

Rochester Numismatic Association

America's Oldest Continuously Operating Coin Club – ANA Branch #2 – Life Club #8
Member: American Numismatic Society – Empire State Numismatic Association
Canadian Numismatic Association – Token and Medal Society – Rochester Museum & Science Center
Newsletter Editor (ad hoc) – Scott Fybush
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From the President by Scott Fybush

A recent issue of *Coin World* brought interesting news about a piece of legislation currently making its way through Congress: a bill that would replace the Kennedy half dollar next year with a circulating 50-cent piece “commemorating the terrorists attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001.”

It's easy to understand the motivation behind the bill (HR 3980, sponsored by Rep. Stephen Rothman, D-NJ) and easier still to imagine it passing easily and with little debate.

But with all due respect to the victims of last fall's tragedy and their families, I believe this is one bill that should be shelved – and quickly.

First, the bill (at least as currently written) violates two of the principles long held to be inviolate in U.S. coinage: a coin should carry the year in which it was actually minted, and a coin should, if it carries a mintmark, carry the mintmark of the facility where it was actually minted.

This coin would do neither: Rothman's legislation would mandate that it carry the date “2001,” marking the second time the date rule has been consciously violated (the first being the “1991-1995” World War II dollars issued in 1993); worse, it mandates that all coins bear the “W” mint mark, regardless of where they are actually minted.

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Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday 9 April – 8 PM
Jason Childers speaks on “St. Helena: Coins in the Middle of Nowhere”
Join the RNA for dinner at the Portico before the meeting.

Tuesday 23 April – 8 PM
Wayne Scheible speaks on “The Bad Boy of Rome”
A board meeting will take place immediately preceding the regular meeting (about 7:15) in our meeting room. All are welcome and encouraged to attend!

Tuesday 14 May – 8 PM
Speaker TBA

Friday 24 May
Presidential Banquet honoring Dan White
Green Lantern Inn, Fairport

Tuesday 28 May – 8 PM
The Meinhart Speaking Contest

Tuesday 11 June – 8 PM
Annual Meeting

Tuesday 25 June – 8 PM
Annual Auction

Sunday 21 July – Time TBA
RNA Annual Summer Picnic
Wadhams Lodge
Powder Mills Park
Perinton

(stay tuned for additional details!)

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held in the lower level of the Eisenhart Auditorium, 657 East Avenue. Please enter through the Gannett School and take the elevator to the lower level and through the tunnel to our meeting room.

Nominating Committee proposes slate of officers, board members

The RNA's Nominating Committee, made up of immediate past president Dan White, past president Darlene Corio and Ursula Loose, announced its proposed slate for the 2002-2003 year at the RNA meeting March 26.

Based on nominations received by the March 12 deadline, the slate consists of:

- President – Jason Childers
- Vice President – David Gottfried
- Secretary – Edie Coe
- Treasurer – Thomas Krause
- Board of Directors – William D. Coe
- Board of Directors – Arthur D. Cohen

An additional nomination was received from the floor, supported by the required fifteen members' signatures:

- Board of Directors – Scott Fybush

Additional nominations received by April 9 and bearing fifteen members' signatures will be eligible to be listed on the secret ballot that will be used to fill those seats.

The ballots will be distributed with your May newsletter.

The winners will be announced at the annual meeting June 11.

April 2002

INSIDE: An update on Dave's battle with the eBay scammer...RNA medal featured in *Coin World*...Happy National Coin Week...and much more!

From the President

Continued from page one

What's more, the bill mandates the design of the coin: an obverse featuring the Twin Towers before the attacks and the word "FREEDOM," a reverse depicting the Pentagon and a tribute to the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania.

All that, plus "E PLURIBUS UNUM," "IN GOD WE TRUST," "LIBERTY," "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA," and "FIFTY CENTS" – should be an artistic masterpiece, right?

(Speaking of needlessly crowded coins, don't get me started on the proposed Missouri quarter design, on which some genius thinks the lettering "CORPS OF DISCOVERY BICENTENNIAL 1804-2004" should somehow appear, all on a coin barely an inch across...)

The idea of "coin design by committee" is an unfortunate one, especially when it comes to such a sensitive topic.

Too many of our current commemoratives, not to mention a fair number of the State quarter designs, look as though they were designed with a computer and a mediocre collection of clip art.

