It was 1973…My writing aspirations had hit a wall. The novel I had written in my spare time had met with tepid reviews and equally tepid sales. Three books of folk tales I had written since, under contract, had also achieved little. The royalty statements from them were next to nothing.

All these books had been fiction. Still bitten by the urge to write, I decided to try my hand at non-fiction. I had been doing a column about general financial information for a few small newspapers and thought of starting a monthly financial newsletter, with a promotional booklet to introduce it. And I would publish it myself.

So that's what I did - compiled a brief history of my financial advice into a booklet with a coupon in it for a three month free trial to the monthly newsletter I would start. I priced the booklet at $10.00 with a unique guarantee: If after reading it, the buyer was not 100% satisfied, he could return it for a full refund.

I called it "How to Make Money" and placed a test ad for it in one of the income opportunity magazines flourishing at that time.

The response was gratifying. The title, my writing style or my money back guarantee, or a combination of all three, induced a good number of orders. And many of the buyers, rather than wanting a refund, found the three free issues of my newsletter worthy enough to subscribe to it thereafter.

I began expanding my magazine advertising and stopped teaching to concentrate on finding the most valuable financial information I could for my newsletters. Slowly but surely my subscription list grew.

Then - a surprise. A letter from a stranger from overseas. He said he could get my financial column into newspapers around the world!

His name was Dr. G. Vee. He kept his word. In the next three months my column was soon appearing in newspapers in over a dozen countries world-wide. How he did it I never knew…We never even met. But his efforts had gotten my column syndicated world wide, giving me great added cachet. My subscriber base rose to 20,000.

Then an idea hit me. Instead of just giving advice in my newsletter, why not also offer unique collectibles for sale in it - stamps, coins, foreign currency, presidential autographs - and all with a 30 day money back guarantee? That was something no other

newsletter publisher was doing at that time. So I began searching out opportunities. And, as I found them, the orders for my recommendations, buttressed by my money back guarantee, came pouring in, and the subscriptions to my newsletter, too. So much mail… By 1975 I was even receiving letters addressed simply*: Alan – Cranston, Rhode Island*.

I continued advertising my 'How to Make Money' booklet in many publications, even offering it by direct mail to lists of people interested in money-making opportunities and financial newsletters. I was soon spending hundreds of thousands of dollars this way to increase my mailing list, getting much more back in added subscribers and collectible sales to them.

My readership was increasing steadily - 30,000, then to 40,000, then more…

In January, 1980, another idea hit me. The gold and silver markets had been soaring. Gold had reached $800 an ounce, silver at almost $50. Those prices were ridiculously high, I thought. Far overvalued.

I made a bold move. I took out a full page ad in the Providence Journal warning people of the danger of investing in gold and silver at these prices and to sell any they had: "BEWARE of GOLD and SILVER – Sell them NOW". The date was January 21, 1980.

48 hours after that ad appeared, the gold and silver markets crashed worldwide.

News of my full page prediction spread quickly. My newsletter circulation surpassed 50,000, then 75,000, then 100,000…and kept climbing.

Then, one day, I got a call from overseas about a discovery in a bank vault in Great Britain – thousands of a supposedly extremely rare banknote no longer in circulation.

If offered out to the small existing collectible currency market, its present value would plummet. But would my subscribers, who were not collectors of this kind of unique collectible, have any interest in them the caller wondered?...

I thought they might; I had an idea how to create collectors of such an item among my readers. So, I decided to gamble and bought the entire lot at a low 'take it all' price. Then I wrote my readers that a large number of a supposedly rare collectible had been uncovered overseas and I was offering them the opportunity to get some. But I didn't want to reveal what it was in my newsletter because dealers in collectible currency would

then surely learn about it and order some for resale right away. And since there were currently so few collectors, that would likely sink the value of these. But, if I got news of this to my readers first – privately – before anyone else knew about this find, and then destroyed the remaining supply so no one else could ever get any more of them… This was the scenario I laid out to my readers.

So I told them to send me a check - from $100 to $1000 - postdated 30 days ahead and, upon receipt of their check, I would send them a confidential letter explaining exactly what they were to get for it. If they were not delighted when they read that letter, they should just let me know before their postdated check came due and I would return their check immediately. Otherwise I would fill their order and with a full one year money-back guarantee of satisfaction.

It had never been done before - asking people to send postdated checks for something <u>they had no idea what they were getting</u>. It was an appeal based solely on their trust in me and my guarantee.

The response was electric. Millions of dollars in postdated checks came pouring in to me from my readers!...

But would my follow-up letter explaining what this was be convincing enough to hold those orders? I worked on it ever so carefully. And, in that letter to them revealing what this collectible was, I also <u>promised that in 2 months I would destroy whatever remaining amount I had left, thus insuring there would never be any more left for anyone else -</u> and a full refund at the end of the year if they were not delighted by their purchase and chose to return it.

It worked! Almost all my clients responded to that letter by letting their checks stand, some of them even ordering many more of these banknotes.

An overwhelming success! But there was a problem… The overseas dealer from whom I had purchased these banknotes began hearing rumors of my success with them and he got greedy, regretting he had sold them to me so cheaply. He demanded more money or threatened to release news to the press of the large amount of them he had found and sold to me.

I would not succumb to blackmail. So, he carried out his threat, which immediately trashed their value in the banknote collector's world. But that mattered little

to my readers—none of them were banknote collectors to begin with. Besides, many of them had already sold at a profit what they had bought from me to banknote dealers or other collectors.

As promised, I destroyed the remainder of what I had left. Only a handful of my readers who had purchased them ever asked for a refund.

Over the years, other great collectibles came my way: The only set of trading cards ever made featuring all of the astronauts who walked on the moon, named one of the 10 outstanding card sets of the 1990s. Soon after I had sold thousands of them to my readers, they were featured in newspapers valued at over twice my selling price..

Then, the first legal postage stamp ever to feature the enigmatic 'Face on Mars', a photo taken by NASA of a rock on the surface of Mars that looked like a human face. A former NASA researcher had written a book about it claiming it was made by intelligent life. Within six months, I had sold almost all those stamps I had and was advertising to buy them back at more than I had sold them for. I then convinced the government representative of an overseas country to authorize the production of a special coin featuring that 'Face', which I also sold like gangbusters…

My readership was soaring—now well over 300,000. I had purchased the house next to my home to use as my office…The mail kept pouring in - more and more subscribers, more and more orders for whatever I was offering, always with an iron clad money back guarantee. So many different items – rare stamps, gems, coins and presidential autographs…

Little did I know that the greatest collectible finds of my life still lay ahead. Plus a new direction to my life was just about to emerge – with both opportunity and problems I could never have imagined in my wildest dreams… And, from people you would <u>never</u> expect!..