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Queen Anne's Revenge anchor to be on display

Staff, wire reports

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

An anchor from the shipwreck thought to be from Blackbeard's flagship, the Queen Anne's Revenge, is scheduled to be on display this afternoon at the QAR Conservation Lab in Greenville.

Divers pulled up the 4.5-foot, 160-pound grapnel, or anchor, from the Atlantic Ocean near Beaufort on Wednesday. The anchor originally had four prongs but now has one-and-a-half.

Archaeologists and conservators with the state Department of Cultural Resources say the grapnel had become unstable after nearly 300 years in the sea.

The grapnel is scheduled to be on display this morning at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort before being on view at the QAR Conservation Lab at East Carolina University's West Research Campus from 1-3 p.m.

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Hold that line? For 80 years, universities haven't

DURHAM -- American college athletics, a report says, is "a highly organized commercial enterprise. The athletes who take part in it have come up through years of training; they are commanded by professional coaches; little if any personal initiative of ordinary play is left to the player. The great matches are highly profitable enterprises."

Although these words well describe big-time college sports in 2009, they were written 80 years ago. On Oct. 23, 1929, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching issued a 350-page report that was based on three years of work and site visits to more than 100 campuses. Titled simply "American College Athletics," it received front-page coverage the next day in The New York Times.

What is most striking about the Carnegie Foundation report is how contemporary its findings sound today. Despite the dramatic changes that have transformed college athletics into a major part of the American entertainment industry -- including television and the influx of billions of advertising dollars -- the descriptions it gives of conditions in 1929 provide an eerily accurate picture of 2009.

From the earliest days of intercollegiate competition, college sports had been criticized for allowing commercial interests and overemphasis on winning to undermine academic values. Before 1900, Harvard President Charles Eliot called these tendencies a "great evil." In 1922, muckraker Upton Sinclair opined that college athletics had become "a monstrous cancer."

To investigate the basis for these criticisms, the Carnegie Foundation gathered information on such aspects as recruiting, payments to athletes, academic standards, administrative control over athletics, and the status and pay of college coaches. Among the report's most heralded findings at the time were the use of aggressive recruiting tactics, the widespread existence of "slush funds" and subsidies to athletes, often by alumni boosters.

Because critics had often cited the high salaries of coaches as evidence of misplaced priorities, the report surveyed universities to determine the salaries of both the head football coach and the highest-paid full professor. The authors found that coaches earned an average of 10 percent more than top professors.

The report concluded that the abuses associated with big-time college athletics were the result of "commercialism, and a negligent attitude toward the educational opportunities for which the college exists."

Today, the landscape remains very much the same, this despite an elaborate NCAA enforcement regime and mountains of evidence detailing recruiting violations, academic compromises, spiraling expenditures and growing commercialism.

Coaches' salaries are now higher than ever. At 45 public universities with big-time athletic programs in 2007, football coaches earned three times what the university president did and 20 times the salary of full professors. To pay these salaries and the other rising costs of big-time sports programs, universities are building luxury suites atop football stadiums and auctioning off such things as the chance to run onto
the field with the football team. Television has rapidly turned coaches into media stars, and postseason bowls and tournaments into prodigious money makers.

At the same time, graduation rates for football and basketball players generally remain well below those of other students, despite new sanctions designed to encourage athletes to obtain degrees.

Reformers over the decades have called on university leaders to affirm the values of the academy and put their athletic houses in order. But reform from within has not worked because the conditions that need reforming are a direct consequence of deliberate and clear-eyed decisions by universities themselves. Those in charge of universities with big-time programs yearn for winning teams, and achieving athletic success requires a cadre of specialized professionals quite unlike those who run universities' educational operations.

Thus two dissimilar enterprises have grown up within these universities, locked in a reluctant but necessary symbiotic embrace.

Given the tremendous popularity of college sports competition, the winner-take-all nature of competition and the reluctance of the academic side of universities to subsidize the athletic side, don't expect universities to suddenly stop exploiting the commercial opportunities before them. The pressures to win, and to do so with as little athletic subsidy as possible, produces the conditions that have characterized big-time athletics for these last 80 years.

What universities could do, however, is admit they are in the entertainment business and be more candid about the tradeoffs involved in running a big-time sports enterprise. Being a source of pride for a state or alumni is not a bad thing, but being disingenuous about it hurts the credibility of higher education and its larger mission.

