

One  
Day  
of  
Hunting  
Treasure

\$1.00

By Shirley Jean Holzworth

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Fort Pierce Press, Inc., Fort Pierce, Florida



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Shirley Jean Holzworth, author of this completely factual narrative had never before set foot in salt water until March, 1965.

Walter, her husband has devoted almost his entire life to the diving profession; and the search for sunken treasure.

Shirley decided to join her husband in his endeavors. It was a case of "If you can't fight 'em, join 'em!" This was a move she has never regretted. It will be better understood as her tale unfolds.

*A most  
significant  
day  
begins - -*

John left, and Mel run  
for the "Reef Comber".



The inlet is  
treacherous  
and  
unpredictable  
at all times.

Once beyond  
the Inlet  
the water  
becomes  
smooth and  
placid.



The morning was much like any other; mornings past and to come. My husband Walter Holzworth and I arrived at the dock just about 7 a.m.

While waiting for the crew to show, the usual tasks had to be done to prepare the DEE GEE for sea. The tanks were filled with gas, diesel checked out, as well as the oil in the compressor. The doors had to be opened and tied down.

It was a beautiful morning. The sky baby blue with little white clouds floating about lazily. A warm sun, and a delightful breeze filled with the morning songs of the birds in the treetops. Few people were stirring about the dock.

I walked up to Henry's Fish Camp for coffee. Frank Allen a non-diving member of the crew (for this trip; he had a pip of a cold) sauntered in and ordered his breakfast. (He'll be handling the ropes and blasts.) Followed shortly thereafter by John Forbes and Alwyn Newton, diamond hunters from South America. George Deming, an archeologist puts in his appearance. He will accompany us as a representative for the state of Florida; checking and recording our finds; making sure that anything of historical value is recognizable and not inadvertently destroyed. And, evaluating any treasure found of which 25% must be turned over to the state of Florida. This, we are most willing to do.

Rupert Gates, Fay Fields and son Dirk then walked in; and along with the others had breakfast.

I walked through the sand down to the dock and on to the DEE GEE to tell Walt that all had arrived but Mel Fisher and Gene Doms, Mel's nephew; and as I looked back there they were, along with a friend Bud.

Loaded with gear and cameras they boarded the DEE GEE and the rest of the crew followed. All well fed and ready to go.

Out on the river were a few fishermen. Some fishing, others just looking on, enjoying the warm sun and the cool breezes.

Walt took the helm, Gene, Frank and Mel, the ropes. Fay, Dirk and Rupert went ashore so they could get to the "Half Reale" and start out detecting.

"Let her go!", Walt yelled and all the ropes were taken but one; the stern rope, which Mel held til the bow swung out far enough, then flipped the loop so as to let her go.

The water in the inlet was swift and going out. Shallow in many places with the sand bars shifting all the time. In some areas you could see rocks and coral jutting out. The water changes quickly from a rough, swift current to a nice smooth ripple and back again; pitching the boat to and fro.

On this particular morning the waves at the mouth of the inlet were at least six feet. The moments were tense; each of us watching and waiting as we headed out - momentarily expecting disaster. I stood close to my husband trying to reassure him.

"This is no time to talk", he barked, "I'm too busy."

As I turned to reply I could sense the strain he was under. The

Delores Fisher, Mel's wife was not aboard on this special day. \*A good diver she participates often with the group.



Walt asked, "Where to Mel?"

Below: Walt, Alwyn Newton, Gene Doms and Dirk (rear) get the anchors out.



thought suddenly hit me, - "We could be salvaging our own boat!"

Suddenly we hit a sand bar. My heart missed a beat.

"I can't steer" Walt yelled, "I can't steer!"

Mel and John ran for the small boat we were pulling, the "Reef-Comber" but before they got to it, Walt called out, "Wait, I can steer now, let's hope we don't have to pound it out."

We were under the Sebastian Bridge and all of a sudden we were pitching and rocking again. The waves and the DEE GEE pounding against each other.

