

Patchwork

LIFE IS A MYSTERY, WHO CAN DENY IT?

Sometimes you wake up and you feel
Like you are drowning
Sometimes you feel like you are
Going to fly to Venus
Every day is different
Every day is funny
Life is a mystery, who can deny it?

I've got a secret and you've got
Some answers
Who taught the birds to fly?
And who taught the fish to swim?

Once there was a second, then
Came the minute, the hour, the day, the week, and the year

Give me a pole and I'll turn
The earth
No! The sun never moves
It only seems to

Life is a mystery, life is a wonder
Who can deny it?
Who can say so?

Patikai Mark Musuka

THE IMPOSSIBLE JOB

I handled the claims at a 15-person insurance agency, and I desperately needed another job. I was 28 years old, and I knew what happened to women when they turned 30. Unless they were total suck asses, the owners would find a pretense to fire them. I'd seen it happen to three women.

Of course it was illegal age discrimination, but in such a small workplace it was almost impossible to prove what everyone there understood to be true. Management could even point to the two suck asses who hadn't been fired. So, I knew I had to get out soon – while I could still get a good recommendation – and before my 30th birthday.

I wanted the security of a union job. For several months, I'd combed the want ads and asked friends about places that might be hiring. As often as I dared, I came in late or took extended lunch hours to put in job applications.

I'd applied at steel mills before. Even after the 1975 consent decree that mandated steel companies make up for past discrimination by hiring women for production and maintenance jobs, I'd never made it past the man at the counter who looked at my application and said, "You wouldn't want to leave an office to work in a steel mill." Despite my protestations that that's exactly what I wanted to do, I knew my application was destined to land in the circular file.

But this time it was different. This time job applicants were given a two-part test. One part was basic math. The other part was a test of one's ability to follow directions precisely – even if they made no sense. By scoring well on these two tests, I by-passed the judgmental clerk and was called in for my pre-employment physical.

I was ordered to report to the Republic Steel employment office on July 12, 1976. At that time, the new hires were given directions to our new departments. There were about 15 of us assigned to the 84" cold mill. When we arrived there, the departmental clerk met us. As he escorted us around the mill, he dropped some people off at each unit.

He gave us a cursory explanation of what each unit did. Our heads swam as we tried to absorb this information and the many unfamiliar terms he bandied about. As we circled around the maze, I began feeling like Hansel and Gretel. Should I have left some sort of trail behind me? How would I find my way back to the parking lot at the end of the day?

Finally, we came to the pickle line foreman's office. That's where I was dropped off with 3 other new hires. Before leaving us, the clerk told us we were to remain there and wait for the pickle line foreman. Like actors waiting for Godot, we sat and waited – and waited – and waited for the foreman who never came.

Jim had worked at Republic for a couple years several years earlier. Since he'd been a good employee, he'd pretty much been guaranteed a job when he reapplied. Trouble was, he'd worked in a completely different part of the mill. He didn't know any more about the pickle line than Dave, Dan, and I. Still, we looked to him for advice.

Should we keep waiting? After all, we'd been told to stay put until a foreman came for us and we'd all passed a test on our ability to follow senseless directions precisely. We had faith that someone would eventually make it to the far off corner where we'd been left.

Or should one of us venture out on our own? If so, where should we go? We knew we didn't belong in any of the units we'd been guided through. The clerk had told us we belonged on the pickle line – a unit we hadn't even seen. We'd also been cautioned about the dangers that lurked in all directions.

As lunchtime approached, our spirits lifted. Certainly the mysterious foreman would come to his office for lunch. When no one appeared and we started to get hungry, we discussed whether we should go to the nearby canteen. We knew we could find it since it was just outside the complex of offices where we'd been abandoned. We decided the safest course was not to venture out, but to do what we'd been told – wait until we saw the pickle line foreman.

A phone sat on the desk. Maybe we should call someone. But who would we call? Again, we decided the safest thing was not to touch anything in the office – just continue to wait for the elusive pickle line foreman.

As we looked at our watches, we saw it was after 2 o'clock. We knew the shift was supposed to end at 3. What should we do? Again, we decided the safest thing was to continue to wait. We discussed what to do at 3. Should we go home and come back the next morning to continue the wait?

Finally, at about 2:15, a man entered the office. He looked at us and said, "Who the hell are you? And what are you doing in my office?" When we explained, he told us he wasn't the foreman we were waiting for. He was the foreman for afternoon turn. He started laughing, telling us it was just like the clerk to leave us somewhere without telling the foreman where we were or even that there would be new hires arriving that day.

