

# Numismatist news & notes

STRANGER THAN FICTION

## Frankenstein Meets the Quarter- Shrinker

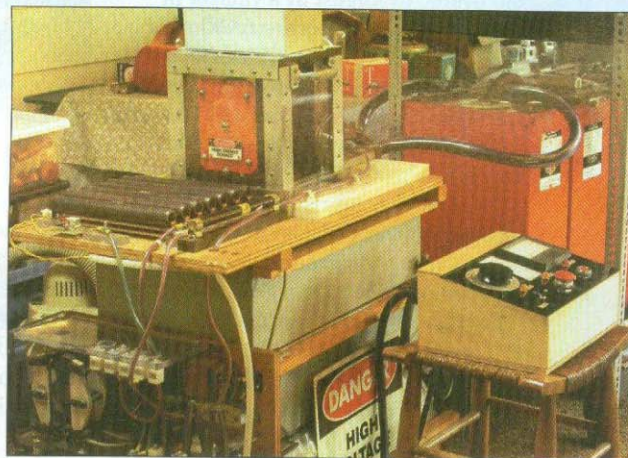
*Not-so-mad scientist  
miniaturizes money.*

[WOODRIDGE IL] More power! The laboratory hummed with the sound of electricity as a gloved hand pushed the lever higher. Soon the transformation was complete.

The retired electrical engineer sat back and thought about how various elements of high voltage and pulsed power—like the fictional Dr. Frankenstein before him—always fascinated him. But he is not consumed with the idea of harnessing electricity to reanimate dead tissue. Bert Hickman uses the power of the sky to shrink quarters and other coins.

Although Hickman has shrunk several thousand pieces of money, he still is amazed by how well they turn out. “I am intimately aware of the interplay and balancing of huge forces that are required,” he says. The system he devised delivers a 24,000-joule punch, about the same amount of energy generated by a 1-ton weight dropped from a height of 9 feet.

Hickman’s quarter-shrinker works on the principle of high-velocity metal



◀ Bert Hickman, the Dr. Frankenstein of numismatics, has engineered a high-powered, electrical device that actually shrinks coins, such as Walking Liberty half dollars (shown above, before and after the amazing transformation).

that the only thing that altered the shape of the coin was an invisible—but incredibly powerful—magnetic field that existed for only 25-millionths of a second!”

Why does Hickman shrink coins? “Because I can,” he says. “I like the sound and look of high-energy electrical discharges and the fresh smell of ozone.” Learn more about Hickman’s obsession at [www.teslamania.com](http://www.teslamania.com). And don’t try quarter-shrinking at home . . . unless you’re an experienced mad scientist.

—Eric Brothers ©

formation. An invisible, pulsed magnetic field pounds the coin into submission and forces it to change its shape in a split second. The machine works best on clad coins, although Morgan dollars and other 90-percent silver coins respond well. Bimetallic coins are good candidates, too, but the

process often causes the two pieces to separate.

Quarter-shrinking is not for the faint of heart. Hickman expects “a controlled mechanical and electrical explosion” each and every time he shrinks a coin. His first, successful attempt was “an incredible rush,” he says, “especially because I knew