

THE TINFOIL TIMES



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLD COAST TREASURE CLUB, INC.

VOLUME 32 NUMBER 12

DECEMBER 2007

**THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE 7:00 P.M. DECEMBER 13
AT THE WEST PALM BEACH GARDEN CLUB IN DREHER PARK
IN WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA**

OUR CODE OF ETHICS: HAVE PERMISSION AND DO NO HARM

2007 HOLIDAY PARTY

It's that time of year again! Time for the GCTC's Annual Holiday Party! Just like last year, this party will be catered, no hassle and FREE to all members! Sonny's BBQ will once again deliver a hot and delicious meal of chicken, pulled pork, BBQ beans, coleslaw, green beans, rolls and butter and beverages. Last year, this catered affair was a big hit with everyone, so count on another wonderful party. Best of all, there will be NO COST to our members! (Membership is a "family membership," which includes Mom, Dad and children living at home. Non-members and guests are welcome to join us for \$12, which covers our food cost.) So, come to the party on December 13th for an evening of great company, good food, fun door prizes and shared memories.

We will once again have a *voluntary Dessert Contest*. Those who wish to participate will be eligible for a First Place Award Ribbon and prize for the best homemade dessert. See if you can unseat last year's champion baker **Ken Lubinski!** That won't be easy, so dust off your family recipes and join in the fun!

Volunteers are welcome to help set up and decorate – arrive by 5:30 p.m. to pitch in to help committee members **Linda Bennett, Cheryl Petenbrink, Karen Larson, Gail Hoskins, Betty Laur and Ernie Bouyoucas**. This year we will NOT have appetizers, but we will serve punch just prior to a **brief and early meeting that will start at 7:00 p.m.** to induct the board, give out birthday quarters, and have **Paola Nash** briefly introduce her new book (see page two for details). Food arrives at 7:30 p.m., so we'll keep the meeting short.

The real fun begins when Hunt Master **Linda Bennett** announces the **Treasure Hunter of the Year Award** and runners up, not to mention various other "dubious awards" for members who have provided some

comic relief throughout the year. In the holiday spirit, the club will have door prize drawings with one ticket per family membership. Remember, there will be no tall tales tables, mystery item nor monthly best finds during the Holiday Party. Also, we will not be selling tickets for the 50/50, door prizes, nor a regular raffle, however, bring money for a special raffle of a beautiful Holiday Tree that **Ed Weston** donated. All proceeds will go for our annual silver hunt! Thanks again, Ed!

For the 12th year, our club will donate to **the Children's Place at Home Safe** to benefit the abused, neglected or abandoned children of Palm Beach County. We ask club members make a charitable donation during our holiday party. There will be a special treasure chest available for donations, which will be delivered to the charity. Please bring your donation check, made out to "the Children's Place at Home Safe." Any amount is welcome. In addition to a tax deduction, you will touch the lives of some of Palm Beach County's most vulnerable children. (Cash is welcome, too!)

Plan to join us and bring the family for lots of fun. Sonny's requires a final count on Friday, December 7th, so please RSVP to **Gail Hoskins** (561) 967-2923 or to **Cheryl Petenbrink** (561) 697-5073 by the 7th. If you signed up in November, that was your RSVP. We DO need the number in your party, if you will bring guests, and the ages of any children so we can give an accurate head count (little ones tend to eat less). **See you there!**

*The officers and board of the
Gold Coast Treasure Club
wish all club members and their families a Joyous
Holiday Season and a Prosperous New Year!*

THE GOLD COAST TREASURE CLUB, INC.

Founded in 1973 by Ted Rudd

President

Ernie Bouyoucas
561-968-1892

Vice-President

Stacey deLucia
561-687-2310

Secretary

Jan Smirnow
561-735-8921

Treasurer

Ken Lubinski
772-546-7692

Hunt Master: Linda Bennett

561-791-7682

Cell Phone: 561-352-4068

Asst. Huntmaster: Richard Zabriskie

Sales and Raffle Promoter

Gail Hoskins

Photographer: Steve Hoskins

Librarian: Cheryl Petenbrink

Hospitality Hostess: Betty Laur

Doorprize Coordinator: Karen Larson

Membership: John Lobota and Jim Sharp

Newsletter Co-Editors:

