

# Exhibit isn't for people with rocks in their heads

By LAURIE SLOTHOWER  
Sentinel Staff Writer

**C**HANCES are, you haven't thought much about fossils lately. Geologic remains do not generate the same public interest as MTV. People don't drive around with bumper stickers reading, "I (Heart) My Fossils." Newspaper editors are not besieged by press releases on "1001 Handy Household Uses for Fossils" sent by the American Fossil Industry. And you'll probably never see the author of a hot new book on fossils promoting his work on the Johnny Carson show.

But fossils can be fun, according to Frank Perry, who will be on hand to discuss his lifelong passion when the Santa Cruz City Museum unveils a new series of geologic exhibits at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

"Ever since I was a child, I've always been interested in natural sciences," says Perry, a soft-spoken man who seems right at home in the library-like confines of Santa Cruz City Museum. "The study of fossils combines biology and geology."

He added, "I could give you a lot of technical reasons why people should know geology — like, you should know about earthquakes so you can protect your house. But I'm interested because it's an integral, fascinating part of our natural environment and there's still a lot to be learned from it."

The celebration Friday will mark the grand opening of a series of permanent exhibits covering earthquakes, Santa Cruz County geology, marine and shark fossils, and the lime industry.

Perry, a freelance museum consultant, helped design the new exhibits and even donated artifacts — a sledge hammer in an exhibit about the lime industry and some rocks in the geology display.

The other displays were donated by private collectors or were purchased with money from the Museum Association.

"This is the first time the museum has had a whole room devoted to geology, and it's the only major exhibit on geology in Santa Cruz," Perry said.

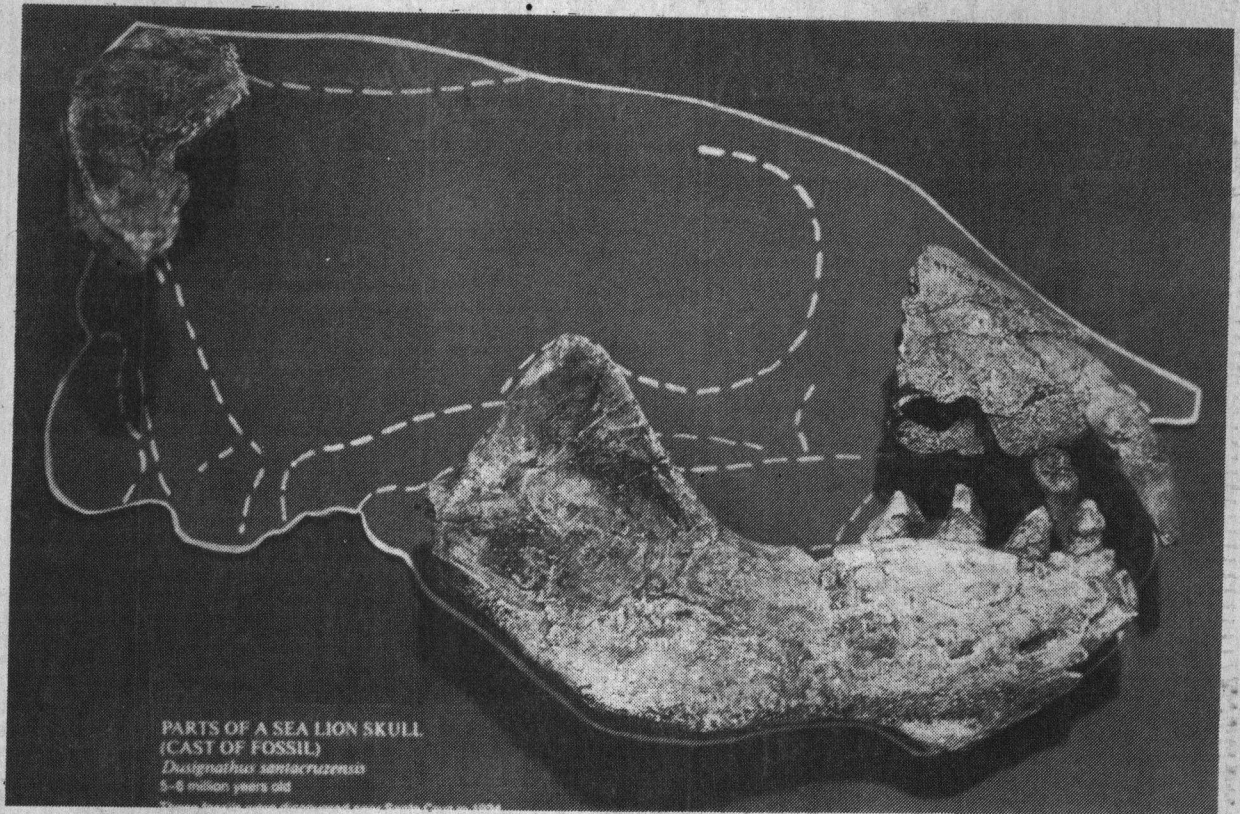
The section on earthquakes features old newspaper articles about the 1906 quake and historic pictures. The lime industry display has photos donated by UCSC. The geology exhibit has samples of rocks which can be touched.

