
The MCA Advisory

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What's New on Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

From the Editor 2

Webmaster Report (by Ben Weiss) 2

Stack's, New York City Final Ford Sale Yields a Nugget (by Alan Weinberg) 2

The Hundred Greatest: A Book Reviews (by Samuel Pennington) 4

Heritage Auction Galleries, Long Beach, California (by Sam Pennington) 5

Passages to Reconstruction: MCA at XXX Fidem Congress (by David T. Alexander) 8

Letters to the Editor 13

Coming Events

January 12, 2008, membership meeting at the New York International Show. Time: 12 noon. Speaker: Ira Rezak on: A Century of Medals and Still Counting: Anniversaries of the Jews in America.

From the Editor

It is not too early to be planning for our meeting in New York on January 12th. The Board has been discussing new directions for the Club; we will share these deliberations and seek your input on the subject, Following Club business, we will have our first “Show-and-Tell.” If you plan to bring something, let me know beforehand because “landing slots” will be limited.

Why limited? Because we will conclude with what figures to be an outstanding talk by Dr. Ira Rezak. Ira will feature three medals struck in 1905, 1955 and 2004; these commemorate the 250th, 300th and 350th anniversaries of Jewish settlement in America.

Webmaster's Report (by Ben Weiss)

During this month we have added new links on our website for the first several months of the MCA Advisory for 2007. Many thanks to Sam Pennington for posting these issues. They can be found under *Archives and Back Issues*.

We have added more medallic images to the series of medals, *Hall of Fame for Great Americans at New York University*. We have also added images for the *Society of Medallists* series. Thanks to Heath MacAlpine, who provided the images, and to Sam Pennington, who posted them, both of these interesting series of medals are now complete. They can be found under *Collector's Guides and Checklists*.

Links to additional *Medal Collections on the Web* have been added to our website. Dozens of different websites are now listed. They include medals from private as well as institutional collections; from Art Medals, to Historical and Commemorative Medals; and medals from the United States to around the globe. If you haven't seen these yet, I urge you to check them out. They are a treat to the eyes and to the intellect.

All of this can be found at:
www.medalcollectors.org

Best wishes,

Ben

Stack's, New York City Final Ford Sale Yields a Nugget

(by Alan V. Weinberg)

Photos courtesy Stack's

The 1850 gold San Francisco Alderman's medal, handmade and encrusted with gold nuggets, realized \$316,250 (includes buyer's premium) on October 16 in New York City at Stack's final auction of the John J. Ford Jr. collection, sold over the previous four years (since October 2003) in 21 auctions by Stack's.

This is the third-highest auction price recorded for any American medal, surpassed only by Stack's auction of two medals on October 17, 2006. The Zachary Taylor Mexican War Congressional gold medal sold for \$460,000, and the 1889 gold medal by Augustus Saint-Gaudens commissioned to mark the centennial anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington brought \$391,000.

The unique San Francisco medal was bought by floor bidder Anthony Terranova, a New York City dealer bidding for a client. The underbidder was Lawrence Stack bidding for his own collection of medals.

There were three silver and numbered 1856 San Francisco Committee of Vigilance medals in the sale, the largest group ever offered at one auction. The first medal sold for \$31,625, and the final two each sold for \$25,300 to floor bidder and Western ephemera dealer Donald Kagin of California.



As for lot 3281, the 1850 California Admission to Statehood medal, according to the catalog: "The Aldermen's Medal. Handmade to the order of the San Francisco

Aldermen. Presented to Themselves on October 29, 1850 on the occasion of the grand celebration held on the Plaza in the city. Constructed from native California Gold Rush gold to the order of the Aldermen by San Francisco lithographer Thomas Gihon of the firm of Gihon & Butler. Gold. 55.1 mm. 973.8 gns. With its original presentation case. Essentially, as made. The piece is made from a broad disk of native California gold. On the front in the center is a California gold nugget in the center of a ring of particles of gold dust fused together to make a circular band. This is placed in the center of a large gold six-pointed star symbolizing the newly admitted state of California surrounding which is the state motto, EUREKA, each of the six letters in that word being positioned at one point of the star. Surrounding the central device is a ring of 30 smaller stars, one for each of the other 30 states in the Union as of September 9, 1850, when California achieved statehood. Around the edge on this side is another, wider band of fused particles of California gold dust. The reverse of the handmade medal was polished smooth to receive the nicely engraved presentation inscription that reads CALIFORNIA ADMITTED SEP. 9. 1850 around the top and *Presented to Morgan L. Mott, Alderman, by the City of San Francisco Oct. 29. 1850* in the center and around the bottom. The maker's name, GIHON SC, is at the lower right. The original suspension loop for wearing is at the top. The piece is bright yellow gold in color on the large central star, the smaller surrounding stars, the engraved side, and the loop. The fused gold dust, central nugget, letters, and field are matte in appearance. The whole ensemble is fixed together by five **gold pins through the back and a sixth through the swivel on the loop. The original presentation box is green leather over wood, rectangular about 3" x 2", with gilt ornamentation on the top, white and pale rose plush lined, secured by two hook and eye clasps. A collector's label (Gutttag's?) is affixed to the back of the box.**

This medal is both exceptionally rare and historically important. There were only 8 aldermen on the city council in October, 1850 (along with eight assistants) so only eight of these medals would have been ordered to be made for the aldermen by Messrs. Gihon & Butler.

