



## **THE DISTELFINK – Tiffany Dollars**

### **September 28, 2009**

My daughter has a gloriously indulgent Godfather, who also happens to be very clever with money. On top of that, he is an avid and enthusiastic shopper to the surprise and delight of my fourteen year old. In a stroke of genius, back in 1995 when Sabine was born, Uncle Dieter (an affectionate name whose origins are too complicated to explain here) devised the idea of giving her Silver Tiffany Coins in \$25 or \$50 denominations to be redeemed at some to-be-determined future date. He has been dutifully doling out these coins for birthdays and Christmas's ever since, and now she has quite a hoard of this exciting currency. It was discussed that since sixteen is the anticipated year for driving, and eighteen for official adulthood and voting, that seventeen should be declared the year to honor shopping – in New York, on Fifth Avenue, in the Mecca where the treasured coins can be cashed in for a wonderful piece of merchandise.

I love the idea of these coins and the teaching opportunities they present. In a world where children don't seem to know how to save with the same enthusiasm as past generations, nor are they particularly attuned to the meaning of delayed gratification given the frequent indulgences they often receive for no apparent reason from their parents, these coins offer several lessons. They teach the need to store them securely so they don't get lost in the early years. They provide counting opportunities when the time comes to learn about real currency, plus they're far more durable than paper money. They mount up fast and the idea of having more than \$100 that they can actually hold is quite tantalizing to a youngster. Then imagine the glee on the face of a 13 year old, who has more than \$750 at her disposal some day. It's a great vision.

I enjoy that Sabine likes to look at Tiffany advertisements and imagine what she might acquire. I love that it will be a day she long holds as a special memory created with a special person in her life. I am thrilled that there is time for her to settle on one thing, change her mind, and change it yet again, as her tastes transform or desires vary. Too often I have noticed that she will buy one thing – a watch let's say – and then two weeks later buy another because she wanted something different. For objects of significance, like a watch or phone or MP3 player, I say, "Buy it once and buy it right." The Tiffany Dollars, and their distant transaction date, create the optimal window for contemplation.

I suppose the only downside to this currency is the lack of inflation hedge, but conveniently we have been in a period of historically low inflation since the mid-1990's. In fact, there was a point earlier this year when all the gains achieved in the S&P 500 over the past fourteen years were erased. So perhaps a treasure box full of silver coins was almost looking like a sound investment too. All in all, I am unabashedly excited about this concept that fosters savings and delayed gratification so ingeniously. And I am delighted to have such a clever, fun-filled and influential adult in my daughter's life whose generosity and thoughtfulness have given me the chance to share these valuable lessons with her.