

Faster! We must bring a dinosaur back to life

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THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR
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Peter May is in a race against time to piece together a puzzle that has been slumbering for 150 million years.

He and his team have seven more days to rebuild the skeleton of a barosaurus from bones left forgotten in a storage box at the Royal Ontario Museum for 27 years.

Nicknamed Gordo, the 24-metre-long dinosaur was so big, some researchers speculate it might have had as many as eight hearts to help funnel the blood up its incredibly long neck.

Its femur (thigh bone) alone spans more than 1.5 metres.

May and his team are putting the finishing touches to a project he says would normally take two to three workers around two years to complete.

But May, who grew up in Hamilton, was given six and a half weeks to do the job.

Toronto's ROM came knocking in mid-October and May threw 15 of his guys on the task of putting Gordo together for future display at the museum.

Some of them work from 5 a.m. until 8 p.m. to get the job done.

Is May worried he won't make the deadline?

"Not yet."

When Gordo is finally resurrected at the ROM, he'll be the largest dinosaur ever displayed in Canada, experts say.

May's company, Research Casting International, has assembled dinosaur skeletons for museums from New York to Tokyo.

"We've probably built more dinosaurs than anyone else in the world," he says.

Born in England, May -- now 52 -- moved to Hamilton when he was eight.

He went to Barton Secondary School on Palmer Road.

May's interest then wasn't dinosaurs but art. He recalls chiselling figurines in his parents' Upper Ottawa and Mohawk area back yard. They thought he made a mess.

"I did it on their lawn and there was lots of plaster and chippings all over the grass so I had to clean it all up before the lawn mower went over it," said May.

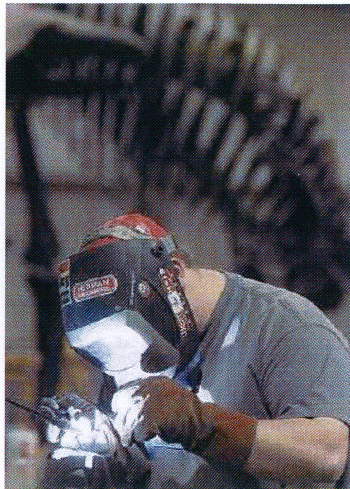
He nurtured that artistic interest by hanging out with folks from the Hamilton Artists Co-Op, now called Hamilton Artists Inc.

Knowing nothing about dinosaurs, the young graduate in fine arts saw a ROM ad for a technician in paleontology while riding in a carpool van on his way to work surveying for the Nanticoke refinery before it was built.

"The night before the interview, I grabbed the Encyclopedia Britannica to read about paleontology and proceeded to fall asleep ... after about the first paragraph."






He scored the job anyway.

That was 1977. And it became his life's work. The father of three who now lives in Oakville has been putting the large bones together ever since, working for the ROM, an Alberta museum, then his own company since 1987.



Pawel Dwulit, Special to the Hamilton Spectator

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