



The QP Bookshelf Part 7:

Stocking Fillers



If afforded a moment's peace during or after the seasonal festivities, or if you're simply looking for something to add to your list for St Nick, you'll be pleased to know that this has been a bumper year for books about watches. And not just the usual one-make histories, though those have been plentiful: watch collecting has expanded exponentially, so there are enough enthusiasts around to justify the publication of books dealing with general arcana and anecdotes. In other words, we've reached a point where we're allowed books that are actually *fun*. This season's batch contains five must-haves, so get out those credit cards (or Post-It Notes for your benefactors).

Ken Kessler





The Watch Buff's Book of Trivia

By Norma Buchanan

Paperback, 176 pages, \$13.95

Published by Watch Buff Books, 2005

ISBN 0-9772512-0-9

Its subtitle tells you with Ronseal-esque clarity what lurks inside: "465 Fun Facts About Timepieces". Norma Buchanan, a contributing editor across the Pond at *WatchTime*, has been writing about the industry for more than 15 years and has the sort of memory that allowed her to recall a vast amount of the delicious trivia that's been floating around since the time before Breguet was first summoned by an admirer of Marie-Antoinette. Every watch enthusiast knows a cluster of factoids ranging from Elvis' watch of choice (Hamilton Ventura) to the precise model that Marilyn Monroe gave to JFK (a Rolex) to the smallest movement ever made (Jaeger 101). Here, Buchanan has made them all available in a succinct volume, complete with index. Want to know the meanings behind watch company names? Who founded which brand? What watches appeared on screen and in books? What a 'ligne' is? Why Bob Hope was fired from his job as Timex's TV spokesman in the late Fifties? (He appeared on a TV show sponsored by rival brand Bulova, since you ask...)

It's all here and more, written with clarity and presented with sublime accessibility. Newcomers will regard this as a crash course in watch lore, while old-timers will adore it for jogging their memories... or confirming their old wives' tales. I love this gem - a contender for Book of the Year. Just make sure you buy two copies: one for your desk, and one to leave in the loo.



Nomos Glashütte - The Great Universal Encyclopaedia

Various contributors

Hardcover, 334 pages, €36

Published by Nomos Glashütte, 2006

ISBN 13: 978-3-00-018473-4

Unlike the *Watch Buff's Book of Trivia*, Nomos' is actually a cleverly disguised catalogue that purports to offer "everything that has anything to do with watches". Modelled on *Schott's Original Miscellany*, it is an encyclopaedia in that its contents - over 400 entries - are listed alphabetically. But it's more like a multimedia event without an electronic component: this chunky volume has sheets of stickers to insert in specific places, pages printed on differing paper grades and textures, a removable topological map of Glashütte in a back-cover pocket, and a sense of humour that runs throughout with deliciously non-sequitur irregularity. Example: look up the word 'Taste' and you get the definition: "People who wear Nomos watches have good taste." Yes, it's a book by Germans that's actually hilarious! Amidst the mirth are genuine nuggets of horological lore, and you quickly get used to the constant plugs for Nomos products because they're so blatant and good-natured. It's like watching a TV show with lots of adverts but so light-hearted that you can't help but smile. So, if you want to find out about "watch straps that smell bad" or which cars are owned by Nomos employees, well, you'll just have to cough up €36.

Further information: Jardin d'Eden, Tel: 01902 844 811

The Revival of Time

By Walter Lange

Hardcover, 174 pages, €24

Published by Econ, 2005

ISBN 3-430-15977-6



Authorised autobiographies are by their very nature hagiographic. Throw in an element of hard commerce - this volume is also a promotional giveaway from Lange & Söhne - and you are right to anticipate a book that is less warts'n'all than you would get from, say, Andrew Morton. And when a goodly chunk of the life in question involves participation on the losing side in WW2, well, the words 'white' and 'wash' spring to mind. But that shouldn't put you off reading this engrossing saga, because its *raison d'être* is the section describing the against-all-odds revival of a watch brand that languished for almost half a century behind the Iron Curtain. To go from virtual non-existence in a Communist backwater to one of the world's most respected brands in five years? It's a tale worth telling.