Walt mumbled, "Seems every time I want to see out, someone's in the way. This inlet is treacherous, changing every few days." With that remark, we all scampered out of his view.

We finally got through all this and the ocean was delightfully smooth. I breathed a sigh of relief; Mel proceeded to introduce his friend Bud and while all were engaged in vigorous conversation, I decided to catch up on my correspondence. It had fallen so far behind. Got two letters written; one to my Mom and one to my sister.

"Quite an accomplishment", I thought. Then I headed for the top and decided to lay in the warm sun for the rest of the way out.

As we approached our working spot, Walt asked, "Where to, Mel?"

"Well, why don't we vote on it?" Mel replied.

Walt suggested, "Shall we hop spot to find big discs?" (These are silver.)

The crew unanimously voted, "Yes."

Mel Fisher is the leader of the group and when on board makes all the decisions. On this particular day he mentioned that a previous appointment would necessitate his departure at about 10 a.m., so he asked Walt to take command.

We continued to our projected area. The water beneath us, breathlessly cool and blue. Walt asked Mel where they should start the search.

"Let's try to the far outside reading." He replied.

Walt agreed it was a good idea, "I think it's pretty close to where we want to swing to and work."

As we reached our destination the first stern anchor was dropped by Gene, then let out about forty feet. I sat on top watching all this movement and staying out of the way. Frank let out the second bow anchor to Alwyn in the "Reef-Comber". John drove it to the spot. Walt gave the signal to drop anchor and Alwyn did so. Gene then put out the other bow anchor to the boys in the "Reef-Comber" and finally the second stern anchor was secured. Four anchors are set out to enable us to keep within the area designated for our search.

While all these maneuverings were being executed, Frank checked out all the air tanks.

The boys then proceeded to settle down to the business at hand. Mel Fisher donned his wet suit, John Forbes and Alwyn Newton came aboard from the "Reef-Comber" after tying on to the DEE GEE. The ladder was secured.



Finally in the fourth attempt,  
Walt found a cannon.



Mel removes his gear as he  
prepares to leave for shore.

Cannon balls. Some are encrusted.



Walt hollered, "Ready to blast, - or do you want to go down and take a look around first?"

Mel decided to descend. He reappeared and said, "It looks okay to me, so let's get on with it." John, Alwyn, Gene and Walt put on the "Male Box" and all was squared away.

Mel told Frank to blast for two minutes. He descended for about twenty minutes. When he surfaced he told Frank to move about fifteen feet and continue blasting. "I can see fairly well for about two or three feet," he remarked.

Frank took to the task of blasting. Bud was racing around taking movies of all the activities. Mel stood by, impatiently dragging on a cigarette. It became water-logged and he flipped it away. Adjusting his mouthpiece he hastened again to the ocean floor.

Three more blasts at fifteen feet intervals and finally with the fourth - half-success, he found a cannon.

I made a buoy of a line with two plastic bottles and the boys secured it to the cannon.

John and George went on down to continue exploration, as Mel at this time had to leave for his appointment in town.

Gene, Mel's nephew took him to the surf from whence he swam to shore. His car was parked at the cabin.

In the meantime, George Deming surfaced and inquired, "When's Mel leaving?" I pointed to shore. George turned quickly, and started swimming toward shore. A previous engagement was on his schedule also.

It was a good three-quarters of a mile to shore, and shark-infested waters to boot. Walt getting into his wet noticed this flurry of activity and with much annoyance remarked, "George should have waited for Gene's return to carry him to shore. Surely, he can't be in that much of a hurry!"

We watched as he swam to shore, and heaved a sigh of relief as he scrambled up the beach. He's a likeable guy, and the risk he took was a great one and really unnecessary.

Just as that was settled, Gene returned to the DEE GEE and threw the rope to me. I started to pull him in when I felt a tug. The rope had gotten caught in the prop.

Holy Toledo, I thought, what now! Walt yelled at me and shut off the motor. This is a signal for the divers to surface, and up they came. John broke surface first and Walt called out explaining the problem, "C'mon boy, you'll have to get it untangled."

