

David Klinger

Over years of study, this collector has developed a masterful command of the hobby.

AN ACTIVE COLLECTOR and student of numismatics for more than 60 years, David Klinger has earned the title “master and commander”—master of his collection of military exonomia and commander (retired) of the U.S.S. *Sam Houston* (1977-81). In all, he spent 30 years as a naval officer, serving on two destroyers and four submarines. “I always had coins and coin books on board with me, even during my tour of duty on the *Houston*,” he says. Klinger also completed three tours of overseas staff duty in Germany, England and Italy—all great opportunities to expand his collection of world coins, tokens and medals.

“I find that moving from one area of study to another keeps the collecting and learning experience fresh and more stimulating,” he says. True to his word, he pursues a variety of collectibles, from ship’s plaques, seashells, beer mugs and submarine models to military insignia and pay books.

“Most of my family and friends think that my near obsession with numismatics makes me just a little crazy,” says Klinger. “But, during my lifetime, this hobby has given me an alternative focus and diversion, along with another circle of friends that keeps me very sane and entertained.”

Indeed, Klinger values his numismatic experiences and relationships. While serving as a lieutenant on the submarine U.S.S. *Francis Scott Key* in the 1960s, he met John Fieldhouse, a captain in the Royal Navy. “He collected ancient Roman coins, and we soon became friends,” Klinger recalls.

“At supper one evening in the wardroom, John and I were discussing gold coinage. I mentioned

that the United States had not struck gold coins since 1933, and he said that Great Britain had not minted gold since the Victorian era. I challenged him, but John insisted he was correct,” says Klinger. “Soon there was a wager between us. If I could prove him wrong, he would buy me a bottle of his favorite gin. Well, it happened that in my small, on-board coin collection was a British gold sovereign dated 1964. I produced the coin, and John conceded.”

But years passed before Klinger collected on his bet. Shortly thereafter, the *Francis Scott Key* was routed to Charleston, South Carolina, where Captain Fieldhouse planned to catch a plane to London. “The immigration agent noticed there was no entry stamp in his passport,” Klinger says. “When asked how he arrived in the United States, John said, ‘By submarine.’ Unconvinced, the agent pulled him aside, and John missed his flight. It took him two days to get back to the UK!”

Almost 15 years later, Klinger was posted to London. “One day a British sailor showed up in my office with a bottle of gin . . . and a note from Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse.”

These days, Klinger’s commanding presence can be felt at the ANA’s Summer Seminar in Colorado Springs, which he has attended annually since his retirement in 1991. This year, he enrolled in two classes: “Collecting United States Paper Money” and, to further his mastery of the subject, “Advanced Military Numismatics.”

“I’m retired, but still very much alive,” he says. “I’m just a hopeless collector!”

—Barbara J. Gregory



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