

# UNLV Professor Arriaza Featured in 'National Geographic'

BY JEFF HAMILTON  
STAFF REPORTER

Imagine digging through the sand on a South American beach and finding the mummified body of a child who lived over 5,000 years ago.

Some might be disgusted by the rotted corpse, or the ghoulish grin on the mummy's face. That someone would not be Bernardo Arriaza.

Arriaza, assistant professor of physical anthropology at UNLV, is the author of a 22-page article in the March issue of National Geographic.

The article details the discovery and preservation of the Chinchorro Mummies of Arica, Chile, buried in the dry soil above a pacific beach. The mummies, discovered in 1983, are the remnants of a prehistoric people who began preserving their dead 2,000 years before the Egyptians began mummifying their pharaohs, the oldest example of artificial mummification in the world.

Arriaza has dedicated himself to studying these time travelers, which he says "represents one of the most startling archaeological collections in the New world."

Lucky for the mummy, there are people like Arriaza. He finds a corpse like that fascinating. He painstakingly examines it, dissecting every inch of the body and face. He discovers that the body has been stuffed with dirt and plants and reinforced with sticks and twigs. He could also see that the skin has been covered by a thick paste and painted black, or red.

The article examines the lives of the Chinchorro Indians, who lived in Chile some 5,000 years ago. He attended the Second World Congress on Mummy Studies in Colombia this past February, where he and his wife conducted a symposium on the Indians and their mummifying ways. The article has benefited every part involved, as he explains.

"The work we've done is good not only for myself, but for the magazine, for the anthropological community and for bringing recognition to this university," Arriaza said. "Indeed, this is some high profile recognition for the university to be mentioned in *National Geographic*."

"In Arica, ancient remains are as common as casinos are in Las Vegas," Arriaza writes in his ar-



PHOTO BY STEVE HOBBS  
Bernardo Arriaza has been studying mummies in Arica, Chile and naturally offer a class on the subject next semester.

ticle. That would explain the attention given to the area by the anthropological community. It is also an important tie-in to the beginnings of Arriaza's career.

He was born in Coltauco, a small town south of Santiago, and went to school at the University of Tarapaca. From there, he applied for and got an internship at the museum in Azapa.

Although he was already interested in history and archeology before he arrived at the museum, he says that it was there that he realized he wanted to be an anthropologist.

"Working at the museum gave me a foundation for many future opportunities," says Arriaza.

After the University of Tarapaca (where he is still an associate researcher), Arriaza came to the United States to study. He first learned English in Tucson, then went to Arizona State University to complete his doctorate in physical anthropology (in 1986). After Arizona, he went to Guam to work for an archeolog-

ical firm for six months.

Arriaza then was working on his post-doctorate at the Smithsonian Institute, when he responded to a call for an anthropology professor at UNLV, and began teaching at the university about three years ago. Now, he teaches three classes per semester and serves on various committees in Las Vegas and in Reno.

For the past two years, he spent his time revising his article for *National Geographic* and preparing for the World Congress on Mummy Studies. With so much going on, one would think that it is time for a rest. Perhaps, Arriaza says, but there is still so much to prepare for.

Next semester, he plans to teach a class on, what else? "Yep mummies." He says that the course will study mummies as documents of sorts. They will be examined as historical records, scientific tools, religious symbols, and as how they are portrayed in modern cinema (everybody has the classic picture of a mummy

wrapped in cloth, battling the Wolfman, or some crazy thing like that).

As for the future of his own research, Arriaza plans for a 1998 Third World Congress on Mummy Studies, in his native Chile. While at the second conference, his and his wife's main focus was to "provide a continuity of research into the remains of this ancient culture."

This congress will concentrate on the much needed preservation of the mummies. Arriaza says that they are so fragile, just a slight bump can break off a body part, hurting the examination process, and no one likes it when a mummy head starts roll-

ing around the office, right?

Arriaza feels there is a need for new, insect-proof containers where the light, humidity, and temperature can be regulated for these remains. Arriaza is busy applying for grants from various arts and museum agencies, in addition to *National Geographic* for such future endeavors.

However, his main focus is still to bring more scientists and scholars into the examination of the mummies. Only then can they begin to answer all the questions about the Chinchorro mummies, and as the professor emphatically states, "Right now I have more questions than answers."

