

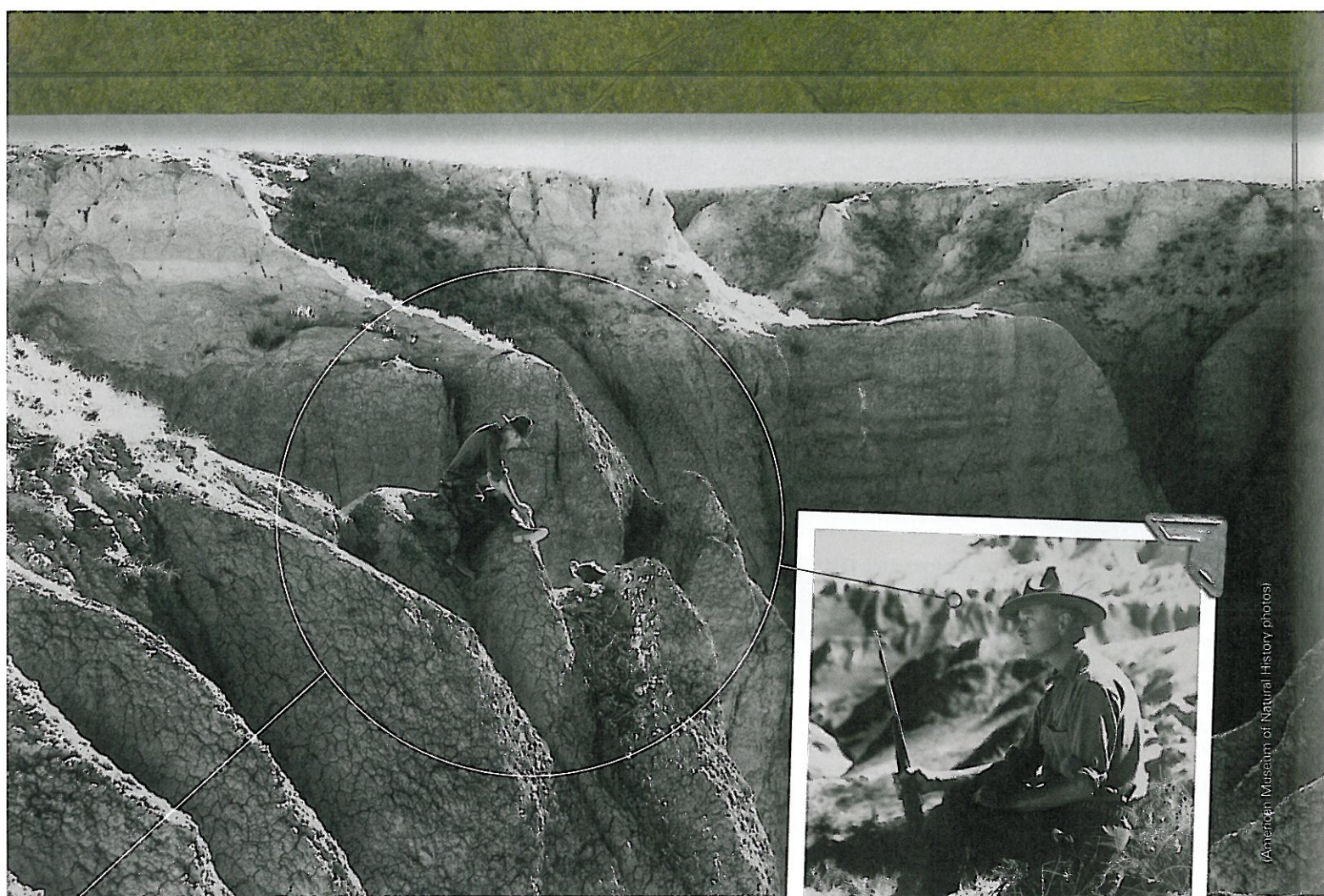
Roy Chapman Andrews: Beloit's Real-Life

INDIANA JONES

This native son narrowly escaped death many times, as he explored remote regions of the world, collecting dinosaur eggs, precious fossils and amazing adventures, along the way.



Photo courtesy of © Lucasfilm Ltd. & TM. All Rights Reserved.



Andrews sits on an eroded bluff in the Gobi Desert, in 1928, in an attempt to capture young eagles as part of his fieldwork.

