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Sealed Air Packaging Professionals Create Custom Solution To Protect 77-Million-Year-Old Dinosaur Fossil

DANBURY, Conn. (Sept. 3, 2008) – It was definitely the most unique packaging request Bill Armstrong had ever received. “It was a true chance in a lifetime,” said Armstrong, technical development manager for Sealed Air Corporation, who led a team of packaging professionals to design, test and implement a packaging solution to transport a two-ton, irreplaceable artifact across the country.

Uncovering the Past

After spending 77 million years underground, a one-of-a-kind, “mummified” dinosaur was discovered by the Judith River Dinosaur Institute (JRDI) in Malta, Mont. on July 27, 2000. Dubbed “Leonardo,” this *Brachylophosaurus Canadensis* (duck-billed dinosaur) was cited by the Guinness Book of Records as the most complete, reticulated dinosaur fossil ever unearthed.

A crew of more than 25 volunteers, including paleontologists and geologists, successfully extracted Leonardo from the cement-like tomb for research in 2001. The dinosaur had been remarkably preserved over the eons, so paleontologists suspected there would be fossilized organs within the torso of the creature. However, to find out for certain, the science team needed to transport the fragile artifact from Malta, Mont. to NASA’s Johnson Space Center in Houston where it could be scanned using state-of-the-art equipment. The entire journey was recorded for a documentary that will air on the Discovery HD television network in September.

Discovering a Protective Packaging Solution

In early 2007, Art Anderson, a member of the science team working on the project, began searching for a protective packaging solution that would safely transport the fossil more than 2,000 miles across the country. Anderson was referred to Armstrong, who specializes in creating custom-packaging solutions for the toughest of challenges.

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Throughout 2007, Armstrong led a team of packaging experts drawn from Sealed Air, International Safe Transit Association (ISTA), Lansmont Corp. and the U.S. Navy to develop and test the best packaging solution for the situation.

After months of planning and several trips to Malta, the Sealed Air team finally traveled to Montana in February 2008 to execute the design they had created over the latter half of 2007 in Sealed Air's Danbury Packaging Dynamics Lab. During their three days on-site, the team assembled the base on which the fossil would ride, built the reinforced crate to hold and protect the fossil and completed the shock isolation system on which the crate would travel.

Leonardo was lifted off its supports in the JRDI Field Station and mounted on the new base for transport. The fossil was shrink-wrapped with Sealed Air's CorTuff[®] film to stabilize the fragile surface. Typically used for industrial applications such as carpeting and construction materials, CorTuff[®] high-abuse shrink film is the strongest shrink film available today – wrapping a wide range of product shapes, weights and sizes on-site and on-demand.

After the film was successfully shrink-wrapped around the fossil, the unit was blocked and braced on the base using Sealed Air's Instapak[®] foam – a fast, easy and versatile process for on-line, on-site production of protective polyurethane foam packaging. Instapak[®] foam has unique cushioning properties that protect products during shipping, warehousing and handling. Significantly reducing the costs of storage and handling, Instapak[®] foam expands up to 200 times its liquid volume in seconds to form custom-fit protective cushions.

The team then carefully moved the assembled crate to the trailer and mounted it atop the shock isolation system layered with three inches of Sealed Air's Stratocell[®] H polyethylene foam. The Stratocell[®] H foam was strategically arrayed to support and protect the 4,000-pound fossil. Stratocell[®] H polyethylene high density foam provides cushioning protection against repeated shock and transport vibrations.

Making History

Armstrong and the Sealed Air team, along with several of the project scientists, eagerly awaited the tractor trailer's arrival in Houston after its 2,000-mile journey. The crate was carefully removed from the truck into a NASA hangar where it was finally opened.

“Not a grain of sand was out of place,” said one of the head paleontologists on the science team. “Sealed Air exceeded our packaging expectations.”

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“Obviously an opportunity like this is rare,” said Armstrong. “Working with a team of experts to transport a 77-million-year-old, irreplaceable item was beyond my wildest dreams.”

Shortly after unpacking the crate, the science team with support from NASA started scanning the fossil to determine if the fossilized organs were indeed intact. The scanning took place under strict security, with the findings to be revealed when *Secrets of the Dinosaur Mummy*, the documentary filmed throughout the process, debuts worldwide at 9 p.m. EST on Sept. 14 on Discovery HD.

“We don’t know yet what the scientists found inside the fossil, but we know nothing was displaced during transit,” said Armstrong. “We’ll have to watch the documentary to find out.”

Leonardo is one of only four existing *brachylophosaurus* specimens uncovered to date. The fossil was named Leonardo because there was graffiti on a boulder near where it was discovered that read “Leonard Webb and Geneva Jordan, 1917.” Paleontologists believe the dinosaur was about four years old when it died.

For more information on Sealed Air protective packaging solutions, visit www.sealedair.com.

About Sealed Air

Sealed Air is a leading global provider and manufacturer of a wide range of packaging and performance-based materials and equipment systems that serve food, medical, and an array of industrial and consumer applications. For more than half a century, Sealed Air employees around the globe have applied deep understanding of customers’ businesses to deliver innovative packaging solutions. Operating in 51 countries, Sealed Air’s widely recognized and respected brands include Bubble Wrap® cushioning, Cryovac® food packaging technologies, Jiffy® protective mailers and Instapak® foam-in-place systems. For more information about Sealed Air, please visit the Company’s web site at www.sealedair.com.

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