

Welcome to the C.N.A. E-Bulletin Number 28 – December 10, 2005

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INTRODUCTION

In the past couple of weeks, I have been dealing with problems that started when I could not open my computer due to a defective sector on my hard drive. This started a chain reaction that lost all e-mails that I had ever received dealing with the C.N.A. E-Bulletin as well as my e-mail listing (other than the mailing list for this bulletin, fortunately).

Not only did this experience get me thinking of backing up more frequently, but it also brought to my attention all the different passwords that a person uses in their daily life. As I was reentering my codes for all the e-mail addresses used at my house (at last count, seven), I also wondered when was the last time I changed passwords for my bank cards, computers, cell phones, home security system and whatever else. Although I knew enough to stay away from things like my name or initials, the digits of our various telephones, 123456, ABC123 and the like, I had not given any thought to what the most famous password in the world is. What is that, you might ask?

People who conduct surveys will tell you that no matter what people are told, they will indeed use the four last digits of their telephone or the last four digits of their credit card (that way, they don't have to write down the secret numbers and keep the note in their wallet, right next to their credit card!). But how many of you would have ever thought of using the world's most famous password? Okay, the suspense must be killing you by now!

It's "Open Sesame!" It certainly opened all doors for Mr. Baba.

WE HAVE MAIL

From Name Withheld: "I was returning from a buying trip to the USA with a batch of coins and made a declaration at the border. I was escorted into the customs search area and the customs official asked me to wait. I was the only person of the 300+ on my plane to declare anything!! The customs area was set up to handle maybe 20 people at a time and I was all alone. After a few minutes a young officer came out and spent the next half hour going through all my bags looking for drugs!! He even checked out the edges of my credit cards to see if I had been chopping coke with them!! I don't even drink coffee let alone do exotic drugs. When we talked about the coins and he asked about the price marked on the coins verses the price reported, I explained that the marked price was retail and I had paid dealer wholesale prices as declared. He spent about one minute dealing with my declared items and over a half-hour searching for drugs. When he said he wished to search my pockets I had had enough. I flat out refused to have my pockets searched. He informed me that the courts had found that customs had the right to search pockets. I told him I didn't care what the courts had found, I was not going to let him search my person without a charge and that it wouldn't be the first time I had defied a court order to defend my personal freedom. This resulted in a stalemate that ended with him offering to "observe" that I had nothing in my pockets. This involved going to a separate area where I patted my pockets and declared that there was nothing in them. This was the end of the interview. I left without having to pay any tax, duty, or "opening" fees. I think that this official was probably bored and amused himself by a needless search. I have joined the ranks of travelers who have nothing to declare and have had no problem at the border for years." - Thanks for sharing your experience. With the high limit of what you can bring into the country, most people certainly have nothing "taxable" to declare.

From Joe Boling: "In the last bulletin, you stated 'On the basis of the above fine, which is nothing more than the amount of duty and taxes payable on the item, why should I ever declare anything?' The FINE is the amount of duty and taxes payable on the watch - that's in addition to the duty and taxes ALREADY PAYABLE. So it's a 100% fine. She owes double what she would have owed had she declared it properly." – That is not the impression I got from the article, but now that you brought it up, I am sure you are right.

PIRATES ATTACK CRUISE LINER – PART FOUR

And the final installment about the inept pirates in speedboats with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades that attempted to board a cruise ship and cargo ships from rubber rafts but were outrun. We also told you about pirates who were successful in hijacking a merchant ship, kidnapping its 26 crew members at gunpoint, and demanded a ransom for release of the crew.

The Somali government has signed a two-year contract with an American marine security company in a bid to end a surge of piracy off the lawless Horn of America country. New York-based Topcat Marine Security Inc. signed a deal worth more than \$50 million (US) with the Somali Transitional Federal Government in Nairobi, Kenya, to escort ships plying Somali waters.

HOW RICH IS RICH ENOUGH?

Here is a question every one of us has thought of a number of times: how much money would you need before you wouldn't care if you ever made another dime? In other words, what would it take to make you feel truly wealthy? Movie star wealthy? Take-this-job-and-shove-it wealthy?

Give us your thoughts at cnanews@look.ca, both how much and why. We will publish some answers next issue.

SO WHERE WILL GOLD GO?

Gold recently hit the \$500 an ounce level. Although still far below the \$873 an ounce that gold futures were going for in 1980, some people are speculating that it will reach an all-time high in the not too distant future.

