

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort from The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

As spring rains dump water onto the mountains and wash down into our rivers and streams, I am beset by a kind of cabin fever which is peculiar to a certain type of person. It's an obsession which has been bottled up all winter long, while the weather kept me trapped indoors, or at least in town.

But spring is here and the rains will taper off soon. I've begun to scout locations on the internet using old maps and new satellite images. My equipment, which has collected nothing but dust for the last several months, has been moved and organized, then rearranged and reorganized, so that it will be ready at a moment's notice when I can – at long last – load it into the back of a vehicle and set out to spend a day or two questing for that most elusive treasure: Gold!

My history with gold is a strange one. I grew up in western Washington state, where prospecting was and is a common hobby, but it never moved me. My family relocated to the very edge of the Sierra gold fields in central California, but I still wasn't interested. My parents would take our family on trips through the little gold mining towns around us, but the main thing I was interested in finding was the best pizza place to have dinner at on our way home.

It was later, while living in Minnesota, a state known for snow, but not gold, that I got pulled into prospecting. I channel surfed past a treasure hunting show. This was before the slate of slick reality gold shows which have covered cable over the last years. No, I got a guy in a flannel shirt who was followed by a single hand-held camera while he gleefully wandered into old mines or panned river gravels before shouting, "Gold!" and showing anything from invisible dust to larger nuggets in his bright green pan. It was terribly geeky and often humorous, and I was hooked. I joined the Gold Prospectors Association of America, found a local chapter, and began learning to pan concentrates I bought online.

And every flake, speck, or dot of gold I discovered fed the flames of the gold fever in my life.

I've been back in California for 15 years, but always have lived away from the areas which have the best prospecting. I've traveled hours to get to claims to practice my hobby. And now I live in Eureka, a town named by the gold discoveries which created our state.

Our region is a modern gold prospector's dream. All six rivers are gold bearing and there are beach locations where you can pan shiny yellow gold right out of the sands. The three largest

clubs – GPAA, the Lost Dutchman’s Mining Association, and the New 49ers – all have properties nearby, places where members can go and dig and return home happy, refreshed, with a little gold to show.

After three years here, I’m just reaching the point that I know our area enough to get out there with my pan. The big clubs have local claims, but no chapters in our corner of the state to help a newbie learn their way around. But I’m figuring it out.

So I’ve got a hobby and this is the place to practice it and I’m finally planning to get out there and do it. Who wants to go with me? We may not get rich, but we might, and besides, just getting out of the house to DO SOMETHING is a reward of its own.

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort with today’s KINS Community Comment.