

ANA to Salute Retiring *Coin World* Editor

When J. Oliver Amos and Cecil Watkins conceived the idea of a weekly tabloid newspaper for coin collectors, it is doubtful they imagined, even in their wildest dreams, the success that *Coin World* eventually would achieve. However, it is entirely possible that their brainchild would not have become so successful without the help and guidance of a staff member borrowed from another of their publications, the *Sidney (Ohio) Daily News*. That staff member was Margo Russell.

Margo began her journalism career immediately after graduating high school, joining the staff of the *Sidney Daily News* in 1935. Her newspaper apprenticeship took her from paper routes to classified advertising to writing obituaries and covering county fairs. During this time her writing abilities, and her good looks, did not escape the notice of her bosses. One of her supervisors, Marion Russell, who later became editor of the daily newspaper, courted Margo and eventually married her.

In 1960, when *Coin World* was introduced to the collecting public, Mr. Amos summoned Margo from the editorial department of his Ohio newspaper to assist D. Wayne Johnson, first editor of the fledgling coin newspaper. Mrs. Russell was assigned the task of preparing "a few" numismatic features, but once started she never stopped! Though at first she knew little about her subject matter, long evenings spent studying borrowed numismatic books soon turned Margo into a hobby spokesperson.

Johnson left his position at *Coin World* in 1962, at which time Margo Russell took over as editor. Under her guidance the paper grew to become the largest-circulating hobby publication of all time. Aside from her regular duties, Margo also was responsible for editing many Amos Press specialty numismatic publications over the years, including the *Coin World Almanac*.

Once her talents as *Coin World* editor had been proven, honors came to Margo quickly and steadily. By 1964 she had been invited to the White House, met



Retiring *COIN WORLD* editor Margo Russell.

with President Lyndon Johnson, and had been named to serve as a member of the United States Annual Assay Commission. In later years, Margo and her husband were guests at the White House several times, and during the course of her career she was invited to attend numerous Rose Garden ceremonies.

Named numismatic "Woman of the Year" by three New England coin clubs in 1964, Margo twice received that title from the Collectors of First Day / First Issue Covers. She holds top honors with the Numismatic Literary Guild, having been awarded its coveted "Clemmy" award in 1971, and her peers continually have chosen her "best writer" and "favorite editor" over the years.

Margo's 25-year association with the ANA has been truly memorable. She has attended 24 annual and midwinter conventions and served on a number of special committees. She was recognized in 1967 at the ANA's Bal Harbour, Florida, convention with the ANA Medal of Merit; in 1975 at the Los Angeles convention she received the organization's highest honor, the Farran Zerbe Memorial Award; and in 1979 Margo was named the

Great Lady of ANA at the annual convention in St. Louis.

Margo personally has covered many major Treasury Department news stories originating from the Philadelphia, Denver and San Francisco mints, the U.S. Mint, and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington, D.C. She has been called on to testify on behalf of the numismatic hobby before Senate and House committees, and has served as a member of the advisory committee for the Research Triangle Institute's U.S. coinage system study, as well as a consultant to the General Services Administration numismatic program.

In May 1970 Margo was named a member of the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission Coins and Medals Advisory Panel, along with 14 congressmen and a bevy of nationally-known figures in the fields of art, banking and numismatics; she served as chairman of that panel in 1972.

A member of major numismatic organizations and an honorary member of collector groups across the country and abroad, Margo has lectured on numismatics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Purdue University in Indiana; Roosevelt University in Chicago; and at state and regional numismatic educational forums. She is a fellow of the American Numismatic Society and of the Royal Numismatic Society of Great Britain. In 1979 she was named to the prestigious Council of the American Numismatic Society and, two years later, to the Society's executive board. Margo also holds a diploma of recognition from the Sociedad Numismatica de Mexico.

A frequent overseas traveler, Margo took part in a study tour to Israel in 1971, and in 1980 served as numismatic ambassador for a five-nation People-to-People European tour, meeting collectors from behind the Iron Curtain in Poland, Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia, as well as Greece.

