

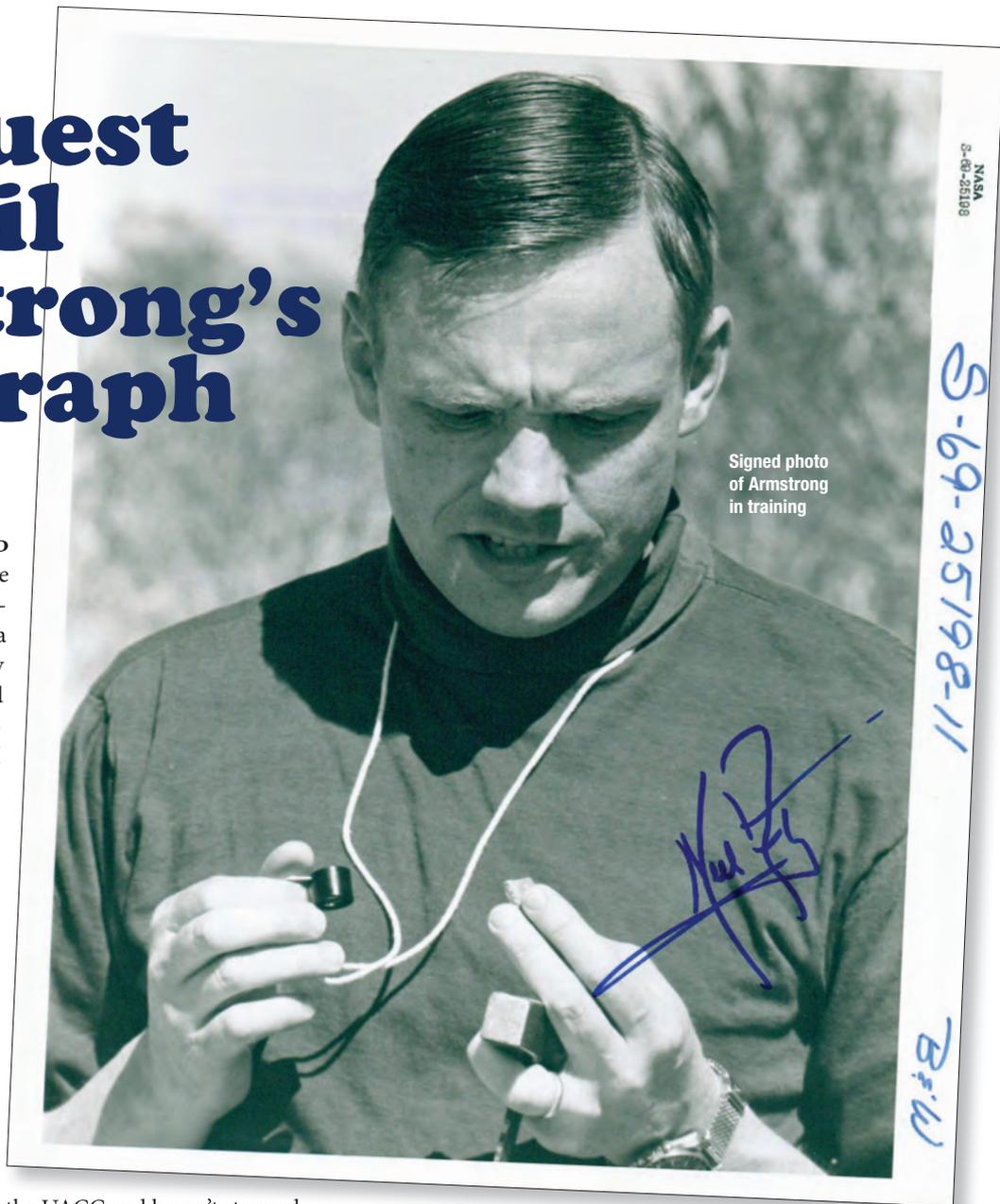
The Quest for Neil Armstrong's Autograph

By Anthony Pizzitola
Vice President, UACC

MY QUEST STARTED in 1979. While browsing in a bookstore, I picked-up a copy of *The Book of Autographs* by Charles Hamilton. The large and impressive Neil Armstrong autograph on page 95 blew me away. I was hooked.

