

# Return of the ring

By Kevin Ford  
MPG Newspapers

KINGSTON – The sun was just starting to set over the horizon west of Duxbury Beach that day some 20 plus years ago. Alvaro DeCarvalho, Dean to his friends, had gone there to go surf-casting. It was a favorite pastime of the Portuguese immigrant who'd spent much of his adolescence in Easton and Weymouth.

He was in the parking lot near the concession stand when he glanced down at the pavement and caught sight of something unusual. A dark purple, glassy object seemed to be sticking out of the pavement. DeCarvalho succumbed to curiosity and bent down to pick it up.

The stone was attached to a high school ring, silver in color and bent out of shape. The words Silver Lake Regional High School, along with the year 1980, were inscribed on the surface. Inside the ring, DeCarvalho could just make out the initials "JEH."

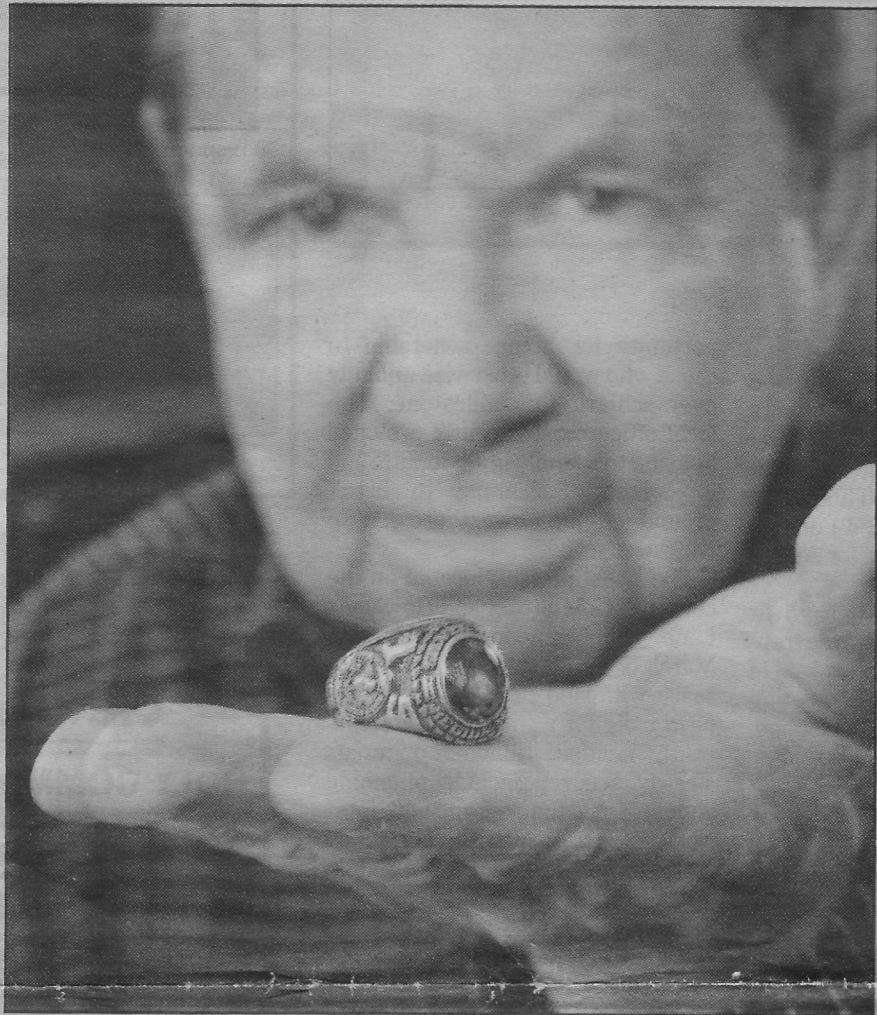
Focused on a summer evening of fishing, he stuck it in his pocket and headed down to the waterline.

Two decades, two colleges, three states and a marriage later, DeCarvalho found himself at his Alexandria, Va. home preparing for a college alumni dinner. He wanted to wear a lapel pin that he kept in a pouch in his dresser. Rifling through the pouch, he once again stumbled across the unusual ring he'd found on the beach so long ago.

The ubiquity of the Internet and the rediscovery of this piece of jewelry ignited a spark in DeCarvalho. He spent the next several weeks scouring the Web for leads.

Last December, with the help of an unknown reunion coordinator and Silver Lake High secretary Betty Lewis, Dean DeCarvalho mailed the memento that had traveled with him across the years to Mildred Holmes, whose son, Jefferey Eben Holmes, had lost it at that same Duxbury parking lot 25 years earlier.

After a thorough repair job, the ring is now set for the final leg of its arduous journey – to Port St. Lucie, Fla., and a return to the finger of Jeff Holmes.



Staff photo/Wesley Ennis

**Odyssey** — Russell Holmes holds the high school class ring belonging to his son, Jeff, lost more than 25 years ago.

"It was very fulfilling to help someone find something they cherish again," DeCarvalho said.

"I'm very happy to be getting it back after 25 years," Holmes said. "I still can't get over it."

