemisphere, in fact we had practically memorized it.”

The curve of the bone meant that there was a skull below. “Feverishly we dug to be rewarded by continuity. The bone did indeed go deeper and broadened to become the entire skull of a titanotherium, a huge extinct relative of the horses, rhinos and tapirs.”

Ray’s comment was one of his trademark phrases that would later be heard by hundreds of students on future Peccary trips.

“Beautay!” he exclaimed.

The skull would later be named Betsy and took them three more days to fully unearth it from the earth. The group searched out the materials needed to remove the skull. The local drug stores and lumber-yards were stripped of all of their plaster and from the feed stores they got burlap sacks. They worked hard until Betsy was covered by a burlap and plaster jacket similar to the type of cast doctors encased broken limbs in. The whole thing weighed about 300 pounds when they finally removed it from the huge pit they had dug around it. Then, they placed the skull on a huge tarpaulin and slowly dragged it back to their vehicle.

Many years later, Malcolm McKenna recalls “My memory of those days in 1947 hasn’t dimmed nor will it ever. The trip was fun and it was exciting for sure. But most of all, it was important and it helped set a trend that has affected thousands of people since then. Ray’s dream had of course started a long time before World War II. But I think that 1947 was a crucial year and the Peccary trip that year changed our lives forever.”

* * *

A few days before Christmas vacation, one of the most important events in the history of the Webb School Museum occurred with the arrival of Betsy, the skull of a titanotherium (*Titanotherium Robustum*). The extinct mammal related to the rhinoceros, stood eight feet high at thie shoulders and was about the size of a small elephant. Betsy was discovered north of the town of Crawford, Nebraska. The deposits in which Betsy was found are of the Oligocene age, 35 million years old. Ray was part of the discovering group. They spent four days removing Betsy from the clay in which she was embedded.

Malcolm McKenna graduates from Webb and is the first of Ray's students to go on to become one of the world's most famous paleontologists and curator paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History. McKenna has said about his Webb teacher, "Ray showed us that the paleontological frontier was amazingly close by and that we, like Ray, could make a contribution to knowledge."

* * *

Ray's paper "A Mylonite Belt in the Southeastern San Gabriel Mountains" is published in the *Bulletin of the Geological Society of America*. It is perhaps the earliest publication of Ray's in a respected scientific journal. The paper noted that the mountain chain behind Webb School were remains of an earthquake fault block. The Abstract of the paper observed:

The San Gabriel Mountains are the somewhat dissected remnants of an elevated fault block. At their southeastern end they are wedged between the Mojave desert mass and the depressed northwestern portion of the Perris fault block. The southeastern San Gabriel range is made up of pre-Upper Cretaceous metamorphic rocks and late Jurassic or early Cretaceous plutonic rocks. An east-west zone through the middle of the area is characterized by extensive mylonitization. Chemical analyses and other data indicate that the mylonites were derived chiefly from a dark quartz diorite, and to a lesser extent from a paler quartz monzonite, without much mixing of the two source materials. The mylonite zones were intruded by the quartz monzonite and probably by the quartz diorite. Possibly the main mass of mylonite was formed by the crushing of a barely consolidated upper portion of a quartz diorite pluton, as one or more tectonic episodes during the general period of plutonic intrusion.

* * *

Bubbles will join Betsy in the museum. Bubbles is the nickname for the skull of a giant pig. The scientific name for Bubbles is *Archaeotherium Ingens*. It lived about 30 million years ago, during the Oligocene epoch, in the swampy plains of what is now Nebraska. Bubbles was discovered in the summer of 1947 by Ray Alf, accompanied by Peccary men Ferris Pritchard, Malcolm McKenna, George Caulfield and the late Bruce Ames.

1949

Ray joins the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP). Founded in 1940, the society represents professionals, students, artists, preparators and others interested in VP. The society is organized exclusively for educational and scientific purposes. The object of the society is to advance the science of vertebrate paleontology and to serve the common interests and facilitate the cooperation of all persons concerned with the history,

evolution, comparative anatomy, and taxonomy of vertebrate animals, as well as field occurrence, collection, and study of fossil vertebrates and the stratigraphy of the beds in which they are found. The society is also concerned with the conservation and preservation of fossil sites.

* * *

Dwight Taylor graduates from Webb and becomes the second of Ray's students to go on and become a famous paleontologist.

A sign of the growing popularity of the Peccary Society at Webb was that from 1949 to 1963, the Peccary Society had its own section in the school yearbook *El Espejo* complete with photos and text. Ray's students entered the Westinghouse Science Talent Search of America and soon had the best record of any school, public or private, west of the Mississippi River. Dwight Taylor '49 was Webb's first winner in 1949 for his study on modern mollusks from Nantucket Island. Part of his award was a trip to the White House to meet President Eisenhower.

1950

September 14, 1950, was a day that changed Robert Hefner's life forever. As Hefner later notes in his book *The Grand Energy Transition*, "It was on that day that I had my first *Eureka!* moment." The 15-year-old Webb student Robert Hefner goes with Ray Alf's biology class at Webb to a small pond near the campus where they collect a bucket of pond water. Hefner writes that Ray told the class "a microcosm of all life was in one drop of pond water." Hefner says, "We brought it into our basement laboratory where he taught how to make slides with one drop of his treasured pond water to view under high-powered microscopes. The depths of that life-changing experience evoked within me a message far beyond my 15 years. It served to guide me in my quest for understanding of energy within civilization." That evening, Hefner wrote the following in his biology notebook:

"On Thursday, September 14, I reached a new pinnacle of experience. It was on this day that I bridged time and space with my microscope and saw with my own eyes a whole new world unfold before me. The hustle and bustle of the world we know was there. The age-old law of 'survival of the fittest' was there also."

Hefner writes in his book, "What was different about this tiny world, contained in one drop of pond water, was what made the 45 minutes so memorable to me. The difference was the amazing animal life, so small and every bit as capable to cope with the problems of its world as I am in mine. Here was a time for philosophical thought, for I had always considered myself superior to protozoa. What I had neglected to consider was the relativity of the protozoa to myself. It was not the mere view of this minute world that

was amazing, but it was the questions it raised in my mind. Here among the parameciums, rotifers, and Cyclops, I found what I considered a truly great experience and perhaps an answer to some of life's great problems."

1950

Frank Carson Knebel, Webb '51, remembers one of the items in Ray Alf's class published in the 2007 *Vintage Voice*. "An ascending wrought-iron spiral, a flat coil twenty feet-long, representing the known universe since its explosive beginning some two billion years ago. Elegantly scripted legends mark its milestones, far apart at first, then increasingly crowded as the pace of evolution quickens: the first nebulae, galaxies and planets, the appearance of primordial life in the oceans, the first vertebrates to colonize the land, and, ultimately, the emergence of the first primates. From within this many-branched family tree, there would ultimately develop, besides the great apes, *Homo neanderthalensis* (Neanderthal Man), *Homo sapiens* (Cro-Magnon Man), and, finally, doubly-wise man, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, us. According to Science, we are the last of our kind, the single surviving species of genus *Homo*. According to classic Christian theology, it is through one of us that God has chosen to jump-start a faltering creation. Truly, we have our work cut out for us. At the tip of the spiral, a final signpost notes the passage of some seventeen thousand years since the first Cro-Magnon shamans carried flaring torches deep in the Stygian blackness of European caves to paint Edenic masterpieces of sympathetic magic on their walls. This currently open-ended period is represented by a thin layer of dust, easily blown away."

Frank Carson Knebel. "Classes in this remarkable environment with this even more remarkable man were a true adventure and challenge, and our days spent peering through high-powered microscopes at the teeming primordial life forms, freshly dipped from the school Koi pool, would arouse both instructor and student to new heights of enthusiasm. Even the simplest of animate creatures were seen as rife with cosmic overtones. 'The secret of life,' Dr. Alf would proclaim at least once a day, 'is in POND WOTAH!' An intensely creative academic, he would, for example, without losing a sentence in his lecture, illustrate the principle of brachiation (the use of the gibbon's long arms for swinging through the trees) with a spontaneous leap toward the low pipe-lined ceiling where he would casually chin himself with one hand."

