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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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**Dues:** \$20.00/Year

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**January 11-14, 2007**--New York International  
Numismatic Convention

MCA Meeting **January 13, 2007**

**What's New On Our Website!**

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

[www.medalcollectors.org](http://www.medalcollectors.org)



## From the Editor

The 189 lots in Ford XVI, all of which were medals, realized in excess of \$3,320,000!! Whether we like it or not, medals have moved out of the dark corners where they used to reside. Finishing an old series or starting a new one will require a much bigger investment than was heretofore the case.

That's the bad news. The good news is that more interest means that there are more people with whom we can compare notes and from whom we can learn. This latter is, in our opinion, the crucial point: relative to collectors of early coppers and the colonial coinages, for example, our knowledge of most of the medals we collect is quite superficial. If we begin to share what we know with what others know, the relevant body of knowledge will cumulate geometrically.

If our words sound like we are shilling for the MCA Advisory, you've got it right. If you, our readers, will get off your collective duffs and send us letters, brief comments or even articles, the amount of fun we will all have will grow ever so much faster than the level of prices. Please SPEAK OUT. Please look carefully at what you have acquired and tell us about the breaks or rust or re-cutting or any one of the eccentricities to which medals are subject. Scan the Internet for historical information and tell us what you found. We have an opportunity to make medal collecting richer for ourselves not to mention those who will come.

## BOOK REVIEW (by Robert F. Fritsch)

Adams, John W., *The Medals Concerning John Law and the Mississippi System*. New York: American Numismatic Society (ANS), 2005. List price \$75.00

This short 75 page, nine plate work is Number 167 of the ANS Numismatic Notes and Monograph series. In it, noted author,

editor and MCA President John Adams presents a succinct but thorough history of John Law and his Mississippi System, and the most complete catalog of related medals published to date. Many medals were issued during the period immediately before and after the failure of the title system, most of them satirical in nature. Most were created by German diesinkers using a variety of languages (French, Latin, Dutch, German) to mask their origin in fear of royal reprisals. This book tells their story.

Chapter One is about John Law, a Scotsman whose conduct in early life exiled him from England under threat of death. After years of study on the Continent, he became expert in economics and advanced several theories of his own. After trying to apply them in Scotland but failing to win approval, he immigrated to France, and in 1715 had almost convinced the court of Louis XIV to establish a General Bank under his leadership. Only the death of the Sun King stopped those plans, but he soon convinced the Regent for Louis XV, the Duke of Orléans to allow the formation of the Banque Générale, which "had no lending powers, but could take deposits, issue bank notes, discount bills and letters of exchange, and facilitate transactions in foreign exchange." Law's bank notes were tied to specie payments and its "crowning achievement" was the acceptance of those notes. Law also sold shares in the Bank to raise capital. It became the major royal depository for taxes and effectively increased the nations money supply but did little to decrease the national debt. New companies were soon formed to sell shares in the development of France's holdings in America, and the Banque Générale became the Banque Royale in 1718. Gaining more assets, these companies became known as the Mississippi System and were soon trading for prices far beyond their assets, and by early 1720, the company and Law were in trouble. The bubble burst, Law was disgraced, and many investors lost vast amounts of money. In

retrospect, however, we are told that Law almost achieved his goals, that much of the royal debt was retired, and the quick recovery after the bubble burst indicated that Law's system actually worked. We are given parallels with the modern "dot-com" and Initial Product Offering (IPO) world of the late 1990s as both schemes had stock values far above their assets. We are even given a chart of share prices of the Mississippi Company during the critical months leading up to and following the bust. If any criticism could be leveled against this excellent history it is that those not versed in economic theory may have trouble following the steps in the process.

Chapter Two starts dealing with the book's purpose by describing the major literature that has been published to date, including Benjamin Betts and C. Willis Betts (who we find out were brothers in a later chapter), S. Alexi, H. A. Grueber, J.T. Medina, and Cordula Wohlfahrt; a contemporary Dutch satirical work, and minor works in French. Each author reported some of the medals in the Law series, and a few even included medals that are now known not to belong. Chapter Three shows several tables (uncaptioned) giving a census of known medals in major collections of the past, where they reside now, and the number of specimens in various metals. While the author lists several prominent collectors in the text, they do not appear in the tables, creating some confusion. Also explained is the Sheldon Rarity Scale used in the catalog, with the most common medal listed as R5 (31-75) but the example given does not match the scale nor the listing in Chapter Four.

