

## Former U.S. Mint Director Mary Brooks Dies

Former United States Mint Director Mary Elizabeth Thomas Peavey Brooks, 94, of Hailey, Idaho, died February 11, 2002.

A life member of the American Numismatic Association, Brooks served as the 28th director of the Mint under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, overseeing the redesign of America's quarter, half dollar and dollar coins for the nation's 1976 Bicentennial. Before her retirement from the Mint in 1977, Brooks received the Treasury Department's highest honor, the Alexander Hamilton Award, for outstanding work. She later was a consultant for Paramount International Coin Corporation.

"I was very saddened to hear of the passing of Mary Brooks," says ANA President John W. Wilson. "I had the pleasure of meeting her at numismatic conventions in the 1970s and '80s, and she always impressed me with her knowledge and wonderful personality. Her service to our country as Mint director will live long in our memories."

Mary Brooks was born to John and Florence Thomas on November 1, 1907, in Colby, Kansas. Her parents moved to Gooding, Idaho, when she was an infant. After graduating from high school in 1925, she attended Mills College in Oakland, California, for two years before receiving her bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Idaho in 1929. That same year, she married her college sweetheart, Arthur J. Peavey, and lived in Twin Falls with their two children. After her husband died in a Snake River boating accident in 1941, she moved with her son and daughter to Washington, D.C., where her father was serving as a U.S. Senator from Idaho.

It was there that she met C. Wayland "Curly" Brooks, a Senator from Illinois who sat next to her father in the Senate chamber. In 1945 Mary and Curly were married. After he left the Senate in 1948, the couple moved to Chicago. He remained active in politics until his death in 1957, after which Mary took on many of his political responsibilities. She soon became Illinois Republican National Committee Woman and in 1960 was elected vice chairman of the committee, serving as the official hostess of the Republican National Convention in Chicago. In 1963 she resigned her national chairmanship and returned to Idaho, where she was appointed to the State Senate, representing Blaine County and part of the Magic Valley.

Brooks returned to Washington, D.C., in 1969, when she was appointed to the position of director of the Mint by President Nixon. After her retirement, she returned to Idaho, living in Boise and spending summers at the family cabins at Pettit Lake near Stanley and her ranch, Flat Top Sheep Co., north of Carey. In 1988 she moved to Hailey, where she lived until a month prior to her death.

Over her lifetime, Brooks was very active and served on the boards of many civic, social and political organizations, including Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority, American Newspaper's Women's Club, American Association of University Women, American Legion Auxiliary and the Idaho Youth Ranch. Her awards and honors were numerous, including the

ANA Medal of Merit in 1988; Idaho Woman of the Year; induction into the University of Idaho's Hall of Fame in 1970 and the Idaho Hall of Fame Association in 1997; and the "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" Award in 1974 from the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau for her efforts in the restoration and preservation of the city's Old Mint Building. In 1999 she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Idaho.

Brooks is survived by a son, John Thomas Peavey of Carey; a daughter, Elizabeth Ann "Betty" Eccles of McCall; six grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at Flat Top Sheep Co. ranch near Carey this spring.

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The American Numismatic Association is a congressionally chartered nonprofit educational organization dedicated to encouraging people to study and collect money and related items. The ANA helps its 28,000 members and the public discover and explore the world of money through its vast array of education and outreach programs, as well as its museum, library, publications, conventions and seminars. For more information, call 719-632-2646 or go to [www.money.org](http://www.money.org).