Over the years, Margo has been just as active in her home state and local community as she has been in the numismatic community. She was president of the Women's Association of the First Presbyterian Church, volunteered as a Sunday school teacher and Girl Scout leader, and

served as secretary of the Citizens' Committee to rebuild the local school system until her job as *Coin World* editor began making extraordinary travel demands. Currently she is a member of the Dorothy Love Retirement Community Council in Sidney, Ohio, and the Shelby County (Ohio) Job Training Program's Private Industry Council, and acts as secretary for a four-county regional Private Industry Program Council. She also finds time to hold membership with the Altrusa Club and holds the Order of the Rose in the Beta Phi Sorority.

Margo's husband, Marion, is a retired editor of the *Sidney Daily News* and currently serves as head of the Amos Press Specialty Publications Division. The Russells have two daughters, Mrs. Michael Barhorst and Susan Russell; a grandson, Tommy; and a granddaughter, Sarah.

For more than 20 years Margo Russell's name has been synonymous with that of her publication. It is difficult for collectors to think of one without the other—*Coin World* is Margo Russell. The ANA will formally honor Margo at the San Antonio midwinter convention banquet later this month. Upon her retirement from *Coin World* on February 28, it is hoped that Margo will continue her activity in the numismatic community. In the past she has always been ready to serve her profession, her hobby and her fellow numismatists—her influence and energy will be greatly missed by any who have had the pleasure of crossing her path. The ANA salutes you, Margo . . . good luck.



Margo Russell is a familiar face at ANA conventions. Here she chats with friends at the 1982 Boston convention banquet.



2010 Farran Zerbe Memorial Award
recipient Beth Deisher.

PHOTO: MARK HAND PHOTO CREATIONS, ANNA, OHIO

ANA AWARDS

Dedicated hobby advocate Beth Deisher is recognized with the ANA's highest honor—the Farran Zerbe Memorial Award for Distinguished Service.

by Stephen L. Bobbitt R1143751

STOCK AND TRADE—that's the story of Beth Deisher: a farm girl who became an award-winning writer; a fact-finding reporter who became a fair-minded editor; and an independent woman who became a loving wife, mother and grandmother. The 2010 recipient of the American Numismatic Association's Farran Zerbe Memorial Award for Distinguished Service, Deisher is recognized and respected by coin collectors, numismatic leaders and players, government chiefs and congressional policy-makers.

Mary Elizabeth Hurdle Deisher grew up on a farm in northeastern North Carolina. From her first brush with news reporting at age 10 to her decision in high school to pursue a career in journalism, Deisher has achieved any and all goals she set and has overcome many obstacles, including an 11-year battle with cancer.

"When you hear the diagnosis of cancer the



▲ The Hurdle family on Easter Sunday 1953: Deisher (center); sister, Sallie (left); father, John; and mother, Fannie.

first time, you suddenly get a different perspective on life. It makes you think," she says from her office at *Coin World* in Sidney, Ohio. "I was very fortunate. I had a wonderful doctor, the support of my family and friends, a job I love, and a positive outlook. A good attitude can make the difference."

Deisher always has had that positive outlook, that spirit that gives her the strength to move forward. She is a powerful force within the numismatic hobby, yet is quick to break out in her contagious, easily recognizable laugh. Little things excite her as much as big events. She is as impressed by knowledge-

able collectors as she is unimpressed by powerful leaders.

Editor of *Coin World* for 25 years, Deisher is the founding editor of four numismatic publications issued by her employer, Amos Hobby Publishing—*Coin Values*, *Paper Money Values*, *WorldWide* ☉

PHOTO: BETH DEISHER

STOCK & Trade

"I never have worried about getting the credit for something I or we did at COIN WORLD, just as long as it's good for the numismatic community."

PHOTOS: BETH DEISHER/COIN WORLD



▲ Deisher was the lead witness at a July 12, 1995, Congressional hearing that led to legislation to curb abuses in the commemorative coin market, and to the creation of the 50 State Quarters® Program. Also testifying were (from left) Alan Stahl, Harvey Stack, David Ganz and Philip Diehl.

