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Press release : 2003 : 05 : 28 : Anthropologist Fields Experience in New Position at USF St. Petersburg

Pam Bellis

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ANTHROPOLOGIST FIELDS EXPERIENCE IN NEW POSITION AT USF ST. PETERSBURG

St. Petersburg Fla - May 28, 2003



Cooking pots give up the secrets of a society to John Arthur. Arthur, newly hired as an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, has spent his career studying pots and other artifacts of past cultures so that he can better understand current society.

Arthur brings nearly 20 years of archaeological field experience to the University. He began in 1987 as a field crew member for an archaeological research company in Texas. In the summer of 2002, he was archaeological field director of an international research project studying the Konso people of central Ethiopia.

"One focus of the research in Africa is to understand the historical changes that have shaped the lives of women Konso hideworkers," Arthur explained. "I led an excavation of a historically abandoned hideworker household. Based on the oral history and excavations, we were able to locate each of the five houses and their associated outside activities within the household compound. Analysis of the different types of materials is presently being undertaken and in combination with the cultural and ethnoarchaeological studies should provide a significant understanding of the developmental sequences that occurred within this specific household, and contribute to a fuller picture of the historical changes within the Konso region."

He recently completed a book titled *The History of Pots: Ceramic Ethnoarchaeology among the Gamo of Southwestern Ethiopia*. It is scheduled to be published by University of Utah Press as part of the Foundations for Archaeological Inquiry Series.

Arthur will bring his archaeological expertise to bear on the local area as well. He plans to develop a historical archaeology project in the St. Petersburg area that will be associated with the Florida Studies Program of Distinction. "I believe that there are important historical issues of Florida that have not yet been investigated and so I am excited to explore these

important cultural facets of Florida history," he said.

"We welcome Dr. Arthur as a member of our anthropology faculty," said Gary Olson, interim associate vice president of academic affairs. "Through his research orientation and commitment to students, he will make a valuable contribution to our already outstanding program."

Arthur is specifically interested in the Horn of Africa and the American Southwest with broader interests in Africa and North America. Currently, Arthur is working on a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation to conduct an historical archaeological and ethnoarchaeological study of the Gamo region of southern Ethiopia. In addition to excavating abandoned households, Arthur will obtain oral histories to help construct a history of the region and aid in the understanding of settlement patterns indicating the development of craft specializations and social stratification in the region.

He received his doctorate in 2000 from the University of Florida in anthropology, and bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Texas.

He has taught at the University of Florida since the fall of 2000.

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