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Subject: **Wally Schirra and his Speedmaster CK2998.**
Date: May 07, 2007 7:19:34 AM CDT
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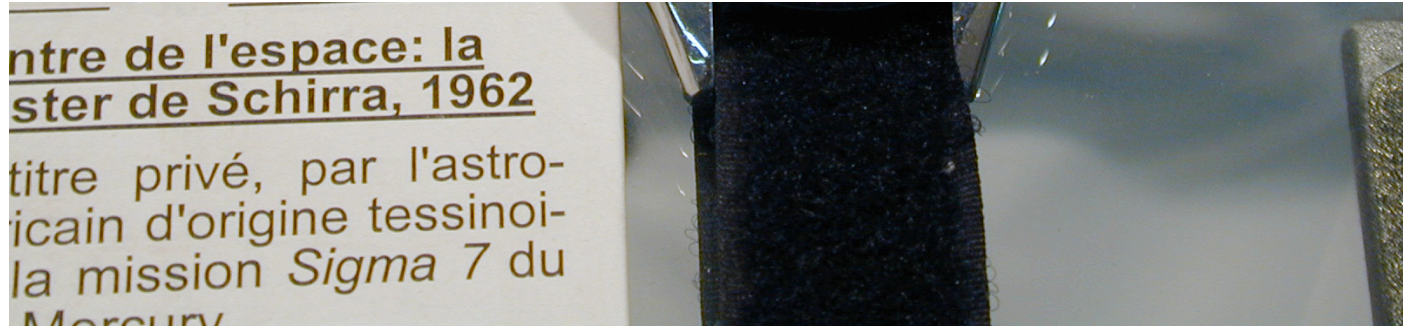
Marco (and I've CCed John),

I am emailing you on a topic which unfortunately has become a sad topic as I've typed...

Back in February, I had the honor and privilege to meet and interview NASA Astronaut Wally Schirra during the Omegamania event happening in Beverly Hills, California USA. I have been working with International Watch magazine to publish a transcript of the interview in an upcoming issue of IW magazine.

One of the topics I had discussed with Wally was where his CK2998 Speedmaster was currently located. Thanks to Steve Waddington, who had taken a number of pictures during his visit to the Omega Museum, I had with me a printout of a picture of a watch we had thought (assumed was Wally's)





And here is the excerpt from the Museum program text:

335. **The 1st OMEGA in space, Schirra's Speedmaster, 1962:** Off the production line November 15, 1961, this Speedmaster chronograph was the first to navigate in space! The astronaut Wally Schirra (of Swiss Ticino origins) wore it October 3, 1962 in preparatory testing during the Sigma 7 mission of the Mercury program - two years and five months before it was officially accepted by NASA! (CK 2998)
Calibre 27 CHRO C12 - 321, mat black oxidized dial, 30-minute totalizer at right and 12-hour totalizer at bottom, continuous small seconds at left, 1/5-second line minute circle, luminous hour markers, luminous Alpha hands, tachometric scale on outside ring, start-stop push-buttons at top and return-to-zero at bottom, hermetically sealed crown, water resistant steel case with reinforced crystal, back with screws and O-ring gasket, engraved "Speedmaster" with seahorse and OMEGA symbol.
This is the 2nd generation of Speedmaster models; launched in 1959, this model differed from the first (1957) in the design of its hands and its tachometric ring as well as the O-ring gaskets on the push-buttons.

...hat Steve obtained during his visit to the Omega Museum...

I showed this printout to Wally and discussed with him:

Chuck: I was going to ask you if you still owned any Speedmasters, but I see you're wearing your gold one.

Wally: Well, the Speedmaster is in a museum in Houston, did you know that?

Chuck: Well, actually, I have a picture in here of your [Picture of Wally's CK2998 Speedmaster which is item 335 in the Omega Museum in Bienne] watch in the Omega Museum in Bienne too!

Wally: Yeah?

Chuck: In Bienne [shuffling through pages of notes prepared], yes, right here... [finally gets to the right page]...

Wally: Maybe they moved it to Houston...

Chuck: Right there on the left, that's supposedly your watch there.

Wally: That looks like it. Well, I wonder what's the one in Houston?

However, the other day I came across an archive of a post on the Military Watch Resource by Don Aldo who apparently visited the Museum a few months ago and he posted this picture and caption:

The first watch in space... well not really... but close. The watch on the left is like the one that astronaut Walter Schirra wore in 1962 during the Mercury 8 mission. How do I know that this isn't Schirra's watch? The text, written in French, mentions how the real watch is actually being exhibited at the Space Center in Houston until

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2005. I know, we're 2007, so is this still the replacement watch or is it really Schirra's? My people are working on it and I'll let you know asap, on the double.

The French language text also mentions how the watch was privately purchased by Schirra (therefore, not issued by NASA).

The watch on the right was worn by Richard Gordon on his Apollo XII mission.



It seems quite possible that Wally was right as Don says:

"How do I know that this isn't Schirra's watch? The text, written in French, mentions how the real watch is actually being exhibited at the Space Center in Houston until 2005. I know we're [in] 2007, so is this still the replacement watch or is it really Schirra's. My people are working on it and I'll let you know asap, on the double."

I too would like to know if Wally was right in the interview. Is it possible to confirm the location of Wally's Speedmaster?

It's with great sadness that I learned of Wally's death while composing this letter to you Marco (and John) this afternoon... Wally was a GREAT fellow, a HERO in every sense of the word. I know I personally feel a great sense of loss at his passing. I know we all are much richer for having been blessed having him a rich and full 84 years and we'll miss his knowledge, talents and enthusiasm in the years to come.

I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to speak with him and at great length. Our conversation will appear in an upcoming issue of International Watch magazine. I have a full transcript and audio recordings of the conversation that I would be happy to send to you if you're interested in them. I believe the conversation we had will be of lasting interest to folks interested in Wally, space and Speedmasters for many years to come.

I believe would be nice touch if it actually turned out Wally was right and I'd be more than happy to note where his Speedmaster is on display if we can determine it's location.

Please let me know.

I would also like to mention in closing that I also had the opportunity to view the proof of your new book on Omega. While I can read very little French I was blown away by the obvious depth and breadth of your work. I placed my order for a copy last month and I am eagerly looking forward to reading it. I expect it will make all of the collectors who have worked to document on the internet various aspects of the Omega story to have to do massive revisions to their efforts! I don't think it's premature to heartily say "Well Done, Marco!".

I hope this finds you well and I hope to hear from you soon.

Cheers!

Chuck

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Chronographs, like most finer things in life, only improve with time...

-- Myself