

# Spot!ight

## Affection for Detection



Photography By: Amanda Whitlock



**Top:** A collection of finds by Kathy and Steve Anderson while detecting are shown. **Above:** Shots of the Andersons and some unique items they've found along the way. **On the cover:** Ray Grypp's chest of interesting finds is displayed at the association's monthly meeting.

## Digging up the past with IV Historical Research and Recovery Association

By Shannon Crawley-Serpette  
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Like any good metal detectorist, John Mateika did a lot of digging — both figuratively and literally — before the formation of Illinois Valley Historical Research and Recovery Association.

New to the hobby of metal detecting, Mateika was looking for kindred spirits while searching the earth for lost metal.

"I didn't think anybody else in the world metal detected," Mateika, a La Salle resident, said.

Eager to make connections, whenever Mateika would spot a metal detectorist hard at work, he would grab his own equipment and pretend to also be hunting that spot.



**Ray Grypp of Geneseo** holds up various rings he's collected over time. Grypp has been detecting since the 1960s.

annual club picnic and Christmas party and an annual club raffle. Plus, members are encouraged to bring their recent finds in each month to show off at the meeting.

Metal detecting is enjoying a resurgence in popularity, according to Ray Grypp of Geneseo, a member of IVHRRRA who has been metal detecting since the 1960s. In the 1970s, metal detecting was a popular trend before dying down in the 1980s, he said.

The lure of the hunt is what has kept Grypp metal detecting for decades.

"I've hunted almost every state," he said.

He's found small gold nuggets in Alaska and hunted in ghost towns.

"The oldest coin I have is probably early 1700s," he said. "It's amazing what you find."

Grypp is happy to impart valuable knowledge to those just beginning in the field.

"Be patient," he said, when asked for his best advice for newcomers. "At first you're going to need to dig almost every signal so you can learn what the machine is telling you."

While some enthusiasts later use discrimination modes to cut back on the junk finds, Grypp said that's a good way to miss finding some jewelry and coins.

"Less is more," he said. "With less

discrimination, you're going to find more."

Steve Anderson, the current president of IVHRRRA, began metal detecting with his wife, Kathy, when he retired three years ago.

The Paw Paw couple was quickly hooked and have upgraded their equipment since their early days in the hobby.

This wasn't Steve's first experience with a detector though.

"When I was a kid — I was probably 10 or 12 years old — I had a metal detector," he recalled.

It was a solitary hobby because nobody else used a metal detector around

his neighborhood and after a while the metal detector was put away and forgotten. Steve never thought about resuming the hobby during the next few decades — until retirement left him with time on his hands.

At this point, metal detecting largely remains a man's world. Only a couple women belong to IVHRRRA, although some wives and daughters of members do occasionally join the hunts.

Kathy isn't sure why more women aren't interested in metal detecting.

"Maybe because you break your nails," she said.

She thinks more women would join the ranks if they went on one hunt and saw the first glint of metal being unearthed. Finding objects that might otherwise never see the light of day is a big draw for her, like the time she dug up a child's bracelet that had Native American markings on it.

Metal detecting also is an opportunity to reunite people with their long-lost property, as members of the IVHRRRA have done when they've found items with names on them.

Kathy still is searching for the owner of a gold St. Bede class ring she found.

"We tried to find the owner," Kathy said.

The couple has found numerous rings, coins and watch fobs since they began detecting. Steve said he was greatly sur-



**Historical Research and Recovery Association** treasurer Dallas Saferite poses for a portrait.

prised over some of the finds.

“Some of the stuff we’ve found is amazing,” he said.

Those wanting to begin metal detecting shouldn’t be afraid of hard work and should be prepared to do a lot of digging for items they often won’t want to keep.

“Mostly pop tops,” Steve said.

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**METAL DETECTING THE RIGHT WAY**

- Do not trespass.
- Always get permission to dig on public or private property.
- Dig as small of a hole as possible.
- Fill in all holes that are dug.
- If you dig up trash, like cans and foil, throw it away. Don’t leave it on the ground.
- Use headphones when at recreational areas to avoid disturbing others with the machine’s constant beeping.

**Right and below:** Frank Juarez of Davenport, Iowa, poses for a portrait with an old cap gun found while detecting.

**Below, right:** Vice president of the association, John Mateika, comments on business during the club’s meeting while secretary, Betsy King, listens and takes notes in the basement of Four Square Church in La Salle. Meetings are the second Monday of each month.

