

'Your Postal Podcast' 73rd Edition Transcript – June 2014

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Richard Watkins: Welcome to *Your Postal Podcast*. This is Richard Watkins of U.S. Postal Service Corporate Communications. In this June 2014 edition, you'll hear about a Nevada artist who has been painting landscapes for decades and had his share of notoriety -- but the apex of his career might just have coincided with the release of a brand new U.S. postage stamp. You'll also hear from one of the nation's best-known auto enthusiasts about the cars featured on some other newly-released Forever stamps.

Hot Rods Stamps Segment

Watkins: A TV host who describes himself as “crazy” about cars was the perfect person to invite to the unveiling of the Postal Service's new Hot Rods stamps. Peter Hass has this famous “Car Guy's” take on why cars and stamps go together so well.

(Sounds of car engines revving from stamp ceremony heard in the background.)

Peter Hass: The Postal Service, following the popularity of previously-released stamps depicting Muscle Cars and Fins and Chrome, issued the limited-edition “Hot Rods” Forever Stamps at a National Street Rod Association car show in York, Pennsylvania, earlier this month.

The stamps feature two versions of the 1932 Ford “Deuce” Roadster – often referred to as the “Deuce Coupe” – one black Ford with orange flames painted on its side, the other a bright red '32 Ford. The timeless Deuce is one of car enthusiasts' favorite to restore and modify.

For the stamps' dedication, Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe was joined by Barry Meguiar, president of Meguiar's Car Care Products and the jovial host of the Velocity Channel's “Car Crazy” TV show.

Following the ceremony, Meguiar said there's a huge audience of “car guys” – the name he uses to describe car aficionados both male and female – who will be excited about these collectible stamps.

Barry Meguiar: I noted something being said that hot rodding was really big back in the 50s. Well, it started in the 50s, but it's huge now; there's about 30 million “car guys” in the United States -- about 40 percent of them are hot-rodders. So we're talking about 12 million hot rodders in America.

Hass: Meguiar said it's a given that car collectors are automatic fans of stamps depicting beautiful automobiles from the past.

Meguiar: Car collectors are stamp collectors, they're watch collectors, they're collectors – they appreciate nostalgia, you know, just across the board. So you often go to car collections and they have collections of, you know, radios and televisions, or whatever. So, absolutely – stamps – dead on. It's the same mindset.

Hass: During the ceremony to unveil the stamps, Meguiar reflected on the Deuce Coupe's popularity.

Meguiar: When you think of all the movies that have focused on the Deuce Coupe, right? And you think of all the songs that have been focused on the Deuce Coupe, and now we have a postage stamp, I mean go figure, is this – is this great or what? I mean it brings it full circle to recognize the integral role that the Deuce Coupe has played in our history, and in our culture and really all that's good about America.

Hass: After the ceremony, Meguiar confided his choice for his favorite car of all time.

Meguiar: Well, I'd have to say the Deuce. You know, when I was a kid, it was the first car I wanted to have. And when I drive my Deuce, I'm 16 years old, you know? Everybody loves the Deuce; I mean every street light you come up to you have a conversation with the people in the car next to you. It's the great American car!

Hass: The Hot Rods Forever Stamps are available now at Post Offices nationwide and at usps.com/stamps or by calling 1-800-STAMP-24. Special thanks to Paul Smith for his assistance with this story.

Nevada Stamp Artist Segment

Watkins: Artists often labor in relative obscurity, but one Nevada painter's work will soon adorn millions of letters. David Rupert spoke with him at the Nevada Statehood Stamp First Day of Issue Event and has this report:

Ron Spears: I was thrilled to get the call. There's no doubt. I mean, who wouldn't be? It's fantastic.

David Rupert: That's Ron Spears, one of a select few people who have had their work depicted on a U.S. Postage Stamp. I caught up with him just before the unveiling of the Nevada Statehood stamp which featured his work. The unveiling was in Las Vegas at an event attended by both Nevada U.S. Senators, the Governor, the Mayor, the Vice Chair of the Postal Board of Governors, and even the Postmaster General among many, many others. For Spears, it was a seminal lifetime achievement.

