

NEWS

A Philly plumber found a bag of items stolen 20 years ago inside a wall. Then, he found its owner.

by [Stephanie Farr](#), Updated: January 9, 2019- 1:21 PM



HEATHER KHALIFA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

When union plumber Lou DiOrio found a duffel-sized Merrill Lynch bag inside a wall while working at a Center City construction site Friday, his mind couldn't help but wander.

“I was hoping it would be cold hard cash without a name attached to it,” he laughed.

But when DiOrio looked inside, he found a woman's belongings — keys, a velour jacket, student books, and a wallet with the owner's "whole life inside of it," including her credit cards and a driver's license.

While there was no cell phone in the bag, DiOrio did find a prepaid calling card because, as he would later learn, the items had been stolen 20 years ago.

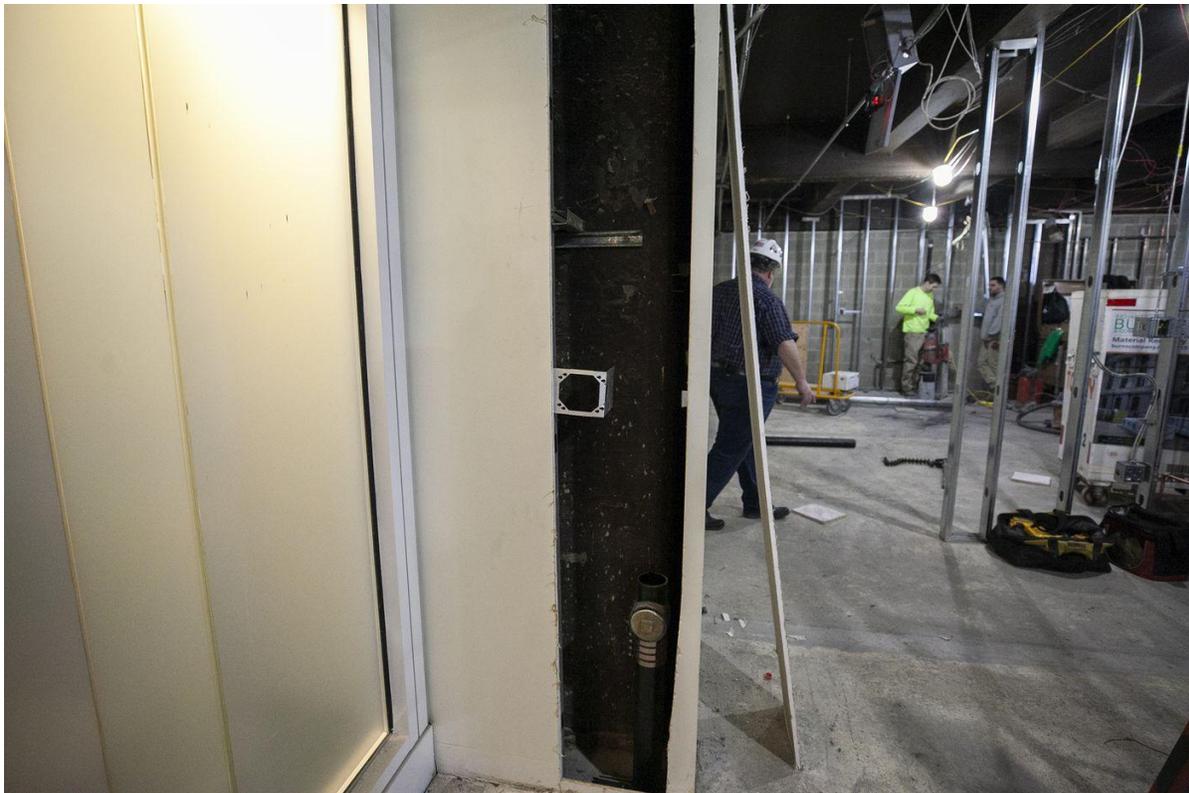
On Monday, DiOrio returned those items to their rightful owner, Kimberly French, who is now a cardiologist at [Jefferson Health's Torresdale Hospital](#) in Northeast Philadelphia.

“I think it’s terrific he’s so honest and went through a lot of work to find me,” French said.

DiOrio, a plumber of 35 years with [Local Union 690](#), said finding the rightful owner and returning the items was never a question.

“That’s what a human being is supposed to do. That’s part of life,” he said. “That bag is somebody’s time capsule.”

For the last two months, DiOrio, 64, a South Philly native who now lives in the Northeast, has been working on construction inside the [Curtis Center](#) at 6th and Walnut Streets.



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The hole in the wall at a construction site in the Curtis Center at 6th and Walnut Streets where Lou DiOrio found a woman's bag of her belongings from 20 years ago.

He was working in a space that's being converted into a kitchen Friday when he opened a wall to make a hole for the plumbing pipes and discovered the bag stuffed inside. DiOrio said the only way for someone to get a bag back there would have been to access the drop ceiling and then push it down behind the wall.



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Where Lou DiOrio found the bag with Kimberly French's missing items.

Armed with French's wallet and her driver's license, DiOrio took to Facebook to find her, matching up the photo on her driver's license with her profile picture. DiOrio messaged French but when she didn't respond he tracked her down to Jefferson Health System and got a message through. The two chatted on the phone and DiOrio dropped the bag off for her Monday at the Torresdale Hospital. French doesn't remember losing the bag and isn't totally convinced the bag itself is hers — though the items within definitely are, she said. She believes they were taken when she was a resident doing clinics 20 years ago in the building where they were found. While this was the first time DiOrio has discovered anything at a construction site, he said he once found \$1,400 in cash inside a dressing room at a [Men's Warehouse](#) and returned it to the rightful owner.

Making pipe dreams come true is just all in a day's work for the Philly plumber.



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