In all this confusion, the "Reef-Comber" started to drift away, but Gene, ever-alert latched on to it quickly. Walt suggested we tie it off with the yellow rope. We did.

Back to the main project, and we prayerfully hoped this was to be the last of the "incidents".

Walt still in his rubber suit, raring to go; fastened his hook-a-hose, put on his fins and mask, scrambled down the ladder adjusting his mouthpiece and called to me, "Shirley, turn my air on!" He was gone.

Walt is the only one who wears a hook-a-hose. It enables him to work for a long period of time beneath the surface. A tank limits him to a half hour. He hates to be limited!

We moved about opposite to Mel's working area. Back and northward, looking into many holes. Back again another eight feet. Walt surfaced and yelled, "Back and southward, it's over in that direction."

There it was, the 1715 wreck; which both Mel's company, Treasure Salvors, Inc. and Real 8, Inc. had been working together on. We uncovered two large timbers.

Alwyn and John picked up about a hundred half reales, using up three air tanks in the process. Walt was still below while all of this was going on.

John hinted he was getting hungry. I fixed some sandwiches and pickled eggs. Walt came up; Frank, Gene and Alwyn joined in. John became impatient waiting and went back down without so much as a mouthful.

I suddenly started to feel ill. (Not sea sick, I'm too much of an old salt for that.) I began to wonder if perhaps I should have stayed at home. Decided to take a nap hoping it would wear off and went down to the bunk area.

In the meantime Rupert, Fay and Dirk came on board looking for some lunch. They had been out all morning detecting and hadn't brought any food or drink with them. Walt was putting on his hook-a-hose gear preparing for another descent and motioned to the crew. Rupe finished off John's lunch; Fay and Dirk made up their own. They ate quickly and left.

Once again Walt proceeded with the task of exploration. He had been down for awhile and then came up and told Frank to move a few feet south and start blasting again. While he was waiting on board a Coast Guard Helicopter flew over, waved a greeting and hovered awhile so Bud could gather more movies. He endeavored to capture every moment of interest on this trip.

I could barely hear the activity above as I drifted off to sleep. The motion of the water lulls you to sleep quickly. Don't really know how long I slept but I awoke hearing Walt call "Move shoreward six feet and north four feet". Somehow we wound up some twenty feet north and Walt howled, "You moved too far, but I'll go take a look anyway. Turn on the blaster for two minutes, Frank."

Blasting the sand muddies the water and even on good days visibility in this area is usually six inches to two feet at most. I heard Walt call out excitedly, "Hey Bud clear water is coming!"

I sat up quickly. For a moment I thought I saw smoke. Or did I? I was just awakening, wasn't quite sure. Yes, it was smoke. I could smell engine smoke or perhaps it was the exhaust caused by a wind shift?

I heard Frank yell, "Fire in the engine room." Walt was out of the water, hose unhooked and down the hatch before I could get to the steps of the galley, a mere ten feet from where I stood. Bud called to Gene to reach for the fire extinguisher. Gene in his haste could

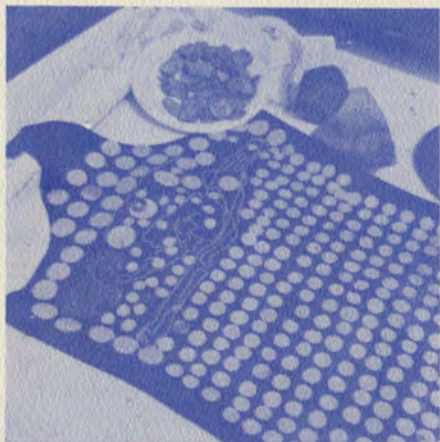
Electronic specialist Fay Fields  
Chief Detector of the group.



Rupert Gates assists Fay with  
the Detecting tasks this day.



"Fire in the engine room!"  
Walt scampers to the scene  
before I could reach the door.



