

Blast from the past: class ring inspires memories



Rob Jacoby '77 displays the class ring he lost while swimming in Yellowstone National Park shortly after graduation.

Immediately after graduation, Rob Jacoby '77 (civil engineering technology) and three childhood friends started out on a cross-country camping trip.

It was a wonderful time, marred by one incident. While swimming in the Madison River in Yellowstone National Park, Jacoby lost the class ring he had worked and saved to buy. "I remember the day as if it were yesterday," Jacoby recalls. "It just slipped off my finger. I thought it would be lost forever."

Fast-forward to August 2005. Chris Trubl, who works for the Bonneville County Sheriff's Department in Idaho Falls, Idaho, is scuba-diving in that same river in Yellowstone. In a location called Firehole, he finds Jacoby's ring, tarnished and encrusted with minerals. Trubl cleans it up, sees that he's found a 1977 RIT class ring and discovers the initials inscribed inside. He contacts

the Alumni Relations Office where Chris Parkin, student Web developer, figures out who belongs to those initials.

Parkin puts the two men in touch and Trubl sends the ring to Jacoby, who now lives in the Houston area.

"I got this e-mail out of the blue," says Jacoby. "It's an incredible story. Never in my wildest dream did I ever think anyone would find this ring."

Much has happened since Jacoby last saw the ring. After the camping trip, he went to work in the New York City office of Metcalf & Eddy, an international environmental engineering company. He earned a master's degree in engineering from the University of Buffalo in 1980 and joined

Shell Oil Company. He has lived in New Orleans and San Francisco and now serves as the U.S. regional manager, Health, Safety and Environmental, for Shell Global Solutions in Houston. His duties involve frequent trips within the U.S. and Europe. He enjoys travel and has a pilot's license, with the goal of becoming a commercial pilot as a second career.

"When I received the ring in the mail, and caught my first glimpse, it caused me to do quite a bit of reflection on what has happened in my life while millions of gallons of water flowed over this ring," says Jacoby. "It was fun to tell the story to my family."

Jacoby is married and has two children. Daughter Alexis is married and lives in Baton Rouge, La., and is completing her degree from Louisiana State University. His son, Ryan, is attending Baylor University and will be transferring to Oklahoma State University this fall.

"I tried to convince them to attend RIT, and have the co-op experience, but they both said Rochester is too cold," says Jacoby.

"I've been really blessed," he continues. "I've had a wonderful career at Shell, and RIT prepared me well. I got one great education at RIT."

As his reward for returning the ring, Trubl had only one request: A photo of Jacoby and the ring. He keeps a scrapbook related to his discoveries, and gives seminars on his adventures.

The water doesn't always give up its secrets so easily. Trubl is still looking for the owners of two other rings he found the same day, one from University of Michigan 1954 the other was Pocatello (Idaho) High School 1974.

"All three rings were within a couple of feet of each other," says Trubl, "and all have a blue Sapphire stone. I'm trying to find the owners on those as well, but no luck as yet."

Kathy Lindsley