Charles Clotfelter is a professor of public policy, economics and law at Duke University. He is writing a book about the role of big-time athletics in American universities.
GOP leader's stunt plays into Perdue's hands

A political tip: If you're going to send something to the governor's office, you'd better know what's in it.

Like, say, a check.

Senate Republican Leader Phil Berger showed off a wheelbarrow full of "Conservative Voter Surveys" Tuesday that he said reflected lots of anger and frustration with Democrats.

As Dome noted Wednesday, the survey questions were written to stir up anger and possible Republican campaign contributions. We're guessing Berger never imagined the governor's staff would bother to read them. He was wrong.

Perdue spokeswoman Chrissy Pearson, responding to a request from Dome, said she had skinned about a third of the 3,000 or so surveys. She noted comments written to the Republican Party included:

"I am embarrassed to be associated with this organization. Your tactics are disgusting and you're going to lose a generation of voters."

And then there was the check. A staff member found a $50 campaign contribution made out to Berger tucked in the surveys, which were, after all, a fundraising ploy.

That brings us to political tip No. 2: If you get a check, cash it.

"I was surprised to find a check," Pearson said, noting that one woman wrote to the party, "Don't just throw this away, read it."

Pearson said the office intended to forward the check to its intended recipient.

Another comment: "Stop wording questions so geared up to get the answers you want and start wording them to actually find out the people's opinion, not just confirm your own. There are probably only three questions on here that are legitimate."

On Dome's own sample survey, a Harrisburg woman wrote in the box for including a credit card contribution: "Not sending you any more money."

Jim Blaine, director of the N.C. Republican Senate Committee, said both parties need to pay attention to the surveys.

"We're glad her staff has looked at the surveys," Blaine said. "We hope she takes to heart the responses that are critical of her programs as we take to heart the responses that are critical of our programs."

Perdue's staff might just want to get its own wheelbarrow and deliver the surveys, which are now public records, back to Berger.
Senate smack-down?

Linda McMahon, an Eastern North Carolina native who became a major pro wrestling executive, is challenging Democratic Sen. Chris Dodd of Connecticut.

McMahon, 61, grew up in New Bern and graduated from East Carolina University.

She recently stepped down as chief executive officer of World Wrestling Entertainment, the largest wrestling promoter in the world, an organization that she ran with her husband, Vince.

McMahon, a Republican, was recently appointed by Gov. Jodi Rell to the Connecticut State Board of Education.

She is running as a fiscal conservative who plans to control spending, hold down taxes and not take contributions of more than $100.

Other Republicans considering challenging Dodd, who has been beset with ethics charges, include former Rep. Rob Simmons, economist Peter Schiff and former Ambassador to Ireland Tom Foley.

In one ad, McMahon notes that her wrestling background gives her a different perspective.

The ad shows old footage of her taking a slap in the face and kicking a man in the groin. The ad ends with McMahon being subjected to a pile driver.

Take that, Washington.

Friday Night Burr

Any visitor to U.S. Sen. Richard Burr's office knows he's a fan of the gridiron.

A black-and-white photograph of Burr's days as a college player at Wake Forest University hangs on the wall, showing him in his uniform, carrying a ball.

Now, Burr is a hall-of-famer.

R.J. Reynolds High School of Winston-Salem inducted Burr on Friday into its sports Hall of Fame in a ceremony he attended.

Burr played varsity football there and was named to the all-conference and all-state teams before graduating in 1974.

He went on to play defensive back at Wake Forest University until a series of injuries forced him into early retirement his junior year.

In a prepared statement, Burr spokesman David Ward said, "Senator Burr is honored to be inducted into the R.J. Reynolds High School Sports Hall of Fame and is looking forward to adding more memorabilia to the North Carolina sports wall in his office."

By Benjamin Niolet, Rob Christensen and Barbara Barrett
UNC staff will flee football traffic

CHAPEL HILL -- Thousands of UNC-Chapel Hill employees will be forced to leave work two hours early today, and some are grumbling about the early quitting time.

The Tar Heels will play their first Thursday night football game at home this evening, taking on Florida State University for a college match-up that will be aired at 8p.m. on ESPN.

The prospect of thousands of fans flooding into Chapel Hill to see the Tar Heels and the Seminoles prompted UNC-CH administrators to re-arrange the work schedules of 11,500 employees in an effort to ease traffic congestion. It also caused local public-safety officials to call in extra troops to help patrol the streets and sidewalks.

