

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Adventures of Mutt and Jeff

When I retired in 2002, I started going to the Ft. Lauderdale SwapShop on Sunrise Blvd, each Thursday (free day). Steve Schor my numismatic friend started joining me for these weekly visits to the flea market to look for coins and other numismatic items. After two hours of walking around in the early morning sunlight, we would adjourn to the canteen inside the SwapShop. There, we would talk coins over coffee and an English muffin for the next two hours.



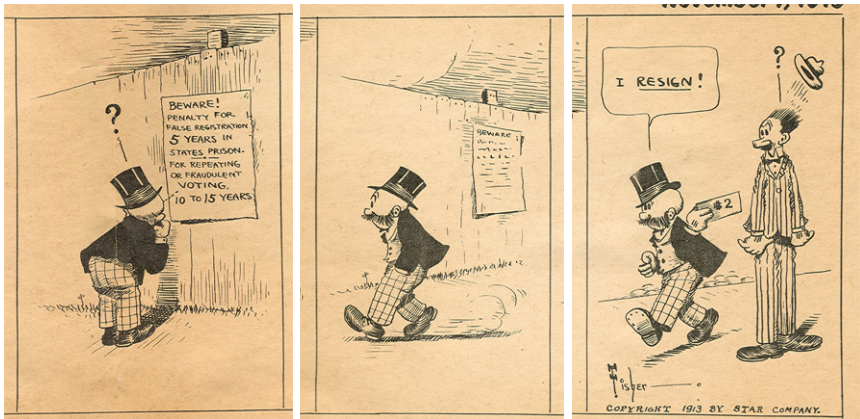
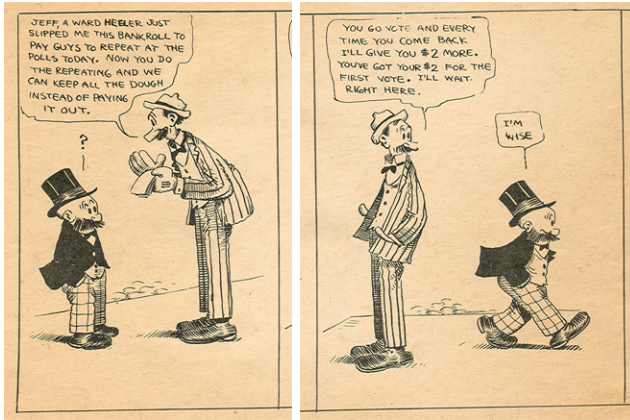
Mutt and Jeff

Mutt is Roger deWardt Lane, Jeff is Steve Schor. They got these nicknames, the first time they went to the the flea market together.

Whenever you see a short person and a tall person as a couple, people say they look like *Mutt and Jeff*. Who are Mutt and Jeff?

Mutt and Jeff became the first daily comic strip in 1907. Hundreds of comic strips have followed with many running for decades. On June 7, 1908, the character A. Mutt was killed off, but was later brought back as Augustus P. Mutt.

A San Francisco Chronicle cartoonist named Bud Fisher began drawing a daily comic strip called “Mr. Mutt.” A short time later, he added the diminutive Mr. Jeff and “Mutt and Jeff” was born. Mutt was a tall, lanky man with a penchant for dimes, while Jeff looked like a coin dealer after a rough weekend. Mutt and Jeff were affable losers — the guys in the cheap seats at horse races on a Wednesday afternoon or walking the next coin show.



The Mutt and Jeff strip 1913

The First Mutt and Jeff Story

Mutt and Jeff decided to attend the Sunrise Swap Shop on Sunday February 9th. They met at the entrance at about 7:30 in the morning. Mutt regularly attends this venue on Thursdays, where he quite often sees Harvey doing the flea market. He knows his way around pretty well. Jeff is new to the market, but had attended it on rare occasions in the past. Mutt generally purchases medals and old travel books.

