

University history museum begins lecture series

The Museum of Natural and Cultural History launches 'Uncommon Treasures' and honors a late history professor

BY HALEY GORDON
FREELANCE REPORTER

A crowd buzzing with excitement sat in the Knight Law Center on Friday to listen to the story of one man who came to Oregon to preach but found himself digging in the dirt for fossils.

Director of the Condon Collection Dr. William Orr presented slides and told stories about different fossils and specimens housed in the University's Condon Collection.

The lecture kicked off the University's Museum of Natural and Cultural History annual archeology lecture series, "Uncommon Treasures:

Stories from the University of Oregon Museum and Library Collection."

Thomas Condon was Oregon's first geologist and the University's first natural history professor.

Condon was a "rapacious collector," who acquired large amounts of specimens and material, Orr said. Both Condon and his wife initially traveled to Oregon to preach Christianity.

"He was very religious, but had no problem with evolution. He saw it as God's way," Orr said.

According to Orr, 1,500-1,700 out of the 75,000 specimens in the Condon collection originally

belonged to Condon. Condon's impact on the study of natural history in Oregon is apparent in the many buildings named after him: The primary visitors' center of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument is named in recognition of Condon, as is the University's Condon Hall, which houses the geology department's offices.

Condon's children sold his collection to the University after he died in 1907.

Currently, modern bones, used for comparative research, make up one tenth of the collection, and the rest is roughly half animals and half plants, Orr said.

The lecture touched on the vast variety the collection and also discussed what paleontologists and

geologists learn from such fossils.

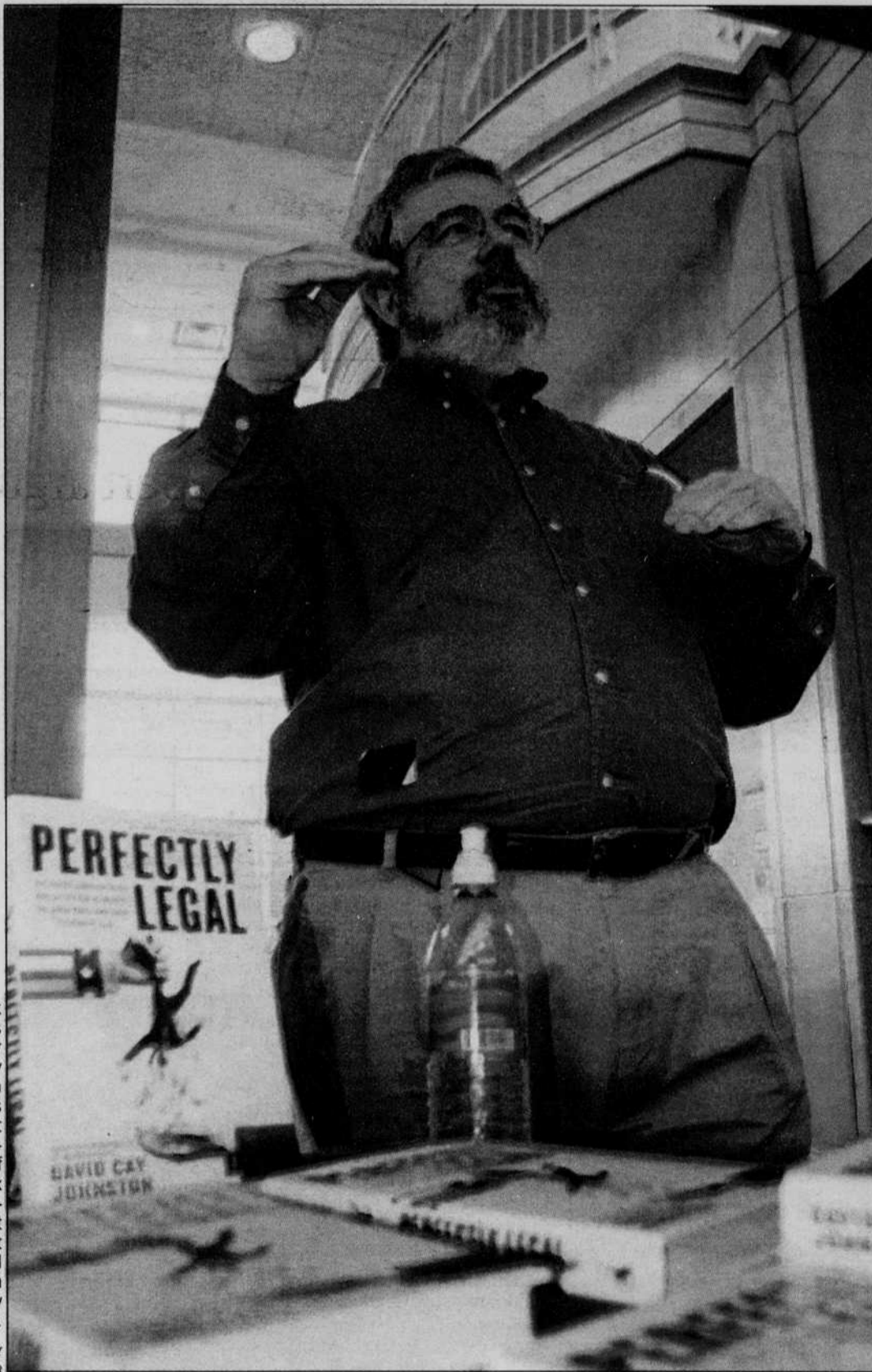
Orr also showed slides of the "only fossil egg we know of in Oregon" and explained that fossils are able to stay intact for thousands of years because of Oregon's volcanic history. Orr's lecture ended with a reception in the Museum of Natural and Cultural History, where the audience was given a glance at the renovations in progress. The lecture series "gives people another opportunity to engage" in the museum, Education Coordinator Allison Kramer said.

It also "shows the extent of what we know of Oregon's past and showcases what the University does," C. Melvin Aikens, museum director, said.

The series is arranged in chronological order, beginning with the fossil collection, he said.

The next lecture, titled "Historical Treasures from the Museum of Natural and Cultural History," will be held Friday in Knight Law Center Room 175.

Haley Gordon is a freelance reporter for the Daily Emerald



New York Times reporter David Cay Johnston promotes his book about the inequities of American tax law, "Perfectly Legal," at the Knight Law School on Saturday afternoon.

TIM BOBOSKY
PHOTOGRAPHER

Johnston: Writer pleads for voter involvement

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it," Johnston said.

Johnston also alluded to the potential for a social revolution if Americans continue to lose jobs and the economic gap increases.

"The French set up a system in which all the wealth was tied up in trusts between the church and the aristocracy. So what happened to King Louie?" Johnston said, "I don't want

that to happen here. I think the prospect of revolution in this country would make the terror of the French revolution look quite mild."

Johnston ended his speech with a positive theme and a plea for awareness.

"One of the wonderful things I've seen lately is all those pictures on TV of people lining up to vote. I don't care who they're voting for — they're getting involved," John-

ston said. "The most minimum thing you can do is read a decent newspaper every day. Listen to people whose opinions are not like yours ... people you don't like can sometimes have good ideas."

Johnston quoted author Neil Postman, saying "without even realizing it, we are giving away our democracy."

Michael A. Booth is a freelance reporter for the Daily Emerald

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