Newmont Mining Corp., the world's largest producer of gold, came out recently and stated that "the price of the precious metal may rise to more than \$1,000 (U.S.) an ounce in the next five to seven years." Maybe so, but aren't they the ones who are digging it out of the ground and selling it?

I don't know about you, but I rather hear it from people other than mining companies, the stockbroker who wants to sell you shares, or the guy you met at the racetrack that tells you he has a friend who is looking for investors to pool everyone's money to invest in gold futures.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS PIGGY BANK

Did you see the suggestive Family Circus cartoon in the papers last Tuesday?

The cartoon had the father lying on his back, pretending to be sleeping or unconscious. The boy says to his sister: "The horse at the mall always comes back to life when you put in a quarter."

Now, I have a question: If he is lying on his stomach, where would you put the quarters?

CANADA'S LARGEST LOTTERY WINNER BEING SUED BY EX-WIFE

When is an ex-wife not an ex-wife? According to Canadian Press, when you win \$30 million and the ex-spouse goes to court to strike down their divorce.

The ex-wife of Canada's biggest lottery winner went to court in June 2004 asking the court to strike down her divorce and force Raymond Sobeski to pay her a \$500,000 lump sum and \$10,000 monthly support. She claims the "marriage" continued after the divorce, and the relationship ended only after Sobeski came forward in April 2004 to claim a \$30 million lottery prize he won a year earlier. The case is still winding through the courts.

One thing that I don't understand is this: If she is claiming that the divorce should be set aside and, therefore, she would become entitled to some of his new-found money, by the same logic, wouldn't she be entitled to half of his winnings?

ANCIENT COINS FOR SALE REAL CHEAP!

A couple went over to Egypt on vacation and since they both loved Flea Markets, they wound up spending their time in a few stalls that sold coins. In one of them, they saw a quantity of ancient coins that they knew were way under priced. He reasoned that they were acquired by the vendor some time ago who didn't keep up with its increase in value, so wound up buying a quantity of them.

As the deal for the coins was being finalized, the vendor told him that he had something unique for sale, namely the skull of Queen Cleopatra. He admitted that he and some friends robbed her tomb right after it was discovered and before security could be arranged to protect its contents. He was willing to let the Canadian have it for only \$100. The Canadian thought that it was a good deal and he agreed to purchase it.

The vendor called out to his son to run home and bring back the skull of Queen Cleopatra hidden in the box in the basement. As the boy started on his way, he asked the Canadian if he wanted the skull of the young Queen Cleopatra or the adult Cleopatra.

Most things you read in the C.N.A. E-Bulletin actually happened. This has NOT been one of them! It was told at a luncheon for stamp collectors I attended.

ANOTHER WAY OF ACQUIRING COINS

They must have a lot of really rich people in California who are in the habit of abandoning safety deposit boxes, routinely leaving behind expensive things. What do you do with these valuables?

The California State Controller's Office awarded Superior Galleries, Inc. (www.sgbh.com) the contract to be its official auctioneer for the annual live/simulcast auction of unclaimed contents from safe deposit boxes and safekeeping vaults from throughout the state over the next two years. The first auction is tentatively scheduled in May 2006 with bidding available both onsite, in Beverly Hills, and live simulcast available via eBay.

Superior anticipates holding auctions of approximately 1,000 to 2,000 lots each of unclaimed property that may include rare coins, jewelry, small art pieces and antiques and other small collectibles. Unclaimed property auctions in the past have achieved prices realized in excess of \$1 million with sell through rates of approximately 90% and have featured rare coins that have sold in the \$10,000 range.

For the full story, go to <http://news-antique.com/?id=618&keys=Superior-Galleries-California-auction-unclaimed-items>.

WHAT IS LEGAL DEFINITION OF FAKE OR PIRATED?

Your editor is wondering if the definition of "Fake or Pirated Items" used by U.S. Customs includes numismatic reproductions?

A travel advisory from the US Embassy is warning everyone against bringing into the US any fake or pirated items, or they would face automatic deportation in violation of intellectual property rights, or arrest and criminal prosecution, in addition to civil fines and penalties. The American Association of Publishers has also alerted American customs officers to check out for pirated books, which could also lead to a penalty of automatic deportation as violation of intellectual property rights.

The US Department of Homeland Security recently searched the bag of someone entering the US in Detroit. During the search, 70-80 compact discs and 10-20 DVDs were found. Since the travelers were not American citizens, their visas were canceled and they returned to the country they came from. If they had been Americans, they could have been subject to arrest and criminal prosecution in addition to civil fines and penalties.

