

**Peace River
and other
Treasure
Stories**

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There have been many treasure stories told throughout the ages of time. These stories tell of something of great value to those who find and obtain these treasures.

Treasure stories not only tell of precious metals and gemstones but also include the valuable knowledge that one may obtain, as well as other things. Treasure stories have been told ever since mankind has known that some things have a great value and are worth searching for.

If you know of a particular treasure story it would be good if you passed this knowledge on to your lineage and to certain of your friends who are interested in such things. Most people are always interested in finding something that could possibly bring them more comfort.

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The Peace River Treasures

These stories were first recorded to a cassette tape by Kenneth O. Gill on January 8, 2009.

They contain some of his personal experiences of treasure hunting with family, cousins, and friends. They also include many stories told to him by his cousin Charlie Fales about treasures.

This story about Juan Gomez was told to Charlie by his father Joe Fales, who was born Nov. 14, 1874, and died on Sept. 22,1943. Joe married my mother's sister Julia Corbitt. They had eight children. Charlie was next to the oldest. He was born on June 12, 1907, and died March 3, 1980. In his early years he heard his daddy discuss this story with his mother. Charlie was a great treasure hunter and we spent many hours together related to treasure hunting.

It all started a long time ago in Spain when apparently a pretty well to do family decided to come to America. At that time there were a lot of other Spanish people coming over here. There was passage on a ship, so they sold everything

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they had and took all their money with them.

They got on the ship and headed for the United States. Everything went fine coming across the ocean but when they got down around the south tip of Florida and ran into the Gulf of Mexico the pirates attacked them.

The pirates killed everybody on the ship except a girl and her little brother. She begged them not to kill him. His name was Juan Gomez who was seven years old. I never heard what her name was. The leader of the pirates was called Gasparilla, and he wanted her on the ship with him so they didn't kill her.

Gasparilla let the boy come on the ship with them and gave him the job of being his cabin boy. He would look after things and keep his cabin clean. The boy Juan Gomez stayed with him for about eight years. During this time the pirates captured lots of other ships until finally the government had a navy ship disguised as a merchant ship and the pirates went out and attacked it one day.

When the navy ship pulled the covers back the
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big guns started shooting the pirates. Some of the pirates turned and run their ship into Charlotte harbor off the west coast of Florida, down by Punta Gorda.

When the navy ship fired a cannon ball, one hit Gasparilla and killed him. The crew wrapped a blanket around him, wrapped a chain around his body, and threw him overboard into

Charlotte Harbor just inside the mouth of Peace River.

Then the pirates that were left were arguing about who was going to be in charge. They took the ship on up Peace River quite a ways, then the Indians got after them. The Indians were shooting flaming arrows on to the ship and set it on fire. Juan Gomez and his sister were with the pirates and the men were fighting among themselves. So while they were fighting Juan Gomez went to Gasparilla's cabin and took out the roll of maps that Gasparilla had.

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The Maps

Those maps showed where all of the treasures were buried all over, in different places. Juan was the one who cleaned the cabin so he knew where everything was. The maps were in a waterproof skin bag. Then Juan ran over to the side of the ship and threw the bundle of maps on

to the bank.

Juan and an older colored slave who was on the ship jumped overboard and climbed up on the bank. We do not know what happened to his sister. Juan took the maps with him and he went to Tampa.

They walked across the woods south of Arcadia all the way to Tampa. It was probably about 75 or 80 miles they had to walk. I don't know what ever happened to the colored slave.

Juan Gomez got a ride on a ship back over to Spain. He was a sailor, and he always wanted to be a sailor when he was growing up. Juan was a captain of several ships until he got to be captain of his own ship. Juan Gomez told this story to my uncle Joe Fales.

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After Juan got to be an old man and he couldn't be a captain on a ship anymore so he got a job hauling cattle on a big old cattle barge from Florida to Cuba.

The cattlemen in Florida that raised cattle for sale drove the herds down to Punta Rassa which is between Ft. Myers and Ft. Myers Beach. Juan Gomez brought the cattle barge over from Cuba

and docked it there at Punta Rassa. They loaded the cattle on to the barge. It had a big fence around it and he hauled them over to Cuba. That was the market for Florida beef back in the early days.

Well, as it happened there was a young cattle boy by the name of Joe Fales that was with a cattle outfit. Joe (Joseph) Fales was born on Nov. 14, 1874, and his early years were spent around Douglas in south Georgia. He later came with his parents to Nocatee, Florida. He always wanted to be a cowboy. There was an outfit that had a lot of cows in the woods down in south Florida that hired him.

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Every year they would drive a herd of cows down to Punta Rassa and put them in a big pen. When the cattle barge arrived they would load them on to the cattle barge and they were carried over to Cuba. Sometimes the boat would be there when the herd got there. Joe Fales got to going on the ship and having coffee with Juan Gomez.

Juan didn't speak English very well and Joe couldn't read or write, so they got fine together. They got to be good friends and this went on for several years while uncle Joe was herding cattle.

As they talked often, Juan would ask uncle Joe a lot of questions about where he lived, about walking in the woods, did he fish, and things like that.

One day when they were talking Juan walked over to a closet and took out a big roll of maps and laid them on the table, and said: “Joe, I want to give you these. These treasures are buried in the area where you live”.

Juan told Joe about his early life as a cabin boy on the pirate ship of Gasparilla. He saw a lot of treasures buried, and they always made maps as

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to where the treasures were buried. He went thru a big roll of maps that he had kept all those years and took out six maps and gave them to Joe.

Juan explained each map to Joe and showed him where each treasure was buried. Joe thanked him for the maps. Juan Gomez was past ninety years old at this time and young Joe Fales was only in his twenty’s.

That was about the time that he had just got married a few years before to a girl named Julia Corbitt. Julia Corbitt was my mother’s older

sister. Not the oldest, because aunt Ardelia was the oldest, but Julia was the second girl in the children of James and Laura Corbitt. My mother was Gracie Corbitt the youngest of the children.

Joe Fales was raised over there by Peace River around the Nocatee-Arcadia area and was never taught to read or write.