## Spring Break Activities

### Dollars for Scholars Sweepstakes

UNLV will again benefit from the proceeds of the us Home "Dollars for Scholars," a home give-away sweepstakes.

Sweepstakes tickets will be available after the official kick-off March 18. Ten finalists will draw for the winning house key during a live kvbc Channel 3 broadcast on Wednesday, May 24.

The goal of this year's raffle is to raise \$100,000 for scholarships and other financial support for UNLV students.

us Home donated a three-bedroom, two-bath house in the Heritage park Community on Sunrise Mountain. When completed, the value will be over \$125,000.

Tickets for the charitable lottery, approved by the Nevada Gaming control Board, will be sold for \$10 each. Mail-in applications are available at any us Home location, Channel 3, Sunny 106.5, KFM 102 and Y-93 radio stations, the UNLV Foundation and all Terrible Herbst locations. Students will also man booths in both the Boulevard and Meadows Malls every weekend until May 24, excluding Easter Sunday and Earth Fair '95.

### Bed Race for Children's Miracle Network

The City of Las Vegas Department of Parks and Leisure Activities, along with the Johnson Community School, will host an exciting day of family fun starting at 10 a.m. on Saturday, March 18.

The event, featuring races, contests and a variety of carnival games will be in the parking area adjacent to Angel Park on Westcliff Drive and Durango. The event is free and open to the public.

A bed race, the day's main attraction, will feature beds on rollers or casters being pushed through an obstacle course. Each bed is to have a team of four to five pushers and one rider.

For safety reasons, the bed race is limited to those 16 or older. The last day to register for the race is Friday. The cost is \$25 for the first bed, \$15 for each additional bed entered. The proceeds will be donated to the Children's Miracle Network.

For more information and race guidelines, please call 229-6175.

### Viennese Weekend

The cultural & Community Affairs Division of the City of Las Vegas Department of Parks and Leisure Activities invites you to dance or listen to the romantic waltzes and lively polkas of Johann Strauss Jr., in the atmosphere of old Vienna.

"An Evening in Old Vienna" is slated for 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 18 with the 15th annual "An Afternoon in Old Vienna" is set for 2 p.m. on Sunday, March 19. Both events are at the Charleston Heights Arts Center Ball-

room, 800 S. Brush Street. Alan Lewis will conduct the Las Vegas Civic Symphony.

The ballroom features a suspended wood floor. Prizes will be awarded for the best-costumed couple, individual lady and gentlemen (costumes should be circa 1856-1899 and are optional).

Admission is \$10 general and \$8 for students, seniors and handicapped. Reservations can be made for parties of 8 or more. A no-host bar, provided by the friends of the arts center, and light refreshments will be available.

For more information, please call 229-6383.

### Anasazi Lecture

The Las Vegas Natural History Museum is proud to present Pat Olson, who will lecture on "Anasazi in Southern Nevada," on March 16 at 7 p.m.

Admission is \$3 for the lecture, which is open to the public and includes a museum tour. The address is 900 Las Vegas Blvd., North. Museum members will be admitted free.

Olson is the assistant curator and staff archaeologist of the Lost City Museum in Overton.

For more information, please call 384-3466.

### Asthma Support Group

Parents and families of Asthmatics Support Group will meet Tuesday, March 21 at 7 p.m. at the Rehabilitation Hospital of Nevada, Las Vegas at 1250 South Valley View.

Baby-sitting and refreshments will be available.

For more information, please call 644-8202.

### Discounts on Disney's Spring Break '95

Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Florida is offering college students a special price to enjoy spring break.

From now until April 7, students can purchase a one-day, one-park admission for \$25 plus tax, including same-day admission to Pleasure Island, a nighttime entertainment complex. Present valid college I.D. when purchasing the special ticket.

Some new thrills recently added to the multi-themed park are:

The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror: At Disney-MGM Studios. Visitors venture into another dimension, then embark on a high-speed journey 13 stories down an elevator shaft into the Twilight Zone.

Innovations at Epcot: High-tech playground where guests play with more than 200 interactive video games, test hundreds of new gadgets and gizmos and visit the Disney Imagination lab to an all-new "Aladdin adventure in virtual reality.

Splash Mountain: Has one of the world's longest and fastest flume drops from the top of an 87-foot-high mountain following a nine minute log ride.

For more information, please call (407) 824-4321.

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