



This is also being called "STS-26...A NEW BEGINNING." All new booster rockets are working in a superior fashion, after a complete revision as a result of the Challenger tragedy. And the new engines are performing in excess of the tolerance needed for an actual flight. The satellite TDRS, which will be launched into space from Discovery during the four-day mission is being loaded now into the spacecraft.

Discovery is on the KSC launch pad and all things are go. In the next several days NASA will give a firm launch date. And we will be here to send information to you on all of the space-setting events that will take place during this historic flight.

There have been a number of important events already for this mission that gets the U. S. back into space and we are sending this information to you now. All of these events were commemorated by SCCS covers and some of them are in short supply. This is especially true of the set of five covers issued on January 9, 1987 when NASA named the crew of 5 for Discovery's STS-26 mission.

Due to the importance of this mission and selection of crew members, we serviced covers for each of the individual crew members, just as we did for STS-1 through 4. Each cover contains background information about the individual astronaut, along with his picture in the cachet. As we said when this original information was sent out in 1987..."This is going to be a set of covers that newer collectors will be looking for when the first post-accident flight of Discovery takes place in 1988." That has proved to be true as in the past 19 months since those five covers were issued, collectors, who have found out about them, have been ordering.

Recently, due to our diminishing supply, this set has been selling for \$17.50 (\$3.50 per covers). Since this mailing is going to you that have helped in our past SCCS cover program, we are making a special offer to you of only \$10.00 per set of five. For you that might wish to send the covers to NASA-JSC for autographing, there might still be time before the mission, but this we cannot guarantee. And we cannot guarantee that the covers will be returned...sooner or later. All we can do is to give you the address as to where to send them at JSC. And we will do our best to get this set out to you by return mail after picking up our orders at the Houston post office.

OTHER IMPORTANT NASA EVENTS THAT LED UP THIS 1988 MISSION

- MAR 10, 1986 NASA selects the first nine post-Challenger accident shuttle missions with the first launch to be that of Discovery's STS-26 flight.
- MAY 15, 1986 NASA announces that the Discovery STS-26 flight will carry a Tracking and Data Relay Satellite, like the one destroyed with the Challenger explosion.
- OCT 3, 1986 James Fletcher and Richard Truly release a schedule for the launch dates of 30 shuttle flights, along with the major cargos, and the first post-accident mission to be made by Discovery on February 18, 1988. (This schedule for Discovery was not met and it will not be launched until late September or early October 1988, but this cover is important to the space cover collector).
- MAR 29 & 30, 1988 FIRST FULL SIMULATION FOR DISCOVERY. This was performed at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. It lasted 32 hours, beginning at 9:00 a.m. CST on March 29. Participating in the SIM were the five crew members of STS-26, along with the men and women in Mission Control who will have charge of the up-coming space flight of Discovery. This was the first full simulation involving all of these participants and the first one to use the flight software that will be utilized in the actual flight. This SIM was also nationally televised by a CBS crew led by Dan Rather and the eyes of the nation were focused on all that took place during this two day event. The SCCS has a set of two covers, one for each of the two days of the SIM.
- MAY 4 & 6, 1988 NEW SHUTTLE ESCAPE SYSTEM Rookie astronauts successfully rehearsed escape systems that would be used in case of a space shuttle launch emergency. The May 4 tests were for a launch pad fire or explosion and the May 6 tests were for the event to be utilized to rescue astronauts from a shuttle that had crash-landed near the runway.

All of the above covers are hand cancelled on the correct dates with the Houston MPP hand cancel. (The SCCS has postal permit #1). And for most of the covers we were able to use space stamps but cannot guarantee that all covers will be furnished with them. We will use the covers with the space stamps in filling the orders first, so if you order soon we will try to see that you get such covers. We will fill the orders in the rotation as received.

SPACE SHUTTLE ATLANTIS ON THE LAUNCH PAD IN 1986

The next flight after the STS-26 Discovery mission will be made by shuttle Atlantis. Since the Challenger explosion, it has already been busy and in late 1986, it was used for "hands-on" simulations on the launch pad by NASA astronauts and JSC Mission Control.

On October 9, 1986 Atlantis was mounted on launch pad 39B at Cape Canaveral. It stayed there for seven weeks for dozens of tests that needed to be performed successfully before the STS-26 mission could be made. Included in these tests were a practice countdown with a crew of five astronauts on board and an emergency escape drill in which seven astronauts pretended to be injured, requiring evacuation from the shuttle on the launch pad. After completion of the tests, Atlantis was moved back from the launch pad to the Vehicle Assembly Building, on November 20, 1986.

CREW CHOSEN FOR COUNTDOWN DEMONSTRATION TESTS. On October 17, 1986 NASA announced the crew of five for these important tests aboard Atlantis. They were: Robert L. Gibson, commander; Charles F. Bolden, pilot; and mission specialists Franklin R. Chang-Diaz; Steven A. Hawley and George D. Nelson. This is the same crew that flew on Columbia's 61-C mission (January 12-18, 1986) the final completed shuttle mission before Challenger's 51-L tragic ending.