Editor's Note: *Ann Bausum, a graduate of Beloit College, writes about U.S. history, for young people, from her home in Beloit, Wis. The National Geographic Society published her first book, **Dragon Bones and Dinosaur Eggs: A Photobiography of Explorer Roy Chapman Andrews**, in 2000. National Geographic has since published six more award-winning titles by her. Visit her on the Web at www.AnnBausum.com.*

Historic photographs are reprinted by permission of the American Museum of Natural History.

By Ann Bausum

When Roy Chapman Andrews and Montague White decided to go duck hunting on the Rock River in southern Wisconsin on March 31, 1905, they didn't know they would end up fighting for their lives instead. Yet, before the day was out, one of them would mark the beginning of a lifetime of exploration by this grim first adventure. The other one would be dead.

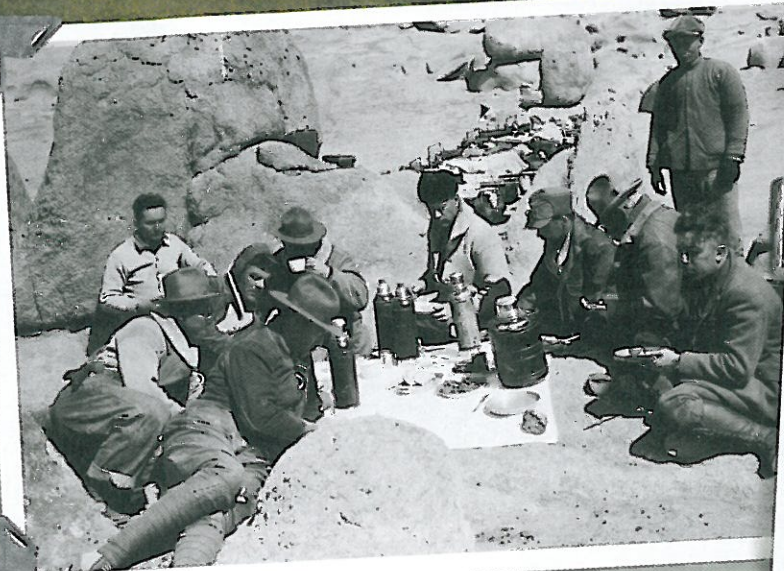
Andrews, a junior at Beloit College, and White, a youthful English professor there, could have chosen better conditions for their outing. The Rock was flooding its banks, its waters still carrying winter's icy chill. But the two companions were seizing an opportunity for recreation during the college's spring

break, so they struck out in a canoe some seven miles upstream from Beloit, Wis., just north of the Townline Road bridge.

White set the disaster in motion when he dropped his paddle in the current, lunged for it, and upset their canoe, pitching both men into the frigid water. Although each could swim, White was seized by a cramp and sank out of sight, while the river carried Andrews in the opposite direction. Eventually, Andrews managed to brace himself on a submerged tree limb, work his way to shore and stagger through flooded fields to find help at a farmhouse. White's body would be retrieved from the water hours later.

The death of his friend stunned Andrews. He struggled with depression and the labor of continuing his studies, somehow managing to graduate with his class in 1906. Then Andrews pulled himself together and set off to make good on

With his Fedora hat, loaded rifle, fear of snakes, love of adventure and keen intellect, Roy Chapman Andrews was a real-life "Indiana Jones."



Above: This photo shows a typical rest stop during a Gobi expedition. Notice the white linen tablecloth and a servant standing by.

Above right: The dinosaur named *Protoceratops andrewsi* was discovered by, and named for, Roy Chapman Andrews. This specimen, which Andrews found, is on display at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.



his childhood ambition of becoming a professional explorer. It seems likely that Andrews carried the memory of Monty White's death with him anytime he entered the field. Preparedness and unwavering leadership characterized the 22 years of exploration that followed. Whether he traveled on the high seas, in jungles or through deserts, Andrews always survived to tell the tale, and he never lost another man during his lifetime of adventure.

A Real-Life Indiana Jones

"In the [first] 15 years [of fieldwork] I can remember just 10 times when I had really narrow escapes from death," Andrews wrote in one of his memoirs. "Two were from drowning in typhoons, one was when our boat was charged by a wounded whale; once my wife and I were nearly eaten by wild dogs, once we were in great danger from fanatical lama priests; two were close calls when I fell over cliffs, once I was nearly caught by a huge python, and twice I might have been killed by bandits."

