



A WATCH ONCE ABOARD THE SPACE SHUTTLE ENDEAVOR LANDS AT THE MUSEUM

The National Watch and Clock Museum® was pleased to receive a bit of history when a special donation arrived after orbiting the earth 182 times aboard the Space Shuttle *Endeavor*. This wristwatch, made and donated by the Towson Watch Company, Towson, MD, had completed its celestial adventure on the wrist of Mission Specialist Gerhard P. J. Thiele, Ph.D. During Mission STS-99, which ran February 11-22, 2000, the watch and the crew of six traveled 4.7 million miles, reaching a maximum speed of 17,500 mph.

The Mission

The purpose of Mission STS-99 was to map the features of the Earth's surface. The Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) utilized two radar antennas, one within the shuttle bay and the other on the end of a mast extending 60 meters away from the craft, during what NASA has described as "the most ambitious Earth mapping mission to date." The result was a three-dimensional topographic map of the entire planet.

Figure 1. The lift-off of the Space Shuttle *Endeavor* at the Kennedy Space Center, FL.

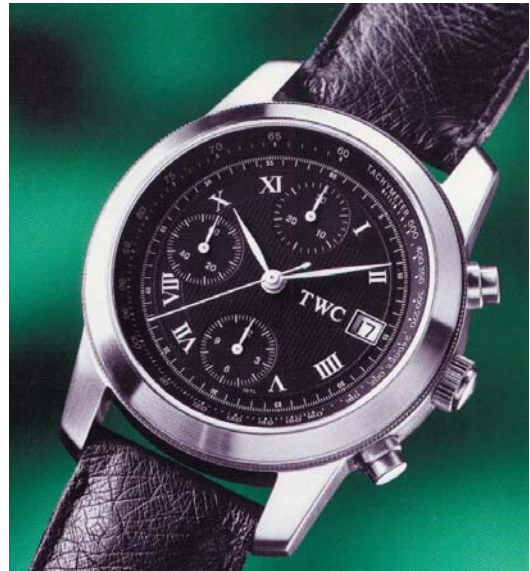
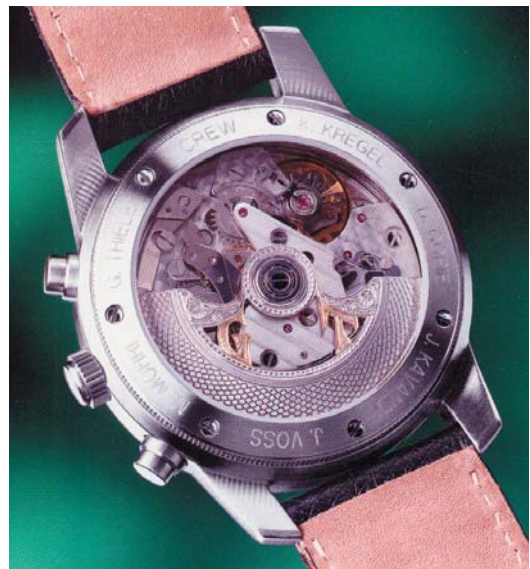


Figure 2, above. The face of the chronograph wristwatch. Figure 3, below. The movement.



The Watch

The Towson Watch Company completed this chronograph wristwatch, serial #1, in 1999. The 25-jewel, high grade, self-winding movement is adjusted to four positions and is housed in a stainless steel case with a sapphire crystal. Beautifully decorated, the Swiss-made movement can be viewed through a mineral



Figure 4, left. Mission Specialist Gerhard P.J. Thiele aboard the Space Shuttle *Endeavor* during Mission STS-99, February 11-22, 2000. He wears the chronograph wristwatch made and donated to the National Watch and Clock Museum® by the Towson Watch Company, Towson, MD.

Figure 5, below. The crew of the Space Shuttle *Endeavor* Mission STS-99. Front row, left to right: Mission Specialists, Mamoru Mohri and Gerhard P.J. Thiele. Back row, left to right: Payload Commander, Janice E. Voss; Commander, Kevin R. Kregel; Pilot, Dominic L. Pudwill Gorie; and Mission Specialist, Janet Lynn Kavandi.

glass back attached with blued screws. The names of each of the crew members are engraved around the back bezel. The black dial has three subsidiary dials showing seconds at 9:00, thirty minutes at 12:00 and twelve hours at 6:00. A calendar and tachymeter complete the features of the watch.

The Donors and Their Company

Longtime friends George Thomas, NAWCC #12879 and Hartwig Balke, NAWCC #131790, embarked on a new adventure when they decided to start the Towson Watch Company. Thomas' 40-plus years of experience repairing high-grade watches, repeaters, chronographs, not to mention manufacturing his own tourbillon watches, combined with Balke's background as a graduate mechanical engineer and watchmaker proved to be a successful match. The first 25 of their hand crafted wrist chronographs were built and sold in weeks.

In addition to the wristwatch featured here, the Museum has several other examples of TWC watches exhibited in our *Wristwatch Revolution* gallery. And four of Thomas' tourbillon pocket watches can be seen in the Museum's gallery of timepieces made by NAWCC members.

Your Museum

Over the years the National Watch and Clock Museum® has benefited from the generosity of NAWCC members who have helped the collection grow and improve. You may be wondering how you could contribute. The watch described in this article is one example of an area where there is a need—contemporary timepieces. When we think of museums we often think in terms of “old” items, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the cultural items of today will be the historic artifacts of tomorrow. I would encourage



members of the NAWCC who have relatively contemporary items (1970s-present) to consider donating them to the Museum in order to help ensure that timepieces from the present and recent past are represented in our collection. Anyone wishing to make such a donation may contact the curatorial office at the address below for further information.

Please see page 259 for *Library News* by Kathy Pritchard.

The National Watch and Clock Museum® and
The Library and Research Center
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Phone: 717-684-8261

Museum Hours: Tues. - Sat. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Library and Research Center Hours:

Mon. by appointment only,
Tues. - Fri. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(Saturdays in January, February and March
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.), Closed Sundays.