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Numismatic Leaders Receive Recognition During ANA Chicago Convention

Leaders in numismatics are essential for helping others to grow within the hobby. Whether that leadership is provided through teaching, mentoring, research, writing or leading conventions and shows, these activities help foster learning for all collectors. The American Numismatic Association's (ANA) biggest influencers were recognized during the Chicago World's Fair of Money®, August 16-20.

Mentors who ensure the growth of the hobby by encouraging and guiding the next generation of numismatists are honored with the **Lawrence J. Gentile Sr. Memorial Award for Outstanding Adult Advisor**. This year the award went to **Tony Bonaro** of Julington Creek, Florida. Bonaro is the director of youth activities for Florida United Numismatists (FUN), a position he has held since he joined the board 18 years ago. Under his guidance, FUN's young numismatists (YN) program has developed into one of the best in the country, and he does an exceptional job educating youth in the art of coin collecting.

Bonaro is active in several other local and regional numismatic organizations, including the Great Jacksonville Coin Club and St. Augustine Coin Club. The retired U.S. Marine Corps officer and former railroad employee devotes many hours to hobby activities. In addition to serving as treasurer of FUN, he works as a district commissioner of the Boy Scouts of America and volunteers at his church.

Wherever he goes, Bonaro shares the excitement of collecting with kids. He conducts four Boy Scout Coin Collecting Merit Badge classes each year. When Girl Scouts sign up, he covers the requirements for the Fun With Money patch. He also coordinates a popular YN trivia program for FUN. In each quarterly issue of *FUNTopics*, he includes an article for kids with trivia questions to encourage YNs to research more about the particular topic and send him their answers via email. Youngsters who send him their responses receive a coin in the mail. He says that



dealers from all over the eastern United States stock his supply of donated inventory that he passes along to eager YNs.

Fascinated by the history behind coins, Bonaro encourages young hobbyists to investigate and learn about their pieces. He exhorts his students to "learn, read, research, and educate yourself as much as you can about the coins you like to collect" and ends his classes by telling his students, "Remember, there is a story behind every coin and piece of currency."

His admonition to the next generation is not mere lip service. Bonaro also does his own research and enjoys writing about his findings. He has published articles in *FUNTopics* on a variety of subjects, including how to conduct Boy Scouts Merit Badge classes, the fascinating story behind "Short Snorter" bank notes, and Mormon gold and currency of 1837-60. He is currently working on a piece about U.S. Mint commemorative coins that relate to the history of the U.S. military.

Bonaro says he is honored to receive an award for simply doing what he loves. He serves the hobby community by sharing his knowledge because teaching others is something he truly enjoys. And because it's fun, he adds.

The spirit of the late Glenn Smedley lives on in this year's recipients of the ANA's annual **Glenn Smedley Memorial Award**. Seven members who embody an exceptionally positive attitude, possess strong communication skills, promote goodwill and cooperation, and demonstrate dependability were honored during the ANA Member & Awards Celebration on Aug. 18 at the Chicago World's Fair of Money.

- In addition to her past work as a dealer and Numismatic Guaranty Company team member, love-token virtuoso **Carol Bastable** of Sarasota, Florida, has donated countless hours and offered her expertise to several hobby organizations. An award-winning exhibitor and an ANA exhibit judge, she has loaned items from her collection for display at Association headquarters and provided educational material on love tokens. She serves as president of the Love Token Society and the Original Hobo Nickel Society and writes regularly about her extensive research for multiple hobby publications.

- Arab, Alabama, resident **V. Kurt Bellman** previously lived in eastern Pennsylvania for many years, where he was (and still is) entrenched in the local numismatic community. One of his main goals is "to turn beginning collectors into intermediate collectors" by getting them to step away from the computer and attend local coin club meetings and shows so they can network and meet hobby mentors. A careful exhibit builder and conscientious exhibit judge, he became an ANA National Volunteer in 2013 and has presented five "Money Talks" lectures at ANA conventions on a range of topics. He was invited to join the

U.S. Mint's program development forum in 2016 and participated in the formation of the American Innovation Dollar Coin Program™.

- Two-time Summer Seminar instructor **George Cuhaj** of Iola, Wisconsin, has authored two publications, edited five others, and has written articles for a slew of hobby newsletters and journals. An active member of the American Medallion Sculpture Association for decades, he has served as secretary, treasurer, and newsletter editor, as well as two terms as president. Since 1995, he has held a seat on the *World Coin News* "Coin of the Year" nomination committee and has also judged the entries. An avid speaker and exhibitor, he has received five first-place awards in four classes at ANA conventions. Notably, Cuhaj organized the ANA's participation at the Coin Collecting Merit Badge booth at the Boy Scouts' national jamboree on numerous occasions over a 30-year period.

- **Roderick "Rod" Frechette** of Corrales, New Mexico, energizes the Albuquerque Coin Club with his boundless efforts in shaping the organization's youth initiatives and its community outreach. Also the recipient of the 2022 ANA Numismatist of the Year honor, he has served in a variety of leadership roles for the club and has penned several articles for its monthly newsletter, *Pocket Change*. He visits local schools to get kids excited about numismatics, and he enthusiastically shares his expertise about ancient, medieval, and colonial Latin American coinage through a multitude of presentations. This Vermont Law School graduate has educated numerous collectors with his award-winning exhibits, which he has displayed at the New Mexico State Fair in addition to ANA conventions.



- In 1969 Hartwell, Georgia, resident **W. Mack Martin** began a decades-long solo journey pursuing Georgia paper money. In 2006 some friends talked him into entering an exhibit at the ANA's National Money Show® in Atlanta, and his solitary pastime blossomed into a social adventure in which he's become an instrumental member of several organizations. Martin became an ANA exhibit judge the following year and has continued to curate his own displays. His towering pile of exhibit awards steadily grows taller, and he's contributed his knowledge of Georgian issues



to multiple books. He has inspired many to seek out these notes and works to encourage young adults to participate in the hobby, especially as exhibitors.

- A former SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team member and program launch director for Lockheed Martin, **Robert "Bob" Mellor** of Melbourne, Florida, is drawn to intensity, which is also evident in his hobby involvement. An ANA district representative, exhibit judge, grading instructor, and Outreach Committee member, he specializes in items associated with early America. He is a member of nearly a dozen organizations, including CONECA and the John Reich Collectors Society, both of which have published his articles in their respective journals. For many years, he has made efforts to expand hobby education on a local level and, more recently, on a national scale.

- Since 1968 Jewish-coin and authority **Mel Wacks** has founded or cofounded five organizations related to biblical, Judaic, and Israel numismatics, including the American Israel Numismatic Association and the Jewish-American Hall of Fame. The Woodland Hills, California, resident edited *The Shekel* for five years, authored both the original and 45th anniversary editions of *The Handbook of Biblical Numismatics*, and contributed innumerable articles to hobby publications. A spirited designer, he has crafted a number of counterstamped coins and medals, including the ANA 1997 convention medal, and he shared his expertise as chair of the ANA Numismatic Art Award for Excellence in Medallic Sculpture Committee for 10 years.



The American Numismatic Association is a congressionally chartered, nonprofit educational organization dedicated to encouraging the study and collection of coins and related items. The ANA helps its members and the public discover and explore the world of money through its vast array of educational and outreach programs as well as its museum, library, publications, and conventions. For more information, call 719-632-2646 or visit money.org.