The picture of the maps was just a picture of the river where he grew up so he knew everything on the map. It was a picture of everything he knew about, so when Juan Gomez showed him where the treasure was buried he knew all of

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them places already. He just didn't know there was treasure buried there.

I don't know what the year was but uncle Joe took the maps home with him and took them into the house and put them away. When he got time he took them out and spread them on the table so aunt Julia could see them. He explained to her on each of the maps where these treasures were buried.

Of course in 1915 nobody even talked about buried treasure. You didn't even say the words back then. But he showed her on these maps

where each treasure was buried. While he was doing this Charlie and May Belle, their two oldest children (both of them were in school, and were about eight or ten years of age) stood at the table and listened to what their daddy was telling their mama.

They couldn't read the writing on the maps because it was all in Spanish. The picture of the river Joe knew well. They could see that the river was right where they lived. Where the treasures were buried along the river, they were familiar

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with the area. They just didn't know there was any treasures buried there.

I might add here that when aunt Julia and uncle Joe got old they got sick and a neighbor woman took care of them. She did the cooking, cleaning, and laundry. All of the household chores. It was several months before they got over their sickness. A lot of their neighbors were very sick also. Finally they recovered and uncle Joe was looking for his maps and could not find them. Uncle Joe went to the woman and ask her if she had seen them. She said: "No, but she had burnt a lot of trash and papers". So, she could have burnt them and he never saw them again.

A Treasure Found

Later on aunt Julia told this story to my mother Gracie one day.

Gracie, one day she said, I was down in the woods with Joe hunting and he was moving along looking for squirrels and I had been talking to him about the treasures. I said: “Joe, why don’t

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we go dig up that money”? Joe said: “No, it will keep. Its been buried all these years and it ain’t going no where. When we get ready we’ll go and dig it up”. He just didn’t care about it all he cared about was hunting, he farmed a little bit, but mostly he was doing cowboy work herding the cows.

One day they were walking out through the woods again and he was walking along hunting in this swamp with aunt Julia following behind him. He said: “Julia, over there in them oak trees, that’s where I put my gator rod down on to one of them treasures I told you about and it’s still there.

She said: “Where?”. He pointed to where it

was and she walked over there and uncle Joe had found the spot with brass knobs sticking up out of the ground. He had put his gator rod down in there and he could feel the treasure chest buried about six feet deep in the ground.

He had left his gator rod there and aunt Julia took a hold on the rod and moved it up and down. She could feel it sliding in that treasure chest. Then she got after him saying: We really ought to

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dig that up Joe. That proved to her the treasure maps were real. He told her: “We’ll get some help and get it dug up”.

Then he started asking his friends to help him because he wanted to have some help to dig that one up. He ask several people and they all laughed at him and said there was no such thing as pirate treasure. It got to be a common thing around Arcadia and Nocatee that ole Joe Fales had gone crazy.

He kept telling the people he had found a treasure down in the swamp and wanted somebody to go help him dig it up. A lot of people around there knew about Joe Fales treasure in the swamp but nobody would go help

him. Finally one of his friends agreed that they would go get it next Sunday morning. They would go down there and dig it up.

Well, he had told his other friends that wouldn't go down and help him dig it up right where it was at, down there back of number seven hoist. Down at Nocatee where they pulled the logs out of the river.

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One night after he already had someone else to help him go dig it up on Sunday morning, something happened. Well, there was three families having a party and there was a lot of others there. These three men from three different families got together and they were drinking and didn't have nothing to do. They said to each other, Let's go down there and dig up ole Joe Fales treasure maybe he isn't crazy if there is one there.

This was in the middle of the night. They went down in the swamp taking a lantern with them. They found uncle Joe's gator rod that he had left on the treasure marking the spot. It was still there where aunt Julia had found it. So they proceeded to dig up the treasure. It was so heavy they needed a wagon to haul it out of the swamp.

Charlie Fales Stories

Charlie Fales was Joe Fales older son, and he was my first cousin. After his daddy died he got to looking for treasures. Most of the older people he

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talked to were not the ones involved in the story but were the children of the older ones. When Charlie was talking to these people he was getting history of things that had happened in the past.

Charlie was talking to an old man and he told him about this incident. That is how I got to hear the story, a lot of this. The old man told him that when he was a young man he had went into the livery business hauling freight. He would haul anything for anybody. He had went and bought himself a new wagon and a new team of horses.

He said these three men came to his house in the middle of the night on a Saturday night and told him they needed him to go haul a load for them. They got him up out of bed but he didn't want to go. They insisted that he go and they didn't want to wait until daylight. They wanted

him to go right now, that they couldn't wait until daylight.

Finally he got dressed and went out and got his team of horses all hooked up to the wagon. They got on the wagon to start off and one of the men was sitting there behind him with a shot gun

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pointed at him. He said: What's gong on? They said: Well, you don't need to know what this is you are hauling tonight and don't you ever tell anybody you hauled this load.

The one stayed there by him all the time with the shot gun and the others sit in the back to show him where to go down in the swamp. He took the wagon down into the swamp and the man stood there and told him: Look to the front, you don't need to see what we're loading. The man loaded up that load on to the wagon, whatever the stuff was.

He hauled it to the house of one of the three men. They told him that if he ever told anyone about this he was a dead man. He would not live if he ever told anyone. So he went on back home, put his team of horses away and told his wife that he didn't know what he had hauled, they would not tell him. They told him they would pay him

well for hauling it and that it would not be long before they came and paid him well for hauling it.

It was a couple of weeks later that a man came by and handed him a paper. It was a receipt

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where they had paid for his wagon and his team of horses. They were paid for in full, and it was his payment for hauling the load that night.

One of these families was named Wells, and the Wells family opened Desoto National Bank of Arcadia. I forget now what year they opened this bank but it was the same man of one of these families. Then all three families bought model T Fords. The model T Fords had just come out and they bought the first three model T Fords in DeSoto county.

Whoever that was, it was them three families that got the treasure. The Wells family opened the bank. The story was never told until all of them people were gone and this man was an old man when he told Charlie Fales about it. He said that when he hauled that load he was a young man.