1951

Webb student Allen Lovekin (Webb '52) recalls that "Ray was having difficulty sharing some of the more abstruse concepts of advanced math. He had developed the habit of awakening sleepy students by leaping from the floor to a waterpipe just below the ceiling of his basement classroom. He would swing from one arm, stroking his chest with the other while making apelike sounds. His implications about our intellect was clear. Some

of us failed the course even so. But much more clear was his facial expression on that morning when the radiant-heating system was turned on and his favorite swinging pipe was hot.”

1952

“One October morning when Ray's troops were combing Red Rock Canyon, Dave's encounter with a *Merychippus* maxillary produced in him a profound epiphany. Burning questions arose. What did these teeth masticate? How long did this animal live? Why did it die? Where is the rest of it? Why did it have three toes? Are we sure it really had three toes? That desert day witnessed the birth of a paleobiologist.” David Webb, Webb '53.

* * *

The 1952 *Biology Notebook* of Dick Lynas says that on 9/19/52 they collected and looked at “pond wotah” from the lower pond, and on 9/20/52 they collected from the upper pond. Lynas recalls that on the facing page of these notes is one of Ray's favorite quotes from M.R. Cohen:

“And our view of the human scene becomes narrow, unilluminated, and passionate if we do not rise above its immediate urgency circumstances and see it in its cosmic roots and backgrounds.”

Dick notes that “I don't recall having any deep philosophical ‘Aha moments’ like other students of Ray. But his progression of the ‘Crises of Life’ have stuck with me, especially the crisis of a ‘Tube within a Tube.’ The way he laid out the sequential and logical steps involved in evolution has influenced the way I think about most everything in life.”

1953

SVP News Bulletin, Number 38, June. Barstow. “Ray Alf reports that they have been collecting nearly every weekend at Barstow. Webb School had the honor of visits from the following SVP members: Ted Downs, D.E. Savage, J.A. Shotwell, G. Edward Lewis and Malcolm McKenna.”

* * *

David Webb and Grant Meyer graduate from Webb and becomes the third and fourth of Ray's students to go on and become a famous paleontologist.

* * *

Few Webb students knew that Ray financed many of the Peccary trips himself. It was something he never mentioned to students. Whenever Ray used one of Dr. Webb's

vehicles Ray had to pay him 7¢ a mile. If a student couldn't pay and Ray thought he should go on a trip, somehow it happened.

Dick Lynas '55 discovered this while working in the archives a few years after Ray's death. He says "I know because I was one of those students and I'm forever grateful to Ray." Dick says "I'm sure that Ray had been doing this for some time. I went on the summer 53 trip. I don't know if we paid him a small amount or nothing. But I think that he normally charged \$500 for the 6 week summer trip."

1954

SVP News Bulletin. Number 40 February, 1954- Chadron Anthills and Brontotheres (results of 1953 summer trip)

At Claremont, Ray Alf has been working diligently on his recently acquired microfauna from a Chadron "ant hill" locality; the collection includes about three thousand well preserved teeth, and about fourteen hundred seeds. He has identified at least 7 genera of rodents, 5 genera of insectivores, 2 artiodactyls, at least 2 carnivores, 2 or 3 lagomorphs, 100 snails including 4 genera, and 2 types of lizards. Two more Titanotheres skulls were collected from the same area. (Richard and Prudence)

**SVP News Bulletin. Number 41 June, 1954- SVP
Webb School, Claremont**

The writer and Dr. Howard were fortunate enough to spend a stimulating day with Ray Alf, at Claremont, and were given a private showing of the well organized museum Ray has developed. We certainly believe that all S.V.P. visitors to California should try to see Ray's museum and witness the spirit and interest he transfers to the many young boys that are lucky enough to be associated with him at Webb School. Just before our visit Ray had returned from a profitable conference with Bob Wilson and E.C. Galbreath, at K.U., and tells us he received lots of valuable assistance on his remarkable new Chadron microfossil discoveries.

**SVP News Bulletin. Number 42 October, 1954- 1954 Summer Trip
Webb School, Claremont**

Ray Alf writes as follows: "Our five-week summer trip with six boys proved very successful. We now have enough material to assemble a complete brontothere skeleton from the Chadron formation near Orella, Nebraska. Since getting back I have spent most of my time on the microfauna from the Chadron formation from the same locality and have added about 10,000 teeth to last year's collection."

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Patrick Muffler '54, wins the second of the prestigious Westinghouse Science awards for his study of the mounted skeleton of an oreodont.

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Ray had a spontaneous sense of humor that often stunned his class. Dick Lynas '55 recalls that once Ray surveyed a brutally bad frog dissection job made by one of his students. Ray looked at the frog with a prolonged seriousness and then all of a sudden pulled out a hammer and smashed what was left of the frog into oblivion. The whole class was left speechless.

1955

SVP News Bulletin. Number 45 October, 1955- 1955 Summer Trip, PE Fossils

Ray Alf has reported the distinctive honor of having one of his boys, David Fleishhacker, win the Westinghouse National Championship on the basis of original mounting and display of the Oreodon-Eporeodon transition. David will go to Princeton this fall. Another major hit for Ray was the discovery during Easter of a fossil jellyfish and worms near the bottom of the Unkar group of the Proterozoic in the Grand Canyon, thus adding the world's oldest fossils to their collection. Ray took seven Webb School boys on the annual summer expedition for five weeks to Wyoming, South Dakota and Nebraska. A brontothere skull has been prepared as well as a nearly complete skeleton of Dinictis.

* * *

On an Easter trip to the Grand Canyon, Ray Alf takes 10 students to the Grand Canyon as part of his "History of Life Course." They find fossilized prints of worms and jellyfish in what may be the earliest traces of animal life ever found on earth. The group hiked 5 ½ miles down the Kaibab Trail from the South Rim of the canyon to study fossils of algae in the deep sedimentary deposits. These are the pre-Cambrian deposits and represent the Proterozoic Era of geologic history, known among paleontologists for their almost total lack of animal fossils.

Ray spotted a piece of quartzite that had broken off a ledge and split. One half had impressed in it what looked like the print of a small fried egg. On the other half of it was a raised lump matching it perfectly. Across the face of both were tiny ripple marks.

Ray is quoted in the Progress Bulletin on 5/12/55 as saying " If jellyfish and worms occurred at the bottom of this series, we must figure back much further to allow for the development of animal life to this point. These traces force us to realize that the origin of animal life on earth goes further back than many had dared to think."

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David Fleischhacker '55 is the third Webb student to win the Westinghouse Science award for his study of the evolution of the oredont in three ways.

* * *

Art Cokey, with Bill Webb one of the two students to go fossil hunting with Ray Alf in 1937, creates a film experiment called *Gumbasia* (in homage to Walt Disney's *Fantasia*) influenced by his professor Slavko Vorkapich at USC. After the *Gumbasia* project, Clokey and his wife Ruth come up with the clay character Gumby. The character Gumby and his horse Pokey become a familiar presence on American television. They have their start on the *Howdy Doody Show* and later get their own series *The Adventures of Gumby*. The characters enjoy a renewal of interest in the 1980s when American actor and comedian Eddie Murphy parodied Gumby in a skit on *Saturday Night Live*. In the 1990s *Gumby: The Movie* was released, sparking even more interest.

The Society of Vertebrate Paleontology had their annual meeting in Los Angeles and many SVP members came out to Claremont to see the museum. George Gaylord Simpson from the American Museum of Natural History in New York, at the time the world's most renowned mammalian paleontologist, visited the museum and viewed the collections.

Impressed by the museum and what Ray had accomplished, Simpson later remarked "Mr. Alf is as far as I know unique among teachers at the high school level in that he has for many years carried on a very active paleontology program. His collecting with his students has been of professional grade and has led not only to the building up of a splendid teaching collection but also to the discovery of specimens of great scientific research interest. Mr. Alf has also inspired his students with the fascination of paleontology and geology, and some outstanding young paleontologists entered this profession because of Alf's teaching."

* * *

By the mid 1950s, Ray's teaching, collecting, mentoring and research activities started to garner enthusiastic acclaim from many quarters. His trips were much more than just collecting fossils. Rather, they were intense bonding experiences as well as a time of intense personal reflection and self-discovery for students. As Ray often said, "Every day is a test of a man's character" and the peccary trips became an excellent testing ground of character.

Thompson Webb said "Peccary trips have been the apparent turning point in the lives of many boys who had previously lacked motivation in their student careers. These trips have been inspiring experiences, enough to give them new direction and vigor to their work upon returning to school."