Andrews sowed the seeds for this adventuresome life as a boy growing up in southern Wisconsin. He was born on what



was then the western edge of Beloit, at 419 St. Lawrence Ave. on Jan. 26, 1884. He was attracted to the outdoors at the earliest age and spent most of his youth roaming the nearby countryside. Andrews explored, gun and notebook in hand, recording what he observed around him and bringing back specimens which, as a self-taught taxidermist, he mounted and displayed in the "museum" he established in the barn behind his family's home. He paid his way through Beloit College with money he had made as a taxidermist and at odd jobs, like driving a delivery wagon for a local bakery.

Upon graduation, Andrews, who had never traveled farther from Wisconsin than Chicago, headed east in search of a job at one of the famous museums where he had dreamed of working since childhood. He managed to talk his way into a position at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, by

offering to do anything, even sweep the floors, for the privilege of working there. When the museum's director questioned why a man with a college education would want to clean floors, Andrews replied, "Not just any floors. But the museum floors are different. I'll clean them and love it, if you'll let me." He was in. Twenty-eight years later, he would, himself, become director of the museum.

By 1908, Andrews had graduated from floor duty to field work. For the next two decades, he would never rest in one spot for more than a few months at a time. At first Andrews studied whales. He traveled on whaling ships and visited whaling stations throughout the Pacific, taking the first action photos of whales, measuring colossal specimens and collecting skeletons for display at the museum.

As Andrews' travels introduced him to Asia, he gravitated toward land exploration there, first in Korea, then in China, Tibet and Burma (now Myanmar). He traveled with a staff of local guides and porters, disappearing into the world's remotest regions for months on end. His isolation would be so intense and his absences so long that he was, on more than one occasion, presumed dead. Andrews would reenter civilization and inevitably learn that the world had moved on without him during his absences from it – losing the Titanic, entering World War I or inventing radio, as examples.

Andrews always carried one more thing out of the wilderness in addition to impressive collections of rare or newly-discovered species. He carried out adventures. By 1912, Andrews



Andrews, in the middle of the Gobi Desert, reads a copy of *Saturday Evening Post*.

had become a favorite on the lecture circuit, weaving together stories of science and adventure illustrated by his own photographic slides. He held audiences spellbound, as he recounted tales of hunting a man-eating tiger, surviving mysterious illnesses and being charged by a wild boar. His intrepid lifestyle, skill with firearms and trademark fedora hat bear striking similarities to a fictional explorer from the early 20th century, and rumors persist that Andrews served as the real-life model for Hollywood's "Indiana Jones" character. One other similarity: Andrews hated snakes.

Caravans Across the Desert

"I had found my country. The one I had been born to know and love," he wrote about his first visit to Mongolia, in 1918. Andrews, who had married in 1914, made his initial exploration of the country while serving as a spy for the U.S. government during World War I. He returned as a scientist the next year and began to dream of the work that would mark the culmination of his scientific career – a series of massive, interdisciplinary expeditions across the heart of the Gobi Desert.

Few Americans had even seen this land, and its reputation as a harsh, barren landscape was borne out by the fact that, scientifically, it had yielded up to that time only one fossil – a rhinoceros tooth. When Andrews suggested that he break with scientific tradition and explore the area with a team of scientists, instead of alone, he caused eyebrows to raise. When he

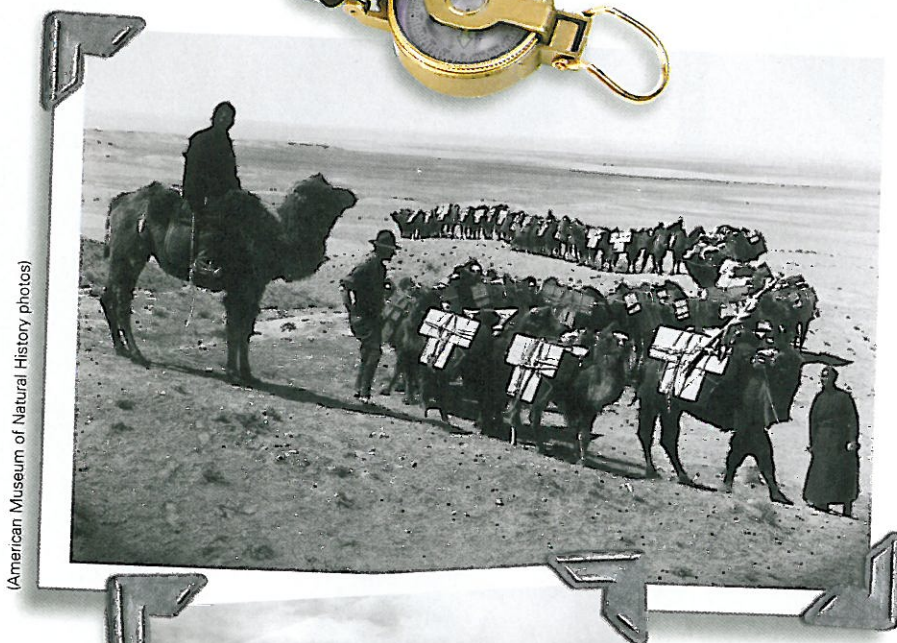
proceeded to turn support of the expedition into a competition among New York City's high society, he caused tongues to wag. And, when he proposed to transport automobiles to Asia and use them to cross the desert, he caused more than a few people to shake their heads and question his sanity.