We are wondering if this refers only to fake Louis Vuitton & Gucci bags, CDs & DVDs and cosmetics and the like? Could this catch-all legislation also include legitimate contemporary counterfeits, such as the many tokens that were privately issued and readily circulated in Canada? What training do customs officers receive to tell a fake coin or note from a real one? What about those "funny money" notes printed as a joke? Let us know at cnanews@look.ca if you know of something happening at customs.

DRUG PLAN FOR NUMISMATISTS

We have been reading about the ideas proposed for Toronto, Vancouver and other places about providing "supervised consumption sites" for drug addicts.

Then it struck me: numismatists have had these safe houses all along to feed their habit.

They are called...Coin Shops!

THINGS YOU LIKE TO HEAR BUT USUALLY DON'T

"I think I charged you a little too much for that coin. Here is a partial refund."

"I know the holder says it is VF but I really think it's only a Fine so I'll reduce the price."

"I usually close at this time, but I will be happy to wait until you finish browsing."

"I neglected to renew my membership last year, but I will be sending it to you as well as my renewal for this year."

"I will mail it to you on consignment so that you can make sure it is in the condition I say it is."

A GREAT GIFT FOR YOUNG READERS

C.N.A. member Eleanor Florence Rosellini has made us aware of a book entitled "[The Mystery of the Ancient Coins](http://www.hiddentreasuremysteries.com/coinsbackground.htm)" (www.hiddentreasuremysteries.com/coinsbackground.htm) that she wrote.

Five ancient gold coins, passed down in a German-American family for generations, disappeared without a trace 40 years ago. With only one puzzling clue, and an old diary written in German, two young detectives travel to Milwaukee to search for the family treasure. But who is the man in the blue parka? And why is he watching them?

The book is hardback 115 pages long and covers a suspenseful tale that encourage children's interest in history, family history, and genealogy. Read aloud to ages 7-12. Especially for 9-12 year olds swept up in the adventures of Elizabeth and her irrepressible brother as they track down some very ancient coins leading to a reward. Funny and believable for kids.

If you click on her Website at www.hiddentreasuremysteries.com you will see [Ordering Information](#), [librarian reviews](#), [background on the author](#) and [Preview Chapter One](#).

The Puzzle in the Portrait, originally a Christmas gift to her children, is the first of a series of mysteries featuring a brother-and-sister detective team who solve long-forgotten mysteries from the past. The second book is entitled The Mystery of the Ancient Coins. The author hopes to pass on to young readers the legacy she received from her own extended family: an eye for the eccentric, an interest in past generations, and an appreciation of the humor in everyday life.

The Hidden Treasure Mysteries are meant to inspire readers to seek the special memories and objects of their own families. If you have a story to share about discovering a family treasure, please e-mail Eleanor and your story will be posted using your first name only.

SONS TURN IN ACCUSED BANK ROBBER

A police officer went online to a sheriff's Website late last month and received the shock of his life when he saw his father being named as a suspect in a string of Central Illinois bank robberies. He consulted with his brother who, along with their other brother, decided to confront their father at his home. Since he was not there when they arrived, they decided to turn him in.

William Ginglen, 64, is accused of stealing more than \$56,000 between November 2003 and July 2004. He admitted to the robberies and will be sentenced at a future date.

"I love my sons," Ginglen said. "I think they could have helped me get through this thing easier. I could have turned myself in and probably would have but I didn't really have a chance to do that. They did what they thought was right. I can't fault them for that."

The Ginglen sons say their father raised them to be good citizens. "It was his ultimate demise," one of the sons said. "He taught us to do the right thing, and that got him caught."

That's a tough thing to do, turn your own father in! What would you have done?

NEW CASINO CHIPS

You may soon be able to add a whole new series of casino chips to your numismatic collection.

According to The Toronto Star's business reporter Rick Westhead, the new series of chips in your collection, although looking virtually the same as current chips, might have a radio transmitter built into them. They first cover over \$6.00 US each. Today, they cost \$1.50 each, but the cost is expected to go down to about \$1.00. A regular casino chip costs about 70 cents.

Why would casinos consider spending millions for the quantities of chips they need for their card tables? Because a few too many of you have been scamming casinos or bringing in counterfeit chips to the casino and secretly adding them to your pile, playing them and winding up with good chips at the end that you then cash in.

Casino Rama, Casino Windsor and Casino Niagara, just to name three of Ontario's leading casinos, are in talks with at least one prominent gaming supplier to buy new chips that feature technology designed to help catch card cheats and others who try to sneak extra chips onto the table after hands are dealt, said an official with Progressive Gaming International Corp., a Las Vegas-based chipmaker. The casinos are considering buying gambling chips that feature miniscule radio transmitters called radio-frequency-identification readers, known as RFID tags, which allow dealers and others to take an inventory of chips at the press of a button.

