

History of the Challenge Coin

During World War I, American volunteers from all parts of the country filled the newly formed flying squadrons. Some were wealthy young men who left colleges such as Yale and Harvard in order to enlist in the military. In one squadron, a wealthy lieutenant ordered solid bronze medallions embossed with the squadron emblem for every Member of his squadron. He carried his medallion in a small leather sack about his neck. Shortly after acquiring the medallions, the lieutenant's aircraft was severely damaged by ground fire during a mission. He was forced to land behind enemy lines, where he was captured by a German patrol. In order to discourage his escape, the Germans took all of his personal identification except for the small leather pouch around his neck.

He was eventually taken to a small French town near the front lines where he managed to escape during a night bombardment. During the attack, he donned civilian clothes and fled without personal identification.

After escaping, the brave pilot succeeded in avoiding German patrols until he reached the front lines. With great difficulty, he crossed no-man's land and stumbled into a French outpost. Unfortunately, the French in this sector had been plagued by German saboteurs, who sometimes masqueraded as civilians and wore civilian clothes. Not recognizing the young pilot's American accent, the French thought him to be a saboteur and made ready to execute him.

Just in time, the American remembered his leather pouch containing the bronze medallion. He showed the medallion to his would-be executioners. When the French captors recognized the squadron insignia on the medallion, they gave the pilot enough time to confirm his identity. Instead of shooting him, they gave him a bottle of wine.

Eventually the pilot made it back to his squadron, where it became a tradition to ensure all Members carried their medallion or coin at all times. This was accomplished through a challenge. A service Member would ask to see the coin. If the challenger could not produce his coin, he was required to purchase a drink of choice for the Member who had challenged him. If the challenged Member produced his coin, then the challenging Member was required to pay for the drink.

The tradition continued that way for many years while surviving Members of the squadron were still alive.

In some cases, a coin can be earned meritoriously for a job well done. Regardless of how they are acquired, the history of the challenge coin remains a part of military tradition, and servicemen/servicewomen will continue to display them proudly for years to come.

Unions around the world have recently embraced the concept and found the coins to be an excellent means of team building and creating a sense of brotherhood and belonging.

IBEW Local 1007, out of Edmonton, Alberta had the first coin of its kind in Canada

Challenge Coin Rules

1. Rules of the coin game must be given or explained to all new coin holders.
2. The coin **MUST** be carried at all times. You can be challenged for it anywhere, any time. You must produce the coin without taking more than one step or an arm's length to produce it.
3. When challenging, the challenger must state whether it is for a single drink or a round of drinks.
4. Failure to produce a coin, for whatever reason, results in a bought round or single drink (whatever the challenger stated). This type of transaction could be expensive, so hold onto your coin. Once the offender (coinless challenger) has bought the drink or round, they can't be challenged again.
5. If all the challenged produce their coins, the challenger loses and must buy drinks for all respondents. This too can be expensive, so challenge wisely.
6. Under no circumstances can a coin be handed to another in response to a challenge. If a person gives their coin to another, that person can keep the coin – it's theirs! However, if a person places the coin down and another person picks it up to examine it that is not considered giving, and the examiner is honour-bound to place the coin back. The examiner can't challenge while they hold another Member's coin. After negotiating a "reasonable ransom", the examiner must return the Member's coin.
7. If a coin is lost, replacement is up to the individual. A new coin should be acquired at the earliest opportunity – losing a coin and not replacing it doesn't relieve a Member of his/her responsibilities. This is especially true if your fellow Member's know that you traditionally carry a coin.
8. The coin should be controlled at all times. Giving a coin to just anyone is like opening a fraternity to just anyone. It is an honour to be given a coin, let's keep it that way. A given or awarded coin is of more personal value than a purchased coin.
9. No holes may be drilled in a coin.

10. The above rules apply to anyone who is worthy to be given/awarded a coin, has a purchased coin or who is a known coin holder.

EXCEPTIONS: There are no exceptions to the rules. They apply to those clothed or unclothed. At the time of the challenge you are permitted one step or an arm's reach to locate your coin. If you still cannot reach it – SORRY ABOUT THAT!