Charlie Fales and Alfred Tomalin from Homestead, Florida, along with Charlie DeLest

all hunted together. They went hunting in the woods together and they hunted treasure together. People would ask Charlie: Charlie, you burn a lot

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of gas and spend a lot of money hunting treasure, and you know you are not going to find any treasure.

Charlie said: Well, you go fishing, you spend a lot of money for fishing tackle, rod and reels, and you burn gas to go fishing and you don't get no more joy out of that than I do hunting treasure. It don't matter if I ever find anything. I'm just getting the same pleasure out of hunting that you do out of going fishing.

One time Charlie bought him a brand new Studebaker car and he had his grandson riding in the car with him. He took a curve too fast down there out of Homestead out of the Everglades, and he turned that car over in the ditch, rolled it over and bent it up. It was stuck in the ditch where he couldn't get it out so he took the little boy and walked back down the road to a house so he could call a wrecker to come and get it out.

When the wrecker got out there the car was sitting there burning, nobody knows how it

caught afire. When they ask Charlie about it he said: I don't know, there wasn't nobody there but me and

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my grandson and I don't know nothing about it, and my grandson ain't talking either.

Later Charlie told some of his friends: Who wants to drive a car that's all bent up. He said it didn't cost but a little bit because the insurance bought him another car and he only had to pay the difference. He said, nobody wants to drive an ole beat up car, so apparently the car had to catch fire and burn. That was the story they told on ole Charlie.

Oliver Gill's Treasure

One day Charlie Fales heard about his uncle Oliver Gill (my dad) finding a treasure on Peace River. Charlie decided he wanted to go talk to him about it. When I heard the story and found out what it was all about I was living on 19th St. in Sarasota, and Orbidue was living in the little hutment at the time right behind daddy.

Orbidue had married Louise Culpepper. One

Saturday night about midnight or later Orbidue

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came over to my house and woke me up. He said: I want you to get up and come over to daddy's. We got some visitors over there. Charlie and John Fales and some others are over there.

I got dressed and went over to daddy's house and I found out Charlie and John Fales along with Alfred had come up from Homestead and wanted to talk to daddy when they heard that he had found a treasure over in Peace River swamp.

I had heard daddy tell the story many times at Thanksgiving or Christmas when we had a big crowd of people at our house. The men folks would ask daddy: Oliver tell us about that treasure that you and somebody found over in the swamp. So daddy had told the story many times.

When me and Orbidue went over to the house they were waiting for us so that we would be there to hear it again. Charlie and John had never heard it. Daddy told them how that he had went with a group of men on a boat down Peace River to a place where the boat pulled up on a high white sand bank with palmettos. The men got off, and the man that ran the boat told them:

That's

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where the treasure is supposed to be, right out there somewhere.

Well, I don't know how many men there were but it must have been ten or twelve. The man that had the boat apparently did this quite often. Daddy said there were holes dug all over the swamp out there and that his friend that was with him was John Nipper a man that worked with him.

They had went on the boat trip and decided that this is where everybody comes. Well, they must be a little bit wrong so we need to go a little bit farther away from here. They went back home off of that boat trip.

Later daddy and John Nipper took off one Sunday about noon time. Mama and daddy had lived at Shell Creek before that and they had just moved down to Punta Gorda. I think they did that to get mama closer to the hospital because Orbidue was born on August 17, 1921. Mama told us that she got mad at daddy for going off treasure hunting that day and leaving her home with a four day old baby. So that told me that the day daddy

went treasure hunting with John Nipper was on the 21st of August in 1921.

They went back on that same road they went down on highway 17 to Punta Gorda and passed thru Ft. Ogden. Over on the north side of Ft. Ogden was a dirt road that went back and crossed the river on an iron bridge. They had quite a long wooden bridge to cross over the swamp before they got to the iron bridge across the river.

They went toward the house where the man owned the boat they went on the boat ride with. They didn't want to be seen. They pulled off into the trees so the car was sort of hid if anybody happened to pass by. It wasn't nothing but an old wagon road thru the woods that they were on, but if somebody came along they didn't want them to see the car. They drove it behind some trees so it was hid.

They got out and walked down into the swamp walking toward the mans house and went right down into the swamp walking along the river. Daddy said they were south, over on the west side of the river. They walked south toward the mans

house and then they were walking north on the west side of the river and they came into some oak trees. The river was off on their right. One of them apparently stumped his toe and thought it was a cypress knee, and when they looked it was a round ball.

They cleaned it off but they didn't have anything with them but a little hatchet. Daddy said they chopped on it and the ball was yellow brass. Then they scratched around in the leaves and he said: In the middle of a big circle of oak trees was these five brass balls that they found when they pushed the leaves back. They knew that's where the treasure was buried.

When they found these brass balls they were like a ship has on the railing of a ship, and the pirates used that as the markers when they buried some of the treasures. Then they looked up on the trees and there were Roman numerals carved on the trees. When you walked toward that Roman numeral you could see one on another tree. There was a line of them north and south and west.

So they said they figured that if you went across

the river to the east you would have found some more Roman numerals over there. The Roman numerals were high enough you couldn't reach them with your hand, so they must have been nine or ten feet high.

Daddy said there was a lagoon on the west side of them and they were in between the lagoon and the river. Well right off Charlie and John told daddy: No, you must have been on the other side of the river because there wasn't no lagoons on the west side. Daddy always held firm that the lagoon was on the west side of the river and the brass knobs they found was between the lagoon and the river.

He said: About a stones throw, the distance you could throw a rock. Well that's alright that would be about thirty or forty yards. We said: How far were you from the lagoon? He said: About the same thing. Then we said: How big was that lagoon? He answered, Oh it was about a stones throw across, it wasn't very big and about two or three times that long.

So, we ask, What did you all do when you found

them brass knobs? **** Well it was getting late in the afternoon and there were panthers and bears in that swamp and we wasn't about to stay in there after dark. So we took the hatchet and chopped a limb on a tree and let it hang down so we could come back and find it later.

