

How and Why Danny Spungen Acquired the Nazi Scourge Exhibit

I have been a collector all my life. I think I started collecting rocks and minerals first because my uncle was a famous geologist and remember doing school projects using them. Other influences:

- My father traveled a lot and would bring home little gifts that I liked to save.
- I started collecting coins very early on.
- My parents would not buy me a dog so I liked books on dogs. Honestly, I remember “borrowing” a lot of books at a store called “Turn Style” in Skokie and a local store (still in business so I won’t say the name...ha ha).
- I remember collecting baseball cards, specifically in 1969 when the Chicago Cubs were doing very well (but of course lost)....

But, the key collecting moment in time: In the summer of 1973 when I was 12 years old, I was watching the cartoon Scooby Do on TV with my brother (Glenn). I yawned and felt a “snap” in my neck. It really hurt! I told my mother and she told me to take a nap upstairs. I remember she had a friend downstairs and I later came down crying. She put me in her car and took me to Evanston hospital and I complained every time she went over a bump!

I ended up staying in the hospital 8 days. I remember that I refused to go to the bathroom in bed pan. I would instead call my dad who then drove from his office on the south side of Chicago to carefully walk me to the bathroom because the nurses would not let me! I really don’t remember to what extent but I had to wear a neck brace over the summer.

To keep me busy, my father when to his brother’s home (Uncle Kenny) and got an old stamp collection of stamps and “first day covers” they both collected when they were young. This is what really laid down the foundation for my passion of stamps and other philatelic/numismatic related items.

In high school I entered a work-study program. I actually applied to a few different jobs that the school helped me with but I really wanted a job at the stamp and coin department at Marshall Fields Department in Skokie (now Macy's at Old Orchard/Westfield Mall). At first Mrs. Betty Mohr rejected me because she thought I was too young and also maybe because she thought I would take the customers for myself.

I begged Mrs. Mohr for a job and said if she did not like me after a week, she could fire me. Mrs. Mohr hired me and it was great. I worked there on/off through college as well (1978-1982 in total I think).

After college I really did not collect stamps anymore. I got some stamp newspapers but I really had no time between working, looking for a wife, and then raising a family!! It was around 2002-2003 that I wanted to get back into stamp collecting but in a limited way. In fact it was Nick Brown during this time who convinced me to buy USA "key date" coins. Nick and I started to go to coin shows and it was fun. In the fall of 2006 Drew Tucci got me into modern Chinese coins and on December 2, 2006 I sold Nick his first 1982 China Panda 1 oz gold coin for \$3,015.00 (that coin was at a peak and has since crashed....and just now back at the selling price).

On November 22, 2006, our family came to an agreement that we would sell PEER Bearing Company. Knowing it would take time to sell the company (it took longer than anyone expected – closing the deal Sept. 11, 2008), I had time to think about what I should do in "after-life."

In June 2007, I registered for two summer "seminar" programs:

- The American Philatelic Society (APS) summer school one week program at State College, PA where I took a class on stamp technology (how stamps are made).
- The American Numismatic Association summer school one week program at Colorado University in Colorado Springs, CO where I took a class on grading USA coins.

It was at the APS Show that I got in touch with a stamp dealer in the State College PA region. The dealer had a USA stamp I wanted all my life...the famous 1918 "Inverted Jenny" inverted airplane stamp (Scott# C3a). I think the dealer wanted \$275,000 - \$375,000 for position 100. This stamp had a straight edge...no perforations on one side. I wanted a stamp with all 4 margins having perforations.

This hesitation actually created a little argument with the dealer that my cousin (Bruce Pincus) heard over the phone while he was driving me around.

I went back to the APS seminar where there was a mini-stamp show. I saw Ken Lawrence holding a piece of parchment from a Jewish holy scripture (Tanakh) that had been ripped apart and used as an envelope by a Nazi soldier who sent it back to his wife in Vienna Austria. In fact, the wife had to pay extra postage at the post office in Austria because the parcel was too heavy!

Ken Lawrence explained that the piece was part of an exhibit that he took around the USA to areas where Neo-Nazis would march. He would set up the exhibit in the local schools and churches to say the Holocaust did exist and that what the Neo-Nazis were doing is very wrong.

Ken was not always safe and in fact "Ken Lawrence" is not his real name. He uses this name in the public world because of the exhibit.

Ken explained that he was working on selling the exhibit to a group associated with the Holocaust Museum in Michigan.

I like museums and had no knowledge of how museums work...but I blurted out (with no facts to back it up) that museums will not properly take care of the exhibit and if they show it, it will be short term and then put in storage making it impossible for 99.999% of the people to get access to it.

I convinced Ken to sell to me...taking a risk...and lowering the price a bit.....that even though I know nothing about the Holocaust, I will do "something" and keep the Ken Lawrence name associated with the exhibit.

This was June 2007. Now, 63 months later, I have done incredible things with the exhibit....you have to view the news articles and video clips to learn more at www.spungenfoundation.org

Danny

Sept. 14, 2012