



Always up for another adventure, Don can't wait to put his detector into action!

A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Treasure

By William Purkey & Donald Russell

Imagine two retired old codgers who have just returned from another three-day treasure hunting adventure. The trip was profitable, too. By *profitable* we mean the great memories and the break we enjoyed from everyday life.

Two or three times a year, for almost three decades, the two of us have packed up and headed for some interesting part of the Atlantic coast. We've traveled from the ghost town of Portsmouth Island to the isolation of the Dry Tortugas, from the Outer Banks of North Carolina to Marathon Beach, Florida. We've been up and down the Atlantic Coast, two old geezers in a tired Toyota

pickup, having a great time.

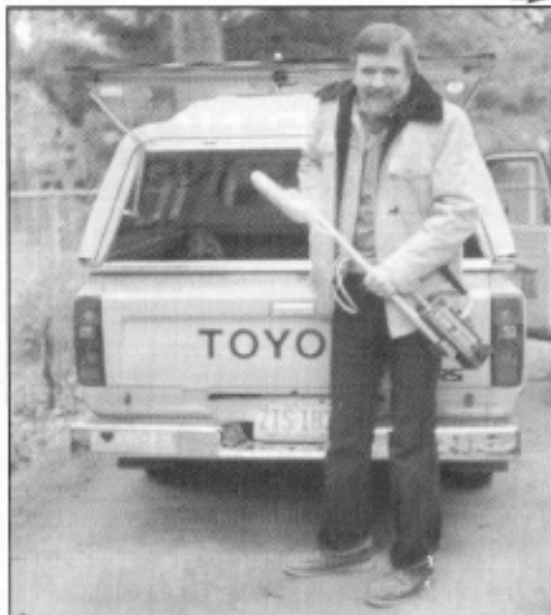
After our trips, we enjoy talking about the treasures we've collected. We've uncovered thousands of coins, a few gold rings, watches, lots of costume jewelry, toys, keys, countless fishing sinkers, and almost anything else you can think of. But that's not the treasure this article is about. The treasures we most value are the wonderful adventures and misadventures we've encountered while on

our trips, and we'd like to share some of them here in *W&ET*. Because several of them involve some small mysteries, we'll call these experiences "cases." Here are a few that we think are funny...

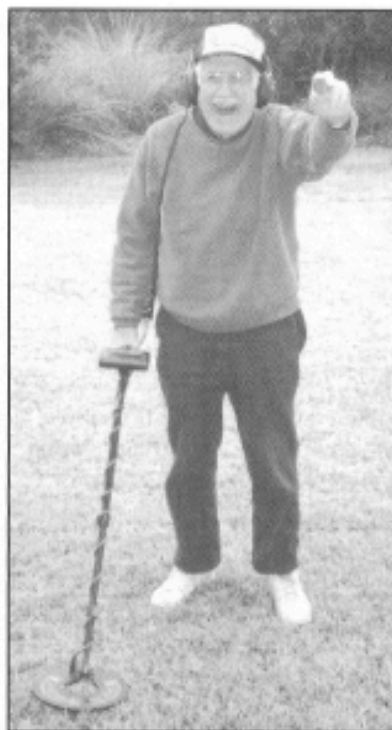
The Case Of The Gold Doubloon

(As told by Don)

William and I were sweeping a beach north of Orlando, Florida. We work as a team and generally try to keep within hailing distance of one another. I had drifted some distance from him when my White's MXT practically jumped out of my hand. Something important was hidden about 8" deep in the soft sand. With one strong dig with my scoop, I came up with a load of sand, and the first shake told me that I had found the treasure of a lifetime! It was a gold doubloon, beautifully marked with Spanish lettering and a coat of arms. My heart practically stopped. Then I shouted for William and he came running. We've worked together for so many years that he knew imme-



William says, "Over the years, we've found thousands of dollars... but the real treasure is a wealth of wonderful adventures and memories!"



"Look, it's a gold doubloon!" Don exclaimed. Then someone broke the news that broke his heart: on the other side of the coin was stamped the word COPY.

diately that I had made a significant find.

A gold doubloon! We could



hardly believe our good fortune. We left the beach and headed back to our hotel. (We stay at beachside hotels before or after the tourist seasons to take advantage of the inexpensive room rates.) As we reached the hotel, we were literally dancing with joy. Try to imagine two old geezers, slapping their thighs and doing a jig, right in the middle of a parking lot! We must have looked like the old prospector in the classic film *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

As we danced around and laughed our heads off, a car pulled into the parking lot and a woman got out. She asked what in the world had made us so happy. We explained that we had

found a gold doubloon. I pulled it out of my pocket and handed it to the woman. She studied it carefully, then remarked, "Too bad it's a copy." We looked at her, unbelieving and slack-jawed.

