

mentioned previously is one that Charlie remembers well.

As Ken Mattingly floated to the SIM bay on the service module, Charlie stood up in the open hatch in order to make sure Ken didn't float off. The sight he saw was breathtaking. "Over my left shoulder was the Moon about 60,000 miles away, it was so big and bright, kind of full, then down to my right was the beautiful Earth over 180,000 miles away." It must have been an incredible thing to see.

We chatted about the lunar rocks and dust too, Charlie commenting that it "smelled like gun powder," which he thought was "probably caused by the ultra dry lunar dust and soil reacting with the oils that were present" in his and John Young's skin when they examined the rocks they had collected inside the LEM. He also told us a tale of lunar surface check lists containing *Playboy* pictures just like they had on *Apollo 12*. Overall, it was an amazing journey into the inner sanctum of *Apollo 16*.

More recently though Charlie has traveled the world as a consultant on many projects and is still actively consulting on a variety of projects for NASA, including space suit designs. Some of his work takes him to exotic places, including a few years back to China's Shenzhen manned space program training center.

Charlie explained, "We were treated like royalty and given a whole host of unfamiliar delicacies." He often asked what he was eating only to pass up the meal when told. Not wanting to offend his hosts Charlie soon learned it was "best not to ask" until, that is, he was sitting in front of one particularly interesting dish. From what Charlie says, "It consisted of this sludgy, long, black sausage type of thing." Cautiously he bit in. He said, "it had a kind of squishy texture but it tasted good." He could not however resist the temptation to ask what it was: sea slug was the response!

Over lunch on the Friday, Charlie was asked if there was anything he would

NOT sign at the public show that evening. Charlie said, "no, nothing." My good friend Rick took the opportunity to ask what was "the most unusual thing you have signed?" "Panties," he replied with a broad grin.

My time with Charlie was over far too quickly on this trip, but I have met up with him more than four times since and will again next year.

I have to thank General Charlie Duke for his help, the time he spent with me, and for giving me insight into his life and the adventures it has taken him on.

He really is humility personified. In the case of the Apollo astronauts innate charm and modesty is an integral, if perhaps less well known, pre-requisite of having "The Right Stuff".

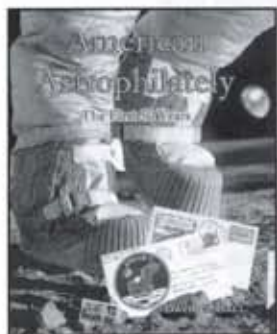
How true that is!

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BOOK REVIEW

American Astrophilately: The First 50 Years



by David S. Ball

A&A Publishers, 2010
ISBN: 978-06153420-16
Pages: 356, plus bonus DVD
Price: \$39.95

With human space exploration moving into its second half century just as the end of the Space Shuttle program heralds sweeping changes in the U.S. human space program, more attention is being paid to artifacts and keepsakes of early space programs.

This growing profile for space-related collectables includes advertisements and articles in publications like *Quest* and websites such as Collectspace.com, incorporation of these items into the collection of the Smithsonian Institution's

National Air and Space Museum, and above all, more sophisticated marketing.¹

And although flown artifacts and astronaut autographs hold center stage today in the field of space collectables, an established hobby was more prominent at the time of the race to the Moon in the 1960s, and not all the prominence was positive.

The hobby is stamp collecting, also known as philately,² which was already very popular when astronauts began flying in the 1960s. Stamp collecting's ties to space exploration go much farther than stamps honoring space exploits, although that part of the hobby has its own folklore, including a famous U.S. stamp commemorating Project Mercury, which was issued immediately after John Glenn was launched into orbit on 20 February 1962, stamps which flew along with the crews of *Apollo 11* and *Apollo 15*, and the 1969 stamp honoring *Apollo 8*'s flight around the Moon, whose design was altered by popular demand to include the opening words of the book of Genesis, as read by the three astronauts from lunar orbit.

Another part of the hobby involves the collecting of specially cancelled envelopes, which collectors call covers. In the

of astrophilately, these covers have flown onboard spacecraft or been mailed and canceled at launch, landing, control or other sites for spacecraft at the appropriate times.