“This specimen is the only one known that is available to collectors of U.S. medals or California Gold Rush rarities. Mr. Ford purchased the medal from the June 18, 1984 sale of American coins and medals from the Virgil M. Brand Collection (Bowers & Merena, lot 1299 at \$9900)...”

This time the medal sold for \$316,250, third-highest price at auction for an American medal.



Lot 3283, the 1856 San Francisco Vigilance Committee medal. Membership Number 5949. Silver. According to the catalog: “Obverse: the great seal of the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance comprising the All Seeing Eye in the center, a tablet below to receive the member’s number, COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE immediately above, ORGANIZED 9TH JUNE 1851. REORGANIZED 14TH MAY 1856 around the top. Reverse: Justice (not blindfolded, as Woodward noted in 1879) standing in the center, SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA below, BE JUST AND FEAR NOT. FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT COELUM. around the top. Maker’s mark V & G. (A. Vachon and T. Gihon) at lower left. Plain edge. Looped for

wearing as made. 36.9 mm. 419.1 gns. 3.5 - 3.7 mm. thick. Medium gray in color in the fields with some light gold and russet iridescent toning. A very handsome piece and the best in Mr. Ford’s holdings. Extremely rare: the cataloguer has records of only nine numbered 1856 San Francisco Vigilance Committee medals....”

Among those nine recorded was “No. 1608, found by two little girls in a vacant lot at 929 Post Street, San Francisco in July, 1891, owned at the time by the girls’ father, a police officer named Dower, present whereabouts unknown.”

The catalog also noted, “All 1856 San Francisco Vigilance Committee medals are from a single die pair. The press that appeared in an October, 1998 west coast sale was mounted with an incorrect San Francisco Committee of Vigilance seal. There are several belt buckles known that were made in London 1966-67 that bear a copied Vigilance Committee seal as a motif.”

This medal, the first of three sold, brought \$31,625. The other two brought \$25,300 apiece.

For more information, call Stack’s at (212) 582-2580 or go on line (www.stacks.com).

The Hundred Greatest: A Book Review

(by Samuel Pennington)

100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens. Complete with Market Values by Katherine Jaeger and Q. David Bowers (Whitman Publishing, LLC, 2007, 144 pp., hardbound, \$29.95 from Whitman Publishing, (www.whitmanbooks.com) or (800) 546-2995).

A few months ago I wrote a medals column titled “Books on Medals You Should Own.” I lamented the fact that there was no “one size fits all” book about medals. Well, with this book, authors Katherine Jaeger and Q. David Bowers have come close.

This book is much more than just a list of the 100 greatest medals. In fact, there are many more than 100 medals listed, but more on that later. The authors have provided chapters and subchapters on the history of medals and medals collecting, grading, storage, display, determining values, caring for medals, early collections, engravers and minters, the making of medals, and just about anything else you might want to know about medals and tokens except where to buy them.

Jaeger and Bowers first asked a number of collectors, authors, researchers, and dealers for nominations to the list to be voted on. These were compiled into a ballot listing over 340 items with brief descriptions. Some, as in the case of the art medals issued two a year from 1930 to 1995 by the Society of Medalists, were listed as groups. If they made the final 100 greatest, all would be accepted as a class.

The ballots were then sent to 99 collectors, authors, researchers, and dealers who were asked to rate the top 100. According to the publisher, about 80% of them returned completed ballots.

Because of the “class” designation, there are many more than 100 medals in the list. Number 19 is what the ballot called “Triumphs of Medallistic Sculpture,” the entire 1930-95 output of the Society of Medalists, numbering 1 through 129, or 129 medals. Number 6 is the Washington Seasons medals, three in all. Then there is number 70, the Admiral Vernon medals, Betts numbers 171 through 337. Topping them all, however, is number 54, the Civil War sutlers’ tokens; more than 500 varieties are known.

