



"HOW I STARTED"

How numismatists "got started"

By Samuel Ernst YN

This month's "How I Started" is about Roger W. Burdette, who my Dad, um, I mean, Professor Seymour Keynes interviewed this month about the Standing Liberty quarter. I hope you enjoy it.

Samuel, I hope the following is what you are looking for.

-RWB

My interest in collecting coins began when I was nine. My cousin, who was just a couple of years older, was given two large cigar boxes by his father. Each box was filled with Indian head cents, plus some other strange looking coins. I remember one had Christopher Columbus on it and another said "Stone Mountain". On top of one pile of cents were two gold coins and it was these plus the other odd-looking pieces that really caught my attention. My cousin showed me a little blue book listing all sorts of I.S. coins and what they were worth. He also showed me where to look on some of the coins for a tiny letter called a mint mark.

We spent the afternoon sorting Indian and Flying Eagle cents by date and stacking them in little piles. Some piles had only a coin or two, others had dozens. When we finished and checked the coins against the blue book, it was clear my cousin had only a few worth more than a couple of cents each. My help was rewarded with one worn but identifiable Indian cent, but the real reward was that I gained knowledge about the breath and scope of U.S. coinage.

Later, I used money earned from mowing yards to buy small albums and the ubiquitous Red Book. I collected from circulation - there were no coin shops within a kid's traveling distance - until I was old enough to drive a car. Then, I occasionally placed small ads in local papers offering to buy coins and gradually enlarged my collection. Possibly the most valuable lesson was learned from numismatist Frank Katen, who patiently taught me how to examine and grade coins.

For the last decade, I've concentrated on researching the stories about coins, rather than acquiring them.

Roger W. Burdette is a numismatic researcher and author. His books, *Renaissance of American Coinage 1905-1908*, *Renaissance of American Coinage 1909-1915*, *Renaissance of American Coinage 1916-1921* explore American coinage redesign from those time periods. Mr. Burdette has been a lot of help to me with answering questions when ever I have asked him and I really appreciate the time and answers he's given to me.

Mr. Burdette was just named to the Citizens Coinage Advisory Committee by the Secretary of the Treasury. Congratulations Mr. Burdette!