But Andrews had given considerable thought to his venture and, in 1922, he managed to pull off his first interdisciplinary expedition to the Gobi. He backed up his elite fleet of automobiles with one of the region's oldest and most reliable forms of transportation: the camel caravan. A train of 75 to 100 camels carried a season's worth of supplies into the desert, including some 3,000 gallons of gasoline, 50 gallons of motor oil and a generous supply of spare auto parts. The camel caravan met up periodically with the car caravan, at predetermined points, so that the staff could offload any scientific

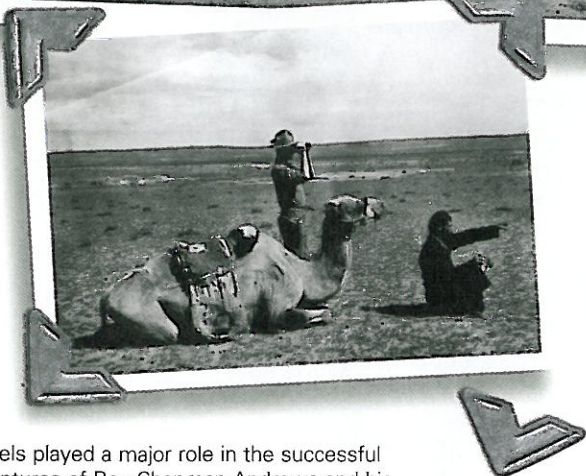
finds from the cars onto the camels and reload the cars with new provisions.

Fortunately, the transfers were not one-sided. Within days of entering the desert, Andrews and his team began to make significant fossil discoveries. Clearly, the Gobi was not a wasteland after all, at least not scientifically. In addition to countless zoological specimens, by the time Andrews and his explorers left the field for the last time, in 1930, they had uncovered new species of dinosaurs, the first evidence of mammals having lived alongside dinosaurs, fossils of previously unknown giant Ice Age mammals and, most exciting of all, the first nests of dinosaur eggs. This discovery alone, made in 1923, gave the expeditions international stature and made Andrews one of the most celebrated explorers of the era.

Among the cargo packed into the desert, but not necessarily out of it, was ammunition. Not only was it required to help feed the large party of explorers and their support staff, with



(American Museum of Natural History photos)



Camels played a major role in the successful adventures of Roy Chapman Andrews and his team. Each animal carried up to 400 pounds of supplies and fossils, in and out of the desert, and the hair that camels shed in summer was used as packing material to protect discoveries.

Andrews playing a central role in hunting for the group's food, but ammunition was required for the team's defense. Bandits roamed the vast expanse of the Gobi and preyed on caravans that crossed it. By packing modern weaponry into the region, Andrews dominated any Gobi arms race and avoided most mischief, but he was not above firing warning shots – or worse – as needed.

If necessary, group members improvised. When one of his explorers accidentally found himself isolated from the group and without a gun (two no-no's in the expedition handbook), he defended himself after suddenly being surrounded, simply by removing his glass eye and showing it to the assembled bandits. The men reputedly fled in panic.

Andrews and his team faced natural threats, too. Sandstorms could materialize out of nowhere and turn a clear day into a choking fog of swirling grit. Tents and property were in risk of being carried away, and humans faced the challenges of not getting lost when a storm came up while they were distant from camp. On one occasion, an isolated explorer improvised a shelter and waited for the storm to blow out, while sand crept higher and higher around his body, until little more than his head remained free and clear. Another storm lashed the cars' windshields with such force that they were ruined by the grinding action of the sand and had to be broken out of their frames in order for drivers to see clearly.

