

Sacramento Valley Detecting Buffs

A Nonprofit Organization
The Public is Invited to Attend
SVDB Newsletter
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Sacramento Valley Detecting Buffs

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Day-in-the-Park

Volunteer

Minutes for Meeting of October 6, 2005

- The meeting started promptly at 7:30 - many members were present. Our President entertained us with a joke. Then he got down to business.

Treasurer's Report: Chuck Klein

- New Balance: \$3241.27

Remember, the cost of silver is going up. The more raffle tickets we sell during the meeting, the more silver coins the club can purchase for the monthly raffle.

Secretary's Report: Rick Costello

- Nothing new to report

Librarian Report: Tom Schweppe

- The library is in great shape. Stop by and check out the books and mags. Great information!

Member Report: George Magann

- The new year is around the corner – can you believe it? Anyway, with the new year comes, among other things, the yearly dues for your club. \$20.00 for a single and \$30.00 for a family.

To avoid the January meeting rush, please bring your dues to the November and December meetings. Or send your dues to: George Magann, 1740 Sessler Drive, Yuba City, CA 95993

New Business:

- **Be there or Be Square:** Founding members will be at our next meeting! Dick and Rita Carl couldn't make it for the October meeting – however they plan on joining us for the November meeting.

- I work at the California State Controller's Office. I am in the Unclaimed Property Division working in the Safe Deposit Vault. I deal with all the goodies that are left in safe deposit boxes because people die and don't tell anyone that they own a box. Or people move and the bank can't find them. Lots of reasons. Anyway, I see family treasures come in and are auctioned off. Whole life stories are destroyed because we don't have the room to keep naturalization papers, wills, ID cards, photographs, love letters, papers from the old country, and many other personnel items that have no commercial value. I also see coins, proof sets, rings, other jewelry, old silver coins, silver bars, gold bars – all this "stuff" that has commercial value. We auction it off to the

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general public – again because we cannot store the items. We have an online auction and a yearly live auction in Los Angeles during the month of May. That auction is a big deal. People from around the world attend. Needless to say, we have wonderful “things” to auction off.

My point – don’t let your family heirlooms fall through the cracks and be auctioned off. Let your family know if you have a safe deposit box.

Now – to find out if you have any property that the State is holding for you – go to the following web site: www.sco.ca.gov. Follow the link to the unclaimed section and then follow the directions.

You might have a surprise awaiting you.

You can also log onto the online auction site through the same website. Good Luck.

SEE YOU A THE NEXT MEETING!!

SVDB Day-In-The-Park

There are two day-in-the park hunts per month. The hunts are on the first Sunday and the third Sunday of each month. Breakfast at 8:00am with the hunt starting at 9:00 am. See the following for meeting place:

☐ **1st Sunday Hunt: Meet at Denny’s at Watt and Auburn**

☐ **3rd Sunday Hunts: Meet at Pancake House at 21st and Broadway**

We need someone to assume the role of Huntmaster for our Day in the Park hunts. To often time is wasted trying to figure where to hunt. Don’t be bashful – step up and volunteer. In the meantime, for those who show up for the hunts the following web site should prove useful: www.gazetteer.hometownlocator.com

Meeting

- 2006 meetings will be held on the first Thursday of the month at the same place as in the year 2005. Calendar in the January issue.

Bring your Finds of the Month to show your fellow members and win a coin.

The Billings Gazette

INDIALANTIC, Fla. (KRT) - It is the stuff of pirate legends, but do not waste your breath asking Joel Ruth on what stretch of Florida's Treasure Coast he found his hoard of Spanish pieces of eight - waiting to be scratched out of the sand with bare fingers and toes.

Treasure hunters guard their secrets - especially, if like Ruth, they have just found about 180 near-mint silver coins worth more than \$40,000.

To most Floridians, hurricane season is the time to board up windows and dread the worst. But to professional and amateur treasure seekers, it is the time to hit the beaches and hunt lost riches.

"It's why we're called the Treasure Coast," said Ruth, a bookish 52-year-old marine archaeologist with an African parrot named Euclid who has learned to squawk "pieces o' eight."

It takes the big storms like Jeanne and Frances to rake several feet of sand off the beaches and dunes and expose gold, silver and gems sunk and scattered centuries ago.

But making a find takes more than walking the beaches with a metal detector. What separates those who make a real find from the legions of beachcombers is knowledge and patience, said Sir Robert F. Marx.

Marx is an underwater archaeologist and marine historian who was knighted by both the Spanish and English crowns for his work, including about 800 popular and scientific articles and about 60 books.

His colleague Ruth, for instance, has been keeping his eye on a certain stretch of beach in Brevard

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County, Fla., for 20 years, checking it every so often as the years go by, Marx said. He and Ruth think the find is part of a sunken treasure fleet off Florida's Atlantic coast.