John Pettley, a Webb School faculty member of this era, provided a perspective on Ray's work in a booklet he wrote titled "How Science Came Alive at an Independent School." In the booklet he describes ray as "A man whose whole life is devoted to life itself. A man whose life charges the lives of so many with the spark of living to the full. A man who gives to Mankind the unsurpassable gift of innumerable good minds in pursuit of truth for its own sake. Few have seen so clearly into the past and sensed the universal design. No man is more deserving acclaim and gratitude."

SVP News Bulletin. Number 46 February, 1956- New Museum, PC Fossils

We of southern California are extremely proud to announce a major step in the advancement of V.P. in the West. Ray Alf of the Webb School in Claremont just informed us by phone (we hope to have more details for next issue) that the school's board has agreed to the building of a museum to house Ray's fine collection of fossil and recent specimens, to be named appropriately the Raymond M. Alf Museum, designed by the well known artist, Millard Sheets, with the viewpoint of artistic and educational presentation. Ray will be in charge of course and will be able to continue adding to the collection in the same manner as he has done before. Ray also was considerably excited over his plan to fly to Berkeley (via piloting by Malcolm McKenna, a former student of Ray's) at the invitation of the University of California Paleontology Department – purpose is to carry on cooperative and he hopes conclusive study of the remarkable “jellyfish” and “worm” fossils he retrieved from Unkar of the Grand Canyon.

SVP News Bulletin. Number 48 November, 1956- 1956 Summer Trip

Ray Alf writes from Webb School that he and a party of 17 students had an exciting time with the contents of a Lance Creek anthill presented by Malcolm McKenna and Donald Savage. The excitement centered mostly around the fifty-one “beautiful” mammal teeth of Cretaceous “varmint” contained in the matrix. The ants had done yeoman service apparently, as in addition there were several hundred reptilian teeth and several kinds of snail shells.

* * *

The trademark phrase that Ray came to be known for was the Latin phrase “Laudate Deum” or “Praise God.” It was not first used by Ray but rather an Englishman who had graduated from California Institute of Technology in 1947 and then became a faculty member at Webb in 1949. His name was John Pettley.

Ray and Pettley were hiking out of the Grand Canyon early in the morning and sunrise began to erase the dark shadows deep within the canyon. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime awe-inspiring scenes. The sun was peaking over the rim and into the canyon. In response to this scene, John Pettley uttered “Laudate Deum!”

Ray never forgot that glorious moment and Laudate Deum became his favorite expression. It seemed to be the perfect expression to sum up how he greeted every day of life. He would use it thousands of times throughout the rest of his life to reward students for some discovery or action worthy of praise.

1957

SVP News Bulletin. Number 49 February, 1957- “Freddie”, Sandy Gifford

Ray Alf reports from Claremont: “The most important news from here is that Sandy Gifford is working full time in the museum devoting a large part of his time to cataloging. We are getting everything in good shape. We have an enthusiastic group of boys working

on different projects, and we have had several field trips to Barstow and one to Cadiz. My spare time has been devoted to the preparation and mounting of a nearly complete skeleton of Paleosyops (Freddie) from the Bridger near LoneTree, Wyoming. It is four feet high and seven feet long and is beautiful.”

SVP News Bulletin. Number 50 June, 1957- Tracks, Avawatz, Hypohippus, Bass Fm
Ray Alf spoke to me on the phone, relating several important discoveries his group had made: “From the Pliocene Avawatz, excellent footprints of two types of camels, antelope, three types of carnivores including Osteoborus (with bone). Also a partial skull of Bassariscus from Avawatz. From Barstow, a new species of Hypohippus! Again they have found new and better “Problematica” from the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Bass Formation, apparently representing some new invertebrate type. Also one of his students, a Mr. John Patrick, won honorable mention in Westinghouse talent search awards for his description of a Dinictis skeleton. Avawatz tracks found by Bo Baum, Hypohippus found by John Tuteur.

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John Patrick '57 receives Honorable Mention in the Westinghouse Science award for his study of the skull of an Oligocene saber toothed cat.

1958

SVP News Bulletin. Number 54 October, 1958- 1958 Summer Trip

Raymond Alf Museum of Natural History

I had my regular five-week camping trip with twelve boys this summer, and our collecting was fruitful in the Bridger Basin near Lonetree, Wyoming, the Tatman mountains south of Emblem, Wyoming, and in the White River near Orin, Wyoming, Crawford, Nebraska, and Scenic, South Dakota. We had the pleasure of field contact with Malc and Priscilla McKenna, Harold and Margaret Cook, and John Clark. I also enjoyed the S.V.P. Field Conference in Montana, and for that successful meeting, once again, congratulations to Bob Fields and Pop Kay. Raymond M. Alf.

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America launches first satellite into orbit.

1959

SVP News Bulletin. Number 56 June, 1959- Alf's work in general

Ray Alf and the ever-hospitable Webb School group were hosts of the Earth Science Section last month, and we were all delighted with a thorough coverage of “New Fossil Evidence Concerning Insectivore Interrelationships,” by Malcolm McKenna, one of Alf's

former students. Dale Russell of Berkeley came down with Mac for the Earth Science meeting. The group admired Alf's latest display piece – a very complete Dinictis skeletal mount. Alf's paper on the Avawatz mammal trackways came out in the last Southern California Academy of Science Bulletin. He and his students continue field work in the Avawatz-Barstow area.

SVP News Bulletin. Number 57 October, 1959- 1959 Summer Trip

Ray Alf took 16 boys with him on his regular, annual expedition to Wyoming, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Collecting was especially fruitful in the Brule formation near Oren, Wyoming, and Crawford, Nebraska. Ray has nearly completed the mount of a partial skeleton of a canid which had not yet been identified, but seems to be near ? Daphoenus.

* * *

The GHK Company is founded by Robert Hefner, Ray's student who was so greatly influenced when he was a student of Ray's at Webb in 1950. Under Robert's guidance, the privately owned GHK Company pioneered deep natural gas exploration in the Anadarko Basin. The firm's operations led to most of the technological innovation necessary to drill and produce the world's deepest and highest pressure natural gas wells, including many world records. In the late 1980's he led the GHK exploration team's analysis of the geologically and geophysically complex Ouachita fold and thrust belt that in 1997 resulted in the discovery of the Potato Hills Field – at the time one of the largest onshore natural gas discoveries in recent decades.

Jon Carroll, Webb '61, recalls the summer Peccary Trip. "I found a rhino that summer -- not a whole skeleton, just a skull, and missing the lower jaw. But still, I remember it. It's on my list of lifetime achievements. "A rhino, Carroll," said Mr. Alf. "Think of it. Roaming these hills. Think of it."

"Ray Alf was a devout Christian, and he believed that each of his finds, all of his bones, indicated the wonder and majesty of God's creative ability. He accepted Darwin and he accepted God, and saw no reason to think there was any conflict between the two. I suspect he thought of his walks through the badlands as a kind of worship. He made me see it that way too; I still do." Jon Carroll

1960

SVP News Bulletin. Number 59 June, 1960- Barstow Tracks, Bass Fm

Ray Alf has made a few additions to his collection of preCambrian “problematica” from the Bass formation. Near Barstow, Ray found what is probably the first mammal tracks (? camel) in that classical section. As usual he plans to take a group of boys to collecting grounds in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Nebraska this summer.

SVP News Bulletin. Number 60 October, 1960- Megahippus, Tedford’s visit to study Barstow fossils

“The month of August was pleasantly spent with Ray Alf curating the Barstow collection in the Webb School. One surprising outcome was a Barstovian record of the genus Megahippus which will be reported on shortly.” –Dick Tedford This is same specimen found by Tuteur in 1957. Ray Alf reports that he and his boys had another successful annual expedition to Wyoming, South Dakota, and Nebraska. He is especially delighted to have had Dick Tedford spend the month of August studying the Barstow fossils in the Ray Alf Museum. – John A. White

1961

SVP News Bulletin. Number 61 February, 1961- Amphicyon Tracks

“During Christmas vacation we had an especially memorable two-day trip in the company of Malcolm McKenna, Ray Alf, Jeff Smith, and Dick Lynas. On this trip the Upper Ricardo produced a nearly perfect skull of a gomphothere and welcome horse remains from a single locality. Later in the trip Ray showed us his mammal trackways from the middle part of the Barstow section using a flashlight (unavoidably, we arrived after dusk). But the side illumination of large dip slopes with a flashlight proved to be a novel way of prospecting for trackways. Most impressive were the huge tracks of a large carnivore (probably Amphicyon) which bounded across the Barstow mud flats taking an eight-foot stride! Ray is preparing to collect some of the better tracks from this site.” – Dick Tedford

SVP News Bulletin. Number 63 October, 1961- 1961 Summer Trip, UC Riverside, boys Webb collection, Harvard sabbatical
University of California at Riverside

Dick Tedford has just returned from Australia. He says his biggest news from Riverside is that they have acquired a major part of the Ray Alf Collection – including all specimens not on exhibition and all of those now out on loan. This is the first of two sales of fossils to UCR by Alf

Webb School, Claremont, California

Raymond Alf reports that he had another successful field trip this summer, conducting about 30 boys through Wyoming, South Dakota and Nebraska. He met Dr. Simons and his party en route and was glad to see some of his former students in the group. He also met Dr. McKenna and his party in Northern Colorado. Mr. Alf expects to spend this year at the Museum of Comparative Zoology.

