

PALEOPARADOXIA DEDICATED



IT WAS SLAC'S VERY FIRST scientific discovery. No atoms were smashed. No physics was involved. The accelerator was only just in the process of being built. A bulldozer went off the correct path and, to everyone's surprise, unearthed an almost complete skeleton (without a head), of a *paleoparadoxia*, an ancient sea mammal that probably looked something like a hippo with frog legs. Almost thirty years later, a full-size model of the skeleton is nearly completed.

Adele Panofsky, wife of the former director of SLAC, Pief Panofsky, took an immediate interest in the excavation of the bones. While Stanford wasn't going to keep the bones, she wanted at least a replica here, especially because she wished to dedicate it to a recently deceased friend, V.L. "Van" VanderHoof, who was a paleontologist himself and a forerunner in the study of the demostylus, a cousin of the animal found at SLAC.

In exchange for the actual skeleton, the University of Califor-

nia at Berkeley, gave SLAC plaster cast copies of the disassembled bones in January of 1969. Adele recalls, "I was flabbergasted, and thought, 'Now, what do we do with them?'" But with a promise of help from a friend at the USGS, Charles "Rep" Repenning, she set out to spend the next three months putting it together. "Well, the three months went by," she says, pauses for a moment, then adds "and so did many years."

She worked three days a week, teaching herself all she needed to know. The most intellectually challenging part—and only part not yet completely finished—was planning how the teeth should be lined up, since no examples of a full set of teeth have ever been found. Ironically, she derived much information from a tooth that VanderHoof himself excavated in a pile of demostylus teeth.

So, on September 4, Adele Panofsky finally stood in front of the completed skeleton—an embroidered *paleoparadoxia* emblazoned on the back of her shirt—to dedicate the results of almost twenty-years' worth of work. In the interim she has become a respected, self-taught paleontologist, and her restoration of the animal's skull has been distributed to a number of museums. A plaque which says "Dedicated to the memory of V.L. VanderHoof 1904-1964, geologist, paleontologist, friend of physicists" was the last addition, and SLAC's first experiment is finished at last.

—Karen Fox