



Western Cape Numismatic Society

Seven short questions to a Fellow Collector

Question 1: Tell us about yourself.

My name is **Thomas van der Spuy**, I'm married and the proud father of two young daughters. For the past four years, my family and I have been living full-time on the beautiful island of **Mauritius**. I'm a passionate coin collector — my wife calls it a *coin-collecting addiction*!

I grew up in **Melkbosstrand, Western Cape**, before moving our family to Mauritius, where I continue to build and manage my collection remotely.

Question 2: How and when did you become interested in collecting?

My fascination with coins began when I was about **seven years old**. One day, I picked up a **1935 Union Halfpenny** on the beach in Melkbosstrand — my first ever coin find. The *TygerBurger* newspaper even ran a front-page story about it!



Not long after, I started melting down old fishing sinkers I picked up with my dad on low tide, re-casting them, and selling them to a local **Portuguese fish-and-chips supermarket**. They paid me in old decimal coins, which I could only use on their arcade games in store — and that's when I began collecting the 2nd and 3rd decimal coinage. A lady at Absa bank kept aside the old decimal coins received at the local branch, which I exchanged with her, each week on a Saturday morning.

A few years later, I discovered an album of **old silver one-rands** in our home, followed by an even bigger surprise: taking apart an old wooden cabinet containing multiple hidden compartments, I discovered a handful of **ZAR (Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek)** coins. Nobody in the family knew they existed and were very valuable at the time! That discovery changed everything — I was hooked on ZAR collecting.

Question 3: What did you collect in the beginning?

From around the age of **eleven**, my main focus became the **ZAR series**, and that has remained my first love and area of specialty. The history, rarity, and beauty of those coins have kept me fascinated ever since.

Question 4: What do you collect now, and why?

Thirty years later my collection revolves around **ZAR coins** in *mint state* condition, a complete passion project that I've been refining for many years. I also collect **rare South African “trophy” coins** such as the **1931 tickey**, **1965 Afrikaans R1**, and other unique, low-mintage issues.

Beyond that, I hold a love for Griqua coinage and anything that is Griqua. I also enjoy improving my set of **mint-state sovereigns** from **1923 to 1932**, along with notable **proof sets** — 1923, 1931, and 1965 — and a carefully curated selection of **South African banknotes** that capture the country's numismatic story across eras.

Question 5: What is the biggest challenge you currently face with your collection?

Two years ago, I achieved a personal collecting goal: completing the entire **ZAR series in mint state**. I'm now close to finishing a **second mint-state set**, one for each of my daughters. My top set is around **80% Top Pop**, but the real challenge now lies in upgrading — the coins I still need or want to improve almost *never* appear on the market.

Question 6: What advice would you give to new collectors?

Two pieces of advice have always served me well:

1. **Don't chase the coin — let the right coin find you.** Even the pieces you think will never appear again somehow do, at the right time and at the right price.
2. **Be patient and buy quality.** It's better to wait and acquire one exceptional coin than to buy three average examples you'll later want to upgrade.

Good coins reward patience and discipline — and that's part of what makes numismatics so special. Follow the advice above and it will also stand as a great investment.

Question 7: If you were to take up a new hobby, what would it be?

Honestly, I can't imagine a life without coins and banknotes — they're part of who I am. The people who make this hobby have become my personal friends. I cannot wait for the next coin show and being surrounded by fellow collectors and the dealers.

But lately, a new passion has emerged: **growing the hobby itself**. I find great joy in supporting our hobby, behind the scenes and in various ways. But a new focus I'm now working on is to **promote numismatics through education, research, and collector outreach** — helping more people discover not only the investment potential but also the lasting joy and heritage that coin collecting offers.