Snakes, that old Andrews nemesis, overran the expedition in 1925, at what became known as Viper Camp. One evening, poisonous pit vipers (relatives of copperhead snakes) invaded the explorers' tents when falling temperatures sent the reptiles in search of warmer quarters. The explorers proceeded to hack away at the invaders, with what must have been a lively running commentary, until they had killed 47 of the snakes.

Despite these challenges, Andrews might have continued his trips to the Gobi indefinitely, had he not run into two insurmountable obstacles. The Great Depression cut off his lifeline of financial

CELEBRATING 105 YEARS *of...*



815.624.6700
www.highviewseniorliving.com

support, and growing instability in Asia made exploration there increasingly difficult and eventually, impossible. Andrews led his final expedition in 1930 and closed down his Asian headquarters, based in Beijing, China, two years later.

Leaving a Legacy

Andrews returned to New York disoriented, professionally and personally. At 48, he was too young to willingly give up exploration, and yet all avenues for reentering the field seemed to have closed. Furthermore, the strain of exploration had ended his marriage of 17 years and left him geographically separated from his two sons.

In 1934, the trustees of the American Museum of Natural History sought to solve the first problem by naming him as director. Andrews himself rectified the personal loss by remarrying in 1935. His tenure as museum leader was full but relatively brief. In spite of the Depression, Andrews managed to add trademark facilities to the American Museum, such as the Hayden Planetarium and the Hall of African Animals. Eventually, even funds for local projects dried up, and Andrews decided to retire in 1941.

He spent the remaining years of his life writing, hunting, fishing and rehabbing a farm in Connecticut. He particularly enjoyed writing for young people, from articles in *Boy's Life* magazine to volumes for the Random House "All About" science series. In his final years, Andrews lived in Carmel, Calif., and died there following a heart attack on March 11, 1960, at the age of 76. At his request, he was buried in the family plot at Oakwood Cemetery in Beloit.

Although the celebrity status Andrews enjoyed during his lifetime – he won honors shared by the likes of Perry, Lindbergh, and Byrd – faded with time, his legacy continues to be measured today, in several ways. The collections made



If You Want to Find Out More...

> Andrews, Roy Chapman. *Under a Lucky Star*. Borderland Books/University of Wisconsin Press: 2009.

> Bausum, Ann. *Dragon Bones and Dinosaur Eggs: A Photobiography of Explorer Roy Chapman Andrews*. National Geographic Society: 2000. <http://www.annbausum.com/dragon.html#links>

> "Dinosaurs Alive," 3D IMAX feature film: 2007. <http://www.dinosalive.com/>

> Gallenkamp, Charles. *Dragon Hunter: Roy Chapman Andrews and the Central Asiatic Expeditions*. Viking Press: 2001.

> Roy Chapman Andrews Society, 500 Public Ave., Beloit, Wis. 53511. (608) 365-4838. Publishes a self-guided tour of local Andrews historic sites, "On the Trail of Roy Chapman Andrews." <http://www.roychapmanandrewssociety.org/index.html>

by Andrews and his teams of explorers continue to be exhibited and studied. More than a few of today's leading explorers trace their childhood interest in science to their reading of such Andrews classics as *All About Dinosaurs*, *All About Whales*, and *All About Strange Beasts of the Past*. Andrews' writing for adults gained new attention several years ago, after *Discover* magazine named his memoir, *Under a Lucky Star*, one of the 25 best science books ever written. The volume, long out of print, has since been reissued in a quality edition, being distributed for Borderland Books by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Finally, and closest to home, in 1999, citizens from his birthplace founded a society to honor Andrews and his legacy. Its signature program, the Roy Chapman Andrews Society Distinguished Explorer Award, brings a leading contemporary explorer to Beloit each year, for a series of programs and recognition. A key component of the visit is the introduction of this explorer to a group of about 1,000 local school children, through advance preparations and a culminating assembly. The society hopes that such events will inspire other Beloit-area youth to become explorers.

Recipients of the society's annual award take home a bronze statue mounted on a base that bears the closing quote from *Under a Lucky Star*: "Always there has been an adventure just around the corner, and the world is still full of corners!" ■

Layout By

SCHWALBACH CREATIVE
S E R V I C E S