Coins and *Coin World's Guide to U.S. Coins, Prices & Values* (published annually since 1989). She is the author of countless news stories and editorials, wrote *Making the Grade—A Grading Guide to the Top 50 Most Widely Collected U.S. Coins*, and has supervised updates of the last five editions of the *Coin World Almanac*.

Deisher has served as hobby spokesperson to the general media, having been interviewed by *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Los Angeles*

Times, *Forbes* magazine, NBC's *Today Show*, *Dateline NBC*, *CBS News*, *ABC News Tonight*, *FOX News*, National Public Radio and BBC Radio in London, as well as dozens of media outlets throughout the United States—all this and more from a woman who made her way in a predominantly male hobby that once was nearly unknown to her.

"*Coin World* is read by decision-makers in the numismatic community and the government," Deisher says. "I believe that's reflected by the many occasions *Coin World* has been asked to give congressional testimony."

At a congressional hearing in 1988, Deisher advocated changing the designs of U.S. circulating coins. As the lead witness at a 1995 House subcommittee hearing, she cited abuses in the Mint's commemorative coin program. Her efforts led to reform of the latter and helped initi-

ate the 10-year, 50 State Quarters® Program. As part of her commitment, she served on the Ohio State Quarter Committee.

"I never have worried about getting the credit for something I or we did at *Coin World*," she says, "just as long as it's good for the numismatic community. I've always said no one has a monopoly on good ideas."

Deisher, who joined the ANA in 1981, is a fellow of the American Numismatic Society and affiliated with many state, regional and national numismatic organizations. She was presented the Numismatic Literary Guild's Clemy award in 1995 and received F & W Publications' Burnett Anderson Memorial Award for Excellence in Numismatic Writing in 2006. In 2009 Deisher was honored with the Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists' Frank Gasparro Memorial Award for contributions to the field of numismatics, and this year was the 11th recipient of the Florida United Numismatists' A.J. Vinci Memorial Award for Excellence in Numismatic Education.

From the ANA, Deisher has received the Glenn Smedley Memorial Award and two Presidential Awards. She happily recalls the "absolutely wonderful people" she's worked with over the years, and strongly believes the ANA is



▲ In October 1987, Deisher and Diane Wolf (right), member of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, presented U.S. Treasurer Katherine Ortega with petitions from collectors seeking new designs for circulating coinage.

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"the leading organization" in numismatics.

"Many of the ANA's decisions greatly affect the hobby," she says. "That's why *Coin World* always gives space to those actions. I hope we are just as quick to praise as we are to criticize. We want to inform people so they can make good choices. We give a voice to the collector, and we have a commitment to report on the numismatic community. We continue to be a forum for express-

ing views and communicating problems."

On occasion, that editorial philosophy and policy has stimulated debate. A lawsuit filed in 2005 by the Ameri-

can Numismatic Association against three former employees and a contractor ratcheted up the rhetoric and tested the long relationship between the ANA and the hobby publication. "*Coin World* was careful, and we did our due diligence," Deisher says. "We gave a voice to people who didn't have one."

Three years after the filing and a change in management, the lawsuit was settled by the ANA, but not before Deisher was drawn into the legal battle and subsequently deposed. "I knew things had to come to an end sometime. The ANA had to change or self-destruct . . . and I believe it was on the brink of self-destruction."

The leadership Deisher has shown in the numismatic world began ☉

▲ Deisher talked with Congressman Michael Castle (center) and Chief Counsel John Lopez after an interview in April 1995.



▲ Chris Hansen of *Dateline NBC* interviewed Deisher in 1995.

By her junior year in high school, Deisher abandoned thoughts of becoming a veterinarian and set her sights on journalism.

PHOTOS: BETH DEISHER



▲ At age 6, Deisher was taking care of the farm's cats, lambs, dog and goat.

when she followed in the footsteps of Margo Russell, *Coin World's* second editor and, according to Deisher, her "mentor and teacher." In 1981, when Deisher was the news editor at the *Sidney Daily News* (which, at the time, was owned by the Amos family, publisher of *Coin World*), Russell crossed the hall at the end of the day and asked if they could talk.

