

The Best Investment I ever Made

By Michael Moline

I've enjoyed coins my entire life thanks to a helpful hand from several mentors. Even more fulfilling, I've paid it forward to young collectors, helping them begin their own enjoyment of our hobby. I always try to emphasize the importance of knowing the values of coins, what factors comprise a coin's value, and how to buy and sell intelligently. Believe me, kids who stay interested in coins are usually the same ones who understood that concept early on.

When I was about 9, I'd ride my bicycle to our local Valley Plaza Stamp & Coin store. Though I was just a kid, the owner spent time with me. He made a point of showing me around, stopping specifically in a section of the store called the "Bid Board," a place to buy or sell coins like an auction. Every Friday evening 30 to 40 people would attend as bids closed. They would discuss coins, history, and many other topics. It was a great place to learn from people who enjoyed coins.

The first coin I saw on the Bid Board was an 1864 Indian Head penny. So strong was the impression it made on me that I convinced myself that this coin had been in Abraham Lincoln's pocket. He *must* have touched it! I bid on the coin and bought it for a dime. How I cherished that coin! I took it to school to show my friends and teachers. I was hooked! I managed to save about \$30 from my \$3 per week allowance, and started buying more coins. I purchased a Dansco Type Set Album and began to bid. I purchased several, and was especially drawn to those cool 20 cent pieces.

I wanted more coins, but I didn't have the cash. I found a solution, both practical and profitable: First I placed some of the more common coins back on the Bid Board and paid careful attention to how much they brought, and tried to figure out why I made or lost money. By the time I was 12 years old, I was able to buy and sell gold coins with some friends for a profit. Those early experiences at the Coin Store created a lot of opportunities for me.

I will always be grateful to Curtis and Bruce, the owners of the store. Their attention, along with similar kindnesses from a few other coin dealers,

gave me the confidence and knowledge to eventually enter numismatics as a career. When I was 20, I accepted a job managing the retail counter at a Beverly Hills Coin firm. Two years later, in 1981, I opened my own coin store in Beverly Hills, and began to meet all kinds of wonderful, influential people, including numismatic legend Abner Kreisberg. Abner, a pioneer in the coin business, owned The Coin Gallery in Beverly Hills. Abner never viewed me as competition, but as a budding colleague. He helped me at a young age, mentoring me and always encouraging my collecting passions, all the while keeping me focused on the business potential that coins could offer. During the long and successful career that followed, I have traveled the world, and profited from this wonderful pursuit which allowed me to semi-retire while still in my 40s.

But the bug has never gone away, so I've recently found a happy home back in the coin business, as Senior Vice President, at the Beverly Hills showroom of Heritage Auction Galleries, the largest coin company in the world!

Now I try to teach as many new collectors as I can about the amazing Heritage web site HA.com. Membership is free and gives access to searchable auction results archives with 2 million descriptions, photos and prices, plus newsletters, press releases, news, ask an expert, view a coin grading tutorial. Heritage Auctions' web site is essential to any investor or collector who wants to know more about coins. What an incredible resource for learning the real market value of any coin!

I also enjoy being part of Heritage because they are as committed as I am to helping young collectors. Rare coin collecting and dealing has been a wonderful lifelong pursuit for me. I have always enjoyed the coins for their historical perspective, but understanding their value and potential at an early age was the key for me. Imagine being able to enjoy something that much while making a living from it. The fulfillment that comes from a career one truly loves should be every parent's dream for his or her children!

That's why I am so passionate about passing numismatics on to the next generation – so that others can enjoy what I feel so lucky to have.