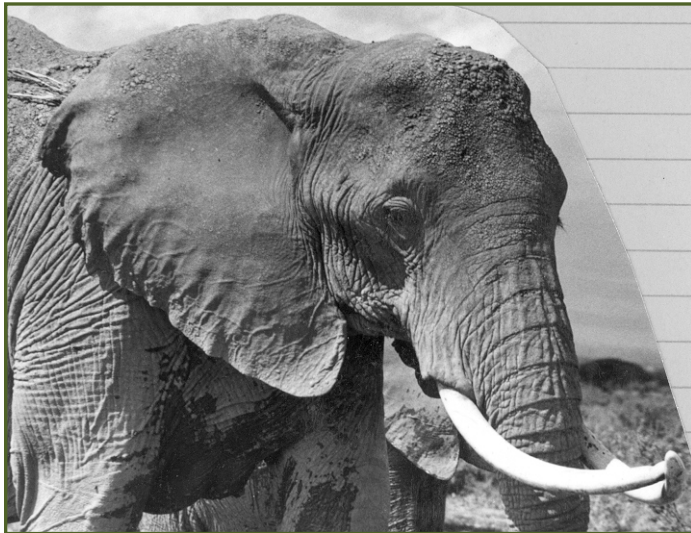


## *THE HISTORY OF THE LD FAMILY*

The LD family has had a very interesting history. It started out as part of the LB family, which was one of the immigrant groups that moved into the central region of Amboseli in the late 1970s. I saw the family for the first time on February 9, 1976. Most of the other Amboseli families had been photographed and sighted many times by this date, thus it was a surprise to find this new family. On that occasion there were 17 animals present, including two large adult females, one with two broken off tusks and another with a large bump under her tail. There were also five young females, fortunately all with distinctive features. They had large tears out of their ears or broken tusks and one was tuskless. In addition there was an adolescent female with a neat V out of the top of her right ear, and several young males. Oddly there were few calves: I only noted one calf under the age of four years old.



*Leticia's ID photo*

I saw this family two more times in February, and two times each in March and April. Every time I saw them, including the first, they were very wary of my car, either running away when I approached or getting into defensive formation. This behavior indicated that they were not used to being in the central tourist area of Amboseli. I did not see them again until October 1976 and on that occasion they were extremely agitated. They were also missing the broken two-tusked female. I never saw her again. However,

from that day on, the family, designated the LB group was sighted regularly on a monthly basis. I believe the core of their home range had been one of the swamps to the east of the Park and that they were forced to leave when people began to cultivate in the area. Broken Two Tusks was probably killed in a conflict with the farmers. Four other families appeared to move in at the same time. All became permanent residents in Amboseli and eventually began to calm down and tolerate vehicles.

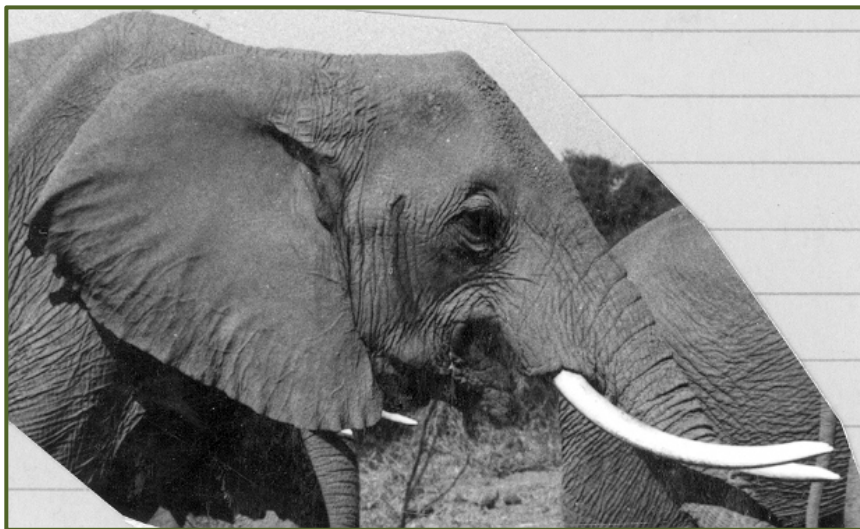
Because the LB females were easy to recognize it did not take me long to work out who belonged in the family. The matriarch was called "Bump-Tail" for a long time, but eventually I named her Leticia and gave the other females 'L' names as

well. In 1977 the family numbered 10 and was composed of the following members:

Leticia (Bump-Tail)  
C'73  
Lana—8-year-old female, V-nick high right  
Lucia—teenage female  
Leana—teenage female  
Laura—about 10-year-old-female  
Lisa—about 8-year-old adolescent  
Lolita—tuskless 6-year-old calf  
YM—10-11 years old  
YM—14-15 years old

The older young male appeared to be going independent; sometimes he was with the group and sometimes not. He was simply referred to as "Leticia's young male" and given the number M163. The younger male was eventually given the name Luke and the number M167.