The woman turned the coin over and pointed out the tiny, almost invisible (to our old eyes), indented words *COPY*. You can imagine how crestfallen we were. Like Humphrey Bogart in the film mentioned above, we watched our dream of finding a gold doubloon blow away.

While we were denied the gold coin, every time we're together we reminisce and laugh about our parking lot joy and our gold prospector jig. This funny memory is more valuable to us than a gold doubloon.

The Case Of The Sullen Bride (As told by William)

Don and I had traveled to Key West, Florida to enjoy its relaxing, uninhibited culture. We planned to visit Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas and to sweep the public beaches. After we unpacked at the Duval Hotel, we grabbed our metal detectors and headed for the nearest beach.

As I worked my Fisher M-Scope along the dry sand, I savored the beautiful ocean and the graceful soaring of the sea birds. The fresh salt air was invigorating. My mind was completely relaxed. Suddenly, I heard the sound of running footsteps, and a young man rushed up and grabbed my arm. He stammered that he and his wife were on their honeymoon, and that his bride had lost her wedding ring in the sand. "Will you look for it?" he pleaded. "I'll pay you!" I responded that it would be my pleasure to search



Keen cuisine! William serves up a feast fit for a treasure hunter... Spam & pineapple sandwiches!

for her ring, and that there would be no charge for my services.

The young man led me back up the beach to where his bride was standing. When we approached the young woman, I introduced myself. She said nothing and gave me an icy stare. This was strange business.

We marked out a square in the sand well beyond where the ring had been lost. We wanted to be sure that the ring was within the square. Within minutes I got a reading, scooped up some sand, shook the scoop, and presented the beautiful diamond ring to the young lady. She took the ring, with no sign of appreciation or pleasure, and headed for the beach front hotel. She left without even thanking me for finding her ring. The young man again offered to give me a reward, and again I declined. He turned and ran after his bride.

Thinking back on the young woman's failure even to express appreciation for finding her ring, Don and I think we have solved the mystery. We believe that the honeymoon couple was involved in a lover's quarrel. In a fit of anger the bride had thrown the wedding ring at the groom. Throwing a diamond ring on a sandy beach is not a smart thing to do.

Although I never received thanks for finding the ring, Don and I have often benefited in retelling and laughing at my strange encounter with an unhappy bride.

The Case Of The Rooftop Penthouse

(As told by Don)

In our many travels up and down the East Coast, William and I have stayed at numerous hotels and motels, large and

small, expensive (in season) and inexpensive (that's us). The motel we most remember is located in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. When we selected Myrtle Beach for our adventure, we did not know that a major national conference was being held there. As a result, when we arrived we discovered that every hotel and motel in the area was completely full.

It was getting late, and we were tired. As William and I drove down the A1A beach road, we wondered if we would have to sleep in the "Toyota Hotel" (our car). At the far outskirts of Myrtle Beach we noticed a run-down motel that appeared to be closed. The Art Deco architecture made it look as if it was a leftover from the 1930s. There was a light burning in the office, so we decided to give it a try.

When we tried to enter the office, we found that the door was locked. On the door was a handwritten sign that read, "Go to Room 21." We figured that since we had come this far, we might as well keep going. We went to Room 21 and knocked on the door. No one answered. Just as we turned to walk away, the door popped open, and there stood a fellow that looked like an unmade bed. He needed a shave, his hair was tousled, and he was wearing an undershirt and a pair of cut-off pants. He said, "Yeah, what do you want?" When we asked about the possibility of renting a room, he responded, "Well, the only thing left is the room on the roof. It will cost you 25 dollars." We accepted the offer, paid the \$25, and got directions to the roof.

After climbing three flights of stairs (the elevator was "out of order"), we struggled up yet another, smaller flight of stairs

to the rooftop. On the roof was a wooden plank walkway leading to a little ramshackle building, no bigger than a small cottage or shack. We unlocked the door, entered, and were surprised to find a one-room apartment, clean and comfortable. The apartment looked as though it might have been built by a hotel employee, probably as a private retreat.

To our delight, the roof offered a magnificent view of a silver ocean and a starry night sky. Our motel was far away from the flashing neon signs and bright lights of the Myrtle Beach strip. The ocean view was unspoiled and awesomely beautiful. Before we hit the sack, we sat in front of our cottage, enjoying a cool drink and sharing our appreciation for this beautiful evening.