But it took Jeanne to bring a slice of the shoreline back to where it was in 1715, he said.

That is the year a famous Spanish treasure fleet of about a dozen ships sunk in a summer hurricane, bloated with treasure headed for Philip V of Spain, Marx said.

Captain-General Don Juan Esteban de Ubilla, commander of the flotilla carrying gems, gold, silver and porcelain from China - hence the name Plate Fleet - set sail in the late summer 289 years ago.

Under pressure from the king to bring treasure to boost a war-ravaged economy, Ubilla set sail even though hurricane season had already started. Leading with the Capitana, the fleet hugged Florida's Atlantic coast, heading north in the hopes of catching the trade winds of the Gulf Stream. With no more warning than a morning of steel-gray skies, a tempest snapped the ships like matchsticks, a few survivors would later tell.

Nautical records of salvage attempts and previous finds pointed to the spot Ruth staked out to search. Others know the spot and have made finds there, too.

The basic rules of treasure hunting on beaches include finders keepers, but do not dig into the dunes or in protected areas.

Because riches go to those who are there first, "You have to be Johnny on the spot," said Mitch King, vice president of the Treasure Coast Archaeological Society.

"(Hurricane) Jeanne did more destruction than any storm has in years," King said. The last storm to yield finds like Ruth's happened on Thanksgiving about two decades ago, he added. Treasure hunters still whisper about it.

And you have to be quick, Ruth said, because the high tides right after a storm often dump several feet of sand back on the same beaches, leaving the heavy treasure well below the reach of most metal detectors.

"You could be walking over a million dollars in coins and never know it," said Ruth, who makes a living on salvage efforts and identifying and restoring ancient coins.

Woman finds rock `n' roll treasure among Katrina debris

BY TOM WILEMON

Knight Ridder Newspapers

BILOXI, Miss. - Tabatha Murray, a waitress at the Waffle House in downtown Biloxi, walked a line to the restaurant after Hurricane Katrina passed to see if it survived.

The restaurant was gone, but she found what is thought to be a rock `n' roll treasure in the debris - a vintage guitar that appears to have Johnny Cash's autograph on it. Seven weeks later, she is shipping the guitar to Hard Rock Cafe's international headquarters in Orlando, Fla.

Don Bernstine, manager of acquisitions for Hard Rock, said the company appreciated her gesture and asked that anyone else who may have memorabilia from the Hard Rock Biloxi Casino follow her example. He would not say how much of the rock `n' roll memorabilia from the casino is missing.

Katrina destroyed the casino's gambling barge and heavily damaged its hotel. The casino resort belongs to Biloxi-based Premier Entertainment, but its memorabilia collection actually belongs to Orlando-based Hard Rock Cafe. The memorabilia the casino had leased included a guitar and clothing from the "Man in Black."

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"When people have a lot of tragedy in life, we really appreciate when they call and tell us they've found something," Bernstine said. "We're hoping to get this back, and we really appreciate it."

Murray, who lives in Gautier, Miss., found the guitar when she and friends who had ridden out the hurricane at her home returned to Biloxi. She decided to see her place of work while she was there. The graveyard-shift waitress saw a Fender strap in a pile of debris.

"I picked it up to look at it and it was signed by Johnny Cash," she said. "I said, 'Oh, my God.' There were people digging through it looking for stuff from the Hard Rock."

Murray said she stayed in South Carolina - and took the guitar with her - until she could return to the Gulf Coast. She contacted Hard Rock officials and then called the newspaper.

"I have had so many people, just by word of mouth, people I trusted, wanting to rip me off to get this guitar," she said. "I'm just happy to get it back to Hard Rock."

Hard Rock will pay the shipping costs for the guitar. Murray, whose car is inoperable, said she would send it by UPS as soon as she can get a ride.

A single mother, she had transferred to the Biloxi Waffle House two weeks before the hurricane hit after working at another Waffle House in Moss Point, Miss.

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

A BURIED TREASURE AT ASTRONOMICAL LOW TIDE, BEACHCOMBER FINDS LIFESAVING LYLE GUN THAT WAS WASHED AWAY 61 YEARS AGO FROM LITTLE ISLAND COAST GUARD STATION BY A POWERFUL HURRICANE.

WHEN BEACHCOMBER Rick Raehl looked down and saw a muzzle, he knew it was a cannon.

He pulled on the sand-and-rust encrusted barrel and the whole contraption - cannon, wooden carriage and all its fittings - just popped up out of the wet sand.

Thanks to Raehl, the Life-Saving Museum of Virginia now has an original Lyle gun used in shipwreck rescues early in the century at Little Island Coast Guard Station.

