

The CURE For Gold Fever

By Lin Stone



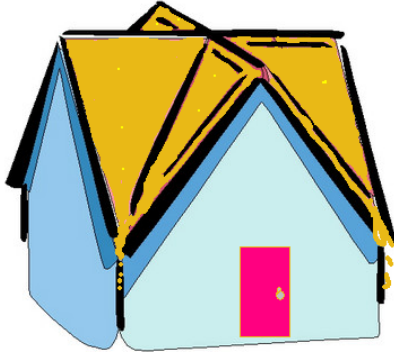
They say it is impossible to cure yourself of gold fever once it settles in your brain. I can tell you from experience that is hogwash. Gold fever can be cured. Let me show you how I cured myself of gold fever.

Lest you think I only had a mild infestation to start with let me relate that from my earliest days I have had the gold fever raging in my brain. Never mind that I had not the foggiest notion in the world what gold looked like.

Gold came in bricks; essentially that was all I knew for sure. Who could miss a brick sitting out in the desert, that was my theory. After studying Mama's gold wedding band for hours at a time I just KNEW that I would be able to spot gold in its native form.

Armed with that concrete knowledge, for seventeen years I hunted diligently for gold, and never found a brick anywhere. Then after a four year stint in the military I came home, got married, and promptly found myself the head of a hungry family. My debts piled up so high and so quickly that I realized that striking it rich with a gold mine was the only way I could ever get out from under.

So, out into the desert I went searching for gold bricks, but now with an intensity of purpose unknown to modern man. I was so determined that I began seeking information from others. That's how I found out that not all gold was in the form of bricks. Some of it came in the form of a thing called NUGGETS. My boss had a gold nugget worth \$3,000 I cradled it in my palm and watched it melt sweat from my hand. Soft, incredibly soft is pure gold.



My boss knew a lot about gold. “One ounce of gold can be hammered out so thin that it covers more than an acre of ground.” My eyes bulged with that information. Why even if all I ever found was one little ounce of gold I could double coat my roof with gold and it would never leak again as long as I lived.

The more information I discovered about gold, the more I wanted my share. One day I happened to see an ad in a Western magazine that offered a metal detector for only \$29.95, and it would find GOLD!

I saved my pennies for over a year and finally collected enough to send after my gold metal detector. Back into the Arizona desert I roamed, certain that I would strike it rich any day. Alas and alack, I finally realized that my little \$30 metal detector was NOT going to find a single brick of gold for me.

Cheap is as cheap does. Am I right? Well, I wondered, am I right? Could it just possibly be that I had not stuck the nose of my little metal detector in the right place to find gold? After all, it had found bottle caps buried one foot below the surface. It had found tin foil cigarette packages three feet down. So, I had to know for sure my little metal detector could find a gold nugget right in front of it, BEFORE I wasted any more time hunting for gold in the desert when I could be scrounging for nickels and dimes in the old school yard.

There was only one way to know for sure. I went to my boss and begged him for the use of his \$3,000 gold nugget. Reluctantly he handed it over to me, sternly cautioning me “DON’T LOSE IT!”

Ha!

Back in the house and for once alone in the house, I put the gold nugget down in the middle of the carpeted living room and began buzzing the metal detector around it. ZZZZT! Oh, what a burst of mind-tingling excitement pounded in my ear. It did, it did. My little metal detector could find gold.

Well, it could find gold lying on top of the ground. But weren’t most treasures HIDDEN? Would Jesse James and gangs leave any gold bricks lying on top of the ground?

Of course not! In a feverish haste I piled clothing on top of the gold nugget. First I threw a pair of britches over it. ZZZZT! Gold. Gold in them there britches.

So I left the britches where they were and threw a heavy coat over them. ZZZZT! Went the detector. Then I threw two dirty blankets and an old quilt over the \$3,000 gold nugget and ZZZZT! My little metal detector met the challenge of detecting hidden gold with sizzling excitement.

With a sense of awe buzzing in my mind I sank weakly down upon the couch and pondered the proofs of my scientific experiment. My little detector was good; there was no doubt about it. Or was there?

Sure, it had found gold in my living room, and it had found gold under a pile of dirty clothes. Was there any chance it could not find gold in real dirt?

I had to know for sure. My fortunes depended on it. Science demanded that I continue the experiment in the dirty world outside. If it worked there I would know for sure that all I had to do was find the right place to stick my little metal detector and I'd find gold.

As I hurried outside for the final test I was trembling with excitement. My whole future depended on the way the next few minutes turned out.



It wasn't hard to find a dirty spot in my yard. The little gold nugget was laid gently on top of the ground and the metal detector was brought in a circular pattern ever closer to the gold, just as if I had no idea in the world there was a real gold nugget lying there on the ground. ZZZZT! That gold nugget was found from way out in the circle.

I felt like dancing, my body had so much excitement raging through it. But wait, wait, I warned myself sternly. Out in the desert, it was much more likely that any gold I came near to would be beneath the sand, not on it. Remember Jesse James and gangs?