What was it that got a medal or series of medals on the list? The authors explain in their introduction: “To have suggested that the greatest tokens and medals are those with the highest market values would have been an insult to history and art, simply a nod to the commercial arena of the moment, which might be different a generation from now. To have suggested that the greatest pieces are the rarest

would have been a similar discredit—rarity really says little about the importance of a token or medal. Instead, voters determined the greatest based upon their own opinions of combined historical importance, numismatic tradition, artistry, utility, and other aspects. Certainly, rarity and value attract a lot of attention as part of numismatic tradition....”

One criticism of the selection process is that it was heavily weighted to historic and commemorative medals and very light on “art” medals. Dealer Joe Levine offered the opinion, “My guess is that the results were skewed toward historical medals because the population from whom they drew their votes was mostly from the numismatic crowd rather than from the art crowd that would have preferred art medals.”

Each medal number got at least a page with pictures, estimated market values, and any other pertinent information, such as mintage figures or special packaging. At the end of the book there is a consolation listing, “What Might Have Been,” with the next 100 most highly recommended medals.

There are affordable medals in the list of 100 greatest. Some have sold for as little as \$30. Plunk down just \$29.95 for the book and see for yourself. You won’t be sorry.

(MCA has ordered 12 copies of this excellent book to award to contributors, youth or other worthies—ed.)

Heritage Auction Galleries, Long Beach, California

**Heritage Medal and Token Sale
Upstaged by Pulitzer Medals**

(by Samuel Pennington)

Photos courtesy Heritage Auction Galleries

Dallas-based Heritage Auction Galleries held a tokens and medals signature auction in Long Beach, California, on September 27 and

28. The sale total was \$596,565.70 (includes buyers' premiums), with the highest-priced item bringing \$63,250, but the big news was what happened to three gold Pulitzer Prize medals awarded to *Newsday*, a Long Island, New York newspaper, for public service.

The Pulitzer medals, awarded in 1953, 1970, and 1974, sold to two separate buyers for a total of \$17,825.

When *Newsday* officials learned of the sale, they were not happy. They thought the medals were locked up in a company safe. According to Pulitzer rules, gold medals are only awarded for public service (out of 21 categories) and go to the publication, not to individuals.

Heritage's catalog stated, "Our consignor obtained these medals in 2001 from an estate liquidation sale in Nassau County which, together with Suffolk County, constitutes Long Island."

The FBI, working with the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department and Heritage, has now taken possession of the medals and will attempt to determine authenticity and ownership.

James Halperin, co-chairman of Heritage Auction Galleries, e-mailed the following statement: "In order for Heritage to accept anything for auction, the consignor must confirm in writing that they have clear title to the items consigned. Sellers who lack confidence of ownership, generally speaking, do not choose a very public and highly publicized auction venue such as ours. In this instance, the consignors, whom we believe to be credible, represented to us that they had purchased the medals in an estate sale in 2001. Please keep in mind that these were just 3 lots out of almost 20,000 lots in a \$27 million dollar auction. In retrospect, based upon what we have subsequently learned, perhaps we should have been more circumspect. In any event, we have voided these sales pending determination of ownership. I'm hopeful, and highly confident, that these medals will soon,

and permanently, reside with their rightful owners, whoever they may be."

Now held by the FBI pending a rightful ownership dispute, here's how Heritage described the three Pulitzer medals that brought a total of \$17,825 before the sale was rescinded. "1953 *Newsday* Pulitzer Prize Gold Medal. 14-kt gold, 66.5 mm, 143.3 gm. Edge inscribed 'MEDALLIC ART CO. N.Y. 14KT.' Heritage is privileged to offer not one, not two, but three gold Pulitzer Prize medals, each awarded decades ago to *Newsday* for public service. According to the Pulitzer website, www.pulitzer.org, in 20 of the 21 Pulitzer categories, winners receive a \$10,000 cash award and a certificate. Only the winner in the remaining public service category of the journalism competition is awarded a gold medal. The public service prize is awarded solely to newspapers, not to individuals, although individuals may be named in the citation.

"Based in Long Island (Suffolk County), New York, *Newsday* calls itself 'the voice of Long Island and America's sixth-largest regional newspaper (eighth overall).' Our consignor obtained these medals in 2001 from an estate liquidation sale in Nassau County which, together with Suffolk County, constitutes Long Island.

"The 1954 award (for 1953 reportage) was made for *Newsday*'s exposé of New York State's racetrack scandals and labor racketeering, which led to the extortion indictment, guilty plea, and imprisonment of William C. DeKoning, Sr. According to his Oct. 28, 1957, obituary in *Time*: [DeKoning was] 'a shrewd, tough ("I ain't afraid of no one") Long Island labor hustler and strong-arm boy, convicted of extortion in 1954 after a four-year crusade by Long Island's *Newsday* (for which it won the Pulitzer Prize); of chronic hepatitis; in Mineola, N.Y. A.F.L. Organizer DeKoning bullied his way from Local 138 of the International Union of Operating Engineers into a prosperous, politically insured Nassau

County kingdom, reputedly decided who could or could not construct a new housing development. Expanding in 1943 to catch some of Roosevelt Raceway's runaway revenue, he raked in kickbacks from nearly everybody, erected the Labor Lyceum, containing a meeting hall, restaurant and Long Island's biggest bar (where union members spent liberally to stay in his good graces), had his union help build him a lavish home.'...