* * *

Harvard University honored Ray with a Distinguished Secondary School Teaching Award, accompanied by a check for \$1,250. Ray was also named a Research Fellow in Vertebrate Paleontology at Harvard and took a one-year sabbatical leave from Webb to study at the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge.

It is an amusing coincidence that the Spring before Ray came to Harvard, Dr. Albert Romer, professor emeritus of zoology at Harvard University and past president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, recalls the following. "The Harvard Committee on Teaching thought it would be an excellent idea to give some recognition to first rate secondary school teachers. They sent out a questionnaire to Harvard students to recommend who they thought had been outstanding secondary school teachers. They got a large list and they started boiling it down. They got it boiled down ways, then, they started writing around to get letters of recommendation and so forth. They finally boiled down to four men who were invited to come for a special ceremony in the Spring at Harvard. Ray was one of the four men they chose from all over the country."

* * *

Thad Smith, Webb '56, carries on museum activities while Ray is away.

1962

SVP News Bulletin. Number 65 June, 1962- Alf in Texas with McKenna

Malcolm McKenna has been busy with exhibition work and studies of various insectivores, but in late January he managed to get away to Texas for a delightful week in the early Tertiary of the Big Bend with Jack Wilson, Ross Maxwell, Cader Shelby, Ray Alf, and George Whitaker. Mr. Alf was almost the only successful fossil collector on the expedition, but what lovely Paleocene fossils! Ray found a few good Tiffanian sites in the Black Peaks Formation in the Big Bend area of Texas; Ray's Annex, Ray's Bonebed East, Ray's Bonebed West, TMM 40535, 40536, and 40537.

SVP News Bulletin. Number 66 October, 1962- 1962 Summer Trip

Raymond Alf Museum of Natural History

Ray reports a fruitful trip with sixteen boys to the Bridger Basin, Big Horn Basin, Orin, Wyo., Crawford, Nebr., and Scenic, South Dakota. While in the field his party met and worked with Elwyn Simons and party from Yale, and visited with Harold and Margaret Cook from Agate, Nebraska.

* * *

Ray publishes a research paper describing a new species of Oligocene rodent from Nebraska based on his one year sabbatical at Harvard.

Thompson and Vivian Webb retire from running the Webb School but maintain living at their home on the campus.

1963

SVP News Bulletin. Number 69 October, 1963- 1963 Summer Trip

The Webb School

We, twenty-six strong, had our usual fruitful collecting in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Outstanding Eocene gems include a complete uncrushed skull and jaws of Hyopsodus and a beautiful palate of Plageomene. The educational value of our trip was made superlative by distinctive lectures on geology and paleontology by McKenna, Radinsky, Ostrom, Simons, and Grant Meyer. We are deeply grateful to them. --Raymond M. Alf

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President Kennedy is assassinated on November 23.

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Fletcher Strickler, Webb '67, recalls that Ray never wanted to fail a student by his test performance. "One student in my freshman biology class with Ray had performed disastrously on a test. Ray asked him, "How do you spell your name?" In a halting, meek voice the student spelled his name. Cheerfully, Ray said, 'Correct! B minus!' We all loved Mr. Alf."

Chuck Ensey, Webb '67, recalls "That biology class was a great one. Of course we dissected frogs and learned all about anatomy, but the more vivid memories are of Alf pretending to be the first amphibian fighting for air and freedom on land. Or re-enacting many of the other crucial steps in evolution that made it all seem so real and captured the grandiosity of it all. One of his great lessons was "the fighting spirit" showing those that try hard are rewarded. I can't hope to summarize all he taught in a few words, but the wonder, the awe and the beauty of nature was clear in all he did. Like almost all classes at Webb, he taught a tough class, you really had to learn and study hard, but the grading was fair and straight forward. Looking back I am remembering how much we actually did study: hours were set aside for homework and reading and I am not sure that happens all that much in public schools today, especially now when kids have so many other

distractions. I was well prepared for college and life in general thanks to Webb. Everyone looks back to their best teachers that inspired them, and Ray was at the head of the class for many of us. He had a joy and love of life that was contagious. Thanks, I know many others will share similar stories with you. Chuck Ensey.”

“Ray was rather old when we attended Webb, but no other teacher had his vitality or enthusiasm. I am not a particular religious person, but looking back now it amazes me that there was never ANY controversy about God and evolution with Ray.” Chuck Ensey

1964

SVP News Bulletin. Number 71 June, 1964- Pending 1964 Summer Trip

Webb School. The Webb School Peccary Society Summer Field Trip, June 23 through July 30, will cover a route of about 6,000 miles in the western United States; material will be collected for study in the Museum of the Webb School. The brochure that announces this trip is illustrated with photographs of the leaders, Ray Alf, Dick Tedford, and John Iversen. The photographs show these gentlemen in their customary field attire and general field condition and are intended to discourage all but the hardiest of students. Ray Alf.

* * *

Ray had a great sense of humor. Steve Boyer '64 recalls stopping for lunch at a Red Rooster on a trip back from Barstow. “We would all be sitting at a table eating away and suddenly a high-pitched voice would say something in Chinese. We would all look and there would be Ray, having just chewed up a chocolate bar, smiling with an open mouth, all his teeth hidden behind brown goo. He was a little kid who in some very nice ways never grew up.”

* * *

John Fraim, Webb '67, comes to the Webb School from Dayton, Ohio. His father Jack Fraim was a graduate of Webb School Bell Buckle. He recalls the contrast between the biology lab of his high school in Dayton and Mr. Alf's class. “The biology lab of my school in Ohio was large with a shiny linoleum floor and bright overhead florescent lights and expensive microscopes lined up on polished black granite work desks. Bottles full of preserved specimens were neatly lined up on the surrounding shelves of the lab like ranks of a precision marching band. In contrast, Ray's classroom was in a small, dark classroom that seemed like the basement storage room of someone's home. A few florescent lights hug from the low ceiling filled with pipes that made squeaking noises like the sound of a small animal in distress. Ray's desk had piles of papers overflowing from it. In the dimness around the room you could barely make out skeletons, rocks, boxes and jars stuffed onto shelves. The strong smell of formaldehyde lingered in the

damp air. The Alf Museum was a few years away from opening and the classroom had become a holding area for exhibits that would eventually go into the museum.”

Fraim recalls his first day in Ray’s class. “Everyone sat around the table in the middle of the classroom waiting for Dr. Alf to appear. Then, we could hear what sounded like an excited monkey and Ray came into the class bent over in the stoop of the primate, quickly looked at the assembled group and then jumped up and grabbed one of the pipes in the ceiling and began swinging from it with one hand and pounding his chest with his other hand, making more monkey-like sounds.”

“When his entry performance was completed, Ray went around the table and welcomed each of us to his class like a coach welcoming new members onto a team. During that amazing year in his class, he would often swing from the pipes in the ceiling, making his monkey sounds. All of this was to remind us how close all of us were to the animal kingdom. Even us at Webb where we wore blue blazers with the school insignia on them to dinner every night. The school motto was written in Latin on a patch on the blazers. ‘Leaders not men’ it said in gold thread under the school logo. More and more, I later came to identify the phrase with Ray. Men was something we would all become. It was simply part of life’s evolution. But Ray was out to make leaders not just men.”

