Researcher speaks on underwater archaeology

by Lyndi Scarborough
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Since USL does not have anyone teaching underwater archaeology, the Anthropology Club recently sponsored a lecture given by a researcher who has spent over 20 years on the subject.

Al Salus, a researcher in residence at Southwestern Louisiana University who received his master’s degree from Florida State University, spoke to a small group of students in Mouton Hall.

According to Thomas Hotard, president of the Anthropology Club, Salus was asked to give the lecture, “to broaden our scope.”

One thing Salus tried to clear up in his talk was the distinction between treasure hunting and archaeology. “Most of the time, people think of underwater archaeology as treasure hunting,” he said.

The difference between the two is, according to Salus, that in underwater archaeology, one does not try to “collect objects,” but instead tries to look at things from an anthropological viewpoint.

His first area of concern, when talking about the method, was finding the resources.

He presented three ways. “Sometimes it’s simple enough to look at a map,” he said. “Other times you have to be a little more inventive.”

He indicated that searching for sites is associated with a certain type of boat. The third way that he said to find the sunken boats is to ask the people in the areas.

Salus then spoke of the next activity, doing surveys. “The most important piece of gear when we’re doing a survey,” he said, “is the positioning system.”

After telling about two different types of positioning equipment, he moved on to talk about different kinds of boats, and he explained that creating a model is one type of preservation technique used when it would be too costly to recreate the boat full size.

Salus was equipped with slides showing several plotting techniques, as well as some things that were brought up from sunken ships. He told of several ways in which to plot points on a river and find where the sunken ships were located.

Toward the end of his lecture, Salus told of a bill now in Congress, that is trying “to protect wrecks from being destroyed by curious seekers.”

After his lecture was complete, Salus handed out postcards to be sent to Congressmen that urge them to pass this bill.