Cross Island Parkway collects menagerie of coinage

By Bob Kudelka

Trish Crouch is no coin collector, but she recently had to learn the difference between a Greek drachma and an Austrian shilling, a Japanese yen and a Chinese yuan and an Icelandic aurar and a Nicaraguan córdoba.

Crouch had the task of categorizing 78 pounds of misfit coins that motorists passed on to the Cross Island Parkway Toll Facility on Hilton Head Island during the past 10 years.

"I learned a lot," said Crouch, SCDOT's Toll Financial Administrator.

The Parkway Toll charge is $1 in US currency, but for whatever reasons some motorists toss foreign coins into the collector. When this happens, the transaction is determined to be a violation. A camera takes a photo of the license tag, whose owner is mailed a bill for the $1 toll plus a $10 fine.

Inside the Toll Facility, coins are sorted and bagged. The sorter spits out non-US currency, and those coins are put aside.

Over the years, the misfit collection grew and was turned over to the SCDOT Toll Operations office in Columbia. Like any state property, the coins needed to be categorized. After that, they would be converted to US currency or melted and sold for metal content.

Crouch figures it took her about 30 hours to sort through the bags of coins. Using internet sites such as Google and Wikipedia and coin collecting sites, Crouch researched the coins and their value.

There were rubles from Russia; koruna from Slovakia; halala from Saudi Arabia; centavos from Bolivia; marcs from Germany; rupees from India; florin from Aruba; and many more.

"Probably 75 percent were Canadian," Crouch said. "The others were from all over the world."

Some coins gave Crouch little information to go on. Some had no written words so Crouch would have to type in things such as "man with funny hat, Asian coin" or "coin with flower blossom" and go from there.

In all, the coins came from 94 countries across six continents.

Many of the coins have little value, especially those that were replaced by the Euro, the official currency of the 16 member states of the European Union. A few, however, were worth more than the toll charge.

The most valuable was a Tanzanian coin emblazoned with a rabbit and worth about $12, Crouch said.

On the other end of the scale, Crouch also sorted tokens from car washes in Arizona and Missouri, golf markers and one token good for a beer at Duffy's Draft House at a resort in Florida.

Crouch would advise motorists against using non-US coins because they'll end up having to pay more as toll violators.

"Don't just load it with whatever coins you have," Crouch said.

Instead, if a motorist doesn't have the required currency, Crouch recommends they use the "good faith option." This option allows them to return within five days and pay the toll to avoid having the violation.

The Cross Island Parkway has collected coins from 94 countries across 6 continents.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB THOMPSON/THE CONNECTOR

Trish Crouch of Toll Operations sorts thousands of non-US coins, tokens and damaged coins collected by the Cross Island Parkway in Hilton Head. The coins were sorted to convert to US currency or melted and sold for metal content.

Here's a list of the kinds of coins collected:

TRANSPORTATION TOKENS:
Beaufort / Jasper RTA
Southeastern Authority, PA
Sunshine Skyway Token, FL
Toronto Transit
Garden State Parkway, NJ

TOKENS:
Parking Cincinnati
12 carwashes (MS, AZ)
5 vacuum tokens
Roller Skating
Bowling or Batting Cage token
Golf markers
"Have drinks at Orange Lake Country Club or beer at Duffy's Draft house"

GAMES:
Adventure Cove
Chuck-E-Cheese
Frankie's Fun Park
Namco
Main Event
Discovery Zone
Aladdin's Castle

CASINOS:
Casinos Austria
Princess Cruise Line
Sun Cruz Casino, FL
Casino Ventures
MGM Grande Detroit

COUNTRIES:
Argentina 11 pesos 36 centavos
Aruba 3 florin
Australia 2.12 dollars
Austria 30 shillings
Bahamas 21.3 dollars
Bahrain 100 fils
Barbados 5.91 dollars
Belgium 119 belgie (francs)
Belize 1.6 dollars
Bermuda 12.31 dollars
Bolivia 100 centavos
Brazil 8.82 real (40 cruzeiros - obsolete)
British Caribbean Territories 60 cents
Eastern Group
Cameroon 100 francs
Canada 920.45 dollars
Cayman Island 21.32 dollars
Chile 1 peso
China 8 yuan
Colombia 171.1 pesos
Costa Rica 105 colones (60 centimos)
Croatia 2 kuna (50 lipa)
Cuba 70 pesos
Czech Republic 27 korun
Denmark 25 ore
Dominican Republic 4.95 dollars
East Caribbean States 5.75 dollars
Ecuador 460 centavos (10 sucres)
Egypt 20 piastres
El Salvador 1.3 colones
England 81.93 pounds
Ethiopia 50 cents
European Union 20.14 euro
Fiji 20 cents
Finland 1 markka 30 pennia
France 228.5 francs 70 centimes
French Polynesia 30 centimes
Gambia 2 butut
Germany 7.68 marcs
Ghana 20 pesewas
Gibraltar 10 pence
Greece 111 drachmes
Guatemala 1.3 quetzal
Honduras 900 centavos
Hong Kong 4.5 dollars
Hungary 136 forint
Iceland 10 aurar (1 krona)
India 11 rupees 50 paise
Ireland 99 pence
Israel 2 lirah 4 sheqel
Italy 5170 lire
Jamaica 68.3 dollars
Japan 506 yen
Jordan 50 fils
Kenya 4 shillings
Kuwait 50 fils
Latvia 2 santimi
Lithuania 20 centu
Luxembourg 50 francs
Malaysia 1 sen
Mexico 475.5 pesos
Netherland 24.5 gulden
Netherland Antilles 1.25 guilder
New Zealand 1.66 dollars
Nicaragua 17.5 cordoba
Norway 5 krone 25 ore
Panama 5.22 balboa
Peru 2.01 nuevos soles
Philippines 11.5 piso
Poland 15 zlotych 40 groszy
Portugal 1 coin marked 2$50
Qatar 50 dirhams
Romania 10 bani
Russia 71 rubles 56 kopek
Russia (old CCCP) 18 kopeks
Saudi Arabia 50 halala
Singapore 1.35 dollars
Slovakia 12 koruna
Somalia 10 shillings
South Africa 13 rand 20 cents
South Korea 910 won
Spain 55 ptas
Sweden 18 krona
Switzerland 70 rappen 15.5 francs
Syria 1 coin unknown value
Taiwan 46 yuan
Tanzania 100 shilingi
Thailand 23 baht
Trinidad & Tobago 1.85 dollars
Turkey 25 kurus (100,00 lira coin-no value)
Ukraine 15 kopiyok
United Arab Emirates 3 dirham
Uruguay 102.5 pesos
Venezuela 894 bolivares

Damaged US coins:
US dimes 990 $9.90
US half dollar 1 $0.50
US nickels 36 $1.80
US pennies 132 $1.32
US quarters 170 $42.50