“During the school year,” Fraim recalls, “I learned that much of the stuff around the basement classroom I first thought was little more than junk was actually priceless fossils that had been written up in the most prestigious science journals in the world. Ray used many of them as lesson props to help him make dramatic point about life. The skulls around the room had names like “Marge,” “Betsy” and “Harold” and Ray would often pull them out of the darkness and talk to them as if they were his living pets. To Ray, of course they were.”

1965

**SVP News Bulletin. Number 74 June, 1965- Pending 1965 Summer Trip
Webb School**

This summer’s paleontological field trip of the Peccary Society will pass through classic and to-be-discovered collecting sites in Utah, Wyoming, South Dakota and Nebraska. The leaders will be Donald Hooker, Dale Morton and Ray Alf. The following winter will be spent in assembling bones and writing appropriate songs to accompany and immortalize that work. --Ray Alf

**SVP News Bulletin. Number 75 October, 1965-1965 Summer Trip, New Museum
Building started
The Webb School**

The Peccary Society's summer trip was a very fruitful one. We made two outstanding finds: a primate skull from the Bridger Formation, and a Pseudocynodictis from Crawford, Nebraska. We enjoyed meeting up with Elwyn Simons, Grant Meyer and Peter Parks, from the Yale crew, out in the field, and also our visit with Margaret Cook. While we were on our trip, the ground was broken and work begun on the new Raymond M. Alf Museum on the campus of Webb School.--Raymond M. Alf

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A proboscidean (elephant) partial skull found in Barstow by Webb School faculty member Ken Monroe. Webb students assist in the collection and preparation of the specimen.

* * *

John Fraim '67 recalls the winning football year of the Webb School Gauls. Led by a small, incredible coach named Les Perry, the varsity football team plowed through opponents winning one game after another until it found itself in the CIF playoffs for southern California. John was the starting running back on the football team. "One of the things that I will always remember was how Ray made all the football games and how he was always on the sidelines and cheered us on with Latin and Chinese phrases and with such enthusiasm he might have been another coach. "Often he was right over me when I was knocked out of bounds carrying the football, helping me up and pushing me back into the game yelling 'Laudate Deum' at me."

1966

SVP News Bulletin. Number 76 February, 1966- Goler, Alf Museum's New Building
Malcolm McKenna has been hard at work on a variety of projects, notably the mammal classification and several small papers on camels, rodents, insectivores, and West Coast early Tertiary faunas. An attempt in early January to collect more Paleocene mammals from the Mojave Desert resulted in little more than a transitory sun tan, but there is still hope that someday someone will stumble on a concentration out there. One of the highlights of Malcolm's trip west was to see the Raymond Alf Museum under construction at Webb School. Alf's collections, made year after year at the same localities, certainly demonstrate that we will never run out of fossils no matter how much we collect at single sites!

SVP News Bulletin. Number 77 June, 1966- Pending 1966 Summer Trip
Webb School, Claremont

Jeffrey Smith, Kenneth Monroe, and I will lead the Peccary Society on this summer's paleontological field trip through the Mojave Desert, Dinosaur National Monument, carious places in Wyoming, the Black Hills and Big Badlands of South Dakota, and the

Agate quarries of Nebraska. All members are invited to stop by and visit our museum on their way to/from the S.V.P. meeting in Berkeley in November.--Raymond Alf

1967

SVP News Bulletin. Number 81 October, 1967- 1967 Summer Trip, studying displays at other museums

Webb School, Claremont

Our summer trip was fruitful, made the more so by excellent lectures on geology and paleontology by Dave Whistler. Dan Fisher. One of the Peccary men, won a regional award in the Ford Future Scientists of America program on a detailed study of a Merycoidodon skull. After returning from the summer trip, I spent a few days in Mexico City observing displays in museums, particularly the National Museum of Anthropology, to get ideas for displays in our museum. Raymond M. Alf

SVP News Bulletin Number 80 June, 1967- Museum opened, Tecopa Tracks

Webb School, Claremont

In February the Earth Science Section of the Southern California Academy of Sciences met at the Webb School. This was the first official function to take place in the new Raymond Alf Museum. Axelrod is enthusiastic about our new discovery of a dicot flora from the Barstow formation of the Mojave desert. We have recently found a new location for camel footprints near Tecopa south of Death Valley. Ray Alf

* * *

Daniel Fisher graduates from Webb and becomes the fifth of Ray's students to become a famous paleontologist.

Ray receives the Ford Future Scientists of America Teacher Award.

* * *

Ray and Grant Meyer, one of his top students, reflect on the nature of a Peccary Trip in a piece titled "What Is A Peccary Trip" Ray's book of writings *Footprints on the Sands of Time*. The date they created this reflection is not given but Meyer talks about the Peccary trip over a period of three decades so this year is a likely year. However, the year they wrote this doesn't really matter as their reflections are not confined to any particular year.

"Knowing yourself, knowing the land and knowing the past" have become the broad outward aims of the Peccary Trip they write. "Each expedition, like each student, has its own personality. From 13 to 22 students and two to four adults travel approximately 6,000 miles in 5 weeks through the western United States primarily in search of fossil

remains from the last 100 million years. The expedition emphasizes student involvement. Everyone is important and will be taught what he or she needs to know while in the field.”

But these are only the outward part of the trips seen by those who have not participated in Peccary Trips before. Grant Meyer and Ray offer a collection of other aspects of the Peccary Trips. These are the aspects of Peccary Trips that loom below the surface of the trips in much the same way that the fossils searched for on the trips exist below the surface of the earth. A plethora of images are offered by them of these “below the surface” aspects of the trips.

Geological history of the western United States. Plate tectonics and mountain building. Western history and trail routes. Indian traditions and folklore. Learning about birds, insects, plants. Why it’s necessary to conserve natural resources. Learning how to read topographic and geologic maps. “A Peccary Trip is a time for living outdoors,” they write. “Cooking over a fire, swimming in a river, bathing in an ice-cold creek, seeing beautiful scenery, visiting historical sights, touring National Parks, riding a horse, shooting the rapids of the Green River, watching a sunset alone on a hilltop, counting the stars in a black star, listening to the owl’s call and coyotes howl and becoming aware of the joys of nature all around you.”

They continue writing about the hidden aspects of Peccary Trips. Learning the differences between a fossil tooth and a plant seed. Seeing the majestic scenery of the west and learning why it was formed. Standing in the rain, holding a tarp over twenty-three barbecuing chickens. The thrill of getting out a skeleton you found after digging all day. Being the first to jump in a 40-degree river at 6 am. Crawling for an hour and a half on sharp concretions looking for your fiftieth tooth and finding it. Climbing above timberline and finding yourself alone with Bighorn sheep. Carrying thirty pounds of water a mile to plaster a skeleton you found. Eating pork chops and pancakes for breakfast in the Tetons. Knowing the next mailstop is only two days away. Vowing to come back to all of this sometime and stay longer.

1968

SVP News Bulletin. Number 82 February, 1968- Barstow and Tecopa Tracks
Webb School, Claremont

Since the SVP meeting, we have had two short field trips. The five-day Thanksgiving trip took us to southern Nevada for a Paleozoic invertebrate collection and to Tecopa for camel footprints. Some of the camel footprints are very large – measuring eight inches long and six inches wide (Sperry Wash site). We also had a two-day trip to Barstow,

where we got footprints of camel and cat and added to our leaf collection. --Raymond M. Alf

SVP News Bulletin. Number 83 June, 1968- Barstow, Gomphothere and Tecopa Tracks (Sperry Wash)

Webb School, Claremont

During the winter and spring months we had some fruitful trips collecting footprints and trackways from the Barstow and Tecopa areas. The prints include antelope, carnivore, two or three different camels, and probably Gomphotherium. We have also added a few leaves to the Barstow flora. During spring recess we were successful in collecting problematica from the Grand Canyon, reptile trackways from Seligman, Arizona, a dinosaur footprint from Kanab, Utah, and a couple of amphibian footprints from Cameron, Arizona. We are planning the usual trip this summer to Wyoming, South Dakota, and Nebraska. --Raymond M. Alf

* * *

The formal dedication ceremonies for the Raymond Alf Museum are on November 3, 1968. The main speaker was Dr., Alfred Romer, professor emeritus of zoology at Harvard University and past president and board chairman of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The museum was designed by renowned California artist Millard Sheets. Ray designs and constructs displays for the new two-story facility. In the upstairs Hall of Life, Ray develops the exhibit theme of "From Stars to Early Civilization," a journey through the history of life on earth. On the lower floor, Ray builds displays for the many tracks collected, calling this space the Hall of Footprints. He also expands his efforts to provide public tours of the museum.