Caution bid me to stake out the ground where I would hide the gold just slightly below the surface. But I am a cautious soul. Before I risked hiding my gold wooden stakes were driven into the ground to form a square three feet on each side. Then I scraped the dirt back and buried my boss's \$3,000 gold nugget an exact and precise one inch beneath the surface. Just to make the test extra hard I took the yard rake and put wavy marks all over the surface of my little square.

That was my gold mine. X marked the spot! With bated breath I leaped for the metal detector, and began using a circular search pattern to explore the dirt in front of me. By the time I got to the center where I had buried the gold nugget my anticipatory smile had died away to a frown of consternation. "ZZZT!" Seemed to have been erased from my little metal detector's vocabulary. It didn't even come up with a z.

Twice more I ran a search pattern over that big square yard of dirt, and found nada. Nada one blasted thing! My cheap little metal detector had not passed its final test of finding a big chunk of gold out in the dirty world. No wonder I had not found any out in the desert! The thing did not work in REAL life!

I threw the cheap thing over against the wall. Who cared if the cheap thing bent a little bit when it hit? It was useless, no good, rotten, left-handed and CHEAP! Then I scraped back the dirt to get the gold nugget out and take it back to my boss. Unfortunately, the gold nugget was no longer resting just beneath the surface. In fact I dug and I dug down three inches deep, and there was no gold nugget to be found.

Talk about excitement, I was frantic with it. It was not the good kind of excitement, but it raged feverishly anyhow. I absolutely had to find that gold nugget. It had taken me a year to save up \$30 to buy a little metal detector, so how long would it take to pay \$3,000.00 back to my boss? Even as frantic as I was my mind did the math and came up with a figure – it would take me 100 years to pay that much money back, and that was only if he let me keep my job when I came home without his gold nugget.

The devil with a search pattern, I wanted to find that gold nugget immediately so I started right in the middle where I had laid it down. Over and over again I searched over that middle ground where I was absolutely certain the gold nugget had been deposited. It was not there.

Gold fever does some strange things to the mind. My thoughts were wreaking havoc in my body too. My whole body was drenched with sweat. My limbs were trembling. My eyes stung. My shoes were soggy. My teeth were clenched and my hands had turned into claws as I searched that whole square two more times with the metal detector. The beeper did not beep one single time.



So there I was with \$3,000 in the hole. My mind must have shifted because suddenly I cackled at that play on words. I really did have \$3,000 in the hole.

Then the tears came and I whimpered in self pity. My boss was going to kill me and I felt so badly that I was quite likely to help him along at doing it.

I took a tighter grip on my sanity. Performing a scientific experiment had gotten me into this mess; scientific planning would keep me from losing it altogether. Feverishly I worked out a plan so that I could not possibly lose that gold nugget. First I got a five gallon bucket to put dirt in as I removed it from the square. As I removed the dirt I would go through it with a fine toothed comb prior to putting it into the bucket.

The bucket filled up rather rapidly. If I was to continue the bucket must be emptied. Now what if that gold nugget had slipped past me and gone into the bucket already? I could not take that chance. I found a tarp and slowly poured the dirt out of the bucket onto the tarp. Keen as my eyes were I did no spot any splash of gleaming light leaping from a gold nugget.

I was using a gardening trowel to dig with. My theory was that if I used a full sized shovel my eyes might miss the gold nugget for scanning too large an area at one time. Bit by bit, scoop by scoop, I dug my square farther and farther down. Bucket by bucket I hauled the dirt over and dumped it onto the tarp. The terror of losing \$3,000 made me act very, very carefully.

Suddenly my wife demanded to know what I was digging the yard up for. "I'm digging a wishing well," I told her.

"There?" she asked. "Here," I told her. With a show of confidence I patted the ground in front of me. **"Right HERE!"**

Shaking her head she went on into the house. I shook my head too, but in self pity. How long could I put off telling her I had just thrown \$3,000 down the hole?

Tears poured down my cheeks; this was worse than the time I had saturated her wedding ring with quicksilver in a scientific experiment designed to make sure it surely would attach itself to gold. It surely had, and her golden wedding ring now looked exactly like a imitation silver wedding band.

She stuck her head back out the front door and yelled at me: "You could dig it faster if you used the BIG shovel!"

What could I say? She was right. I could. I nodded and turned my head to hide my tears. "What are we going to wish for?" she asked teasingly – "A million dollars?"

My tears spurted more urgently than ever. Under my breath I muttered that yesterday I might have wished for a million dollars. But today, all I wished for was to find that \$3,000 gold nugget before my boss found out I had lost it.

Yea. Sometimes just finding what you already had before the treasure hunt started is enough of a miracle to make a man happy. If I could just find that nugget I would be ecstatic. When my hole reached a depth of two feet I sank back onto my haunches and let my self pity pile up high enough to choke me.

Then suddenly I had this wild and incredible idea... Had the gold nugget gotten stuck in the rake when I made those squiggly marks over it?

Relief flooded through me. Why of course!

That was what had happened.

Had to be.

I leaped for the rake and studied the tines. No gold nuggets nestled there, of course. No, not even one.

But wait, wait.