"Both sides of this large and heavy 14-kt gold medal are essentially in as-struck condition, with no mentionable defects save for a minuscule rim bump at PU of PUBLIC. There is some slight mellowing of the original golden luster. The obverse was designed in 1917 by Exeter, New Hampshire, native Daniel Chester French, whose family counted among their friends Ralph Waldo Emerson and Louisa May Alcott. Reverse design by Henry Augustus Lukeman. Comes with original box of issue, stamped in gilt with 'Medallic Art Co. New York.'

"The gold medal for newspaper journalism is the most prestigious of the Pulitzer prizes. To our knowledge and that of other industry experts with whom we have consulted, including Dick Johnson, who was a principal with Medallic Arts Co. for 10 years (1966-1976), this represents the first time that even a single example of the Pulitzer Prize gold medal has ever been offered at auction, much less three such phenomenally rare pieces."

The top price of the auction, \$63,250, was paid for a small gold medal commemorating completion of the Erie Canal. The same medal in silver but with the original box brought \$4600. The new book *100 Greatest American Medals and Tokens* by Q. David Bowers and Katherine Jaeger lists this medal as the eighth greatest. It states that the original box adds \$200 to \$300 in value.



According to the catalog: "1826 Erie Canal Completion Medal in Gold...43.67 gm, 44.5 mm. One of the greatest engineering undertakings ever accomplished was the building of the Erie Canal in order to connect the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean. The canal, although conceived several years earlier, was constructed between 1817 and 1825 and connected the Hudson River to Lake Erie, allowing a much quicker and more inexpensive transportation method than traditional land travel. The finished canal resulted in a considerable population surge in western New York, and eventually areas even further west. American commerce flourished, and even international trade increased. Even by today's standards, the completion of such an enormous civil engineering project would garner respect. Now, consider the utter lack of engineering resources, manpower, and finances that challenged early proponents of the manmade waterway. Obviously, the completion of the Erie Canal was cause for much fanfare. Statewide celebrations took place throughout late 1825 and into early 1826.



“To further commemorate the event and to honor those intimately involved in the project, the Common Council of New York City ordered a series of medals to be struck in three different compositions: white metal, silver, and gold.”

The catalog contained a learned dissertation on how many of each material were struck. One claim is, “Fifty-one Gold medals struck; presented to “crowned heads of world and eminent men” including General Lafayette and 3 surviving signers of [the] Declaration of Independence. “Several hundred” pieces struck in Silver and White Metal (pewter); presented to guests and officials.”

The medal brought \$63,250, highest price of the sale.

For more information about Heritage’s numismatic auctions, call (800) 872-6467 or visit (www.coins.ha.com).

Passages to Reconstruction: MCA at XXX Fidem Congress

(by David T. Alexander)

“Rebuild and Replenish” was the theme for the 30th Congress and 70th Anniversary celebration of the International Federation of the Art Medal (FIDEM), held in Colorado Springs on Sept.18-22, 2007. The American Numismatic Association (ANA) hosted this worldwide gathering of medallic sculptors, collectors and medal-makers.

ANA hosted the Congress in 1987 on its 10th birthday and the group’s 50th anniversary held in the same locale in 2007. The 2007 event drew more than 100 delegates and attendees from some 19 countries from Japan to Finland, Australia to Russia. The American contingent led by Delegate Cory Gilliland of Willsboro, NY, added materially to the gathering’s success.

American participants included many MCA members, such as founding President David T. Alexander, Stephen Scher, Donald

Scarinci, Dr. Alan Stahl, Mashiko, ANS Curators Robert Hoge and Peter van Alfen, and D. Wayne Johnson,

Center of activities was the Antlers Hilton Hotel, with key events at ANA headquarters and the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center adjoining the ANA building. The upper floor of the ANA Museum housed a magnificent array of medals forming the competitive exhibit by medalists from around the world; a second group of medals formed the “Parallel Exhibit” honoring FIDEM’s 70th birthday occupying the rear of the gallery.

A special feature of this year’s event emphasized by the organizers of the Congress was increased collector participation, through lectures and presentations held at the Antlers and a stellar guest exhibit strategically positioned in the ANA Museum foyer.

Greeting all who entered the museum was a display of selected pieces from the Lawrence R. Stack Collection of Renaissance medallions, medals and plaquettes. Assembled by the CEO of the New York-based numismatic firm of Stack’s, this collection brought together many of the greatest examples of Renaissance medallic art from Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands and England.

