

been retained in our collections. Kenneth Keith, our most generous donor, gave some \$50,000 in scarce coins and medals as he continued to build our Mexico collection.”

A copy of *The Numismatist* describing the Keith donation found its way into the hands of Wichita Falls resident James F. LeBus, who was involved in a burglarly ring. Allegedly, he informed one of five men that Kenneth Keith was a coin collector. On Saturday, July 12, 1975, those five men—Clyde Burn, Earl Culwell, William Pinson, Lonnie Dale Loyd and Alton Fanchier Jr.—met at the latter’s rented home on Fillmore Street in Wichita Falls, where they plotted to rob the Keiths’ home in Jolly.

Former ANA Editor, Executive Vice President and later President Edward C. Rochette described the crime in his monthly “Other Side of the Coin” column in the November and December 1987 issues of *The Numismatist*:

Loyd and Pinson left Fanchier’s house and headed southeast on Highway 287. Parking their pickup truck some distance from the Keiths’ stone house, the pair hiked the remaining way. Pinson was armed with a 12-gauge shotgun, Loyd carried a .25-caliber pistol. Pinson hung back, covering Loyd as he forced entry through a screen door.

“I put my elbow through the screen and ripped it down,” Loyd later told a jury. “I was stepping through and telling Mr. [James] Keith to lay down, everything was going to be okay.

“He yelled and started running toward the door...I was just pulling my leg through the door and heard the shotgun go off. I saw the barrel of the gun,” Loyd continued matter-of-factly, “and Pinson was holding it.”

James Keith lay dead. Loyd added that Kenneth Keith came running down the hall at the sound of the commotion, but was stopped, beaten and taken to his bedroom, where he was

bound with tape. A systematic search of the house failed to uncover the coin collection—it had already been given to the ANA. On discovery of a wall safe, the three remaining members of the gang were summoned and told to bring tools.

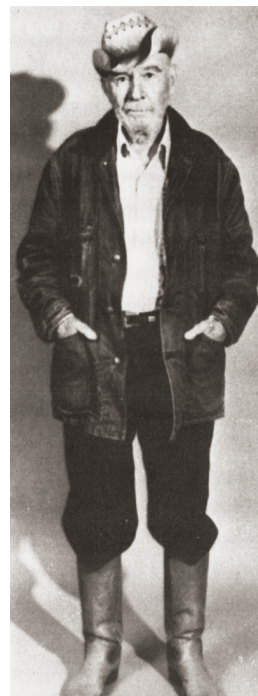
The burglars stumbled upon James Keith’s gun collection, taking it with them when they finally quit the property hours later.

The ANA Board of Governors offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the persons responsible for the murder of James Keith. The Texas Rangers widely publicized the reward, and in October 1975 one member of the gang, Earl Culwell, implicated William Pinson as the killer in exchange for immunity and the \$5,000. The ANA agreed to pay half that amount for Culwell’s testimony, with the rest to come following Pinson’s conviction and imprisonment.

Continuing with his narrative, Rochette wrote,

Among those arrested was Clyde Burns. On the night that he arrived at the Clay County jail for the subsequent trial, the Keith home was fire-bombed. Suspicion immediately fell on Burns’ fellow gang members, who, it was believed, wished to prevent Kenneth from identifying the culprits. What they did not know was that the authorities, realizing that only Kenneth Keith could identify his brother’s killers, had moved him to an apartment in Wichita Falls. The historic ranch home, built by Kenneth’s father, was completely destroyed, as was Kenneth’s spirit.

According to Rochette’s report, the second chapter of the story began a few years later at the ANA’s Colorado Springs headquarters. “The trial in 1977 had caused... 67-year-old Kenneth



PHOTOS: ANA ARCHIVES

▲ The two sides of Kenneth Keith: hardworking rancher (left) and genteel numismatist.

Keith to relive the horrors of the break-in—the murder of his brother, the beating, and the fire-bombing of the family home in an attempt to keep him from testifying. He died soon after the trial ended.”

