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# BAY NEWS



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# Memories of Terror Wash Ashore...



...as the legacy of TWA Flight 800 continues to haunt our lives. Famed Brooklyn scuba diver Gene Ritter was exploring off our shores last week, when he came upon a grisly reminder of the death flight...including this burnt remnant of a shoe and a piece of the plane from the ill-fated flight. Story and more photos on page 8.

(Photo by Lauchlin MacNeil)

# Bklyn Diver Says Washed Up Debris Is Part Of TWA Flight 800

By Joe Maniscalco

Gene Ritter has been diving into Brooklyn's dark, murky waters as part of the Professional Diving Organization (PDA) for years. But perhaps the most frightening and disturbing thing he's ever encountered may have come from a walk along the Coney Island shore on a sunny afternoon.

On September 8, at about 1 p.m., Ritter was strolling along the shore at Brighton 2nd when he noticed what appeared to be a trail of burnt charcoal running up and down the length of the beach. Continuing to walk east towards Manhattan Beach,

Ritter discovered more of the curious black material -- much like broken-up pieces of cooking charcoal -- fouling the sand.

Accustomed to poking around the water in search of sunken and buried artifacts, Ritter used his trained eye to follow the "rack line" down the beach. The rack line, as Ritter explained it, is the highest point on the beach where the high tide rolls in. It is here where accumulations of straw and other debris are deposited by the ocean waters.

As Ritter followed the rack line to the next bay, he noticed more burnt black material, this time in bigger

pieces -- and something else. On closer inspection Ritter discovered pieces of what he determined to be rubber. Going further along, Ritter began picking up larger pieces -- and, eventually, big chunks -- of the substance that to him, clearly looked like tires. "They were burnt on one side and smooth on the other."

After that, Ritter said, he noticed bits of molten metal lying everywhere along the rack line. Then he found a round piece of material that looked like the sole of a women's shoe. It was then that Ritter began thinking about the TWA Flight 800 disaster.

"This has got to be something," he said to a friend who was walking along the beach with him. Ritter next spied an object that he described as a piece of an airplane overhead-compartment or service tray. Then came the carnations.

Strewed about the rack line, Ritter saw scraps of flowered wreaths and a whole flower pot. It was here that Ritter would make another potentially ghastly discovery.

A book of matches with "May 27, 1990" stamped on the cover was found. Around the matches Ritter found a 4-ounce bottle and then a 7.5-ounce bottle. After showing them to a friend, Ritter believes that these bottles contained "kananga water," said to be used by some people during funeral services. "The scariest thing was the shoe," Ritter said.

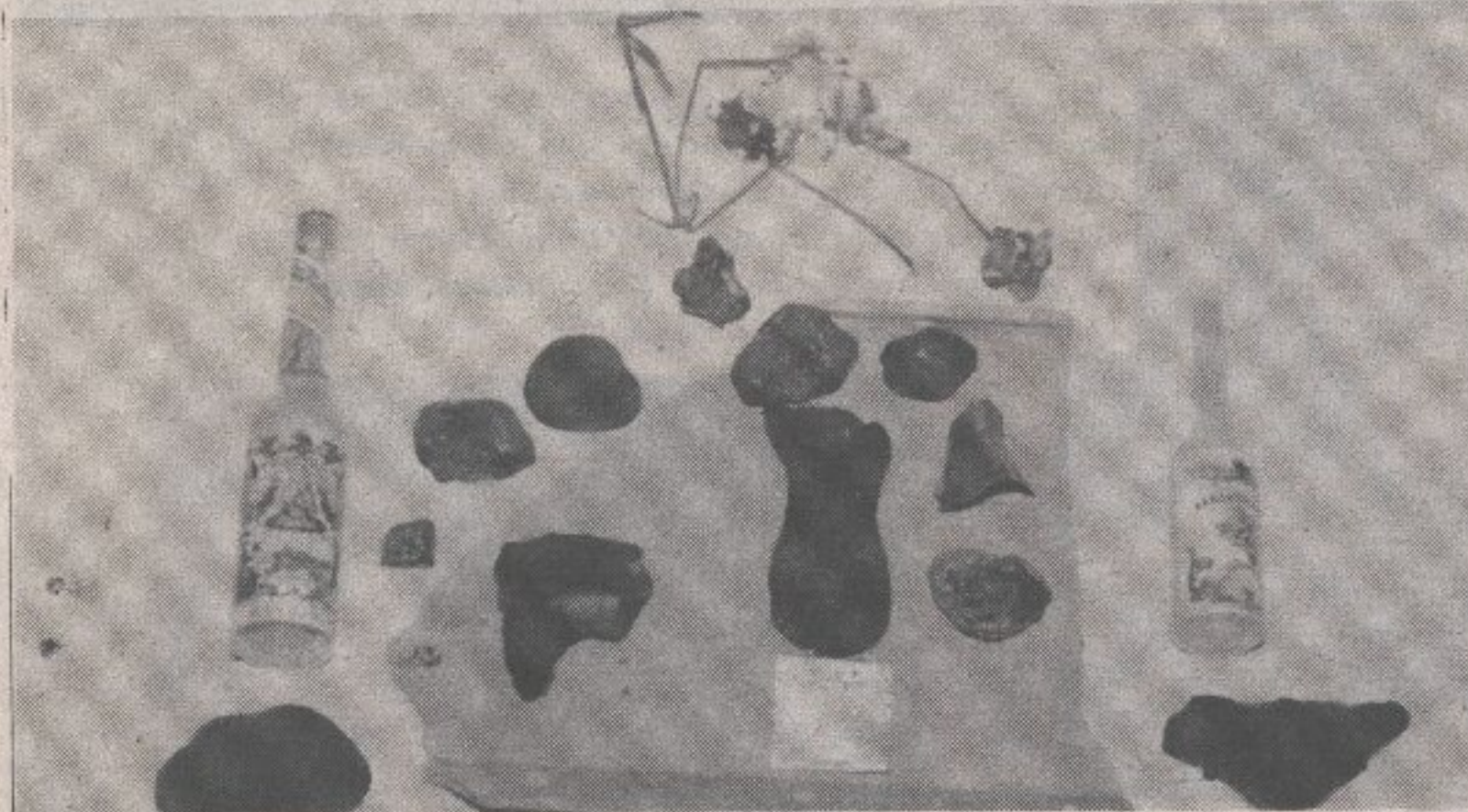
Ritter is now trying to get officials to send a team to investigate the area for possible evidence that the materials found could be from the wreckage of TWA Flight 800.

"Debris trails travel for miles until they hit something that will stop them," said Ritter, making the possibility all the more real.

And what about the black material running up



Diver Gene Ritter displays pieces of what he believes to be debris from the TWA Flight 800 disaster.



Some of the possible debris from TWA Flight 800 includes: a burnt sole, molten metal, charred rubber and an unidentified piece of heavy plastic.

Photos by Lauchlin C. Mac Neil

and down the beach? Ritter believes that it is tar. "I found the same type of material when we were investigating the dreamland pier site," Ritter said. "I thought it was charcoal then, but I brought it to an archaeologist who said, 'No this is tar,' and lit it on fire to show me."

With the line extending some three miles from Manhattan Beach to Sea Gate, according to Ritter, there is a great deal of debris for officials to investigate. But that's not the terrible part. Said Ritter, "I wouldn't be surprised if bodies didn't start washing up."