Included were Antonio Pisano, called Pisanello, re-creator of the medal in the 15th century, with portrait pieces of Leonello d’Este Marquess of Ferrara and humanist Vittorino Rambaldoni da Feltre; Matteo de’ Pasti’s studies of Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, with medals of Fra Antonio da Brescia, Pietro da Fano and Leone Leoni and other Italian medalists. English medals were highlighted by the fabulous gold portrait medallion of Queen Mary I (the Tudor monarch often recalled as “Bloody Mary”) by Jacopo da Trezzo, one of only two gold examples known.

Displayed was the greatest of all German medals, Hans Reinhart the Elder’s massive silver *Dreifältigkeitsmedaille* or Holy Trinity Medal of 1544, depicting in medallic

form the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. Albrecht Dürer was represented by one of two silver examples existing outside a museum of his 1621 medal hailing Emperor Charles V's visit to the Nürnberg Diet that was forced to relocate after an outbreak of plague.

The Renaissance exhibit introduced visitors to medallic art and formed a visual bridge between the traditional medal and the contemporary works of FIDEM members. Medals were arranged by country in wall-mounted and free-standing cases on glass shelves, each bearing a label with the flag of each country, sculptor's name and title of the medal. All works are recorded in the 374-page soft-cover *Exhibition Catalog of FIDEM XXX, 30th Congress, International Federation of Medallic Art*.

FIDEM's own medals are permanent medallic record of each event, and the 2007 medal is one of the most innovative, designed by Sarah Peters of Falmouth, Mass. This odd-shaped 92.3 x 98.2 millimeter bronze is entitled "Rebuild-Replenish," the theme of "Passages to Reconstruction," understanding of the medal as a valid branch of the sculptor's art.

This medal is free-standing on its edge; laid flat it becomes a jigsaw-puzzle piece interlocking with additional medals to form a round-cornered rectangle or serpentine form on any length desired. The obverse is a hard-hat construction worker ("Rebuild") driving a nail with outsized hammer, his waist inscribed **XXX FIDEM CONGRESS, Colorado Springs, 2007**. The reverse is a woman holding a woven basket of seedlings ready for planting, "Replenish." With their meticulous crafting and pleasing light tan-gold patina, once actually seen and held, the medals were irresistible and sales were lively.

The American Delegation to FIDEM distributed another medallic creation produced by New York City artist Mashiko, a 97 x 60 millimeter hinged tinsplate box inscribed **XXX/ FIDEM CONGRESS/ 2007/ AMERICAN DELEGATION/ Colorado Springs, CO**.

USA. The inner lid is inscribed **PASSAGES/TO/RECONSTRUCTION**; the bottom bears an etched leaf-less wind-blown tree.

A brochure announces "This is a story of existence in seven stages." The medal enclosed is cast in resin, described as "a fossil city in white, the only physically moving part is a hanging ball. It suggests that time is continually in motion." The tree is reiterated in a digital printing by Tara Donahue from Mashiko's original drawing, along with two additional digital images of the fossilized city described is an original poem:

A silent echo
In a fossilized city
Erosion and dust embrace the void
The universe is a place for rebirth and
new life
The beginning of a new life
PASSAGES TO RECONSTRUCTION
are everlasting

Formal FIDEM sessions began with the gala opening ceremonies at 9:00 on Wednesday. Representing ANA were President Barry Stuppler and Past President Kenneth E. Bressett. Following Stuppler's welcome, Bressett introduced FIDEM President Carlos Baptista da Silva of Lisbon, Portugal.

Da Silva was followed by FIDEM Honorary President Lars O. Lagerqvist of Sweden, keeper of the Royal Cabinet of Coins in Stockholm. Lagerqvist sketched FIDEM's history since its first 1937 Paris Congress, organized by medal-makers Andre Arthus-Bertrand of France and Fernand Fisch of Brussels. He has attended every congress since 1957 and brought a wry humor to his reminiscences.

FIDEM is the acronym of *Federation Internationale des Emetteurs des Medaliles d'Art*, International Federation of Issuers of Art Medals. Over the years "*Emetteurs*" was dropped and FIDEM is now officially the

International Federation of the Art Medal, with membership from more than 30 countries.

Keynote speaker was U.S. Mint Director Edmund Moy. Veteran observers of the U.S. Mint are amazed at the energy and undisguised gusto Moy brings to the director's office. Past directors were often political hacks with the civil servant mentality "don't make waves, don't make changes, keep your head down."

