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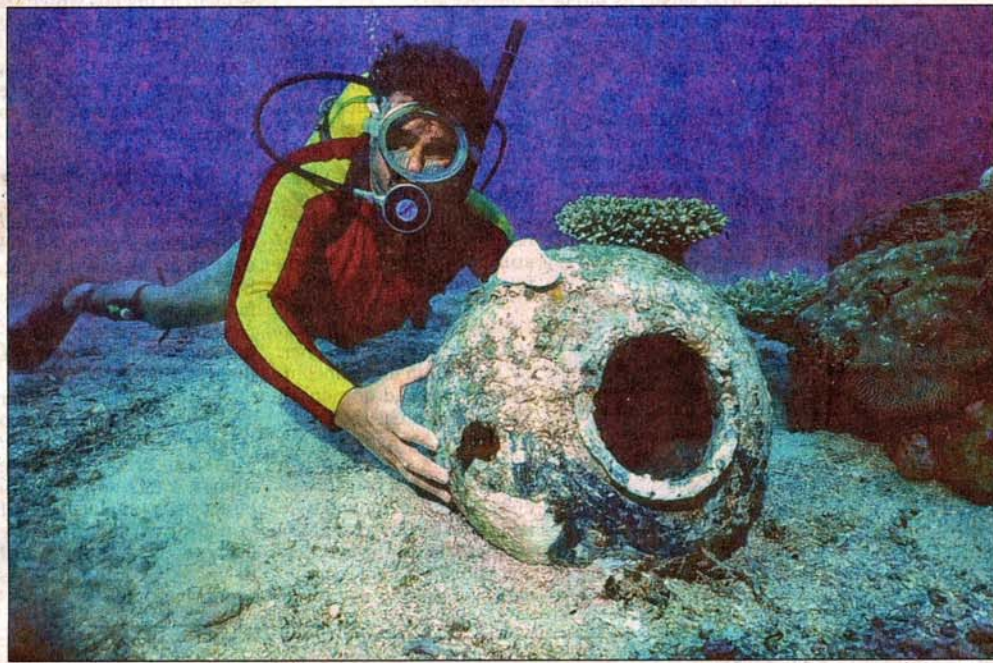


Photo courtesy of Robert Marx

**Jarring discovery.** Robert Marx is photographed underwater as he unearths a sixth-century ceramic water jar on the wreck of an Asiatic trading vessel off the coast of Sumatra Island, Indonesia.

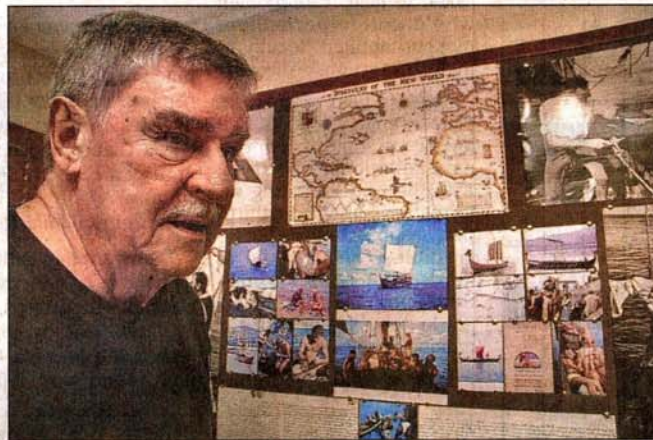
# Treasure tales

*Wreck diver, wife depict adventures in new books*

BY CHRIS KRIDLER  
FLORIDA TODAY

Indianalantic treasure hunter Robert Marx says you can't believe everything a treasure hunter — or a reporter — says.

"Every wreck found is called the richest wreck ever lost," he says in the office of Seven Seas Search and Salvage. He blames such exaggerations on what he calls "the Fisher factor," after the late Mel Fisher.



