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Professor Dodson's Egyptian Dinosaur Adventure

By Patricia R. Kane-Vanni, Esq.

No one has been to the Egyptian desert to excavate dinosaur fossils since before the First World War. In 1914 German paleontologist Dr. Ernst Stromer excavated abundant fossil fauna, including land and sea animals, plants and most excitingly, dinosaurs! Sadly all of these fossil treasures, though well documented, were destroyed in an Allied bombing attack on Munich in 1943.



Dr. Dodson and the bone.

In early 1999 Josh Smith, one of **Dr. Peter Dodson's** (professor of veterinary gross anatomy) vertebrate paleontology graduate students, decided to reinvestigate the wealth of dinosaur fossils in Egypt's Western desert. His two short days of prospecting in the Bahariya Oasis revealed a number of Cretaceous-Age (100 million year old) fossils of dinosaur and fish origin littering the ground. The following year, after some extensive fundraising to finance the project, Smith and Dodson put together a team of volunteers. They included Penn graduate paleontology students and geology colleagues, to return to Egypt and search for a new fossil fauna, the lost legacy. The team included geology students Matt Lamanna, Jen Smith and Allison Tumarkin, Patricia Kane-Vanni, Drexel University geology instructor Dr. Ken Lacovara, Academy of Natural Sciences fossil preparator Jason Poole, other volunteers and an intriguing addition, the MPH production company, a major underwriter of the project. MPH shad-

owed and filmed the project for an expected television special.

The trip encompassed a six-week field season from January through February 2000. Although it was winter, temperatures varied from the 60's to the 80's. The nighttime lows hovered in the 40's. The temperatures weren't so much of a factor since the team could dress for the cold but not for the dust storms. Thankfully, after January the storms abated and the most significant work was accomplished.

There were six new productive sites excavated as well as two old Stromer sites. The majority of the finds were ancient fish and sharks, as well as snakes, turtles and crocs and some tantalizing dinosaur clues. Several *Spinosaurus* teeth, a theropod claw and teeth and a sauropod caudal (long-necked dinosaur) vertebra were discovered. But the most intriguing find came only two weeks prior to departure. As soon as excavation started, they knew they hit pay dirt. Within a four-yard radius a number

of identifiable large bones were excavated. The centerpiece was the discovery of a 5 foot, 7 inch sauropod humerus, one of the largest ever found! There is no question that this is a major find. Extensive study and comparison of the bones with identified species has verified that this is an entirely new species. The name of the new dinosaur is *Parallatitan stromeri*, meaning tidal or coastal giant — stromeri honors Ernest Stromer.

The discovery was reported in the June 1, 2001 issue of *Science*. During a press conference at Penn on May 31 the team exhibited the humerus and provided details about the find. The story received world-wide coverage in the print and electronic media. The June *Pennsylvania Gazette* featured an extensive, illustrated article. It can be found online at <<http://www.upenn.edu/gazette/0701/prendergast.html>>. A television documentary about the discovery will be aired in the near future.

First Hofmann Professor Appointed

Dr. Jill Beech, V'72, professor of medicine and chief, section of medicine and reproduction at New Bolton Center, has been appointed the first **Georgia E. and Philip B. Hofmann Professor in Equine Medicine and Reproduction**.

The new professorship will be celebrated on September 19 at New Bolton Center. Dr. Beech will give an inaugural lecture entitled "A Tribute to New Bolton Center, Its Patients and Friends."

Dr. Beech, after graduation, completed an internship in pathology at the School. In 1973 she was an intern at New Bolton Center, then a resident. She was appointed as an instructor in medicine in 1976 and joined the faculty in 1977 as assistant professor of medicine. She became an associate professor in 1983, a full professor in 1993, and

section chief in 2001. Dr. Beech's primary research interest is in neuromuscular diseases of horses. Dr. Beech is an accomplished potter who has had exhibitions at area galleries. Her pieces are always "snapped up" at the annual SCAVMA Auction.

The Georgia E. and Philip B. Hofmann Professorship is the 18th endowed chair at the School. It was established through the estate of Georgia



Hofmann, an owner and breeder of Thoroughbred horses. Mr. and Mrs. Hofmann were avid horse enthusiasts and had a long relationship with the School. In 1970 they established the Georgia and Philip Hofmann Center for Animal Reproduction at New Bolton Center. Mr. Hofmann served on the School's Board of Overseers and was chairman for a number of years.