



A Primer for Collectors BY GENE HESSLER

Somali 5s note brings back memories of quick departure

The following relates to the trip mentioned in the previous column (see *Paper Money*, Jan/Feb 2009).

ABOUT SIX MONTHS BEFORE WE ARRIVED IN Dar-es-Salaam, the capital in Tanzania, formerly Tanganyika, there was a revolution in Zanzibar, a former British Protectorate. In October 1964 Zanzibar, an island 26 miles away, became part of Tanzania. Political circumstances had not settled completely, and we did not know for certain until the evening before if we would be permitted to play a scheduled afternoon concert in Zanzibar City. The following day we arrival to a cool reception on the tropical island: for the first time throughout our journey, no government officials met our plane.

I mention Zanzibar for the notes and coins I *didn't* find. After our outdoor concert, I roamed through the bazaar and searched for the elusive monetary remnants that circulated until 1933; at that time Zanzibar adopted the use of East African currency. We flew back to Dar-es-Salaam that same evening. We were scheduled to fly to the north, however that was changed.

There were anti-colonial demonstrations against France, Belgium, and America who had sympathized with the intervention. France and Belgium had come to the aid of the Congolese government during an extremely troubled period. There were other anti-American demonstra-

tions in North Africa. Consequently our schedule was changed, and performances in Egypt and Sudan were canceled. This was a disappointment because I wanted to be near the place where General Charles "Chinese" Gordon fought a losing battle with the Mahdi during the siege of Khartoum in 1884. To pay his troops, Gordon issued his own scrip, crude but historical; some notes were signed by hand.

This change in our itinerary came toward the end of our tour. We returned to Nairobi for a few extra concerts then the State Department sent us to Morocco for final unscheduled concerts.

A few weeks earlier we were in Somalia for concerts there. The first notes issued by the Somali Republic were circulating; they were dated 1962. I put aside the 5-, 10- and 20 -scellini notes, P1-3. I could have and should have returned with a 100-scellini, P4. This note that had a face value of less than \$10 as I remember, now sells for \$600.

After two days of concerts and sight-seeing, including a walk to the camel market just blocks from our hotel, there were rumors of an anti-American demonstration. Confined to our hotel we were told to have our bags packed and wait. After a few hours, by the telephone in our rooms, the call came to meet in the lobby immediately. Buses to take us to the airport were on their way; we were told to move rapidly when they arrived.

As I remember it was early afternoon when the buses arrived, and with military precision we boarded. With an escort we headed for the airport; the buses drove on the airfield and stopped by the plane, which had already been loaded with concert equipment. We had skipped the cus-

tom procedure and were airborne within minutes. A few years ago during the U.N. presence in Somalia I was reminded of our departure, and recognized a few landmarks in the evening television coverage.

When I look at my Somali notes I'm reminded of an enjoyable time in Mogadishu, the capital, where most of the people were

receptive to our visit. From a boy on the street I purchased a set of antelope horns for about fifty-cents; the 5-scellini has the image of an antelope. As I remember we had some interesting food with an Italian influence; there had been an Italian presence there during the first half of the 20th century. But I also remember our rapid exit from a country that today remains in crisis. ❖

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January 25, 1999)



On a State Department-sponsored tour of African countries, author/musician Gene Hessler purchased a set of antelope horns for about 50¢. The 5-scellini note, Pick-1, he acquired on the trip has an antelope image.