



"HOW I STARTED"

How numismatists "got started"

By Samuel Ernst YN

I hope everyone liked the article I wrote about my friend Rick Kay last month. I thought his experiments on the chemical composition of pattern coins sounded really interesting. Didn't you?

This month I am going to share the story of how another friend of mine got started. His name is John Kraljevich. I've never met him in person but he's always been great with answering questions I've had. He's a professional numismatist and researcher. He specializes in early American coinage. Here's how he got started.

Hi Samuel-

Here's a couple of paragraphs on how I started.

As a kid I'd always collected something. Rocks and minerals were my first love, particularly since the price was right as long as I kept my eyes peeled on trips through the woods near my home. A love for dinosaurs led to fossils, so I gathered a small collection of those as well. At some point, perhaps at the age of 5 or 6, coins first caught my eye. My dad and I attended a lot of country auctions, and every time there was a glass case I was drawn to it. Inevitably, the glass case contained a Morgan dollar, or some Indian cents, or something similar. My dad had a small group of things he had saved in the 60's, including some silver dollars and silver certificates. Those started a small collection that I added to at flea markets, small auctions, and from change. My older brother had a coin guide that was as old as I was though he had never seriously collected, and from it I learned about things like large cents, Standing Liberty quarters, and other stuff I'd never seen. Soon a visit to a coin shop ended with me getting my first Whitman folder and my first Red Book. I was 9.

My grandmother worked as a volunteer clerk at a gift shop, and early on she helped me add to my wheat cent collection by looking through all the change she handled. She was a lifelong collector of sea shells and supported my collecting instinct — she had actually met my grandfather at a shell collectors convention and knew how a hobby could become a life passion. When I was 10, my mom and dad knew I was serious enough that they took me to a coin show we saw advertised in the local paper. At that show, I joined the local coin club in West Chester, PA and learned of a whole new world. The guys in the club took an instant interest in helping me learn about coins, supplying me with books, and encouraging me. I joined the ANA that year and pretty much dived into coin collecting head first. When my mom drove me 300+ miles to my first ANA convention when I was 11, we both knew I was hooked. It was intoxicating to be around coins like an 1804 dollar and to meet people like Dave Bowers and Aubrey and Adeline Bebee, folks that were famous but still like to talk coins with a kid. My mom's support was unwavering after that, even going as far as to attend the ANA Summer Seminar with me in Colorado when, at age 13, my dad thought I was a little too young to go there alone. A lot of the kids I met during that week are still my friends, 17 years later.

After 7 years of working for auction companies like Bowers and Merena, American Numismatic Rarities, and Stack's as a cataloguer and director of numismatic research, John started his own company in August 2007. **John Kraljevich Americana and Numismatics** handles early American coins and currency, historical medals, documents, and other early Americana. John still writes some auction cataloging and also writes columns in Coin World and The Numismatist.

If you want to find out more about John and his company visit: www.Jkamericana.com

