

THE DIVER LIFE

News, Events and People of the **PADI DIVING SOCIETY**

The Sea Sleuth

ADVENTURER AND EXPLORER ROBERT MARX

BY JENNICA PETERSON

A few weeks ago, Robert Marx walked into a mall in Central Florida. As he passed by a decorative fountain, a gleam in the water caught his eye. He leaned in to get a closer look, and then he found himself reaching in to pull a coin out of the wishing well. “Once you have the urge,” he says, “you always want to find something. The thrill is always there.”

Marx, managing director of Archaeological Partners, Inc., an Explorer’s Club fellow, a National Maritime Historical Society member, and a PADI Diving Society Member, began his adventurous diving life as a child after he saw the John Wayne underwater thriller *Wake of the Red Witch*. When

he was 15, he found his first gold coins on a Gold Rush-era shipwreck. He gave them away to his friends thinking they were buttons — they were worth around \$10,000 each in 1951. He has since made up for this loss many times over by becoming a world-renowned expert on finding sunken cities, shipwrecks, and their treasures, including the Portuguese *Flor de Mar*, perhaps the richest wreck in the world. But Marx is a maritime historian who meticulously uncovers treasures once claimed by the sea for the sake of history, not money. “This stuff does not belong to whomever finds it, it belongs to all mankind,” he says. “That’s the reason why I’m in the business.”

Marx has fought off pirates, corrupt politicians and sharks during his explorations of some 3,000 shipwrecks in 62 countries. He has fiercely guarded his finds against greed and decay by working with UNESCO and many other organizations dedicated to historical preservation, by creating the Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology, and by building seven museums for his finds. And while he has lectured in universities worldwide and has written more than 900 articles and some 60 books, Marx still overflows with stories that instantly transform a glittering coin into a vibrant life lived long ago. “When I pick up a goodie,” says Marx, “the first thing I say is, ‘I wonder who held this last.’”



FOLLOW THAT DOUBLOON His tools are as sophisticated as a submersible and as simple as a magnifying glass. In the end, it's the history that intrigues Robert Marx.

FAR LEFT: COURTESY ROBERT MARX; LEFT: CAMERON THORP