Chris Kridler, FLORIDA TODAY

**If walls could talk.** A well-known treasure hunter with years of dives to his credit, Marx has pictures depicting his adventures in his Indianalantic office.

Marx claims to have found the richest wreck, the plunder-filled Portuguese ship *Flo do Mar*, lost in 1511 off Indonesia. It had cargo valued at \$100 million, according to the new book he wrote with wife Jenifer, "The World's Richest Wrecks: A Wreck Diver's Guide to Gold and Silver Treasures of the Seas."

The ship was loaded with 80 tons of gold figurines, more than 200 chests of jewels and pearls, porcelains and more, and he pulled up \$1 million worth of artifacts, they write.

But, according to the book, several countries claimed ownership of the treasure, halting the recovery and throwing the dispute into international court. Then the 2004 tsunami buried the wreck in mud, he says.

The life of a treasure hunter is filled with such thrills and conflicts, as countries spar over who gets the booty that expert divers like Marx find and recover.

"You always share with the country, and now permits are almost nonexistent," he says. "Most countries won't do it."

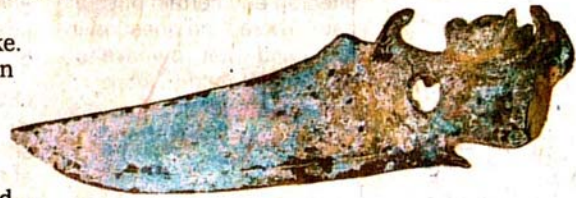
Though Marx has his share of treasure, during many years working with the United Nations, he's recovered many wrecks on behalf of countries, too. Artifacts he's found are in the hands of museums

**Below.** An ancient weapon found on a dive.

and collectors alike.

He's been keen on treasure since he was 5, ran away from reform school for the seventh and last time at 13, became a helmet diver as a teenager and eventually joined the Marines. Now 72, he's engaged in more expeditions:

He's full of salty stories about shark bites, the Viking ships he built for the movies, artifacts in gold and silver and jade, government bureaucracy and his research into whether Asians reached the Americas long before the Spanish. Much of his work has been documented in books; he and his wife, between them, have published more than 60. Jenifer's latest is "Gold in the Ancient World."

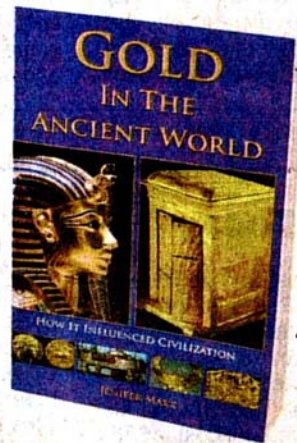
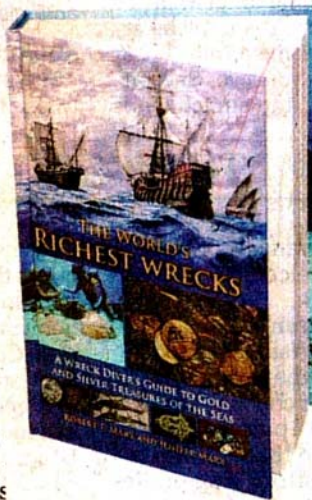


Here in Florida, Marx says, treasure might be underfoot, thanks to the shifting sands of time.

"Most people think ships sink," he says. "They don't sink. They wreck. They hit the coast. Like half of the stuff on this coast here has actually got condos built on top of it, because the land went up."

Though treasure-hunting can be lucrative, it's not about the money, Marx says. "To me, it's still an adventure today." ■

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### On the shelf

**"The World's Richest Wrecks: A Wreck Diver's Guide to Gold and Silver Treasures of the Seas"**

By Robert F. Marx and Jenifer Marx

RAM Books, 420 pages,

\$24.95, hardcover

\$19.95, paperback

**"Gold in the Ancient World"**

By Jenifer Marx

RAM Books, 280 pages,

\$15.95, hardcover