And Chapter Four is the heart of the book. In it Adams makes the maximum effort not only to describe the medals and their inscriptions, but the actual meaning of each piece. These listings along with the accompanying plates make the high price of the monograph well worth it. It kindled a desire in this reviewer to own some of these medals although their great rarity makes that desire just

a dream. A few items in the listings would benefit from a bit more explanation – major among those is the formation of a *chronogram* first mentioned in Medal 14. It took the reviewer a bit of analysis to figure out how it was formed and translated. There is a reference in the first few listings to an author not mentioned in Chapter Two, plus a false cross-reference to a previous design for Obverse 22. These are minor complaints that are the result of the analytical nature of the reviewer.

This book is highly recommended for the serious medal collector even if their specialty is not of the era or type. It presents a fascinating study of an interesting historical figure and associated medals in a highly readable and informative work.

## **The Magic of the Medal**

(Medallic Art Society of Canada)

Magic. What a beautiful word. One which promises so much, but – hélas – seldom delivers.

To some people Disneyland is a magical experience, a mediocre film which nobody understands is magic, or a glitzy commercial with breathtaking special effects is magical, too.

So what, then, is magic? Can we define it? The answer is no. Has it something to do with our intellect? No. We really do not know what magic is, but, with our senses and emotions, we can feel it. We may describe it as a very rare moment which, like a precious gift, gives us a long lasting joy.

As a medal designer, I will give you one example when you might – just might – experience something like magic.

As we know, the medal – this small object – belongs to you more than any art around you. The painting is on the wall; sculpture stands in its own space; but your medal's real place is in your hand.

Just pick it up and put it in your palm. The warmth of your skin starts to penetrate into the cold metal and you start to feel that this small disk is becoming – in a magical way – somehow a part of you. There is now an interaction between you and your little object. Touch the surface; rub it lovingly. It is only a skin, a cover. The real life is under the skin, just as in any other good sculpture. Take it over to the window. Let some sunlight play on the high points of the design. It might change the expression on a face or add some movement to a figure. You might even discover hidden forms you did not notice before.

But in a different light, with a flick of your finger, you can change this play again and again.

That medal is not a lifeless piece of metal any more. It became your very own medal, which you – and only you – brought to life.

And this is real magic.

CENTENNIAL MEDAL, Dora de Pédery-Hunt 38mm, copper

## **Admiral Vernon Corner**

(by John W. Adams)

The October issue launched what was hoped to be a regular feature. We posed several questions but, to date, have received no answers. Where are you Vernon collectors? We know that this group is numerous and hope that it will come out of hiding.

On November 7th, Stacks auctioned the Glode M. Requa Collection of Vernon medals. The collection contained over 50 varieties, with the quality level unusually high. No provenance was provided, so it is not known how and when Mr. Requa assembled his set, arguably the best in modern times. If one of our readers would undertake to interview Mr. Requa, we would offer a suitable reward.

Whereas the collection was outstanding, the cataloguing of it was even better. Our own

John Kraljevitch was the first ever to go beyond grade and attribution. He was at pains to provide insights on planchets condition, the relationships between varieties, coin turn versus medal turn and die-sinking styles. In short, he treated this ignored series with great dignity and insight. We particularly enjoyed his historic asides on Don Blas (he of one arm and one leg) and the participation of American Colonial troops. For Vernon collectors, this catalogue is an instant classic.

## **French Medals of the American Independence** (by Leonard Augsburger)

Excerpt translated from *Les Arts: Revue Mensuelle des Musées, Collections, Expositions*, Volume XV, 1918, No. 172, pp. 4-5.

Translator's Note: This article, *Les Médailles Françaises de L'indépendance Américaine*, by Charles Saunier, cited by both Zigrosser (Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 101, No. 6, December 1957) and Turner (Numismatist, January 1975) in their studies of the Libertas Americana medal, appears in a volume of *Les Arts* dedicated to American content, including the articles "The Statue of Washington by Jean-Antoine Houdon", "The First French Book about the United States", and "Two American Museums". The cover of this particular issue features a reproduction of Gibelin's early drawing of the reverse of the Libertas medal. This drawing was owned by Saunier, who also authored a biography of Dupré.

"...in the first place, Augustin Dupré had a mission to engrave a medal of singular importance, that of the Independence. LIBERTAS AMERICANA, such was the inscription on the obverse. In the spirit of Congress, this medal was to perpetuate the remembrance of several dates – the Declaration of Independence 1777 (sic), and the

capitulation of generals Burgoyne and Cornwallis (1781) – that no citizen should forget. They were, as well, to serve to recall the sympathies, the overseas assistance that had so largely facilitated the success of the armies of Liberty. As far as the war exploits of the American as well as allied forces, the Constitution which had forbidden titles and decorations was contemplating a vote for a special gold medal reproducing the image of persons or representing the essential acts of persons that Congress wanted to honor.