Although I grew up in Houston near NASA, I was not a space enthusiast, much less an autograph collector. But there was something worth investigating in that signature and in autograph collecting. Soon thereafter, *Linn's Stamp News* published an article on the *First Man on the Moon* numbered prints by artist Paul Calle, the lithograph that was the model for the *First Man on the Moon* stamps. I purchased one print for a nominal \$50. In the same year, I joined the UACC and haven't stopped collecting since.

Initial inquiries revealed that Armstrong had left Houston and was no longer a member of the space program. When I asked how
The author with Armstrong in 1992



Signed photo of Armstrong in training

to obtain his autograph, people stared as if I was from the moon. Stories surfaced that he was very private but would honor through the mail. In the early '80s I sent a large matte board that was returned unsigned. But the following day, I received the White Space Suit (WSS) inscribed and autographed in now fading blue ink. Shortly thereafter I sent the *First Man on the Moon* print and it was returned signed in pencil. I was ecstatic and my obsession to surround myself with items from the first man on the moon slipped into high gear.

In 1983, on a trip to the Air and Space Museum I visited the gift shop and was stunned to see a Paul Calle lithograph of Armstrong, signed by Armstrong. It was mine for \$125. Interestingly, these signed prints could never quite sell and the balance of the inventory was eventually purchased by a friend of mine for only \$35 each.

The Elevator Encounter

In the mid-80s, I ventured to NASA and was given numerous photos. I became friends with Mary Lee Meider, the

No. 1 of 1,000 of the First Man on the Moon lithograph signed by Armstrong, Aldrin and Apollo 11 astronaut Michael Collins.



1969 First Man on the Moon

First Man on the Moon - Neil A. Armstrong

Michael Collins T. Buzz Aldrin

Neil A. Armstrong

Neil A. Armstrong
T. Buzz Aldrin
Charles Connerly
Alan Bean
Alan Shepard
Gene Mitchell
Gene Scott
Jim Lovell
John Young
Cliff DeLoach
Gene Cernan
Harrison Schmitt



Sketch of the moon signed by all twelve moon walkers.



Apollo 11 emblem signed by Armstrong and Aldrin

secretary to the astronauts. In one case, I asked for the 'Snoopy' picture, a photo of a smiling Armstrong inside the Eagle. NASA was out of the print but handed me a copy of the negative from which I printed a 16x20. At a 1989 signing for his book *Men from Earth*, Buzz Aldrin was shocked to see the large print of the fa-

mous photo. He carefully examined it and then signed it along with a copy of his book.

That same year NASA held the 20th anniversary of the Moon Landing. It was one of Armstrong's rare appearances. I arrived, bundle of materials to be signed in hand, most importantly the 'Snoopy' picture. Scouting the hotel premises for nearly an hour, I spotted him waiting for an elevator. I joined several collectors on the elevator with Armstrong and impatiently asked for his autograph. He was as shocked as Aldrin at the size of the photo and hesitated. Then he asked my name and provided my first in-person autograph with Armstrong.

The Twelve

There were twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, Hercules had

twelve labors and twelve men walked on the moon. In the mid-80s I embarked on the plan of obtaining autographs from the twelve moon walkers on an 11x14 matte upon which my wife, Lydia, drew a picture of the moon. Alan Shepard and Gene Cernan were easily obtained at Houston area golf tournaments. For the balance of the moon walkers, I used address lists published in the UACC *Pen & Quill*. Where company information was available, I contacted their secretaries in advance.



