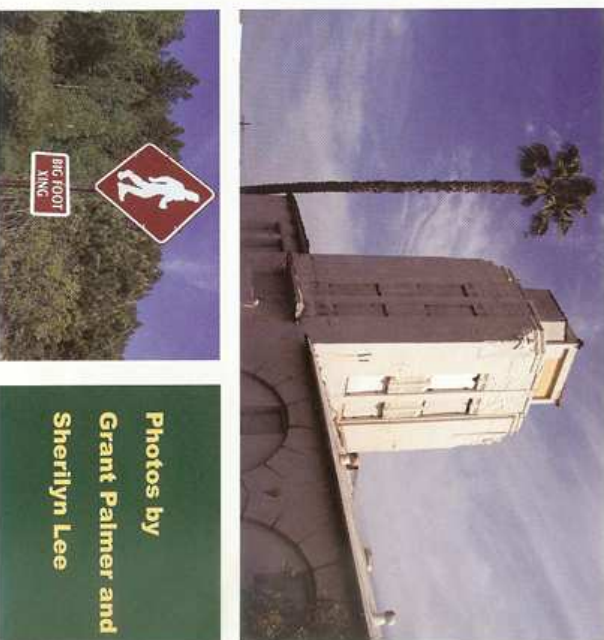
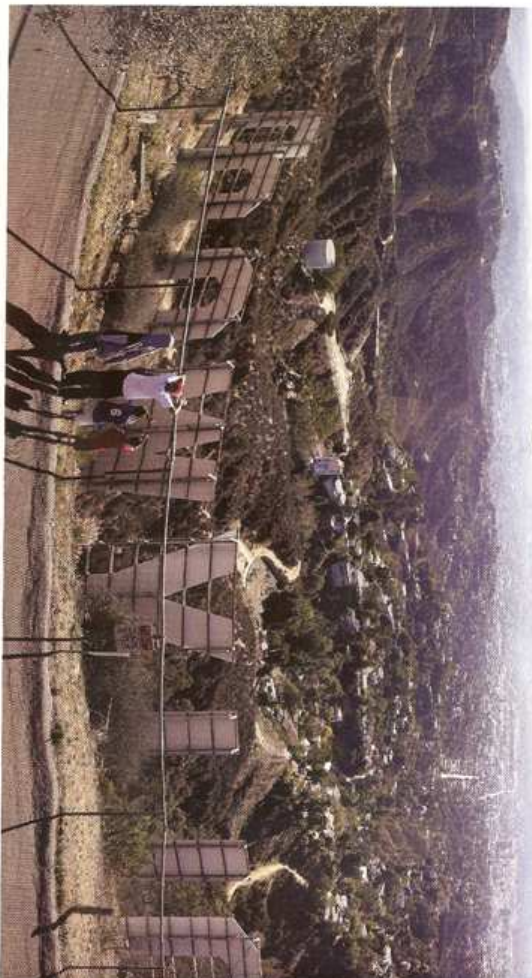


# Geocaching: Less Cash, More Fun



Photos by  
Grant Palmer and  
Sherilyn Lee

By Sherilyn Lee

Last summer, Grant and I arrived in Colorado a few days before the AG to get a head start on our vacation. We walked through the downtown neighborhood surrounding our hotel, admired the statues, fountains and flowers. Our walk wasn't entirely leisurely; we had located one geocache that day and were stumped on our search for our second.

Geocaching is a global high-tech treasure hunt where participants hide and locate containers called geocaches or caches. Participants create a free account at Geocaching.com to download the coordinates of caches into their GPS handheld devices and solve the clues, hints or puzzles about the cache written by its owner.

These devices easily fit into a carry-on, cost about \$200, and with normal use can last for many years of vacations and staycations. There are more than 700,000 geocaches worldwide in urban centers, parks and other points of interest, such as amusement parks, museums and other tourist attractions. Nearly half a million of them are found every week. Grant deciphered the hint on a scrap of paper and passed it to me.

"That's not a GPS coordinate, that's a Dewey Decimal number . . ." I said.

We looked at each other and headed towards the library across the street. As we walked through the automatic doors, we noticed the sign, the library was closing in 20 minutes, and we were leaving for Denver early the next morning. We had to find it now.

We wandered the stacks, following the trail of Dewey Decimals. The cache was nearby. It had to be. Grant stood on the main aisle to keep a lookout in the quiet library, and I searched the spines of the books shelved in the corner of the American History section. I knelt and looked under the shelves.

"Found it," I whispered.

Grant nodded, his back still turned to me. No one seemed to have noticed us from the main aisle. I crawled to the end of the bookshelf and peeked around the corner. No one in sight. I reached up to the cache, an Altoids tin, stuck beneath the shelf by a magnet, and removed it.

"Got it," I whispered.

Grant pointed upwards. I stood under the security camera. He turned and walked towards me. I opened the cache and unrolled the log book filled with names and dates of the many who had found it before us.

An announcement over the P.A. system reminded us that the library was closing for the day. I signed and dated the log, "TEAM-WOMBAT 2008-06-28," rolled it up, closed

the lid and returned the cache to where I had found it. The magnet clicked as it touched the shelf. Done.

We've found 56 caches so far. At the summit of Pike's Peak, Grant found a cache and could barely sign the log due to his altitude sickness, and I could barely stand. As a genealogist, I was surprised to discover an old, forgotten graveyard while we geocached near my family's home on Kauai. Geocaching lets us be tourists in our hometown of Los

Angeles. These local caches have brought us to the top of the Hollywood sign, to the helicopter pad on the abandoned set of *M\*A\*S\*H*, and an airfield used during the filming of *Casablanca*. We've even been questioned by security guards searching for the people who broke into a nearby store.

Geocaching lets us explore with some clues and stories from a guide, get some exercise and gives us the most treasure, easy to pack souvenir—a story.