Linda Bennett and Stacey deLucia

Email: gctreasureclub@yahoo.com
Website: www.geocities.com/gctreasureclub/

CLUB MAILING ADDRESS

c/o Gail Hoskins
206 Russell Dr
Lake Worth, FL 33461

Dues are \$30 a year
New members pay an
initiation fee of \$5
and \$30 if joining between Jan 1st
and the end of June
or \$15 if joining between July 1
and Dec. 31

MEMBERS BUY AND SELL COLUMN

KEVIN REILLY offers a complete line of new and used detectors and also scoops, cleaners, tumblers and books. He also does custom metal working and laser detailing (call for details). 954-971-6102 or www.rtgstore.com
Has low prices plus 10% discount to members. The new five sided scoops are now available. See my website. For member discount, you will have to go to the store to buy the scoop.

TOM LIEBERMAN: Ready to serve your real estate needs. Call 561-852-7409 or email: telieberman@aol.com

ED WESTON - WANTED: Collectable and antique fishing tackle. Lures, rods, reels. 561-622-9282.

JERRY LAUR – FOR SALE OR TRADE: Tesoro Cibola, \$250. Call Jerry at 561-694-7963.

FRANK AND PAULINE NASH - Minelab and Fisher metal detectors for sale at [Palm Beach Metal Detectors](#). The owners are club members Frank and Pauline Nash. When you purchase a new detector from them or refer a customer to them, 10 % of the net profits will go directly to benefit our club and its members. Call (561) 743-5248.

PAOLA NASH - *Balsamic Vinegar: Introduction to a Mysterious and Centuries-old Italian Vinegar* by Paola Nash. This book is meant to be entertaining and educational. It is not a cookbook! The book's purpose is to educate consumers about balsamic vinegar, a staple now of the American diet. The book will eventually be available at bookstores, but the application process takes weeks, therefore the book will not be in stores for this upcoming holiday season. The book cover price is \$45, but it will be sold for \$36 (20% discount, plus tax) through the club. It presents as a coffee table piece (hard cover, 11x11, great images). Pair the book and an inexpensive bottle of balsamic vinegar (available everywhere starting at \$4) and you will have a great conversation piece item that also will make a great and novel Christmas present.

Club members can advertise items for sale or items wanted, free of charge. These items do not have to be related to metal detecting. Contact Linda Bennett to place your ad.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to the following contributors:

*Linda Bennett, Stacey deLucia,
John Lobota, Ernie Bouyoucas, Ben Smith, Frank
Nash, Mitzi Bergrud and Jan Smirnow.*

GAIL AND BETTY'S CORNER

AND THE WINNERS ARE!

DOOR PRIZES

One Troy Oz Silver Round – **Karen Larson**

Treasure Magazines – **Ken Lubinski**

Angel Alert – **Linda Bennett**

Old Bottle – **John Lobota**

Old Bottle – **Linda Bennett**

Lotto Scratch Offs – **Tom Lieberman**

Old Bottle – **Richard Zabriskie**

Old Bottle – **Jim Smith**

Fall Centerpiece - **Marilyn Batts**

Fall Centerpiece – **Ben Smith**

*Donations of items for our monthly drawings are always appreciated! Thank you for the following donations: Old bottle by **John Lobota**; Treasure magazines by **Don Caplinger** and **Linda Bennett**; lotto scratch offs by **Ben Smith**; Angel Alert by **Paul Hamlin**; centerpieces by **Linda Bennett**; two old bottles by the late **Tom Dooley**; and an old bottle with certification by **Joy St. Clair**.*

Remember – You will receive one free door prize ticket for each of the following: bringing a guest, displaying your monthly finds on the Tall Tales Table, providing refreshments for the meeting, or volunteering to bring the mystery item. Do *all* these things and earn **four free tickets** for the door prizes drawings!

MYSTERY ITEM

Just WHAT is a Mystery Item? Each month one club member volunteers to help stump fellow members by choosing a secret item that remains hidden from EVERYONE, board members included, until revealed. The volunteer receives a free door prize ticket for that effort. If one of a member's displayed finds on the Tall Tales Table *matches* the mystery item, that member wins a silver half dollar, so bring EVERYTHING you find and you might just win a prize!

