

The life and times of Jim Ziegler

Numismatic TALES By George Manz

We have much to learn from those coin collectors who pioneered coin collecting in Canada. While many coins of these pioneers have already died, I hope this series will stimulate interest in the history of Canadian coin collecting.

This is the first in a series of interviews with coin collectors and coin dealers who have interesting stories to pass on to all collectors, both young and old alike. I hope to interview collectors from other parts of Canada after I complete this series on collectors from Saskatchewan.

Jim Ziegler was born in 1920 on a farm near Francis, Saskatchewan. When he was seven years old, young Jim jumped off a high wagon box and fell awkwardly, smashing his hip. His injuries were so severe they administered the last rites during his five-and-a-half year stay in hospital.

But Jim Ziegler was not going to let a disability get in the way of having a full and productive life.

During World War II, he got an assortment of jobs, including a six-month stint in a mental hospital (he didn't like it there) as well as working as a postal employee in Montmartre, Saskatchewan. Ziegler quit that job because he says, "there was no future in the post office because the chap I took over from was overseas and his job would be waiting for him when he got back to Canada."

Jim also worked in an aircraft plant in Fort William, Ontario, manufacturing airplanes for the war effort.

Jim then got a job working for Saskatchewan Government Insurance in 1946. He married his wife Irene in 1950. Jim retired from SGI in 1982.

Jim Ziegler began coin collecting when he was still a youngster. He remembers the day when he found a beautiful Victorian 10-cent in pocket change. He told me that the choice was between keeping the coin or buying an ice cream



cone. The ice cream cone won out that day.

He started seriously collecting coins in 1951 and became one of the first members of the newly-formed Regina Coin Club in 1953.

The Regina Coin Club was one of the earliest coin clubs in Canada affiliated to the CNA. Its earliest members included Roy Miller, Cec Tannahill and Scoop Lewry. Both Tannahill and Lewry went on to become CNA presidents; while Miller has bought and sold some of the best examples of Canadian coins for the last 50 years.

When Jim first began collect-

ing, most of the Canadian coins he picked up were from pocket change.

He worked hard to try to collect one coin from each date, purchasing some of the key date coins from dealers.

One of the most difficult coins to obtain back then was the 1921 silver 5-cent. At the time, little was known about how rare this coin really was. So in 1952 Jim purchased one that was graded VF. The coin's value at the time was \$30, but Jim got a deal and only paid \$25 for it.

Jim recalls that in 1957 he was hard up for cash. "I had

the house mortgaged, I wanted a car, so I sold it to Cec Tannahill" for \$125, making a \$100 profit. Ziegler admits "that was the biggest mistake I ever made."

Today that coin would be worth about \$3,500. But back then, coins were cheap and you could purchase key dates for a fraction of today's price.

It was Hans Zoell who first got Jim Ziegler interested in errors and coin varieties.

He fondly remembers the many coins he purchased from Zoell in Regina and recalls selling some of his errors and varieties to Hans, who later published a series of Canadian coin variety catalogues.

Jim then showed me some of his error coins, including an aluminum 25-cent and a copper 25-cent.

He kindly let me borrow some of his collection in order to scan the coins for this article.

Before I left, he gave me a gift.

The gift turned out to be a set of what he calls "twins." The two 1-cent coins are almost identical, both having only been partially in the collar when the blanks were struck in 1980.

At 80 years of age, Jim Ziegler still enjoys coin collecting and regularly attends Regina Coin Club meetings and shows.

George Manz writes for numismatic publications in Canada, the U.S. and Great Britain. He owns George Manz Coins, specializing in Canadian, Newfoundland, U.S. and world coins, as well as Canadian paper money, commemorative medals, tokens, numismatic books, and odd and curious money.

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