

# Cavities hold key to prehistoric mystery



Photo by Mark Pynes

Teeth are often the only skeletal remains left intact for anthropological study after the ravages of time.

## Caveman's smile inspires anthropologist

By Jennifer Young  
Of the Emerald

Anthropology Professor John Lukacs has put some bite into his research about a prehistoric culture by examining teeth to draw his conclusions.

Lukacs work has unearthed the first documented case of fluorosis in a pre-historic culture. Fluorosis, an excess of fluoride, appeared in all of the remains Lukacs studied on a 500-acre dig in Mehrgarh, Pakistan.

The study of teeth rather than skeletal remains is an important research technique in the study of ancient cultures because often bones are too deteriorated to provide any significant biological data.

"Exposing the bones to air often turns them to dust. Sometimes you can see it virtually happening before your eyes," said Lukacs.

Lukacs concentrated his study on the only intact remains: teeth. When looking for the signs of fluorosis — the prevented formation of the outer layer of tooth enamel, discoloration or staining, the low incidence of dental decay — Lukacs noted that a symptom of fluorosis was missing, a reduction in tooth size. The Mehrgarh people have among the largest teeth

of southern Asiatic populations of 8,000 B.C. "These people did not achieve their total (tooth) growth potential and still they have a tremendous tooth surface," said Lukacs.

Lukacs recently shared his research in Brussels with fellow archaeologists at the Seventh International Conference of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe.

Tooth size is one way a physical anthropologist distinguishes the mode of a society. The Mehrgarhs consumed a coarse, unprocessed diet typical of a "pre-agricultural" civilization.

The Mehrgarhs had a dental decay rate of less than 1 percent as compared to 25 percent for agricultural societies.

The source of fluoride in Pakistan is the Bolan River. The river passes through limestone deposits near its source where fluoride occurs and is carried downriver. The present-day population of Mehrgarh exhibit the same signs of fluorosis as did the people of 8,000 B.C.

Lukacs plans to continue researching the biology of the Neolithic people of Pakistan by studying in closer detail a more complete set of skeletal remains at Karachi.

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## Fast Continued from Page 1

peace activist 17 years ago.

Even before the fast, both Gray and his wife have identified with the hungry of the world, have emulated their condition. Since 1970, he has subsisted on the World Equity Budget, which is the world's gross product divided by the world's population — about \$90 a month. This often leads them to peruse the grocery store dumpsters of Eugene.

Gray does not want to be called a martyr or a "special" person. His action, which many would call "drastic," is something any "ordinary person would take if a child fell in a river or was in a burning house — you'd rush in and try to save that child. It's just an ordinary human response," Gray said.

"We feel the world is in that kind of situation — a situation in which it may self-destruct in a very short time. People must face this crisis, and possibly by our action, which is an action of high risk, it will somehow awaken people to the nature of the crisis. It will help people to look right at the bomb and act appropriately to stop it now. That's our hope."

To prepare for the fast, Gray and the other fasters have gotten themselves into the "best

physical, mental and spiritual health." The normally thin Gray fattened himself up about 20 pounds and had a medical exam just before he began the fast Saturday. During the fast, the fasters will drink only fresh, spring water. Without food, the body cannot handle chlorine, Gray said.

Fasting is not new to Gray. He has participated in several fasts, including a 12-day fast in Sicily to bring attention to construction of a cruise missile base in Comiso.

The three fasting centers are in Bonn, Paris and Oakland. Beside the indefinite fast, thousands of people and 11 nations have planned fasts of a day, a week or longer.

"I don't especially like fasting," Gray says. "I'm not looking forward to it. The best thing about fasting is when you can stop, as far as I'm concerned."

"The latter stages are not pleasant. From what we've learned, it's not an easy death. But you don't think about that when your child falls in the river. You don't think how cold the water is. You're going to save your child."

"If it makes a difference, then it will be worthwhile — whether it costs me my life."

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