In November, **Ken Lubinski** supplied the mystery item of an Allen Wrench, which **Tom Lieberman** had on the tall tales table, earning Tom a silver half dollar.

Remember - bring all items found. You never know what will be that month's mystery item!

50/50 DRAWING

Bob Dobski won \$53

for his share of the
50/50 drawing.

IT PAYS TO PLAY, FOLKS!

And odds are a LOT better than the Florida Lottery!

MONTHLY BEST FINDS CONTEST

(Winners receive a silver half-dollar and certificate)

BEST GOLD – BOB SMIRNOW

GOLD EARRINGS WITH DIAMONDS



BEST SILVER – PAUL HAMLIN

SILVER BRACELET WITH GOLD BAND AND DIAMONDS



MOST UNUSUAL – JAN SMIRNOW

RETAINER



COSTUME JEWELRY – PAUL HAMLIN

HAIR CLIP



BEST COIN – FRANK NASH

1927 QUARTER



BEST TOY – PAUL HAMLIN

MERMAID



NOVEMBER PROGRAM

With 45 guests and members in attendance, President **Ernie Bouyoucas** greeted the guests and returning members and quickly got the program started. **Karen Larson** introduced **Bill** and **Betty Landry** from Daytona, Florida. **Karen** and **Betty Laur** met Bill at last April's Great Southern Beach Shootout in Daytona Beach where he had a bottle display. Bill is a licensed auctioneer in both Florida and Massachusetts. In addition to collecting antique bottles, Bill is a fellow metal detector enthusiast.

Bill began collecting bottles in 1969 while in the US Navy in Mayport. He travels a lot due to this hobby; to England mostly, and of course, he does numerous shows in the states.

The history of bottle making actually started in the Netherlands in the 1600's. Bill stated that Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was the original bottle hub in the states due by primarily to having the largest population at that time in history.

Bill shared a wealth of knowledge by showing different types of bottles, some dating back to the 1700's. He talked about the history of bottle making, various types of necks, shapes and lips. Once Bill explained the values of the old bottles, including some (quite a few) that can be auctioned for upwards of \$50,000, the audience's interest rose dramatically! Most seemed surprised at how lucrative bottle collecting can be. The values of the bottles Bill brought with him ranged from \$65 to \$500 each.

Historically speaking, Florida did not make a lot of bottles. Bill talked of druggist bottles made right here in Palm Beach County, Jacksonville's soda bottles, and the brown, clear and aqua beer bottles that were made in Key West. (Key West bottles are worth somewhere in the price ranges of \$800 to \$900 each!)

He recommended several books for those interested in Bottle Collecting: "Lost Soda Bottles of Florida," by W.P. Beer and "Bitters Bottles," by Willy Van den Bossche.

Comparing genealogy at dinner prior to the meeting, **Jan Smirnow** and Bill Landry discovered that they shared a distant relative by the name of **Tom Landry**, a football coach. Later that evening, Bill presented Jan with an 1890 intact glass bottle with embossed name "A. Landry, Montreal." Bill explained he had three and since Jan was family he gave her one! Jan plans on eventually passing this treasure on to one of her children.

As for what to collect today in glass bottles, Bill recommended Soda bottles! Bill and Betty can be reached by email for information: witeandwongusa@aol.com.

After an interesting presentation and monthly meeting, President Bouyoucas thanked **Les** and **Marilyn Batts** for bringing the delicious refreshments.



Speaker Bill Landry

November birthday celebrants **Leslie Batts, James Gilliece, Tom Lieberman, Paola Nash, Frank Nash, Barbo Rosenberg** and **James Wilhelm** each received a silver quarter for attending the meeting during their birthday month. *Apologies from the Secretary go to **Barbo Rosenberg (11/15)** for dropping her name on the birthday list printed in the November newsletter. Sorry Barbo, please be assured that you **are** on the list and we welcome you back for the season!*



HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS MONTH TO:

Mabel Caplinger (12/7)

Allan Dillon (12/24)

Carol Presslein (12/27)

What do the above people have in common? If they come to the meeting during their birthday month, they each will receive a gift of a silver quarter!

DONATIONS

Kurt Herring has donated his multimedia projector that the club has used on numerous occasions in the past two years for program presentations. In appreciation for his generosity, the board voted to present Kurt with a lifetime membership.

