



"HOW I STARTED"

How numismatists "got started"

By Samuel Ernst YN

I got a great email from Omaha Coin Club member David Lewis. In his email he shared how he got started. It's really interesting and I think you will like it too. Thanks Mr. Lewis!

Hello, I just looked at my latest issue of the Omaha Coin Club newsletter and read Sam Ernst's column. It's a nice feature, and I applaud this young man for stepping up and making a very interesting contribution to the club and the newsletter.

Here's my story, if you can use it.

In 1969, when I was 5 years old, my parents decided to redecorate our kitchen. The house had been owned by a Franciscan monk when they bought it in 1950, and they had told me stories about the storage building in our back yard having been full of stamps from floor to ceiling when they moved in. The flood waters of the Floyd River in Sioux City, Iowa swept away all those stamps in 1952. Apparently, the old monk was a bit of a coin collector, too. When they took out the old kitchen cabinets, my folks found a BU roll of 1935-D Lincoln Cents, a 1921 Morgan Dollar, and a 1922 Peace Dollar in a cubby-hole in the wall. I remember thinking that those cents, which were only 34 years old at the time were "really old", and from then on I kept my eyes peeled for old coins. My brother bought me a Redbook for my 6th birthday. You could occasionally find 90% silver coinage in circulation, and I saved as many 40% silver Kennedy halves as I could afford to. I started taking the bus downtown when I was 8 to attend the monthly flea markets, where there were always several coin dealers present. I remember how patient Mr. Peterson of Tri-R-Hobby was in helping me build near complete sets of Lincoln Cents and Liberty Nickels. I was a fussy collector even then, and always bought the nicest grade coin I could afford the first time. When I was 12, I used to work \$3 an hour helping Mrs. Holmann at Holmann's Coins and Maytag Repairs put foreign coins into 2x2's and price them according to the Krause guide. I joined the Air Force when I was 18, and coin collecting got shelved for career, marriage, and buying a house.

In 1994, I found a pair of lovely About Uncirculated Seated Liberty dimes at a flea market in England, in a bowl on a table labeled "Foreign Coins—5 Pence Each". I bought a copy of Coin World, checked current prices, and thought that there were probably a lot of U.S. coins in the United Kingdom that the dealers in Great Britain probably didn't have the time nor the desire to look up in their price guides. I started traveling all over the U.K. checking out coin shops and going to coin auctions, concentrating on U.S. coins. I soon had enough to start selling coins at the monthly Coin and Collector's fairs at the recreation center on the Air Force base where I worked. I worked part time for a few coin dealers in Omaha when I was still on active duty with the Air Force, and when I got ready to retire, I went to work for the largest coin company in the country. Now I travel all over the country visiting collectors, evaluating their collections, and bringing their coins back to Dallas for auction. I handle about 20 million dollars worth of coins every year.

David Lewis joined the Omaha Coin Club in 1999. He works for Heritage Auction Galleries in Dallas, Texas. He is a Senior Numismatist and Consignment Director. You can contact him at DLewis@HA.com

