

RNA



News

The official journal of the Rochester Numismatic Association



The Medal Issue

Gerry Muhl offers little-known facts about two RNA medals • PLUS: Andy Harkness' hunt for an elusive ag fair medal • More 2005 Meinhart Speeches

January 2006

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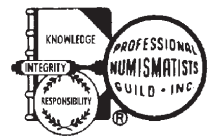
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to 2006!

If your numismatic battery is running low and needs recharging, I suggest you consider coming to a meeting of the RJNA (Rochester Junior Numismatic Association).

The meeting might be a little rowdy, but the enthusiasm of the young numismatists is sure to lift your spirit. Meetings are held in the ballroom of the Eisenhart Auditorium normally on the third Friday of the month.

The next scheduled RJNA meeting is January 20. It will be the RJNA's first meeting for 2006.

As it happened, my own battery was on low after having to cancel the RNA meeting scheduled for last night, December 15. It was to be our semiannual holiday auction. I was looking forward to seeing what numismatic treasures might be offered.

My son and I were on the Thruway about an hour outside of Rochester when we learned of the stormy conditions heading our way. My wife was worried about us, and she wanted me to know that a number of RNA members had called, wondering if the RNA would be meeting in view of the weather and dismal forecast, not to mention the horrible driving conditions, freezing rain and snow expected.

Several members had called my home to say they would not be coming to the meeting. It was no picnic on the Thruway, either; many cars had slid off the road, and traffic slowed to a crawl. It took about two hours to get in from the Waterloo outlet mall area, and after telephone

conferencing with a few of our members, it was clear to me that the meeting should be cancelled for the safety of all concerned. The decision was easy after it was made.

We will reschedule our semiannual auction to January 19.

My rationale is as follows: (1) a big auction would be too much to squeeze into a business meeting; (2) the ANA's FUN show opens January 3, and RNA members that go to that show will likely not be

coming to our January 5 meeting, but will be back in time for the following meeting; (3) by rescheduling to January 19, we have time to regroup and plan our program going forward, we hope to the benefit of all of our members.

I would also like to call a winter board meeting, to be held at Gerry

Muhl's house, 50 Rogers Parkway in Irondequoit, on Thursday, January 26. Agenda items will include (1) planning for winter and spring, (2) planning for National Coin Week, (3) extent of participation with ESNA in a Spring show, (4) emergency planning and (5) any other RNA business that may come up. All members are welcome to attend. Please call Gerry at 336-9459 if you need directions.

Well, after tonight's RJNA meeting, I felt energized to write this column and to say how good I feel about the RJNA's plans for its program for 2006. Much of tonight's meeting was devoted to discussion of ideas for a bimonthly RJNA bulletin to be

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**Need a numismatic
recharge? Come to
a meeting of the
Rochester Junior
Numismatic
Association!**

Secrets of RNA Medals

By Gerard Muhl

Every spring the Rochester Numismatic Association unveils its Presidential medal to the oohs and aahs and envy of clubs all over the nation. But really, what could be more straightforward. For over 90 years, the RNA has been honoring its past presidents with 2-inch bronze, copper, or plastic medals (in the case of the 1941-42 Floyd Newell and the 1943 Edward Meinhart, plastic medals during the World War II copper shortage.)

On rarer occasions, the club has also issued 39mm medals in various metals to honor individuals or to commemorate special events. Let's take a look at two of these medals -- the 1979 and the 1982 special issues. If you forgot, these are the joint RNA/Rochester Museum Susan B. Anthony medal and the RNA 70th Anniversary medal. Now for some background and maybe some secrets.

The 1979 Susan B. Anthony medal began with a conversation June 1, 1979, between club member Gerry Muhl and Medal Arts mint director Cliff Carlson. It was noted that U.S. Mint Director Stella Hackel would be in town July 2 to issue the first new Susan B. Anthony dollar at a special ceremony hosted by the Rochester Museum and the RNA. Club President. Muhl then showed Carlson the Hackel U.S. Mint Medal. Carlson said he could strike a better one; and furthermore, he was upset that the U.S. Mint was competing with a private business such as Medal Arts.

President Muhl suggested that Medal Arts strike a medal for the July 2 ceremony, and that he would present it to the Mint Director with Carlson's message. Extra copies of the medal could be sold to cover Medal Arts' cost.

To everyone's surprise, Carlson felt it was a good idea. He then told the Medal Arts Rochester facilities director to begin the process. The director OK'd the project, provided finished art could be given to him within three days? The race was on.