Then we ask: Why didn't you go around that lagoon if it wasn't very big?, and he says: Well, you know, I don't know why we didn't. He said at that time cows were in the woods so there wasn't no undergrowth, there wasn't no shrubs and trash stuff growing. He told us the cows ate the leaves off the trees as high as they could reach. So, when you're down in the swamp at that time, in 1921, you could see way on thru the woods in any direction you looked.

He said they just chopped a little limb and let it hang down, not very noticeable. But he didn't know why they didn't walk on around the lagoon. They turned west and walked straight across the lagoon from where the brass knobs were and straight out on to the hill where the land was high thru the cow trails.

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They just kept going west straight on out thru the woods because they knew the car was out

there behind the trees somewhere. Well he said, as it happened they walked straight to the car. It wasn't far from them. They got to it real quick so they were able to get out of the woods before dark.

When they went back looking for it they never could find that place anymore. They never did locate it so the brass knobs were still down in the swamp and the Roman numerals were still carved on the trees.

A Trip to the River

Charlie said: O.K., Well, will you go with us over there and daddy said, no, I go to church now. I ain't missing no church. Me and Orbidue went with Charlie and John and the rest of them over to Peace River. It's only about fifty miles to Arcadia, so it's about sixty miles down to Ft. Ogden. We started treasure hunting.

We went lots of times for several years and
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made a lot of trips in there, but they kept after daddy. They came back over there and talked to daddy a few times, and me and Orbidue talked to

daddy. We had heard him tell the story many times and daddy's story never changed. He never told it different and he always told the same thing.

Finally we convinced daddy to go with us one Sunday. He missed church and he went with us over into the swamp. We had two car loads. I was riding in the back seat of Charlies car with daddy riding in the front seat with Charlie. Orbidue and Alfred was in the back seat with me. On the way to where we were going Charlie ask daddy a lot of questions. When we crossed the iron bridge across Peace River north of Ft. Ogden, daddy told them: This is the same bridge that we crossed on. Then he said: This road you're driving on is not where we went.

Charlie said: No, uncle, this is a county grade that didn't use to be here but in just a few minutes I'll show you where you were at. We got on up the road just a little bit and he pointed off to the left thru the woods and you could still see the old

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wagon trail. It was two ruts going off thru the woods. Daddy said: Yeah, that's where we went, right down that road. Charlie said: O.K, but we

can't go that road we got ditches on the side of the road so we have to stay on the grade.

We went about a half mile due west from the iron bridge, and by the way the old iron bridge is gone, they tore it down a few years after that. But we went about half a mile and turned south on another dirt grade. That put us down near where the man lived that had the boat.

Charlie knew where that was at. Daddy was telling him where to go. We turned off that county grade to a little road that went back into the woods. Then we're back on the old wagon road now heading toward the house where the man owned the boat that carried them on the boat ride down the river.

Then Charlie stopped the car and said: Uncle, are you sure this was the road you were on? Daddy said: Yes I am. Now this was in 1951 and it had been thirty years since daddy was in there. I'm sitting in the car listening to them talk, and

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daddy said: You see that bunch of trees up there ahead of you? You'll see a bunch of guava trees right there where we're looking at that bunch of trees, and right behind them is where the man's house stood that owned the boat.

Charlie said: O.K. uncle, and Charlie drove on up to where the bushes were at that daddy was talking about. He parked the car, got out and walked around on the other side of them trees, and you could see where the cabin used to stand. Some of the blocks were still there.

John and Alfred were in the other car behind us. Sam Corbitt, John Fales, and I don't remember who else was with us that time. We all got out and walked around to see where the house was, and they said: Yeah, Well uncle this was Ty Cobb the ball players cabin that he came to when he wanted to get away from everybody. He came out here just to get away from town and away from people.

Charlie said: His boat landing was right down here by the river. Then daddy said: Well, do you see that line of punk trees about sixty feet tall that

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was running north and south between where the cabin had stood and the river? Charlie said: Well, we are probably fifty or sixty yards from the river. Daddy said: Yeah, but we didn't go down there we tuned right where those punk trees are planted but they were not there then.

There was a pathway that way, and we went down there and got in the boat. There was a place big enough that the end where the boat tied up and the man could swap ends with the boat. It was probably twenty to twenty-five feet long. We went out a little creek and ran into the river and then we turned up stream. The river was flowing, but sometimes the tide waters came in and then the tide would go out. The water in the river was nearly always flowing because nearly all the rain from up around Arcadia and drained down all the way up to Bowling Green and Ft. Meade. So it was always flowing south.

Daddy then said the boat was going upstream. All of the trash in the water was floating down past the boat going behind them. He knew they were going upstream and he said they went for
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about forty or forty-five minutes that was all. Then the man pulled into the bank after he went around a lot of curves. But when he got to this bank he stood up and said: This is where the treasure is supposed to be out here in the swamp.

We wasn't hardly a half a mile from the mans house. By taking the people on the boat and

taking them for a boat ride he charged every man. I don't know how much money he charged them, but when he got eight or ten men on the boat and each one paid two or three dollars apiece it gave him a pretty good chunk of money at that time.

It was the only place like this. I've been up and down Peace River on a boat several times with Charlie and John and sometimes just me and John. I knew there wasn't no other place like this, nowhere on that river from the gulf to as far as we went north could you find another white sand bank with palmettos. This was the only spot.

When John Nipper and daddy and all the other men went out there where them holes were dug and messed around for a couple of hours, they got on the boat and the man carried them back and

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they got in their cars and went home. Nobody found anything.

That is why John Nipper and daddy went back in the car by themselves and wandered down in the swamp by themselves a few weeks later when they found them treasure knobs.

When daddy told them that they got on the boat right down that path where the punk trees are growing they said: No, uncle Oliver, the boat landing was down here. Come on and we'll show you. So we all walked towards the river. When we got there, there was like a green grassy little yard about twenty feet square right on the river bank where Ty Cobb used to pull his fishing boat up out of the river.

From that spot we walked back to the north. Nobody ever went back to where daddy said they got into the boat. We walked on north along the swamp. We were following the cattle trails going where the cows used to walk back to the north.

Me and John Fales wandered off down deeper and closer toward the river and went into the swamp. That was because we were looking for

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them Roman numerals on the trees.