“But, in fact, outside of American military chiefs and a single Frenchman, the Colonel de Fleury, no other person would be the object of a particular medal. However, the accomplished prowess of Lafayette, Rochambeau, Grasse, and Noaille hadn’t escaped Congress. For example, at the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, Washington indicated to Congress “that the indefatigable ardor that animated the officer and soliders of the allied army had been the principal factor in this important event”, and that it should be announced, in order to not appear ungrateful, the acts of Rochambeau, Grasse, colonel Laurens and the viscount Noailles. Then, Congress, after heavy thanks addressed to the general in chief and the troops, a commitment taken to erect in York, in Virginia, a commemorative column “with the emblems of alliance between the United States and His Majesty”, decided that “two pieces of canon taken from the English army will be offered by the commander in chief of the American army to the counts Rochambeau and Grasse, and that an inscription recalling the decision of Congress will be engraved on each of them” [Saunier translates an abbreviated version of the full quote, see Loubat, *Medallic History of the United States*, p. 86, for the original].

“For his part, Lafayette received a sword of honor. But others merited a durable mark of remembrance: it was the role of the medal of Liberty, to support the testimony of the gratitude of the United States.

“One made, and makes again, in France, a grand case of this medal. It presents itself as one of the best of the American series. The obverse is full of fire as the reverse is one of charming grace. Admire the wonderful shape of the beautiful and energetic Liberty that, the hair in the wind, pike thrown over the shoulder and mounted with a Phrygian cap, rushes in a radiance of ardent glory. On the reverse, the sentiment of antiquity is joined with the elegance of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: Hercules the American infant strangles two serpents, while at his side an elegant Minerva (France), spear at hand, prepares to strike the English leopard, warding off the English attack with a shield decorated in fleur-de-lis. Augustin Dupré had truly created an excellent work, of great note, with a movement, an elegance rarely approached since. An American writer, Monsieur Appleton [no doubt William S. Appleton is referred to] was able to say, “The genius of Dupré worked this idea in a form so magnificent, that this medal occupied a rank elevated among the best productions of modern art”. One strongly appreciates, also, the inscription of the reverse that was from Franklin, as was the invention of the medal itself: NON SINE DIIS ANIMOSUS INFANS (in order to live, the infant has need of the Gods).” [The Latin quote is from Horace.]

“The letters published by Mr. Loubat in his premier work, *The Medallic History of the United States*, indeed show that the initial thought of the medal came from Franklin. On March 4, 1782, he wrote to Robert R. Livingston, secretary of state for foreign affairs, “I was having the idea to strike a medal following the last great event (the surrender of Cornwallis) that you told me about. This medal would represent the United States as Hercules the infant in his cradle, in the progress of smothering two serpents...the destruction of two entire armies occurs rarely in war, one has in this way an idea of the future force of the new empire...”

“The drawing reproduced by *Les Arts* [the early Gibelin rendering] and the inscription that completes it [Gibelin attributes the idea of the medal to Franklin in his own hand] confirms this paternity of Franklin, otherwise affirmed by the tradition of previously published texts [a pity Saunier does not enumerate these other texts]. The author of the drawing is none other than Esprit-Antoine Gibelin, an artist rather forgotten but who had his hour of celebrity as the renovator of the fresco in France. It is he who decorated the Amphitheatre of the School of Surgery in Paris, now the School of Medicine. He also painted the grisailles [gray shades on stone, giving the impression of engraving] on the façade of the Military School, and finally Renouvier in his *Histoire de l’Art sous la Révolution*, attributes to him two other projects relating to medals. One, being the image bound for the reverse of the Bailli de Suffren medal, which Dupré engraved. The other had to do with the Convention [of the French Revolution].

“Such is the atmosphere of the Gibelin drawing. But, there is another thing – Gibelin, who had lived a long time in Italy and who was as much an antiquary as an artist, made his mark in the figure of Minerva who brandishes the lance conforming in image to the best monuments of antiquity. In the execution [of the medal], the gesture was modified, no doubt in response to a more modern conception of arms of combat. The cradle, specified by Franklin, also lost importance. The [Gibelin] drawing, at the same time that it carries the written proof of the participation of the great American, *argumentum dedit Benjamin Franklin* [Gibelin’s written note under the drawing], testifies, one time more, of the care given other studies to the motifs in the field of the medal. Franklin, an elevated spirit, chose the subject, while the Academy of Inscriptions and Fine Letters, a competent society, chose the literary comment. The artists were competent in such matters – Boullogne and Coypel, under Louis XIV, Bouchardon and Cochin under

Louis XV. Agreeing to what was shown, the engraver executed the work after having discussed, modified, and invoked the rules of their arts and the practical matters of minting.