Elegantly translated by Elizabeth Doerr, one of the best watch scribes at work today, it's a fast read and an informative one. It might even bring a tear to your eye. For those who have been put off by watch histories that are either too slim on detail or overburdened with minutiae, this is, like Goldilocks' porridge, just right. Then again, it's a unique and fascinating story; you can only marvel at Walter Lange's tenacity in restoring his family's legacy. This book is so enjoyable that it begs similar volumes on Jack Heuer, Nicholas Hayek, Luigi Macaluso and other worthy and/or notorious figures in post-war watch manufacturing. Ms Doerr, if you have the time..?

The World Of Watches: History Technology Industry

By Lucien F Trueb

Paperback, 436 pages, ca €55

Published by Ebner Publishing International

ISBN 0-9706984-4-5



This one will take some hunting, but it's worth it. I will even go so far as to say that, should my house catch fire, it's the one watch book I would rescue. This masterpiece contains more useful lore than any single title I can name, especially if you have a need for potted histories of brands, a history of watchmaking in general, and detailed descriptions of technical terms and concepts, in one easy-to-use volume. It never leaves my desk.

This is the revised, English-language update of a book published in 1999. A colleague tells me it's worth learning German to be able to read the original, but for most of us, this will suffice. Trueb writes with scholastic clarity and precision, and he has created what would surely be a definitive work for first-year students should there ever be courses on watch history. It is simply indispensable. I found my copy at a watch fair; as amazon.com yielded nothing, the best I can do for you is provide the publisher's details below. Chase this one; you won't regret it.

Further information: Ebner International, 200 W 57th Street, Suite 1410, New York, NY 10019-3211, USA. Tel: +1 212 977 1050



**IWC Pilot's Watches:
Flying Legends Since 1936**
Edited by Rudiger Bucher and
Christian Pfeiffer-Belli
Hardcover, 96 pages, €29
Published by Ebner Verlag, 2006
ISBN 3-87188-068X

As with *The Revival of Time*, we have an interesting, if predictable problem with this long-awaited volume. Make no mistake: IWC's military watches are simply among the most coveted ever; Mark Xs and Mark 11s ranking right up there with pre-1990 Panerai and assorted Longines models. The IWCs certainly deserve a

book on their own, especially to supplement the paucity of books about military watches that are still in print. As with the Walter Lange bio, producing a book that also serves as a promotional vehicle for IWC's current models means there has to be a certain amount of compromise.

And this is where the problems are found.

As a Swiss and therefore neutral company, IWC's war years were much more complicated than Lange's and so need a more sophisticated treatment. This doesn't happen.

Then there is the 'commercial xenophobia' element, if such a thing exists. In the opening chapters, for example, Cartier – a sister brand of IWC – is deservedly name-checked when

Santos-Dumont's work with pilots' watches is cited. But when the far more important watch developed by Capt. Weems is described, the name 'Longines' is conspicuous by its absence. When discussing the Mark 11 (the one watch that I will *never* part with, just so you know where my heart lies), Gisbert L Brunner, who should know better, writes, "There's probably only one pilot's wristwatch that deserves the epithet 'cult watch' – the Mark 11." Gee, what about Lindbergh's Angle Hour, the 1953 Omega, Breitling's original Navitimer, the Breguet Type XX and the various Weems models? At least three of them fetch far more than Mark 11s at auction. And yet, the *only* time other watches are mentioned in this book, which is absolutely necessary to create anything resembling an historical context, it is to denigrate them in the chapter on auction results. This isn't simply churlish, it's downright dishonest.

The excess of space devoted to current (civilian) models turns this into a glorified catalogue. Furthermore, it lacks an index and needs serious proofreading to deal with type and punctuation errors.

Don't get me wrong: the nine contributors are among the best there is – knowledgeable to a fault, serious to the point of austerity, and not omitting a single fact related to IWC military watches. Which makes the lack of balance and omissions all the more disappointing.

The book does tell IWC's full story though, and in great detail. However, I'm the target audience, just like every one of you with a passion for military watches, and I'm let down. Worryingly, a line in the introduction tells the reader that this is the first in a series of 'Watch Legends' books by the same team. I can't wait to see how they deal with Hamilton. ○