

ARISTOTLE'S VAULT

FORUM GUIDE

FORUM

Advanced U.S. Coin Grading and Problem Coins

EPISODE 6

Grading with Don Ketterling: Professor Insight



DON'S BIO

DON KETTERLING

- Professional coin dealer and Numismatic Consultant from Reno, Nevada
- Has been teaching Advanced U.S. Coin Grading and Problem Coins for over 10 years
- He has lived and experienced the evolution of grading
- Began collecting Buffalo Nickels during the Eisenhower Administration, often trading the lunch lady at school Jefferson Nickels for Buffalo Nickels
- At 14, began gaining professional experience at a coin shop
- After returning from Military Service, has worked as a coin professional for over 45 years

KEY TOPICS

In this episode, Don discusses some very specific topics that may arise when dealing with advanced grading. In his discussion with students, he takes the time to explore the fine details.

BLUE HOLDERS

Don discusses an example of a blue holder. PCGS blue holders are considered Generation 4.0 and were used from October 1998-February 2002. They consisted of a new font, series and coin number information, a new hologram, and the barcode was moved from the front to the back. Generation 4.1 holders were used from February 2002-November 2004 and also had a blue label. They differed from the earlier versions, because the certification numbers changed from 7 digits to 8 digits. (Courtesy of PCGS).

DIE POLISH LINES

Don discusses die polish lines made by the mint. The group discussion focuses on the appeal or lack of appeal of coins containing these marks made by the mint. Personal preference should be considered when deciding whether or not to purchase a coin with such lines. The specific coin that prompts the conversation is an 1888 S.

CASINO TABLE HANDLING

Don focuses on coins, minted in Carson City, used at casino tables. Being that Carson City, Nevada is located close to many popular gambling spots, it tracks that coins from that area would have seen a lot of action at the poker tables. In examining an 1889 CC, Don focuses on how damaged many of the circulated coins of this era are.

EVOLUTION OF GRADING STANDARDS

Don provides a key insight into the evolution of grading. His discussion revolves around grading inflation and how to keep your bearings, as grading companies shift their standards. Don's biggest suggestion is to create your own standard and shift it based on modern trends.

TONING AND OXIDATION

Prompted by an 1890 O, Don discusses the natural process of toning and oxidation. He describes that naturally toned coins have layers of color and often occur from being the end piece in a paper roll or from exposure to the sulfur in canvas bags, creating edge or crescent toning. He encourages graders to look out for artificial purples and/or wild blues.

DMPL (DEEP MIRROR PROOF LIKE)

Prompted by an 1883 O, Don delves into the recognition process of a coin labeled Deep Mirror Proof Like. He discusses with the group a technique for using your fingernail to see if the reflection can be seen 6 inches or more away from the coin. He emphasizes that a mirror surface often magnifies marks and that DMPL designations are often given based on the dates of certain coins.

TELLER HANDLING

Don focuses on Silver Dollars from the New Orleans Mint, especially in the years 1879-1882. Despite their lack of circulation, due to lack of popularity by the public (they were awkward to carry), tellers were required to count them every day, thus creating handling marks. He goes on to discuss how in the 1960s the mint sold many of these bags as uncirculated, only for people to see that teller handling was evident.

COIN OF THE EPISODE

Jeff examines a 1941 Walking Liberty Half Dollar



- It has interesting toning, it is radiant, it has good luster.
- It is considered to have “original skin”, meaning it hasn’t been dipped or retoned.
- You may have been thrown off by the fingerprints.
- Final grade was PCGS MS 67+ with a CAC sticker.