“The Libertas medal was ready in 1783, and, on April 15th Franklin advised Robert R. Livingston of the sending to his address an example in silver for the President of Congress, accompanied by two others in copper for himself, noting, “the striking in copper seems to be better” [Franklin seemingly envisioned the needs of future auction cataloguers wishing to present the medal of inferior composition in the best light]. He also announced the expedition of a certain number of examples for members of Congress. At the same time, he advised his correspondent of the gift to the king and queen of France [Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette] of two medals in gold, and of silver examples to each of the Royal Ministers, “as

proof to future generations of the obligations we have to this nation". A silver medal was also given to the Grand Master of the Order of Malta, Rohan-Puldoc, who had favored the cause of Independence." [The two gold examples given to the King and Queen of France, arguably the most significant American numismatic artifacts in history are today missing.]

**Our congratulations to Leonard for submitting eloquent proof that the Libertas is admired on both sides of the Atlantic—ed.**

### **Rudyard Kipling**

: Born 12/30/1865. Died 1/18/1936. (by Henry Waterson)

Rudyard Kipling was 70 for only 20 days. And thereby hangs this tale.

It all began at a coin show in Long Beach, California, June 1, 2001. Larry Elman sold me a medal of Rudyard Kipling by Julio Kilenyi. This medal is listed in BRITISH COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS AND THEIR VALUES by Christopher Eimer, B.A Seaby, London, 1987 p.234.

The entry reads:

2037 Rudyard Kipling, Memorial 1936  
Obv. Bust r., draped. RUDYARD  
KIPLING. Rev. Two female  
Figures on a mountain peak: one  
standing, holding a lyre; the  
Other reclining, her arm resting on  
a book. D.76mm. By J.  
Kilenyi. See Plate 52. Bronze, 25  
Pounds

(Joseph) Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) author

As you can see in the illustration the two allegorical women probably represent two of the Greek Muses but I have often thought they should be Kipling's two sisters, Truth and Fiction from "The Legend of Truth."

This story languished for about a year and a half until an item turned up on eBay in December 2002. Up for auction was a letter from Rudyard Kipling to Julio Kilenyi. It was typed on Bateman's stationery, dated 6<sup>th</sup> December 1935. It read:

Dear Mr. Kilenyi,

The medallion has just arrived and I make you my best thanks.

It is a beautiful bit of work (I regret that I can't wear it) and the good will that comes with it makes it even more beautiful.

Most sincerely,

(Signed) Rudyard Kipling

Needless to say, I acquired this letter. It came with a Certificate of Authenticity that guaranteed the letter to be genuine. The text of this letter raised some questions I wished to pursue. It would be hard for this to be Eimer's 1936 Memorial if Kipling received one in 1935 and sent the artist a thank-you note the same year. However, Kipling could be referring to some other medal he got from Kilenyi. I decided to try and find out. I wrote to Christopher Eimer and sent him a copy of Kipling's letter to Kilenyi. Here is his reply:

What a fascinating document Kipling's letter on the medal is! My dating of the Kilenyi medal was based, I have to confess, on Kipling's year of death and not on manuscript or any other evidence. The letter that you have in your possession is clear evidence that Kilenyi's medal was not produced on Kipling's death, but some other as yet unknown reason.

Eimer was a victim of the Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc sequence snare. Next I wrote to Alan Richards, a Kipling scholar and bibliographer. I gave him my story to date and asked for his input. He responded immediately; "As it happens, I can help." It turned out he also owned an example of the medal and knew of a reference to it in the Columbia University



Libraries publication called *The Engel Collection*, 1967. He quoted the following excerpt: "Bronze medallion commissioned by Solton Engel and designed by Julio Kilenyi in 1935 in honor of Kipling's seventieth birthday (12/30/35)". The citation describes the medal and notes that eleven-inch obverse and reverse castings, mounted on a board and a three-inch example are in the collection at Columbia.