The market is not what it was 20 or 30 years ago, said Jeff. He had little expectations of finding much. They went up and down aisles that Mutt knew from experience might yield the best opportunities to buy and chatted about things numismatic as they went along. Mutt was able to acquire a military medal from one dealer and a large Ben Gurion Israel medal for \$2 from another. In the process they developed a bit of chatter with the dealers and between each other, what they started calling the *Mutt and Jeff* approach. They were dressed as tourists and by hitting the dealers with talk from two directions; seemed to be able to make the transactions go smoother.



Russian Ruble 1833

Mutt found a silver swimming medal from 1928 and asked the dealer what he wanted for it. It was perhaps worth 5-10 dollars. The dealer asked \$25. Mutt demurred. In the meantime, in the next display case; Jeff found a Russian ruble while Mutt bargained for the swimming medal. When Jeff asked about the large silver coin, \$5 came the reply. Jeff did not get excited or show much

emotion but pulled out a \$5 bill quickly while Mutt kept up the conversation about the swimming medal and how silver was only \$4.50 per troy ounce.

Later at home, Jeff checked the Krause Catalog which proved enlightening as the ruble dated 1833 was cataloged at \$120 in extra fine. Originally, he thought it might be worth about \$30. He was very pleasantly surprised. It seemed there were still bargains out there.

After a bit of breakfast at about 10 AM and more numismatic talk, they went to the rear of the flea market. Jeff didn't find anything else of note, but Mutt was able to purchase some Arabic books and an English to Arabic dictionary. He asked the dealer where they came from, who replied, "from abandoned storage spaces." He got a big laugh from her when he made a remark, "Who knows what's next, they may prove to be very useful."²

Mutt and Jeff left about 11:30 AM and said "a good time was had by all."

² It is pure speculation but years later, reading about the find of those Arabic books, which I remember clearly, it could be possible that they came from the 9-11 **Terrorists** who did live in the Hollywood area. The books included a beautiful Qur'an from Cairo, an Arabic-English Dictionary and a propaganda soft cover small book on explaining Christianity to the Arabs in English, printed in South Africa. There were in the box, several books which I did not take. They were soft cover cookbooks in Arabic which I identified by the pictures and recipes.

Another Mutt and Jeff Story - The Haney Medal

Mutt met Jeff at the usual time at the Swap Shop. It had been over a month since they had done the flea market, due to the hot weather and hurricane season. Florida had experienced four big ones - Charlie, Frances and Ivan and one other that must have been smaller as I can't remember its name. With the slightly cooler weather, the vendors were out in larger numbers than during the real hot weather. Since Mutt and Jeff do the market for the exercise, if they don't find anything numismatic, it's still ok. The coffee

and conversation were still good. The adventure was almost over when they came across a dealer in coins who by this time was well known to them and they to him. He usually greets them with the saying "*I just sold everything to the other guy.*"

This time was different since he had a small medal. Mutt liked it as it was like "breaking the ice" and asked, "how much?" The dealer said, "I've been asking ten dollars but to you, three dollars." Mutt's response was, "That's close, I was thinking of two dollars." He replied "let's split the difference." So, Mutt purchased the medal for \$2.50. It was hours later when they stopped for a second cup of coffee and this time in better light. So, Jeff looked again at the medal. He said, "you did ok. The designer's name on the medal is *VD Brenner.*"



The Haney Medal

Looped small bronze plaque medal 25 x 34mm

Obverse: female std. r. on bench, holding paper-Legend
FOR FINE / CRAFTSMANSHIP

Small wreaths l. & r. of legend

Designers name vertical lower left VD BRENNER

Reverse: HANEY MEDAL / AWARDED / 1940 / BY THE /
SCHOOL / ART LEAGUE / OF / NEW YORK CITY

Medalist below: MEDALLIC ART CO

Mutt was still researching the item when he found that the ANS has an original plaque c.1909, 110 x 162mm and a different small one, dated 1921 with a reference Smedley13. The Art Stu-

dents' League of New York since its inception in 1875 and throughout the 20th century, has been a major force in the course of events which caused the art capital of the world to move from Europe to New York City.

My contact at the *American Numismatic Society* in New York said, "It is a variety of Brenner medals that is not represented in the ANS cabinet even though we have the personal collection of Brenner items, from the artist's own collection, a gift in 1987."