Imagine, say, the Peace dollar if it had been designed this way: some 1920-era lawmaker might have mandated a depiction of Flanders Field, a biplane, a soldier and the legend, "WORLD WAR 1914-1918."

Oh yes – it would have been dated "11-11-1918" for its entire run, too!

With enough time for reflection, though, those in power at the time decided to let the artists do their work, and so we're graced instead with Anthony DeFrancisci's classic design, widely recognized as among the most beautiful of any U.S. coin.

DeFrancisci, and those who commissioned his work, knew what today's lawmakers don't: sometimes you can say more with much less. (On that note, I could actually live without the word "PEACE" under the eagle on the reverse, but then nobody asked me.)

By making our coinage too literal, and depending too much on text to carry the design, are we not depriving future numismatists an opportunity to learn the meaning of our coins on their own?

But those concerns about the design of the coin are hardly unique to this proposal; they're equally true of just about every commemorative coin proposal that's made its way through Congress in recent years.

What concerns me even more about *this* proposal is the way it's phrased: "commemorating the terrorists attacks on the United States."

Think about that for just a moment: Rep. Rothman wants to strike 750,000 commemorative coins (plus millions more for circulation) honoring an attack on U.S. soil.

Isn't that what commemoratives are all about, after all – honoring people and events about which our nation should be proud?

What happened September 11 was a tragedy. It was also the first battle in a war that's still very much underway, and Rep. Rothman's proposal is equivalent to a suggestion in 1942 that the U.S. should issue a Pearl Harbor commemorative.

The time may yet come when the U.S. should issue a coin that memorializes for the ages our struggle against terrorism. But that time will come only after we've won – and even then, only after there's been time for reasoned reflection about how best to artistically depict such a complicated subject.

Clip art on a hastily-conceived coin such as this – especially one that violates some of the near-sacred rules about dates and mint marks – just doesn't cut it.

One more design gripe: Wouldn't it have been nice if the State Quarters legislation had barred the use of state flowers, state capital domes and especially state outlines?

Just wait until we get to the Colorado, Wyoming and Kansas state quarters...

(This column reflects only the author's opinion and not that of the Rochester Numismatic Association.)



Get Mugged!

At long last, the RNA coffee mugs are here. Now buy one!

You've been hearing about them for months now; in fact, "the mugs will be here soon" is probably on a par with "the check's in the mail" when it comes to presidential catchphrases.

But after all that waiting, they're finally here. Really. No, seriously. As in, ten big boxes of the things sitting in the presidential basement.

(Ed. Note – now down to just six boxes!)

I'm biased, of course, but I think they look pretty darned good. They're dark blue, with gold-colored RNA seals on both sides.

Extensive empirical testing in the RNA kitchen has determined that they're dishwasher-safe, as long as you're careful. The metallic logo imprint is probably not microwave-safe, but what you do in the privacy of your own home is up to you...

(Ed. Note – we've been told they are, in fact, safe for microwave use by those who have tried.)

Want one? Two? A dozen?

They'll continue to be available for sale at RNA meetings, for \$7 each, two for \$12.

If you'd like them shipped to you, please add \$3 per mug for shipping (they're heavy and need to be packed carefully to avoid breakage), and send your check, payable to the Rochester Numismatic Association, to:

RNA Mugs
PO Box 10056
Rochester NY 14610-0056

Need more information? Just contact president Scott Fybush by e-mail (scott@fybush.com) or at 585-442-5411.

Club Connection



RNS MEDAL features a design that was rendered in 1943 but not used then because of World War II.

Rochester club's 90th celebrated in silver

The Rochester Numismatic Association, a New York club, has struck a silver medal to celebrate its 90th anniversary.

The obverse design features a classically dressed woman holding a palm frond in one hand and a shield reading RNA in the other, and is also inscribed NINETY YEARS. Alphonse Kolb originally designed it to be executed in 1943 in bronze to commemorate the club's 700th meeting. However, as bronze was needed to further the war effort, the medal was never struck.

The reverse features ROCHESTER NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION 1912-2002 on a stylized inscription of a 90, and the club's initials.

Some specimens of the 1-ounce medal are still available to the public. The medals are priced at \$15 each plus \$2 postage.

To order, contact the Rochester Numismatic Association, 50 Rogers Parkway, Rochester, NY 14617.

RNA in the News

Thanks to Gerry Muhl for getting this nice piece about our ninetieth-anniversary medals into the March 25, 2002 issue of *Coin World*!

