

OBITUARY – THOMAS EDWARD HANLEY

1920 - 2000



Tom Hanley passed away on 4th September 2000 after a long illness. Tom was a well known figure in numismatics and coin collecting circles in Australia, particularly in organised numismatics. The crowning glory for his many years of loyal and devoted service in the field of numismatics came with the award in 1996 of the Order of Australia Medal.

The value of Tom to our association came from his roles for many years as Secretary and subsequently President of the Australian Numismatic Society (a Sponsoring Society of the NAA). Founded in Sydney in 1913, it is the oldest such society in Australasia.

Let me take you back to March 1960 when, as a young schoolboy of 13, I attended my first meeting of the A.N.S. There I met

Tom for the first time.

In that era attending a formally conducted meeting in the upstairs room of the Mitchell Library was awe-inspiring and a little frightening. Tom was Secretary and he went out of his way to make me feel welcome, just as he welcomed all those who came to meetings. New or young Society members were his "children" and were encouraged to become involved in the Society's activities. Tom's love of the Society came out of his happy, open nature and his love of coins and collecting them. However ahead of this was his love for Joyce, his wife of fifty two years. Tom and Joyce did not have children of their own so the Society's children became theirs in a sense. I can recall their kindness and encouragement over the years especially at the Society's public exhibitions, Port Mac-

quarie conventions and picnics. Tom must have attended nearly every meeting of his fifty two years of membership and in the last twenty years or so nearly always accompanied by Joyce. This consistency of purpose and his fatherly approach to "his" Society did not hinder him from understanding the broader picture for coin collecting organisations of which he was always supportive. This meant the A.N.S. became a significant sponsor of the N.A.A. and helped to lay our association's solid foundation for the future. This was a crucial time in the formation of the N.A.A. by its founder the late Ray Jewell and Tom gave the concept wholehearted support when he could have been excused for only thinking of the welfare of his beloved A.N.S.

Tom was born at the family home in Bondi Junction on 16th July 1920. He attended school at Stockton (Newcastle), Five Dock and Fort Street Boys High. During the later depression years he worked for Langco Electrical Company at Rozelle. During the Second World War he was works supervisor involved in full wartime production. During 1945 he attended the A.B.Triggs auction sale conducted by Lawson's. He acquired much of his collection during the years 1945-55. He joined the Society in 1948, the same year he married Joyce. They owned and ran a grocery store at Croydon Park until 1953. They then moved to Caringbah and Tom took up employment with the Medical Benefit Fund at its headquarters in the city. He became a member of the Australian Numismatic Society Council in 1950, Treasurer 1952-54, Councillor, Secretary 1956-66, President 1966-67, once again Secretary 1968-83, then a well deserved break until again being Treasurer in 1989-90 and President 1990-94.

During all this time Tom remained a general collector of great breadth who, when not working for the Society, would sort coins and medals in his "den".

Yet he found time in his retirement since 1982 to catalogue the Dixson Numismatic Collection for the NSW State Library.

In 1964 he was elected Honorary Life Member of the Society and awarded its first Gold Medal. Tom always had time for coins and a good yarn whenever you met him. I can never forget watching him at "work" at the MBF when I would call in to pick up articles from him for the report when I was editor in 1972-73. It was in this environment I could really see he was popular and truly liked. His sense of humour and openness served him well but beyond this friendship quality he won the true respect of all collectors because of his honesty, integrity and willingness to share knowledge of coins and medals and the stories behind them. It was later in the 1970s that Tom co-authored two very popular books on collecting Australian coins that would help to popularise the subject with the public at large. We should not forget the thousands of letters he wrote in answer to queries from the public during the pre-decimal boom years and the number of people among us he brought into the Society (and hence the NAA) either directly or indirectly.

There will never be another quite like him - Tom Hanley - "the grand old man of The Australian Numismatic Society" to quote Fred Dobbin in the 1993 A.N.S. Yearbook. Yet, through regular attendance at meetings and the support of Joyce, we still have a Hanley in our midst.

Jim Noble.