CREW CHOSEN FOR EMERGENCY ESCAPE TESTS. The crew of seven for these emergency escape tests was also selected by NASA on October 17, 1986. The seven were: Frank L. Culbertson, commander; Stephen S. Oswald, pilot; mission specialists G. David Low, Carl J. Meade and Kathryn C. Thornton. Joining them are payload specialists Jerome Apt and Pierre J. Thuot. None of these seven has flown the shuttle in space.

COUNTDOWN DEMONSTRATION TESTS The crew of five astronauts left Houston on November 17, 1986 and arrived at Canaveral shortly thereafter. They began the Countdown Demonstration Tests the next day. Participating in these was Shuttle Mission Control at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. We have a cover for each of the two days.

EMERGENCY ESCAPE TESTS The crew of seven astronauts left Houston on November 17, 1986 and arrived at Canaveral shortly thereafter. They began the Emergency Escape Tests on November 20, 1986. Participating in these was Shuttle Mission Control at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. We have a cover for each of these two days.

ASTRONAUTS RESUME "FLIGHTS" IN
SIMULATED SPACE SHUTTLE MISSION

Mission 61-H was supposed to have launched on June 24, 1986 but when Challenger, on its 51-L mission, was destroyed, it left this 61-H mission in limbo. However, on October 29, 1986, this same five astronaut-crew-members began the first lengthy simulation of a shuttle mission since the Challenger accident.

The simulation began at the Johnson Space Center at 9:09 a.m. on October 29, 1986 and ended the next day at 5:00 p.m. This simulation covered the first 32 hours of mission 61-H, including the "launches" of two satellites. One simulated launch was for SKYNET (a British military communication satellite) and the other for PALAPA, an Indonesian communication satellite.

The 61-H crew members (originally chosen on January 29, 1985) for this mission simulation were: Michael L. Coats, commander; John E. Blaha, pilot; and mission specialists James P. Buchli, Anna Fisher and Robert C. Springer.

This first lengthy simulation had its start in training on February 3, 1986. On that date astronauts at the Johnson Space Center resumed their training, which had been halted right after the accident of Challenger on January 28, 1986. With this re-start in February, no on-orbit training or activities for a specific mission were practiced, but involved only basic shuttle skills, launches, and re-entries. So this 61-H simulation was a first and the re-start of specific flight training.

SCCS COVERS FOR 61-H

- + Crew of five chosen on January 29, 1985.
- + Astronaut training re-start at JSC on February 3, 1986.
- + Crew of 61-H holds a two-day mission simulation at JSC (set of two) first on beginning day (October 29, 1986 and second cover on ending day (October 30).
- + Simulated launch of British SKYNET satellite (October 29, 1986)
- + Simulation of launch of Indonesian PALAPA satellite (October 29, 1986).
- + Double cancelled cover for 61-H. First cancel is January 29, 1985, date the crew was originally chosen. Second cancel is January 28, 1986, day that the loss of Challenger halted America's space program and aborted the 61-H flight.

All of these covers for 61-H are MPP hand cancelled on correct dates.

Dear Space Cover Collector:

A PREDICTION???? WE HOPE IT'S JUST SOUND ADVISE

With over twenty years of experience in producing space covers for collectors, the SCCS does feel that we have learned what collectors want. While some cover producers, since the Challenger accident, have said, "Nothing is happening," that is not true and we believe that the covers listed in this mailing are going to be in the group that other collectors will soon be "scrambling for." Here are some of the reasons on which this statement is based:

- (1) Have you seen covers for all of the events noted in this mailing from other cover producers?
- (2) True, some collectors have "put their collection aside" since January 28, 1986. They may have succumbed to the erroneously advice of "nothing is happening." But those that stayed active and received these covers are not going to have to try to find them at a later date.
- (3) The SCCS, to our knowledge, is the only producer that commemorated all of the events noted in this bulletin.
- (4) The covers noted in this bulletin will close the gap for you for these events between the explosion of Challenger and the launch date of Discovery in just a few short weeks.

HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO "CLOSE THE GAP"

This mailing is being made to you that have previously taken part in the SCCS cover program but who did not order these covers when previously offered. For your convenience we have put these in the three enclosed order forms which will make it easier in making your selection.

If you wish to purchase an amount over your cover budget...no problem. Just send in the order with your partial payment and let us know when you will send in the balance. The arrangements are made by you. And whatever you arrange is alright with us. We will immediately send all of your ordered covers go you, so that you can add them to your collection now.

And now that we are about to see one space shuttle back into orbit, please accept a big THANK YOU from the Space City Cover Society for your past loyalty. We dedicate our work of over twenty years of producing space covers to you and the many friendly collectors like you.