Observers find Moy a dramatic and refreshing change, with remarkable connections on Capitol Hill. In his address, Moy noted that the Mint was once a leader in medallic art in the great years between 1892 and 1925. Moy hopes to be part of the next great wave of creativity, stating, "one of the things I'd like to leave behind is to be known as a catalyst for a new Renaissance, a neo-Renaissance of coinage design that will reflect the best and the future of the new millennium instead of being rooted in doing redesigns of the past."

He described the effects of the Artistic Infusion Program (AIP), pointing to the Congressional gold medals of Dr. Norman Borlaug and the Tuskegee Airmen by Phebe Hemphill as examples of its success. AIP Master Designer Richard Masters was praised for his Little Rock Nine silver dollar, a design showing only the lower bodies and feet of the Black girls and their military escort walking into Little Rock High School at the tumultuous opening of the Civil Rights struggle. Coinage law bars the use of portraits of living persons on the nation's coins, though this did not prevent Eunice Kennedy Shriver's face from appearing on the Special Olympics dollar a few years earlier. Designer Masters therefore focused on the feet of the school girls and the heavy military boots of their escort to create a poignant design.

Moy shared his plans for his own Mint Director's Medal, the latest in a series dating back to the early years of the Philadelphia Mint. He took as his theme Frederick Hart's artwork *Ex Nihilo, Out of Nothingness* at the

entry to Washington's National Cathedral. "To me, that's a perfect way to have someone in allegoric view of themselves... I'm not done yet, I'm still being formed, I'm not totally finished."

Moy wants a new figure of Liberty for his medal, telling engraver-designer John Mercanti and his co-workers to slim her down into 21st century style with a dress "more reminiscent of Vera Wang" than Greek sculptor Praxiteles. The son of Chinese parents, Moy noted that the traditional Liberty "is a very Caucasian figure. Liberty is no longer a Western civilization concept. What would the love child of Tiger Woods and Jessica Alba look like grown up? That's the face I see for Liberty."

Congress participants were offered a succession of speakers and workshops whose number varied from day to day, with a reception or special event each evening. Each lecture series was directed by an appointed moderator with speakers coming from the U.S., Europe and Australia. Only a sampling can be recalled here.

Noted New York medal scholar Stephen Scher, consultant in the preparation of the Stack's Renaissance exhibit, moderated the Wednesday presentations. The presenters personified FIDEM's artistic and historic outreach. ANS Curator Peter van Alfen discussed "Head Hunting: the Rhetoric of Race and Emile Monier's Medals of the 1931 Exposition Coloniale in Paris." Monier challenged traditional medallic treatment of race with eight medals of French African colonies that ignored racist stereotypes to portray Black Africans with dignity, artistic, anthropological accuracy and underlying sympathy.

Veteran public speakers know that every presentation involves an element of Vaudeville, proven on Wednesday when an electrical blackout struck the hotel and surrounding neighborhood for nearly a half hour. Moderator Scher was equal to the

challenge and “the show went on.” ANS Chief Curator Robert W. Hoge investigated “The Last of the Indian Peace Medals,” describing the rare oval silver Peace Medals portraying Presidents Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison.

Moderator Scher presented “Reggio Emilia and the Mannerist Medal in 16th Century Italy,” sharing researches into medals of the Reggio Mint by such identified artists as Gian Antonio Signoretti and Andrea Cambi called Bombarda, whose pervasive style was unique to this small series of the mid-16th century.

The American Medallic Sculpture Association (AMSA) hosted a reception at ANA headquarters on Wednesday evening that offered opportunities to further examine the array of medals in the exhibition. AMSA was founded in 1982 to advance the cause of medallic sculpture and is today undergoing a bold and long hoped-for revival under President Jim Licaretz, also a veteran engraver-designer of the Philadelphia Mint.

During this reception, FIDEM President da Silva announced the winner of the medal exhibition Grand Prix for 2007: Portuguese sculptor and ANS Saltus Medal winner Helder Batista for his 50 millimeter bronze 50th Anniversary of the Moscovide Church Medal, a study in varied silver and gold patinas. A medal designed by Italy’s Alessandro Verdi created the FIDEM 70th Anniversary Medal announced at the reception, but was used only for presentation purposes at the Congress.

The Thursday and Friday FIDEM events overlapped. Thursday saw three contending sets of speakers all at the same times along with two workshops. One series was moderated by Princeton University Curator of Numismatics Dr. Alan Stahl. It included Eugene Daub with “Medallic Portrait Sculpture: Face Types and Type Faces,” an in-depth look at the interrelation of portrait and lettering that can make or break a medal design.

Daub cited Frank Lloyd Wright’s aphorism, “a house should not be ON the hill, but OF the hill.” Lettering should complement the portrait, not overrun it, Daub believes, since “a medal should be a perfect blending of sculpture and graphics,” the design responding to the play of light on its surfaces rather than color that is integral to paintings or prints.