So me and John got separated from the rest of the crowd. Orbidue, Sam Corbitt, and I'm not sure if Dozier was with us on that trip. But Orbidue, Alfred, daddy, Sam, and Charlie, all walked along the cow trail. Me and John we walked back down into the swamp toward the river.

Me and John on lots of our trips over there stayed close together and walked together in the swamp. Sometimes we're wading in the water knee deep, sometimes a lot deeper.

Then me and John got separated. Pretty soon we're walking along looking at them trees hunting for them Roman numerals and I heard John call me. I could tell he was a ways off. I didn't know that he had gotten that far from me. I hollered back and answered him. He heard me, and he hollered again. I told him, alright I am coming.

I walked toward where I heard John calling and I'm going thru water and it done got up over knee deep and muddy. It's hard walking thru that swamp thru them woods.

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I called John and he'd answer and I wondered if he was moving. Was he going away from me because I didn't find him, and every time he'd call I'd answer. I'd keep going toward where he was at. He was quiet a long ways from me back in that swamp.

When I finally come out to where I could see John he was sitting on a log on a tree that had fell down into the lagoon. The lagoon that him and

Charlie and everybody else was telling daddy that there ain't no lagoons on the west side of the river. Daddy was insisting that there is because he knew they were on the west side of the river.

Well, John was sitting on a tree that had fell down in that lagoon. Now they never realized that the lagoon was there, but me and John realized it at that time. It was about as big as daddy had said. We went on across between the lagoon and the river but we didn't find no circle of trees. You couldn't see the ground because there were so many clumps of bushes everywhere.

When we had ask daddy before why him and John Nipper didn't walk around the lagoon he

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didn't know why. Well, me and John found out. When we got to it, it was like a creek that run between the lagoon and the river about thirty feet across. It was covered with hyacinths.

Me and John pulled a few dead limbs out of the trees, some that had fell on the ground, and we threw them right out across the middle of the water. Then we got down on our belly and crawled across them tree limbs to get to the other side of the lagoon.

John went on ahead of me. When I got to the middle I slid down in an open space between the hyacinths, I stuck my hands right straight up and let my feet go straight down. The tip of my fingers cleared under the water before my feet hit the mud in the bottom. It was probably ten feet deep of water at the time and about thirty feet across. When the tide comes up the water comes in thru this little creek to that lagoon. The distance was about as far as daddy said.

Me and John walked on to the north towards Log Lake. That wasn't but a hundred yards away from us. Then we turned back toward the high

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woods where the other group of men were at. Of course we hadn't seen them for an hour and a half or two hours. We really didn't know for sure where they were. As we went around the end of the lagoon between the lagoon and Log Lake, then we're walking to the west toward the high ground. We were gonna get out of the swampy area and go into the woods looking for them.

All of a sudden Sam Corbitt came down out of the woods and called us. We hollered and answered him. He came on down. He said: Hey, where are ya'll at? Uncle Oliver said that lagoons

in here. We told him: Yes it is Sam, we just came thru it. He said: Where, I don't see it.

Well everybody wanted to see it. What happened was they were standing about a hundred yards from the lagoon to the west of where we were at. Out in one of the cow trails and out thru the palmettos and thru the pine woods to out where they were all at.

They were standing there talking and daddy is looking toward the river. He said: You boys, see that high palm tree and that cypress tree, well that

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lagoon lays in between them two trees. They are all standing there telling him: There ain't no lagoon in there.

It had been thirty years since daddy was in there and yet he knew that the lagoon lay between them two trees. That's exactly where me and John was at the time and they didn't know it. Sam Corbitt took off down in there and said: Lets go to see it, and he took off toward the river calling me and John. He knew we were down in the swamp somewhere and he came on down there and the rest of them followed him on down there. They all came in to where we were at.

They came thru the woods far enough to see the lagoon. Now I think they had to get in the water to walk down that far so I don't think daddy came with them down in the woods to see the lagoon. The rest of them did because they didn't believe it was there. When they got there they found out that lagoon is there.

We've been back lots of times to that same place. The truth is that lagoon lays to the northwest of where the boat put the men up on

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the bank to look for treasure where they dug holes out there. All of it where the high sand bank was and the lagoon was probably, maybe, two hundred yards northwest of that spot. That was all, and we were that close to it.

The Cypress Tree

In some of the stories that the old folks had told to Charlie when he had just started hunting treasure, they knew about the cypress tree. He had talked to some of the oldest people of the old timers around Arcadia, Nocatee, and Ft. Ogden.

Some of the oldest ones were the children of

the older men that had seen the big cypress tree that stood down on the edge of Peace River.

It just so happened that tree stood right in the middle between the lagoon and the palmettos where the boat always docked. This big tree was big enough that the insides of it was hollow and the hunters in the woods could go inside of that tree and sleep at night. They could be out of the

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weather or rain. If the rain started they could go in that tree and stay dry.

This tree originally stood high. I mean like one hundred and fifty feet high or so. It was ten feet across and it had wood carvings in it. Somebody had carved a lot of pictures up on the tree and of course it was the pirates that had done it. There was a picture of a ship on it with a three mast schooner.

There was another picture of an anchor and a chain. Then there was another picture of what they call an “idiot head”, like if you draw a round circle of a face and put eyes, a nose, and a mouth in it. There was one of them carved up on the tree and they said there was an angel carved on it.

The real old timers could see those pictures

carved up on that tree, but now the tree had died and fell down. The stump stood there for years and years and years. Lots of people in the woods built fires inside of it and spent the night in there lots of times.

The weather finally rotted the tree off so that it fell and there was nothing left but the stump

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showing. Right on the edge of the river. It was big, the biggest stump most of the men had ever seen in their lives. That stump lay right between the high white sand bank where the boat docked and the lagoon. When anybody went up and down the river the old timers saw the old tree. But that was probably a hundred years before our time.

At the time when Gasparilla's ship was running up and down the river there wasn't no mud in the river. It was just clear water and you could look down in the water and see the fish. Charlie said that many times he rode in a boat with his daddy, and when they reached where Lettuce Lake drained into Peace River that there was a spot that you could look down in the water and see a boat down in there.

