



“My Two Cents’ Worth”

by Ed Reiter



75 AND COUNTING

On the highway of life, major road markers tend to appear at 25-year intervals. That’s why so much emphasis is placed on silver and gold wedding anniversaries and 25- and 50-year class reunions. That’s also why most commemorative coins celebrate anniversaries divisible exactly by the number “25.”

Few live to see the 75th anniversary of either their weddings or their graduations, which makes the diamond a fitting symbol for such occasions—because reaching them is extremely hard.

Living to the age of 75 is more attainable, and more and more people are doing so these days. Even this, however, is a noteworthy achievement usually requiring a mixture of good genes, hard work and lots of luck.

I find myself pondering life’s highway increasingly these days because, at just about the time this issue of *COINage* arrives in your mailbox or on a magazine rack in a nearby store, I’ll be marking the completion of 75 years on my personal journey along that road.

I confess I’m a bit ambivalent about this “achievement.” Turning 75 is a milestone, to be sure. But it’s also a millstone in a way, for it serves as a reminder of just how little sand remains in the upper half of life’s hourglass. And too often it’s accompanied by nagging health issues that debase much of the “gold” in one’s golden years.

Any quibbles I might have are laid to rest, of course, when I remind myself that growing old—even less than gracefully—beats the alternative of being laid to rest myself. Then, too, there’s the thought that in my younger days, I set a more modest goal of simply living to see the year 2000.

The world of numismatics has come a long way since my birth in June 1938.

Somewhat ironically, the collector base had grown during the Great Depression because of the introduction of “penny boards,” which provided an inexpensive way for financially strapped Americans to fill their idle hours by filling die-cut holes in heavy pieces of cardboard with cents and other coins pulled from circulation at face value. Dynamic growth, however, didn’t take place until after World War



II, when the booming postwar economy gave millions of Americans both time *and* money to pursue hobbies such as collecting coins.

I was born and raised in Rochester, New York, a hotbed of numismatics then and now, and

was introduced to the hobby in 1952 by a high school classmate named Dick Leary, who was then an officer of the Rochester Junior Numismatic Association. I never joined the club myself—probably because its meetings took place on the other side of town. For various reasons, I also never joined its parent club, the Rochester Numismatic Association—though I did become a footnote to that club’s history by serving as guest speaker at its 75th anniversary banquet in 1987.

Mobility problems prevented me from attending the club’s 100th anniversary banquet in January 2012. Through the years, however, I have been privileged to form friendships with a number of its members, including the late John Jay Pittman, one of the greatest collectors of modern times, and Scott Fybush and Gerry Muhl, two of its former presidents, who both have written articles for *COINage* during the last several years.

One of my prouder boasts is that I found examples of the two big keys of the Lincoln cent series—the 1909-S VDB and the 1914-D—in circulation during my years in Rochester, before I moved to New Jersey in 1964.

The ’09-S VDB, in poor to fair but nonetheless legible condition, turned up in 1952 in the cash drawer of a fruit stand near my home—one of several neighborhood businesses where I was permitted to look through merchants’ coins. I came upon the ’14-D, in very good condition, in 1960 in one of the dozens of cent rolls I regularly obtained from a friendly bank teller in order to check them for worthwhile coins, which were readily available at the time.

Looking back on the road map of my life, I’ve spent major portions of more than 60 years—fully four-fifths of that life—collecting coins and chronicling the hobby in articles, columns and a solitary book.

They’ve made the trip much more memorable—and a whole lot more enjoyable. ☺