Spears: For me personally, it's great just to be involved in the 150-year statehood celebration of Nevada and being around here, because that's a generational thing – you might miss it. And so to be part of that now is fantastic. To do the stamp for it is just, you know, over the top.

Rupert: Spears is an accomplished artist and illustrator. His previous projects included illustrations for *Dungeons and Dragons*. He has illustrated book covers, magazine articles and children's books and dozens of video games. But this was his first stamp.

Spears: My first priority was just that I really hoped the people of Nevada like the stamp – that's the biggest thing, and that was from day one. In terms of what I'd like them to see secondarily, I'd like them to look at it and pause – and not necessarily to mediate on it, but certainly give it some thought while they look at it.

Rupert: The process of his selection was interesting. There wasn't a contest or any sort of public comparison of artists. He was chosen by a postal art director who found his work. He was then commissioned to do the piece based on some guidelines given to him by Director Antonio Alcalá.

Spears: It's always a team effort. Every illustration is a team effort. In this case my direct team was Antonio and he gave me the directions, which was primarily don't put buildings in unless it's important for them to be there; no wildlife. It had to be a real scene, I couldn't make stuff up. I had to have the right fauna in there and flora. That's pretty much it. And he said just go around the state and we'll see what you've got. He asked for three designs. I initially gave 15, just because I was so excited about it. How could I make that choice?

Rupert: A panel made the final choice based on the preliminary designs. Then Spears was freed to create the piece focusing on the Valley of Fire, an isolated location about 40 miles from Las Vegas in the state's oldest park. Spears had lots of input throughout the process.

Spears: And then it went to more committees and to civilian committees, and to the governor's committee, and the Postmaster General as I understand it. And all of these came back with great input and we arrived at the final design of the stamp. In terms of the complexity of it, it was one of the longer projects I've ever worked on. I don't think I've spent two and a half years on a single image before.

Rupert: The artist embraces the relative obscurity of his name not being on the stamp. Instead the only credit he gets is as part of selva around the stamp that is later discarded.

Spears: In terms of my name being there or not, that's not really important. It's not about me or the name. It's about the stamp and about the state. I embrace the obscurity.

News Roundup

Watkins: And now for a roundup of recent postal news. While National Dog Bite Prevention Week was last month, the Postal Service remains committed to employee safety, especially since more than 5,000 postal employees were attacked last year.

Now that summer weather is here and the kids are out of school, it's important to continue to focus on dog attack prevention and responsible pet ownership.

"There's a myth we often hear at the Postal Service," said Postal Service Manager of Safety Linda DeCarlo. "Don't worry — my dog won't bite. Dog attacks are a nationwide issue and not just a postal problem. Any dog can bite and all attacks are preventable through responsible pet ownership."

Nationwide, 5,581 postal employees were attacked last year. Yet of the 4.5 million Americans bitten by dogs annually, half are children according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Postal Service, the medical community, veterinarians and the insurance industry are working together to educate the public that dog bites are avoidable.

Thanks for listening to *Your Postal Podcast*. Now, we'd like to hear from you. Please email your feedback and story ideas to YourPostalPodcast@USPS.com.

One lucky listener who emails a comment about this month's podcast will be picked at random to receive a digital color postmark keepsake envelope featuring the Ronald Reagan Centennial Forever Stamp, plus a full pane of 20 stamps. The winner will be selected from all qualifying comments emailed to YourPostalPodcast@usps.com by Monday, June 30th, 2014.

Our congratulations go out to John Miller of Reading, Pennsylvania, who emailed us a comment about the May podcast and has won a set of five First Day of Issue digital color postmark keepsake envelopes featuring the New England Coastal Lighthouses Forever Stamps, plus a full pane of 20 stamps.

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