U.S. Mint Engraver-designer Don Everhart followed with a remarkable overview of current U.S. Mint methods of design, including traditional clay and plaster and ultra-modern computer designing programs including Free Form and Doby Illustrator. Especially fascinating was Everhart’s display of rejected design sketches for such coins as the Jamestown dollar, South Dakota, California and Nevada Statehood quarters.

Friday was the most activity-filled day of the Congress. No fewer than four simultaneous speaker series and two workshops among which appeared U.S. Delegate Cory Gilliland as moderator for England’s Philip Atwood, with “American Medals in the British Museum,” dating back to pieces unexpectedly found in the Royal Collection of King George III.

MCA’s David T. Alexander, a senior cataloger for Stack’s and Past President of the New York Numismatic Club, gave a power-point presentation, “What Shadows We Pursue: Medals of the French Legitimist Pretender Henri V.” Henri, the “Child of the Miracle,” was born after the assassination of his father the Duke of Berri. The 10 year-old was named successor to his grandfather Charles X in 1830 and pursued the French crown for 73 years.

The French National Assembly offered the childless Henri the crown in 1871-73, if he would adopt his cousin the Count of Paris of the junior branch of the House of Bourbon as his heir. He agreed, but the deal failed over the issue of which flag to use. Henri refused the tricolor, insisting on the white Bourbon flag with three gold lilies used until the 1830

revolution. He died in exile, leaving a copious “fossil record” of medals and pattern coins.

Britain’s Ron Dutton examined “First Steps: Medals of the Parallel Artists,” medals and artists in the parallel exhibit at FIDEM in the ANA Museum. Moderator Alan Stahl introduced Donald Scarinci, prominent New Jersey attorney, member of FIDEM, Medal Collectors of America and the Citizens Coin Advisory Commission with “Appreciating and Collecting Contemporary Art Medals.” Scarinci is famous also for his incisive review of the last FIDEM Congress in Paris that was a near-fiasco.

Stahl, former curator at the ANS, former U.S. FIDEM delegate and Past President of the New York Numismatic Club presented “The Origins of the Struck Medal,” drawing on his extensive research into numismatics of the Republic of Venice. He reviewed the works of Pisanello, Ambrogio da Clivate, Benvenuto Cellini, Andrea Spinelli and Leone Leoni in setting the stage for the struck medal, including creation of early screw presses derived from the wine presses then in widespread use.

Friday evening saw a gala reception at the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center adjoining ANA headquarters. Featured speaker was artist Otakar Dusek of the Czech Republic, who delivered an impassioned address on “Artistic Freedom in the Czech Republic,” the story of his medallic art, which was illustrated by slides. Dusek described himself as the first truly independent medallic artist since the fall of communism in his country.

A holdover from communism is the control exercised by the Czech National Bank, which has effectively monopolized not only the commissioning of official medals but has intruded itself strongly into their actual design. Meeting official guidelines were Dusek’s medals for the 700th Anniversary of the Prague Grosch (Groschen), and his medal honoring the 700th Anniversary of King Vaclav II.

Striking out on his own, Dusek created the startling 60th Anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad Medal, “the negation of humanity” by combining a Nazi era 50 Pfennig coin and a Soviet 20 Kopeck as obverse and reverse, pierced through by a rifle bullet. His medal for the 40th Anniversary of the Ordination of Father Jiri Ladislav Majkov included cross shapes reiterated on the medal, its holder and outer box.

Pre-World War II medals struck in honor of the Slavic gymnastic society “Sokol” with portrait of Dr. Miroslav Tyrs were buried in the ground to save them from the Nazis. In 1939 Dusek used some of the recovered medals and crafted an outer medal around them with updates 1948 for the communist take-over and 1998, the anniversary of the Munich Agreements that partitioned what was then Czecho-Slovakia and led to the outlawry of the Sokol.

Dusek’s most innovative medal honors Czech president and former dissident Vaclav Havel, taking the shape of the logo of a beer brewery where the playwright and future president was forced to work in punishment for pro-democracy agitation. Dusek sidestepped the question of which portrait to use: as a boy, youth, dissident or president. Instead Havel’s unchanging fingerprint was employed along with an actual autograph inscribed by Havel himself, making him in effect the co-author of the medal!

The General Assembly of FIDEM was held on Saturday, with reports to treasurer and other officers, including the revelation that worldwide membership is 256 individuals plus museums, libraries and 45 Mints or medal makers around the globe. After several years as President, Carlos Baptista da Silva stepped down and Finland’s Ilkka Voionmaa was elected chief executive, along with Vice Presidents Cory Gilliland (U.S.A.) and Ronald Dutton (U.K.); General Secretary is Maria Rosa Figueiredo (Portugal), Treasure, Ines Ferreira (Portugal); the Executive Committee includes

Marie Astrid Voisin (Sweden), Philip Attwood (U.K.) and Carolien Voigtmann (Netherlands),

The 30th FIDEM Congress closed with the festive banquet at the Cheyenne Lodge of the great Broadmoor Hotel overlooking a panoramic view of Colorado Springs. The gathering was not merely a successful event of a great world organization but a triumph of international fellowship, artistic cooperation and highly successful collector input.