The saga of Holmes' class ring begins in the spring of 1979. Holmes was a junior at Silver Lake and, like many other juniors, thinking about getting a memento of his high school years. He discussed it with his parents, who decided he'd done well enough academically that they would purchase the ring for him.

Along with the new ring, Holmes had recently come into possession of a dark green, 1966 Plymouth Satellite

coupe. As a 6-year-old, he rode along when his grandfather purchased the car years earlier.

"I remember the Sunday drives we'd take in it up to the Dairy Queen near the Duxbury line," Holmes said. "And to St. Joseph's Church of course."

As a teenager, Holmes used his new wheels to cruise the Plymouth waterfront ("I don't even know if they let you do that anymore," Holmes said.), as well as take the occasional trip to the beach.

He received his ring in time to wear it to his junior prom that spring. The ring featured a treble clef on one side,

# Ring comes full circle

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a nod to Holmes' four years as a trombonist in the school band.

"When any of the hometown parades marched by, the trombonists were always out front," Holmes said. "That's where I wanted to be."

A few weeks after the prom he drove his Satellite down to Duxbury beach and spent the day on the sand, wearing the ring.

Returning to his car, Holmes removed his ring and placed it on the car's roof before opening the driver's side door and sitting down to brush the sand off his hands, arms, and legs.

All cleaned up and ready to go, he closed the door, turned the key, put the Satellite in gear and pulled away. It wasn't until he was halfway home that he realized what he'd done.

"I was like, 'Oooh...the ring!'" Holmes said.

He went right back to the beach to look for it, but it was seemingly gone for good. He soon found himself caught between feelings of despair over losing such a valuable piece of jewelry and dread over explaining it to his parents.

"I was pretty well bummed out," he remembered. "It's definitely an emotional loss when you're a junior in high school. Then you get that lump in your throat when you have to tell this to your parents."

Russell and Mildred Holmes were indeed upset their son had been so careless, but they never raised their voices or harped on it. When the subject of finding a replacement came up, Holmes refused, insisting

any other place for.

"All the bric-a-brac of life," he said. "When you're that age, you're not the tidiest person in the world."

He eventually started night school at Massasoit Community College, then transferred to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., taking the chest with him. When he graduated and started a job in New York City, the chest went to his brother's barn in Abington.

DeCarvalho soon found a larger home in New Jersey and sent for the chest. In 1998, he got married and moved to Alexandria, Virginia. The chest went with him, with the ring still in the pouch that was tucked away inside.

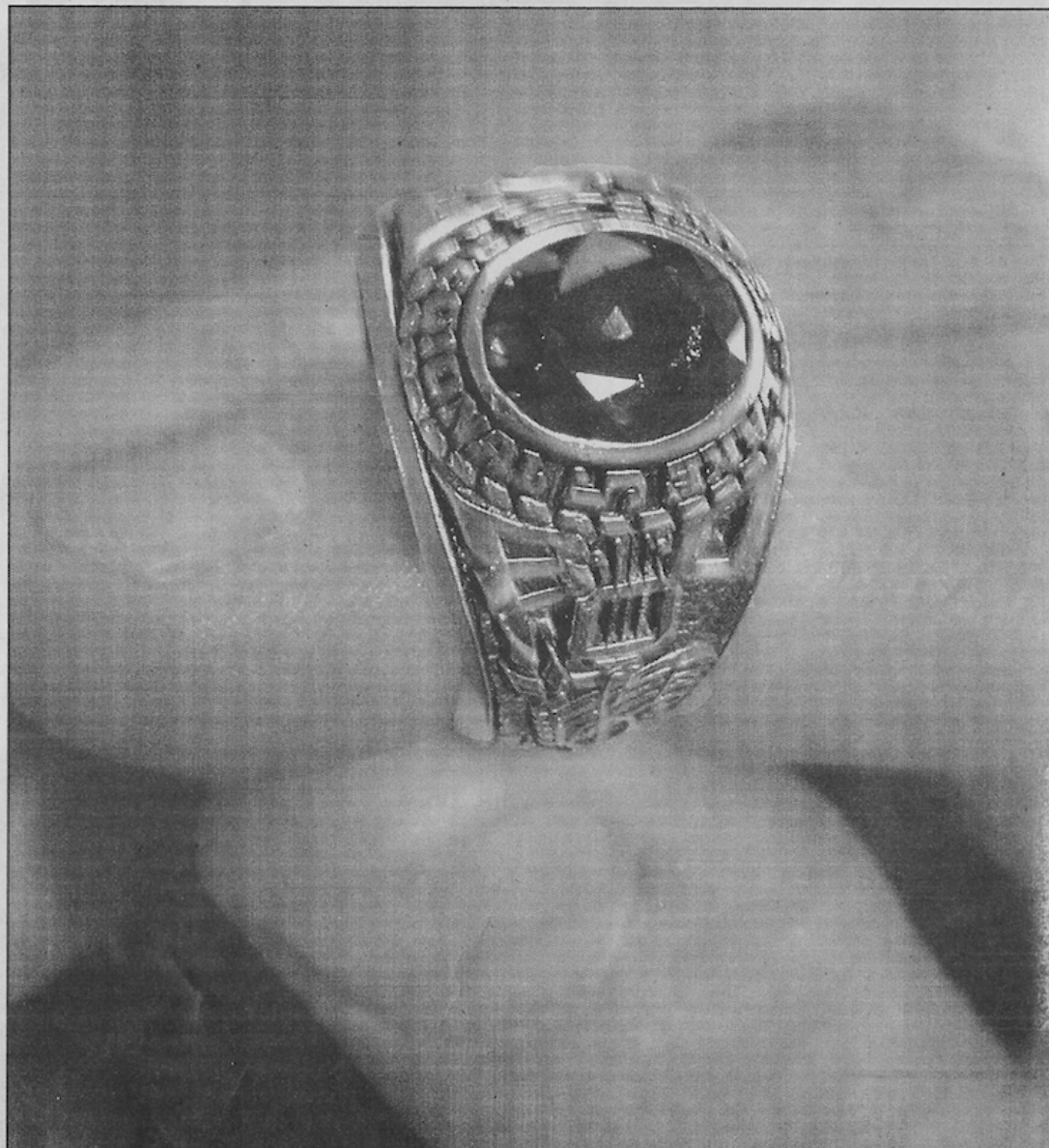
When he rediscovered it last August, DeCarvalho focused on the treble clef on the side.

