

DROP ZONE SICILY

BY JAMES FURMAGE

Hello All,

I thought I would submit for a Golden Detector Award and tell a story in doing so. It was early and cold on Nov 26th, 2010 when my children and I went for a little TREASURE hunt. While visiting my in-laws In Fayetteville, NC we decided to go metal detecting. With permission from the base security C.O. we were off to a well-known Fort Bragg area for paratroopers named the "Sicily Drop Zone". Thousands and thousands of yards of ground to search, so we fired up the Fisher F2 and Garret ACE 250 and went to work. Right from the start, multiple targets in the iron class showed up. As we dug them, we found shrapnel, blank fired casings, M60 links, well, you get the idea. So much in fact we had to discriminate iron out to prevent us from needing a back-hoe to excavate quicker.

As we made our way through the open areas we found chem-light sticks, MRE wrappers, pencils, pens and trash that we luckily had a trash bag with us to discard at the end of the hunt. Then much to my delight, I dug a target that showed between a pulltab and penny that was a pale gray/white ball. I had seen this before I thought, and showed my sons the MUSKET BALL I dug. They were pretty hyper about it. In time, I noticed we were finding these MUSKET BALLS everywhere, then found a pile of about 20 balls in all.

Now this is strange, so I ask my father in-law who is a retired 1st Sergeant Division Artillery if they still fired any artillery that used lead balls. He answered not during his time in service which dated back to Vietnam. Then my sons called for us because they found something and they were instructed not to pick up anything without an adult present. They had found a base plate of a fired artillery round. I finished digging the plate to find it covering about 25 pounds of lead balls. Ok now, one would ask, why do you SHELL troops who are PRACTICE jumping into a TRAINING drop zone? The answer is, you don't, so this area must be an old artillery/bombing range. We gathered our fair share of lead balls and continued for another hour or so.

Now to the award part of this story. While doing this hunt, I found a soldier's dog tags with wedding band attached to the chain. Dog tags have full name, social security number, blood type and religious preference. So with this info in hand, I contacted the one person on base I thought would be the most helpful in finding the owner, the base CHAPLAIN. I gave him the name and social security number of the soldier and asked if he could locate him at Fort Bragg so I may return the items to him.

The Chaplain returned my phone call and said the soldier had since re-located to Fort Campbell, Kentucky and the Chaplain e-mailed the soldier with the info. Saturday afternoon I received a call from Darren, the soldier, and told him what I had and that if he could identify it I would send the items to him. As you may have guessed, he was able to identify both items, his SSN was a match and advised he put his wedding ring with his ID tags to keep around his neck while he parachuted out of the aircraft, losing it in the process. With a little postage, it is now enroute back to its owner.

And now my research into artillery has lead (no pun intended) me to WWI or WWII artillery. My father in-law and I both are researching this, so for now that chapter is TO BE CONTINUED.

Thanks
James Furmage