Gerry reports it has already brought in several mail orders for the silver version of the medal.

As of the March 26 meeting, Gerry still had several examples of the medal available to members in a variety of metals. Contact him at (585)336-9459 if you still need a medal and haven't yet ordered yours!

Guenther Loose

The RNA is sorry to report the death of Guenther Loose, member number 45, earlier this year. Loose had been a member since 1976.

EBay Buyers Beware – Part Two

Or, Some People Really Are That Dumb...

By David Gottfried

Well, as promised, here's the follow-up to my recent escapades with an eBay seller who turned out to be just slightly above Cro-Magnon intelligence.

But for those of you who may have missed last month's newsletter, here's a quick recap – my father bought an 1854 Type II gold dollar for my 25th birthday. It was advertised by the seller to be slabbed MS-61 by SEGs.

About a month later, we received an e-mail stating that the seller was dead! Not just dead, but murdered – or so his supposed lawyer told us. But wait, it turns from the local sheriff's office that there was no murder. And, the lawyer turns out to be the seller, just using a different e-mail address.

The US Postal service got involved, eBay suspended all of his active auctions, and the sheriff made a visit to his home, I suppose to lend some moral support.

This was all very nice to find out, but the seller still had quite a bit of money from us, and I had no coin.

Eventually I did get a coin, but it was sans slab. Sent it into ANACS and got the result... AU-50, scratched. Not a bad coin, but also not the one I had expected.

Here's the real kicker to this story. Turns out, the seller was back online, this time on Yahoo Auctions. Some other buyers who were scammed discovered that the same exact coins they thought they had purchased were up for sale again, this time on Yahoo. And the doofus seller used his same name and address!!! Needless to say, Yahoo suspended these auctions as well.

Fortunately, the seller has assets. The Post Office attorney handling the case is having merchandise sent to him in exchange for full refunds from our "murdered" seller.

While I like the coin, enjoy the press coverage (see Will Astor's article in the *Rochester Business Journal* from about a month ago!), and like having this neat story to tell everyone, I'd be even happier with the money.

The only thing that would round the whole thing out is if the seller spends some time in prison.

So anyway, there you have it...round two of the continuing saga. I should have one more brief update – something to the effect that I've received the refund! That being the case, I'm still down one birthday present. I guess I'll have to start looking on eBay for something good.

National Coin Week

Gerry Muhl passes along a reminder that the ANA's National Coin Week takes place this year from April 21-27, just in time for our April 23 meeting.

How can the RNA mark this event, which focuses on exposing the rest of the community to the fun and excitement of numismatics?

Bring your ideas to the April 9 meeting, or drop a line to VP Jason

Childers or treasurer David Gottfried.

A few suggestions from Gerry: "How about an RNA coin exhibit on our Web site? We could advertise it along with our 90th anniversary in the local news, with times of meetings."

It's never too early to begin planning for National Coin Week 2003, either; it takes place April 20-26, 2003.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.money.org/ncw2002.html>

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Board Update

Your board met on February 26, and conducted the following business:

Edie Coe was appointed by president Scott Fybush to fill out the vacancy created by Melanie Bael's resignation as Secretary.

Gerry Muhl announced that he's working on a medal to mark the upcoming 30th anniversary RNA coin show.

Jim Sanders investigated options for youth scholarships and determined that the ANA Summer Seminar requires participants to be 16 years old or older, which none of the RJNA members meet.

He is investigating the possibility of bus travel to a coin show in Toronto or elsewhere.

David Gottfried presented communication from the ANA, which indicated Rochester is not large enough to host an ANA summer convention but could host

the spring show in 2012. He is preparing a formal proposal to be presented to the ANA board at this summer's convention in New York City.

David also reported seven members have still not paid their dues.

Jason Childers communicated with the Canadian Numismatic Association, which reports our dues have not been paid since 1999. Upon payment of our back dues, they will reinstate us and send us a 40-year certificate.

A motion was made and passed to bring us current on dues.

Treasurer's Report

CD: \$11,818.74
Savings: \$2,031.86
Checking: \$1,673.03
Accts. Rec.: \$733.00
Cash (approx): \$400
Coin Show: \$2,117.16
Total Assets: \$21,237.82
Accts. Pay.: \$(1,685.25)
Grand Total: \$19,552.57

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