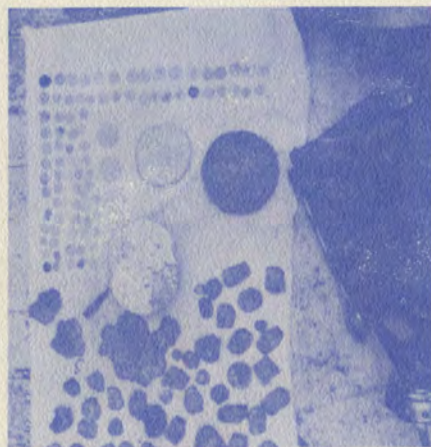
Pictured left and right are silver cobs, gold escudas, a chain, and silver discs from the original (1964) find.



Standing L. to R., Rupert Gates, Walter Holzworth, Dick Williams and group leader, Mel Fisher. Seated in foreground, ever-dependable, Moe. These men recovered the treasure of 1715 off Fort Pierce in 1964, working on Kip Wagners lease. Mr. Wagner leads the group known as Real 8, Inc.



Walt displays part of a jug; probably used for drinking water. Found in the 1715 wreck.



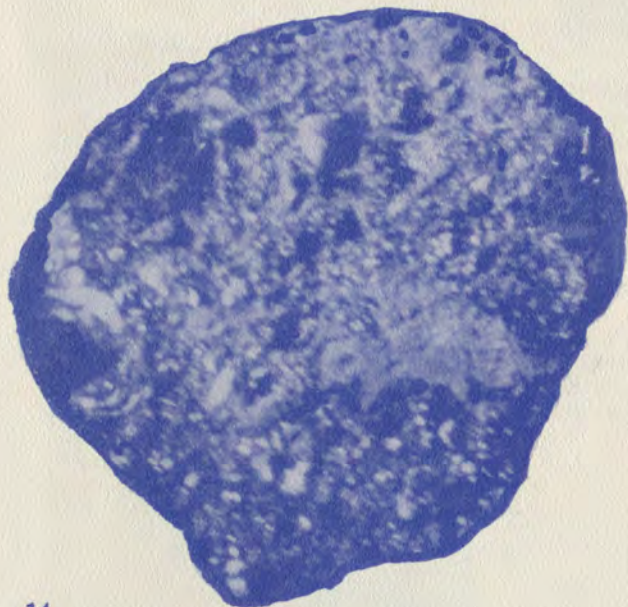
Author pictured holding a pendulum used for firing a cannon. With the ship's motion it would sound the signal to open fire.





Frank Allen (left) pulls ropes, John Forbes lets out the rope to move the "DEE GEE."

Here it is! Our fabulous "PIZZA"!



hardly get it down, but finally handed it to Walt who turned it away in disgust. I helped Gene put it back in place.

The starter had gotten stuck in the first stage and burned out. Henceforth we knew we couldn't turn off our motor, or we'd be adrift. Oh well, I thought, at least we still have our little "Reef-Comber" for security.

Hot and sweating in his rubber suit; upset at the happenings of the day; Walt a bit disconsolate muttered, "Guess we should have stayed home."

Our three detecting buddies Rupe, Fay and Dirk came on board looking for blocks and bottles for markers and a soda pop or two. We exchanged quips about our varied problems and frustrations; then loaded them with their needs aboard the Reale 8 small boat. (the "Half Reale")

Walt somewhat cheered started back down. We watched his bubbles coming to the surface. Seconds later, so did he. Excitedly he yelled, "Give me a rope!" Bud handed one to him and he disappeared. We stood by anxiously wondering what he could be tying to the rope. He yanked the pull signal and the boys hauled away.

"Gads, this is heavy", said Frank. Both he and Bud pulling strenuously at the rope, lost their footing, Bud nearly fell overboard. This unexpected weight caught them both completely off guard. Not helping matters any the ocean at this point started to stir, almost with fiendish delight. The swells gathered momentum.

Suddenly, there it was; just as Walt had always said it would be. The whoop and holler brought me to my feet and out of the cabin's shade. It was a large silver pan cake. As large as a pizza, - which is eventually what we named it.