* * *

Martin Luther King is assassinated in Memphis on April 4.

1969

SVP News Bulletin. Number 86 June, 1969- Korber at museum, Easter Trip, Gomphothere Tracks

Webb School, Claremont

We had a successful eight day trip during spring recess, collecting footprints in the Coconino, Moenkopi and Muddy Creek Formations. On weekends, we have been working on the Gomphotherium trackway at Barstow (Brown and Korber were doing a lot of it). Many visitors came to see the museum: Kiwanis Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, and many, many classes from the elementary schools in the

valley. Al and Libby Korber are doing noble work in establishing order in the museum. --
Ray Alf

* * *

Randal Davies, Webb '70, recalls an interesting story about Ray involved with track. "During my junior year at Webb in 1969, I was on the track team and ran the high hurdles. At one track meet, I completed a race behind another runner that I thought I should beat. I felt bad because team points were awarded to the top five finishers, and each place lower was one point less for the team. Afterwards, when I learned that there were on only four entries in the 880 race, I decided to enter because I would be assured of making up the missed point for the team."

"This was my first 880 race, which is two laps around the track, or a half mile. The race started and I discovered that two of the runners were very fast, and they left the other three of us far behind right away. But the slower three of us headed out at a reasonable clip. As we completed 1-1/2 laps, I was feeling pretty confident because I was managing to stay just ahead of the other two runners. I thought that all I needed to do was hold my position and I would finish third - how great would that be!! But then, as we rounded the final corner of the last lap, the other runners passed me - one, two - like I was standing still. I sped up and tried to keep up with them, but it was no use. I ran as fast as I could, until I was completely exhausted. Panting for breath, I struggled to cross the finish line, and collapsed on the track. I had finished in last place by about 50 yards."

"While I was laying there exhausted and embarrassed, Ray Alf ran over to me, looked down, and yelled "Great job, Davies!! Great work!!" He helped me up, and was as excited and supportive as if I had set a world record. Until then, I did not think that he even knew my name, but he was there watching the whole thing. He knew that I had given everything I had, and that was what counted. What an amazing man. I felt good that I got the point for the team, and good that I tried so hard. And, I will never forget the lesson I learned that day from Ray Alf. There are too few people in the world like him."

1970s

After his retirement, some of Alf's former students run the museum on a temporary basis.

1970

SVP News Bulletin. Number 88 February, 1970- Gomphothere Tracks, 1969

Summer Trip

Webb School, Claremont

During the past year we have been working on excavating a Gomphotherium trackway from one of our Barstow localities. The 16-foot trackway has been reassembled and is on

display in the Hall of Footprints in the Museum. Last year's summer trip was one of the largest (21 students) and most successful. In addition to our usual hunting grounds we were invited to a ranch near Lost Spring, Wyoming, where we collected a complete Subhyracodon skull and jaws. During the winter we hope to expand our collections from West Barstow. --Al Korber.

* * *

Ray Alf is the commencement speaker for the Webb School class of 1971. In the speech Ray tells the students, "In a few minutes you will hatch. May you come out of our shells as sons, not as animals or machines or governments, but may you come out as sons of men, of angels and of God."

1971

Vivian Webb passes away.

Ray receives an honorary doctorate degree from Claremont Graduate School and Lewis and Clark College in Oregon.

1972

SVP News Bulletin. Number 95 June, 1972- Ray and Korber
Webb School, Claremont

Ray Alf reports that he is being kept busy each day leading tours in the Raymond M. Alf Museum, but did take time to visit Hawaii for the Cordilleran Section Meeting of the Geological Society of America. Now back in this country, Ray plans to maintain his former busy schedule while Al Koerber and Dan Guthrie lead the traditional summer trip of the Peccary Society (Ray did not go).--Ray Alf

SVP News Bulletin. Number 96 October, 1972- Leggewie to Africa, 1972 Summer Trip (Ray did not go)

Ray Alf Museum, Webb School

Curator Ray Alf worked throughout the summer, showing people through the museum. The number of visitors since the museum opened is nearing 10,000! This is a real contribution to the Pomona Valley and the wider community. Orange County's Education Department will list the museum this year in its directory of important points of interest to be visited by public school students. In June, Ray received his third honorary doctrine, this time in pedagogy from his alma mater, Doane College. Al Korber headed our Peccary trip this summer, assisted by Biology Professor Dan Guthrie, Chairman, Joint Science Department of Scripps, Claremont Men's and Pitzer Colleges. In addition to the enthusiastic help of his wife, Libby, Al had a staff of four college students. Fourteen casts of paleontological materials were brought back for the museum. New fields for digging

were made available at Crawford, Nebraska, for next year's expedition. Variety of activity included back-packing during the 5,000-mile trip to the Midwest, which took 5 ½ weeks. Constance Vadheim and Robin Leggewie helped in the museum with preparations and tours. Leggewie then left for a thirty day field trip to Zaire, Africa, and Constance is preparing to do graduate work in Anthropology at Penn State.--Ray Alf

* * *

Ray's alma mater Doane College awarded Ray an honorary doctorate as an outstanding scholar and athlete.

1973

SVP News Bulletin. Number 97 February, 1973- Ray's South Africa Trip

Webb School

In November 1972, Ray Alf spent 10 days in South Africa where he made a very significant collection of the early PreCambrian of the Barberton Mountain area. This is the area that has produced the oldest known records of life on earth. Ray's collecting included specimens of bluegreen algae from the Threestruit Formation which is at least 3.46 billion years old. A side trip to the area north of Johannesburg produced specimens of three types of stromatolites. The trip was concluded with a visit to the Museum of Vertebrate Paleontology and a look at their excellent Triassic reptile collections.--Ray Alf

SVP News Bulletin. Number 99 October, 1973- Alf to Alaska, 1973 Summer Trip (Ray did not go)

Webb School, Claremont

Ray Alf made two short collecting trips this past summer (1973), one to Fairbanks, Alaska, to get material, mostly Bison crassicornis, from the permafrost, and one to South Dakota and Nebraska. Our Peccary Society field trip under the director of Art House and Bill Ripley went co-educational and proved smooth and successful. Connie Vadheim and Peter Anton took care of the museum during the summer and had it open to the public. They did noble work in conducting tours and working on new displays. Connie is now off to Penn State to complete her graduate work in Anthropology, and Peter is off to Harvard. --Raymond M. Alf

1974

Ray retires from teaching but remains active giving museum tours. He was still recognized as the curator and director of the museum but with emeritus status. It was somewhat awkward because the museum would not get a full-time director for three years.

He is named to the Hall of Fame of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for his running prowess.

Ray receives Outstanding Secondary Educators of America Award.

Ray is elected to honorary membership into the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, the only international association of vertebrate paleontologists.

Webb School builds a house for Ray and Pearl so that they could live on campus for as long as they wished. He would live in the home for 25 years. It was designed with a big window facing the hills to the north of the campus. During the years of his retirement, Ray would sit in front of the window for hours working on his meticulous drawings. If he needed inspiration, Ray once said “All I have to do is gaze at those beautiful hills.”

1975

SVP News Bulletin. Number 103 February, 1975- Ray and Rob Leggewie to Olduvai Gorge

Webb School

Ray Alf reports the last September he and Robin Leggewie visited Olduvai Gorge, and had the good fortune to meet Mary and Richard Leaky, and Dr. and Mrs. John Sharman of the British Institute of Archaeology and History. On the way home, Rob and Ray stopped in Paris and saw some of the original works of Georges Cuvier. In November (1974), Ray was asked to participate in a Science Symposium – Life: A Search for Understanding – sponsored for thousands of high school seniors, by the University of Northern Iowa (invitation from Ken DeNault ‘61). Ray notes that the October issue of Sunset Magazine ran a nice article on the Alf Museum. Ever busy, Ray appeared on a December 16 Channel 7 ABC News interview, “Interesting People of California”, and to top off the year, the Museum had the pleasure of a visit from the Elwyn Simons. --Ray Alf

* * *

Thompson Webb passes away.

Grant Meyer (Webb 1953, another former student of Ray) becomes the second director of the museum.

