

as they excavate a site. **Excavate** means to uncover by digging.

In 1994 University of California scientist Tim White revealed that, while excavating in Ethiopia, he had found an even earlier australopithecine than Johanson's. This African hominid may have walked the Earth as much as 4.5 million years ago.

**REVIEW** *How have Don Johanson and the Leakeys contributed to the search for early hominids?*

## Early Ancestors

From the discoveries of archaeologists, paleoanthropologists, and other scientists, we can begin to know what the distant past was like. Many experts agree that the first hominids appeared south of the Sahara in Africa more than 3 million years ago.

By Lucy's time, several kinds of australopithecines lived in eastern Africa. All were mainly plant-eaters. Most may also have eaten meat left over from lion kills.

By 2.5 million years ago, at least one larger-brained group of hominids lived in eastern Africa. These belonged to *Homo habilis*. Within 500,000 years they had spread throughout eastern Africa and into southern Africa. They usually traveled across open grasslands in search of food. As they traveled, they gathered and ate many different kinds of plants. In addition, they scavenged meat from lion and leopard

Don Johanson's camp at Hadar, Ethiopia, where the paleoanthropologist unearthed Lucy

## BIOGRAPHY

### "Lucy"

The name *Lucy* might seem unusual for an ancient hominid. Don Johanson tells how Lucy got her name. At the time of the discovery, a tape recorder in Johanson's camp was playing the Beatles' song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." As Johanson explains,

"At some point during that unforgettable evening . . . the new fossil picked up the name of Lucy, and has been so known ever since."

Back in the United States, Don Johanson and Tim White rebuilt Lucy's skeleton from tiny bone fragments. When she was alive, Lucy stood just about 4 feet high. She was 19 to 21 years old when she died. Lucy walked on two feet and probably spent much of her time in open country rather than in forests.

Lucy (above) is the most complete australopithecine skeleton ever found.