An ongoing slide presentation of geology in Santa Cruz County is due to be installed by Friday.

Perry is a author of a book called — what else? — "Fossils of Santa Cruz County."

The man most worthy of the title "Mr. Fossil" says fossils in Santa Cruz are young — less than 60 million years old — quite young in comparison to the four billion year history on the earth.

The shark's jaws on display in one glass case technically are not even fossils, Perry points out. Plant or



Graphics complete the picture for fossil enthusiasts.

animal remains must be at least 11,000 years old to be considered fossils, says Perry.

Other parts of the new exhibition deal with important aspects of geology in the county.

Like the lime industry, an important aspect of Santa Cruz's past, according to Perry.

During the 1880s, 90 percent of all the lime used in the San Francisco Bay Area came from quarries in Santa Cruz. Mortar made from Santa Cruz lime binds buildings all over Northern California.

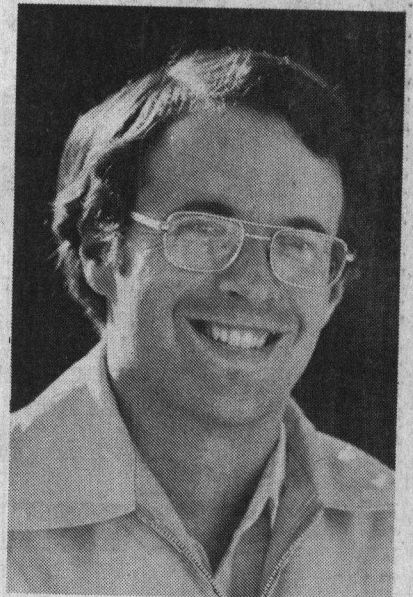
"If it weren't for the lime industry, there wouldn't be a UCSC," says Perry, noting that the land on which the university sits was owned by lime-quarrying Cowell family. Kilns

used to bake marble into lime still sit at the entrance to the university, and the college's outdoor amphitheater is in an abandoned quarry.

Then there's the Coastal Environment display, which shows Natural Bridges State Park when it was still a natural bridge. (The bridge formation gave way to erosion in 1980, creating a natural chunk of rock and a natural island.)

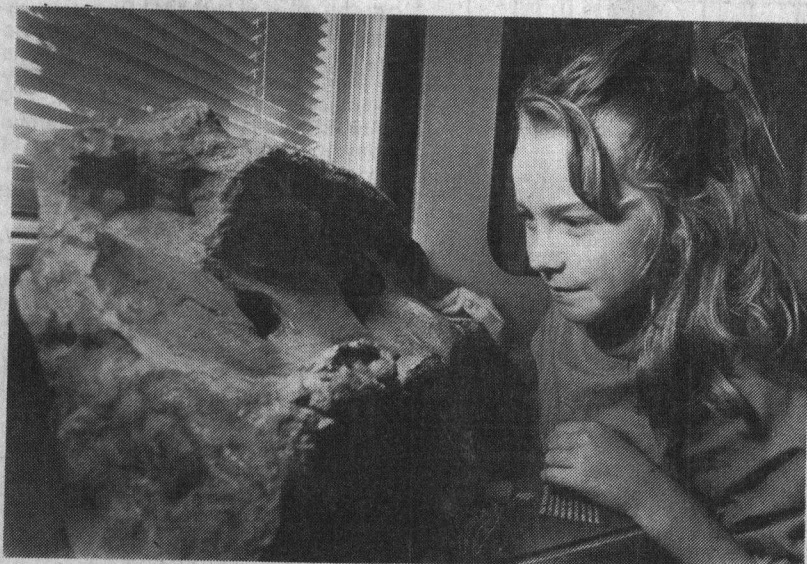
Rock formations such as the one at Natural Bridges were fairly common in Santa Cruz before the turn of the century, Perry says. Most were washed away with time.

