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## The More Things Change the Less Change I Get

by Jerry Lerman (344)

This month many of us are marking the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of our lives being turned upside down by Covid-19. That's a LOT of loneliness, isolation, and binge-watching! Personally, I can't remember what shows I was absorbing via 'On Demand' in the first few months. Something was set in the Ozarks, I seem to recall, and something else in West Covina. Back before March, 2020, I remember actually GOING to such farflung places, but it's been two years now that we haven't set foot inside an airport. Back then, the word 'ZOOM' meant traveling fast in a jumbo jet!

One byproduct of COVID seems to be the disappearance of 'change' – that is, the coins one usually gets in exchange when paying for goods at stores using dollar-denominated bills. *For this family, the preceding sentence contains a couple other nouns besides 'change' that are losing their meanings: namely, dollar bills and stores.*

There was a time when I would find dimes, quarters, etc., in my pants pockets at the end of the day – and occasionally between sofa cushions when vacuuming. I collected the coins in a piggy bank, and then, as the piggy grew sufficiently full for *slaughter*, I would roll up its contents into neat little cylindrical paper sleeves. These I would take to the bank, toss in an extra \$20, and deposit them into our kids' college savings accounts.

Not every cent would get that treatment, though. I looked carefully at each one during my packing process, and if I came across a pre-1959, wheat-backed penny, a mercury head dime, or a buffalo nickel, I collected those in another container, thinking that they might become scarce enough to exceed their nominal values someday.

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## Aaron's Question Column



Modern corrective lenses

One of the original bifocals made by Benjamin Franklin

**Question:** What can you briefly tell us about the history of eyewear - when did the miracle of corrective lenses come into being? Has an 'inventor' ever been identified? -Jerry

**Aaron's Answer (A'sA):** Corrective lenses have a rich history, although some of the exact details are blurred. Some accounts say that the first eyewear was invented in 1284, by Salvino D'Armato, while others say that they were invented in 1286 by Dominican friar Giordano da Pisa. However, for a long time before that, since the 5th century BC, Egyptians had been using reading stones, which were essentially very large lenses that you put on paper to magnify the text. These stones were brought to Rome, and the Emperor Nero used them. Then, reading stones were almost entirely forgotten until the Renaissance, when either Salvino D'Armato or Giordano da Pisa had the idea of making smaller reading stones and putting them into frames to be worn on the face instead of placed on the text. In 1301, the first guild specially designated to make eyeglasses was commissioned in Venice. 100 years later, German mathematician, astronomer and astrologer Johannes Kepler published his explanation on the subject on why convex and concave lenses can correct farsightedness or nearsightedness.

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