

The Book Deck

American Astrophilately: The First 50 Years by David S. Ball. 352 pages, 8 by 10 inches, perfect bound, card covers, plus DVD, A&A Publishers, Charleston, S.C., 2010. ISBN 978-0-615-34201-6, \$49.95 postpaid in USA, \$64.95 postpaid worldwide from

www.AstroPhilately.com.

Author Ball defines astrophilately as telling the story of the conquest of space through philatelic media. Covers cancelled on the day and nearest to the event are the collectible documents. Although space launch covers are popular, additional locations are also pertinent like primary recovery ships, the Russian space station, and the international space station where crews cancelled envelopes.

There are three major parts to the book. Part One consists of 17 articles. In his introductory chapter, Ball calls attention to important aspects of astrophilately: recognizing the precise date and time of an event keeping in mind time zones and daylight savings time, backdating of material, understanding the "plating" of postmarks, and autographs including autopens and fakes. The remaining chapters are largely written by recognized experts in the various specialties within the broad field of astrophilately.

Beatrice Bachmann describes the stratosphere balloon flights of the 1950s and 60s. Ross Smith points out the little known subspecialty of tracking ships and their crews as opposed to the more popular recovery ship souvenirs. Author David Ball's chapter defines a Captain's cover as a special souvenir bearing the commanding officer's printed name or autograph and normally presented to crewmembers and VIPs. Kris Stoeber tells the story of the USS J. R. PIERCE, second recovery ship of the Mercury Aurora 7.

A popular cachetmaker of the 1960s and 70s was Morris Beck, who prepared covers for the U.S. Navy and Space Recovery events. Beck authority Owen Murray describes and illustrates these covers. To obtain life insurance for an astronaut was practically impossible. Author Ball shows "insurance" covers for Apollo 11-16, i.e. crew-signed covers that a widow could sell if needed to help finances in event of death. Paul and Chris Calle describe the design of stamps and covers to mark the moon landing and its anniversaries 20 and 25 years later.

Part Two of the book consists of 90 pages illustrating nearly 300 space covers in color, identified by cachetmaker, mission, crew, and date and location of launch and recovery. Part Three illustrates hundreds of postmarks and their varieties for space launches and recoveries. A brief glossary of terms and a bibliography conclude the book.

An added bonus is an important DVD mounted on the inside back cover. Here the reader will find more articles on fakes and forgeries, machine cancels, ship cachets, tracking stations, and VIP cards. For reference use there are



spreadsheets on launch sites and dates, and data on the covers created by Morris Beck. Two exhibits are shown by Reuben Ramkissoon and David Ball, the FIP and APS regulations for judging astrophilately are presented, and an archive of the Calles' (father and son) sketches and correspondence can be viewed. There is also a comprehensive unclassified government bibliography on animals and man in space.

The design and layout of the book are pleasing. Covers are shown in full color. One annoying aspect was the repeated misspelling in one article about postal "stationary," even though it was reprinted from elsewhere. The book would be better served with an index. However, this book and the appended DVD make them a remarkable resource on astrophilately. Collectors will find this a valued addition to their library.

Alan Warren (11,043)

The Old Queen of the USCG Fleet - Continued

year, a group in Sacramento made an effort to turn FIR into a museum ship and she was removed from Suisun Bay to the Sacramento area. Again, the effort failed. The record becomes a bit murky but it appears about 2007 FIR was sold to a private individual or group and moved to her current location at pier 38 in San Francisco. Rumor has it that they contemplate making her a novel hotel or bed and breakfast.

It will soon be 20 years since FIR was decommissioned and still her ultimate fate seems unknown. When the USCS convention comes around next April in San Francisco it may be worth a trip down to Pier 38 to see what has happened to USCGC FIR (WLM 212).

References

www.uscg.millhistory/webcutters/fir1940.asp

A lighthouse/Buoy Tender in the Pacific Northwest by National Park Service

Liberty-Maritime Museum: FIR

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