By placing a computer and monitor at game tables, dealers can quickly display the initial bets of players, thwarting anyone with a strong hand of cards who might try to slip more chips to their betting pile. Dealers, the so-called eye-in-the-sky video surveillance used at virtually all casinos, or the sharp-eyed pit bosses didn't get you, the new hi-tech chips will, the chipmaker says.

Companies – and countries – are finding a number of unlikely uses for RFID tags. The U.S. government has said all of its newly issued passports will feature the technology by next October, and in Italy, cheese makers now embed the tags in the crust of newly made wheels of authentic parmesan to cut down on knockoff cheese from Eastern Europe that's appearing in stores around the world. The high-tech chips will be used to guarantee tickets for next year's soccer World Cup in Germany are authentic and, thanks to RFID bracelets being used at some U.S. theme parks, the technology is even being used to help locate abducted or lost children.

The chips don't need batteries since transmitters just modify a radio signal beamed at them by a reader. They are virtually indistinguishable from regular chips. Casino chips with transmitters first began to surface in the industry in the mid-1990s. The first North American casino to use RFID was reportedly in Saskatchewan.

Counterfeit chips remain a problem for casinos. Many still mark their chips with inks that appear only under ultra-violet or infrared lighting. Two men were arrested in Nevada in March on counterfeiting charges after state gambling regulators there accused them of minting and cashing homemade chips in denominations of \$100 and \$500 at several casinos. The pair has been accused of bilking at least six casinos in the Las Vegas strip out of at least \$50,000 US.

Casinos have been a draw for cheaters for decades. Among the earliest scams was one perpetrated by so-called stringers, who would tie a piece of fishing line around a coin so that it could be used repeatedly to play a slot machine. Nowadays, Nevada's gaming control board says it arrests about 500 people a year for counterfeiting or other gaming crimes.

HOW MANY DIFFERENT CREDIT CARDS DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR COLLECTION?

According to Ellen Roseman's column in The Toronto Star about finding the right credit card, she mentions that the website www.fcac.gc.ca set up by the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada lists 65 different cards from 18 financial institutions.

The column mentions that there are 53 million Visa and MasterCard products currently in circulation in Canada – more than two cards for every Canadian adult.

So how many of you would apply for a bunch of the cards just so you will have it to add to your collection?

C.N.A. STAFF WARNED OF HOLIDAY PARTYING

Yes, it's that time of the year again. The annual C.N.A. office party is just around the corner.

In the olden days, we might have spent the evening photocopying one's bare buttocks, drinking until we ran out of booze or conscientiousness, dancing on the desk wearing only a lampshade, marinating the food in Jamaica Rum for a week and kissing everyone in sight. This was usually followed by acute embarrassment the next day. Isn't that what you did before legal liabilities, roadside breathalyzer tests and political incorrectness kicked in?

The staff of the C.N.A. has been warned that during its annual employee gathering at the Executive Secretary's home, employees should not drink and then drive home.

Hey, wait a minute. I am the only employee and I don't drink. Besides, if the gathering is at my home, I am home already and won't be driving home.

If you giggled even a little at that, you must have broken out the eggnog early?

GIFT POLICY

My wife never has a problem giving me a Christmas present. After all, she has good taste. She married me didn't she? (Proofreader wife here. I would like to debate that point sometime!).

I never have a problem getting her something she really likes, because I ask her to pick it out and then I buy it for her. Works for me. Works for her. (Proofreader wife again. If you knew his taste, you would understand why!).

In case all you wonderful people are wondering what gifts to buy your family members, friends...and yourself...here are a few suggestions:

How about giving non-numismatic members of your family or friends something numismatic that ties into their interests. For example, if a person collects butterflies, give them some coins with butterflies on them. A dog lover can research the breeds of dogs on the coins you give them. Some coins or notes from their country of birth might be appreciated.

Most companies have a gift policy that basically forbids their employees from accepting gifts over a certain value. In case you are wondering, I have no such policy.

Always give someone the things that they are involved with. For example, you might consider giving a lousy golfer a telescopic ball retriever. So I will be happy to accept... MONEY.

CONCLUSION

Because of the material already on hand, there will be another issue this year, on December 20.

John Regitko
Your C.N.A. E-Bulletin Editor
Canadian Numismatic Association

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