Our rescuer called the day turn foreman to the office. He said, "Well, it's too late for you to do anything today. I'll find one of the laborers to show you around and show you where to report tomorrow morning."

As we followed this laborer onto the shop floor, we were struck by the deafening roar of the pickler, a 1/4-mile-long, three-story-high machine that ran steel coils through a hydrochloric acid bath to remove rust and other impurities before sending them on to the next unit for further processing.

I quickly found out that this unit was considered a place where women didn't belong. My co-workers would look at me and express their sympathy, saying since I was obviously trying to learn it was really too bad I'd been assigned to a unit where women couldn't possibly do the job.

I'd ask why women couldn't handle the job. The answer was always the same, "Look at Betty. Betty proves women can't do the job here." Betty was the first woman hired onto the pickler. She hadn't been there that long – maybe a month – but that was more than enough time to convince everyone that she couldn't do the job. And, they were right about Betty. She couldn't do the job.

I always came back with the same retort, "Look at John. If Betty proves women can't do the job, I guess John proves men can't do it either." (John was another recent hire who made Betty look industrious and competent.)

Of course the guys would say, "That's ridiculous. John doesn't prove men can't do the job." There are a lot of men who can do the job. I'd say, "No more ridiculous than saying Betty proves women can't do the job. I'm sure there

are many women who can do the job, and I intend to be one of them.”

There was one other woman on the pickle line – Jane. But Jane didn’t count because she was summer help. As such, no one really expected her to be able to do all that much. Jane was the only female summer help I saw that year. The guys used to get on her father pretty hard about bringing his daughter to work in a steel mill.

Whenever I was given a job for the first time, I would always ask a co-worker to show me what to do. If he started to do it himself, I would stop him immediately, saying I wanted to learn the job. Although most of the laborers still believed a woman couldn’t do the job, it didn’t take long before they started answering all my questions and showing me the tricks to make the job easier.

Several of the oldest men on the unit noticed that I was serious about learning the job. They pulled me aside to assure me that I didn’t have to worry about making it through probation.

I wasn’t assigned to work much with Betty, and I certainly didn’t go out of my way to befriend her. I viewed her laziness and incompetence as an obstacle to being accepted and proving that I did indeed belong in a steel mill and could and would pull my weight there.

The first time I worked with Betty, she was the bander. Since the line was running ship coils, another laborer and I had been assigned to put on the extra bands. When the automatic banding machine ran out of bands, Betty asked me for help. Although it was her job to change the bands, I started to pick up the new roll of bands to put in the machine. Betty stopped me, saying she didn’t expect me to

lift the bands for her. It was just that she didn't know how to change them.

The rolls of bands were heavy. Lifting them up several feet onto the automatic bander was one of the most physically demanding aspects of our job. Given Betty's reputation, I'd assumed she was looking for a way out of doing the work. As she told me she didn't know how to change the bands, I realized she'd never asked anyone to show her how to loop the new roll through the complex series of twists and turns.

The next time I worked with Betty, she was the feeder and I was the feeder helper. When the turn began, she picked up the band cutter to cut the bands. I asked her what she was doing since that was the helper's job. She told me she always did the helper's job, that she'd never worked with anyone who let her do the better feeder's job. I told her since she was older than me, she'd be doing the feeder's job that day. I added that if she had any problems or any coils she couldn't handle, she should let me know and I'd put them on the line for her, but that I wasn't going to take the better job since she was the one who was entitled to it seniority-wise. She thanked me and got through the turn without needing much help.

Again, I realized that Betty had never been properly trained. Rather than ask to be shown how to do the job, she'd allowed others to do it for her.

Shortly after that Betty was fired. She'd made so many people carry her and do her job for her that by the time she finally decided to learn the job, it was too late. No one believed her. No one wanted to help her. Her co-workers all thought it was best that she be fired while she was still on probation.

After a little more than a year on the pickler, I signed a bid for a better job. Before I signed this bid, two other women were also working on the pickler. Today, a number of women work there, and no one thinks that it's a unit where women can't do the job.

Things slowed down after 1976, and it was a number of years before summer help was hired again. When they were, over 25% were female. This showed that the men no longer looked at this as an inappropriate job for their daughters.

