

Diving for memories
Local man makes good out of scuba adventures
By NICHOLAS DESHAIS
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In his spare time, Bob Grattan dives for memories.

And sometimes, decked in scuba gear and wielding an underwater metal detector, he uncovers them.

When he surfaced from diving in Silver Lake near Ann Arbor last summer and got a closer look at the class ring he had unearthed, he noticed some things: a few clues that could lead him to the ring's owner — but only a few.

It was a gold band, marked “University of Maryland, 1951.”

Mainly a treasure hunter — he brings in as much as \$12,000 from his sunken booty every year — Grattan considers it his duty to do his best to find the rightful owners of rings. At least when he gets the chance.

Most of the jewelry he finds is unmarked: plain wedding bands, pendants or bracelets. But when he finds a ring with a clue, he chases it.

“I contacted the University of Maryland and gave them the initials on the ring,” said Grattan, 51, who works at Serfz Up in downtown Port Huron as a computer technician. “They gave me three names.”

After a few calls, he found the man who had once worn that class ring: Alfred Hellman.

Hellman and his wife, Kiki, live in Clarksburg, Md. They've been married 52 years. “I'm the one that lost the ring,” Kiki said Friday.

The two met and “started going together” in 1954 when they both were attending medical school at the University of Michigan.

“It was love at first sight,” Kiki said. “By February of 1955, we knew we were meant for each other.”

Some things never change, however, and the students were poor. Alfred got down on one knee and, instead of slipping an engagement ring on her finger, he slid on his class ring.

“It was too big. I had to tape it on,” Kiki said.

A few months later, in June, Alfred had to report for active duty in the Air Force. During the Ann Arbor summer a few weeks later, Kiki went down to Silver Lake.

“There was one Sunday, when I went swimming with classmates.” She jumped in and the ring slipped off her finger. Her friends began to search. “I was devastated. They dove and dove for probably an hour.”

Fifty-three years later, Grattan dove just once.

When he called the Hellman’s, they were excited, but Kiki had long ago replaced the ring: she immediately bought Alfred a replacement and then, on Jan. 29, 1956, the two were married.

But they were happy to get the ring anyhow.

“He was shocked,” Grattan said. Grattan currently is in search of the owner of an Air Force ring from the 1940s.

Another ring, a 1901 “BHS” ring, he still is investigating.
“BHS. I don’t even know what BHS is.”

Grattan, who’s been scuba diving since 1980, said he keeps it up because he likes it. Not for the wealth.

But, with his only overhead gas for his car, \$4 for a tank full of three hours of air, and some 9-volt batteries for his metal detector, he makes out like a bandit.
It’s easy to imagine the piles of gold at Grattan’s house, but he said it’s not like that at all.

“Old fishing lures. You name it I find. I got watches, I got lighters, I got keys, I got sunglasses,” he said. “You wouldn’t believe the stuff I have at home.”