Muhl called his sister-in-law Susan Sherlock, an artist in Syracuse. He noted that any design would have to be kept simple so that the die could be totally cut by machine. The design should also incorporate the words of Susan B. Anthony, "Perfect Equality." Equality of the sexes was Anthony's goal in her struggle for women's rights. Sherlock

did the artwork, and Muhl drove to Syracuse to get it in time to deliver it to Medal Arts.

The reverse lettering for the medal's design was gratis by Rochester Reprographic, which just happened to be open the early evening of June 1. It was located conveniently just a few blocks from Medal Arts.

On Monday, June 4, President Muhl delivered the finished artwork to a very surprised crew at Medal Arts. The drawings were sent out so zinc plates with an impression of the artwork could be made by an acid cutting process. The zinc plates would then be used on a reducing pantograph to cut the dies.

It was agreed that each current RNA member would get a free proof-like nickel copy of the finished medal. Silver copies would go to U.S. Representative Barber Conable and U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and to U.S. Mint Director Hackel. Bronze copies would be sold, and the club would receive two dollars from each sale. A total of 1,000 bronze medals were struck.

At this stage, a problem arose. The supplier of bronze blanks would not be able to deliver the material on time to be struck into the "Perfect Equality" medals. What to do?

The staff at Medal Arts searched for any unstruck

blanks. What turned up were blanks left over from a job that created medals for the Battleship Arizona Memorial Association in Hawaii. The blanks were made from bronze salvaged from the sunken ship. Time was of the essence, so the RNA medals became relics of the USS Arizona!

The "Perfect Equality" medals were ready with two days to spare. They were issued at the ceremony on July 2, 1979, and personally handed to U.S. Mint Director Hackel and to the U.S. members of Congress present. One hundred nickel copies were given free to RNA members. The RNA furthermore made over \$500 from sales of the bronze "relic" medals.

Another Rochester Numismatic Association 39mm medal with a secret is the 1982 70th Anniversary medal signed by Alphonse A. Kolb. Kolb was a longtime die engraver of RNA medals. He began his work for the club in 1921 and



did not retire from making the past-president medal until 1978. In 1982, Kolb was living in Rochester's northeast side. He still got to RNA meetings in the good weather, and suffered from only minor bouts of memory loss. While visiting him at home one day, members of the RNA medal committee asked him if he had ever done any plaster models for medals that were never produced. If he had any such medals, could the Club borrow one for the production of its upcoming 70th Anniversary medal?

Alphonse Kolb looked around his at-home die-

cutting studio and found what appeared to be a very old and quite dusty plaster with the image of a seated woman with a scroll in her lap. She was staring at a globe on a table with a large feather quill pen. There was no lettering on the unsigned plaster. Kolb said the Club could use it.

After some discussion, Kolb removed the globe and pen from the table in the model. He carved the dates 1912-1982 and the letters "RNA" onto the scroll. Finally, he signed the plaster to be used "A. A. Kolb."

The plaster was delivered to Bastian Brothers in Rochester, where lettering was added and the whole work of art turned



into a die. Pieces were struck, edge numbered, and sold to Club members on the occasion of the RNA's 70th anniversary in January 1982. Now for the secret! Medal Committee member Gerry Muhl, while looking through some historical information on Secretary of State John Hay's 1901 Open Door Policy with China, had a big surprise. The article

noted that a medal was issued to honor Secretary Hay in 1901 for his effort at keeping trade open with China. The medal pictured was without a doubt made from the plaster in Mr. Kolb's studio. Who really



made the plaster design – none other than famed engraver Victor D. Brenner. Of course, Brenner is famous for the design of the Lincoln one-cent coin.

When you look at your uncirculated Lincoln cent collection, remember that with a little secret help from longtime RNA member A. A. Kolb, Brenner designed for club members what some say is one of our most beautiful medals. The 70th Anniversary of the Club will be remembered.

What other secrets will RNA medals hold?

From the President

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launched as early as February. It might include an article with a numismatic theme, a crossword puzzle or word search, news of what took place at their monthly meeting and possibly a collecting tip or coin question.

I'd like to close with reports of two endearing moments from earlier tonight. One youngster showed two 1977-D Roosevelt dimes to Gerry Muhl and me. He had gotten the dimes from his Grandpa's change, and one dime looked a little funny. The mint mark on one coin looked larger than on the other. The lighting in the ballroom is poor, but on close inspection, it sure looked like doubling in the date and lettering on one of the dimes.

