

MY MOST PRECIOUS COIN

by Bill Hickman

In about 1958, I was an eleven year-old boy who had been collecting coins for just a few months. I started collecting because many of my friends collected coins and it strengthened our bond. People liked me as a child (not everybody feels the same today). The lady who owned the liquor store across the street from our home used to take me behind the counter and let me sort through the coins in the cash drawer. Occasionally I would find a Buffalo Nickel, a Mercury Dime, a Walking Liberty Half Dollar, or even a Standing Liberty Quarter. Most of these coins were not of high grade, but each and every one of them encouraged me in the hobby and fascinated me with their history. To this day I collect raw coins and believe that an uncirculated coin is one without a past, a story, or a history. Can you imagine what would happen today if a child were found manning the cash register in a liquor store?

I used to hang out at the sporting goods store up the street because of the fascinating people who congregated there and had stories to tell. We would swap lies and sea stories about the biggest fish caught, the most points on a buck killed, or the highest game we had bowled. The sporting goods store was also next door to the laundromat where I drove the operator crazy by constantly emptying the change machines, looking for coins for my old blue albums. One of the characters who told stories at the sporting goods store was a coin collector who owned a small gardening business. This man occasionally hired me on Saturday mornings to assist on his jobs. He also took me to a coin club meeting and gave me my first 1909 VDB penny, which I still have today.

One day, a lady named Margaret Atkinson came to visit my parents. Margaret had a husband named George or "Slim" who drank a lot and was in and out of jail. When outside the gray bar hotel, Slim would call my father who would give him a job as a house painter and would allow Slim to stay in the camper trailer parked in our back yard. Margaret would come to visit her husband or to just see us if he was currently a guest of the county. When Margaret learned that I was a numismatist, she said she had a present for me. On her next visit, she brought me something I had never heard of—an 1878-S Trade Dollar. This coin is still my most cherished and most valuable. Upon joining DNS I brought the coin for Show and Tell. People in our club thought this to be an exceptional coin which should be submitted for professional grading. I procrastinated about submitting my trade dollar for a long time and finally decided to just stick it in my type set because I would never part with it and the value to me was much more than a number of dollars. I did show the coin to six dealers at our coin show and opinions ranged from AU 50 to MS 61, with consensus being about AU 58. Although the coin is my most valuable, it will remain raw and in my type album. It is my most precious coin because it came from a friend and I often wonder what happened to her.