Close-up of Armstrong's signature on "Snoopy" photo

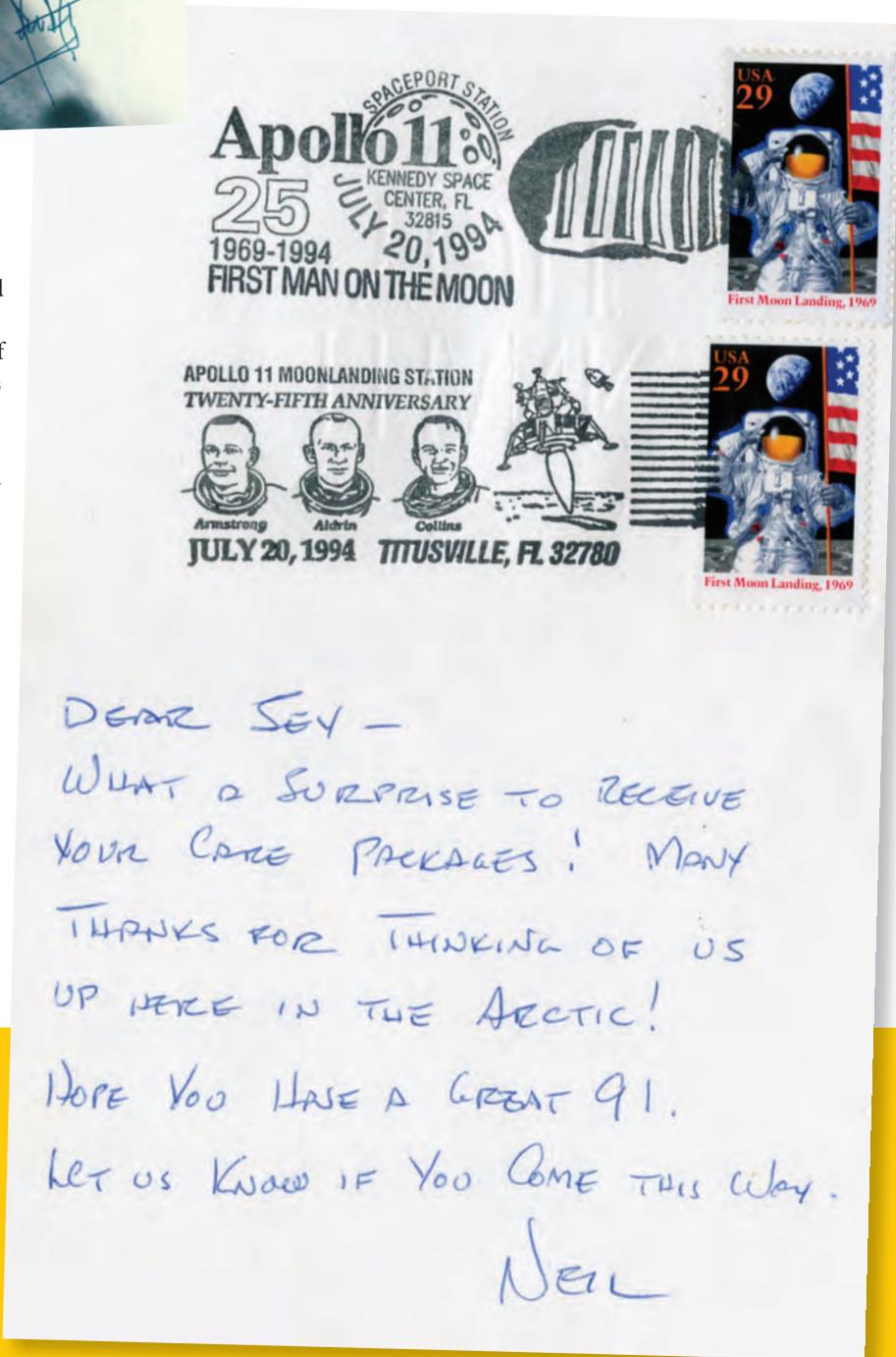
Within a short time, I had the majority of signatures on one dynamic page. Now it was time for Armstrong. A friend at NASA provided his office number and I hesitated for several weeks before calling. Finally, I dialed and waited for a secretary to answer. "Armstrong," announced the voice on the line and I almost dropped the phone. I politely described the item I wished signed and requested his autograph. He asked that I send it with a note *reminding him that we had talked* to his Lebanon post office box. It was returned signed.

The Two-for-One Plan

The Roman philosopher Seneca said, "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." In 1992 and 1993 Armstrong participated in the Doug Sanders Charity Golf Tournaments held in Houston. As the Regional Representative for the UACC, I notified my membership of his presence there.

One Houston mega-collector left a four-letter message on my phone recorder stating that it should have been kept a secret. At the tournaments Armstrong signed "one per customer" with a smile.

This satisfied many collectors, but those who had pursued Armstrong for years (such as myself) were not content to call it a day.



Neil Armstrong Handwriting Analysis

By Arlyn Imberman

These two samples provide insight into how Neil Armstrong views himself, and how he would like to appear to the world.

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Handwritten Note

Neil Armstrong's writing completely fills up the note paper, which reflects his need to control the content and dominate it, almost like taking up the air in the room. His evenly penned lines reflect fine values and principles, and the clarity of the note reflects respect for the reader.

