



In 1929, nationally acclaimed sprinter Raymond Alf arrived in Los Angeles to run for the L.A. Track Club. After the track season ended Alf found a teaching job at Webb School of California, a boarding school on the outskirts of Los Angeles; he stayed for 70 years. Alf's paleontology career began in 1935, when he spotted a fossil horse jaw at a store in Claremont Village. After learning that the jaw was found near Barstow, Alf gathered together some students and went in search of fossils there. In 1936 they hit the jackpot, when Bill Webb '39 spotted a skull. Alf and Webb excavated the specimen and took it to paleontologist Chester Stock, who identified it as a new species of fossil peccary (pig). Inspired by this discovery, Alf traveled to Nebraska in 1937 to hunt for fossils with Bill Webb and Art Clokey '39. This first Summer Peccary Trip began the long-standing museum tradition of offering annual summer trips to fossil-rich areas in western North America. From Nebraska, Alf, Webb, and Clokey traveled to South Dakota and accidentally met Professor John Clark from the University of Colorado. This chance encounter inspired Alf to become a paleontologist, and he completed his masters degree in geology at University of Colorado the following year.



Upon returning to Webb, Alf taught science once again, but added paleontology into his curriculum. This and the growth in interest for Alf's peccary trips were the foundation of a student paleontology program at Webb. In the summer of 1939, Alf returned to Nebraska with Webb and Clokey on the second Summer Peccary Trip. That year the lower level of the library became Alf's museum and classroom. Soon thereafter, public tours began. This marked the beginning of what was to become a permanent Alf Museum. Spurred by Alf's inspirational teaching, a number of students went on to become distinguished paleontologists, including Malcolm McKenna '48, Dwight Taylor '49, David Webb '53, and Daniel Fisher '67. Some students received national science awards, and Alf earned wide recognition for his teaching and fossil collecting activities. During this period, Alf's classroom museum quickly filled with fossils. By the 1960s, it was clear that a larger space was needed to house "Ray's Museum." In 1968 this dream came true, when the current museum building was dedicated to him. Alf then designed and constructed displays for the new two-story facility. In the upstairs Hall of Life, Alf developed the exhibit theme of "From Stars to Early Civilization," an amazing journey through

the history of life on earth. On the lower floor, Alf built displays for the many tracks and trackways that had been collected, calling this space the Hall of Footprints. Alf also expanded his efforts to provide public tours of the museum.



Soon thereafter, Alf retired from teaching, yet remained active and often gave tours. After his retirement, some of Alf's former students ran the museum on a temporary basis. In 1975, Grant Meyer '53, another former student, became the second director of the museum. Throughout the 1980s, Meyer's efforts were focused on modernizing exhibits and beginning the process of gaining accreditation from the American Association of Museums (AAM). Meyer left in 1990 and Don Lofgren was hired as the museum's third director. With a new director, the museum intensified its effort to become accredited. The museum worked to organize and document its very large specimen collection. Computer databases for accession, locality, and catalog files were developed, and over 100 metal storage cases were installed to house fossils. In 1998, the museum achieved AAM accreditation. Thus, the Alf Museum became one of only 4.5 percent of museums nationwide to gain accreditation. In 1999, the Webb community was saddened by the death of Raymond Alf, but Alf's legacy continues on with the growth of the museum he founded over 70 years ago.