* * *

Faculty member Bill Ripley recalls a Peccary Trip to Barstow in the fall of the year. “That evening, Ray gave his star lecture and, as we bedded down, the heavens seemed to come alive as his words echoed across the eons of time. As dawn broke over the cool

desert sands the next morning, I turned over on my cot and a great panorama greeted me. Overhead, a large raven glided across the dim-lit sky. One could almost hear the wind flowing through his powerful wings. In a clearing a few bedrolls away, my eye caught a strange movement ... On the other side of a clearing was the figure of a man carrying a walking stick. I couldn't help wondering how many clearings around the world had heard the sound of his footsteps. How many hundreds of mornings had he greeted with delicate stride, empowering that body to greet still another sunrise in search of something beautiful and enabling that fighting heart to cry out each evening, 'Laudate Deum!' On that silent morning, I met the nature the culture and the man that is Ray Alf." Bill Ripley.

1977

**SVP News Bulletin. Number 111 October, 1977- Meyer Arrives June 1977, 1977
Summer Trip (Ray and Grant)**

Ray Alf Museum, Claremont. The staff of the Raymond Alf Museum was enlarged in June by the addition of Grant Meyer who took over duties as Curator. Ray Alf remains Director. The summer field season was a great success as Ray and Grant led a group of students to old Webb localities in Wyoming, South Dakota and Nebraska. Highlights of the trip were a complete skeleton of Tephrocyon and the marvelous hospitality offered the group by Lloyd Tanner, Dave Nixon and the University of Nebraska. Ray is busy this fall writing a book based on his fifty years teaching biology and Grant is presently snowed under with a sizable job of cataloging. (Grant Meyer)

* * *

Grant Meyer, Webb '53 and another student of Ray's, returns to Webb from Yale University to become the second director of the museum. Meyer had spent 14 years at the Peabody Museum at Yale directing their field operations in vertebrate paleontology. His work included overseeing expeditions in 13 countries where he made some spectacular finds.

For example, Meyer found the first specimen of the swift and gracile carnivorous dinosaur *Deinonychus* in Montana and a nearly complete skull of the early primate *Aegyptopithecus* in Egypt. Both of these discoveries had a profound impact on paleontological knowledge. He was considered one of the best field paleontologists in the United States and his return to Webb was a huge boost for the museum program.

1979

Ray receives the National Association of Geology Teachers Award for his teaching success in the earth sciences.

The museum is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation governed by its own board of trustees. This move opened up greater fundraising opportunities for the museum as well as sparking the expansion of outreach programs. The first task that Meyer and the new board faced was establishing an endowment to provide the much-needed financial base for the museum. The endowment drive was successful and the overall museum program was able to continue growing. Particularly successful was the public outreach program.

1981

Vivian Webb School for Girls founded.

Throughout the 80s, Grant Meyer organized many international tours for museum friends and supporters that were very successful. Trips were made to Africa, South America and Central America and Ray went on some of these trips. In addition, Meyer worked to modernize and expand exhibits in the Hall of Life. Some of the display cabinets were hand built by Ray with limited resources at the times. The exhibits also needed improved text and graphics. Other displays were crudely labeled wood pedestals with specimens perched on top.

All of this upgrading and change caused friction between Grant Meyer and Ray. Some of Ray's displays were removed and replaced with new ones. And the changes also meant that Ray would have to modify his "From Stars to Early Civilization" tour he had been giving for so many years.

The disagreements between Meyer and Ray finally came to a head and Ray no longer came down to the museum that bore his name even though he lived only a few hundred yards away.

1985

On Alumni Day, November 2, there is a program and tribute to Ray Alf's 80th birthday. Letters and tributes to Ray are on display. A sampling of them from his students is below.

"You have been, without question, one of the most moving forces in my life, one of the finest teachers I've ever had, and one of the best human beings I have ever known."

Thomas Kersten, M.D.

"Ray Alf was the first man who dramatically opened my eyes to not only the world of science but the reality beyond our 'view,' the reality of all that is more than meets the eye! I will never forget my own reaction to the drama of life I not only had never seen, but never dreamed of, as I first looked through my microscope into that drop of pond

water to find the busy everyday life and world of micro-organisms. I will also never forget my first observation of the ‘survival of the fittest’ as I watched, there before my own eyes, the slow moving amoeba surround and devour the unsuspecting, apparently stronger and faster moving paramecium.” Robert Hefner, Webb ’53.

“I’ll remember Ray Alf, not as the teacher who taught me biology or trigonometry – or even the wonders of the evolution of life on earth in that basement classroom next to the lower dorm – but as the man who taught me the excitement of learning. When you took his class, you sensed immediately that for Ray Alf teaching wasn’t an occupation. It was a mission, a calling in the most profound sense of the term.” Ted Harwood, Webb ’56.

“In you classes and on your Peccary trips, you opened my eyes to nature in all its dimensions. You left with me notions and ideals and principles that travel with me every day. You walk down every nature trail with me, every anticline, syncline and alluvial flood plain I look on, you are looking on too. You enter every museum I go into where there is a piece of the fossil record. I look forward to walking the South Rim trail in a few years with my two sons. You’ll be on that trip, Ray, down through the Kaibab formation, down the red, dusty trails you hiked fifty times or more, down to the Phantom Ranch and into a cool bunk at day’s end. My boys will thank you then, too, as I did thirty years ago.” Alex Veech, Webb ’57.

“I still remember pulling up to the old campsite late in the evening and spreading out our gear while you brewed up ‘a shot of hot’ and the smell of steaks cooking on the fire. Peccary trips were my first introduction to the great outdoors and I have never lost the sense of awe and wonder in the beauties of nature and the universe that you instilled in all of us. That communion with nature has continued in my life to this day and the curiosity about the origins of life and the workings of the universe that you awakened in the field and reinforced in your classes still drives me. I have never been a student of Zen but I am sure that you personify a Zen master in your influence on your unknowing acolytes, leading them to the voyage of self-discovery that takes the rest of a lifetime.” John Tuteur, Webb ’59.

* * *

The book *Footprints On The Sands Of Time: The Writings of Ray Alf* is published by the Alf Museum and edited by Lawrence McMillin and Gard Jameson.

1990

Grant Meyer resigns as director of the museum in December. Don Lofgren becomes the museum’s third director.

In the next few years, with its new director, the museum intensifies its effort to become accredited. The museum works to organize and document its very large specimen collection. Computer databases for accession, locality, and catalog files are developed, and over 100 metal storage cases are installed to house fossils.

Pearl Alf dies in her sleep on December 22.

1991

Don Lofgren, a PhD in paleontology from UC Berkeley was a full time curator in the Museum of Paleontology at UC Berkeley but the job was temporary so he was applying for available paleontology jobs. He applied for the position as director of the Alf Museum and in July was notified he got the position.

On the second day of his position as director of the museum he was surprised to learn that Ray lived on campus but had not been in the museum for years. Lofgren recalls that “I called Dr. Alf and he invited me up to his house later than day. As I made my way up the hill I wondered what he was like and why he didn’t come to the museum.”

The 85 year-old Ray Alf greeted Lofgren politely and ushered him into his living room where they talked a little about paleontology and UC Berkeley. Ray showed Lofgren a letter that he had received in the 1940s inviting Ray to come to UC Berkeley and study for a doctorate. Ray had earned that Lofgren had just arrived from Berkeley and pulled the old letter out of his file.

Lofgren remembers that day very well. “Our conversation was awkward as Ray was distant,” Lofgren says. “Something was weighing on his mind. In a short time he got right to it. He related his unhappiness as he described some events dealing with the museum that he was quite bitter about and that part of his life’s work was being destroyed.”

Then, Ray looked Lofgren straight in the eye and asked pointedly, “So what are YOUR plans for the museum?” As it was Lofgren’s second day at Webb he was not prepared to answer and he doesn’t recall what he said. “But the one thing I do distinctly recall,” he says, “was the cool reception I received from the museum founder that day.”

A couple of weeks later, Don Lofgren invited Ray down to the museum to talk some more and Ray explained why he was upset. There were a number of areas of disagreement. One was the destruction of the displays in the Hall of Life. Another was not being consulted about important museum issues. Another was not receiving income from the endowment gifts and not receiving adequate compensation for giving his fossil collections and other materials to the museum.

