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## After 2 years, lost wedding ring comes full circle

**By Leigh Jones**  
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GALVESTON — Joel Wassner was carrying a stack of damaged door frames out of Central Christian Church on Tuesday morning when something metal in the gravel parking lot caught his eye.

It could have been a bottle cap or a scrap of debris left from Hurricane Ike, but Wassner bent down to pick it up anyway.

The scrap turned out to be a scratched gold band, and Wassner quickly realized it was probably a wedding ring when he saw the “14K” stamp on the inside. Next to the stamp, the ring was inscribed with a date — 8-17-54.

Shirley Felts was sitting in the back of the church’s sanctuary when she heard Wassner and the other volunteer workers talking about his find.

“My feet hit the floor, and I was running,” she said with a laugh.

She knew exactly who the ring belonged to.

### Mardi Gras Disappearance

In 2007, Doug Guiling and his wife Ellen, parked their car at the church, as they do every year, and walked the two blocks to the Mardi Gras parade route down 25th Street.

It was cold, and both were wearing gloves, so Doug Guiling didn’t notice until the parade was almost over that his ring was missing.

Felts and several other church workers helped the Guilings search for the ring, focusing the temporary spotlights set up for the event on the area around their car.

But the ring had vanished.

The Guilings returned to their home in Dallas the next day, but Felts and her husband

kept looking, even retracing the visitors' steps to and from the parade.

Several days later, Doug Guiling returned to the island with a rented metal detector and went over the parking lot again.

When he still found nothing, Guiling left his name and phone number with Felts and figured the ring was gone for good.

### The Phone Call

The band was not the first Felts had lost.

His first disappeared after he took it off to clean his grill.

He second wedding ring and his Texas A&M class ring were stolen out of his car, where he had locked them safely away in his briefcase while he played golf.

After that, his mother-in-law suggested he wear his father-in-law's wedding ring, and Aggie class ring, rather than replacing his.

Warren Sexton died in 2005, and neither of his rings had been worn since.

Joan Sexton wasn't as mad as she might have been when she learned her husband's band had gone missing in Galveston, Doug Guiling said.

Guiling eventually bought another wedding ring, and replaced his class ring.

He never thought he'd hear from Felts again.

When she called Tuesday morning, the Guilings were getting ready to head to Galveston again with their three daughters for a short vacation.

"I almost didn't answer the phone because I didn't want it to be a work call," he said, laughing at the irony.

### Reunited

On Friday morning, Guiling, Felts and Wassner met in the church's lobby, where a group from Disciples Volunteering continued to repair storm damage.

"Oh, this makes me break out in goose bumps," Felts said as Wassner pulled out a handful of keys and slid the ring off the big metal clip holding the whole bunch together.

Although the ring was scratched, with a few dents around the edges, it had weathered its disappearance and its saltwater scrubbing fairly well.

Felts and Wassner, a Texas Christian University student, both believe Hurricane Ike's floodwaters washed away the gravel and dirt that must have covered the ring for the last two years.

Guiling grinned as he slid it onto his finger, but it didn't stay there long.

"I'll take that," Ellen Guiling said, giving her husband a knowing look.

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