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Letters

Old bones

In reference to the report on the conference on human evolution held at the Institute of Human Origins, Berkeley, in Spring 1983, I would like to take this opportunity to clarify certain misconceptions and errors that appear to have originated at this meeting ("Lucy's Family Problems," SN: 7/2/83, p. 8).

Firstly, it is stated "Tardieu and Senut were invited but did not attend the Berkeley Conference, reportedly because they do not like the intensity of the American anthropological debate." This remark ignores the fact that we were "invited" but requested to pay for travel and attendance expenses. Given the limited funding available for travel and attendance it was quite impossible to spend such an amount for a three-day trip to California.

Regarding scientific questions, it is reported that Johanson said "Senut's evidence for *Homo* at Hadar rests on the most weathered, most fragmented distal humerus in the collection." It is correct that the humeral specimen thought to

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Cover: Northern elephant seals, battling each other and the forces of nature, have come back from near extinction a century ago and now number more than 75,000. Each year, males battle one another for the right to oversee a harem. In lower photo, elephant seal pups lie battered and dying—victims of El Niño-driven storms that hit Año Nuevo (Calif.) Island last year. (Photos: Kennan Ward, top; Richard S. Condit, bottom).



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be of a different genus than Lucy is very fragmentary; nevertheless, several of its features are sufficiently preserved to allow anatomical study. After comparing right and left humeri in wild specimens of *Pongo pygmaeus* (35), *Pan troglodytes* (57), *Pan paniscus* (12), *Gorilla gorilla* (56) and *Hyllobates* (68), and more than 100 modern humans, I still think that these traits distinguish two groups at Hadar. Additional studies of the radius support this conclusion.

Dr. White is reported to have said that I supported my conclusions with line drawings of the fossils that, when checked, don't match the fossils they are supposed to represent. The latter claim is completely unsubstantiated. Our sections have been repeated in duplicate or triplicate on different casts of the same specimens; in all cases, the same pattern was obtained.

The first part of the statement is simply false; I have never used line drawings to support the hypothesis of two groups of Hadar. In any case, line drawings of sections cannot be obtained for the supposedly more modern specimen because the necessary reference points are not preserved. Line drawings have only been

applied to Lucy's humeri (and to some extent to AL 322.1) where they revealed a morphological resemblance to modern African apes (AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, 56, 275-283).

Brigitte Senut
Laboratoire d'Anthropologie du
Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle
Paris, France

anchors weigh

Thank you for continued articles of excellent substance from the world of science. One caption from page 425 of the 12/24 & 31/83 issue (in "Who Should Rule the Ice?") struck a sour chord—"Helicopters, supplied by the U.S. Air Force..." Transportation on the Antarctic continent is provided by VXE-6 (Antarctic Development Squadron Six), U.S. Navy.

Glenn S. Bacon
VXE-6 Flight Surgeon
McMurdo Station, Antarctica

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