

Chuck Maddox in Memoriam

"Chronographs, like most finer things in life, only improve with time." That was the epigraph that followed every internet post by Chuck Maddox, one of the leading experts in the world of vintage chronographs, and one of the most prolific writers on his chosen subject. Sadly, Chuck died unexpectedly at the age of 46 at his home in St. Charles, Illinois, on May 12, 2008. He is survived by his sister Laurie.

Chuck published articles in watch publications, including *International Watch*, covering subjects ranging from the Omega Speedmasters worn in space to the history of the Heuer Carrera to advice for the novice collector. In February, 2007, *International Watch* sent Chuck to interview Apollo astronaut Tom Stafford. Chuck spent weeks preparing to interview Stafford, but a last-minute scheduling change found Chuck instead interviewing the late Wally Schirra, a particular hero of his, on only an hour's notice. Chuck didn't miss a beat; his interview of Schirra had the tone of a conversation between two old friends. "It's like I was preparing to interview Willie Stargell, and I ended up with Willie Mays," he quipped.


Still Chuck's connection to the watch-collecting community was fundamentally a personal one. Through back-channel e-mails, rapid-fire instant messages and posts on watch discussion forums, he shared information with experts and novices alike, raising questions, providing answers, provoking discussions, and generally sharing his boundless enthusiasm for all things chronographic. Much of this information, including photos of watches, comprehensive charts, and scans of vintage watch catalogs and instruction manuals, is preserved on his website—www.chromomaddox.com. For watch lovers, exploring Chuck's website is like browsing through the stacks of a great library.

Omega chronographs were his particular passion. He bestowed colorful names on many models, and several have become part of the chronograph vernacular.

The black-cased Seamaster, Reference 145.0023, is best known as the "Darth Vader," for Chuck declared that this is the watch that Darth would have worn. A similar watch in tungsten-chrome case became the "Anakin Skywalker," for it suggests the young Darth Vader, before he went over to the "dark side." He dubbed the impossible-to-find Speedmaster Reference ST376.0822 the "Grail," and many a collector joined the search. Since his death, collectors have come to call this one the "Maddox Speedmaster."

Chuck collected a wide variety of chronographs, including Heuer, Porsche Design, Gallet, Hamilton, Zenith, Zodiac, Ventura and Certina, among many others. And he was not without opinions. Three registers were the minimum requirement for a chrono (with two registers being dismissed as "half a chronograph"); the Valjoux 72, Valjoux 7750 and Lemania 5100 were his movements of choice; slide-rule bezels (such as the one found on the Gallet Excel-O-Graph, Breitling Navitimer and Heuer Calculator) were a particular fascination; tool watches should be made of steel or titanium. To Chuck, gold chronographs were simply gilding the lily.

Chuck was a storyteller who always chose the scenic route in taking his readers from Point A to Point B, with colorful detours all along the way. Opening one of Chuck's posts you might learn about the evolution of the Speedmaster dial, find a table with the measurements and weights of 50 chronographs, or read a spirited defense of the Heuer Camaro. But you might also get a clip from the film *Gone in 30 Seconds*, a short history of the Apple Newton, or a pro-NASA op-ed on why we need to continue exploring the heavens. For all his wealth of knowledge, at a certain level Chuck's passion for the hobby was refreshingly simple and generous: Chuck Maddox loved watches, and he wanted you to love them, too. His friends will continue to do that, but miss him all the same. —Jeff Stein and Allen St. John.

A photograph of three men standing in front of a backdrop with large white letters spelling 'NASA' against a starry space background. The man on the left is Charlie Duke, wearing a tan flight jacket with a NASA patch. The man in the center is Chuck Maddox, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a white flat cap. The man on the right is Wally Schirra, wearing a dark jacket with a NASA patch and an American flag patch. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera.

Chuck Maddox (center) with Apollo 16LM pilot Charlie Duke (left) and Wally Schirra (right).