His daddy told him that was a boat off of

Gasparilla's ship. It may have been one of their long boats. I don't think it was Gasparilla's ship itself. It could have been part of it. We don't know what happened to it after Juan Gomez and the old slave jumped off of it, when the men on board was fighting and the Indians were after

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them. We don't know what ever happened to the ship.

The water was clear when daddy and John Nipper was in there in 1921. There was no hyacinths in the water and there was no hyacinths in the lagoon. When I saw it, it had hyacinths scattered all around the edge. The little creek that brought the water in had hyacinths in it.

Me and John had to climb across the hyacinths and limbs to get across it . When daddy and John Nipper saw it, it would have been just plain open water. It was wide and deep and they wasn't about to go across it. They turned and went thru the lagoon which was only waist deep. The water was clear and they could see there was no snakes or alligators or nothing in it back in 1921.

After we had found the lagoon me and John told them that we had done looked around and

we didn't find any brass knobs. We couldn't see the ground for all of the underbrush growing in there. It was getting late and we didn't have any more time to spend in there that day so we all went on back. Daddy wanted to get back so he could go to

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church that night.

Me and John went back a few weeks later after daddy was over there with us and after we had already found the lagoon. We talked about what daddy had said. He said they got in the boat and went down a little creek and out into the river and went up stream.

Me and John got in a boat and we went down the river to Ty Cobb landing. That is where the green carpet grass was, and just a little south of that maybe a hundred feet or so we pulled up to the bank. We could see that there was water behind the trees. We took everything out of the boat and laid it on the bank. I think we took the outboard motor off and laid it on the bank.

I think we had to turn the boat up on it's side to pull it thru the trees and put it in that hole of deep water. Then we finally decided that those trees that were in the way grew up in the mouth

of a creek.

When we put the boat down in that hole of deep water over behind them trees, John broke off a big limb about ten or twelve feet long. We were

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going to go up this creek where the man's cabin stood.

Well, when John put that long pole down in the water it didn't hit the bottom. The trees were grown up where the water didn't run in and out to the river anymore. It was all grown up and filled up with trash there at that little creek. So we poled using the pole as an oar and put it against the bank and pushed and got the boat to moving on up to where Ty Cobb's cabin was.

This is the house that the man lived in that owned the boat that daddy and John Nipper rode in. We followed that creek about fifty or sixty yards from the river and it dead ended. It opened up and made a circle kind of a big pool. That was where you could turn a boat that was about twenty or thirty feet long around.

There was a fence post sitting up there that was all smooth around the top where the ropes had been tied. You could tell that's where he tied

the boat up. What daddy had told us was right. We got out of the boat and climbed up on the ground. We walked along the edge of the punk trees that

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was along the path that daddy had told us about.

We walked up the path where daddy said it was, where the boat was landed, and then we finally loaded the stuff back in the boat and went back to the truck and went home. We determined that what daddy was telling us was right and always had been.

Charlie's Stories

Then all of the stories Charlie had told us about the people in the early day, how they had hunted for treasure. They said you could see these carvings on the cypress trees from a way off. There was an idiot head on the tree which is a round face with eyes a nose and a mouth. There was some other carvings on it.

These men that Charlie talked to told him that their daddy had told them about these things. A lot of Charlie's information came from some of

these older men who had learned it from their daddys. But now all of the older men that had

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seen this were gone.

Charlie never did find anybody who had seen it. It was always the sons of the older men that told Charlie about it. After the tree fell down after all these years somebody burned it or whatever. The storm must have broke it off because for many years the stump stood up there. Many people had seen the stump after the tree was gone.

The pirates did the wood carvings up on the tree and there is no telling how close that was to where the pirates made their headquarters when they came up the river to stay for a while to get out of the gulf and hide.

They probably brought their ship up to this big cypress tree. Way up in the top was the crows nest, a place that a man could climb to the top and sit in that crows nest and watch the river. He could see any ship that was coming in, probably all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Maybe they would see a ship coming into Charlotte Harbor and coming up the river where the water is now.

When daddy and John Nipper went looking

the water was clear in Peace River in 1921. A few

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years later, back in the thirty's when I saw it, it was still clear. That was before they did all the digging up around *Naples* and messed up the water and made the water in Peace River brown.

They were off on the west side of the river when they came into this area where they found the brass knobs. After they found the first one they scratched around in the leaves and found four more. Daddy said there were five brass knobs. Four of them were in a rectangle and the other one was sitting in the center of one end.

I wish I knew which direction, and I don't know if daddy ever told us if that was north or west. It didn't make any difference then but now it does because I don't believe the treasure is buried where the brass knobs are.

I think that was a marker and the knobs are pointing to where the treasure is actually buried. This is where they found the Roman numerals carved up higher than you could reach. They had to be carved nine or ten feet above the ground. Daddy said that when you walked toward the tree

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where the Roman numerals was, when you got close to it you could see another tree with another Roman numeral farther on.

These Roman numerals went three directions away from the brass knobs which made them believe if they had went to the east side of the river they would have found some more Roman numerals carved on the trees over there.

Then about the lagoon. Why he crossed it. He said: I don't know, we couldn't go north anymore so we turned and went west across the lagoon in about waist deep in water. They chopped a limb on the tree, walked a little farther and chopped another limb and let it hang down to make them a trail that they thought they could go back and find.

When they went back in later they couldn't find their way back to where the knobs were. Now in 1951 it has been thirty years since daddy was in there. So him and John Nipper not knowing where they were and not knowing where the car was at turned away from the spot where they were at. As it happened they walked right on out on to

the high ground. They walked straight on out

west to the car. It was straight in line with where they were at. So they were lucky. Then when they went back, for some reason, and I don't know why, they parked the car in the same spot and walked to the lagoon.

Well, any way they got in the car and went on home that first time. When he was telling the story to all of us, he told the story just as he had always told it and it never varied at all.