"The biggest concern we have is evening rush hour," said Lt. Kevin Gunter, a spokesman for the Chapel Hill police department.

UNC-CH officials have resisted Thursday night home games for years, as have many schools with stadiums on campus.

Then last year, after the Tar Heels beat Rutgers University on a Thursday night early in the season, the program got a bump in the rankings and free prime-time national publicity that could help win over potential recruits.

Suddenly, there was less opposition to the notion of a Thursday night matchup -- particularly if the game were held during fall break, when students would be away.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity to showcase our campus," Chancellor Holden Thorp said in recent e-mail to UNC-CH employees and students. "The topic of Thursday night football has vexed our campus for years.

"We have resisted scheduling a Thursday night game in Chapel Hill during classes, a stance that I support. This year, however, we proposed the idea of holding the game during fall break."

But the campus does not close down during fall break.

Administrators announced in August that employees would have to leave work at 3 p.m. today so parking decks and lots that are available to football fans on the weekend would be available tonight.

Kenan Stadium seats 60,000.

'Nightmare for some'

State law requires the employees to make up the two hours later. Squeezing them in between child care or second jobs will present problems for some of the work-a-day folks.

"It's a heck of a nightmare for some people," said Tommy Griffin, head of the UNC-CH Employee
Forum. "There's been some grumbling."

He said the parking decks are supposed to be cleared of employee cars by 3:30 p.m. "I don't see how that's going to happen if everybody is getting off a half hour earlier," Griffin said.

UNC Hospitals also changed its schedule because of the game. Patients will be discharged at times when traffic is not expected to be heavy.

For two weeks, public safety officials have been trying to warn Chapel Hill residents and others of the expected traffic snarl.

Nine roadside signs flash the information, and postcards have been mailed to neighbors.

"We have tried to tell the public to expect delays," Gunter said. "If what we've seen from Florida State in the past is true, we're expecting fans to show up early.

"The downtown area, we expect, won't just be filled with vehicles, but foot traffic, too."

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Search continues for Va. Tech student

By Daniel de Vise
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, October 21, 2009 5:07 PM

Morgan Harrington telephoned her friends Saturday night from outside John Paul Jones Arena at the University of Virginia to say she had left the Metallica concert, couldn't get back in and would find her own way home. She hasn't been heard from since.

A massive police and community search continued Wednesday for Harrington, 20, a Virginia Tech junior, whose absence became cause for alarm after her cellphone and purse were found by a passerby in a parking lot outside the arena. The case has garnered national media attention, a heavily trafficked Facebook page and even a posting to the Metallica band Web site, under the heading "One Of Our Fans Is Missing."

"We have a purse. We have a cellphone. We have a missing girl. Those are the facts," said Lt. Joe Rader of the Virginia State Police, speaking at a news conference Wednesday afternoon. "We do not know whether she is alive or has met some kind of ill fate. It's just that simple."

Harrington, an education major from Roanoke County, traveled to U-Va. with friends for the concert. They became separated about 8:40 p.m. when Harrington left the group to use the bathroom and wound up outside the arena, which allowed no reentry. She called her friends and said she "would find a way either to [meet] up with them or to get home," Rader said. Interviews with friends and other concert-goers and surveillance tapes suggest that she was last seen about 9:30 Saturday evening. Her family notified police Sunday that she had not come home as expected.

Police are working more than 100 leads from across the country and have completed a search of the arena and its vicinity, in part to ensure that Harrington had not become ill or injured and exposed to the chilly Charlottesville weather.

Rader said there were no signs of a struggle in the parking lot where the purse and phone were found, but stressed that the case had become "a criminal investigation in nature." He said a reward of at least $50,000 would be forthcoming.

Harrington was last seen wearing a black T-shirt celebrating the metal band Pantera, a black mini-skirt with black tights and knee-high black boots.

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Flu vaccine makers fall far behind schedule

SWIFTWATER, Pa. -- The federal government originally promised 120 million doses of swine flu vaccine by now. Only 13 million have come through.

As nervous Americans clamor for the vaccine, production is running several weeks behind schedule, and health officials say it is due to the pressure on pharmaceutical companies to crank it out along with the ordinary flu vaccine, and a slow and antiquated process that relies on millions of chicken eggs.

There have been other bottlenecks, too: Factories that put the precious liquid into syringes are backed up. And the government ran into a delay in developing the tests required to assess each batch before it is cleared for use.

