



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE PELLEY

You might see Mike Pelley diving for treasures in local bodies of water—you might not, too, because he's underwater.

Scuba giver

Summer's gone, but the dropped phones, sunglasses and cameras that rest at the bottom of local rivers and lakes aren't entirely out of reach. **Mike Pelley** is seeing to that. Pelley, 27, started a YouTube channel called **Merman Mike** a couple months ago dedicated to scuba diving for lost items. In one video, amid a murky, underwater world of rocks and algae, there's a glint, then a loud whoop from the voice behind the camera. Pelley found a moss-covered GoPro camera, still functioning. It's the kind of find Pelley's seeking every time he goes under—and the kind that he strives to reunite with its rightful owner. A full-time Sacramento State student studying business marketing and working as an estimator for his dad's construction company, Pelley finds time once or twice a week to suit up, search for sunken treasure and pick up trash along the way. SN&R chatted with Pelley about his developing channel and the scuba life.

How'd you get into this all?

I was actually watching another [scuba diving] YouTuber, DALLMYD, and I was kind of feeling a little jealous that he was doing such a cool thing—and I was thinking to myself, I wish I could do something like that, and I started thinking about it. I had the American River right next to me, I could get scuba-certified pretty easily ... so I decided to pull the trigger on it, and went for it. Got certified, got my gear—my dad helped me out 'cause he used to go scuba diving all over the world ...

Took about a month since I decided to actually do it until I was in the water, certified and digging up treasure and collecting trash. ... The river's giving to you, so you give back to the river.

What's the plan for the channel?

Right now it's just a hobby I love doing, and it's, to me, just really cool that other people are watching me do it. If it can get somewhere where

I can make money and do this every single day for people, I think that would be amazing—just getting to return valuables to other people that they thought were lost forever.

How do you find treasure hotspots for diving?

You usually want to try to find out where the most amount of people are hanging out. ... But yeah, just follow the people. ... It is honestly just a really good feeling for me to return something back to the owner. And then, of course, I always get excited for sunglasses, too. It's just, unfortunately, there's no way to return that unless someone specifically asks me to look for it.

What do you do with them all? How many do you have?

Oh god ... I think I have like, 70-something pairs now? But I'm planning on using those for the raffle prizes, because I've got a bunch of \$100, \$200, a couple \$300 dollar pairs of sunglasses now ... "Hey, like and subscribe to my YouTube channel and you'll be entered in to win these awesome Oakleys that I found at the bottom of the American River."

Have you lost anything before?

Oh yeah. I had a pair of Electric sunglasses, and they were my first pair of nice sunglasses. ... So I went whitewater rafting, the sunglasses were on my face, I went in the water with the sunglasses, came up without them.

Does diving ever get boring?

I've never been bored once yet. I've got a smile from ear-to-ear every time. It's almost a surreal feeling of—it's kind of like that corny saying of all your problems and everything else in the real world goes away. It's that exact feeling. As soon as I'm underwater, my mind is just focused on that next piece of treasure, and I can't get enough of it. I have to be dragged out of the water. □

Watch Mike Pelley's videos at youtube.com/channel/UCGLo_Voyv_aDJ3ZpPQyrfuA and check out his Facebook page at facebook.com/mermanmike.

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