Shirley Pasholk

WORDS

Plenty of things I have to say,
A saint tomorrow, a poet today,
Words have a price to pay,
Powerful or weak,
Harsh or meek,
A message they relay,
They can push you down,
Or pull you up out of the pits of hell.
They can make you feel like shit,
or make you feel quite well.
Words can show your ignorance,
Or words can show your class,
But be careful because you never know
which words may be your last.

William Norman

MR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was a great and powerful leader. He overcame great odds to make sure black people had the same rights as white people have. He wanted all blacks to be able to dine and sit with whites, attend the same schools, churches, and any other public places, including being put in jail cells with white people.

His wife's name was Coretta Scott. She was born in Alabama in 1929. She then met Mr. King at a music school in Boston, and in 1953 they were married. They had four children. In 1955 he became a leader in the fight to end segregation. On December 5, 1955, all blacks refused to ride a bus until all seats were open to them. This boycott lasted one year.

He was famous for his speech, "I Have a Dream!" He was away one night giving a speech when some white people bombed his house to scare the blacks away. That didn't work. Mr. King still marched forward with his ambitions. Dr. King led a march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. Blacks and whites would go into public places and ask to be served. They would sit there until they were served or arrested. He was proud to go to jail for what he thought was right. Angry white people would pour sugar, salt and coffee over their heads. Yet all they wanted was for blacks and whites to be treated equally.

Now most things have changed. Blacks are now able to enter the front door of a diner and dine with white people. They don't have to go to the back door to be served. They can go to church together, go to the same schools, and have the right to share a jail cell with a white man. Finally, in 1992, women of all nationalities were elected to the House of Representatives; also in that same year an African American woman was elected to the Senate.

Tragically, on April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King's life was cut short by a man named James Earl Ray who shot and killed him in Memphis, Tennessee. – all because he didn't like black people. People all over the country were shocked by the news of Martin Luther King's assassination.

Martin Luther King Jr. did change the world for the better. Now blacks don't have to go to the back door of a diner and pay for their food and get it. They are now able to walk into a diner with a white man and be seated together instead of separate. Whites and blacks now go to church, school, and do everything as other people, not as people who are separated by skin color. Mr. King ended segregation for most places. There are still some people and places that are very discriminatory and still either separate blacks and whites or become very rude with black people and vice versa. As a great man once said, "I have a dream that one day people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Jennifer King

PIERRE FOODS
(Tune of *Jingle Bells*)

Refrain:

Pierre Foods
Pierre Foods
Pierre all the way.
Oh what fun it is to cook
In a burger plant each day. HEY!

Verses:

Formulas in their hands; grinders on their way,
Tumblers here I come, to start a brand new day.
Throwing meat and soy, salt and STP,
Oh what fun it is to mix in a meat filled factory. HEY!
(Refrain)

Now it's up to you, Formax do your thing,
Endless patties formed, more tubs to you I'll bring.
Patties dropping down, to the belt they go.
Flames are shooting out, steamed in the JSO. HEY!
(Refrain)

Packers on the line, waiting for the meat,
To pack it up tonight, fr-e-e-zing hands, c-o-l-d feet
Boxes they do fill, counting all the time,
Making friends and concentrating on this busy line. HEY!
(Refrain)

Q.C. on the job, doing what they know,
Making sure the products right, Always on the go.
Checking here and there, perfection is their aim,
That's the only way it will have a Pierre name. HEY!
(Refrain)

Line Leaders on their toes, try to keep things straight.
Are boxes there to fill? Are packers back from break?
Frozen weights and temps, are just to name a few,
Making sure the label's right are things each day they do.
HEY!
(Refrain)

Shipping time is near; truck is on the door.
Boxes neatly stacked and waiting on the floor.
The bills are ready now; the trucker now can load.
With product on the truck, it's time to hit the road. HEY!
(Refrain)

Carol Rudder & Karen Smith

MY DREAM VACATION

The stillness of the air is stifling, the burning sand steaming from the sun as our lonely group of tourists crosses the dunes of the Sahara on camels. It is only an hour past sunrise and already the temperature is hot enough to break the digital thermometer on my watch. I try to sink deeper and deeper into my clothes so my skin does not feel any direct effect from the blazing sun. Heat devils shimmer across the horizon giving the impression that a physical wall of heat will halt anyone traveling too far.

I shake my head to change the focus of my thoughts. Vacationing in the heat is bad enough; no need to obsess about it. As I squint into the piercing glare only our company of travelers is discernable. My attention is drawn to the absolute stillness of the place: no tree branches snapping under our feet, no animals chittering, and no sounds of civilization to reassure us that somewhere close are shelter, people or amenities. The only sound is the methodical swoosh of the camels' hooves. This is what is driving me to madness: the stillness of the desert, the feeling of isolation from any other recognizable semblance of humanity or civilization.