Perry concluded, "Geology is a very broad subject, and I think there's something for everyone in these exhibits."



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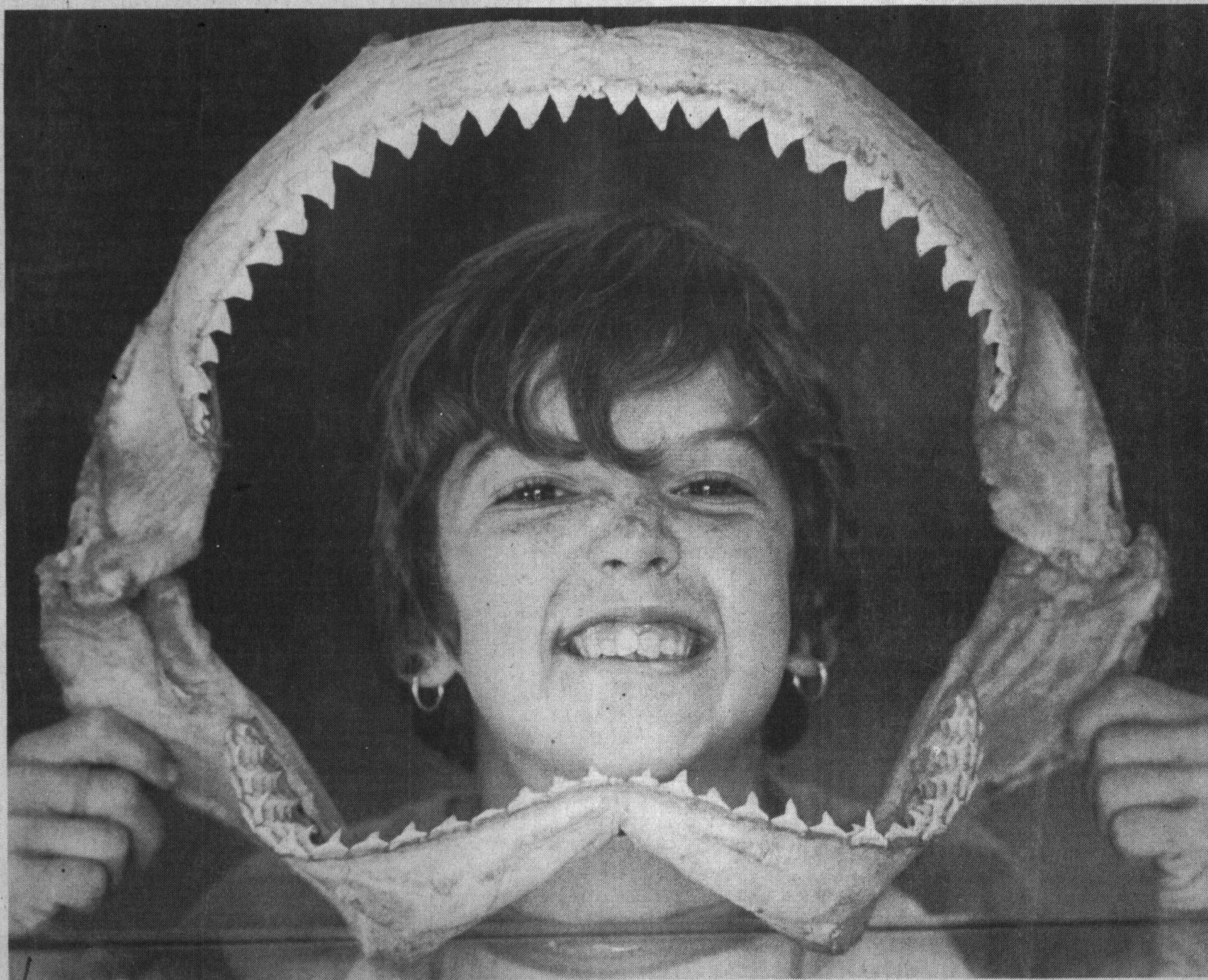
Autumn Glunt puzzles over whale vertebrae.

Photos by Bill Lovejoy

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# *Geology* Fun with fossils



Shark jaw inspires a little mimicry from Brietta Lunsford.