On the run since he testified for the prosecution, Culwell was desperate for the rest of his reward and began telephoning the ANA daily. Pinson’s appeals had delayed his eventual conviction and sentencing, and thus postponed Culwell’s final payout.

At 7 a.m. on May 29, 1980, Ed Rochette, then executive vice president, arrived at the ANA to find Culwell sitting on the front steps of the building. He demanded that Rochette immediately hand over the money due him. “I stalled,” said Rochette. “I was not about to go into the building alone with Culwell. We talked. I gave him a few dollars for breakfast and asked him to return a little later. In the meantime, I would check with Texas authorities for confirmation of Pinson’s status.”

Rochette called William G. Paul, district attorney for Montague, Archer and Clay Counties, who verified that Pinson had been



PHOTOS: BEN E. KEITH COMPANY

convicted and soon would begin serving his life sentence in Leavenworth, Kansas. The ANA prepared a check for Culwell, but the informant wanted cash. Rochette arranged for Culwell to redeem the check at the Colorado Springs National Bank.

In April 1980, Pinson was released from Leavenworth for health reasons (he reportedly had faked a heart attack) and fled to New Mexico. Officers there arrested him on unrelated charges, and he was sent to prison in Huntsville, Alabama, where he died three years later.

The Keith Legacy

In 1996, acting on advice from professional financial consultants, the ANA Board of Governors voted to sell and reinvest 30 percent of the Association's holdings of Ben E. Keith stock, which amounted to 732 shares (\$1.1 million). The decision was made to lower the risk of over-investing in a single, non-liquid stock. The

reinvestment was overseen by Larry Baber, then chairman of the ANA's Finance and Investment Committee; ANA member Denis Loring, then senior vice president of The Equitable Life Assurance Society; and ANA member Stanley Merves, then principal of Merves & Company, CPAs.

Today, the Ben E. Keith Company is listed as one of the 70 largest, privately held businesses in the United States, and one of the world's major distributors of Anheuser-Busch products. Part of the firm's mission is to serve its customers and the areas in which they operate. Keith employees actively volunteer their time and resources to help a number of national and local organizations and assist in their work of building strong and vibrant communities. The company's partnerships include the American Heart Association, American Cancer Association, March of Dimes, Habitat for Humanity, and local food banks, shelters and

schools/universities. According to the company's website, the firm believes its "actions must always be rooted in honesty and integrity; and we should always foster trust, faith in others, fairness, and respect. Celebrating and embracing insights and experiences through people's diverse backgrounds, abilities, and contributions reinforce our ability to create next-generation leaders."

When Kenneth Keith included the American Numismatic Association in his will, he hoped the hobby organization he loved would benefit for years to come, and indeed it has. The ANA is very proud of and grateful for its continuing relationship with the Ben E. Keith Company.

ANA Treasurer Baber adds, "We are fortunate that the Ben E. Keith Company family of employees has been a good steward of the company over these many years. The firm's sound business practices have supported the Association greatly."

ANA EVENTS ARE NATIONWIDE!

AMERICAN NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL MONEY SHOW • IRVING, TX • MARCH 8-10, 2018

SUMMER SEMINAR • COLORADO SPRINGS • JUNE 16-21, 2018

SUMMER SEMINAR • COLORADO SPRINGS • JUNE 23-28, 2018

WORLD'S FAIR OF MONEY • PHILADELPHIA • AUGUST 14-18, 2018

NATIONAL MONEY SHOW • PITTSBURGH • MARCH 28-30, 2019

WORLD'S FAIR OF MONEY • CHICAGO • AUGUST 6-10, 2019

NATIONAL MONEY SHOW • ATLANTA • FEB. 27-29, 2020

WORLD'S FAIR OF MONEY • PITTSBURGH • AUGUST 4-8, 2020

WORLD'S FAIR OF MONEY • CHICAGO • AUGUST 10-14, 2021



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