

OBITUARIES

Elvira Elisa Clain-Stefanelli (1914-2001)

In October of 2001, Mrs. Elvira Elisa Clain-Stefanelli passed away quietly, at the age of 86. She is survived by her son, Alex, his wife Eleanor, and their daughters Catherine and Elizabeth.

Her passing marked the end of an era for the National Numismatic Collection (NNC). The Smithsonian Institution's coin cabinet today is primarily the work of Elvira and her late husband, Vladimir. Together, they built it from approximately 60,000 specimens in 1956 to over 960,000. With the death of her husband in 1982, Elvira took over the sole leadership of the NNC as executive director, continuing the growth and expansion of the size and importance of the collection. It is now by far the largest and most valuable single collection in the Museum of American History. Its growth under their direction in both size and quality elevated the Smithsonian's numismatic cabinet to the level of a world-class collection.



Not the least of Elvira's achievements was her service as advisor to the US Mint, the Department of Treasury and many boards, committees and associations. She was never an insular scholar. She always believed her professional responsibility included using her extensive knowledge to help others achieve their goals. Her contributions have been lauded by organizations throughout the world. Over her career, she received almost every major award in Numismatics.

Elvira was not only an avid collector, but also an outstanding scholar. Her numerous books and articles on many numismatic topics have appeared in many languages. Her most recent book, *Life in Republican Rome on its Coinage*, was published in 1999. As a museum professional, she crafted many exhibitions, not only at the Smithsonian, but also in museums and shows around the world. Millions of people have come to see and enjoy the objects that she put on display.

This record of achievement is not only a measure of her personal skill, but also of her relationships. Elvira Clain-Stefanelli not only formed close relationships with the leading numismatists of the world, but also with many collectors and particular-

ly with young interns and scholars for whom she always had kind words of encouragement and advice. I was lucky enough to work with her and be the beneficiary of her guidance. I am sincerely grateful for the experience and memories of a great lady and scholar.

Douglas MUDD

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