

Undersea probes yield the ocean's secrets

By Laura Parker
The Washington Post

MALE

Graham Hawkes is finally back where he belongs this week, combing the unexplored ocean bottom in search of Spanish galleons that sank in forgotten corners long ago.

Hawkes believes there might be as many as 30 broken galleons hidden far beneath the Gulf Stream, which the old Spanish boats rode before turning east from Florida to cross the Atlantic.

Until recently, when he and others developed the technology to probe deeper and deeper beneath the sea, those mysterious wrecks and their promising cargoes were unseeable and unreachable. No longer.

That's what Hawkes was looking for when he stumbled across another watery mystery last month — and suddenly found himself swept up in a vortex of wild publicity and tales of aliens and Atlantis.

On May 2, Hawkes spotted the unexcited remains of a World War II-era ship, a 100-metre-long, 200-metre-wide, 100-metre-deep.

By May 4, four other planes had appeared on the sonar, and for a moment it seemed as though Hawkes and his crew had found the famed Lost Squadron, the patrol that mysteriously vanished 45 years ago and spawned the legend of the Bermuda Triangle.

An engineer by training,

Hawkes considers himself an explorer and researcher, rather than a cross treasure hunter.

But before he knew it, he was swarmed by reporters, would-be fortune seekers, Hollywood scriptwriters and believers of the myths about supernatural forces devouring the scores of ships and airplanes that have disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle.

By the time it was over — and the "find" was proved unfounded — Hawkes had been contacted by a man who offered to split a 4-metre solid gold Buddha statue with him if Hawkes would use his sophisticated equipment to locate it on the bottom of the Pacific.

Another suggested a search of the Red Sea to find where it participated when Moses led his people out of Egypt.

Then there was the caller who provided a detailed description of the lost continent of Atlantis, a tip on how to spot it, and a warning that when Hawkes compasses began to spin, it would be too late.

Just before he put to sea again, Hawkes reflected on this oddball intruder in his life. "One thing I can guarantee you," he said, "if we find any more airplanes, we're certainly not going to tell anyone."

The fact that he found the planes at all in an area that had been combed for years by treasure hunters indicates that the technological revolution has changed forever the nature of undersea exploration.

The airplanes lie up right in 200 metres of water, just 25 kilo-



The unexpected: Graham Hawkes, right, and Keith Calloway announce the discovery of the navy planes.

metres off Fort Lauderdale. But the ability to see them did not exist until recently.

"A lot of valuable stuff has been lost in the ocean," Hawkes said. "Until the last few years, it was as if it was sent into outer space. There was no access to it. Now everything we want to find is going to be found in the

next 10 to 20 years. There's going to be a gold rush in the ocean."

Hawkes won't speculate how much gold might litter the ocean floor in the zone he is searching. He won't even describe where he's searched.

There is so much debris on the ocean floor that Hawkes' sonar finds something worth examining every four hours.

So he wasn't all that surprised when the Deep-See picked up the first airplane. Hawkes flew in the underwater robot video camera, attached to a winged base, for a closer look. It was an Avenger, easily identified by the spherical gun turret at the rear of the canopy.

But when the fifth Avenger appeared on the sonar, Hawkes' mood changed. This was unusual. Five Avengers, clustered upright, within a two kilometre radius. The proximity suggested they had gone down together.

Identifying numbers on some of the planes were still readable; one appeared to match the number of the Lost Squadron's lead plane.

The patrol is thought to have ditched together in the water when the first of them ran out of fuel.

And that's why, when Hawkes found a cluster of five Avengers, he thought he might have the right planes.

Only he hadn't.

Navy records revealed that the five Avengers were among a group of eight downed bombers lost during low-level practice bombing runs off Fort Lauderdale between 1943 and 1945.

Why were they all together? Probably because the practice missions used the same barge as a target. Missions would tend to plunge into the same square of water. So the Lost Patrol may remain a mystery to those who love a mystery.

CORRECTION

1991 Catalogue
Page 35
Item 9 #680708 not exactly as shown

We apologize for any inconvenience caused.



Canadian Tire Corporation Ltd.

TOWNSHIP OF NORTH

CONTRACT

SEALED TENDERS on form in envelope marked "TOWNSHIP OF NORTH CONTRACT" to be received by the Township Office, 100 Main Street, North York, Ontario, M2H 1A1, by 10:00 a.m. local time on:

for the construction of a new plant for the Township of North York, 100 Main Street, North York, Ontario, M2H 1A1.