

[INCREDIBLY] GOOD READING FOR PYROS

Encyclopedic Dictionary of Pyrotechnics (and Related Subjects), CD Edition 1.0, Journal of Pyrotechnics, 2012.

It's finally here. After years of work by the Kosanke, Sturman and Winokur and over 100 authors, shepherded by Bonnie Kosanke, the E. D. of P. has landed. And this is a splash that should be seen throughout the world of pyrotechnics. It's monumental, it's thorough, and it's impressive. And it's available only on CD (for now).

What can you say about an "encyclopedic dictionary"? The cast of characters is non-existent, the plot is really missing a lot, and the climax – well, it ends in Z. Of course we don't expect a dictionary to have a plot but we do expect it to have a lot of words, the kind we need to know about when we need to know. OK, but how about the encyclopedic part? It is really an encyclopedia? That's an adjective, not a noun, right? In this case, let's see what Webster says:

- A *dictionary* is a reference book about words.
- An *encyclopedia* is a work that contains comprehensive information about a particular branch of knowledge.
- *Encyclopedic* means a method of treating a subject suggesting an encyclopedia.

And so we have a dictionary about words used in pyrotechnics, produced as a comprehensive work, with illustrations.

There is so much information crammed into these pages that it actually occupies three volumes, at over 1,200 full size pages. Those three volumes offer definitions, explanations and illustrations of more than 4,600 entries, along with more than 3,300 cross-references, abbreviations and symbols). You'll also find 3,000 photographs and illustrations, 600 pyrotechnic formulations and 500 tables. Some of the entries occupy more than a page in length.

Speaking of size, if you think about it you will realize that having a book of 1,200 pages would be one big pain in the neck to use, hence the designers' choice of presenting the information in three volumes. Having those three produced as hard cover books, with color printing, is an expense that would probably never be recovered by the producer, or would be too expensive for potential readers to buy, with very few exceptions. For this reason the decision was made to finalize this version and get it into distribution now, and the only way to do that is digitally as a CD disc. We've been told that the discs are in stock, ready for mailing to buyers. The announced cost is \$30, which includes shipping and handling. At this point it's being offered by Journal of Pyrotechnics (see their ad elsewhere in this issue) and must be done using PayPal. JOP's Bonnie Kosanke says she is working on a plan to have other vendors offer it for sale and that should make it easier for buyers without PayPal capability.

So how does it work? When my computer accepted the disc there was a considerable delay as it churned through this incredible mass of data and finally offered a menu that contained only one choice – present the contents so the viewer can select volume 1, 2 or 3. It took me a minute or so to realize that on my particular computer it was a right-click that got things moving. The files are in Adobe Acrobat format so a recent version of Reader is needed. Most computers today are so equipped and if not, the software's latest version is a free download at many sites.

Once the files got moving I was presented with eight cover and explanation pages, which were not all that annoying to read for a project of this complexity. Then, there it was – the dictionary itself. Volume #1 covers A through E; volume #2 covers F to O; volume #3 finishes with P to Z.

The work is stunning. I just wanted to click each and every page because I found details and explanations of pyro words that I may have used in my work but was not really sure of what they meant. But after 30 or 40 pages I realized that I'd probably not make it through 1,200 pages, so then I switched to scanning. That didn't work either because I kept stopping at too many entries.

The work is monumental. It's significance to the pyrotechnic world is past superlatives. I predict that it will be used by generations yet unborn until some dim time in the future historians will still find it immensely useful.