

There's Gold in Them There Dunes



I'VE JUST DISCOVERED YOU DON'T NEED A BOAT AND A WEALTHY SPONSOR TO BE A TREASURE HUNTER!

If you're traipsing around Grace Bay you may have seen David Stone, either on the beach or in the ocean, looking for lost things in the hope of reuniting them with their owners - and maybe even getting a great story out of the deal.

Usually referred to as the, "Guy who looks like Santa," David Stone often puts his metal detector, and his time and years of experience, to work for the benefit of a panicked stranger. He doesn't do it for the glory

and he doesn't charge for his services, though certainly the fortunate woman reunited with her 5-carat diamond anniversary ring would have been happy to pay his fee! The Thank-Yous and donations he does receive are used to maintain his website:

www.ILostMyjewelry.com.

The hotels and resorts all know David well, and he often gets calls from properties after a distraught guest reports having lost an engagement ring, a wedding band,

their mother's antique bracelet, or one of any numerous precious items not easily or cheaply replaced. If he's on island, David is happy to help.

This all started as a simple hobby, a way to entertain his young family on the beach holidays he loves. Though only moderately successful, the whole family was able to get into the spirit of things after finding a few lost pieces of jewelry. David's moral compass pointed him to the lost and found depart-

~ STORY & PHOTOS BY KATHRYN FOX ~



ment of the resort nearby. It turns out, most guests who lose something in the ocean, don't report the incident to lost and found.

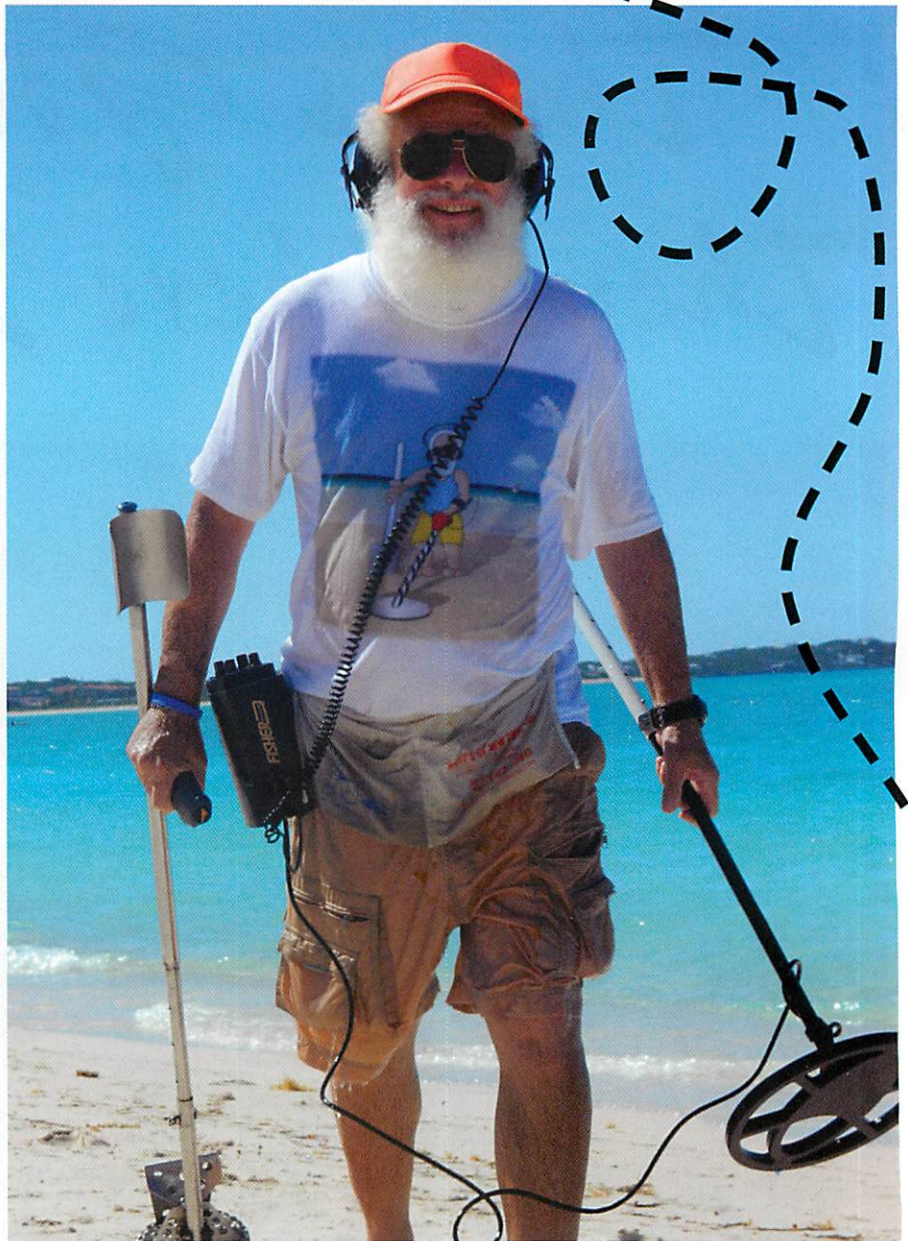
"It's like the lottery," David says, "If you don't report it lost you'll never get it back. Sure the odds are against you, but if you don't play you can't win!" In order to reach a larger audience in the hope of returning more of his finds to their owners, David set-up the website and devised a system that would help ensure the right treasures found their way into the right hands. "Sometimes you have an all bottle-cap day," he says, "And some days it's all treasure."

Over the years, David has gained a pretty intense understanding of tide and wave action, and the effect those might have on a lost treasure. I asked David if he did a lot of experimenting to figure all this out, but apparently rather than risk losing a ring to an experiment, "It's more a matter of the experience. Where I find lost items, for example, compared to where the owner describes having lost them."

What's the most common item of jewelry discovered in bodies of water around the world? "Men's wedding rings." An optimist at heart though, David is reluctant to jump to the conclusion there's something nefarious in that phenomenon, "I believe it's because most men aren't used to wearing jewelry. They get their wedding band and they've never worn a ring before so they choose a looser fit than a woman might. They're in the water playing catch and next thing you know, the ring is travelling farther than the football they've just thrown."

If you're wondering whether David wears his own wedding ring in the ocean, the answer is no, "I tell everyone I reunite with a lost piece of jewelry, that they must promise to never wear it in the ocean again. But I say that half joking, obviously, the decision is theirs to make."

Though David admits returning lost items is at times a thrill and a joy, his most rewarding discovery isn't that five-carat diamond, or



any other piece of jewelry for that matter; "I found a British Infantry button from 1795 next to a cannon in 3 feet of water." In keeping with his not-for-personal-profit philosophy, the button is now on display in the Turks and Caicos National Museum.

David calls Providenciales home for much of each year, and is often seen wandering Grace Bay with eyes on the sea floor and ears encased in headphones waiting for his equipment to tell him there's treasure afoot. Next time you see him, say hi, there's no need to lose a family heirloom just to meet him. ■

Visit David's website to see some of his finds. Maybe he even has something you lost, posted there! www.ilostmyjewelry.com

