

## Back in time just a short drive

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NORMAN — On a foggy day in January, Amy Byers carefully fits clay plasticine around the bones that ridge the fin on the back of a 300-million-year-old Edaphosaurus.

Later, she'll brush in silicone rubber to create molds that will capture every detail of every bone.

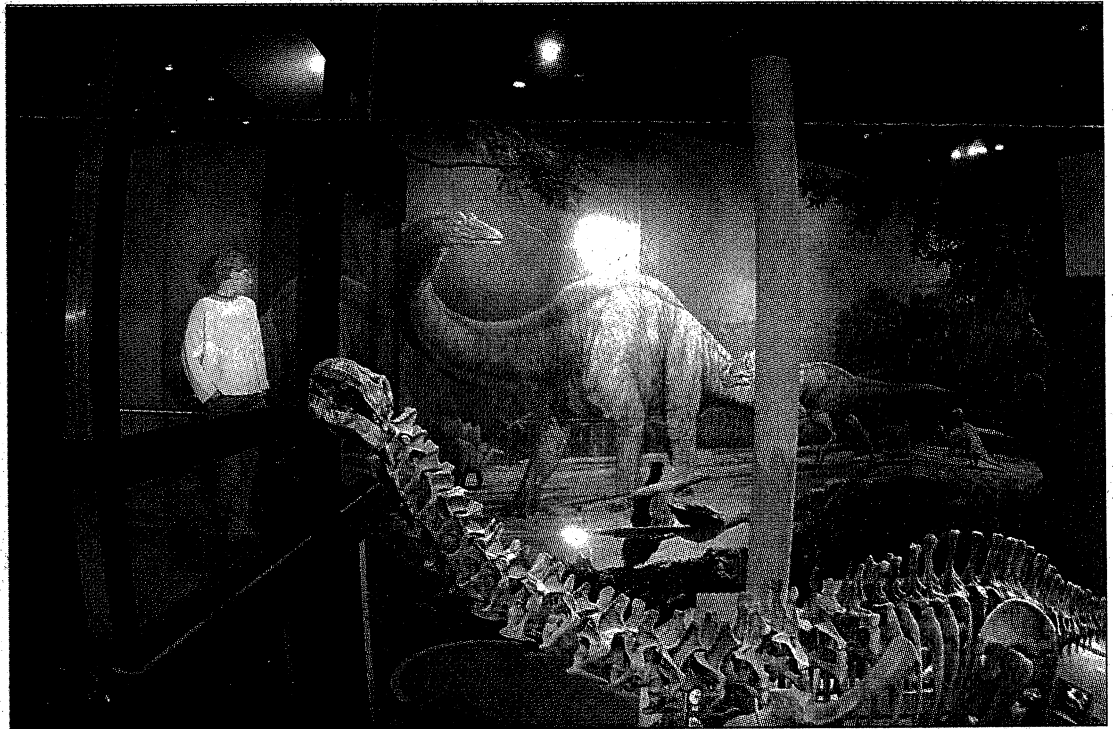
A mold-maker from Research Casting International (RCI) of Beamsville, Ontario, she is helping to make a casting of this "pavement lizard" at the request of the National Science Museum (of Japan).

A year and a half ago, a Japanese visitor attending the annual meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology happened to see the mount on display at the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. He wanted one like it for the museum in Japan that he is involved in refurbishing. Unfortunately, there aren't enough dinosaur bones to go around.

That's where RCI comes in. The company finds the finest fossil specimens of an animal and replicates them for dinosaur-hungry museums all over the world.

Upstairs in the vertebrate paleontology lab of the Museum of Natural History, a team from RCI has obtained permission from Kyle Davies, the museum's fossil preparer for vertebrate paleontology, to separate the bones of the Edaphosaurus and cast them individually. That way, the replica — made from a lightweight polyester resin product

**TRAVELIN'**  
**ON**



COURTESY PHOTO

A thrilling view of the 'Clash of the Titans' exhibit in the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History's Hall of Ancient Life can be seen from this glass-walled "Dinovator" as it rises from the first floor to the second.

strengthened by metal wires — can be assembled in a new pose.

It might be the rigid, four-square position for which show cattle are famous. Or it might be much more imaginative — say, an angry mother rearing up to defend her young. A veritable "action dinosaur."

The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History has enlisted RCI's help on some of its best-known mounts. For instance, there are very few Apatosaurus skulls around because they're so small they tend to be easily crushed, explains Linda Coldwell, publications and promotions specialist for the museum.

The one found in the Oklahoma Panhandle by J. Willis Stovall, the first museum direc-

tor, lacked a skull. So when museum officials wanted to pack a wallop by putting this 93-foot-long monster on display, they turned to RCI to copy another Apatosaurus's brain-pan. It had to be enlarged, because this is a bigger skeleton.

Hint to first-time museum-goers: The experience of looking down on the Apatosaurus from the elevator as it rises to the second floor is a treat not to be missed!

One of the museum's more fragile holdings, "Treasures from the Vault," is a temporary exhibit that will be on view Feb. 24 through May 9. The museum collections include more than 6 million objects and specimens spanning more than 500 million years of history.

Housed in a climate-controlled and high-security 60,000-square-foot copper-roofed "vault" in the heart of the museum, these collections are central to the research and documentary work of the museum's curators and to other scientists around the world.

### To go

To reach the museum from Lawton, take I-44 to the Blanchard/Norman exit and go east on Oklahoma 9 to I-35. Get on northbound I-35 and go one mile to the Oklahoma 9 exit for Tecumseh. Turn east and drive two miles to Chautauqua Avenue. The museum is two blocks north on the right-hand side of Chautauqua. Its phone number is (405) 325-4712.