

HIDALGO YOUTH COIN CLUB SELECTS BEST STATE QUARTERS

by Raul H. Gonzalez

What was once known as the 'hobby of kings' in the late 19th Century, is now referred to as the 'king of hobbies.' Unlike many favorite pastimes and other hobbies that have come and gone, there is one that has managed to continue to grow and gain in value - coin collecting.

The children of the Rio Grande Valley now have a club devoted to the field of numismatics-the study or collection of money, coins and metals. The club formed in February and has been meeting twice a month at the McAllen Public Library's conference room. The enthusiasm has been so great, that the kids (aged 7 to 15) have requested to meet every week while on summer break from school.

It took two months and four class meetings for the students of the newly formed Hidalgo Youth Coin Club to select the best designs from the 50 statehood quarters as well as the 6 U.S. Territory quarters. All 56 designs were scrutinized, judged and ranked according to a set of criteria that included artistry, symbolism and historical significance.

A great amount of history and state information was learned during the process. This exercise has taught them to be more detail-oriented and will propel them to be the next great generation of young numismatists.

The U.S. Mint produced five quarters annually beginning in 1999 and were introduced into circulation in the order they were admitted into the union. For the first phase of this monumental project, the students were asked to choose the top 2 designs per year.

Round One saw the elimination of 31 quarters, including their home state of Texas. According to them, these were either too plain, too cluttered, not interesting enough or just questionable design choices. The remaining 25 quarter designs were then placed into four categories and judging began anew to find the best for each and the results are as follow.

The 'Best Design Depicting a Historical Event' was awarded to the Utah quarter, with its golden spike and two trains meeting to connect the Transcontinental Railroad at Promontory Summit.

In the 'Best Design Symbolizing Their State' category, the Tennessee quarter was chosen. It displays 3 musical instruments (guitar, trumpet, violin) representing the areas of their musical heritage - country music, the blues and Appalachian music.

The largest category, 'Best Artistic Design' was won by Nevada with 3 galloping wild mustangs in front of snow capped mountains and flanked by sage brush on either side with a banner reading "The Silver State."

The 'Best Design of a U.S. Territory' was awarded to the island nation of Puerto Rico with a parapet jetting out from a fortress overlooking the ocean and their national flower, the flor de maga (a hibiscus-like flower).

For their final task, the students were asked to choose the year (1999-2009) that had the best overall designs from the 11 years of the Statehood/Territory Quarter Program. Large images of proof quarter sets from the San Francisco Mint were displayed on a large flat screen TV in order to view them as a group.

The year 2006 was chosen as their favorite. It contains the states of Nevada, Nebraska, Colorado, North Dakota and South Dakota. The next best design year was 2008 followed in order by 2005, 2007, 2009, 2003, 2001, 2004, 2000, 2002 and 1999.

Guest speakers will be scheduled to make presentations and share their invaluable numismatic knowledge and experiences throughout the year.

Former band director, Raul H. Gonzalez has been leading th youth group since it's inception. If you would like to join the youth coin club, please call 956-566-3112 to find out when the next scheduled class meeting will take place.