

The Bucks County Fallen Firefighters Memorial Committee has created a challenge coin to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the first memorial ceremony in 2004. The cost of each challenge coin is \$10.00 and all proceeds will be donated to the Bucks County Hero's Scholarship Fund. The Bucks County Hero's Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to the children of firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical service personnel who are killed in the line-of-duty or permanently disabled in the line-of-duty. To purchase one or more of these coins, contact Dave Hathaway at ffhathaway@msn.com.

History of the Challenge Coin

According to the most common story, challenge coins originated during World War I. American volunteers from all parts of the country filled the newly formed flying squadrons. Some were wealthy scions attending colleges such as Yale and Harvard who quit in mid-term to join the war. In one squadron, a wealthy lieutenant ordered medallions struck in solid bronze and presented them to his unit. One young pilot placed the medallion in a small leather pouch that he wore about his neck. Shortly after acquiring the medallion, the pilots' aircraft was severely damaged by ground fire. He was forced to land behind enemy lines and was immediately 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. In the meantime, he was taken to a small French town near the front. Taking advantage of a bombardment that night, he escaped. However, he was without personal identification. He succeeded in avoiding German patrols by donning civilian attire and reached the front lines. With great difficulty, he crossed no-man's land. Eventually, he stumbled onto a French outpost.

Unfortunately, saboteurs had plagued the French in the sector. They 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. He had no identification to prove his allegiance, but he did have his leather pouch containing the medallion. He showed the medallion to his would-be executioners and one of his French captors recognized the squadron insignia on the medallion. They delayed his execution long enough for him to confirm his identity. Instead of shooting him they gave him a bottle of wine.

Back at his squadron, it became tradition to ensure that all members carried their medallion or coin at all times. This was accomplished through challenge in the following manner - a challenger would ask to see the medallion. If the challenged could not produce a medallion, they were required to buy a drink of choice for the member who challenged them. If the challenged member produced a medallion, then the challenging member was required to pay for the drink. This tradition continued on throughout the war and for many years after the war while surviving members of the squadron were still alive.

Challenge Coin Rules

- The challenge is initiated by drawing your coin, holding it in the air by whatever means possible and state, shout or otherwise verbally acknowledge that you are initiating a coin check. You may also place it or strike it on a hard surface such as a table. If you accidentally drop your coin and it makes an audible sound it is still considered a challenge.
- The response consists of all those present responding in a like manner within 15 seconds. At the time of the challenge you are allowed one step and in arms reach to locate your coin.
- All coin holders present will participate during a challenge. A response can be with any other challenge coin.

- If there is a challenge and a person is unable to respond then the individual(s) without their coin are required to buy a drink of choice for the individual who issued the challenge.
- If everyone being challenged responds with their coin then the person who challenged is required to buy a drink of choice for all those he/she challenged.
- Failure to buy a drink is considered despicable and a failure of trust. Some units require that you return your coin should you do so.
- Coin checks are allowed anytime, anywhere and anyplace.
- There are no exceptions to the rule.
- An organization or unit coin is a coin. Belt buckles are belt buckles, key chains are key chains. However a coin placed in some fashion around the neck is considered a coin.
- You are responsible for your coin. If someone else is looking at or accidentally drops your coin on a hard surface you are responsible for the consequences of the challenge. However, no one can borrow your coin and force a challenge.
- Once you agree to carry a coin it comes with an obligation of group loyalty and traditions of the coin. Don't accept a coin if you do not share the values and beliefs of the group shared with a willingness to respect the traditions of the challenge coin.
- When giving a challenge coin to another individual, it is tradition to pass to the individual in a hand shake as a show of friendship.