



Friday, August 13, 2004

Treasure hunter returns class ring to OU alumnus

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

Brian McBurney, SECS '79, is proudly wearing his Oakland University class ring again after it was lost 15 years ago and recently discovered by a modern-day treasure hunter.

McBurney, who received a degree in engineering from OU, lost the alloy ring, sporting the OU sail logo and a black stone, at a park near his home in Langhorne, Pa. When he realized it was missing, he assumed it was gone forever.

Now living in Mesa, Ariz., McBurney said he was "shocked" to receive an e-mail from the OU Alumni Association telling him his ring was recovered.

"I was really disappointed when I realized I lost it," McBurney recalled. "Not that it held a lot of monetary value, but it was important to me sentimentally, and I wore it. It didn't sit on the nightstand."

Jean Mersman, office assistant for Alumni Relations, received an e-mail from Frank Burkhead, a Pennsylvania resident and metal detecting enthusiast. He found the ring in a park and wondered if she could track down the owner.

"We had three clues about the owner, his initials, graduation year and the School of Engineering," Mersman said. McBurney fit the description.

Burkhead sent an e-mail to McBurney and described the ring, "It doesn't show any damage or corrosion at all. It looks like it might have fallen off of your finger a week ago. Amazing."

This was the first time Burkhead was able to return an item he found to an owner. "I have found many other rings, but none were traceable at all. Truth be told, most aren't worth trying to trace. No three-carat diamonds yet," he joked.

Burkhead metal detects for a hobby at least once a week.

"I often go dirt fishing for an hour or two before or after work," he said. "I'm fortunate that I live and work close to both the beach in New Jersey and many colonial era sites. I've found all sorts of things, jewelry, nails, bullets, horseshoes, lots of aluminum foil, soda and beer cans, and, of course, money. Just about anything that people have made from metal eventually turns up. I keep the interesting things and throw out the trash."

Fate was once again on McBurney's side when he realized he would be vacationing with his family near Burkhead's home last spring. The pair made plans to meet and exchange the ring.

McBurney, an applications engineer for Flow Technology, is now sporting his OU ring again.

"Finding a ring while detecting is exciting, as it doesn't happen every time out. To then manage to reunite a found ring with its owner, well, that raised the bar to incredibly special," Burkhead said.

SUMMARY

Brian McBurney, SECS '79, is proudly wearing his Oakland University class ring again after it was lost 15 years ago and recently discovered by a modern-day treasure hunter. McBurney, who received a degree in engineering from OU, lost the alloy ring, sporting the OU sail logo and a black stone, at a park near his home in Langhorne, Pa. When he realized it was missing, he assumed it was gone forever.

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