

Obituary

Remembering Frank: Francis J. Morin 10 October 1917 – 22 July 2012

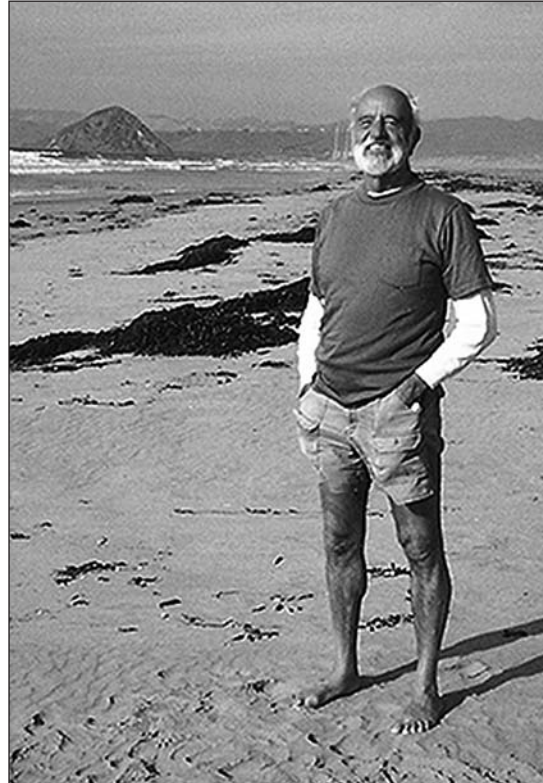
Frank Morin, a key member of the Easter Island Foundation since its inception in 1989, served as co-editor of the *Rapa Nui Journal* as well as the EIF treasurer for many years. He was a frequent collaborator with his long-time companion, Dr. Georgia Lee, in petroglyph surveys and research on Hawai‘i, Easter Island, and California. Frank died peacefully at home on July 22, 2012. He was 94, still with the verve and enthusiasm of a much younger man.

Born Francis Joseph Morin into a musical family in New England, he went on to study physics and chemistry, first at the University of New Hampshire, and then in graduate school at the University of Wisconsin. With the coming of WWII, he was plucked out of graduate school and recruited to work on advanced projects at the famous Bell Labs, at that time located in New York. There he collaborated with a number of eminent physicists, most notably Philip Anderson, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1977. (From what I have been able to learn, Frank almost won one himself. Anderson called him “a superb experimentalist”). Indeed, he was very much involved with the early development of transistors, thermistors and integrated circuits. He holds three U.S. patents for metal oxide semiconductor procedures that he developed in the late 1940s.

Frank continued at Bell Labs after the war but, with the rapid development of the U.S. Space Program, he moved west in 1962 having been asked by the North American Aviation’s Science Division to set up a lab there and, subsequently, to become its Director. There he was active in NASA’s Apollo Moon Program and a member of North American’s Rocketdyne Division, later Rockwell International. Frank retired in 1980 and moved north to the seaside village of Los Osos, California. A couple of years later, his son Michael took him to hear a talk given by Georgia Lee on her work on Easter Island. They met and soon thereafter took up life together.

It was thanks to Halley’s Comet that I first met Frank and Georgia; I was on Easter Island photographing the famous comet for NASA, and they arrived aboard a cruise ship where they had been giving lectures about the island and the comet. We hit it off like gangbusters from the beginning, the three of us plus my late beloved wife, Matty.

Among our happiest of times was when the four of us rented various houses, two weeks at a time, first on Kauai, then at Côte de Beaune in the Burgundy Region in



Frank Morin
Photograph by Steven Roger Fischer.

France where we spotted a billboard advertising Morin et fils wine – and followed it up with a delicious wine tasting in nearby Nuits-Saint-Georges where we found Frank’s roots. And lastly, we enjoyed Italy’s magical Tuscany. There was, too, a leisurely cruise from Tahiti to Easter Island that we took in 1991 which carried us and some 100 others to dozens of South Pacific isles along the way, as documented in Georgia’s book, *Te Moana Nui: Exploring Lost Isles of the South Pacific*.

I honestly can’t count the number of times Matty and I stayed with them in their lovely home in Los Osos, and their hospitality was infinite. So seemed Frank’s knowledge about so many things. He had the most amazing ability to discuss all manner of subjects, from physics and astronomy (and sci-fi – he was a devout “trekkie”), to wine making and tasting, music, religion (Buddhism especially), and of course Hawai‘i and Easter Island. And the good table; Frank was a

master chef. And few know that a younger Frank was an accomplished concert pianist and was a featured soloist with the University of Vermont symphony orchestra. He was a serious student of Jungian psychology. Frank, in his gentle fashion, tried to explain to me what it was all about but alas, I was an inattentive student and he got nowhere with me.

For a number of years – until his knees went arthritic – the sand dunes and beaches of Los Osos were one of Frank’s favorite places to be. (The image of Frank on his favorite beach was taken by Steven Roger Fischer). Frequently, he would take long (7 kilometer) walks along the shoreline, stripped down to as little as possible. Even to his last days he would often do, as Georgia used to say, his imitation of a lizard out in the walled-in back garden of their home, soaking up the California sun.

I last visited Frank with my dear companion Gabriela a little over a year ago, and he was still just as sharp as ever. He explained that his only major problem, the deterioration of his lungs, may have resulted from all the toxic fumes that he had inhaled as a student. (He was a non-smoker.)

Frank is survived by his devoted companion of many years, Georgia Lee; seven loving children, Thomas, Michael, Cynthia, Peter, Andrew, Sarah and Sylvia; and their mother, the former Joanne O’Riordon of Baltimore, MD, and a number of grandchildren.

William Liller August 2012