The anticipation was electrifying. We wondered what awaited us below. Bud stood by dejected because he'd forgotten his swim suit. "Don't just stand there, get into a wet suit," I suggested.

He grinned at me, and nearly clobbered Gene as he blindly rushed into the cabin. He was ready in minutes to go over the side.

Al and John stood by. They were out of their wet suits and resting. Hauling the "pizza" from the ocean's bottom had really exhausted them. It weighed some seventy-five pounds.

Bud was putting on his tanks when Walt came up and yelled to Gene, "Move north eight feet, and tell Frank to turn on the blaster for two minutes." He was gone.

The blasting is like being in a hurricane. The sand, rocks and seaweed blow in a frenzied maze. You can't see; the force tosses you about with ease against sharp coral, the ocean floor - everywhere, anywhere. This is no place for a novice, and even the pro has a job to face. The two minutes of blasting seemed endless. The water slowly cleared, the current carried away the mud and sand. Small fish swam by, pretty coral lay there all shapes and sizes; many broken away by the constant force of the current; shells, not very many large ones, just clam size or smaller. And there; in the midst of all this, Walt

Walt calls, "Al, John, come below. I want you to see this."



"Can I go too?" In my eagerness  
I no longer felt ill.

The ocean bottom is beautiful, resplendant with coral and fish.



beheld a vision he'd dreamed of, but almost never expected to see. So many, so much - silver cobs, all sizes, just everywhere.

Filling his gloves, he came up. "You Al, you John, get your suits on, I want you to see this."

I turned, half in my gear box and asked hesitantly, "Can I go too?"

Walt nodded with a half-smile playing across his face, "C'mon honey."

I don't think I've ever dressed so quickly. I got to the bottom even before Al and John. I was stunned. I could only grab and stuff cobs in a bag, and I couldn't do it fast enough.

The water was so clear. I could see for at least twenty feet, and it was almost impossible to believe. The ocean bottom was a greenish tan and the cobs bright green and rust brown. It seemed like the sun was shining only for us; showing through water, lighting our way. Clearly, Beautifully.

What had been an impossible dream had come true. Just a few days before I had said to Walt, "If only we could find a spot, where there'd be so many, I'd be frantic trying to gather them up."

I looked over at Walt, wishing to express my thanks for letting me be a part of this. He was signalling to Bud, "Where's your camera?"

Bud, arms wide, thumbs down, trying to bump his head on the ocean floor, --- "I don't have it."

I felt sorry for him, such a significant moment and no camera. This was not usual, not a daily occurrence. This was a "first" for all of us. Yes, Walt too! This was a vast find, even for Walt, who has seen more gold and silver than any of us.

I don't believe anyone could have been as excited as I was. In the midst of this great find I was like an octopus. Hands flying in all directions trying to fill my bags to capacity. Alwyn bumped against me, I hardly noticed I was so preoccupied. Suddenly someone grabbed my bag and was gone. It was Walt, I guess. He thought the weight of it would drown me if I tried to surface. So, I grabbed another and proceeded to fill it. I didn't notice the water beginning to cloud. I could still see clearly for about ten feet. Just had another filled when Bud took it and handed me an empty. John came past and knocked me over; the current was increasing in intensity, it carried him right into me. I paid him no mind and went on dusting and picking up all sizes of cobs. There were pieces of broken olive jars, musket balls wired together; and I just gathered as much as I could.

I moved on towards Walt, to signal that I was going up. As I did so the current hurled me against a pail and I knocked it over spilling out all that had been gathered. Walt leaned over to take my bag for me. I signalled No. This, I wanted to carry up myself. I had yet to carry any quantity to the surface, and it was a thrill they weren't going to take from me. Oh, I've brought up some silver and gold pieces, but never anything like this. Just this once, I was going to bring up this find myself.

Frank was pulling the ropes as I came up with my bucketful. I handed



Above: Cannon covered with coral, and large anchor.

Below: I looked over to Walt, wishing to express my gratitude for this thrilling moment.



it to Gene, and he called out to me, "Go to it, Lucky."

