

# Museum exhibits fossils

## A&M professor obtains contract for anemia study

By CHRIS CAIN  
A brontosaurus has been walking around Brazos County. Well, not recently, but he did leave his footprints.

Somebody found them and put them in the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural Science along with some mammoth's teeth, a whale vertebra and even some live animals.

The natural science museum at 204 W. Villa Maria Road was moved from its original location in Francis Hall on the Texas A&M University campus 17 years ago, said museum director Bill Grimes.

When the Texas A&M College Museum closed, some of the exhibits were moved to the old Bryan County Club on Villa Maria Road to form the present Brazos Valley Museum of Natural Science.

The museum is for the public; and not supported by the city or the county. It receives most of its support from museum memberships, classes, bird seed sales, and the Audubon wildlife film series.

Exhibits in the natural science museum consist of stuffed birds and animals, insects, marine invertebrates, shells, rocks and minerals, and fossils found in the Brazos Valley area.

The brontosaurus footprint, a petrified elephant tusk, the mammoth's teeth and the whale vertebra found on the Brazos River are examples of the exhibits in the museum.

Most of the displays are behind glass but some, like the elephant tusk and mammoth teeth, are left uncovered for curious fingers to investigate. However, above the description of the rear leg bone of a saber-toothed tiger, there is an empty space.

Andy Wood, education coordinator and keeper of the animals also in the museum, said he thinks the bone was stolen. He said the museum has never had any problems with people taking the exhibits before.

A recent addition to the museum collection is the exhibit of cold-blooded vertebrates consisting of snakes, turtles, fish and frogs found in the Brazos Valley.

The museum staff now is rearranging and improving the displays Wood said. Lighting is being added to some of the exhibits, lettering is being redone, and displays are being moved, he said.

"We can't afford to put money into the displays; we must put it into education," said Wood.

Museums are often associated with dust and older generations, but not the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural Science. Although it may be located in a building constructed in

the early 1920s, the museum is centered around youth, said Wood. It is set up for educating children, added Wood, who teaches the museum's preschool classes.

These classes enable children from 3 to 5 to learn about the living things around them. A classroom in the museum and field trips around the area help teach the children about native animals like turtles and frogs, Wood said.

Classes for 7- to 12-year-olds started April 1 and will continue through May 6, he said. Wood added the museum may have two or three adult classes, but has a need for dedicated volunteer teachers.

Almost every person on the staff is a student at Texas A&M and all but one are volunteers.

Wood, a junior wildlife and fisheries science major, said he has worked in museums in Connecticut for the last seven or eight years. Grimes, a senior wildlife and fisheries science major, worked in a Fort Worth museum before volun-

teering his services to the natural science museum. Grimes recently became director and is presently the only paid employee of the museum.

In addition to classes, tours of the museum are offered. "We get a lot of school groups and scout troops," said Wood. He added that they also take displays to schools, depending on what the group wants. "We do what the people want to do," said Grimes.

Several years ago, the museum changed its name from the Junior Museum of Natural History to the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural Science. The previous name had a tendency to make parents feel left out, Grimes said.

The museum building has many drawbacks, he added. Accessibility to the handicapped or elderly, and a lack of working space are two of the main problems, he explained. But a new seven-county multi-use facility under construction now in Bryan on Briarcrest will solve these problems.

European victims of Cooley's anemia, an affliction that kills by leaving deposits similar to rust in muscle tissues, may live longer because of research being conducted at Texas A&M University.

Ways are being sought to relieve the young victims of this hereditary disease in which the body is unable to transform iron into hemoglobin. The resulting iron build-up in mus-

cles leads to death by impairing the heart and other vital organs.

Dr. Arthur E. Martell of Texas A&M, distinguished professor of chemistry and chairman of the nation's largest chemistry department, was recently awarded a three-year, \$145,423 contract by the National Institutes of Health to develop agents called chelators that allow

the body to absorb the excess iron and pass it out through the urine. Such procedures could keep the toxic level of iron down while blood transfusions, currently the only treatment, can be continued to supply the needed hemoglobin.

Relatively few people develop the ailment. Those who do usually die before their 20th birthday.



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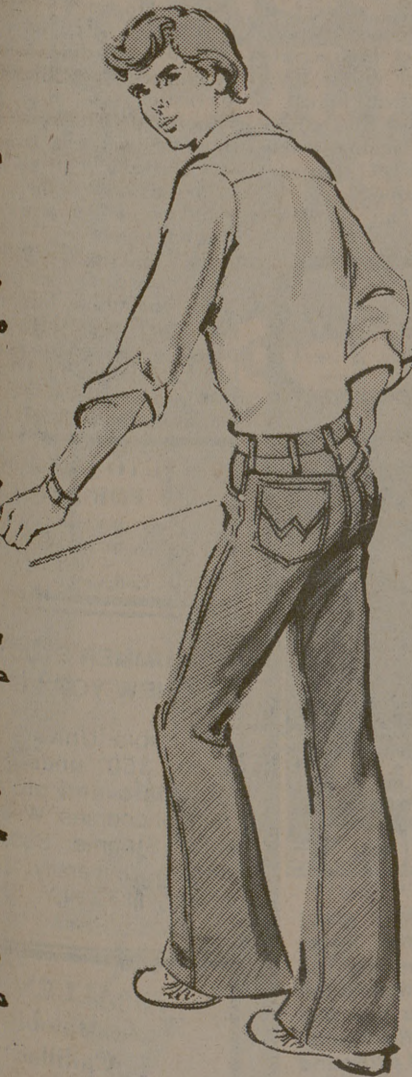
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