



VOLUME 7



JOURNAL OF THE
NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

OF AUSTRALIA INC.

<http://naa-online.com/>



OBITUARY

RAYMOND THOMAS NUNNE JEWELL

1927 – 1992

Ray Jewell, the foundation President and force behind the creation of the Numismatic Association of Australia passed away suddenly and unexpectedly at home in Warragul on the 27th. December 1992. His life spanned three eras of Australian numismatics. Few remain who can remember all, none who played such a pivotal role.

Ray has been rightly described as the doyen of Australian numismatics. His knowledge and experience were renowned. Ray will not be remembered however for possessing this knowledge, but rather for the kind, generous way in which he shared it.

The need for a national numismatic body was recognised in the earliest days of Ray's involvement in numismatics. The formation of the Numismatic Association of Australia was the culmination of his dream to create such a body and a reflection of his desire to share and spread numismatic knowledge.

Ray was born in the Melbourne suburb of Elsternwick on August 2nd, 1927. He attended Scotch College, Melbourne where he was a Prefect and Captain of boarders. Ray also edited the school magazine. He was a keen participant in sport, particularly cricket and football.

His family was of Scottish descent and were involved in the management of country hotels. After school Ray followed his parents into the same line of business. He often spoke fondly of his experiences in the hotel trade at St. Kilda during the Second World War when American servicemen were stationed in the area.

In 1949 he married Nan (Nancy) whom he had met when they were both sixteen. They had a son and daughter and five grandchildren. Ray and Nan had moved to the Gippsland town of Warragul to be close to their family in 1990 and although Ray had to travel many hours each week by train to work he felt the

move to the country was one of the best he ever made. It gave him the opportunity to be more involved with his family and access to the rural life style he really enjoyed.

After their marriage Ray and Nan initially managed a hotel in Middle Park but soon took over a newsagency in Prahran, a partnership with his brother. Ray was already a keen collector of coins and stamps. He spoke of his adventures is seeking out pieces to add to his already impressive holdings. One might anticipate his later skills in business in his ability to convince Nan of the importance of some of his acquisitions at that early stage of their married life. Imagine the deftness needed to convince a young wife of your need for 29 Holey Dollars, but then they were strung together and hidden with his son's toys!

His two great friends of that era were Syd Hagley and John Gartner, each significant figures in Australian Numismatics. These were the three who brought numismatics across the war years in Victoria and South Australia and in the mid 1950s initiated the modern era by convincing Mint authorities to strike proof coins for collectors on an annual basis. Together, they seem to have accounted for a great proportion of the sales from the Melbourne and Perth mints of Proofs in 1955 and 1956.

Ray was an active member of the Numismatic Association of Victoria, he was a president and also judged the Max Stern Trophy, for the best paper presented to the society from its inception in 1967 for over ten years. The dinners with Phil. Downie, Paul Simon, Ron Stewart and many others before the meetings of the Association were some of the principle numismatic events of the era.

In the 1950s Ray had collected large numbers of duplicate EF and uncirculated Australian Commonwealth coins. Few other were interested at the time and he even spent some for lack of takers. The best of these duplicates were offered through Max Stern in the Port Phillip Arcade. His interest in unpopular collecting areas of Australian numismatics placed him in a unique position when they became popular. Ray's last great collecting interest was Union Badges, an unpopular field when he began collecting but demanding ever increasing prices when his interest became known.

For Ray collecting had to be a challenge and a source of knowledge, not a matter of money.

He encouraged his grandchildren to collect but never made their path to collections so smooth as to become boring.

Ray moved out of collecting stamps when he had taken his interest as far as he could, he moved out of coins at much the same stage and he moved into other collecting areas – from 'Phantom' comics, to the finest Worcester porcelain a passion he shared with Nan. The one constant was his enjoyment of collecting and meeting fellow collectors.

His knowledge twice came to the rescue of State numismatic collections. In the early 1960s he was instrumental in alerting authorities at the National Gallery of Victoria of items from their collection appearing on the numismatic market – this discovery led to the realisation that thefts were also taking place from the Natural History and Science and Technology collections. Ray's efforts led to the trial and imprisonment of the responsible person and stopped the damage to many important collections. Ten years later he uncovered a major theft in Sydney with the immortal lines 'These copies are very nice but can we see the originals'.

His business life was an extension of his collecting life. Ray was not like other dealers, the evidence for this is that he never needed any stock! Others rely on making a impulse sale, Ray could rely on the friendship and trust of the people he worked with. He was not interested in getting people to buy something, he was interested in finding the thing the person really wanted – and he could be relied upon to do it. People felt that going to talk to Ray in his office was a pleasant, unpressured event because it was.

In public speaking his delivery was slow and contemplative, he preferred to have meetings worked out as far as possible before they began, he enjoyed a joke and could be impish, he liked his food and had a particular weakness for sweets. While he did not drink himself he always provided the finest for his guests, he was always ready to learn and never sought to hide his ignorance if he did not know something. He enjoyed life and people and loved his family deeply.

We will miss Ray. We should aspire to deserve the respect he had and we are grateful for his life.