This was exciting information. Eimer's "unknown reason" had a solution. It was a birthday medal. But like any good JEOPARDY researcher you always want to confirm an answer with a second source. Alan Richards had also quoted an article by Kipling collector Matilda Tyler in the *Yale University Library Gazette*, "...Kipling's letter of thanks to Kilenyi must have been one of the last he wrote. Reference is made to the medal, with a photograph, in the *Kipling Journal* of March, 1936." Here was that second source and an answer to a previous question. I had checked the *Kipling Journal Index* in 2002 and the only hit I got for keyword "medal" was Solton Engel in *Journal #37*. I thought he was a sculptor who had also done a Kipling medal. He was someone I should look up sometime. Two "somes" in the same sentence is the procrastinator's mantra. Now knowing what I was looking for, I found a bound copy of *Kipling Journal #37* in the UCLA Young Reference Library. It contained a fine illustration of both sides of the medal and this quote from Solton Engel on page six. "My friend Julio Kilenyi, an artist of great distinction here in the United States, prepared a portrait study and design for the two sides of the medal which he hoped would become a message of appreciation from America and Americans to Rudyard Kipling on the occasion of his seventieth birthday." So I found my second source. This was the issue of the *Kipling Journal* that announced the death of Kipling to the membership. The only artwork in the issue was Kilenyi's medal so it is easy to

see how it could be construed as a memorial too.

Meanwhile, I was searching various databases at Harvard University for a Kilenyi medal of Charles Eliot, a well-known President of Harvard and I got a hit on Kipling in the Hollis Catalog. I did a call-round the various collections and found Peter Accardo, the Acquisitions Bibliographer at the Houghton Library. I told him about the Kipling medal and his thank-you note to Kilenyi. He said he thought he knew exactly what I was talking about and he'd check it and call me back in twenty minutes. And so he did. He told me that both the medal and a copy of "my" letter are on permanent display in a case down just two flights from his office. My Certificate of Authenticity had suddenly gotten a little shaky. He also put a letter in the mail to me that he said was full of surprises. The letter was from Solton Engel to Flora Livingston. She was the great Harvard Bibliographer of Kipling in the twenties and the thirties. Here is that letter on Engel letterhead dated January 21, 1936, just three days after Kipling died.

My dear Mrs. Livingston:

Last month, for the seventieth birthday of Mr. Kipling, my friend Julio Kilenyi, the eminent sculptor who designed Byrd, Lindbergh, and Edison Medals among many others, sent to Mr. Kipling his new Kipling Medal of which I am sending you a copy under separate cover. Mr. Kipling replied to him as per the enclosed reproduction of the original letter.

Two hundred medals were struck off of which the artist kept twenty-five. The other one hundred and seventy-five I have taken over merely to guarantee the cost of the entire venture and to keep the medals out of sacrilegious hands.

To date I have given medals to Mr. Drake, the Kipling Society in London, the Grolier Club here and to a very few of my closest friends. I am by no means anxious to distribute the entire number but I should be

very glad to have you advise me as to some persons whom I might easily overlook unless I were guided.

I plan to go abroad next month and shall take a few medals with me to London and Paris. Outside of Major General Dunsterville, I know of no one in London unless you think Mr. Watt should receive one.

The letter of Mr. Kipling I have had reproduced in a very small edition—200 copies—by a photographic process, with the idea of having each recipient of the medal receive a copy of the letter.

I know that you will understand the great joy that I have had in making possible the completion of this work of art; but I assure you that this pleasure would be as nothing except for the joy of sharing it with you and the late Mr. Kipling's other warmest admirers.

Sincerely yours

(Signed) Solton Engel

This extraordinary letter was source number three. The medal was a Rudyard Kipling 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute. It is not often that you get to complete the circle and actually find out all that you had set out to discover. This is one of those rare cases where you are left with no dangling participles.

Alan Richards had previously pointed out that there were forgeries of Kipling's thank-you note on the autograph market. I suspect that these forgeries are in fact Engel's contemporary reproductions and that what I have managed to do is reunite one of the medals with one of those letters. I now have one of 200 two-piece Solton Engel Sets. I thank the Good Lord that I acquired my Set after Mr. Engel ceased to be in charge of distribution. I do not think that my hands would have ever measured up to his moral yardstick.

My Certificate of Authenticity has also gone from shaky to shattered and now lies in

200 pieces. In the future I will need to be a little more skeptical of Certificates of Authenticity issued by authorizing bodies like Louie's Juke Joint.

I would like to thank Christopher Eimer, Alan Richards and Peter Accardo for their most helpful responses to my enquiries. Had I done this research today, the Kipling Society website has progressed mightily since 2002 and all would have been revealed more quickly than it was.

Harry Waterson, 2/16/04 (revised 6/30/06)

**A pretty neat piece of sleuthing—ed.**

### **Flown Treasure from the Space Race**

(by Howard C. Weinberger)

(This article complements the one entitled "The Astronaut Medals" by Frederic Withington in our May/June 2006 issue. Ted addressed mainly the beginning of the medal series and the Gemini medals, with only brief coverage of the Apollo medals. Howard Weinberger addresses only the Apollo series, and adds more detail. As Ted said in his article, Howard is the main expert on the subject---ed.)

