



Peter May and 'friend': filling a special niche market for dinosaur replicas.

The age of the dinosaur alive and well in Oakville

Local firm specializes in monstrous replicas

You don't have to travel to Alberta's badlands or the rich Howe Quarry in Wyoming to uncover dinosaur bones; there are pre-historic remains right here in Oakville. Mind you, these 'fossils' are made of fibreglass and polyurethane foam.

A small Invicta Drive company is making jumbo headlines around the world these days as it re-creates the mammoth creatures that roamed our planet millions of years ago, and ships them to awaiting internationally-renowned museums.

In a 6,000-sq. ft. warehouse, nine employees of Research Casting International mold and cast and connect hundreds of 'bones' to a steel armature forming the skeletons of everything from a camarasaurus to a dromaeosaurus. Dinosaurs in various stages of completion are found in the mounting area, and those that are complete, lay bubblewrapped in huge wooden crates ready for their journey.

To maintain anatomical accuracy, bones are garnered from various sources including the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Royal Ontario Museum. Molds are taken from these bones and casts are

created which are wrapped around a steel frame. The dinosaurs then become modular with four or five main sections to assemble instead of some 280 individual bones, says company president Peter May.

What began as a part-time company for May - a former University of Guelph sculpting student - has grown into a thriving business.

**By Kathy Yanchus
Entertainment Editor**

"The first year we did two or three animals mainly for universities and museums. It just grew and grew," says May, who upon graduation worked as the ROM's head technician and at the Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta mounting and casting animals.

When the company took off, May devoted his full attention to it and eventually moved his operation to Oakville two years ago.

He attributes the tremendous growth of his specialized company to a resurgence of interest in dinosaurs, and his rapid success to the quality work which includes the control he exudes over the casting.

"If somebody wants a dynamic pose we can control the

(See 'Dinosaur' pg. 3)

December 11, 1991

False 911 call & f

A 52 year-old local man charged with fraud and placing a fake 911 call was sentenced in Oakville Provincial Court Friday after being involved in what the

Dinosaur business is booming

(Cont'd. from pg. 1)

weight of the bones," says May. "People are used to seeing big old dinosaurs in static poses."

With dinosaur-theme children's books and computer games on the market today, peoples' perceptions of dinosaurs have changed and there exists a real excitement and fascination associated with the creatures, explains May.

"It's part of our world's history. It's real, not a fancy at all. It's a fascinating time in our planet earth's history."

May also attributes his company's achievements to his employees, all of whom are trained on the job in every aspect of the process.

"The quality of the work (accounts for company's success)," says May. "We've got a good crew here. They're very conscientious. Without a good crew, it's not possible. They are excellent craftspeople."

One of the most challenging - and as it turned out, controversial - projects to date for the company was a five-storey tall barosaurus for the American Museum of Natural History. The barosaurus - one of the largest animals ever to roam the earth - is posed rearing up to defend its young from an attacking allosaurus, in a striking exhibit designed to give people insight into the challenging world these creatures faced 150 million years ago.

The 43-foot high barosaurus represents the largest free standing dinosaur mount in the world, says May, but its sheer size is not what stirred up

paleontologists, who labelled the display unscientific and inaccurate. It was the pose which they felt was impossible given the sheer weight of the animal's bones - a single vertebra weighed up to 200 pounds - which would cause the dinosaur to keel over. Although experts were aghast, people are flocking to the museum.

"There are a lot of know-it-alls in the dinosaur world. This sparks controversy and brings them out. It brings people in and makes people ask questions," says May, adding that the media coverage - the exhibition opening was covered by everyone from CNN to Good Morning America - was a positive for the Museum known for its "conservative" nature.

After putting the dinosaur together, May says he believes this behaviour was plausible for the barosaurus.

May is currently working on a project for the British Museum of Natural History in London, England which will include fossil mounts of a camarasaurus, an albertosaurus and an allosaurus for a new dinosaur gallery which opens in March. On the heels of this project, May and his employees will be creating "four animals" for a museum in Osaka, Japan.

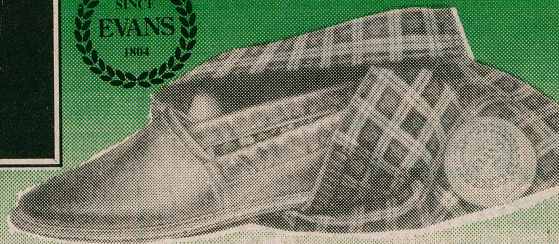
Even after casting and mounting 80 early reptiles and mammals over the years, May still finds excitement in the whole process of bringing to 'life' such grandiose creatures.

"There are new projects all the time. When you're working in a museum, there are no real deadlines, there's no real urgency, he says.

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