John Lobota has donated a 1936 copy of the book-*Treasure Island*.

THANK YOU GUYS!

All donations are appreciated and always welcome!

Good Will Ambassadors Performing Random Acts of Kindness

The Gold Coast Treasure Club recognizes members who go out of their way to provide selfless service to our community. The first time a member returns an item, that individual receives a metal detecting pin (crafted by **Steve Hoskins**) to wear on his or her hat, in addition to a certificate of appreciation. Future returns are recognized by a certificate. Kudos to all club members who go out of their way to return items to their owners, thereby advancing our hobby and putting our club in a positive light!

REPEAT GOODWILL AMBASSADORS



Linda Bennett
Returned a Heirloom Watch



Bob Smirnow
Returned a Platinum Ring

Pauline Nash got her first metal detector - a Radio Shack Bounty Hunter - two Christmas's ago. An entry level machine, this one was practically a toy. When she helped find a diamond ring at Jupiter Beach in the summer of 2006, she was bitten by the treasure hunting bug and the search for **QUALITY** machines for her and her father began. Frank spent weeks researching detectors on the Internet and concluded that Minelab was the best company, despite the added expense. He felt it was better to buy the best rather than to waste his limited free time on a lesser brand. Pauline got the Minelab X-Terra 30 and her dad got the Minelab Explorer. Excited about their new hobby, they joined the club in January 2007. The club hunts, activities and networking with other members have been rewarding and positive experiences for the Nash's. Frank's job as an international pilot for American Air Lines takes him to varied destinations, providing numerous opportunities to hunt unique spots. Many coworkers and local people have tried his machine, and then bought machines from various sources. Minelab took notice of Frank's numerous referrals and suggested that he become a dealer. **Palm Beach Metal Detectors** began a few short months ago. Gold Coast Treasure Club member **John Lobota** designed the web sight: PALMBEACHMETALDETECTORS.com

There are many dealers and Internet stores out there with similar prices. Sure, some throw in a few free items, most of which are of little value. Frank realized the main thing missing was old-fashioned *customer service*. With that in mind, Frank offers more than mail order houses can or will provide. These services include personal demonstrations of the machines, assembly if desired and technical support. As a show of appreciation to our club and to help raise much-needed funds, Frank Nash will donate to the GCTC 10 % of the profit of *each sale* made to a club member or from a referral from a club member. No other metal detector store or Internet site does this for our club, so as Frank's business grows, so will our club's profits. It's a win-win for all. Please keep this in mind when the time comes to purchase **your** next new machine. (THANK YOU, FRANK NASH, FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND FOR PROVIDING THE ABOVE INFO.)

MEMBER UPDATES

Please remember those members who are not able to metal detect – **Don Caplinger, Dorothy Mills, Jeff Foss** and **James Wilhelm**. Calls are always welcome!

EYEGASSES, CELL PHONES AND INK CARTRIDGES

Club members are encouraged to bring in prescription glasses and sunglasses, which will be donated to underprivileged people suffering from vision problems. **Stacey** collects these during our meetings so the club can donate them to the South Florida Lion's Club.

Jan Smirnow is collecting cell phones and ink cartridges. NOTE: All ink cartridges need to be kept enclosed in plastic baggies so the cartridges do not dry out. Donations can be placed in the box in the back of the room. Help save our planet AND raise \$ for GCTC!

FOREIGN COINS

Our club continues to collect foreign coins to donate towards a summer camp for handicapped children. This is a year-round project. The coins will be mailed in May, along with the South Florida Treasure Hunting Club's donation. If you have coins to donate, please see **Linda**.

Thanks to Les Batts for his donation of foreign coins!

BEN SMITH'S INDEPENDENT HUNT

Ben Smith had planted various parts from an appliance at Ocean Reef Beach on Singer Island. The plan was for club members to hunt on their own and find these planted items. The first member to collect the pieces and correctly identify the appliance would receive a new silver dollar.

Frank and **Pauline Nash** hit the beach just before Tropical Storm Noel and Frank found 90% of the parts. But alas, he could not figure out the appliance. **Gary Spiroch** was able to correctly identify the appliance as an upright vacuum cleaner after looking at Frank's collection of parts.