(Only our founder DTA could craft a summary of his complicated event that was at once incisive and comprehensive--ed.)

Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr. Adams:

I hope it is alright for me to write to you at this address. The email address listed on the Medal Collectors of America site did not seem to work for me. I am a coin collector (mainly focused on Southern gold), but my interest is moving toward early copper and medals. I have been collecting Southern gold for quite a while, but the amount of material that is available of any quality, along with the frequency in which coins are "messed with", is making me stray from that area.

I truly like the studiousness of the early copper world and the medal world. As you can tell by my signature line below, I am a tax lawyer (focusing mainly on international tax planning and structures) so research tends to come naturally to me. I would like to learn more about medals and start collecting, but I don't know the best place to start. It seems that there are many different areas of medal collecting after taking a quick look on the MCA website.

Do you know of any general book that gives an overview/landscape of the medal collecting world? I like to read and become fairly knowledgeable before I start to make purchases, so I was curious if you had any

suggestions on where to begin. I know that you wrote a very well received book on Comitia Americana medals which has enjoyed nice write-ups in the Numismatic Bibliomania Society publications. I also recently purchased Q David Bowers' 100 Greatest Tokens and Medals book, and I hope to receive it this week.

Any suggestions that you can provide would be greatly appreciated, and I thank you in advance for your time.

Regards,

Mike

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Good morning, Mike –

I am delighted that the field of medals may be of interest to a collector with your credentials. I am sending along an article that speaks quite directly to your question. However, if you would like to chat on the phone, give me a ring anytime at 617-371-3710. Also, you might want to invest the \$20 to join MCA and get some back issues. The contents in any one month might be weighted toward art medals but the next month will be historical medals and the following month will be topical medals. As the editor, I try to concoct a good mix.

Best,

John

Hank Spangenberg sent us an interesting notice as follows:

Ohio Sesquicentennial Official Medallion

This Gold Bronze Medallion Commemorates Ohio's one hundred and fiftieth birthday (1803-1953).

It was designed by Erwin F. Frey, an Ohio Sculptor, and struck by the Medallic Art Company of New York.

The obverse suggests the State's regard for practical education as symbolized by three allegorical figures, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, and the State's four stable activities, Agriculture, Mining, Manufacturing, and Merchandizing.

The reverse carries nine pictorial remarks: Present State House; Buckeye and Honey Bee; Corn; Horn of Plenty; Aviation; Grapes; Glass and Pottery; Serpent Mound; and Steel. In the center is the official symbol of the Sesquicentennial year.

Dear John,

Again I thank you for your opus, COMITTA AMERICANA. It certainly focused my attention on what I regard are the most significant medals in the history of this country. Also, I want you to know how much I appreciate your MCA Advisory. I look forward to its interesting pages each month.

The virtual impossibility of collecting a complete set of original Comitita Americana medals must perforce lead collectors to accept your suggestion that "one can enjoy a complete set if, along with a few originals, one fills in with electros, casts, and medals struck from copy dies." I would, however, exclude modern bronze copies bonked out by the Philadelphia Mint after 1900, sandblasted, and given a golden coating. The early medals were true works of art, but these are not. In time, oxidation begins under the coating and they develop ugly black splotches. They are just

mass-produced souvenirs unworthy of inclusion by a discriminating collector.

The practicability of your suggestion can be illustrated by the enclosed photographs of my Comitita Americana medals which were recently taken for a planned publication of The Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia. I also have antique copies of all the rest of the military and naval medals authorized by the American Congress: Franklin's 1783 Libertas Americana and Betts 615 are still missing. My bids always just missed, but the medals I did get were surprisingly inexpensive, particularly in the light of current prices. I hope to properly catalogue my collection before long.

I humbly suggest that, although I have several, only one Franklin medal should be included. Great is my respect for that Philadelphian, but no one should have three times the representation as that given to Washington.

I acquired a copper Diplomatic Medal from PC&A for \$65 in 1995, but did not include it for the same reason as Betts gave on page 302. It "was not struck until 1791 and is not colonial".

Instead, I recommend that future studies of medals peripheral to the basic Comitita Americana group include the 1783 Peace of Versailles medal which marked the end of hostilities and which attested to England's recognition of our independence and recognized our right to expand westward.

Certainly these are entirely pertinent: to the set.

Best regards,

Alvan Markle