

There is still an outside chance that Space Shuttle Columbia will launch the latter part of 1980 according to NASA officials. If it does, and even when it does...be prepared for an immediate upsurge in space cover collecting. Right now space cover collecting is like a sleeping giant, slightly stirring, just before being wide awake. And presently a lot of space covers are being produced in very small quantities and when the RUSH begins...sit back and smile; smile that is if you are one of the select few that have been collecting these covers for the past couple of years. If you are, you will avoid the impossible task of filling in many missing gaps. We believe that the following two groups of covers will be in that category.

3,122 applications for 10 to 20 jobs

February 22, 1980

Screening of astronaut hopefuls to begin

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration will begin screening some 100 astronaut candidates Monday in an effort to trim the group of hopefuls to the number needed for future space shuttle flights.

Twenty applicants will report to Johnson Space Center on Monday for one week of interviews and physical examinations. Four members of the first group are women.

During a recruitment drive last year, NASA received 3,122 applications from men and women interested in securing between 10 and 20 future astronaut positions.

NASA spokesman Terry White said 2,759 persons applied for mission specialist or systems engineer positions aboard the shuttle, while 488 persons sought pilot positions. Some individuals applied for both positions.

All of the group reporting Monday are mission specialist applicants.

An astronaut selection board is scheduled to screen the groups of 20 each week for about the next six weeks.

The final group chosen by the selection board will return to JSC in July to begin a year of training.

The recruitment drive, which began Oct. 1, 1979, and ended Dec. 1, 1979, is NASA's second such effort. NASA select-

ed 35 astronaut candidates in 1978. The first flight of the space shuttle is scheduled later this year or early next year.

Pay for the astronaut civilian positions ranges from \$20,611 to \$34,714 annually.

As we did for the previous groups of Astronaut Applicants, we will prepare commemorative covers for this new series. There will be a total of six covers, one for each group of approximately 18 to 20 candidates. The first one will be postmarked Houston February 25, 1980...the reporting date of the first group to the Johnson Space Center. All covers will have a matching cachet and postmarked with the Mailer's Postmark (Permit #1) hand cancel. Delivery of the set of six will be about two weeks after the sixth group reports to JSC. The schedule now calls for that being about the middle of April.

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One of the main reasons for delay in the first orbital flight of Space Shuttle is a sub-par situation in regards to the ceramic-based tiles which cover the orbiter. Their function is to protect it from intense heat during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere. Tests are being done on two different type of aircraft at Edwards AFB, California. These flown missions will pin-point specific defects and will enable NASA to make correct decisions in how to eliminate those defects.

On October 3, 1979 Bill Dana flew an F-104 in the Pre-Test Shuttle Tile Test. Two different flights were made on that day; one lasting 2 hours 40 minutes and the other lasting 1 hour 35 minutes. It consisted of preliminary approach and landing studies in preparation for actual tile tests. We offer this cover for October 3 plus the next four tests in a set only @ \$4.75 per set. This is SCARCE and the SCCS produced only 250 sets.