Two Hundred years from now, if past history is a guide, the memory of the 20th century may be highlighted by only three or four events. As we reflect upon the events that history will be sure to remember, the space race, especially the six Apollo missions that successfully landed man on the moon, is sure to be at the top of the list.

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#### **History**

The space program and especially the manned missions of the 1960s and 1970s are permanent impressions in the minds of most people who lived during them. The excitement of Sputnik, of Alan Shepard becoming the first American in space, John Glenn the first to orbit

the Earth, Ed White the first to walk in space, and the dream of man walking on the Moon coming true with Apollo 11. These are some of the highlights of this astounding era. Naturally, of the millions of people who were witness to those early days of the space race, there are thousands of them that became huge fans of the space program. These people, along with thousands of new fans that were not born at the time, but who have read the many books or seen the many movies that have been made about the era, continue to be excited about these historic and thrilling days gone by.

Gold and silver coins, trinkets and buried pirate treasure usually come to mind when you hear stories of the old treasure ships. But, not all the treasure is at the bottom of the ocean. The astronauts of the Apollo era carried gold and silver coin-like medallions aboard their spaceships, too. These were The Robbins Medallions, small coin-like medals about the size of a half dollar with the mission emblem struck in high relief on the front. The reverse of a medal displays the names of the astronauts, the launch, landed and return dates, and sometimes the spacecraft names and Moon landing site. These medals were struck for each of the Apollo missions as personal mementos for the astronauts to commemorate their respective historic missions.

The spacecrafts were very small, barely allowing room for the astronauts to stretch. Weight was a particular concern, so the astronauts were permitted very few personal items to take aboard. There were only three commemorative items that were taken aboard a mission - Crew Patches, Commemorative Postal Envelopes, and The Robbins Medallions.

The Robbins Medals are among the most important of the artifacts that accompanied man to the Moon because they are documented as flown and because they depict the mission facts and emblem. The Crew Patches and Commemorative Postal Envelopes are beautiful too, but unless they are accompanied by a letter from one of the

astronauts, certifying that they were flown and from their collection, it is difficult to be sure if they were. NASA is still having replica patches produced today for collectors that are identical to the old ones. There are also many other items being collected that were flown, like pieces of the spacecraft, spacesuits, flight manuals and even left over freeze-dried food packages. Beware though as many of these items are somewhat generic to a flight, and once again are only as good as their documentation. However, as long as the serial number checks out, you can be sure that a Robbins Medallion was flown.

Information about The Robbins Medallions as well as any personal items that the astronauts took aboard with them was guarded. NASA honored the privacy of the astronauts, but was also sensitive about any potential negative publicity that could arise if it was thought that astronauts were taking souvenirs into space that they could later sell for profit.

The history of the medallions and the mission emblems is interesting reading in itself. The crews either designed or helped to design their mission emblems with an in-house NASA artist. There is much meaning in these designs and a lot of thought that went into each emblem design and the naming of the spacecrafts. For example, the Apollo 12 emblem pictures a Clipper ship sailing around the Moon because all of the crew was Navy. The background pictures four stars, one for each of the crew and one for C.C. Williams, a member of the original crew that died in an air crash prior to the mission and who was then replaced with Alan Bean. The Apollo 15 medallions are struck from silver treasure that was salvaged from a Spanish treasure ship that sunk off the Florida coast near Cape Canaveral. Consider the incredible trail that this silver followed! The Spanish had looted it from Latin America and attempted to return back to their Spanish homeland when it sunk to the bottom of the ocean during a devastating storm. It was then

salvaged and taken to the Moon and back 256 years later.

The Robbins Company of Attleboro, Massachusetts began producing the medallions for the astronauts starting with Apollo 7. They also produced the medallions for Skylab, Apollo-Soyuz and they continue to strike them today for all of the STS Space Shuttle and Expedition missions. The process has evolved since those early days, but essentially Robbins would work with each crew to create their medal design. The Apollo missions carried between 80 and 450 of the sterling silver medals, and between 3 and 7 medals made of fourteen carat gold. The medals were only available to the astronauts. They were produced as keepsakes for themselves, their families and friends.

And they were ordered at their own expense.

The gold medals are not likely to see the light of day though, and any gold medals that do come up for sale will likely sell at great premiums to their silver counterparts when it is realized that there was usually only one gold medal struck for each member of a particular crew. There are only 49 gold medals from all Apollo missions combined. One of these medals might be compared to an artifact that was aboard Christopher Columbus' Santa Maria, or the Mayflower.