The other moment took place during a discussion about the things to do at each meeting. It was the second meeting for one of the boys tonight. Austin is deaf; he signs and has an interpreter. One of the RJNA members asked if he could teach the club how to sign his name and a word or phrase at each meeting. The new boy smiled, signed and said his name and showed how to sign "hello" and "goodbye." Everyone present tried out the signing. Since I was sitting close by I could see how happy Austin was to be included in the meeting. I am really proud of all of our young numismatists. Despite the outside temperature, I am feeling warm inside. Happy New Year to all, and to all a good night!

*Sincerely,
Tom Kraus*

A Western Adventure from an Eastern Armchair

By Andrew Harkness

Numismatics started for me in 1957 on returning home from military service in the Far East. Friends greeted me with a few six-packs and a nickel-and-dime poker game. George Milard talked of his futile attempts to find a 1950-D nickel to complete his collection, and of a standing offer of \$2 to obtain one. He told me where the “D” was located, and I handed him his 1950-D nickel. Two dollars was a significant amount to a veteran who had recently been making \$114 a month.

Been a collector ever since. From circulation, I’ve found all the Lincolns save the S-VDB and the 14-D. My two 1955/55-S, both AU, were sold for \$500 – to help with the down payment on our house.

In 1970, I was very proud of my NYS Civil War token collection that I had been building for 10 years. It consisted of nearly 100 different merchants, and *all of the towns* were represented.

Then collecting for me changed forever. While going through the great Lenard Babin’s coin stock, I saw the silver Wisconsin State Agricultural Society Award medal, granted to a dentist in 1871. It was a beautiful piece of folk art with a historical connection; and Lenard let me steal it from him for \$10 (cash, of course). I kept it in my pocket for days. Babin could not sell me others because they came to him only occasionally. Two months passed before I found a second piece, one from the American Institute. I remembered Bob Lindesmith’s wonderful checklist on the subject in a 1969 *TAMS Journal* (I am member #951 since 1964). It became *my*

checklist for 10 years. By then I had found and acquired all of the medals Lindesmith had located (and more) in old-time and modern auctions and lists – save one – the Wyoming Fair Association medal. My first medal was depicted on my collector’s calling card, which I sent to publications, dealers and collectors. Still no Wyoming medal! Then, in checking the Lindesmith list, I realized that his Wyoming listing was one of the few *actually in*

his collection! How could I make my “mentor” cough it up? It was easier than I expected...

He had relocated to Washington State from his native Michigan and did not have a personal specimen of the Michigan State Agricultural Society Award (C.C. Wright Sc.). A telephone conversation sealed the trade! My state collection was complete...or was it?

I shipped the Michigan medal the following day by registered mail.

I waited by the mailbox for nearly three weeks.

Then the package arrived

Parcel Post with the USPS message: “This parcel was broken but resealed in Pittsburgh, Pa.” I opened the package with heart in throat. There in the wrappings were...four vials of contact lenses!

Ten years go by. Bob Slawsky has a mail-bid auction. There is what I believe is my Wyoming medal, consigned by a Pittsburgh-area collector. Bob is a good friend and honest. He reduces bids. I mortgaged the house, car, etc., and submitted my bid. I won the medal with a bid 10 percent over the underbidder’s.

When the package arrived, I noted that Bob had followed my instructions...he had sent the medal by *registered mail*.



Welcome New RNA Members!

Next time you’re at an RNA meeting, please take a moment to say hello to these new members: **Shirley Scialdo**, **Richard Jozefiak**, **Kevin Rankin**, **Peter Blaisdell** (returning) and **Lisa Fybush** (family).

Large Cents

By Steven Rutledge

When my brother started to write his speech on the first coins ever minted, it got me thinking – how were coins minted back then, and how did the minting processes change from the first basic method of hammering coins to the modern machines that can produce millions of coins at a time?

I looked up some things on the Internet and found out a lot of information. The first hammer-struck coins were produced around 700 B.C. on small pieces of metal. The face value of the coins was equal to the value of the metal so people wouldn't have to weigh the coins to find out how much they were worth. This method of producing coins was very crude, and most of the coins had rough edges. People known as coin clippers would secretly clip off the rough edges of the coins; return the clipped coins to circulation. They would then melt together all of the gold and silver they got and sell that metal they clipped and make a profit. But since the face value of the coins was no longer equal to the value of the metal, clipped coins caused people to have to weigh every coin they got to make sure they weren't clipped.