My mind pounced on yet another permutation; what if the rake had picked up the gold nugget, but had dropped it out on the way over to where I had so carelessly thrown it?

Inch by inch I searched the ground between where the rake had landed and where I had thrown it from. Nothing showed up to gleam in my eye. I sank down upon the hard packed earth and moaned.

Lost, lost, all was lost. But wait, wait.

Yet another permutation leaped full blown into my mind. What if the nugget had stuck inside the tines only until it landed, then had sprung forward, ahead of the rake, and landed still farther from the hole I had thrown it from? I searched diligently to verify that was indeed what had happened.

Indeed, it had not.

Shattered and forlorn I went back to filling up bucket after bucket. Ten buckets later I realized that I must have somehow missed it. That was easy to understand. I had been quite frantic and I had searched too fast. The only thing to do was go back through every cubic inch of dirt I had already gone through.

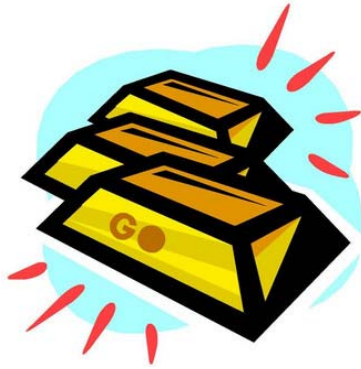
There was nothing else for it. Of course I had to go buy another tarp to hold all the dirt from the first tarp as I went through it. Of course, I did not find the gold nugget anywhere on the first tarp. Of course I cried about it. Of course I went back to digging my hole deeper. I was as emotionless as an Egyptian slave. There was no hope in me, just mindless digging, digging, and digging some more because if I didn't find that gold nugget I would indeed be slaving away forever. There were no tears left in me. I couldn't even work up a snuffle of contempt for slaving away at my wretched labors.

Finally, almost three feet deep, I found the gold nugget. At first I could not believe it was really there. I had to pinch it to see if it was real. It was really there. Really, THERE!

As I gazed down at that gold nugget fastened tightly in my hand, I was ecstatic. In fact the word "ecstatic" came no where close to describing the shivering ecstasy that coursed through my body.

For years I was to wonder how that gold nugget ever got that deep in so short a time. The only possible answer I ever came up with was that in making marks on the ground with the rake I had somehow pushed the gold nugget down into a gopher hole.

Before it disappeared right in front of my eyes again I hurried that gold nugget back to my boss. As it passed back to his hand from mine I realized that my mind had been completely and permanently cured of gold fever. There wasn't even a breath of hot air left in me.



I know this cure works.

From that day to this I have never again gone out hunting for gold.

I guarantee that anyone going through the same steps I went through will be cured of gold fever forever.

The end.

Lin Stone is an author, writer and photographer living in Mena Arkansas among the gentle mountains known as Ouachita. His articles and essays are syndicated by talewins to be published automatically on other web sites.

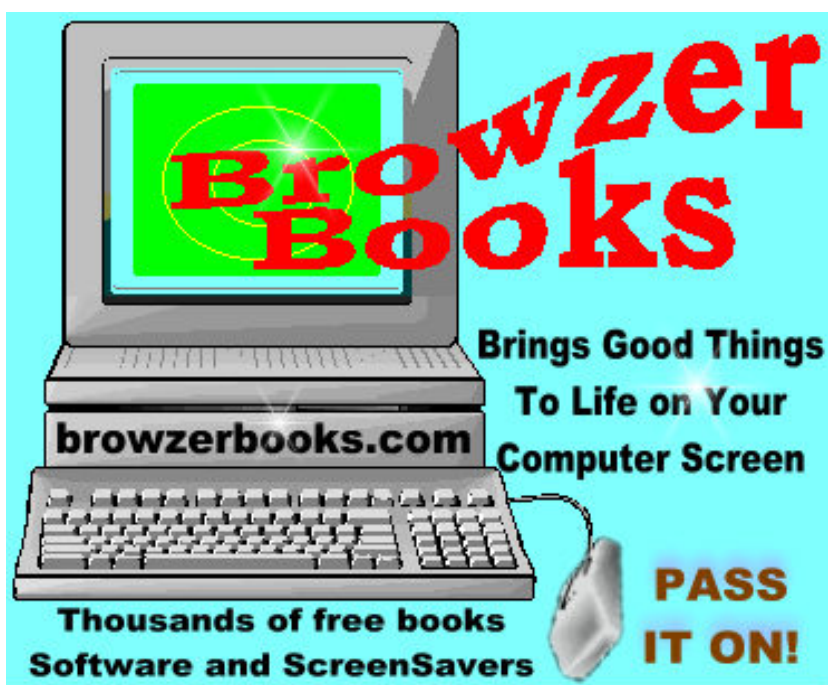
He writes about adventures for Gates of Go, and he writes about the peaceable things of this world for Share Your State. In his spare time Lin writes articles and stories for American Insurance Depot.

You can have immediate, and free, reading of many more pieces when you visit Lin's home page at <http://www.talewins.com/StoneSoup.htm> where he keeps stirring up more good things for the soul.

The Cure For Gold Fever

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