The Robbins Medals traveled right beside the legends and heroes of the space race during their moments of glory. All flown medals were packed in a locker aboard the command module. Only a handful of the gold medals were taken in the lunar module down to the lunar surface. They are a medium able to transcend the holder back to the moment. Knowing that these medals were right there gives you the chills!

We tend to take for granted what was accomplished. I think to some extent it is because most of the players are still alive. However, when you consider the big picture, the accomplishment itself, which had been a

dream in the minds of men since they first looked up into the night sky, may eventually be remembered as the most significant event of the 2nd millennium itself.

Memories of the Apollo Space Program and the interest in it will be long lived. As history looks back upon the pioneering days of space exploration, the accomplishments of the Apollo Program, with all of its engineering mastery, will certainly be among the most important and significant events of the 20th century.

Considering the small size of the Apollo spacecrafts, how few personal items the astronauts were permitted to take with them, and how interest in the Apollo Program continues to grow, it is likely that artifacts that were flown aboard these spacecrafts will continue to become more scarce and in demand. Today people are collecting most anything that was flown aboard the Apollo missions, including parts of the spacecrafts and spacesuits, pages of flight manuals and heat shield fragments.

The Robbins Medals were among the astronauts personal possessions that were taken on these missions. They are one of few documented commemorative items that were actually flown. And, unlike most other flown items, these medals are engraved with the history of a mission, including its emblem; the dates; the names of the crew; and, in some cases, the names of the spacecrafts and the landing site on the Moon.

Collectors and historians have only been able to get bits and pieces of information about the medals through Freedom of Information Act filings, by contacting NASA and the Astronaut Flight Office, and by conducting personal interviews with astronauts and others who were close to the space program. The story would have remained hidden if not for the tenacity of Howard Weinberger. His unrelenting desire to own one of the medals eventually led him to the entire story.

It began with Walt Cunningham and Apollo 7. Cunningham wanted a special memento of his flight into space. He worked with a jeweler in Titusville, Florida to have a commemorative medal made for himself with the emblem and details of the Apollo 7 mission. As the jeweler began the task, other astronauts heard about Cunningham's idea and wanted to order one or more of the medallions. As the requests increased, the jeweler contacted The Robbins Company of Attleboro, Massachusetts, a manufacturing company that specializes in casting and stamping. He gave the responsibility of producing the actual medals to The Robbins Company, while he served as the middleman for Apollo 7 and 8. The Robbins Company took complete control over all projects after Apollo 8.

Cy(ril) Baker, then the administrator of the Astronaut Flight Office in Houston, Texas, helped the astronauts with the logistics of ordering the medallions, returning them for engraving and finishing. The astronauts submitted their order requests for the medallions and their payments to the Astronaut Flight Office. The Astronaut Flight Office Fund paid the Robbins Company.

It is important to note that the Astronaut Flight Office, not NASA, commissioned these medals. They were produced primarily as personal mementos for the astronauts and were never intended for the public. Only astronauts affiliated with the Astronaut Flight Office were able to purchase them. The purchases of these medallions by the astronauts were private transactions.

Information about the medallions was guarded, like most other things that the astronauts took aboard with them. This was partly to protect the astronaut's privacy, but also because NASA was sensitive to any potentially negative publicity that could result if it was reported that astronauts were profiting from selling flown items. After all, these missions were funded with public money. In fact, because of a few incidents, it eventually

became policy that the astronauts were not to commercialize the contents of their PPKs (Personal Preference Kits) at the risk of being released from the flight program.

The Robbins Company would generally work closely with one of the astronauts from the crew to create their flight medallion. The medallions were struck two to three months prior to the flight. The serial numbers and flight dates were not engraved prior to the flight. Except for Apollo 7 and 8, the medallions were not finished or polished until after they were flown. Because the medallions on Apollo 7 and 8 came back scratched, it was decided that the medallions made for future missions would be finished after their return to Earth.

The medallions were tightly packed together and stored in a locker aboard the command module, except for a small number of them that may have been put in a PPK to take to the lunar surface. Upon their return to Earth, the medallions were sent back to The Robbins Company for the finishing process. This is when the launch, landed, return dates and serial numbers were engraved. After they were finished, the medallions were put into their own individual plastic boxes for safe storage. The boxes were made of two pieces of interlocking plastic that hinged together. They were 2 x 2 inches square. The bottom piece of the box was black plastic and the top piece was clear. A dark gray square foam padding was put inside the box for the medal to securely rest on. A small white sticker with the serial number was put on the bottom of each box. These boxes were not flown. The finished medallions were then sent back to the Astronaut Flight Office for distribution to the astronauts who had ordered them.