Russell offered Deisher a job on her staff. The young editor initially balked at the idea. Only four years earlier, she had followed her husband, Art, from Virginia to his native Ohio and found the job on the daily newspaper. "I told Margo I didn't know anything about coins, except how to spend them," Deisher says in reflection. "I knew about mintmarks and dates because, as a young girl, I spent time with my aunt filling Whitman folders."

But Russell, like others before and since, saw more in Deisher. Russell wanted the young woman from North Carolina for her expertise in writing and newsroom management. The 35-year-old Deisher accepted the "temporary" transfer to *Coin World* after Publisher John Amos assured her she could return to the *News* if she did not like working at the hobby publication.

After a four-month stint, she was sold. "I traveled to shows and met many collectors and dealers in the hobby. I've never looked back," she says.

Deisher always has looked forward, seemingly from the time she was born in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Deisher grew up with her older sister, Sallie, on a farm outside Hertford, near the Perquimans River. Her father, John Quincy Hurdle, a descendant of a Dutch sea captain shipwrecked off Hatteras Island in the early 1800s, rotated crops of corn, soybeans, peanuts and cotton, and managed extensive livestock that included cattle, hogs and sheep.

"My father raised livestock as a hedge against hurricanes, which could wipe out an entire crop in a matter of hours," Deisher says. "I followed

him everywhere. He was like the Pied Piper for me."

Her first responsibility on the farm was taking care of lambs whose mothers had one too many and cast them aside. By the time she was 6, she was the keeper of the family dog, 22 cats, 4 lambs, a goat, a pony and a raccoon. She later showed registered Hereford steers at regional livestock shows.

But those halcyon days did not last. John Hurdle died of a heart attack at age 47, when Beth was only 12. Her mother, Fannie Elizabeth Eure Hurdle, went back to school and received a degree in accounting. She became a bookkeeper and office manager.

"My mother was my role model—a pioneering 'supermom,'" Deisher says. "She was a single mother who worked full-time, yet never missed a PTA meeting, parent-teacher conference, 4-H activity or sporting event." Deisher followed that example with her own son, Ed, who now is married and the father of two.

By her junior year in high school, Deisher abandoned thoughts of becoming a veterinarian and set her sights on journalism. She was introduced to the craft in 5th grade, when she was selected as the "reporter" for her 4-H Club.

"I thought it meant I was going to be the secretary, and I didn't want that," she says. She soon discovered she was assigned to write about her club's activities. The pieces were to run in



▲ Deisher showed off a prize-winning steer at a North Carolina livestock show in 1962.

International Farm Youth Exchange

"A people to people program for better world understanding"



MARY BETH HURDLE

Route 3, Hertford, N. C. 27944

1968 Delegate to Iran

the local weekly newspaper. Two years later, Fannie was delivering young Beth's assignments to the editor, who asked if she helped her daughter write the stories. Fannie explained that Beth alone was responsible. The editor wanted more from the aspiring author, and soon Deisher was writing, learning to edit and getting her first glimpse of the world of newspapers.

"During my freshman year in high school, we had a new English teacher who was a sports stringer for the Carolina edition of the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*," Deisher says. "He convinced the principal to offer a journalism class and allow the students to put out the school newspaper."

Deisher was the first to sign up for his class and worked on the paper throughout high school, serving as editor when she was a senior. The students frequently attended young writers' conferences at Old Dominion University and the College of William and Mary, listening and talking to noted journalists of the day.

When she was ready to go to college, the School of Journalism at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill did not accept women in its freshman class, so Deisher attended the Women's College of the University of North Carolina, which a year later changed its name to UNC at Greensboro. During her time there, she worked on the school's twice-weekly student newspaper, *The Carolinian*, with a stint as managing editor.

