

Three events woke me up to the power and importance of legacy. The first was the birth of my granddaughter. I want her to be successful in the future. My wife and I had created a living trust, but I wondered what else we should be doing.

The second was learning that I had prostate cancer a few weeks after retiring from a full-time job. I have always been very healthy. It was a shock to learn that I had cancer. This was a wake-up call on my mortality. While my surgery was very successful, I realized I could not avoid it any longer; I needed to start planning our legacy for future generations.

The third event happened while I was going through drawers to get rid of items that were no longer of value to me. Some old coins were tucked away in a corner of a drawer. They were old silver dollars, buffalo nickels, and some other miscellaneous coins I had owned for over forty years. There weren't many, and I thought perhaps it was time to sell them to clear out more space.

As I was going through some other cabinets, I found even more old coins that had been my father's. He was a World War II veteran who served in Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific during the war. Some of the coins were very old. One coin was an 1866 penny from Great Britain. Another was a 1920 Australian penny. Others were from the Philippines. There was even some old Japanese war currency. These artifacts are an important legacy from my father's past. He left no stories about the war; he would only speak about it with the men with whom he had served.

My wife reminded me that we have even more coins. Her mother had collected a variety of foreign coins while being stationed at military bases around the world as the spouse of a US Air Force officer. We found even more coins we had collected during our marriage, including a collection of quarters and many old pennies.

A genesis of an idea stirred. Instead of getting rid of all of these coins, why not assemble them into a coin collection? These coins could describe a history of our family that could be passed on to future generations. Each future generation could build on this legacy by adding to the collection, incorporating other new coins and the stories that went with them.