Later Charlie never believed it. He said daddy was on the wrong side of the river. They never believed there was any lagoon on the west side of the river, that all of the lagoons were on the east side. There around Lettuce Lake to the south of Lettuce Lake. We went over lots of times with Charlie.

When we go into the woods we are looking for the Roman numerals and hoping to find the brass knobs in the ground. The main thing we were looking for was the Roman numerals because they were up on the trees. We figured they were still there so that gave us something to go by.

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It was about sixty miles from Sarasota over to Ft. Ogden, so me and Orbidue talked to daddy

about it several times. His story never changed about anything. They were on the west side walking along between the lagoon and the river.

So, that just about completes the story of daddy's treasure.

A Few Other Notes

When the other treasures were dug up, the men that showed Charlie where they knew the treasures were dug up, they were close to where uncle Joe's treasure was dug up.

Those treasures had a pipe going down underneath the chest. On the ends of the pipes were brass balls just like daddy saw in the swamp in 1921 when he was with John Nipper. It seems that they used these brass knobs as a marker fastened on the end of the pipes.

They could have set the chest on the pipes to lower it into the ground so the brass knobs were on top of it. The brass knobs were a marker and

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daddy could have probably taken a hold of the brass knobs and pulled them out of the ground because they were on short pipes.

A Treasure Chest

Charlie told us that in the early days in Arcadia that many people knew of a little house where a woman kept her hens and biddies in her back yard. I was a treasure chest that had been dug up. We don't know where she got it or who she was.

For several years it was there. Many realized that "old crazy Joe Fales" wasn't crazy after all.

Uncle Joe's Treasure

When we had first started treasure hunting with Charlie and after daddy had told us his story.

One day Charlie carried us back into the woods to where uncle Joe had found the treasure and had put his gator rod on it. It was in what used to be a small creek bed about one half mile

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southwest of Nocatee bridge and went west for quite a way.

We parked the car and crossed over the bridge

and went south. We got to this place where Charlie showed us, and he said: This other little low spot to the west of that used to be a swimming hole when I was a boy. There was twelve or fourteen feet of water in it.

There was an oak tree on the west end of the water hole, but the water was gone now. The storms had washed the trash and dirt back in it and filled it up. The whole creek bed all the low holes were filled. The oak tree they used to climb up and dive into the water had a chain around it.

What they didn't know at the time they were swimming there was a story Charlie heard later.

Charlie told us the story about some man that drove his Model T through the woods and got stuck. He was looking for limbs to put under the wheels and found a chain around the oak tree. He went home and got his horses to pull his Model T out of the mud.

He hooked on to the chain around the tree and

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pulled it up out of the water hole. Whatever was hooked on to the end of the chain stayed in the water hole. We never did find out or hear what was on the end of the chain, and Charlie never got any readings with his metal detector around

that hole or the water hole. It appeared that if anything was there, it was gone.

A Homestead Story

Later Charlie met a man that came from Homestead that knew where a treasure was. He said: I can't tell you where it is but I can show you the spot.

The man lived with his uncle when he was a boy. His uncle took him down on Sunday morning to where another man had dug up a treasure the day before. He told Charlie how much money his uncle had gotten for his share.

The man came up from Homestead to show Charlie where it was. He came right to Nocatee and to where uncle Joe's treasure was dug up. John Fales called it the "gold hole" because it was

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the spot where his daddy's treasure was dug up by the three men from DeSoto county.

When he got there he moved on down that same old creek bed a little closer to the river and showed Charlie the spot where his uncle said he dug up the treasure.

Homestead or Miami

A few years later Charlie met another man in Homestead or Miami, because Charlie was always talking about treasures. Some other man knew where a treasure was dug up one time and the same story almost exactly. When that man showed Charlie where to go, they went to Nocatee and went back in the woods. The same spot where uncle Joe's treasure was dug up, and went right on past where the other man showed Charlie where the other treasure was dug.

It was in that same creek bed. They walked a little farther and told Charlie: This is the spot where he knew a treasure was dug up. So, there were three treasures dug up in the same creek

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bed.

One night I was think about it. Back when we were treasure hunting nobody ever mentioned it so I guess no one ever thought about it. I thought, Why would the pirates put three treasures in one creek bed? I figured that they had a smart man that must have been an

engineer on that pirate ship.

They would put the chest of treasure they were going to bury in the back of a small boat. Then they went up the creek on the high tide until they ran aground. Then they would stop and wait for the tide to go out. Then they would dig a big hole behind the boat and set the chest right down in it. They would then cover it up. When the tide came back up to float the boat back out in to the river the tide water washed everything clean.

There was no signs that a treasure had been buried there. That sounds real logical to me that it could have happened. If that was a practice that they were doing all of the time then there may be lots of treasures buried along the creek along Peace River.

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Rocky Bluff

I was quite a young boy maybe twelve or thirteen years old when I was riding with my daddy, riding west on highway 301 toward Palmetto coming from Wauchula. When we crossed the creek at Rocky Bluff just east of Ellenton, daddy told me when they rebuilt the

bridge and raised it higher the dragline operator was digging dirt in the creek to raise up the shoulders of the road higher.

It was where it crossed the creek there at Rocky Bluff. The dragline bucket dug into a treasure and the operator saw it and shut down the dragline and told his men that the dragline broke down and they could go home. They would come back next week to work on it.

That would give him a chance to come back and dig it up. There may be more treasures buried in the creek of Rocky Bluff and someone needs to check that one out.

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Charlie's Beads

Charlie Fales asked us all to go down to his house in Homestead one weekend. There were four of us that went down there. Sam Corbitt, Orbidue Gill, John Fales, and myself.

Charlie showed us in his yard where they had drilled holes twelve inches in diameter and eighteen feet deep, also fourteen, twelve, ten, eight, and six feet deep. He put scrap iron down

in the bottom of the holes to test his metal detector and the Big M scrap metal detector that Charlie had.

It would detect metal at seventeen feet, and no other detector would do that, that we knew of. They had dug the holes with Charlie DeLest well drilling machine.

Charlie told us a story that he went with some friends to an island in the Everglades that used to be an Indian village. He said they went to an island that had palm trees on it. All of the other islands did not have trees.