What effect the delays will have on the course of the outbreak is unclear, in part because scientists cannot say with any certainty just how dangerous the virus is, how easily it spreads or whether it will mutate into a more lethal form.

"We're in this race against the virus, and only Mother Nature knows how many cases are going to occur over the next six to 10 weeks," said Michael Osterholm, a vaccine expert at the University of Minnesota.

In the meantime, many states have had to postpone mass vaccinations. Clinics around the country that managed to obtain doses of the vaccine have been swamped. And doctors are getting bombarded with calls from worried and angry parents.

"Nobody has it," said AnnMarie O'Connor, who waited more than four hours for the vaccine in Rockville, Md., standing in line with her two young children and about 1,000 other people. Health officials "said the shots would be here in early October. But where are they?"

The delays have led to renewed demands for a quicker, more reliable way of producing vaccines than the chicken-egg method, which is 50-year-old technology and involves injecting the virus into eggs and allowing it to feed on the nutrients in the egg white.

Since April, swine flu has killed more than 800 people in the U.S.

Federal officials initially projected that as many as 120 million doses of the vaccine would be ready to dispense by mid-October. They later reduced their estimate to 45 million. As of Tuesday, only 12.8 million were available.
Despite H1N1 fears, many worry about vaccination

By Rob Stein and Jennifer Agiesta
Washington Post Staff Writer
Thursday, October 22, 2009

Americans have become increasingly alarmed about the swine flu, but many are wary about getting vaccinated against the disease, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

As the H1N1 virus continues to spread nationwide, a majority of those surveyed -- 52 percent -- now say they are "a great deal" or "somewhat" worried that they or someone in their household will be infected with it, up from 39 percent of those polled in August. Concern is rising fastest among young adults, one of the groups most vulnerable to the virus. In August, just 26 percent of those ages 18 to 29 said they were concerned; now 47 percent are worried.

At the same time, however, many Americans are hesitant about being vaccinated or having their children inoculated. More than six in 10 say they will not get vaccinated, and only 52 percent of parents say they plan to have their children vaccinated, even though parents tend to be more worried about the flu.

The findings illustrate the dueling challenges the federal government faces in its unprecedented effort to protect Americans against the first influenza pandemic in more than four decades. Federal officials have spent at least $2 billion to buy enough vaccine to inoculate at least half the population and pledged to provide the immunization to everyone who wants it.

But vaccine production has lagged behind projections, leaving public health officials scrambling to allocate the limited doses available and frustrating some anxious parents and other people waiting to be immunized. At the same time, there is still a long way to go in federal efforts to convince people of the necessity and safety of the vaccine.

Two-thirds of those polled say they are confident that the vaccine is safe, but only 22 percent say they are "very" confident it is. And among the three in 10 who say they are not confident, only 6 percent plan to be vaccinated. Even among those who are convinced the vaccine is safe, just 46 percent plan to get inoculated. That number rises, but only to 56 percent, among those worried about catching the virus who think the vaccine is safe.

Among those who are encouraged to be immunized, adults younger than 30 are less apt to consider the vaccine safe, while parents' views are on par with those of the public as a whole. Sixty-five percent of
parents say they think the vaccine is safe, and 19 percent are very confident about its safety.

Just over six in 10 young adults (63 percent) express confidence in its safety, compared with nearly eight in 10 seniors (78 percent), and only 13 percent of those younger than 30 say they have "a great deal" of confidence. Further, only about three in 10 younger adults say they plan to be inoculated despite the elevated risk they face, compared with four in 10 seniors.

During a congressional hearing Wednesday, several senators questioned federal officials about the vaccination campaign and other issues, including shortages of antiviral drugs for children and whether hospitals are prepared to care for large numbers of sick patients. Most of those surveyed express confidence in the ability of federal and local governments to respond to an outbreak, though few feel deeply sure of it.

"I'm worried that the virus is getting ahead of the public health system's capacity to respond to it," said Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.), who chairs the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano assured the senators that everything is being done as quickly as possible to produce and distribute antiviral drugs and vaccine.

"There will be enough vaccine for every American who wants to be vaccinated," Sebelius said, repeating reassurances that the vaccine is safe.

She also said that approval of emergency intravenous use of new antiviral drugs in patients critically ill with swine flu could come within days.

"It is imminent," Sebelius said. "We hope that's the case."

Polling director Jon Cohen contributed to this report.

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