

Faster, Higher and Farther

by Steve Hoffman and David O'Neal

Space Coast Region Sends Logo Pins into Space

At 11:29 am on July 8th, Shuttle Atlantis launched from Pad 39-A for the final time and marked the end of NASA's Space Shuttle program after 30 years and 135 missions. Atlantis landed at Kennedy Space Center at 5:57 am on July 21st after traveling over 5.3 million miles in its 200 orbits of the Earth. Among the cargo carried aboard that historic flight were two logo medallions from Space Coast Region of the Porsche Club of America.



When Space Coast Region (SPC) was first chartered in February 1968, the *space race* was in high gear and NASA launched Apollo 8 – the first manned spacecraft to orbit the moon. At that point in our nation's history, “the Cape” stood as the undisputed epicenter of aerospace science and engineering. 1968 also marked Porsche's first win at the *24 Hours of Daytona* – an amazing 1-2-3 finish. In the ensuing 44 years, Space Coast Region and its members have thrived at these junctures of speed and technology which reside in our Region.

In 2010, Space Coast Region was recognized as PCA Region of the Year and awarded the Ferry Porsche Trophy at the Porsche Parade in St. Charles. As in prior years, the winning region had adorned the trophy with their region name, the year of their recognition, and in many cases, a region logo pin. As the 50th recipient of this important award, Space Coast wanted to follow this protocol and return the trophy with something special to set our Region apart from the others. The plan was hatched in February: get a Space Coast Logo flown aboard a space shuttle and then affix it to the Ferry Porsche Trophy. That sounds simple enough; but when it comes to space travel, nothing is ever simple...



First Challenge: Access

Space Coast Region has numerous NASA and space agency contractor employees among its 751 members, including its Past President Ralph Fritsche and current Vice President Steve Hoffman. These people had the connections to begin the arduous process of seeking a spot aboard a flight. These two gained special access to the Space Shuttle for some unique photo opportunities; Ralph's 993 graced the cover of the August 2011 *Panorama* with Steve's 930 sitting off-camera to the left alongside Shuttle Atlantis. But as one might imagine, cargo space aboard a shuttle is a very precious commodity.



Second Challenge: Approval

Steve Hoffman prepared the outline of a letter that would be used to convince NASA that the logo pins were of value to the space program, the morale of NASA employees and the public in general. Touting SPC's history with the space program and mentioning the 105,000 tax-paying members of the Porsche Club of America residing in the United States helped the cause. The letter, along with two logo lapel pins, was presented to the individuals who control the flight manifest for the Space Shuttle missions. The letter circulated for quite some time until NASA's Abby Cassell appreciated what SPC was trying to accomplish and promised to do her best to see that its cargo "got a ride". Once at NASA, the pins were weighed, their metallurgy tested and they were sealed in compact plastic bags. This processing, however, does not guarantee "a ride" aboard the shuttle.

Third Challenge: Scheduling

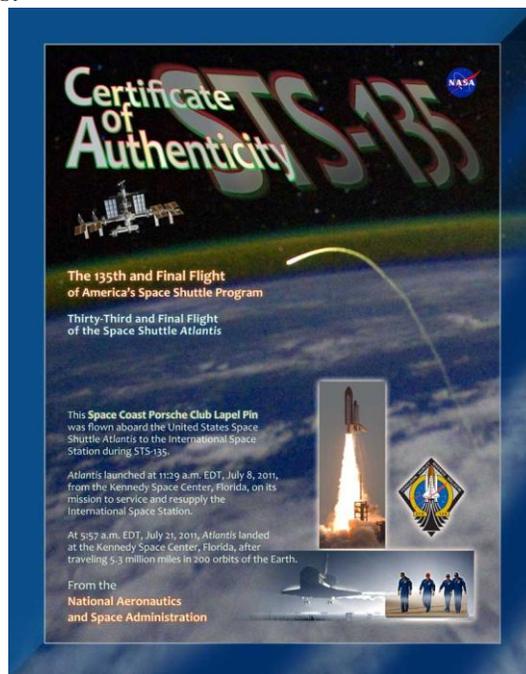
SPC officers hoped that the pins would be included on STS-134, the last flight of Endeavor, as NASA anticipated a crush of requests for the final Shuttle mission. But the manifests were closed for that flight and the only option left was space onboard Atlantis. The launch window was moved later into July due to weather delays, leaving less time for Space Coast members to recover the pin post-flight, affix it to the Ferry Porsche Trophy, and return the Trophy to PCA. A special request was made to Tuffy Bronstead, PCA's Awards Chair, to allow SPC to retain the Trophy and hand deliver it to Parade in Savannah. Space Coast Region wanted to convey the story of the pin's journey and display the Trophy's new adornment, but the pin had to be in its custody prior to the 2011 Region of the Year presentation at the Concours Banquet.

Forth Challenge: Recovery

Space Coast's NASA insiders waited with anticipation as the days led up to the final flight, but no confirmation came from NASA. Around the world, people watched with great joy as Atlantis launched, performed its mission objectives on-orbit and landed perfectly. A few days after landing, Steve Hoffman was notified that SPC's two pins had made the flight. The final challenge was to get possession of them so there was enough time to adhere one to the Ferry Porsche Trophy. Due to the fact that SPC's "cargo" was a fairly low priority for offloading, especially compared to cargo and data needed by scientists and engineers around the world, Space Coast did not receive the pins in time for the trek to Savannah. A substitute logo pin was placed on the Ferry Porsche Trophy for the presentation; SPC representatives intended to swap that pin with a flight pin later in the summer.

During Parade, however, the PCA Executive Committee announced that the major awards, such as the Ferry Porsche Trophy, would reside permanently at PCA's new headquarters in Maryland rather than with the Region. This change in PCA policy helped to resolve immediately a conundrum that arose once the pins were retrieved from NASA after Parade had ended.

With NASA, process, pomp and tradition are an integral part of the space program. The lapel pins would not be returned simply to Space Coast Region. The pins were mounted within two beautiful plaques, numbered and serialized for authentication, and accompanied with certificates of authenticity. These plaques could not be disassembled simply to retrieve the pins. The plaque acknowledges the pins' presence on Atlantis and documents the statistics associated with the flight of STS-135. Part of the certificate of authenticity reads:



“This Space Coast Porsche Club Lapel Pin was flown aboard the United States Space Shuttle Atlantis to the International Space Station during STS-135.”

Today, one of the plaques is displayed proudly at Space Coast Region's primary sponsor, Porsche of Melbourne. The plaque was entrusted to owner/general manager Shay Rowe at SPC's annual Summer Awards Banquet in late August. The plaque and pin are part of the Region's hardware and will remain one of its most prized possessions. The other plaque was delivered to PCA Executive Director Vu Nguyen and PCA National President Manny Alban by Space Coast Region's Newsletter Editor Ginny

O'Neal during September's ALMS Gran Prix of Baltimore. That plaque is on permanent display at PCA's Executive Office in Columbia, Maryland.

Several records are associated with the special cargo carried aboard the Atlantis. The Space Coast Logo Pins went faster than any PCA item - 17,000+ miles per hour, traveled farther than any PCA item - 5.3 million miles or 200 orbits of Earth, and flew higher than any PCA item - 120 miles above the surface of the Earth. Space Coast Region is the last to display the Ferry Porsche Trophy in its Region throughout its tenure as Region of the Year. SPC also held that Trophy in its possession for a record 13 months, due to the scheduled dates for the Savannah Parade.

And so NASA and its SPC members end one era in style and look forward to the future.