I wrote in my notes on August 17, 1977 that the LB family was very calm and "even Leticia ignores me". She had always been wary and sometimes even aggressive. There was no doubt that she was the matriarch. I was sure she was the mother of either Lucia or Leana, but I was never sure which one. By physical resemblance and behavior I guessed that Laura and Lolita were probably the daughters of Broken Two Tusks, and M163 was possibly her son. I think there was at least one other adult female in the family who disappeared before I knew the LBs, and she would be the mother of the others.

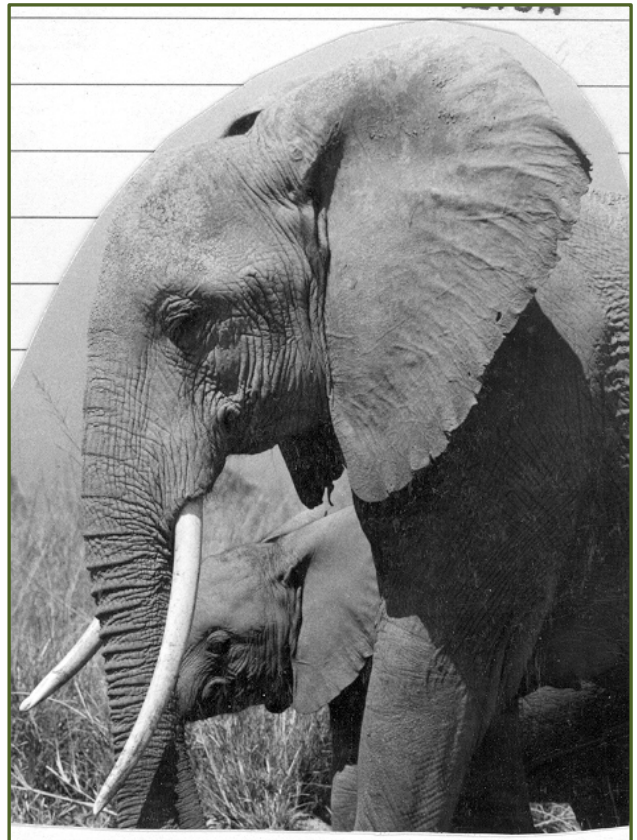


*Laura's ID photo; she was a beautiful female*

By 1978 the LBs were well-known. The family consisted of nine members, M163 having gone independent. They had gotten through the bad 1976 drought with no losses other than Broken Two Tusks. However, they must have gone way down in condition because there were no births in the family for a minimum of three

years. Leticia had had a calf in 1973; calves may have been born and died during 1974-76; but from October 1976 to September 1979 no births were recorded in the family. Finally in October 1979 Leana gave birth to a female calf. Then in February 1980 Lucia had a calf, also a daughter. Over the next two years two more females were born, one to the matriarch, Leticia, and one to Laura.

Although there was a serious drought in 1984 the LBs did exceptionally well, not losing a single animal during that dreadful year that took such a large toll on many of the other families in Amboseli. Lucia and Leana had calves in 1983, one male and one female. These calves turned out to be real survivors, making it through the bad times. And the tuskless female, Lolita, had her first calf, born at the height of the drought in October 1984, and it somehow made it through until the drought broke. Three other females were pregnant throughout 1984 and successfully gave birth in 1985. Lana had her first calf in February; Leticia gave birth in March; and Laura had a daughter in June. The fact that all these calves survived is a tribute to the matriarch Leticia for making the right decisions at crucial times.



*Lisa's asymmetrical tusks and ears with many small nicks made her relatively easy to recognize*

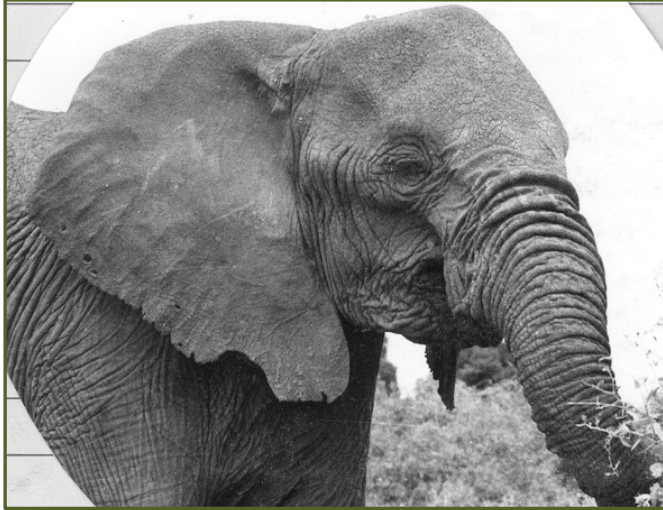
The reproductive success of the LBs continued through the 1980s and by the end of that decade the family was getting large by Amboseli standards with 22 members. Not surprisingly, a split was occurring. Laura, who had always been the most independent of the adult females, formed a sub-group with Lisa and Lolita, and much of the time they moved on their own as a unit of nine, while Leticia continued to lead a group of 13. The family, including both subgroups, consisted of the following members:

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth
Leticia	F	1940
Lloyd	M	Mar-85
Lorelei	F	Jan-81
Lana	F	1969
Lela	F	Feb-85
Lucia	F	1963
LUC87	F	Mar-87
Lucas	M	Apr-83
Lobelia	F	Feb-80
Leana	F	1965
LEA87	F	Jan-87
Leah	F	May-83
Lois	F	Oct-79
Laura	F	1967
Lindsay	F	Jun-85
Luther	M	Mar-81
Lisa	F	1969
LIS87	F	Jan-87
Lydia	F	Mar-82
Lolita	F	1971
LOL9	F	Apr-89
LeRoy	M	Oct-84

Laura's independence may have put her in some danger. While a smaller group might be able to find adequate food more easily, there is also something to be said for safety in numbers. Laura was attacked by Maasai, probably by young warriors out to prove their bravery. She was speared in the trunk leaving two gaping wounds--an entrance wound on the front of her trunk and an exit wound at the back. Laura looked in a bad way. It was especially distressing watching her try to drink. When she sucked water up into her trunk, the water poured out of the holes. But miraculously the wounds healed and a few months later only well-healed scar tissue could be seen.

Fortunately spearing incidents are relatively rare and Laura and her subgroup grew and thrived over the next years. Laura and Lisa each had a daughter in May 1991, and in July 1993 Lisa's daughter Lydia had her first calf making Lisa a grandmother at only 24 years old.





*Wonderful Lolita was born tuskless*

In the meantime, Laura's son Luther left the family to become an independent male as all young males do. Then In July 1994 Lolita gave birth to a daughter. There were three more births over the next three years: Laura, Lisa and Lydia all had calves.

By now there were many calves to name. Usually a calf is not named until it is four years old. Up until that age it is referred to by a code based on its mother's name and its year of birth. I was starting to run

out of the usual first names, and I started using themes. For the 1987 calves I used Kenya place names, so, for example, Lisa's '87 calf was named Lassit after a town in southern Kenya. For the 1991 calves I chose the names of Amboseli plants so Lisa's '91 daughter was named Laisikirai and Laura's was named Leleshwa. I had also started an Amboseli elephant-naming program for donors and this definitely helped with new names.

All was going well but once again Laura got into trouble. In January 1996 the Amboseli park pilot was flying over Longinye Swamp and saw an elephant mired in the mud. The pilot, the Amboseli Elephant Project research assistants, and Iain Douglas-Hamilton, who was visiting, attempted to rescue Laura. It proved to be much more difficult than they expected and eventually they had to get close to 100 people from the nearby lodges to help pull her out. Laura was up to her head in the mud and was very weak; she was estimated to have been there for several days. During the exercise Iain was convinced that Laura understood that she was being helped. Finally she was extricated with a great cheer from the crowd. She staggered to her feet and moved off not turning on any of the people who were very close to her. Laura had used up another one of her nine lives. Even more miraculously, only one month later she gave birth to a healthy calf, which meant that she was 21 months pregnant during her ordeal!

The LB family had grown tremendously and by 1997 Laura and her subgroup had split permanently. We gave them the family designation LD and considered them a completely independent family. From this point on this history will concentrate on the LDs. Sadly, shortly after we created the new family, Laura lost her daughter Lindsay in 1997. She disappeared and we don't know what the cause of death

was. By the end of 1997 the structure and composition of the LD family was as follows:

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth	
Laura	F	1967	
LAU96	F	Feb-96	
Leleshwa	F	May-91	
Lisa		1969	
LIS96	F	May-96	
Laisikirai	F	May-91	
Lassit	F	Jan-87	
Lydia	F	Mar-82	
LYD97	F	Apr-97	
Lemlepo	F	Jul-93	
Lolita	F	1971	
LOL94	F	Jul-94	
LaDonna	F	Apr-89	
Leroy	M	Oct-84	
<b>Independent Males</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Birth</b>	<b>Mother</b>
Luther	359	Mar-81	Laura

Over the next 12 years the LDs did remarkably well. There were 21 births. No other adults died and only two LD calves died during this period: Lisa lost her '96 calf in 2000 and Lemlepo's 2005 calf died before she reached a year old.