Hammer-struck coins were used for over 2,000 years until around the year 1500, when an Italian man invented a screw press, which dropped a guided weight precisely on top of the blank coin. The screw press resulted in clean-cut edges that prevented people from clipping coins, but this first design of the screw press was only capable of cutting out the blank pieces of metal with no design on them.

Around the same time, Leonardo da Vinci devised a coin-rolling mill, but his mill was never built. This mill, supposedly powered by either a waterwheel or horses, pressed a design onto a strip of metal placed under a roller with a design on it.

About 50 years later, a screw press was invented that could cut out the coin and print the design on it. These screw presses were used in countries such as France and England. In this same time, the rolling mills were finally built, and they were used in countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary and Spain.

In the 1550s, a factory was built in Segovia – which is in present-day Austria – that used rolling presses and revolutionized the way coins were minted. A group of mills

were constructed – each one doing a different job in making the coins. It was kind of like an assembly line – one mill pressed the metal into the desired thickness, another cut the metal into circles, another rolled the design onto the coin using the rolling technique, and another mill weighed the coins to make sure that they all weighed the same.

Using this technique, the Segovia mill could produce millions of identical coins. The rolling mills were eventually equipped with steam engines to power them instead of water wheels. In the late 1700s, the rolling presses were replaced with the screw presses. The screw press became the dominant method of minting coins because it was easier to replace the

dies on the screw presses. But then in the late 1800s, a new technology replaced all of the former techniques of minting coins. It replaced both the roller presses and the screw presses. As technology advanced, in 1892, hydraulic pumps were used to drive the presses.

In China, coin minting had taken a completely different path. Instead of hammers or presses, the Chinese poured molten metal into casts. This method worked well for them, and even Africa used this technique for a very long time. It was not until 1889 that China decided to start producing coins using presses and dies.

To make coins today, the U.S. Mint, which was established in 1792, buys large strips of metal, which then go through a blanking press that

punches out the round discs called blanks that are the correct size of the coins they will be. The blanks are then heated up, washed, dried, and sorted out by size. The blanks are checked for any misshapen coins, and the good coins are then sent to a machine that forms the rim on them. The coins are then stamped with the designs and checked again for defects. The finished coins are counted, put into bags and shipped off to the Federal Reserve Bank, and from there they go out to the local banks.

Last month I got an ancient Roman coin for my birthday. It must have been a hammer-struck coin because it was minted around 351 A.D. The coin I got is pretty good for a hammer-struck coin because it's not off center or misshapen at all, and it's one of my favorite coins because it's so old. I think that it's pretty cool how coins that are minted different ways look so different from each other, and you can tell right away which method was used to make the coin.



The Calendar January - February

- **Thursday January 5 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting: Gerry Muhl** speaks on “The Colonial Coins of William Woods.” He minted the Rosa America and Hibernia issues of 1722-1724. If you’ve got one, bring it with you!
- **Thursday January 19 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting: Holiday Auction** Rescheduled from December – and just as much fun in January!
- **Friday January 20 – 7:30 PM – Rochester Junior Numismatic Association** Know someone 17 or younger who is interested in numismatics? Why not bring them to an RJNA meeting? Or just show up and join in the “Stump the Advisor” fun.
- **Thursday January 26 – 8 PM – RNA Board Meeting** At Gerry Muhl’s house, 50 Rogers Parkway, Irondequoit. Call 336-9459 for directions. All members are welcome!
- **Thursday February 2 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting: Dave Gottfried** speaks on “I Just Got Married And I’m Too Busy To Give Scott and Joe-Steve A Speech Topic”
- **Thursday February 16 – 8 PM – RNA Meeting: Chip Scoppa** speaks on “Mintmarks, Present and Yesteryear.” (We’re partial to “D” ourselves, but just the Dahlonga version...)
- **Additional Spring 2006 meetings: March 2, 16; April 6, 20; May 4, 18; June 1, 15**

Regular RNA meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays of every month, except July and August, at the Eisenhart Auditorium of the Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Avenue. Enter through the Eisenhart or Gannett School doors and follow the signs downstairs to our lower-level meeting room. All are welcome! Call Dave Gottfried at 738-0908 if you need a ride or directions.

RJNA meetings are held in either the ballroom of the Eisenhart Auditorium building or an upstairs classroom at the Gannett School; follow the signs posted on the building’s doors or call Steve Lanzafame at 288-1932 for more information.

The Calendar welcomes meeting notices from other area clubs. Send them to rnanews@fybush.com or PO Box 10056, Rochester NY 14610.

Happy New Year from the RNA News!
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