In the summer of 1972, this area of philately became controversial with media reports that 641 covers had been flown to the moon onboard *Apollo 15* a year previously, and that some were being sold by a European dealer. Investigations by NASA and the U.S. Senate subcommittee led to reprimands against the *Apollo 15* crew of David R. Scott, James B. Irwin, and Alfred Worden and the effective end of their careers as astronauts. Investigations also caused to *Apollo 13* astronaut Jack Swigert to lose a crew assignment to the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project when he was not immediately forthcoming about autographing stamps for payment.³

Once the furor over the covers and stamps blew over, the subject was largely forgotten except for brief mentions in astronaut memoirs, and the extra caution displayed by Apollo astronauts from that time forward when faced with requests to autograph stamps and covers.⁴ Since that time, very little has been written about space stamps and covers for those who do not take an interest in the hobby.

David S. Ball's *American Astrophilately: The First 50 Years* is the most comprehensive guide to this area of philately published for an American audience. The thoroughly-illustrated book contains 18 articles from 14 contributors, who include America's leading astrophilatelists, along with the additional articles, illustrations, and spreadsheets in the bonus DVD, make it an indispensable resource for collectors of astrophilatelic covers, particularly those who are interested in competing in international philatelic exhibitions.

But *American Astrophilately: The First 50 Years* contains a little of interest for those who do not collect stamps or autograph material, and does not answer the question of why the worlds of philately and spaceflight intersected so spectacularly on the days of Apollo. This reviewer, who has collected space-themed stamps and astrophilatelic covers since the height of the space race in the 1960s, has never seen an answer to this question in the literature, including this book. Therefore, this review will briefly review the shared history of philately and space exploration in the United States.

Stamp collecting, even after a period of decline in recent years due to the arrival of other pastimes related to computers, television, and the Internet, remains one of the biggest hobbies in the United States and elsewhere. America's leading stamp collecting organization, the American Philatelic Society, boasts more than 35,000 members, representing only the most serious stamp collectors.

Individual collections range from small accumulations of stamps to much more elaborate and expensive collections. Many collectors collect covers that moved through the postal system almost any conveyance imaginable from coaches and stagecoaches to rockets, and postal history collections can encompass covers that moved through the posts long before the first postage stamp was created in 1840.

The hobby likely reached its zenith in the early and mid-years of the 20th century, when people were inspired by the exploits of collectors such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt and



Great Britain's King George V, the educational benefits of stamp collecting, and the relative lack of other indoor distractions.

After World War I, the aviation industry in America and elsewhere grew by moving the mail, and collectors quickly became interested in letters and covers carried by aircraft, which often carried special air mail stamps and cancellations. Air mail pilots, such as Charles Lindbergh, became major celebrities, adding to the interest in air mail covers.

Some air mail covers, especially for flights inaugurating new mail or passenger routes, carried elaborate designs known to collectors as cachets, and became popular collectables. Aerophilately became a popular topic for philatelists, and it remains so today.⁵

Along with airmail covers, there are also naval covers, which began appearing early in the 20th century when post offices were set up on board U.S. Navy ships. Soon stamp collectors with a naval background began to collect covers associated with naval vessels, usually covers canceled with naval ship cancellations, sometimes bearing special cachets.⁶

Many people who collect stamps branch out into first-day covers, which are envelopes bearing special cancellations and cachets used only on the first day a new stamp is put on sale. Many of them also collect covers canceled on the date and place of historic events such as elections and presidential inaugurations.

All these streams of stamp collecting came together when rockets began to carry satellites and spacecraft beyond Earth's atmosphere in the 1950s. Already in the 1930s, some early rocket enthusiasts in Europe had placed philatelic covers onboard their experimental rockets and sold them to collectors to help defray expenses, and a few months before *Sputnik* flew in 1957, a group of U.S. stamp collectors interested in space exploration formed the Space Unit, which today remains America's premier organization of astrophilatelists.

Sparked by the interest of philatelists who collected air mail covers and event covers, covers were canceled at launch sites for early satellites and the first U.S. human spaceflights in Project Mercury. Many people collected these covers with autographs of astronauts or well-known personalities from the space program, forming a link to another popular hobby.

In 1959, the U.S. Post Office put postal covers onboard a Navy Regulus missile that was launched from the submarine, USS *Barbero*, in the only example of government-sanctioned

“missile mail.”

Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo spacecraft were picked up by Navy ships after they splashed down in the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans at the end of their flights, and collectors interested in naval ships and spaceflight began collecting covers canceled onboard the recovery ships for these historic flights. Morris Beck, a naval cover enthusiast who had designed and produced colorful cachets for naval covers, began producing cachet designs that were applied to all covers canceled on Navy recovery ships.

As interest in the U.S. space program grew in the 1960s and early 1970s, so did demand for astrophilatelic covers. The stamp columns that appeared in many newspapers at the time announced the availability to the public of first-day cancellations and recovery ship cancellations for only the cost of the stamps, then just a few cents. Advertisements for inexpensive space covers appeared in spaceflight publications of the time, such as *Space World*, and this reviewer and many others obtained their first such covers through those means.