"It's a major maritime discovery for Virginia Beach," museum director Fielding Tyler said, "because there aren't that many around and we know exactly where it came from and the story behind it."

This Lyle gun was used to shoot lifelines from the Virginia Beach shoreline out to floundering ships offshore from 1900 until it was lost in the infamous August 1933 hurricane, the eye of which passed over Little Island Station.

The brass cannon in its oak carriage, which was taken away by the raging ocean that summer day long ago, was returned to the arms of beachcomber Raehl on May 24. He found the cannon at low tide right in front of the Little Island Station, which is now Little Island City Park.

Raehl, a retired Navy man, just happened to look down and see the round muzzle of a gun sticking just above the sand. He said he instinctively knew he had found a cannon.

He had purposely gone beachcombing that Tuesday before Memorial Day weekend, because there was an astronomical low tide. At astronomical low tides, the moon's gravitational pull is very strong and causes

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unusually high and low tides. When the tide is extremely low, objects not normally seen at low tides are often revealed.

On his low-tide beachcombing forays, Raehl usually looks for things such as driftwood, old bottles, buoys and shells. A 160-pound cannon was definitely out of the ordinary.

“It totally wrecked my back pulling it up,” he said.

On the way back to his Red Mill Farms home, Raehl stopped at Marshall Belanga’s house on Sandbridge Road. Belanga, who came from a U.S. Life-Saving Service family, identified the cannon as a Lyle gun. Named for its inventor, Army Col. David A. Lyle, the gun traditionally was used in the late 1800s and early 1900s to fire a metal projectile with a shot line attached out to shipwrecked boats offshore. The line would haul out successively heavier lines until there was a line strong enough to support a breeches buoy which could carry crewmen, one at a time, to shore.

Raehl took his treasure back home and began trying to clean the cannon up. “I started chipping away at it,” he said, “and I saw the letters USLSS.”

USLSS stands for United States Life-Saving Service. Raehl knew then he had found something significant and went back to the beach the next day with his 8-year-old son Bryan. That day the two found five of the cannon’s 17-pound metal projectiles lying in an encrusted pile 30 to 40 feet from where the gun had been.

When children in the Red Mill Farms neighborhood, who had toured the Life-Saving Museum of Virginia last year as part of their third-grade local history unit, also identified the cannon as a Lyle gun, Raehl called the museum.

Museum director Fielding Tyler and board member John “Bruddy” Baillio visited Raehl, examined the cannon and confirmed the Lyle gun identification. Then Raehl offered to donate it to the museum.

“Oh, I wanted to keep it bad!” Raehl said later. “But it just doesn’t belong to me. Why couldn’t I have found some insignificant little cannon?”

According to Baillio, “It’s an enormously significant find, but even more important, what a civic-minded fellow he was.”

Tyler began to research the gun’s origin. He and Raehl went back out to the beach at Little Island Station.

“Where did you find it exactly?” Tyler said he asked Raehl. “I looked up and saw where we were. Bingo! We were in front of the station.”

In further research, Tyler learned that the original 1878 Little Island station was destroyed in the August 1933 hurricane. At the time of the hurricane, it had been replaced by the current 1920s building and was being used as an equipment building.

The Lyle gun’s origins became very clear after Tyler spoke with former retired U.S. Coast Guardsman Ben Wroton, a museum board member. (Incidentally, Wroton retired from the Coast Guard, as group commander of the historic station that is now the Life-Saving Museum.)

At the time of the August hurricane, Wroton was a Coast Guard boatswain mate, stationed at Little Island Station. Wroton recalled that the gun and every other piece of rescue equipment was lost when the equipment building was totally destroyed in the fierce storm.

“The old building was out where the pier is now, about 300 to 400 yards out from the beach,” Wroton said. “When the building went down, we lost everything we had, all the equipment and all the rescue gear.

“It was 61 years ago, too, by golly.”

Baillio took on the task of restoring the cannon and carriage, which had been under water for all those 61 years.

“It was just a big crusted lump, encrusted with a cake of sand,” Baillio said. “We took a little tap on it and here was the marvelous clear brass cannon. Amazing! Just amazing!”

The cannon was so well preserved that not only were the USLSS initials visible but a few more taps revealed the

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serial number, the manufacture date, 1900, and the name of the factory, the American Ordinance Co.

The cannon and other metal fittings on the wooden carriage were soaked in chemicals to clean them. The heavy oak carriage also spent time in a chemical bath to soften the iron and sand encrustation. But all in all, 61 years under the water was not very detrimental.

``It's in good shape," Baillio said.

The shiny brass cannon in its oak carriage will be unveiled in a ceremony Thursday evening and goes on public exhibit Friday in at the Life-Saving Museum, at 24th Street and Atlantic Avenue.

``We're as proud as peacocks, of course," Tyler said

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