



Western Cape Numismatic Society

Seven short questions to a Fellow Collector

Question 1: Tell us about yourself.

My name is Pierre Nortje and I am a member of the Western Cape Numismatic Society. I married my wife, Mariana, on Valentine's Day 40 years ago, in 1986. We met as students at Stellenbosch, where both her parents still live. We have three children and three grandchildren, two of whom are living in Beijing, China.



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

I cannot recall a time when I did not collect something, but regarding coins, I know for sure that I was already collecting them as a boy in primary school. My father bought me my first Bickels coin catalogue in the early 1970s from City Coins. (I still have the catalogue).

Question 3: What did you collect in the beginning?

When I was a young boy in the late 1960s, one could still go to the local banks and exchange (buy) the pre-decimal silver issues at face value. So on Saturday mornings, I would go to all the banks in our town (Wellington in the Western Cape) and buy up all the silver coins they had received in the past week from clients who wanted the 2nd decimal coins from 1965 onwards. Thus, I collected the coinage of the Union of South Africa in the beginning, but later I also collected ZAR, shipwreck coins, and South African banknotes.

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

I now solely collect numismatic literature. I love to write about South African numismatic history, and as many references are not available online, my only sources then are hard copies, e.g. books, newsletters and old catalogues.

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

In terms of first-hand references, it is extremely difficult to find original newspapers from the period of the ZAR coinage (1874-1902) like De Volksstem, Land en Volk, Standard and Diggers' News and the Transvaal Advertiser. Although I don't collect them per se, I would like digital access to as many of them as I could get, but very few are available in any format. Many of the answers that I am looking for, e.g., when exactly the first ZAR coins were put into circulation and what denominations they were, are sure to be found in these newspapers - but I had very little luck so far.

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

Coin and banknote collecting is a hobby, not an investment: I have seen too many burned fingers over the years. If you want to invest in precious metals as an example, why buy a business-strike silver Krugerrand at a markup of 50% of its actual worth? Enjoy your hobby and if there is a profit to be made, regard it as a welcome bonus.

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

Precious and semi-precious stones, as well as fossils have always fascinated me, but as I am now at retirement age, I will not start a new collecting hobby. I am an avid bird watcher and now collect free pictures of them that I take myself!