When he went with his friends to the island
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that had the trees on it they found signs that the Indian village had been there, They found beads that appeared to be lead so they gathered up a bunch of them and saved them.

Charlie was holding the box that the beads were put in. When the box got heavy Charlie thought he had saved enough so he held the beads in his hand as they handed them to him. When they were not looking he started throwing them over his shoulder. They did not find anything else worth keeping that day so they went home.

A few years later a man came by buying old gold or broken gold. One of the lead beads was with the gold pieces he was looking at, so the man checked it and asked them if they had any more of these. He said: This is not lead it is platinum, and it is worth more than gold.

Charlie wanted to go find more of the platinum beads but when he went to the island again all the islands had trees. He did not know which one the platinum beads came from, so he never found any more beads.

He ask if we wanted to go out to the island and

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we agreed to go. We got in Charlie's car and went out of Homestead into the Everglades. I think we went northeast out of Homestead a few miles. He parked on the shoulder of the road and he pointed to an island with trees about a mile away.

We walked through the water which was knee deep. We walked over rocks and sometimes we stumbled and fell. It was hard walking thru the water. It must have been an hour to walk to the island and we did not find any platinum beads. But we got wet and dirty. I think we found a few stone beads.

We knew Indians had lived there but we didn't find anything worth keeping so we walked back to Charlie's car and went back to his house. It was an interesting weekend and we went on many interesting trips with Charlie.

The Coral Creek Silver

A long time ago I heard about another ship that was about to be caught in a storm in the Gulf. The

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ship was carrying a load of silver bars and when it came in Gasparilla Pass into the bay east of Boca Grande island. The ship hit rocks and did damage to the ships bottom.

They guided the ship into Coral Creek on the north side of the bay. The creek had coral on the banks and it was cracked open. After the storm had passed the men unloaded all the silver bars and dropped them down in the cracks in the coral along the banks of the creek.

Then they turned the ship on it's side and repaired the damage to the bottom. It took many weeks to do it.

When they went to get the silver bars they could not find them. The cracks in the coral had closed up and they never found the silver again.

The Everglades Treasure

I worked in the Sarasota School Bus Garage in 1949. One of the men I worked with was Bert Brooks. He told me this story.

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About 1932 he was returning to Sarasota from Tennessee. He picked up a man on the road and gave him a ride to Sarasota. The man told him that he had just got out of prison after ten years of bank robbing with two other men who were now dead.

They robbed a bank and got away. Then they drove down into the Everglades and went down a small road until they found a pile of rocks. They hid the stolen money by the rocks and left it.

On their way back home some law men stopped them and one of the men with him started shooting at the law. Both of the other men were shot and died. He was sentenced to ten years in prison.

Bert Brooks was running the White City Tourist Camp and gave the man a room for the night. The next day he took him to the Everglades to get the money.

They went south on highway 41 into the Everglades until they found the road into the woods. They turned on to that road and went in the woods toward where the money was buried.

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Suddenly a man with a shotgun stepped out in front of them and stopped them. He said: Where are you going? They told him they were just looking around and not going anywhere in particular.

He said: Turn around and go back. We have a moonshine still in these woods and two men are around that curve up ahead and they will shoot you if you go there. We don't allow visitors.

So Bert turned the car around and left there. They did not want to get shot so they left the money buried there.

The Tampa Bay Treasure

Bert Brooks told us another story. He said a colored man who was a good mechanic where he

worked. When they ate lunch the man did not talk much. They would ask him a question about his life and he acted like he did not want to talk about it.

After about two years they got him to talk a little, and when Bert talked about the money in the Everglades the man nodded his head. Then

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they ask him if he knew where any money was buried.

He said yes but he did not want to talk about it. So they tried to talk to him a little at a time and finally got a story from him. On the south side of Tampa bay was a two story house that pirates lived in, and money was buried south of the house in the woods.

He acted very scared whenever he mentioned anything about the buried money. They believed that he was there when it was buried. But they asked him to show them where it was buried. Then he would not show them or talk about it any more.

Bert would get alone with him whenever he could and finally got the man to show him where it was. But that was only after Bert agreed to go on Sunday, and would do nothing but take the

man back home after he showed Bert where it was buried.

**One Sunday Bert picked him up and headed north on highway 41. The man showed Bert where to turn west on Piney Point Road toward
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the ferry landing.**

About a half of a mile west of highway 41 they turned north towards Tampa bay. It was about a mile to the north. They drove about a half mile in the woods and the man told Bert to stop. He got out and walked to a tree, then stepped several steps toward another tree and stopped. Then he said: Right here is where it is. He got back in the car and Bert took him home.

A few nights later Bert and a friend to help him, went back and started digging in the spot where the man had showed him. They went back many nights when they couldn't be seen when they were working at night.

After they had dug a hole about four or five feet deep they pushed an iron rod into the ground and it hit the treasure box a few feet deeper.

Water was already coming in the hole causing the sand to wash down. So, they carried some

boards and heavy timbers to shore up the hole to hold back the sand from washing down. They realized that the treasure box was sinking deeper into the ground.

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They brought more timbers and kept building a wall inside of the hole. After a few weeks they were down about sixteen feet and Bert was down in the hole. He was putting sand into a bucket and his helper friend was pulling it up with a rope and dumping it out.

When Bert pushed his arm down into the bottom of the hole where he was digging he could feel the corner of the box with his hand. He also was looking through the cracks between the timbers and he realized that he was down in the bottom of a hole like a room with only a hole at the top to come down in.

The earth on top of this room could cave in and bury him at any time so he climbed up the rope and got out. He said that he was not going back down although the treasure was about eighteen feet down at that time.

Then they cut down a tree and let it fall and covered the hole. They left it and it is still there. They thought that the pirates in the house to the

north had buried it there. The house was close to the water of Tampa bay on the south side of

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Tampa bay.

Well, for now this is the end of Kenneth's treasure stories but never forget that some others may surface at any time in the future because there are many places around where you are that someone's treasure has been buried and no one has found it yet.

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Advice About Treasure

Proverbs 15:16

Matthew 6:19

Matthew 13:44

James 5:3