



A DETECTORIST'S DILEMMA

By Allyson Cohen



I remember a time when every piece of metal I found was considered treasure. As time went on, and my finds increased, I started categorizing this “treasure” into good treasure, mediocre treasure, whattheheckizit treasure, and junk treasure (but of course it was always treasure). All my finds were carefully cleaned and organized, placed in labeled containers, and stored neatly away. Everything was catalogued in my mind. I could even tell you exactly what site and in what spot at each site that I had found a particular item.

That was in the beginning. When I was a newbie to this hobby, I had no idea what would come as the years passed. I knew nothing about detecting, knew no one who detected, didn't belong to any detecting clubs, and Facebook wasn't popular yet. I had a machine with a picture of a coin, a pull tab, and a ring on it (which seems silly to me now), and there was no one to help or give me advice. I was frustrated, but determined, and as time went on and my frustration turned into knowledge, I finally traded in the detector with the pictures for one with numbers.

New machine in hand, I was suddenly back in detecting kindergarten because I hadn't considered the learning curve that comes with a new machine. It took a lot of patience to interpret all the chatter and tones it produced, but I finally mastered it (sort of), and was able to find even more of this so-called “treasure.”

Thus begins my dilemma. The days of every piece of metal being “treasure” ended long ago. I no longer save the questionable items, rusty thingamajigs, and whattheheckizits.

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Even so, when you've been in the hobby a while, things have a way of piling up. A jar with “buttons” written on the side was full years back, and its contents moved three or four times now. The same goes for the tableware collection, mostly spoons, which, on several occasions I have tried to give away as party favors, but had no takers. So there it sits in a box, reminding me of my hobby, but mostly reminding me that I've got a

lot of junk, um... I mean *treasure*, lying around.

It's the same story with the buckles, junk jewelry, ox knobs, dog licenses, etc... I remember a time when I whined and pined to find a crotal bell and, for the life of me, just could not find one. Now suddenly my crotal bell collection is needing a spot of its own. For a while I investigated the wonderful world of electrolysis, experimenting with my collection just to see what would happen. It was fascinating to watch the little bubbles and see the scum float on the surface of the water. It was a learning experience, teaching me what to do, and what not to do, with my finds. I also learned that it's fairly easy to turn nickels pink, so to be more colorful, I was thinking of doing this with all my spare nickels now.

I received a Dremel tool one year as a birthday gift from my mother. She was not happy about purchasing it for me, but my father assured her I would like it. I loved it, and as I opened it, immediately started thinking about all the fun I would have experimenting with it. Again, I learned what to use it for, and what not to use it for, and like electrolysis it made some of my finds more colorful. If not for this experimentation, I would never have known that using a brass brush at high speed on my Dremel would turn my treasures the color of gold. Then came the rock tumbler, a very thoughtful gift from my father, and I was thrilled. I could finally clean up some of my clad coins and cash them in. And so the tumbler became my favorite item, as my collection became smaller, and my bank deposits became larger. There's nothing like the constant whir of a rock tumbler in the background to make you think it's all worth it. One season I topped out at over \$600 in clad alone!

I also sold a bunch of my silver and gold, and was quite happy with the return I got. Some folks don't sell anything, ever, but the sentimental attachment I have to my finds only extends to a very few items.

One friend was irritated with me because I sold a Barber dime I found for \$100, telling me, “I could have gotten you at least \$150 for it,” but I was like, “Who cares? It's a dime, I found it, and I got a hundred bucks for it...” A hundred bucks for a dime? I did the math, and well, that's just a



Dug tableware makes for poor party favors, as the author (shown on the opposite page) can attest.

no-brainer to me. “You’re going to give me \$5 for a silver quarter? Shoot, here’s 20 of them.” I’m too practical, and besides, I’ve got photos.

But despite the fun experiments and monetary gain one can get from this hobby, I’m still back to the real reason for writing this, my detectorist dilemma; i.e. what the heck am I going to do with all this “treasure?” For a while I put my worthy finds in display cases, labeled with the date and site, but those cases were packed when I moved a few years ago, and I couldn’t even tell you which unpacked box they reside in now. But display cases take up space too, and frankly, the excitement factor for such things has waned. I don’t go to any great lengths cleaning or separating my finds anymore. Terrible, I know. But when I return home from a hunt, I take my bag out to the back patio, dump it in the reserved-for-detecting-finds spot, pick through it for the keepers, and there it sits until the rains come and wash it all off. After the rain, it gets picked through again, but the junk stays there until my OCD kicks in, or we’re expecting company, and I have to clean it all up. I have a dish next to the sink for silver coins, coppers and cool flat buttons, but after a while that gets full and the silver goes in the silver box, the coppers in the copper box, and the buttons—oh so many buttons—go in the button box. Then there are the keys, almost as plentiful as spoons. I don’t want to throw them away, because, well, they are *keys*. So I hoard them with the rest of my treasures. Someone told me old keys are selling for like \$50 on eBay. If this is true (I have not investigated this yet), but *if it is true*, I think I could pay off my car with key money alone.

I’ve come up with a few creative ways to store these treasures, so when family or friends visit, they are unaware of the hoard that’s hiding just beyond their sight, perhaps in a decorative jar, can, or old jewelry box. But the bottom line is I just don’t know what to do with all this “treasure” anymore. It’s cool, it’s old, it’s relicy, but it’s taking over my



A jewelry box is fair game when it comes to storing excess detecting finds.

life and my storage space.

I’m at the point where I can’t remember the last site I hunted, never mind what I found there. It’s all just a big blur of dirty and rusty, but very important, stuff. I never imagined when I began this hobby that finding too much stuff would become a problem.

The one thing that hasn’t changed, though, is my love of this hobby, and my desire to detect. So, until I stop detecting (that’s not going to happen), or someone comes along and says “Wow, I always wanted a collection of dirty, rusty old metal detecting finds. Will you take \$5k for the lot?” (again, not going to happen), I guess I’m just stuck with my hoard for the time being, and perhaps I should begin focusing my energy on more creative storage ideas.



Allyson Cohen started out hunting schoolyards with her dad, and has been at it now for almost a decade. Her passion for the hobby led her to create the blog DetectingDiva.com, with the intent of promoting women in metal detecting, and to share a female point of view of the hobby.



A colorful bookend, or a box of crusty rusty stuff? Storage is all about the presentation.