Ben Smith pronounced that there was no winner, so the silver dollar will be saved for another independent hunt that Ben Smith will have next year.

TREASURER'S REPORT
\$ 1,003.44

TALL TALES TABLES TOTALS FOR 2007 AS OF NOVEMBER 2007

DOLLAR AMOUNT: \$5,078.03

PLATINUM: 6

GOLD: 134

SILVER: 232

BURIED COIN CACHE

CLUE ONE

To find the cache you'd best take a stroll,
somewhere close by - how 'bout Lake O.

Not the one to the North and West,
look here in town, it'll be for the best.

CLUE TWO

Here are the numbers you'll need to see,
Follow them 'round to the cache for thee.

Look carefully and you might arrive,
Watch for 2520, 30, 11-5, 30 and 11-5.

CLUE THREE

If you've had enough and want to arrive,
At zero point eight you'll stop the Drive.

Look to the East and you'll be fine,
If the numbers you see add up to nine

*Burial of cache and clues are provided by **Ernie Bouyoucas**. If found by a club member, that person will receive a prize of \$25.*

INTERNET SITES

From Mitzi Bergrud - Forum that covers not only gold prospecting but meteor hunting, semi-precious gems, fossils, and general metal detecting:

<http://www.huntingforgold.net>

If you join the following forum, you will receive good e-mails on what is happening in the southeast for gold prospecting:

<http://www.Nuggetdigger@Nuggetdigger.com>

NEW TREASURE MAGAZINE

The Treasure Depot Magazine will be a bi-monthly publication covering all aspects of our metal detecting hobby. From coin shooting to relic hunting, surf & sand, bottles, and finding that lucky gold nugget! It will be 64 pages with full color! As a subscriber to The Treasure Depot Magazine, you will have 6 opportunities to win a nice Metal Detector. Also as a subscriber, you will be eligible for the free life time pass to all GNRS and North/South Hunts. The drawing will be on January 7, 2008. The lucky name drawn from the subscription data base will never have to enter another hunt raffle or ever pay another entry fee. The subscription deadline for this will be December 15th, 2007.

For Subscription information:

<http://www.thetreasuredepot.com/>

(Click the magazine banner at the top of this forum)

CLEANING COPPER AND BRONZE COINS – RESTORING PATINA OR TONING

BY JOHN LOBOTA

After cleaning a copper or bronze coin, one is usually left with a stark bright metallic disk that is not aesthetically appealing. Restoring some of the coin's original patina can vastly improve its appearance. The best way to do this is to use a product called **Dellars Darkener**.

Dellars Darkener for copper restores an aged look to copper coins that have been previously cleaned. It tones and darkens and works well on all copper coins. It is safe, non-toxic and will not damage coins according to users. You can purchase this product from this website along with other coin cleaning supplies:

<http://www.brent-krueger.com/cleaners.html>

Here is a list of some other coin cleaners and a description of what they do. In some cases it is better to use a tested product, rather than a home recipe on lightly dirty coins. For heavily encrusted dug coins, the homegrown methods I shared previously are your best bet.

- *MS-70 coin cleaner*: Industrial strength coin brightener. It's like nothing that's ever been on the market. Safe on gold, silver, copper, nickel, bronze and brass. Contains no acids or solvents, will not discolor mint state copper coins when used as directed. Designed to remove surface contamination such as PVC and dirt.
- *eZest, formerly Jeweluster*: A liquid tarnish remover for silver, copper and gold coins.
- *Blue Ribbon professional coin cleaner/conditioner and preservative*. Removes soil and coatings from coins, leaving a natural finish and color. Adds a lubricant as a protective film.
- *Coin Care cleaner/conditioner*. Removes soil and coating from coins leaving a natural finish. Adds a lubricant as a protective film. Environmentally safe.
- *E&T Kointainer Koinsolve* Neutral coin solvent. Removes PVC, oil, tape, grease. Harmless to coins.
- *Uni-Solvent* removes grease, oil, tape, soft glues, stains, and vinyl films. Does not harm hard plastics including all slabs, Capital holders, Mylar and acetate sleeves.
- For nickels there is *Nic-A-Lene cleaner*, *Nic-A-Tone toner*, *Nic-A-Date date restorer* which can be found here:

http://www.stantonbooks.com/cleaners_gloves.htm

Membership Renewal Form

Name _____

Address _____

City and State _____

Zip Code _____

Phone # _____

Cell Phone # _____

E-mail _____

Please _____ DO _____ DO NOT

Include my address, phone # & e-mail address
in the new club directory.

