



# "How I Started"

How numismatists "got their start"  
By Samuel Ernst YN

Dear Samuel,

Coin collecting and dealing is in my blood - numismatic pioneer B. Max Mehl was my grandmother's uncle. Sadly, he died just three years after I was born, so I never got to meet him. I was introduced to coin collecting by my stepfather when I was approximately 7 years old. One day he brought home some coin albums and suggested that my brother and I start looking through change to see how many of the dates and mint-marks we could find. Apparently I became quite interested when he told me that some coins were worth more than face value!

We lived in NYC and when we got older, we started going to Stack's on Saturday mornings. Occasionally we would buy something there or through one of their auctions, the latter being especially exciting. We constantly looked through change wherever we could, such as places like our barbershop's cash register. This was in the 1960's and occasionally we found coins such as Standing Liberty Quarters, Walking Liberty Half dollars, Liberty Nickels, etc. But the absolute highlight of my change searching days was when I got home from a purchase I had made at Stacks and looked through my change. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a 1942/1 Mercury Dime! I later sold it to them for \$75 and was very proud (and full) of myself. As I entered my later teens, my interest in coins waned somewhat, but for some reason, it was rekindled again a few years later and I became a serious collector from about age 20, on. Back then, my number one love in coins was Capped Bust Half Dimes, which I was buying gem Uncirculated examples of in order to complete a date set. But, I was enamored with many other coin types, as well.

My decision to enter the business side of rare coins was the result of a totally unexpected series of events. In 1979, while I was in my final year of law school, and not yet sure if I wanted to practice law or not, a single phone conversation paved the way for the start of my numismatic career. One day, out of the blue, a representative of a large coin firm who was selling coins to me said something to the effect of "You should think about going into the rare coin business. You'd like it and you'd be good at it". As soon as I heard those words, as the expression goes, bells went off in my head. I interviewed with the firm he worked for, New England Rare Coin Galleries, and with a major competitor of theirs, Steve Ivy Rare Coins, both of which offered me a job. Since I was only a few months from graduation from law school, I went ahead and finished. And I somehow passed my bar exam, despite the fact that I didn't study much, knowing I wasn't going to be practicing law. I went to work for Steve Ivy Rare coins, only days after my bar exam in the summer of 1979. Ironically, a few years later, we merged with New England Rare coin galleries, to form Heritage. I have been involved in the rare coin industry on a full time basis, in a number of different capacities, ever since. And to this day, I still love rare coins.

Below, I have listed my numismatic background, as it appears on my website and am always happy to talk about and answer questions about rare coins.

Sincerely, Mark Feld

## My numismatic background:

- numismatic pioneer B. Max Mehl was my grandmother's uncle. In addition to having enjoyed collecting coins as a child, I have been involved in the rare coin industry on a full-time basis since 1979, as follows:

1979-1982: Retail sales and auction consignment coordinator for Steve Ivy Rare Coins

1982-1983: Owner of Mark Feld Rare Coins

1983-1985: Auction consignment coordinator, cataloguer and auctioneer for Heritage Rare Coin Galleries

1985-1987: Buyer for David Hall's Numismatic Investment Group

1987-1989: Employed by Mark Salzberg (now an owner of NGC) as part of a two man wholesale rare coin business

1989-1991: Owner of Mark Feld Rare Coins

991-1998: Full time grader at NGC

1998-2004: Employed by Pinnacle Rarities, where I was involved in purchasing, sales and coin descriptions

2004-present: Owner of Mark Feld Rare Coins

This month we are going to learn how Mark Feld got his start in numismatics. I know Mr. Feld through the PCGS U.S. Coin Forum. He has a real interesting story. I hope you enjoy it like I did.

You can contact Mr. Feld at his website: [www.markfeldcoins.com](http://www.markfeldcoins.com) (Check it out!)  
Or by mail at: Mark Feld P.O. Box 9432 San Diego, CA 92169  
Or by phone: 858-459-3884 (Monday - Friday 6:30 am - 5:30 pm Pacific Standard time)  
Or email: [coinguy1@earthlink.net](mailto:coinguy1@earthlink.net)

