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For Immediate Release
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Subject: Tom Swift 100th Anniversary Convention

Edward Stratemeyer (1862-1930) founded the Stratemeyer Syndicate in 1905. This company acted as a book packager, to use a current phrase, where by he planned out series of books, convinced a publisher to issue them, created outlines for individual titles, and worked with ghostwriters to flesh out these outlines into book-length manuscripts. This work was done on a flat-fee compensation basis with writers assigning all rights for their work to Stratemeyer for sums on the order of \$125. At the time this was equivalent of two month's wages as a newspaper reporter, the most common day job for a Syndicate ghost.

The Syndicate produced many series, both well known and obscure, and these included the Motor Boys, Bobbsey Twins, Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew. During Edward's lifetime, the most popular of these series was Tom Swift, a group of what became forty volumes (1910-1941) about a young inventor who created fabulous vehicles and devices that might change the world. It had 6.5 million copies sold through Grosset & Dunlap by 1934, the same year that Nancy Drew emerged as a better seller than any boys' series. Some examples of Tom's inventions include:

- * a photo telephone booth (1914) which predated Bell Labs' version (1964) by 50 years.
- * a portable electric moving picture camera (1912) capable of working well in low light and running on its own to capture images of animals at night.
- * an attachment to radio to let you see actors on the stage ... in color (1928).
- * a recreational vehicle with all of the comforts of home (1929).
- * a combination aeroplane and dirigible (1910).
- * an electric racing car (1910).
- * a passenger airplane capable of taking passengers from the east to west coast in daylight hours (1926).

From the beginning the books had an explicit goal of enticing readers to enter into fields of invention and engineering so that they could help to shape the future of fields like "land and sea locomotion." Perhaps it was not fully anticipated at the time but a large percentage of Tom's inventions were aircraft of one type or another.

Many young readers were so influenced and among certain generations of American's, Tom Swift reading is a common thread for cultivating their interests in science, engineering, aviation, or invention. Of course, reading Tom Swift also influenced writers to engage in their craft such as Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Clive Cussler, Harper Lee (TS is mentioned in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*), and many others.

There have been five Tom Swift series with 105 volumes in the past 100 years. The Tom Swift Jr. series (1954-1971) of 33 volumes is particularly popular among the post-WWII Baby Boom generation. Some of the readers of these books became inventors and innovators of the computer generation. Both Bill Gates and Steve Wozniak have cited Tom Swift [Jr.] as an inspiration to them.

With such an important influence, it seems appropriate to mark the significant 100th anniversary with a convention where like-minded people can gather and find common ground with their youthful reading of one of the Tom Swift series.

Our event will span three days. Friday July 16 will be a tour of two museums (Automotive and Air & Space in Balboa Park), a stop at the Hotel del Coronado (where Stratemeyer stayed in 1915 during a visit to the Panama-California Exposition in Balboa Park), and UCSD Geisel library. At the latter we will explore an exhibit on Tom Swift that is available for viewing in June and July. We will also see a live performance in the form of a radio drama based on one of the Tom Swift Jr. books, *Tom Swift and the Visitor from Planet X* (1961). This story is volume 17 of the second series and provides the climax of Tom Jr. and Tom Sr.' communication with an extraterrestrial civilization who sends messages to the Swifts via images and mathematical symbols beamed via radio waves and displayed on an oscillograph device for translation. This show will use three or four voice actors plus live sound effects using various mechanical devices.

The Saturday and Sunday portions (July 17-18) at the Sheraton Mission Valley hotel will include about 14 presentations on a wide range of Tom Swift topics. There will also be sale tables, a silent auction, and historical displays. These will include displays of old chemistry sets, scarce or unique Tom Swift collectibles, and items related to the attempts to make Tom Swift films or television programs. A highlight of these displays is a large wicker open cockpit from a full-scale airship built for a Twentieth Century-Fox film attempt of 1966-69.

After the Saturday sessions will be a dinner at the hotel. That will be followed by another live radio show based on one of the first five books of the series published in July 1910, *Tom Swift and His Airship*. In this story, Tom builds an interesting craft named the Red Cloud which is a combination of an airplane and an airship. Tom's vehicles are seldom limited by compromises of engineering. They are always bigger and faster than anything you can find in the "real world" and provide all of the comforts of home while traveling to exotic locales.

Our 14 scheduled presentations include a wide range of Tom Swift topics:

- * Stratemeyer Syndicate and Tom Swift 101 (Keeline)
- * The "Science" of Geology in the Tom Swift Sr. Series; or, A Highly Selective, Sometimes Humorous, and not Too Rigorous Investigation (Dixon)
- * Growing Up When Tom Swift Jr. Was New (Baumann)
- * Writing Tom Swift Fan Fiction Roundtable (Baumann, Cooper, Dickerson, Hudson, Wolff (video))
- * Tom Swift's Successors: 1950s TV Space Heroes (Berkwits)
- * The Science behind Tom Swift Tech (Campbell)
- * Unanswered Questions in the Tom Swift Jr. series (Cooper)
- * Growing Up with Victor Appleton II (Dickerson, Lawrence (video))
- * How Tom Swift Invented Everything (Dombi)
- * How an Asteroid was Named "Tom Swift" (Peter & Robert Jedicke (video))
- * A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words: The Artists of Tom Swift (Keeline)
- * Tom Swift on the Silver Screen (Keeline)
- * "It's my Centennial," said Tom Swiftly (Lederer)
- * Writing Tom Swift in the 1980s and 1990s (Vardeman)

A Tom Swift convention on this scale has never been tried before. A group of a dozen collectors met last year less formally as a planning and kickoff meeting for the centennial event.

We have had some good publicity for this event. This includes a half-page article in *Sci Fi Magazine* (Apr 2010), Twitter tweets (short text messages broadcast to followers) by Roger Ebert (film critic) and Stan Lee (creator of Spiderman). On Monday (June 14) we had a blog entry by Nicholas Basbanes, bibliophile and author of *A Gentle Madness* and several other books of interest to advanced or aspiring book collectors.

Information and registration pages may be found on the convention web site (<http://www.TomSwiftEnterprises.com>). There are separate charges for the convention itself (one or both days), the Friday tour, and the Saturday dinner.

There is also a quantity of licensed Tom Swift and Tom Swift Jr. merchandise being produced by Cafe Press (shirts, magnets, decorative tile boxes, etc. on <http://www.CafePress.com/TS100>) and Lulu. One of the print-on-demand books from Lulu will be the *Tom Swift Guide to Life* by James and Kim Keeline which pulls adages and advice from the books. This color-illustrated book will be available in hardcover and paperback. Other books will likely be offered if they are completed on time.

Since James and Kim Keeline own the original blueprints and surviving parts from the full-scale airships built for the Twentieth-Century-Fox film attempt, they will display some of the smaller pieces at the convention. They have also commissioned a 16" wood desktop model of this airship design.

This promises to be an interesting and exciting once-in-a-century event. One of our likely participants is Steve Wozniak who says he "intends to attend" provided he can clear some conflicts from his schedule.

Help Tom Swift enter a new century by attending the 100th Anniversary Tom Swift Convention.

100th Anniversary Tom Swift Convention (July 16-18, San Diego)
<http://TomSwiftEnterprises.com> <http://www.CafePress.com/TS100>