

A&M archaeologists try to solve case of 16th-century shipwreck

By Anne Neidinger
Reporter

The Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M is trying to solve the mystery surrounding an early 16th-century shipwreck at Molasses Reef in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Nautical archaeologists are trying to solve the mystery surrounding the ship's crew, their mission and why their vessel was heavily armed.

The Molasses Reef wreck was first publicized in the late 1970s when treasure hunters from Miami discovered it and claimed it was Christopher Columbus' Pinta, Tom Oertling, a research associate for the INA, said.

However, the treasure hunters never arrived to salvage the ship, which was wrecked on the 1½-mile reef, nor did they ever produce documentary evidence to prove it was one of Columbus' ships, Oertling said.

The institute was called in 1982 by the government of the Turks and Caicos islands — the last in the Bahama Island chain — to excavate the wreck, believed to be a Spanish vessel.

The excavation was completed in 1986 and analysis should be finished within the next 18 months, he said. At that time, the artifacts will be returned to the islands where they will be displayed at a museum established by the government.

Not much is known about the ship's crew, Oertling said. The few personal items found at the site include a sewing kit and a 3-inch-long engraved lead box, possibly used as an inkholder. Navigational tools and Indian and Spanish pottery also were found at the site.

At an average shipwreck, he said, about ten percent of the wood of the ship will remain. The Molasses Reef wreck consists of only two percent, he said, which makes it difficult to determine the ship's size, but the wreckage site is about 91 meters wide and 91 meters long.

Although the ship has little organic or wood remains, 95 percent of its wrought iron — including bolts, spikes, ship hardware and artillery — has been recovered, he said. This has brought the INA most of its new information. It is helpful in the analysis of the date of the wreck because wrought iron became obsolete by the middle of the 16th

century, when cast iron was produced, he said.

The artillery discovered includes two large cannons, called bombardetas, 18 versos, or swivel guns, and two small hand cannons called haquebutts, Oertling said. Fragments of muskets also were recovered.

Hardware from the ship includes pieces of the rudder, such as its hinges, he said. However, the rudder itself hasn't been found.

"It's possible that when the ship wrecked, the rudder came off and floated away, which would have prevented the crew from getting off the reef very easily," Oertling said.

Lucayan Indian pottery found on the ship has helped the institute establish that the vessel went down before 1513, he said. Historical records have said the Lucayans, who inhabited the Bahamas, were extinct by 1513.

"There were no more Indians to make the pottery; therefore, the ship must have gone down before 1513," Oertling said.

Oertling said the ship could have been exploring, taking slaves or on some sort of royal venture. The INA knows a lot about the artifact collec-

tion itself, but other questions remain unanswered, he said.

"The biggest mystery is what the ship was doing where it was," he said. "The only chance we will have of identifying the ship is to find in the archives some record of the voyage, a manifest of the ship's equipment and be able to match the artifacts we have found with that manifest," Oertling said.

Although this may be a long shot, he said, an archival researcher with the INA, Denise Lakey, has been in the archives in Spain searching for such a record.

The research project has been directed by Donald Keith, research assistant of nautical archaeology, since it began in 1982.

Funding for the project has come from the National Geographic Society, Morning Watch Research, the National Endowment for Humanities, the Meadows Foundation and other institutions and private donations.

The INA hopes to discover and excavate other ships which may help them learn more about the Age of Exploration and Discovery, dating 1492-1592, Oertling said.

Attorney working on cocaine case comes under fire

EL PASO (AP) — Former County Attorney Danny Anchondo is defending a man accused of leading a large cocaine-distribution network, but it sometimes appears that Anchondo himself is on trial.

Anchondo's client, Audelio Arzola Amaya of El Paso, is one of six men on trial in federal court here on cocaine possession and distribution charges. The government accuses the men of belonging to the El Paso-based "Arzola organization," which it contends is the largest cocaine smuggling ring ever identified in West Texas.

Anchondo, who was appointed El Paso County attorney in January 1986 and lost the Democratic primary for the post four months later, was mentioned prominently in the trial's second and third days.

On Tuesday, a convicted cocaine dealer turned government witness said Anchondo was pre-

sent during a cocaine delivery at the Big Spring Airport sometime in 1983 or 1984.

The witness, Robert Marquez, said Anchondo accompanied Arzola Amaya to the airport when the defendant handed Marquez a suitcase containing cocaine.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Tom McHugh said later that Marquez told investigators that Anchondo was standing away when the transaction took place.

On Wednesday, a woman who said she transported cocaine for Arzola Amaya when she could get time off from driving a school bus testified that the defendant had an office in Anchondo's law firm, Anchondo and Anchondo.

The woman, Teresa Anchondo, told the jury that she drove children to school during the week for the Ysleta Independent School District and supplemented her income by making cocaine deliveries for Amaya during weekends and holidays. She is not related to Danny Anchondo.

A&M veterinarians use surgery to help domestic animals see again

By Craig Calk
Reporter

Texas A&M veterinary specialists are now using the most advanced eye surgery technology to help domestic animals see again.

Veterinary ophthalmologists Dr. Joan Dziezyc and Dr. Nicholas Millichamp are using laser surgery, helpful in post-cataract surgery and in some types of glaucoma treatment.

The eye surgeons also make use of two different ultrasound machines for diagnosing eye problems and treating them. A phaco-fragmentor uses high-energy ultra-

"The ultrasound machine is a very nifty, hollow needle that is put in the eye of the animal. The needle vibrates and breaks up the cataract which in turn is aspirated out of the eye."

—Joan Dziezyc, veterinary ophthalmologist

sound to break up cataracts. A low-energy ultrasound machine is used as a diagnostic tool.

"The ultrasound machine is a very nifty, hollow needle that is put in the eye of the animal," Dziezyc said. "The needle vibrates

and breaks up the cataract which in turn is aspirated out of the eye."

Most of the animals treated by the A&M specialists are dogs that local veterinarians cannot deal with because of the lack of expertise.

"The most common eye problem seen in animals is cataracts," Dziezyc said. "If the lens in the eye gets opaque, then it's a cataract."

The ultrasound, if used to remove the cataract in young dogs, will result in a nicer, clearer look with a less inflammation.

The ultrasound cannot be used in older dogs because their eyes are too hard and it takes too long to break up the cataract.

The laser is used most often after eye surgery if the animal develops scarring in the eye.

"When cataract surgery is done, the front part of the lense to the eye is taken off and everything behind the lense is removed un-

til a clear membrane is reached," Dziezyc said.

"Surrounding the eye is the clear membrane in which the eye sees through," she said. "If the membrane gets opaque the animal is looking through an opacity. The laser is used to blast a hole through the opaque membrane."

This same process is done in people as well.

Laser surgery at A&M is the only one of its kind done in Texas.

The money for the laser was donated by a retired schoolteacher who has had dogs all her life with eye problems.

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