

**Biographical introduction:** This interview with Colin Groves of the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, is part of the ANU Emeritus Faculty's Oral History Program. It involves retired staff members who were part of the university in its earlier life. The Oral History Program was initiated and developed by ANU Emeritus Faculty as a contribution to university and community understanding of the beginnings and development of ANU over the past six decades. Emeritus Faculty has a special interest in this period, since the Faculty's membership includes many of the people who helped shape the university in its early days, to make it the pre-eminent institution it is today.

Colin was born in Great Britain in 1942. He studied toward a BSc in Anthropology at University College (London) and then a Masters degree at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, London, with John Napier as supervisor. After one year, his Masters was switched to a PhD, graduating in 1966. Colin's interest in 'big' and 'fierce' animals (leading to biological Anthropology) commenced at age 5 years, when he was given a book on these by his grandfather.

For 2 to 3 years following his graduation he spent at University of California (Berkeley) where he carried out research and teaching. Later he moved to the Smithsonian Institution where he studied Primate biology with John Napier.

Following his stint at the Smithsonian, he moved to Queen Elizabeth College (London) as Demonstrator then to the ANU where in 1974 he was appointed Lecturer in Physical Anthropology in the then Department of Prehistory and Anthropology (now the School of Archaeology & Anthropology) chaired by John Mulvaney.

Colin had mixed feelings about leaving Great Britain and came to Australia with few preconceptions about the country. He was surprised however at the size of Canberra.

As the A.D. Hope building had not been built, his department was housed initially in the Haydon Allen Building. Following completion of the A.D. Hope building he moved between several offices to eventually the office where he is now located - on the LG floor. His numerous books and manuscripts are placed on numerous shelves he proudly obtained from the Government Stores at Fyshwick.

Colin was appointed Professor in 1999 and comments on the negative attitude then Vice Chancellor Dean Terrell took with professorial appointments. Terrell's successor (Ian Chubb) by contrast had adopted the attitude that academic excellence and not financial constraints were important for promotion to Professor. He believes that Ian Chubb did a good job during his tenure and reinvigorated the criteria for excellence as well as eliminating the two-headed academic structure at the ANU.

Like many departments in the Faculties at the time, his own routinely outperformed its equivalent in the Research Schools despite the added involvement of teaching undergraduate students. Colin feels privileged to have been able to teach what he wanted in Physical Anthropology; subjects such as Studies on Primates, Human Evolution and Human Adaptation.

He, along with Robert Attenborough, also taught special courses in biological anthropology. These courses were popular with students especially in the period 1980's and 1990's. Fortunately increases in student numbers in these courses led to increases in staff. Parenthetically he recalls an essay written by one student who at that time wrote "Mulvaney must not be allowed to retire"!

Colin's ability to lecture unfortunately began to be restricted during 2015 by a genetic disorder. This led to his retirement in that year.

He is however still very active writing original work and recently has had a number of important theoretical papers published.

Colin's contribution to knowledge is reflected in his election to membership of the New York Academy of Sciences and Fellowship of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He is also a member of numerous professional societies and editorships.

He considers among highlights of his research career, the writing of his book 'A Theory of Primate and Human Evolution' published by Oxford University Press, his collaboration with Peter Grubb and the writing of important research papers on taxonomy and evolution with a Czechoslovakia colleague Vratislav Mazák.

Other highlights were his association with prominent leaders in East Africa, South East Asia, particularly Suluwasi, and in Iran and in Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates where he advised on a range of hoofed animals and on conservation and environmentally sensitive matters.

When invited to reflect on the standing of his Department, Colin did not hesitate to state it to be the best in Australia. He regrets that little interdisciplinary interaction took place between his department and its equivalent in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

On the International scene, he said colleagues John Mulvaney, Peter Bellwood, Jack Golson and Rhys Jones were well known. However Colin's international reputation was testified by the fact that many people wanted to work with him at the ANU. He regards his main mentors as John Napier who oversaw his PhD work, and Peter Crowcroft.

At the ANU he made his own way and on numerous occasions has been invited to comment and discuss on radio and TV about human evolution. Of the senior administrators at the ANU he had most regard for he lists Anthony Low who, among other things, resisted the call of Education Minister Dawkins to amalgamate the ANU with the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now the University of Canberra).

On further reflections he, like many of his peers, is alarmed at the march of bureaucracy in universities most of which are now seen as a business. And in offering advice to students contemplating a career in Biological Anthropology, Colin believes that in order to succeed, one must have passion and dedication – a 'fire in the belly'. The degree is important for thinking and to be 'educated'