(Note: members' names, at least, will be included.
Directory goes to members ONLY.)

MAIL TO:
Gold Coast Treasure Club
Ken Lubinski
P.O. Box 1818
Hobe Sound, FL 33475

CLUB T-SHIRTS

Sign ups for club t-shirts began at the September meeting. Orders will be placed after the December meeting. The shirts, which will feature an 8-inch silk screened club patch on the front, will be crew neck style made out of 50/50 cotton and polyester. You have a choice of white or royal blue. Sizing is based on men's sizes. Cost will be \$12 for small, medium, large and extra large. XX large and larger sizes will be \$15. Shirts should be available by the January meeting. Either sign up at the club meetings or contact **Linda Bennett** by e-mail or telephone to place your order.

FEBRUARY MEETING PROGRAM

Captain Dom of the group working on the Jupiter Beach 1660 Spanish offshore wreck will be coming to present a program. His wife, **Yvonne Addario**, will be bringing copies her new book *Treasure Diving with Captain Dom*, to sell. So mark your calendar, you really do not want to miss this one on February 14th! More details will be in the February newsletter.



The Nash Family at book signing. Published in The Community Voice. Frank made the arrangements for the upcoming program.



Treasure Hunters

8/22/2006 12:23:15 AM by Samantha Riepe



Whether hunting jewels intended for a queen, washed up gold doubloons, or colonial relics, modern treasure hunters are in it less for the profits, more for the thrill. *Photo by Brad Brandenburg*

Just off the coast of Andalusia, Spain, about a half a mile beneath warm Mediterranean waters, deep-sea fish swim amidst the decomposing skeleton of the HMS Sussex, a British warship that went down in 1694. After 300 centuries in its watery grave, the estimated six tons of gold on board has appreciated to an astounding value of billions in modern-day dollars.

It's one of several substantial sunken finds uncovered in recent years, with treasure hunters benefitting from the technology of GPS, scanning sonar, and deep sea robotics. The United Nations estimates that three million sunken structures dot the ocean's bottom.

Many are modern recreational or commercial boats - sea-bound junk of little interest to hunters. They're after more fabled wrecks like Spanish galleons or British steamers with yellowed government documents and dusty treasury ledgers that carry a king's ransom, bribe or dowry of solid gold and silver.

Few treasure hunters can afford to employ the most expensive of search techniques such as sonar to scan the ocean floor or unmanned robot vehicles to investigate underwater anomalies. More common are the smaller salvage companies that employ one or two boats, a small crew, and equipment like waterproof metal detectors for shallow excavation.

Treasure Expeditions Corporation is such an operation, based out of Florida and owned by Brad Johnson, a hunter since age 18. But ask if the company is his sole way of making a living, and you'll get a laugh. "No one has ever really gotten rich by treasure hunting," says Johnson, who works in banking to pay the bills. "You could try to live off it, but you might end up living in the back of a van."

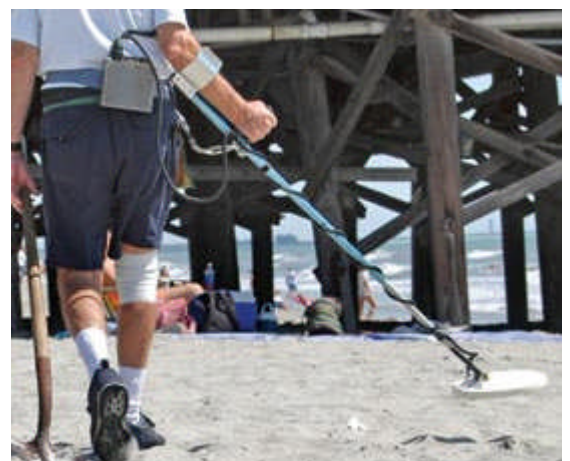
TEDIOUS TASK

Those who believe in the romanticized version of treasure hunting - sunken vessels waiting to bear a motherload of chests full of gold and jewels - would be sorely disappointed at the actual yield. The process is an arduous one. Divers scan areas of the seafloor in increments of about three square feet at a time, using a device much like an underwater leaf blower to move lighter layers of sand and reveal a harder bottom. It's under this layer where the coins or jewelry of centuries-old wrecks may sink, to be sensed by a metal detector and collected by a hunter. A 16th century Spanish gold doubloon, called an escudo, may be valued at \$10,000 if the date and other markings are clear. A quality silver piece can sell for \$300.