"I can't", I replied "Need another tank." He got it for me and in my mad rush to get back down I got it twisted. Bud came over and helped me get straightened out.

Meanwhile Al and John came up to rest a minute. Both sat there without saying a word. They were completely exhausted. Frank started to fill tanks and Gene was working the ropes on the bucket.

I went back down. Water was getting muddied again, but I could still see four or five feet. I let Walt know I was down there with him and started to my joyful task again. I was working maybe some fifteen minutes, when the water suddenly became dark. I could scarcely see what I was gathering. Had to hold my hands up to the mask to distinguish the shells from the cobs. I found about 3 or 4 more cobs and the current became treacherous. I picked up a large stone and place it in my bucket to hold me steady in one spot.

Suddenly something extremely large and black brushed up against me. I looked toward it, could see no diving gear or straps. The water turned back to it's muddy brown color; and I could see nothing. Absolutely nothing! I decided it was time to leave!

I started looking for Walt. If he wanted to stay down it was okay by me, but I wanted out. I held my breath listening for his air bubbles. No sound. I let out mine; took another breath and waited --- swam around a little searching and listening. Still couldn't find him. Tried this several times. I didn't want to go up without letting him know. Well, I didn't find him, or anyone else. So, I decided, this was it -- up and out!

Finally got to the ladder, still anxious about Walt; and there he was! On deck, laughing and carrying on with the boys. Kidding Bud about leaving his under-water camera at Mel's and joshing with Gene because he missed out on all this. He would have that miserable cold!

I gathered my wits and asked weakly, "Who else is down?"

Walt smiled back, "Just you, honey." I wanted to faint. Started thinking back to my episode with that "black monster" below. What was it? A Shark? A large coral shadow magnified by my imagination? I hated to think -- and scampered aboard murmuring, "Sure is nice to be back on board."

I took pictures of the days take, as we proceeded to call it a day. Walt called John and Al to the "Reef-Comber" to pick up anchors. First the two bow anchors came up, then the stern. Gene started to coil the ropes.

Bud grabbed his camera and started taking more pictures of Walt scooping up cobs into a bag I held. We were having a joyous time. We tried quickly to evaluate our find. Four large bags; wet weight were at least sixty-eighty pounds a piece. Then the Minny balls and all the encrusted artifacts. The "pizza" at the very least -- seventy-five pounds.

The time spent below the surface was recounted. Walt was down about five hours. I had used two air tanks. Alwyn and John each used four tanks. Mel, two and Bud three. It was a hectic, wonderful, thrilling



Walt searching for dates  
and identifying marks.

Behold! -- This was our "Take" for the day.



day. We were all pretty tired, but SO happy.

We headed back. Walt was at the helm. We wondered about getting back through the inlet.

I busied myself cleaning up the galley; checking my list on stock for the next days outing. Somehow I didn't feel sick anymore. Decided to freshen up a bit, put on new makeup, combed my hair and then went up to sit on the boxes, away from the crew preoccupied with the task of getting us back.

This inlet is tricky. It's been know to turn a boat completely around and toss it about with ease and sink them. My heart swelled with pride as I watched my husband and his crew masterfully guide us into port.

The boat was tied down, each crewman had a job to do. I went back to the galley to continue my preparations for the next days voyage.

Mel, appeared at the dock. He was most anxious to hear what the day had produced. Walt handed him a bag.

"Good", Mel smiled.

"Here, take the other", Walt said.

"Well, for Pete's sake" Mel said with surprise.

"Wait" said -Walt, "You can take those to the car and come back for the rest."

Mel's mouth literally fell open. "I'll say one thing, we sure started out in the right place, didn't we?" He walked ahead, heavy, but happy with silver. We were all walking on air. It was a pretty wonderful day.

Things were beginning to clear for me, mentally; that is. I suddenly noticed Frank was gone and Fay and Dirk were with us. Momentarily, I wondered if we'd lost Frank, -- over board? Or, was he curled up asleep somewhere.

Walt laughed, "No, he and Rupe had to leave on an errand."