Deisher intended to transfer to the main campus for her junior year, but the dean of the journalism school there said UNC's paper, the *Daily Tar Heel*, likely would not have a position for her and that she would get more practical experience if she remained at Greensboro. However, he read her material and said he would help her get an internship.

"I took him up on his offer, and during the summer between my junior and senior years I interned at the *Norfolk Ledger-Star*," Deisher says. "My first day there, the managing editor

told me I would be filling in for reporters on summer vacation. I covered everything—medicine, military, courts and features. I worked in two bureaus and the main office."

At the beginning of the last semester of her senior year, Deisher bowed out as managing editor. She had made a commitment to herself more than 10 years earlier to be an international exchange student through 4-H.

"When I was 10, I heard a young man about 20 who had just returned from Panama as part of the 4-H International Farm Youth Exchange (IFYE) program," Deisher says. "I knew that was a goal I wanted to achieve."

She selected the Middle East as her preferred assignment and, in 1968, was chosen to go to Iran, a decade before the dramatic changes in that nation's government. Before she left, Deisher sought out an Iranian college student who acquainted her with Farsi—the Persian language of Iran—by teaching her basic phrases and vocabulary.

"Ten days after I graduated (with a double major in American and British literature), I

was in Washington, D.C., where all the IFYE participants met before going to their assignments," she says. "My first choice had been Israel, but when I asked why I was assigned to Iran, I was told, 'You have the ability to adapt to situations.'" ☉



▲ Deisher (second from left) learned a traditional Iranian folk dance from members of her host family in the Assyrian village of Saw-at-Lue in West Azerbaijan. According to religious custom, she wore a *chador* (top) when in public.

"I was a thousand miles from the quake, but I hadn't communicated with my family for over a month."

► Beth and Art Deisher on their wedding day, with her Aunt Etta and Uncle Erwin Turner. Etta was a coin collector, with whom Deisher filled many Whitman folders in her early years.

Deisher spent 6 months in Iran, living with 13 families in 7 states. As expected, she wrote about her experiences and sent her reports to the Agricultural Extension Service, which reprinted them in newspapers throughout North Carolina.

Some time after she arrived in Iran, Deisher learned that an earthquake had occurred in the eastern part of the country. She asked the American Embassy to let her family know she was all right. "I was a thousand miles from the quake, but I hadn't communicated with my family for over a month," she says. "The Embassy told me, 'We know who you are and where you've been. We've had calls from your family, congressmen and senators, and we've assured everyone that you are fine.'"

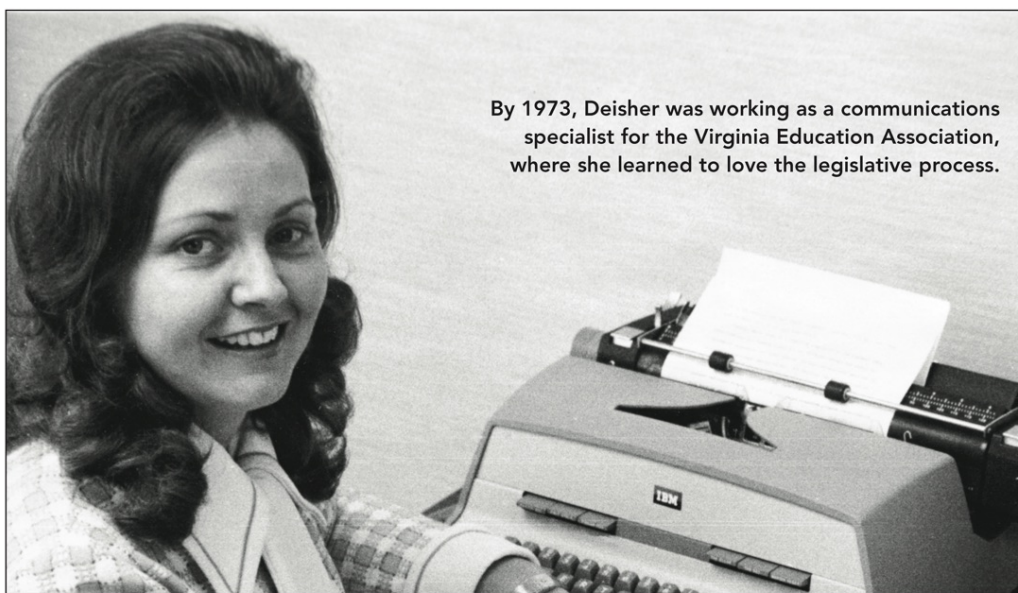
Deisher continued to learn Farsi and improve her communication skills by talking with the young children in the villages where she lived and worked. One day, she and her host family learned that a motorcade carrying Iran's Empress Farah was scheduled to pass by their village. Not wanting to miss the event, they