#### FLOWN GOLD MEDALLIONS (Population data)

Apollo 07----> 3\* (actual number struck is unknown)

Apollo 08----> 3 (all were made into pins, and each contains a diamond)

Apollo 09----> 3

Apollo 11----> 3  
 Apollo 10----> 4 (each contains a diamond, and one was made into a pin)  
 Apollo 16----> 5  
 Apollo 13----> 6  
 Apollo 14----> 6  
 Apollo 15----> 6 (three were accidentally left aboard the Lunar module and lost)  
 Apollo 17----> 6 (two have one diamond, one has three diamonds)  
 Apollo 12----> 7 (five were made into pins, four of which contain a diamond. One not made into a pin also contains a diamond)  
 Total number of flown gold medallions = 49

There is little doubt that in historical retrospect, the Apollo Program will stand out above all of the others and will be most fondly remembered by history. It attracted worldwide audiences, created a lot of excitement, and sometimes, intense drama. Most importantly, these flights were the first to leave the Earth to take man to another world. There are thousands of items that were made to commemorate the Apollo missions over the years. Collectors have begun to sort through them to decide which will still be considered important to collectors in the future. Today's short list of most desirable items includes artifacts that were flown aboard the actual missions and autographs of the astronauts and the other key contributors that made the Space Program possible.

There are many flown space items, from small pieces of heat shields and towlines, to control knobs and pages of flight manuals. Some have been marketed nicely, offering signed certificates of authenticity to go along with them. There are also unique items that were flown, like waste collection devices, freeze-dried food packages, and parts of spacesuits.

Finally, there are the ultimate flown items. The personal possessions of the astronauts, like dog tags, PPKs, and even tools

that they used. Many of these items are beyond the reach of most collectors and will likely be owned by a museum some day. The Robbins Medallions were among these personal possessions. Their beauty lies not only in what they represent and where they have been; but, also as works of art. These beautiful coin-like artifacts have the highlights of the mission history artfully sculpted and struck in precious metal; both gold and silver.

The Robbins Medallions resemble, physically and symbolically, treasure from the exploring and pioneering sailing ships that took man across the oceans centuries ago. Gold and silver treasure usually comes to mind when recalling those historic days of treasure ships and pirates. The ships that man sailed into space carried similar treasure. They were not intended to end up in the marketplace, but the Robbins Medallions have fetched impressive prices at auction over the last few years. This is despite the fact that so little was known about them at the time.

The two books about the medals are still available by sending your check and \$5 shipping to:

Asset Alternatives, Inc.  
 PO BOX 544  
 Birmingham, Michigan 48012-00544

The first book – *The Robbins Medallions - Flown Treasure from the Apollo Space Program* tells a history of the medals and the missions, and provides population and serial numbers of the medals. \$19.95

The second book – *Collecting the Robbins Medallions – Flown Treasure from the Manned Space Programs* has updated information since the first book and provides population and serial numbers for all missions after Apollo, including Skylab, ASTP, Space Shuttle, Expedition and long-duration space flight. \$39.95

## Letters to the Editor

Hi John,

I was fortunate at the Ford IPM auction to purchase the small George III PM—now it will make a nice companion with my John Johnson 1786 Indian chief distinction. I am still on the prowl for a William Johnson, (John's dad) distinction. I would appreciate it if you would kindly pass along any information of any upcoming sales or auctions on the Johnson family or French & Indian War material in the future. Met some great young historians: Christopher Fox, Erik Goldstein, and John Kraljevich at the Guthman auction in Portsmouth—all who share like you and I, a love of Americana, especially Indian Peace Medals.

Regards,

Ron Slovack

Dear John

Many thanks for the mention of the Baldwin Auction in MCA Editorial. The cataloguer (and I am sure I can speak for the auctioneers too) much appreciates it.

Best regards

Daniel Fearon

**As many of you know, Baldwin's have long been a source of high quality medals and, in recent months, have become even more active in a variety of markets. Ed.**

Dear John,

I very much enjoyed the latest issue of *MCA Advisory*. Attractive in appearance and with a wonderful diversity of articles. I do

question one statement which can hardly be face: you said that it would be beyond your competence to discuss federal Indian peace medals in the Ford Sale. I beg to differ. I have yet to read *anything* that you have done that was not masterfully prepared.

Medals are indeed exciting, and I enjoy mine immensely. At the Ford Sale I landed three of the Seasons Medals at the event, and bought a fourth from Tony Terranova after the sale. These are among my favorite American pieces—right along with what I know is one of your favorites too: the 1787 Columbia and Washington Medal.

All the best to you, and thanks again for a great issue.

Sincerely yours,

Q. David Bowers