

# Little Evidence Of Hicks Left

## RESIDENT STUCK OUT IN CLOSE-KNIT NEIGHBORHOOD

By Ron Wood  
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BERRYVILLE — There's no sign of the Liberty Tree Restaurant that Wayne Hicks used to run in Berryville. It's been bulldozed. His old office is a used car lot.

Hicks hasn't lived in the modest brick house on Pleasant Street in four or five years, neighbors say. They don't miss him.

Hicks stuck out in the quiet, close-knit, middle-income neighborhood. There was lots of traffic, coming and going all the time. Neighbors wondered what he was up to.

Fortunes waxed and waned for Hicks. He always drove a nice car. There was a small motor home for awhile and jet skis in the back yard. Then the motor home was gone, people came and hauled the jet skis away.

He wasn't the best water customer the city had, either, often getting behind on payments.

What he did seem to have were lots of new ideas for making money. He'd play one out then move on to the next.

### **HICKS: Local Stores Took Alternative Currency**

Hicks, 52, pleaded guilty last week in Fayetteville to conspiracy to defraud the federal government of income taxes. He also has thousands of dollars worth of civil judgments against him.

Several years ago it seemed everybody had a hand in Hicks' Liberty Dollar endeavor, an alternative currency system based on silver, according to Fred Fields, whose retail shop sits on Berryville's town square. You could buy a car at local lots with the 1-ounce silver pieces. Fields says the bank may have even taken the coins for a while. Lots of stores took them.

Bruce Campbell, barber and trader in coins, knives, golf clubs and other interesting items, has one Liberty Dollar left. He'd take \$40 for it.

Liberty Dollars and Hicks' other local money-making ventures made some residents suspicious but didn't get him in trouble. What did was an alternative banking scheme known as MYICIS that allowed some 3,000 members to avoid paying taxes, according to court documents.

Downtown Berryville is small-town comfortable. Hundred-year-old buildings horseshoe the square. Wilson's appliance store dominates the northern end. It's been in business here forever. On the other end is the Grand View, a renovated early 1900s hotel. A 1960s bank flanks U.S. 62, which nowadays runs right through the center of the square. It used to split around City Square Park.

The locals hang out at a restaurant where the lunch special is country fried steak for \$5.95 with all the iced tea you can drink. There's two barber shops. Even a Rexall drug store on the corner.

People are friendly, but not very interested in talking about Wayne Hicks.

Some just laugh when you ask about him or if they still take Liberty Dollars.

Some brush it off, like a waitress at the local eatery.  
"Don't get me started, there's no tellin' what I'd say," she laughed.

Still others say they liked Hicks, he was good at heart and had some good ideas, like trying to bring back a silver based currency system.

The MYICIS scheme, not so much.

"Wayne was good people," Fred Fields said. "He was just a country bumpkin who got in over his head."

Fields theorized that Hicks didn't have the background for that one, didn't have the technological know-how or the people to help him make it go.

"I just think he got into something that was too big for him to handle," Fields said. "He's been pretty scarce since this whole thing started."

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#### **AT A GLANCE**

#### **GUILTY As CHARGED**

Wayne A. Hicks Sr., 52, pleaded guilty Tuesday in federal court in Fayetteville to conspiracy to defraud the federal government of income taxes. Hicks admitted the last tax return he filed with the IRS was for the tax year 1992. He agreed he owes taxes on income he received from 2003 through 2006.

Prosecutors said Hicks ran a \$100 million alternative banking system, known as ICIS or MYICIS, that allowed members to shield their financial transactions from the Internal Revenue Service. Many of the members involved in MYICIS were also in the Patriot

Movement, were generally anti-government and did not pay federal taxes, according to federal prosecutors. Some schemed to overthrow the federal government.

Hicks has not been sentenced. He faces up to five years in prison, a fine of up to 250,000 or both. He may also be required to pay restitution.

Electronic court records from Taney County, Mo., say Hicks faces charges there from failing to pay taxes. He has not gone to court on those charges.

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FRED FIELDS

Berryville shop owner

**(PHOTO CAPTION) ALTERNATIVE CURRENCY** Bruce Campbell holds his last Liberty Dollar on Thursday in his barber shop on the downtown square in Berryville. Campbell tried once pay rent with the alternative currency which is made of an ounce of silver.

**(PHOTO CAPTION)** Historic downtown Berryville has a comfortable small-town feel with many local businesses including a pair of barber shops and a drug store.