My camel startles me as she barks to the camel behind her. I look to make sure this nemesis is not nipping her flanks again, and I notice he is not. She barks again and this time the other camels respond in kind. This sound is a welcoming relief after living several days without any sustained sounds. The camels stop moving, refusing to go any farther and begin to close in around each other, their braying echoing across the horizon.

Why has my camel suddenly stopped moving? Why isn't the guide telling me anything? I try to answer my questions as I shade my eyes with my hands, risking my skin to direct sun. Off in the distance beyond the shimmering wall

of heat I see another wall. It is a wall of sand, and it is heading this way.

The wind, now the low hum of a railroad locomotive, grows louder and louder and I feel trapped; a chilling fright over takes me as one tied to the tracks with no chance to escape, the train approaching ever so close, the whistle blowing louder and louder with the feeling of doom inevitable. I'm in a cold sweat and yet cannot breathe from the all-engrossing heat. As the stupendous noise of the impending storm shatters the silence and no amount of wet clothes allows me to breathe, all I can think is what on earth possessed me to sign up for an Adventure Unlimited Vacation to the Sahara Desert.

Maybe my friends and family who'd said I had to be out of my ever-loving mind were right. I could be sitting on a beach, drinking Mai Tais; I could be sightseeing in Europe; I could be gambling in Vegas; but no, I am hunkered down next to a camel hoping that she won't be hearing my last words. I can't even call my loved ones to say goodbye – or hear them say, "I told you so." My phone has said, "Out of area" for the last two days. (No cell towers anywhere nearby.) And, to make matters worse, the contract I'd signed clearly stated no refunds. As the wall of sand draws closer and closer, the camels become more and more agitated. Seeing my much more experienced traveling companions so distraught only increases my feeling of impending doom.

My mind goes back to the Westerns I'd seen as a child, recalling Ronald Reagan in *Death Valley Days* when the 20 mule team borax wagons would circle for protection against much smaller storms in a much smaller desert. Then I think of the skulls that littered the desert landscape in these old flicks. If I don't survive this, I wonder if future travelers who find my skull will at least take DNA samples and look for evidence, so that my next of kin will know what really happened.

As the wind brings the swirling mass closer, it feels as though the sand will rend my body to pieces if I don't

suffocate first. My eyes are watering, trying to get the sand particles out. The sand whips harder, blistering my face, and I need to take shelter. I get off the camel and say, "Here we stay, girl. This is it." Going farther against this wall of sand is impossible. The camel instinctively lies down. I lean against her belly and hide my face from the wind.

The weight of the camel against me and my damn fear of storms causes me to feel as though I am falling into some kind of abyss. Like a child going down a slide I find myself falling down a shaft into a cavern. From the loud thud I know the camel falls some distance away from me. I look around. In the dim light I can see objects made of gold and silver. I am rich beyond my dreams.

Is this part of a dream? Have I died and gone to heaven? This isn't the way I pictured it and I reach for one of the gold pieces. Knowing gold, I can tell the real thing when I see it. As I look around the room I notice many personal items; watches, necklaces, bracelets. Are these the possessions of former travelers?

All of a sudden, I feel the cold barrel of a gun behind my head. "Give me your money, your watch, your jewelry, your cell phone and whatever else," says the stuttering voice. I quickly empty my pockets and give the guy a dollar. (That's all I have left after paying for this all-expense-paid vacation.) His voice sounds remarkably like the guide and the travel agent at the mall.

Shivering, from being in the shade after so many days in the desert and from fear, his next words puzzle me. "Cash or credit?" I hear him say. I had already given him all the money I had. Again I hear, "Cash or Credit?" Suddenly, I wake up from my daydream and I am at the travel agency. "Forget the desert," I blurt out, "I'm going to the Bahamas, you crook."

Tony Panza, Shirley Pasholk, Roselle Turner, John A. Yonkof

SNOW

White
Light
Fluffy
Snowmen
Hot chocolate
Children sledding
Dogs playing
Time for resting
Wet
Blowing
Frigid
Boots & parkas
Gloves & scarves
Snow pants
Runny noses
Shoveling driveways
Slippery roads
Time to bundle up
Stay home
Light a fire
Watch the snowflakes fall
ENJOY IT ALL!

