

## Man says he has discovered Forrest Fenn's treasure

By Robert Nott [rnott@sfnewmexican.com](mailto:rnott@sfnewmexican.com) Dec 21, 2019

[https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local\\_news/man-says-he-has-discovered-forrest-fenn-s-treasure/article\\_8bdec7e0-2027-11ea-bd41-5bf5044a64d0.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/man-says-he-has-discovered-forrest-fenn-s-treasure/article_8bdec7e0-2027-11ea-bd41-5bf5044a64d0.html)

The saga of the search for Forrest Fenn's treasure continues to twist and turn through the court system.

Two weeks ago, David Harold Hanson of Colorado Springs, Colo., filed a lawsuit against Fenn for \$1.5 million, claiming Fenn has deprived him of the treasure through fraudulent statements and misleading clues.

Now an Arizona treasure hunter has filed a motion to intervene as a defendant for Fenn in that case, claiming he found the site of the treasure — which, in his view, is a “virtual art installation or metaphorical ‘treasure.’ ”

Brian Erskine of Prescott, Ariz., said in his complaint, filed in U.S. District Court last week, that he “solved the quest,” adding Fenn did not mislead anyone about the search.

He said the site in question is located in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, between the towns of Silverton and Ouray and accessible by U.S. 550, also known as the “Million Dollar Highway.”

His court filing says he presumes Fenn “concealed a box at the site only metaphorically.” In addition, the court document says Erskine assumes a “controlled, voluntary transfer of box ownership by execution of a legal deed” from Fenn to whoever finds the treasure.

Among other arguments for his case, Erskine says abandoning a chest of valuables in the wild, as Fenn says he has done, would pose significant risks and uncertainty. Speaking by phone, Erskine said he is positive he is right.

“I solved it. I can prove it,” he said. “I don't think there's any reason [for anyone else] to pursue it.”

He said he spoke to Fenn by phone and Fenn said he had sent Hanson's filing to an attorney to review and that he would not comment until the attorney got back to him. Fenn told The New Mexican in an email last week that the treasure is still out there, outdoors, and that Erskine hasn't found it.

“The treasure is still where I hid it more than 10 years ago,” Fenn said.

As of this year, an estimated 350,000 people have gone searching for the chest laden with valuables. Fenn said he hid the loot somewhere in the Rocky Mountains.

Some have died in the hunt, while others have quit jobs and spent thousands of dollars to try to find it — using clues Fenn gave in a 24-line poem published in his autobiography, *The Thrill of the Chase*, and online.

In 2017, Fenn told *The New Mexican* the chest weighs 20 pounds and its contents weigh another 22 pounds. He said he brought the chest to its hiding place over two separate trips, by himself. The hunt has drawn worldwide attention and a number of unwanted visitors to Fenn's Santa Fe residence, some of whom said they believe it is hidden there.

Fenn said the treasure is not at his home.

In his court filing, Erskine lays out a lengthy and complicated explanation for how he used various clues to find the site of the treasure.

Among those clues is an illustration by Allen Polt, found in the epilogue of Fenn's book, and an outdoor photo taken by Erskine in August 2018 at the site in question. Erskine said he searched the site with tools, including a metal detector, "finding nothing of tangible value."

In the conclusion of his 17-page filing, Erskine asks the court to grant his motion to intervene in the case to validate Fenn's argument that he didn't deceive anyone in the ongoing adventure quest.

Via email, Hanson declined to comment.

Erskine said in an email if Fenn does award him the treasure, he plans to sell it to "an institutional buyer for display/curation/public museum enjoyment and more quest development as a great cultural and literary legacy of the West, ideally here in Prescott, Arizona, which is a place a lot like Santa Fe."

He said he doesn't think people, including treasure hunters, will be disappointed that the search may come to an end.

"I don't think there's any loss of hundreds of thousands of people running around the West looking for something that is not there," he said.