camped on the road for three days.

"I had my camera and was taking pictures of the motorcade of 1950s Cadillacs, when one came to a screeching halt in front of us," Deisher says, laughing as she recalls the moment. "Out pops the empress, and I'm still taking pictures as she walks up to my host sister to ask her about the village."

"When she was finished, the empress turned to me and, in perfect English, asked, 'What are



By 1973, Deisher was working as a communications specialist for the Virginia Education Association, where she learned to love the legislative process.

PHOTOS: BETH DEISHER

A self-confessed “news junkie,” Deisher watches the 11 o’clock news every night. “All I need is about six hours of sleep,” she says.

PHOTO: BETH DEISHER/COIN WORLD



▲ Margo Russell (right) presented Deisher the Numismatic Literary Guild’s Clemmy award in 1995.

you doing here?’ I explained my situation before the empress turned again to my host sister and said, ‘This day, I grant you one wish.’ I had no idea what I would have asked for, but my host sister didn’t hesitate a moment. She said, ‘For my village to have a school.’ When I visited five years later, a school was in the village.”

After her return to the States in December 1968, Deisher resumed her journalism career. She was visiting friends at *The Ledger-Star* when the managing editor came out and asked, “When can you start?”

The full-time gig at the Norfolk newspaper had Deisher writing feature articles and doing investigative reporting. Loaned out to cover daily stories for the education beat, which was “very active on a lot of issues,” she came to the attention of the Virginia Education Association (VEA). Soon she was offered a job there as editor of the *VEA News* and features editor of the *Virginia Journal of Education*. However, she found her niche working on legislative issues.

In 1974, while she was helping coordinate an IFYE conference in Virginia, she met 1971 program alumnus Art Deisher. He pursued her, and they married in 1976. Art, who earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Ohio State University, is a financial planner.

When their son was a student, his mother often took a leadership role in school activities, heading a drive that raised more than \$60,000

to purchase new band uniforms and musical instruments. Deisher also was a member of a special committee that spearheaded a campaign for passage of an \$18.3 million bond issue. (The funds were used to renovate the local school district’s high school, build a new middle school and secure land for a new elementary school.) She was cited by the school district as its Citizen of the Year in 1995.

Beth Deisher also has led a variety of trade organizations, including Ohio Professional Writers, which she served as president in 2006-08. Three times during her 39-year membership in the National Federation of Press Women she was recognized as Ohio’s Communicator of Achievement, most recently in 2009. She also is a 39-year member of the Society of Professional Journalists and was one of the first two women invited to join the Tidewater (Virginia) chapter in 1971, when Sigma Delta Chi opened its ranks to female journalists.

When asked when she finds time to rest, Deisher says, “We live on a 144-acre farm near Bellefontaine, about 40 minutes from my work in Sidney. Home is a different world. Art and I try never to bring work from the office.”

A self-confessed “news junkie,” Deisher watches the 11 o’clock news every night. “But I’m up in the morning at 5 or 5:30. All I need is about six hours of sleep.” And then she’s ready to start another day, going about her work—asking questions, writing editorials, assigning and editing news stories, and looking out for the well-being of the numismatic hobby. ©



PHOTO: DAN GUST

▲ Deisher and family in May 2010 (from right): husband, Art; son, Ed, with 3-year-old Eric; and daughter-in-law, Kelly, holding 2-week-old Abby.