But the roadblocks to treasure riches are many. Johnson points out that of the wrecks discovered in the '60s and '70s, many have been searched and the easy finds have already been plucked from the ocean. Of the artifacts that are found, economic forces play a role in potential profits. "You can put any value on a treasure that you want, but it's really what the market will bear," says Johnson, who sells recovered coins, jewelry and porcelain at auction, on the internet, and at Key West gift shops. "You may find a blanket of thousands of coins, but it doesn't matter if you can't market them or find someone who wants to buy them."

There's also the matter of politics. As treasure hunting grew in notoriety in the '70s, investors jumped on board with salvage companies, who were quick to publicize - and sometimes exaggerate - finds. Coastal states took notice, and began to impose sanctions laying claim to a portion of the finds made in their offshore waters. Florida, whose surrounding seas are the resting sites for many ill-fated Spanish ships transporting gold cargo from Mexico and South America, uses ownership rights granted by the Abandoned Shipwreck Act to collect an immediate 20 percent of all recovered treasure. Internationally renowned discoveries like the *Sussex*, originally a British warship, but sunken off the coast of Spain and found by the American company Odyssey Marine Exploration, have created diplomatic challenges and conflicting claims. Britain wants to salvage the ship, which it still technically owns. Odyssey wants to split profits. Spain is holding up the whole operation, wanting more evidence that the wreckage is actually the *Sussex* and not a Spanish vessel.

Johnson and hunters like him find their payoff in the thrill and notoriety that can come with the business. This hot August day, he and his crew are working the 1715th Fleet, a group of 11 Spanish galleons that fell victim to a late July hurricane just off the east coast of Central Florida. Vicious winds splintered the ships against coral reefs, scattering gold and jewels intended to save Spain's King Phillip V from bankruptcy. Among the still unfound treasures are the Queen's Jewels, a pearl and gold set that Phillip planned to give the Duchess of Parma as dowry for their impending marriage. Stories and movies that mention the set have exaggerated their value, claiming the earrings, crown, and necklace were composed of gold and diamonds. It's more likely that the Queen's were not jewels at all, but instead large pearls.



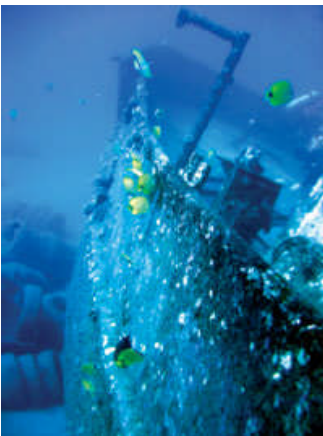
“Pearls disintegrate quickly. Discover a strand of pearls, and you’ll see that the seawater has eaten them into nubs,” says Johnson. Still, his team and others press on to find the jewelry set - diamonds or not. “Since these are documented as being intended for the Queen, they have value historically and romantically.”

LAND HUNTERS

Not far from where Johnson scours for fabled jewels of the past, you may find Wallis Swartz pressing along the beach, searching for modern-day valuables. Swartz is president of Suncoast Research & Recovery Club, a metal detecting and archeological organization based in Pinellas County, Florida. He’s been detecting treasure for 18 years. The chance that he’ll find a Spanish doubloon, perhaps washed up in a recent storm, are extremely slim. More likely are class rings, crucifixes, or wedding bands, lost on a typical day at the beach.

A find of a ring amongst bottle caps and nickels can be random or intended. Swartz is often connected, through Suncoast’s website or word of mouth, with people that have lost valuables. “They’ll search the internet for metal detector clubs and find us, or call the local sports shop to rent a detector, and we’ll be recommended,” says Swartz. “And all the beach rangers here know to call us.” Swartz and fellow club members have been summoned for a variety of scenarios, from diamond stud earrings thrown into a front yard during a domestic dispute, to a \$100,000 Rolex ring that slipped off the end of a dock into ten feet of water and 18 inches of muck.

