

Hobbies

New \$100 bills coming, but hang on to your old ones, too

By Roger Boye

Today's column answers questions from readers about coins and paper money.

Q—I'm told that the government is making new \$100 bills and will recall the money we now use. When will that happen? Will the old bills become worthless?

A.S., Chicago

A—Uncle Sam has added two anti-counterfeiting devices to \$100 notes, microprinting around the center portrait and a polyester thread embedded into the paper and running vertically on the left side. The enhancements are expected to make currency more difficult to duplicate accurately on color copiers and eventually will be added to bills of

other denominations, except possibly \$1 Federal Reserve notes.

But the money now in use won't be recalled. Instead, it will be replaced as it wears out. The new bills of "series 1990" should begin appearing in circulation by year's end.

Q—How much does a dealer make on the typical coin sale? If a dealer sells me a coin for \$50, how much would he pay to buy it back?

T.G., Park Ridge

A—A dealer's profit will vary with the coin type and condition, general market environment and a myriad of other factors. In general, dealers buy collectible coins for 50 to 70 percent of retail. In other words, a dealer might pay you up to \$35 for a coin that

sells for \$50.

The profit usually is much less on bullion items, including common-date silver dimes, quarters and halves, silver bars and American Eagle gold and silver coins. Often on such items, the wholesale ("buy") price is 90 to 98 percent of retail.

Q—Do you know of anyone who buys old "wheat pennies"? How much would I get? I saved 12,000 of them, but my wife wants to reclaim the storage space.

F.B., Downers Grove

A—Dozens of dealers buy Lincoln cents made in 1958 or earlier, the so-called "wheat pennies" because two ears of wheat are depicted on the back side. Read the "coins wanted" classifieds in

Coin World or other hobby publications, or call some local shops that advertise in the Yellow Pages.

The price you'll get will depend on the dates, mint mark and condition of your coins. One of the country's largest dealers in "wheat cents," Virg Marshall III of Wymore, Neb., pays a minimum of 70 cents per roll (50 coins) for common-date wheat cents in at least "good condition." Prices go up to \$5.75 a roll for the less common dates, such as the 1938-S.

Q—What's the silver-to-cash ratio for silver dimes and quarters? Is there an easy way to remember the numbers?

V.C., Chicago

A—Each \$1 face value of U.S.

silver coins made in 1964 or earlier contain .76 of an ounce of silver. Ten silver dimes, four silver quarters, two quarters and a half, or any combination that totals \$1 holds three-quarters of an ounce of silver. When the metal sells for \$4 an ounce, that \$1 in coinage is worth \$3.



President Bush is depicted on a new bronze medal made by the federal government, part of an on-going series honoring the presidents. A three-inch medal costs \$21 and a 1 5/16-inch medal—which has a much smaller surface area—costs \$1.25. To order, send a check or money order to the United States Mint, Order Processing Branch, 10001 Aerospace Drive, Lanham, Md. 20706.