Everything should have continued to go well for the LDs, but external conditions were against them. By the end of 2008 Amboseli was in the grip of the worst drought in living memory. In 2009 thousands of cattle, sheep, goats, zebras, wildebeest and other animals died. The elephants were not spared; almost 400 of the 1600 elephants known to the project died. The calves were the first to go. There was nothing for them to eat and their mothers could not produce enough milk for them. In 2008, 151 calves were born, which was a new record. However, the next year these calves were at the age when they needed to supplement milk with vegetation and there simply wasn't anything they could eat. As a result 97 of them died during 2009. The calves born during 2009 also suffered but they did better because they didn't have to eat as much vegetation. Of the 85 calves born during the drought 38 died.

Although the LDs had been through two previous droughts when they were still with Leticia, even she would not have been able to save them. The LDs were very badly hit. They lost 19 members during 2009 and two more in early 2010 as the effects of the drought continued even though the rains had started. All were calves except for two crucial individuals: Laura and Lolita. It was a major blow for the family losing a matriarch and another important adult female. Other families had even greater losses. One family lost seven females. In all 60 adult females died in the Amboseli population.



*The LD family drinking at Snipe River having just come in from the dusty lower slopes of Kilimanjaro; this photo was taken in 2005 before the tragic losses of 2009*

When Laura died, the next oldest female, Lisa, took over as matriarch. She was 40 years old and faced the huge challenge of holding her family together. Sometimes when a matriarch dies and there are other deaths in a family, cohesion breaks down and the family splinters. Lisa kept her family together and most important starting to increase its size again.

The drought broke in December and fairly good rain fell in 2010. African savannahs are remarkable in being able to recover quickly. Within a couple of months the woodlands and plains were transformed from what looked like bare soil to lush green swards. It always amazes me. Underneath that dusty ground the seeds and roots remain waiting for the moisture to release them.



Slowly the elephants began to recover. They put on weight and there was a spring in their step. The ATE team had their work cut out for them trying to discover who had died, who had survived, and who all the orphans were. It took almost a year to be able to figure it all out.

In the meantime, it didn't take the females in the Amboseli population long to recover enough to start breeding again. Already in January and February 2010 we recorded females in oestrus. With a twenty-two month gestation period we expected to start finding new calves in November 2011. And that's exactly what happened. There were actually two births in October, so those females were surprisingly early. More calves came in November and December: a total of 50, and then in 2012 there was a deluge of calves, another 201!

Under the leadership of Lisa, the LDs joined in the baby boom. In the meantime one amazing young LD female, Lemlepo, had given birth in 2010, which meant that she had carried that calf throughout the drought. The first LD female to give birth during the baby boom was Lydia who had a son in November 2011. Then in 2012 the LDs outdid themselves with seven births. Each of the adult females who survived had a calf. Lassit had a daughter in January; Laisikirai a male calf in February; Lisa a female in April; Leleshwa a male in May; Livie a female in August; Lennox a male in August; and LaDonna a female in October.



*The glorious Lisa who has four daughters, eight grandchildren and three great grandchildren*



Some of the LD females didn't waste any time, and after shorter than average calving intervals, they gave birth again in 2015. Lydia, LaDonna and Livie gave birth that year.

Over the next four years the LDs continued to do well. Another four calves were born. Lisa has proven to be an excellent leader. She is definitely doing something right because all the calves born since 2010 have survived. In fact, there have been no deaths at all in the family since the drought.

Lisa turned 50 years old in January this year. She carries so much wisdom with her and she is everything we at ATE love about elephants: intelligent, cooperative, kind and caring.

**Cynthia Moss**  
**Amboseli National Park**  
**December 2019**

*Structure & Composition of the LD Family*  
*December 2019*

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth	Mother {Grandmother} if Dead
Lisa	F	1969	
Luna	F	Apr-12	
Laisikirai	F	May-91	
LSK16	F	Feb-16	
Likile	M	Feb-12	
Lassit	F	Jan-87	
Libet	F	Dec-17	
LittleLinda	F	Jan-12	
Lydia	F	Mar-82	
Lyonette	M	Apr-15	
Leonid	M	Nov-11	
Lizzy	F	Apr-97	
Larry	M	Mar-14	
Lemlepo	F	Jul-93	
LEM17	M	May-17	
Laminar	M	Mar-10	

Lorna	F	Feb-96	Laura
LNx18	M	Apr-18	
Lengola	M	Aug-12	
Leleshwa	F	May-91	Laura
LWA16	F	Feb-16	
Lukase	M	May-12	
LaDonna	F	Apr-89	Lolita
Ladislaus	M	Apr-15	
Lokoli	F	Oct-12	
Livie	F	Jul-94	Lolita
LeaB	F	Dec-15	
Lindiri	F	Aug-12	
<b>Independent Males</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Mother</b>
Luther	359	Mar-81	Laura
LeRoy	398	Oct-84	Lolita
Leandar	682	May-99	Lolita