Rose Buckner, Kum Sun Kim, Joe Pilot

THE MAGIC PAPER RIDE

It was story time at the local library. All the mothers would bring their small children in to listen to the stories of Miss Lola. Now Miss Lola was not your ordinary librarian type. Oh no! Miss Lola always wore costumes. Every week she had on something different. Long skirts with bright colors and always a head wrap to match. She always wore dangled earrings, and she never wore shoes. Miss Lola had such a soft spoken voice, a voice that could mesmerize anyone, young or old.

The story room at the library was small, so the mothers dropped off their children, and then proceeded upstairs to the main library. This was nice because even grown-ups need a little library adventure.

There was a rug on the floor. Miss Lola had everyone sit in a circle. The rug was made out of rags. The colors were so vibrant. Hues of blue, red, yellow and orange, and every now and then you could see the small crystal beads that were carefully woven in between.

Miss Lola sat in her rocking chair in front of the children. "Good morn' to all of you!" The children replied, "Good morning, Miss Lola!" "Now what adventurous place would you like me to take you to today?" Some of the children wanted to hear Dr. Seuss. One little boy wanted to hear ghost stories, another wanted to read about Big Bird. One little girl raised her hand and said, "Those are the same stories we have heard over and over. Miss Lola, can you take us on a real adventure?" Miss Lola replied, "Come little one, what is your name?" "My name is Amy, and I want to fly high above the clouds." The other children were laughing at her. "Now, now," Miss Lola said. "Why are you all laughing at Amy?" One of the little boys replied, "Everyone knows that you can't fly into the clouds."

Miss Lola looked at Amy and said, "Would you and your friends like to take a magic paper ride?" Amy's eyes got

as big as saucers. She started jumping like a baby kangaroo. All of the other children were now wondering too. "Miss Lola," Amy asked. "Can you really take us on a magic paper ride?" Miss Lola asked, "Do you believe you can?" "Yes, Miss Lola," Amy said. "Well then, let's go."

In the corner of the small room there was indeed a Magic Paper Rug. "Okay everyone! If we are going on the Magic Paper Rug, we need to get our bags of alphabet fairy dust!" "What is alphabet fairy dust?" Amy asked. Miss Lola replied, "When we go on the Magic Paper Rug, we will need our letters so that we can spell words and make sentences. That way, when we return home, we can create our own story about our adventure."

Everyone hopped on to the Magic Paper. "OK, everyone, close your eyes and wish real hard, and say to yourselves, 'dreams really do come true.'"

"Here we are, our first stop is Cloud Central." The children opened their eyes and could not believe that they were really floating in the clouds. "Wow," said Amy. "It looks like we are in a big bag of cotton candy!" The children were in awe of what they were experiencing.

"OK, children," Miss Lola said. "Take out your alphabet dust, and try to make a word out of what you see." All the children opened their bags of alphabet dust and started to make words out of the shapes of the clouds. One little boy thought his cloud looked like a frog. Another little girl said her cloud looked like a pillow. Amy said, "My cloud is the best! It looks like a fairy!" "Why do you think fairies are the best?" Miss Lola asked. "Cuz fairies are like magic. They make all your wishes come true." Amy replied. "Ah, I see, then you will really love our next stop," Miss Lola said.

"All right children, hop back on the Magic Paper Rug. Our next stop will be way above the clouds and into the galaxy of stars." The children closed their eyes once again and wished really hard.

"OK, children, open your eyes. Here we are at Fairy Dust Lane." The children got off the Magic Paper Rug and

started to walk around. With their heads held high, just looking all around, you could see the look of wonderment that they held in their eyes. The stars were shining in the deep blue sky, shining like diamonds....little diamonds in the sky. The moon was the brightest yellow that anyone had ever seen. The children were amazed; it was nothing like they had ever seen.

Miss Lola asked the children once again to open their fairy dust. "This time children," Miss Lola said, "put your hand into the fairy dust and make a wish. Look up in the sky and pick a star. Now close your eyes real tight. Open your hand, and let go of the dust." All the children did what Miss Lola asked of them, but one of the little boys said, "Miss Lola, I don't want to let go of my fairy dust. If I let it go, my wish won't come true." "Ah, my little one, that is not so. You see, when you learn to let the fairy dust go, good things will happen, and your wishes will come true."

The little boy looked at Miss Lola, still a little unsure. He looked at her and said, "I believe you Miss Lola because I never thought we could really fly up into the clouds." He then turned to Amy and said, "I'm sorry for laughing at you. I now believe wishes really do come true." The little boy then closed his eyes, made a wish, opened his hand, and threw his fairy dust into the sky.