Dirk then popped in with, "Well, when do we count up the treasure?"

"Let Mel handle that at the bank", Walt replied. "We're ready for home, sweet home."

Amen, to that, I thought.

The rest left with Mel for the bank; with Bud still taking pictures every inch of the way.

Walt and I headed for the warm restful shower and the good dinner awaiting us. Bless him, he was exhausted. Excitement stilled boiled within me. We tried to unwind by recounting the events of the day. I was still unwinding -- my Walt was sound asleep.

A passing thought: This was a day that seemed doomed at its inception. But, oh --- what a delightfully happy ending.

Turn page for additional photos.

To order books, or coins see page 24.



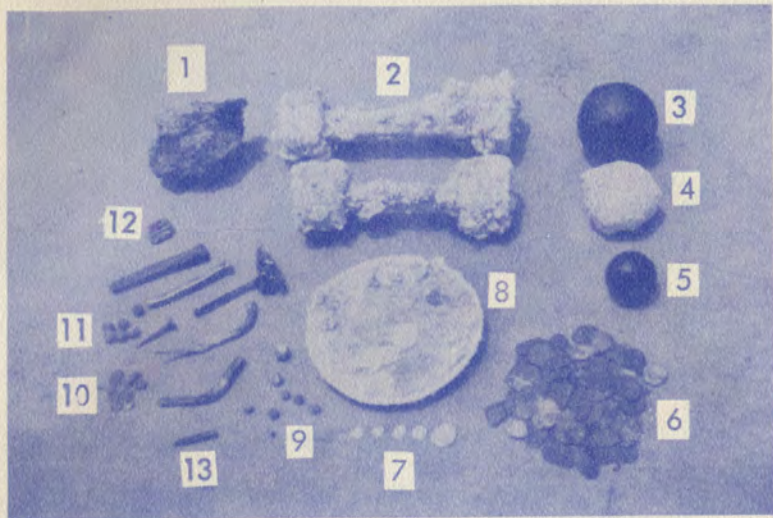
Walt holds bell found in the leased search area of Real 8, Inc. The inscription reads: "Spring of Whitely, 1801".



Shirley Holzworth holding silver cobs.

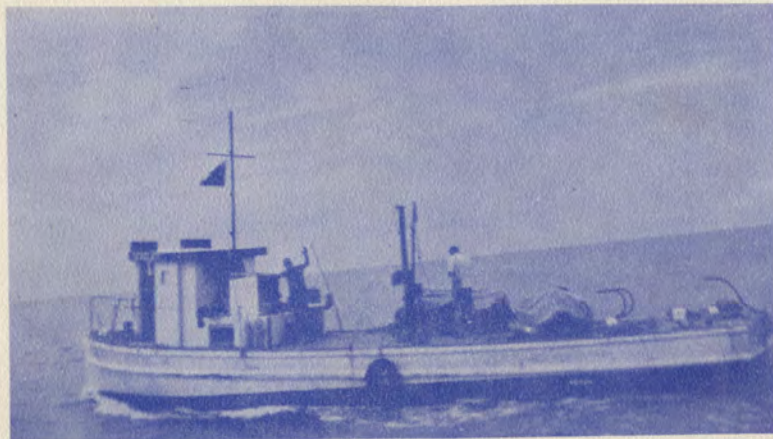


Putter Plate encrusted with gold and miny balls. Found off Marathon, Florida.



In the above group, found off the three mile limit, Marathon, Florida (1) encrusted cannon ball, (2) Bar shot, (3) cleaned cannon ball, (4) three inch encrusted cannon ball, (5) cleaned 2½ inch cannon ball, (6) Silver Reale, (7) Gold escuda found off Fort Pierce, Florida, (8) Plate, (9) Miny balls, (10) Seals, (11) Miny balls, (12) Buckle, (13) nails and spikes from wrecks found in Florida Keys. On the plate (8) is a rare, almost perfectly round gold piece.

Pictured below: "Derelict", the Real 8, Inc. boat.



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