

OCCURRENCES

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GETTING IT TOGETHER

Is the hip bone connected to the thigh bone? That's the kind of problem which confronts Oakland Community College students enrolled in "Mounting a Mastodon" this fall at the Highland Lakes Campus. Students are assembling a mastodon skeleton whose head will hover eight to nine feet above the ground. Once complete, the skeleton will be the second construction of its kind in Michigan. The other is at the University of Michigan's Museum of Paleontology.

The skeletal remains of "Elmer" (nicknamed for the glue initially used to hold his broken bones together) were unearthed by Groleau Brothers, Inc. in 1968 in Union Lake and donated to the college. Since only one-third of the bones were found, the missing pieces were cast by the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

"Thin metal rods will be inserted into the bones and then joined to form the skeletal frame. A heavier rod will support the head while the pelvic bones will be bolted to the rest of the skeleton," explains instructor, Hezy Shoshani.

A doctoral student in biology at Wayne State University, Shoshani initiated the establishment of the Elephant Interest Group centered there and has authored numerous publications on the elephant. His studies have led him to Europe, the Far East and Africa.

The mastodon which roamed the earth for two million years became extinct 6,000 to 10,000 years ago as a result of its overspecialized vegetarian diet. "If you had been trained through the years to eat only pizza and all the ingredients disappeared, you'd be as extinct as the mastodon," Shoshani says with a smile.

The skeleton which will be displayed in the Science Building at Highland Lakes will require at least one year to complete. The class meets every Thursday for laboratory and lecture sessions. Topics for discussion include the anatomy, evolution and migratory routes of the mastodon. In addition, students will paint a mural on an adjacent wall as background for the skeleton. A full scale papier-mache' model has already been completed and is currently on display.

Students who were unable to participate in the mastodon course this fall, may sign up for the Winter, 1982 semester. For more information about the course, contact Charles Nelson at 363-7191 or Hezy Shoshani at 577-2924 or 833-7547.

