

## Introducing the Next Generation

When it was suggested to Jim that I take over his “As I See It” column, his reaction was priceless. It was as if someone had kicked his beloved dog, Elly. Well, I’m happy to report Elly is doing fine and Jim recovered from the initial shock. Jim and I thought it would be a good idea to take this column to introduce myself, my family and share a little bit about my new adventure into your Philatelic world. Indulge me for this one column and in return I’ll make you two promises. First, in subsequent columns I promise to never talk about myself as much as I will here. Future columns will be more philatelic in nature and, frankly, more fun.

Secondly, I promise to turn “As I See It” back over to its rightful owner. Jim really does enjoy opining on various philatelic issues and this is his column. So he’ll be back and better than ever in next quarter’s newsletter.

In previous editions of this newsletter, Jim has mentioned his grandson, Parker. Parker is my son and the greatest blessing my wife (Allison) and I could have ever dreamed. He’s an incredibly happy and energetic 15-month old who wears out his parents on a daily basis. You will no doubt see Parker at shows in the near future. Plus, thanks to purchases made by his Grandpa, he’s already an avid collector.

My wife, Allison, is a high school English teacher at John Marshall Community High School in Indianapolis. Dealing with drama-filled teenagers by day and Parker and I at night, you can imagine she has the patience of a saint. A truly gifted teacher, caring and loving wife and an incredible mother, I can’t tell you how lucky I am to have her in my life. She, too, will attend shows when her schedule allows and you’ll see why the saying “my better half” applies in our relationship.

As Jim noted in the last edition of his newsletter, I have embarked on a fantastic career post graduate school. It’s a second career, of sorts. I worked in professional and college athletics for four years upon completion of my undergraduate degree. After I finished graduate school I was offered a position at Marathon Petroleum Company. Although it was a total diversion from the path I thought my career was heading down, it was too good an opportunity to pass up. Marathon is a first-class company and we operate in a challenging industry that I’ve grown to love.

Speaking of a total diversion, how in the world did I end up interested in Confederate Philately? I think it boils down to three main factors. First, I’ve always loved history. It was the only subject in high school that didn’t bore me to tears. When most kids were reading fictional dramas and myster-

ies, I was reading *1776* (can you say dork?). Philately is such a wonderful vehicle to learn about history, as you clearly know. Second, a portion of my family lives in North Carolina. As a kid I would visit most summers and we would make frequent visits to the University of North Carolina. I became (mildly) obsessed with the Tar Heels and, specifically, basketball coach Dean Smith.

It’s a (mild) obsession that still exists today. In the meantime, we began taking family vacations to Hilton Head Island. In general, I’ve always loved and felt the most comfortable in the southeast. It’s an area of the country that just speaks to me. It fits my personality. Finally, the last factor is Jim. The connotation of “stepfather” is borderline insulting to the impact he’s had on my life. This extends well beyond philately. Roughly one year ago he bought me a UNC advertising cover and something just “clicked.”

I really can’t describe it, but I was hooked. A few (or 20+) books later, I began to think I should take this newfound passion a little more seriously. After many discussions with Jim, we decided diving into the world of Confederates made the most sense for me. Since my knowledge is still relatively limited, having a targeted area upon which to focus made the most logical sense.

That, in a nutshell, brings us to today.

Over the next couple of years, I’ll continue to study and build my collection. I’ll be spending some time with Jim at shows (INDYPEX 2013, for example, coming up later this month in Indianapolis) and writing a column for this newsletter. I’m looking forward to meeting many of you in the near future.

One thing I’ve learned in the small amount of time I’ve spent roaming philatelic circles is the quality of material is only matched by the quality of people who collect it. I’m looking forward to taking this journey with you.

Until next time, happy hunting!

Joel

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