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Skulls, Mammoths Baffle Reporter On Natural History Museum Visit

By Bob Paul

Hoop-snakes and frogs surviving 100 years sealed in concrete still are fond beliefs of many adults, I found on a recent visit to the Museum of Natural History.

The man to see about the museum, which occupies most of the second floor of Condon Hall, is J. Arnold Shotwell, I was told.

Mr. Shotwell's office was simple enough to find, but finding Mr. Shotwell himself presented difficulties. Crates and cartons of fossils, bones, and minerals littered the room.

"I'm from the Daily Emerald," I said, addressing a nearby skull.

Fortunately, Mr. Shotwell heard me and appeared from behind a box of rocks. We sat down for an informal interview over a table strewn with sundry bones of an aquatic rhinoceros.

Presenting natural history to grammar and high school students is one of the museum's main aims. Shotwell, who is preparator for the museum, feels that at this age students show more genuine interest in museum exhibits than adults. Last year over 8000 primary and secondary school students viewed the displays.

Midway through our interview, Dr. Barnett (he's acting director of the museum while Dr. Cressman is on leave of absence) entered.

"Do you have the phone number of the woman who owns that mammoth?" he asked.

Shotwell replied with the information.

"Pardon me," I said, but did he say, "the woman who owns that mammoth?"

Not a live mammoth, he explained, or even a whole one. Just the lower jaw. "We find lots of mammoth fossils, but very few complete lower jaws. We could use it very nicely for displays."

He added that the museum does

not ordinarily purchase objects for its collections, but, since this was a particularly desirable specimen, it was worth investigating. Most collections are obtained by donations or are gathered on organized field trips.

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