But Swartz knows exactly where to hit paydirt by chance as well. He recommends the beach after the daily crowds have left, fields and parks where sports are played, or any space with a historic human use. “Anywhere that man has walked, he has dropped things,” Swartz says, “and the more he’s walked, well, the more he’s dropped.” One of his favorite finds was at a small old park, near areas said to be former Indian trails. His detector picked up something at the base of an old oak tree. Swartz dug ten inches to find a 200- year-old etched brooch. “You find something like that, and you’re hooked. You’re so focused on the detector, just waiting for that noise.”



GETTING WHAT YOU PAID FOR

Those just starting the hunt imagine metal detectors to be highly discriminating machines, picking out gold from silver, and ignoring trash and other worthless debris scattered on beaches and lawns. But it’s not that easy. The cheapest detectors may produce nothing more than a series of noises that the user must decipher. Additionally, the detector requires the user to set the desired frequency, depending on what he wants to find. Problem is, certain materials share frequencies, such as gold rings and nickels.

“You can go out and buy a detector for \$200, and that’s what you get: something as basic as a beep, that you’ll just have to dig to find out what it is,” says Amy Maruso, marketing director for Troy Custom Detectors, a highly regarded brand in the treasure hunting community. “A good detector gives you more discrimination, and you can make some stunning finds. People ask if detectors really work, and the answer is: yes, they do,” says Maruso, who began detecting after losing her car keys on a riverbank. She located them with a borrowed detector, took a few steps and found a coin, then two

more steps and another coin. She hasn't stopped since, taking to the beach with her detector, headphones and an apron. Maruso fills the apron pockets with bottle caps or soda pull-tabs, following the treasure hunters code of ethics to remove all found trash.

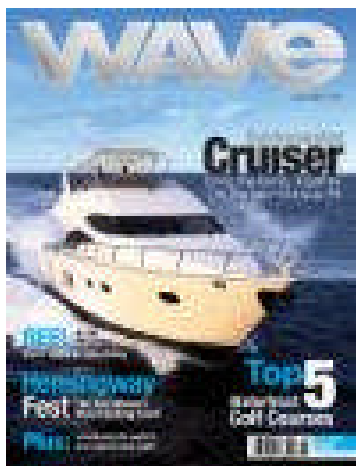
"Just about anywhere you do it, people are watching you, wondering," she says. "People with a genuine interest will approach, wanting to know what types of things you've found." Maruso has uncovered gold jewelry and other valuables, but prefers relic hunting for items from the colonial era, such as the Queen Elizabeth bell she found near a converted schoolhouse. "Some things are not valuable or collector-worthy, but I wouldn't sell them anyway. It's my collection, a part of my life," she explains. One relic she found was a Masonic badge of a man who had died, which she returned to his surviving family.

GIVING BACK

It's not unusual for terrestrial treasure hunters to search out the owners of found items for safe return. They'll report to lifeguard stands to see if anyone has lost a wedding ring or cell phone, and have even started an internet site to connect people with their lost class rings. They are eager to disprove an unfounded reputation as opportunists set on pawing items of sentimental value, purely for economic gain. "I keep a whole portfolio of thank-you notes, because there are people out there who make this hobby sound bad, almost like we are extortionists," says Linda Bennet of West Palm Beach's Gold Coast Treasure Club. She estimates that the group returns about 30 lost items a year.



On Easter weekend, Gold Coast members recovered a pendant lost by a woman while riding in a horseback arena. It was a gift from her husband, who had passed away. They also scoured a traffic accident site for a gold cross belonging to a young man who had died in the crash. "The majority of us are honest people who just want to help," Bennet says. "If we've found something you've lost, we'll gladly return it."



<http://www.wavelife.com/Article/ShowIssue/17/september-2006/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 13: Holiday Party

NO CLUB HUNT IN DECEMBER

January Hunt: TBA by John Lobota and Ernie Bouyoucas

February Hunt: Silver Hunt

TH Expo 2008: TBA

April 25-27, 2008: Great Southern Beach Shootout (Don't miss it this year!)

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WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/GCTREASURECLUB/