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Symposium on evolution 'growing' experience



by Jim Miller

In theory, evolution began millions of years ago. Its impact and relevance seems as fresh as ever, if the recent Symposium on Human Evolution is any indicator. Hundreds of people sat quietly enthralled through the two days of the symposium which featured presentations on a variety of topics.

The topics given a formal treatment were: The Geological Framework, Hominid Evolution in Africa, Fossil Man in Java, Fossil Man in China, The Human Brain, and Evolution of Human Behavior.

Although the language was complex at times, and the questions detailed and precise, it was the humanity of the six men involved that kept the symposium alive. Dr. Jacob, for example, in

the summation of his argument that evolutionary theory was constantly changing named two groups involved in this activity. Their names? Lumpers and splitters, of course.

The final few hours of the gathering saw the six speakers gather as a group to field questions from each other and the audience.

At this point the smoke detectors on the eighth floor took charge and the building evacuated.

When the audience regathered Dr. Cooke suggested it might be an appropriate time to discuss the question about the first use of fire. It was suggested that Peking man used fire 1/2 million years ago.

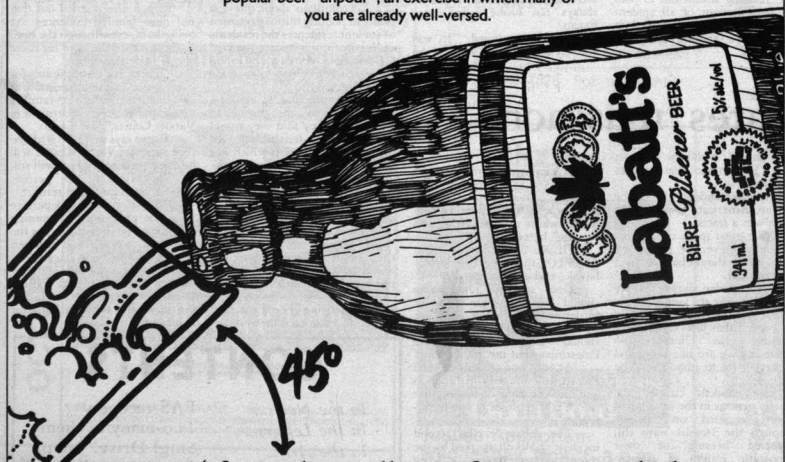
The development of bipedalism in man was discussed. Here it was felt that the need for man to carry food to a nursing mate was the primary reason. If man could walk upright he could presumably carry more. I'll leave the implications to the sexists.

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There are many theories regarding this particular facet of the beer mystique. The one we favour builds a beer head from the bottom. Start by keeping the glass upright and pouring down the middle until a head begins to form. Stop, let the foam build, then tilt the glass to a forty-five degree angle and continue to pour down the side. As the glass fills, bring it back to the upright position leaving a head about two fingers tall. The beer pour is nearly always followed by the ever popular beer "unpour", an exercise in which many of you are already well-versed.



Lesson #4 from the College of Beer Knowledge

Australopithecus was probably the first 'flasher'.

At this point one of the panelists gave a vivid portrayal of man hunched over protecting breasts, genitals and vulnerable underbelly. Suddenly evolution was on fast forward with the professor standing erect. Which lead another to suggest that Australopithecus was probably the first 'flasher'.

Dr. Tobias and Dr. Jacob got into a discussion about the relative use of cannibalism by early man. Dr. Tobias described the custom of name giving seen in some areas today. Apparently in some societies there are not enough names to go around. So man, being an intelligent creature, came up with a solution. If someone is born, someone else must be sacrificed; their brains cooked and eaten by the newborn's father. Dr. Jacob countered that if ancient man had practised 'nutritional' rather than 'ritual' cannibalism he wouldn't have lasted.

On a slightly more serious note the panel seemed in full agreement on their opinion that man sprang from a common ancestor. They discounted the theory that man developed into homo sapiens in separate locations.

Video tapes of the symposium will be available through the radio and television department of the U of A. The Canadian Journal of Anthropology hopes to publish the materials and proceedings of the symposium by the spring.

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