"I said, 'Hmmm. This guy was probably in the band,'" DeCarvalho said.

He went online and started searching sites like Classmates.com, hoping to come across a reunion for the Silver Lake Class of 1980. He eventually found the chairman of the 20th anniversary committee, who didn't recognize the initials but suggested he contact the school directly.

Secretary Betty Lewis, who held another class ring someone had found last year, took DeCarvalho's call and listened intently. After he told her about the date and the initials, she pored through an old graduation program from 1980 and found Holmes' name.

Looking up his old transcript,



without a ring.

Holmes graduated in 1980 then studied aviation maintenance at East Coast Aerotech in Bedford. After earning his federal aviation license, he got a job with Gull Air, a commuter line in West Palm Beach, Fla. He got married six years ago and now has two children. Over the years the loss of the ring gradually slipped from his mind.

Dean DeCarvalho doesn't remember specifically what year he came across the shiny purple object in the Duxbury Beach parking lot. Both he and Mildred Holmes agree it couldn't have been too long after Jeff Holmes had lost it – perhaps a few years.

The ring had been bent and the stone had endured a few scratches, but the intricate lettering had survived unscathed. DeCarvalho put the jewel pouch in a seafarer's chest he used for things he couldn't find

It was the same address where Russell and Mildred Holmes live today.

"I called the number and reached Mrs. Holmes," Lewis said. "I asked her if she had a son who had lost a class ring, and she said, 'Oh my gosh, yes! He lost it 20 years ago!'"

Lewis arranged for DeCarvalho to mail the ring to the school. Holmes was so grateful, she went to the school with the intention of offering Lewis a reward. She refused, but did accept a bouquet of flowers Holmes had put together.

"She was so excited," Lewis said.

Jeff Holmes and his family drove up from Port St. Lucie to Kingston in December to visit his parents for the holidays. Sitting at the dinner table one evening, he heard his father say, "Have we got a story for you."

It was then the former trombonist learned about Dean DeCarvalho,

**Nostalgic** — Jeff Holmes' Silver Lake Regional High School class ring is engraved with 1980 and musical icons representing his participation in the marching band where he played trombone.

Betty Lewis, the seafarer's chest, and the quarter-century voyage his ring had taken from Duxbury to Abington, New York, New Jersey, Virginia and back to Kingston.

"I was really taken aback," Holmes said. "For this gentleman to have kept it that long and then gone through all that trouble to get it back to me – it was very nice of him to do that."

The ring was taken to Premium Jewelers on Summer Street, where artisans restored it to its full late-70s glory. Jeff Holmes returned home and has yet to see the repaired ring, but Mildred Holmes said she plans to mail it to her son in Florida in the coming weeks.

DeCarvalho, now an executive at

the Water Environment Federation in Alexandria, said he could sympathize with how Holmes must have felt in 1979. He never had a class ring and could only go on a high school trip to Bermuda after selling the most raffle tickets in his senior class.

"I can definitely relate to not having a lot of money, and then you lose something like that," he said. "That's not something you can ever do again. I felt bad for whoever lost it."

DeCarvalho said the enthusiasm he heard from Holmes and his mother was priceless. He called reuniting Holmes and his ring spiritually fulfilling.

Holmes, now an aircraft mechanic

for Precision Jet in Stuart, Fla., still drags his trombone out once in a while. He also has the same '66 Plymouth Satellite in his driveway in Florida. The engine still works, though the brakes and fuel tank need work.

In a letter that accompanied the ring to Kingston, DeCarvalho suggested Holmes put it in a safe deposit box. Holmes said he's not going that far, but he will keep it in a special box for jewelry he keeps in his dresser. Chances are he won't leave his ring on the roof of his Plymouth again.

"I don't think I'll wear it every day," Holmes said. "I'll take it out on special occasions."

Staff photo/Wesley Ennis