Behind much of this was the problem that Ray needed money because no retirement fund had been established while he taught at Webb. As a result, nearly all of Ray's income was from social security and this simply was not enough. This led to the idea of compensating Ray for his portion of the museum's collection. But it was very difficult to determine that value of Ray's portion of contributions to the museum. Three experts were consulted and they placed a low estimate of \$20,000 and this is what Ray received. But Ray thought this was too low and Don Lofgren agrees that it was too low.

All of this made Ray even more bitter than before and these problems weighed heavily on Ray's mind. However, Don Lofgren was persistent in meeting with Ray and as they met more and more the problems arose less frequently.

1992

Ray had settled into a routine in these twilight years of his life. On a typical day he took morning and afternoon walks with long-time faculty member Rick Whyte and Webb graduate '57. They would walk around the upper track and then down to the lower campus and the museum. Taylor Stockdale recalls that when he lived in the Kirkhill Dorm apartment in the early 90s "I would sit out on the patio with my coffee, and they would come by. We would chat for a few minutes and then they would move on with their walk."

Ray would shake hands or give hugs to all Webb faculty and staff he knew. On Thursday afternoons, Ray and Don Lofgren would meet for 90 minutes and talk about the museum. During this time, Lofgren asked Ray questions about the museum's history and collections.

Most of the rest of the time Ray spent in his home drawing at his desk in front of the large window that faced the hills. Any time a campus family member had a baby, Ray would draw a rose and give it to them as a way of offering his congratulations, welcoming the new child to the Webb community. Rick Whyte lived next door to Ray and often dropped in on him. And Ray did not have to worry about shopping for food as his meals were brought to him by the dining-hall staff.

But what brought Ray the most joy during these final years of his life were visits from his daughters Janet and Mimi as well as visits from alumni. He called all of his former students "the boys" whether they were from the class of 1939 or 1969. They would visit a few times a month and Ray would greet them with great exuberance like a long-lost brother.

* * *

Ray was also becoming more active in museum and Webb events. He liked to give tours of the museum on Webb's Alumni Day. Many alumni would appear at the front door of the museum before the tour. Ray would give them a memorable performance as he worked through his "From Starts to Civilization" tour corresponding to the specimens in the museum. Just like in the old days, Ray would beat his chest and throw back his head and laugh and recite his favorite poem about the dinosaurs.

Another thing he enjoyed doing was giving seniors a send-off speech before their annual trip to the Grand Canyon (for the boys) or Half Dome in Yosemite (for the girls). The seniors would gather on the museum steps and Ray would recite a passage or two from the Bible and then pump his fist into the sky and shout a few "hip-hip-hoorays" for the class. Over the years, this action had become Ray's trademark expression of his overwhelming exuberance for life. His actions would bring seniors to their feet cheering as they boarded the bus for their trip.

* * *

The Dean of Webb School, Randall Holdridge, brought Ray out Barstow to partake in a weekend alumni Peccary trip. One site visited was the rocky slope where the famous peccary skull of 1936 was found, the skull that really started the Peccary Society.

Don Lofgren recalls that as they overlooked the site, Ray called him aside and asked if he could gather "the boys" together to sing the Peccary Song. Everyone was gathered together and they sang the song. Everyone remembered the words.

Dick Lynas '55 recalls this trip. "I happened to be in that group, right next to Ray, and not having thought of those words for 30 years or so I felt a little panic rising. But magically, each word came to mind just as it was needed. Ray still had his beautiful tenor voice and it inspired us to sing in perfect pitch. It was the best rendition of the *Peccary Song* I ever heard. A picture of this is in the archives."

This was Ray's last Peccary trip as he was simply getting too old to travel anymore to his beloved Barstow badlands.

* * *

The Board of Trustees of the Alf Museum decided to formalize the Peccary Society concept by offering a series of activities for alumni and other museum supporters. They would be brought together on a regular basis to participate in short fossil collecting trips to Barstow and Arrow Canyon (Nevada) and long ones to the Grand Canyon and even the Gobi Desert in Mongolia. There would also be an annual dinner banquet. The dinner would be a celebration of the existence of the unique peccary program at Webb and include a keynote speech by a world-renowned paleontologist.

1993

The first Peccary Dinner was held with Bill Webb and Art Clokey, the two original members of the Peccary Society, in attendance. Art provided an impromptu narration of the film footage he had taken on the first Peccary trip of 1937. It was the first time the footage had ever been shown to the Webb audience. The most memorable part of the short film is footage of the 31 year-old Ray Alf kneeling in front of the morning campfire and making ritualistic motions almost as in some type of prayer for a new day. (Or maybe it was simply a request to the coffee gods to help make his infamous peccary “shot of hot” coffee more drinkable?) The old film footage forms a display in the Alf Museum for visitors to see.

At the dinner, Ray gave a short talk on the formation of the Peccary Society and talked about some of the successes his students had obtained in their careers in the earth sciences.

1996

Ray was active but his health was beginning to slip away. He would still take walks with Rick Whyte but now Rick would have to take a tight grip on Ray’s arm as the once great sprinter was very wobbly on his feet. Ray’s daughters would visit him more and more and stay longer and longer so that they could watch over their father. The girls hired a caregiver to stay with Ray during the days.

Ray inducted into the Doane College Athletic Hall of Fame for his efforts on the Doane 1928 track team.

Ray given the Morris Skinner Award by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology.

1997

Ray began to have some dizzy spells so Janet and Mimi arranged to have a local college student and Webb alumnus Bob Connolly ’89 move in with Ray.

1998

The museum achieves AAM accreditation becoming one of only 4.5 percent of museums nationwide to gain accreditation.

In December, Ray had become too frail to live at home and was moved to San Antonio Gardens in Claremont. At the rest home, Ray quickly made an impact on staff there and

had them repeating some of his trademark sayings such as “Tay-et.” Don Lofgren would visit Ray often and when the staff saw him they would shout “Tay-yet.”

1999

Ray passes away in September at the age of 93. In November, a memorial service at the Vivian Webb Chapel was held to honor his amazing life.

Something Ray once wrote comes to mind.

“Each person is the director of his or her life experiences – joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, successes and failures, likes and dislikes, all the vicissitudes of life, and like the conductor of an orchestra, who brings the chaos, the cacophony of sound, into a symphony of harmonious beauty, one must bring forth the mélange of experiences – personal harmony. We are the conductors of the multifarious experiences of our lives and must concatenate them into euphony, personal symphonies, the harmony of which can bring into sympathetic vibration the heart-strings particularly of all those we love. The songs in our hearts are the ultimate music of all things good, true and beautiful.”

Appendix A

The seven Brontothere skulls on display in the Hall of Life in the Raymond Alf Museum were found by various people on summer Peccary Trips in the late 40's and 50's. The finder got to name them. They are:

BETSY: found by Malcolm McKenna '48 on the 1947 Summer Peccary Trip

HAROLD: found by Thad Smith '56 in either 1954 or 1955. Named after his father Harold Smith '25, who Thad says was the second student enrolled at Webb by Thompson Webb.

PRUDENCE and RICHARD: found by Dick Lynas on 1953 summer trip and named for his parents.

MARGE: found by Ray Alf on the 1957 or 1958 Summer Peccary Trip. Ray named it after the sister of Ralph Coomber '59.

LINDA: found by James Wang '51 on the 1950 Summer Peccary Trip. Named after James Wang's only sister who died in infancy from an accident.

DUMBO: found by Doug Rainger '52, probably on the 1950 Summer Peccary Trip.

OTHER NAMED SKULL OR SKELETONS.

KATHERINE and SARAH: both found by Ray Alf

HELEN: found by Jack Iverson (faculty)

ANN: found by Joe Patrick '52

Zygalophodon skull: found by Ken Monroe (faculty) in May 1965

Bothriodon: found by Fred Burr (nude while looking for clothes?)

Turtle: Al Korber '64 and Steven Grauer '64 (not sure which turtle)

BUBBLES: prepared by Otto at Cal-Tech (found by McKenna?)

Black Oreodon: prepared by David Fleishhaker '55; Westingstone Science Awardee, "Oreodont evolution in three ways"

Sand Box brontotheres are from Arner Ranch

FREDDIE: Lone Tree Eocene brontothere, found by Fred Burr '34, he saw scrap high on steep ridge

PEARL: found by Ray Alf; dark part prepared by Otto (Cal-Tech), white part by Ray Alf and Marvin Miller '50 on trip

BUZZ: found on 1953 summer trip? Named after Buzz Koerner '55 but he did not find it (personal comm. To D. Lofgren)

TITUS: ?