The letter illustrates a pattern of self-containment. It is unpretentious and could be

the writing of an engineer or scientist. The forms are precise, careful, and thoughtful, reflecting the importance of getting his message across to the reader. The spatial arrangement is clear and the implementation of the words shows his perfectionism. He is, by nature, conservative, despite his love for adventure and someone who will take risks, though very calculated ones.

The letters and strong baseline show his

discipline and self-control. Although quick to feel anger and irritation, he is careful to temper his emotions.

Armstrong could have been a fine lawyer, since the use of space on the note paper confirms his ability to negotiate well, leaving opportunities for choices and options. The spatial use also shows his capacity for self-reflection and introspection. He grew up with a strong moral code, which has served him well

My two-for-one plan was conceived and, although physically exhausting, the end result was beyond belief. With a satchel filled with photos, I approached a couple at each hole and asked if they wanted the autograph of the first man on the moon. Who could refuse? I provided two photos if they promised to return one to me as soon as Armstrong left the area. Many of the signatures were rushed but the critical strokes were in place. I also attended the galas in the evenings where I had the opportunity to engage Armstrong in casual conversation and discuss some of the unique items in my collection.

No More After '94

It was announced in 1994 that Armstrong would no longer sign through the mail. I remembered his words after that first telephone conversation—“remind me that we had talked.” And I thought of our discussions at the galas, so I sent him several items in the late '90s and they were returned signed. I am certain that under unique circumstances where the autograph is *not* the perceived objective but the sharing of the historical item *is*, Armstrong will probably sign.

Armstrong has always been uncomfortable with his celebrity status yet realizes that most have never met a modern day Columbus. On August 5, 2009 the first man on the moon will be 79 years old. He believes that everyone was born with a pre-determined number of heart beats. His papers will soon be delivered to his alma mater, Purdue University. In 2000, Armstrong came to Houston to receive the Rotary's highest award. After the ceremony and dinner he remained for more than an hour shaking hands and posing for pictures. With a whisper, he politely refused all autograph requests.



Crew photo signed by Aldrin, Armstrong and Collins

Splashdown!

In January of this year, I journeyed to the Northeast braving a snow and ice storm to purchase a remaining collection of the First Man on the Moon prints including No. 1 of 1,000 signed by Armstrong. Thirty years after my first print purchase, I was in possession of a dream come true. And 30 years after my introduction to the UACC, the UACC will publish the *Neil Armstrong Signature Study*, authored by me, but the brain child of UACC President Michael Hecht.

Where my quest will lead me tomorrow or next year, I don't know, but I can say that the journey has been one of the greatest in my life and I look forward to many more years and more opportunities to cross paths and pens with Neil Armstrong. 🚀

in his endeavors.

All his words begin with large initial letters, which, again, shows his desire to present himself with strength and style despite his introversion. The high “t’s” crossing off the stems in the letter reflect strong energy, and his skill in navigating the pen—as well as a spaceship—is impressive. The letters are written with a minimal effort and no embellishment, revealing his intellect and impatience with all that is extraneous to his objectives.

Signed Index Card

The second signature represents how Armstrong wants to appear to the world. In looking at the three zones (upper, middle, and lower) of his signature, the high look in the “A” in “Armstrong,” reflects pride in his accomplishments. The middle zone reflects



his high intelligence and need for perfection, while the penetrating long lines of the lower zone reflect his appetite for research. Through the paraph (the underline under his name) in the signature, he has created a platform from which he can speak and take off to new and exciting entrepreneurial ventures.

Armstrong's signature is not just a signature, but also a logo. It is easily twice, if not three times the size of his writing print/script,

and, no doubt, a style he developed later in his career. As an introvert, it is his way of receiving attention and recognition, and has become the symbol of his public persona.

The signature is a fascinating way for Armstrong to live out his fantasies. While the writing is certainly earth bound, the signature reaches up into the stratosphere. Look at the disproportionate size of the “N” in “Neil” as compared to the name. While most of us would write the letter “N” in one stroke, he has written it in three, to reflect the breaking of boundaries. Also note that his last name is illegible. In a signature, the first name represents the writer's own identity and achievements, and the last name represents his family or given name.

Armstrong is a cool, calm, and collected creature and an excellent choice to venture into new worlds and unknown territory.