"All right children," Miss Lola said. "It's time to go." All the children got back on the Magic Paper Rug so they could begin their journey back home.

When the children got back to the library, Miss Lola parked her Magic Paper Rug back into the corner of the story room. "Miss Lola," Amy asked, "should we take our words that we made out of the alphabet fairy dust?" "No," she replied, "because the words you all made tell a story about our adventure today." The little boy who laughed at Amy said, "Miss Lola, can we come back next week and go on another adventure?" "Come here, my sweet boy. Of course you can come back next week, and this time you can pick our adventure!" Miss Lola asked the little boy, "Sweet child, what

is your name?" The small boy replied, "My name is Thomas, and thank you for making me believe that wishes really can come true!" "You are quite welcome, Thomas. I am looking forward to our next adventure."

The mothers were starting to come down to the story room to pick up their children. Amy ran over to her mother, jumping up and down. She was so excited to tell her mother about their adventure. Thomas went to find his mom. When he found her, he started to tell her about the Magic Paper Rug. He was talking so fast that his mother said, "Thomas, slow down, I can't understand you. You're talking too fast." He went on to explain about flying up into the clouds, going up into the galaxy, and making a wish with fairy dust. "Oh, Thomas," his mother said, "don't be so silly, everyone knows that you can't fly on a magic rug!" He grabbed her hand to take her over to Miss Lola, but she was nowhere. He looked all over the story room. "But mom, we really did fly!"

Thomas went over to the small corner, where Miss Lola parked the Magic Paper Rug. The rug was gone! He went to the window to see if he could find Miss Lola, but she had vanished. Thomas scratched his head and thought maybe he had dreamt what had happened that day.

All of a sudden, a gentle wind kissed his face, and he could hear Miss Lola's dangling earrings ever so faintly. It was then that he knew he was not dreaming.

Amy was across the room with her mother. She looked over to Thomas and gave him a wink. He smiled back to her and whispered to himself, "Dreams and wishes really do come true ... you just have to believe."

In dedication to my mother, Jeanine, who always sprinkled fairy dust in my life.

Laura M. Disbro

LA COCINA CHAOTICA
(THE KITCHEN'S A MESS)

Platos, plates, not washed
Periodicos, magazines outdated, lie disheveled
Vidrios, half-full wine glasses, high piled
Cuchillos, sticky forks, unordered

Una taza y mas tazas, cups, coffee stained
Pasta Mediterranean and shrimp fettuccine blindly mixed
Lana y mas lana, dimes, quarters, nickels scattered
Cacerolas, pan on pan, spaghetti stained

Huevos, fried bacon on eggs, sticky splattered
Pescados, oily fish, sitting, pan cooked
Quesos, cheeses most expensive, half-opened
Vinos, wine bottles, on the floor smashed

Cucharas, spoons drippy, ant crawled
Platos sucios, dirty dishes, sink filled
Grasa, cooking grease, thickly spilled
Libros, books, table topped

Dishes, cleaning, me, no can do
Soy un barracho, *No puedo mas*
Wiped out and totally drunk
I'm a sleepy lazy skunk

John A. Yonkof

COIN COLLECTING

Collecting coins is a very interesting hobby. Collecting can be very profitable as well as satisfying. People collect a lot of things, but collecting coins to me is one of the best hobbies to have.

There are a lot of variations to collecting coins; some people collect only pennies or dimes or dollars. Some only collect for investment and some collect for the fun.

It is a very satisfying feeling to complete a whole set of whatever a person collects, like the state quarters. The state quarters began in 1999 and will end in 2008. Each state has a quarter, and five are printed each year in the order in which the state joined the United States.

I like to collect proof coins. To me, you can never get a more beautiful coin than a proof coin. Proof coins are struck twice and buffed and polished and are never touched by human hands.

Coins can be purchased several different ways. There are over two hundred different private mints. A lot of those mints take advantage of people who are very naïve about what they are buying. Thus they usually lose money on buying coins.

I buy my coins from the United States Mint. There are four different mints. They are Philadelphia, San Francisco, Denver, and West Point. These mints are government mints. It is better to buy from the US mint rather than from one of the private mints.

It is exciting when you find something old in pocket change. I always say, "You can't go wrong collecting money."

Collecting coins is a fun and fascinating hobby and could be profitable. I enjoy it tremendously.

Richard Brought