

THE ART AND PASSION OF COLLECTING

By AGWire™
November 6, 2015



Most of us are lucky enough to have enjoyed a time when we'd pool our spare change together and ride our bikes down to the local store with our best friend to buy packs of baseball cards. We'd bring our loot home, open them up, chew the stale bubble gum, and spread the cards out across the kitchen table, and then flip a coin and proceed with divvying them up as if it were a Major League Baseball draft. Those were fun times back then. As we reminisce, the reality is that we really haven't changed all that much. It doesn't matter if you grew up in the 1960's and said "I've got dibs on Mickey Mantle" or in the 1980's and said "dibs on Ozzie Smith," this childhood pastime has remained very much the same throughout the years.

In today's world, when our 'mature' group of collectors gets presented with a nice portfolio of old Engelhard bars from one of our dealer friends, it's the same escapade all over again. "I've got dibs on the 5 T.OZ bar," or "I've got dibs on the London Kilo." Point is, collectors are collectors. Call it a hobby, or as some of our wives call it 'a sickness,' whatever you may call it, it's a great way to enjoy and appreciate the spirit of collecting finer things and associate yourself with unique people who share the same enthusiasm and passion. The methodology behind the passion and pursuit strategy is very simple. The most sought after items, or the scarcest items, bring the highest value, intrigue, and popularity. The least sought after items have a more vast appeal simply because of their current commonality and more accessible price point. With respect to Engelhard silver ingot collecting, *value classification*, which ultimately dictates buying *strategy*, is pretty clearly outlined in the Valuation Guide ICR Ratings on the AllEngelhard website. Virtually all Engelhard bars are now collectible. The more commonly produced bars from the late 1970's and early 1980's still trade at reasonable prices today, making them a great entry play for new collectors.

Once you determine your target wish list, the next and more difficult step is to acquire the piece. Ebay is the world's largest platform for Engelhard silver ingots and bars, and collectibles in general. Transactions in this open auction format truly do set the standard of price discovery and market value. But don't think for a minute that if you have your eyes on a particular rare bar that you're the only one pursuing it. Ebay auctions often create frenzy, with back and forth bidding from start to finish, and almost with certainty several strong snipe bids coming in within seconds of auction close. There's no sure strategy for auction bidding that we have found or mastered. Some bidders place last minute snipes only to be outbid by a higher snipe. Often buyers place an early maximum bid and other bidders tirelessly try to bid up to their

personal limits, only to be outbid by someone's earlier higher bid. But one thing is for certain, **the highest bidder always wins**. Every eBay auction is different, every buyer has his/her own limits, and even the same item offered at another time may have a completely different audience and valuation. Within one year, we witnessed an Engelhard 4oz ingot trade for \$3560, only to see the same series 4oz ingot selling several months later for only \$1100, followed by two sales in the middle of the range.

Some collectors only pursue the known Tier 1 and Tier 2 rarities and bid as they would an ultra rare coin, whereas others pursue the less known underdogs in recognition that the market will eventually recognize their choice in favor. Any choice is a good choice when it comes to Engelhard at today's values. But as the silver ingot and bar collector audience increasingly grows and awareness expands, we expect values to continue their trend upward with ranges tightening up very quickly. Got dibs?!

Collectively, AE