Jeff asked, "who was Haney?" Mutt's reply was, "I still do not know", but with the help of the Internet, I finally found the answer.

James Parton Haney, 1869 - 1923, was an art educator. He was associated with the School Art League of New York City. He had at least one exhibition of his own drawings in Chicago, 1917. He also edited a book in 1908 titled: Art Education in the Public Schools of the United States. Haney was Secretary of The National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education and Director of Art and Manual Training for New York City Public Schools. The model of the medal, designed by V D Brenner was the large original plaque in the ANS collection - c.1909 and is still being awarded by the School Art League of New York City.

The Brenner Haney Medal has gone through many varieties over the years. Originally established in 1909, the Haney Medal was first struck by Robert Stoll of New York City. This was the firm Victor Brenner worked for as a hand engraver when he first came to this country in 1889. He was employed by Stoll starting in 1892.

Brenner was a modeler. He learned to make a model oversized prior to 1900 in Paris and have the model reduced by pantographic reduction. He was the one who brought this technology to America. Prior to 1917, the job came to Medallion Art Co to strike this medal. The year was in raised letters as was the rest of the lettering on the reverse. This left a large reserve for the recipient, an art student, to have his own name engraved.

Brenner was proud of this medal and exhibited it at the Inter-

national Exhibition of Contemporary Medals at the *American Numismatic Society* in 1910. In 1923 Haney's name was added to the reverse. Previously it was called the "School Art League of New York City Craftsmanship Medal." After 1923, it was called the "*Haney Medal*." Numismatists recognize Brenner as the designer of the Lincoln U. S. cent. Mutt gave the *Haney Medal* to the *American Numismatic Society* which listed it as gift from the "*deWardt Collection*."

The Mutt and Jeff stories were first printed as part of the Fort Lauderdale Coin Club Newsletter. After the first year, Roger, Sr. started posting the stories on the Internet on his web site. He has received complimentary comments from other collectors who enjoyed following the *Adventures of Mutt and Jeff in South Florida*. If you Google this reference, you will find links to many of the stories.

My Meshuggener Dollar

Mutt and Jeff found a meshuggener U.S. Dollar at the SwapShop. Mutt's Yiddish dictionary says most Americans know the meaning of MESHUGGENER which means:

"CRAZY, nuts, wildly extravagant, absurd"



The U. S. Dollar dated 1889 O for NEW ORLEANS MINT

Mintage 11,875,000 - This dollar has 18 holes drilled in it. The mystery was settled when it was found to be an AA token - this person stayed on the wagon for eighteen years. The dollar, which Mutt paid \$4 for, was sold recently for \$25 as an unusual item.

My Gifts to the American Numismatic Society

I've been a member of the ANS and the *Royal Numismatic Society* (London) almost since I became a numismatist over forty years ago. I wanted to join the RNS and contacted them. Their reply was that a member had to recommend me. They had two members in the State of Florida, and they sent me their names so I could contact them. One was in Miami, an Editor at the *Miami Herald* by the name of Langdon Hayes. I invited him to join me for lunch at the Diplomat Country Club. We had a very nice time talking coins and he said he would sponsor my membership in the RNS and suggested the ANS too.

I have visited the *American Numismatic Society*, at their original location at 155th St & Broadway, New York, twice. Over the years, I have received many books through subscription.

When I retired, I started donating a few coin and other numismatic items from my original collection to them. Then, when *Mutt and Jeff* started going to the SwapShop, I would look for medals to give to the ANS. By 2007, I had donated about seventy-five coins, medals, paper exonomia and tokens and other exonomia items to the Society. A few years ago, they started a glossy large format magazine. Several times the items I have donated were pictured in the collection columns, with - "*Gift of Roger deWardt Lane.*"

MICO KAUFMAN self portrait. The ANS has 29 other medals by him, but not this one, which I donated to them. The Haney Medal designed by V. D. Brenner, they too did not have.



Mico Kaufman Spirit of America - The Hamilton Mint AE