When we returned home a few days later and told our wives that we had rented a motel room for only \$25, they were horrified. What sort of miserable accommodations could we have possibly found for that low price? We explained that the \$25 was a down payment. The view was worth a million dollars!

The Case Of The Disappearing Partner

(As told by Don)

As mentioned earlier, the two of us usually work a beach within sight of each other. However, one day at Folly Beach, I noticed that William had vanished. In the distance was a weathered pavilion, constructed years ago by a local recreation department. The pavilion was built on pilings and had the usual accommodations of basic bathrooms and a wide porch.

Judging by the marks on the wall and deck, the pavilion had

at one time had drink machines and a pay telephone. The flooring consisted of wooden planks a fraction of an inch apart, just wide enough to allow coins to fall through the decking. A wooden lattice surrounded the entire pavilion, from ground to deck.

On approaching the pavilion, I spied the rear section of a body protruding from a hollowed-out depression at the base of the lattice. Moments later the body vanished, and then an arm came out to drag in a metal detector. It was a Fisher M-Scope, and the body was Williams.

I remarked to myself that my digging buddy must have gone completely daft. He undoubtedly would have to cope with snakes and bugs, and probably leaking pipes. I continued sweeping the beach, but after a few minutes my curiosity got the best of me. Perhaps William needed to be rescued from under the pavilion. My concern vanished when he snaked his way from beneath the lattice and stood up with a big grin on his face. When he saw me, he pointed to his bulging pants pockets. William had hit a glory hole!

For years, visitors to the beach and pavilion had accidentally dropped coins that rolled through the cracks between the building's floorboards. This was particularly true in the area where the pay phone and drink machines had once been located. William shouted, "There's plenty more where these came from." That did it! My 84-year-front half eased under the lattice, and my bottom half followed. Later, when we finally emerged from under the lattice, we each found over \$8 in lost coins.

We can only imagine what we must have looked like,

crawling out from under the pavilion on our bellies, looking like two overage soldiers on maneuvers. The money that we found is mostly forgotten, but the memory of the disappearing partner will be with us for as long as we live.

The Case Of The Spam Dinner (As told by William)

Whenever Don and I head out for a few days of treasure hunting, my wonderful wife of 53 years, Imogene, always prepares and sends us off with a picnic basket of delicious, low-salt, low-fat, health foods. We are ashamed to admit that we don't travel far until we stop to pick up our own idea of health food, such as Vienna sausages and Kentucky Fried Chicken, canned baked beans, and hoop cheese, Oreo cookies and Ritz crackers, canned sardines, and packs of peanuts, Krispy Kreme doughnuts, and cold drinks.

One evening, after a full day on Jacksonville Beach, we returned to our low-budget motel room, so tired that we dreaded the idea of going out to dinner. At that moment I produced a surprise for Don. Earlier I had purchased a special treat for this kind of situation. I opened a grocery bag and pulled out a loaf of bread, a small jar of mayonnaise, a can of sliced pineapple, and, last but not least, a large can of Spam. I opened the jar and cans and cut the Spam into large slices. Then I slathered the fresh bread with mayonnaise and added slices of pineapple and Spam to make sandwiches.

Don and I have eaten at many restaurants, good and bad, during our years of treasure hunting. The great majority of these have long since been forgotten. Yet, we will not forget

one of the best tasting meals we two old prospectors ever enjoyed, pineapple and Spam sandwiches, washed down with a good beverage.

The Case Of The Happy Husband

(As told by William)

One day when Don and I were working a beach off Folly Inlet in South Carolina, a man came up to us and said that he had lost his wedding band under the swings in a nearby playground. Could we please find the ring for him? The fellow knew about where he had lost his ring, and sure enough, Don found it immediately. The ring was a large gold band engraved with double hearts, and obviously of great value.

Imagine Don's surprise and shock when the fellow kissed the ring, then promptly gave Don a bear hug and kissed him square on the mouth! Don was floored. The man then went happily to his car and drove away. Don finally turned around and saw me laughing my head off at his reaction to being kissed. We still laugh every time the incident comes up.

These six cases describe only a small part of the funny, zany adventures we've enjoyed together over three decades. Sure, we've found thousands of dollars in coins (Don purchased three Treasury Bonds for his grandchildren with his findings, while William spent his money as fast as he found it). We've also found many rings, bracelets, watches, and toys, and returned several class rings to their owners. Yet the real treasure we always find during our trips is more precious than gold. That treasure is the memories we share of our wonderful adventures. □