

Our dear friend and colleague Frank Brown passed away unexpectedly and suddenly the afternoon of Saturday, September 30. He had been actively working on the geology of the Turkana Basin in East Africa, his life-long interest, the morning of his death.

Frank was a teacher, mentor, and friend to all at the University of Utah. You could not know Frank without being influenced by him. In his 46 years at the University, he served in the roles of Professor, Chair of the Department of Geology and Geophysics, and Dean of the College of Mines and Earth Sciences. He stepped down from the deanship in 2016 after a tenure that lasted 25 years. In recognition of his accomplishments in research, teaching, and administration, he was awarded the University of Utah's highest honor, the Rosenblatt Prize, in 2001.

Frank's passions were teaching, learning, and helping others. He won the outstanding teaching award in the Department of Geology and Geophysics many times. He loved learning – no one knew how many languages he could speak well enough that locals marveled at his fluency: in Swahili he was a master, but he could also converse in both widely spoken and also little spoken African languages – Amharic, Kikamba, Kikuyu, Dasanetch, Nyamatong, Turkana ... the list goes on. This fall, on his last foreign trip, he attended a three-day conference in Finland. His colleagues watched in some awe as he happily started learning Finnish from the street signs and storefronts. And we all appreciated his willingness to help – in ways that ranged from shoveling the walks of the college entrance (he was often the first one to arrive, even on snowy mornings) to the quiet ways in which he made it possible for students to continue their studies or Kenyan friends to launch new endeavors with small (and sometimes not so small) loans. His generosity was legendary.

Frank's life work was the geology of the Turkana Basin in East Africa where hundreds of hominin fossils have been discovered since his first fieldwork in 1966 in the lower Omo Valley of Ethiopia. In the ensuing 50 some years, he provided the chronologic framework that allows the understanding of the evolution of humans in East Africa. He mapped volcanic ash layers across the landscape, he correlated them using micro-chemistry, and he dated them with the K-Ar method. He was able to recognize, and place in stratigraphic order, more than 300 volcanic ashes. Some of these could be traced 1,000 kilometers or more, and provided key age control for sites he never even visited. And he was most willing to take others to the field, to work on knotty problems others had, and to question even his own earlier conclusions when new evidence was discovered. On learning of Frank's passing, one colleague noted, "He made us think harder and walk farther."

We have lost a true friend.

Over his many years in working in Africa Frank supported the educational and research expenses of many African secondary school, undergraduate, and graduate students. To carry on this vision for African scholarship, Frank established a scholarship fund. To contribute to that vision, please send donations to the Francis H. Brown African Scholarship Fund that is managed by the Leakey Foundation ([www.leakeyfoundation.org/frankbrown](http://www.leakeyfoundation.org/frankbrown))

There will be a memorial service on Sunday, November 12 in Salt Lake City at 6 pm at the Utah Museum of Natural History in Salt Lake City. Additional details will be posted on this website.

Please see Frank's obituary at: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/saltlakatribune/obituary.aspx?n=francis-brown&pid=186851473&fhid=23304>