By the early 1970s, so many people sent in covers to the U.S. Navy to be canceled on recovery ships that most of the recovery ship cancellations for the final Apollo and Skylab flights were applied at naval bases on dry land. Kennedy Space Center cancellations for those same flights were in such demand that the cancellations were often applied at the larger post office in Orlando, Florida. Forgeries of rare astrophilatelic covers from early space flights also appeared during this time. Although there remains a market for covers related to the Space Shuttle program, interest has fallen since the days of Apollo.

Astronauts on Mercury and Gemini flights carried coins, dollar bills, and other keepsakes, but no U.S. human spacecraft is known to have carried philatelic covers onboard until *Apollo 11*, which is believed to have carried 214 such envelopes onboard the Command Module *Columbia*. As recorded in *American Astrophilately*, all the subsequent Apollo Moon landing flights through *Apollo 16* carried philatelic covers, but *Apollo 17*, which flew after the *Apollo 15* cover controversy erupted, carried none. Most of the covers carried on these flights were given to friends of the crew or to people who had contributed to the success of the flight.

The *Apollo 15* cover controversy meant that with two notable exceptions, no subsequent U.S. human spacecraft has carried philatelic material. The two exceptions are the *Challenger* STS-8 mission in 1983, which carried 260,000 covers for the U.S. Postal Service in its cargo bay for sale to collectors. In 1994, the *Endeavour* STS-68 flight carried 500,000 stamps honoring the 25th anniversary of *Apollo 11*, which the postal service also sold to collectors.

Many covers exist that have flown to the *Salyut* and *Mir* space stations and the *International Space Station* from Russia, which for many years has profited from philatelic covers carried on board its Soyuz spacecraft.

Few people with only a general interest in space exploration would find much of interest in *American Astrophilately: The First 50 Years*, beyond the period artwork on the covers

reproduced in full color in the book and DVD. Like most specialist publications, this work assumes a certain amount of knowledge, in this case both of spaceflight and of philately. Historians looking for background on the cover controversy mentioned above will also find some useful information.

The book contains an article about so-called insurance covers, which Apollo crews signed before launch for sale as a source of income for the astronauts' families in case the astronauts lost their lives in flight. Happily, these covers were never needed for that purpose, but many of these covers did make it onto the market. Further research is needed on how widespread this practice was and exactly how many of these covers were created.

And as collectables related to the space program gain more scrutiny from outside researchers, better information will not only shed light on those who flew the mission but on how average people interacted with the space program by obtaining their own souvenirs. This new knowledge will also benefit collectors, who will have more accurate information about the stories behind their memorabilia.

Chris Gainor

Notes

1. See David Clow, "Earthshine, Fading," *Quest: The History of Spaceflight Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2010, 46-56; which focuses on astronaut autographs. The same issue of *Quest* contains three advertisements for space memorabilia auctions.
2. Philately is defined as "the collection and study of postage and imprinted stamps; stamp collecting," in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (2005). Wikipedia defines philately more broadly as the "study of stamps and postal history and other related items." (Accessed 6 January 2011).
3. See "Articles Carried on Manned Space Flights," NASA Press Release 72-189, 15 September 1972, as reproduced on Collectspace.com, http://www.collectspace.com/resources/flown_a15_articles_carried.html (Accessed 6 January 2011).
4. See David Scott and Alexei Leonov, *Two Sides of the Moon: Our Story of the Cold War Space Race* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2004) 328-33; James B. Irwin with William A. Emerson Jr., *To Rule the Night* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Co., 1973) 232-6; Walter Cunningham, *The All-American Boys* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1977) 232-40; and Donald K. "Deke" Slayton and Michael Cassutt, *Deke! U.S. Manned Space From Mercury to the Shuttle* (New York: Forge, 1994) 278-9.
5. Aerophilatelists in the United States are organized in the American Air Mail Society, which began in 1923. <http://www.americanairmailssociety.org/index.htm>.
6. See the website of the Universal Ship Cancellation Society for background on naval covers. <http://www.uscs.org/>.
7. The name of the Space Unit, which is also known as the Space Topics Study Unit, refers to its relationship with the American Philatelic Society and the American Topical Association, which brings together stamp collectors who focus on particular topics such as space exploration. Information on the history of the Space Unit is contained in the November/December 2007 issue of the Space Unit's journal, *The Astrophile*. <http://www.space-unit.com/>.