

Editor's Q&A:

Holly Rotondi

by **Larry Jewett**,
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HOLLY ROTONDI

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This interview was transcribed from
the Feb. 16, 2024, episode of the
Coin World podcast

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Q: A commemorative coin program will soon benefit the Friends of the National World War II Memorial. How excited are you about this upcoming program?

A We are so thrilled, and it's even more appropriate because it actually commemorates the 20th anniversary of the World War II Memorial, which was dedicated in May 2004. This is a really big year for us, and we're really excited to highlight it with this amazing set of commemorative coins.

Q: Some may be familiar with the memorial in Washington, D.C., but your role is with the Friends of the National World War II Memorial. What are the responsibilities of your organization?

A The Friends of the National World War II Memorial was founded by the folks who built the memorial. They were part of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Once the memorial was dedicated, it was handed over to the National Park Service for care and maintenance, but our founders felt there really needed to be a continued commemorative and educational experience for the memorial. The organization wanted to provide support to the National Park Service so that this memorial is cared for in the way that we want it to be.

Q: Who can be a part of this organization?

A All are welcome. We are a national organization — we are based in Washington, D.C., but we have virtual programming,

educational programming monthly, available to all. We have a teachers' conference that we hold in Washington each year, we have a big social media presence and we also have commemorations annually throughout the year.

Q: How are you finding the public's education about World War II, since the conflict was more than 80 years ago?

A We are finding the young people are not being taught about it much, but it's through no fault of the teachers. Because of all the challenges educators face, World War II is becoming less integral in what our students are learning, so it's become a major focus for us to keep the attention, teaching them about what the 16 million men and women did for our country and literally the world. We also teach about how it was a collective effort. A word we use is "unity." The whole nation had to come together to win the war and we did. I think it's one of the crowning achievements in U.S. history.

Q: You took part in a striking ceremony in Philadelphia in advance of the coin release. Did this event turn your interests towards numismatics, even though you're probably very busy with everything you have going on?

A Possibly. It was like nothing I have ever participated in. The folks at the Philadelphia Mint took the time to explain the process. I was sort of like a wide-eyed kid watching it all. Just being able to do that strike was fantastic. CW