



# Space Log

Vol 9 No 2

November 1979

## NASA LOCAL POST "EXTREMELY URGENT" MAIL

NASA Local Post issues have been around since February 20, 1967. Our first one was a sheet of nine 5¢ "stamps" for the fifth anniversary of John Glenn's Mercury flight. The locals were used on cover for that issue and many other issues have followed it. NASA Local Post has become known as what must be "the longest active local post for space events."

Even so, the local post covers had to have a U. S. stamp and U. S. postmark. The locals themselves were considered "cinderallas" material.

Now, that has changed.

Starting November 26, 1979, the U. S. Postal Service relaxed its first-class mail monopoly. It now allows delivery by private carriers of "extremely urgent" letters.

In the October 24, 1979 issue of The Federal Register, the text was given on the final ruling of this partial suspension of the Private Express Statutes for "extremely urgent" mail. The ruling states, "The suspension is available only if the value or usefulness of the letter would be lost or greatly diminished if it is not delivered within these time limits:

- (a) For letters dispatched within 50 miles of the intended destination, delivery of those dispatched by noon must be completed within six hours or by the close of the addressee's normal business hours that day, whichever is later, and delivery of those dispatched after noon and before midnight must be completed by 10 a.m. of the addressee's next business day.
- (b) For other letters, delivery must be completed within 12 hours or by noon of the addressee's next business day.

If the U. S. Postal Service was going to lose any business by this relaxed ruling, then the service would have to be paid for at prices that would not appear cheap. However, if the needed service is available now through a private carrier, and a guarantee given for that service, then the fee in actuality would not be considered "high." The "cost factor" in the new ruling is:

"It will be conclusively presumed that a letter is extremely urgent and is covered by the suspension if the amount paid for private carriage of the letter is at least \$3.00 or twice the applicable U. S. postage for first-class mail (including Priority Mail), whichever is greater."

Even though this new relaxation of the U. S. Postal Service's controlled mail handling monopoly is of importance, it is not the first time. In recent years we have three others; (1) allowing letters to a cargo shipment to accompany the parcel, (2) provisions for mail which is vital to certain data processing operations to be privately carried, and (3) private carriage of the mails during the recent postal strike.

It has been concluded that this latest ruling will have an impact on mail service, but it will have to be on a wait-and-see basis as to what extent. The U. S. Postal Service has noted that "caution was required to insure that any relaxation of the Statues did not jeopardize the universal system in the United States."

The USPS has also stressed that it will "protect the postal system against the inroads of 'cream skimming' by private carriers solely on the basis of their ability to undercut postal rates selectively."

### HOW THIS AFFECTS NASA LOCAL POST

There is no ruling that a private carrier stamp for "extremely urgent" mail is required, but it seemed a natural for NASA Local Post to use such stamps to commemorate people and events connected with the space program. Since the minimum rate for a letter is \$3.00, then each stamp would have to have at least that denomination. But there is no ruling that specifies that the stamp would have to be sold to collectors at that price. And NASA Local Post does not intend to. We will continue to make these available at only a few cents each. This way there would never be a hardship on any collector that wanted to add the issues to his or her collection.

The U. S. Postal Service will require that "record-keeping be maintained to document actual delivery within a tight and defined time frame." This, NASA Local Post will comply with. Even though a \$3.00 NASA Local Post Private Carrier stamp would be furnished to a collector at a nominal price, that stamp could not be used for service in the future unless the full fee were to be paid. In order to comply with the necessary record-keeping, NASA Local Post would require that if a stamp is wanted on a privately carried letter, then it would have to be purchased at the time NLP receives the letter. It would be applied to the face of the letter and immediately postmarked. The needed additional remarks would also be rubber-stamped on the face of the letter at that time.

SCCS PRIVATE EXPRESS MAIL NEW ISSUES

As far as practical, all NLP new issues will be printed in sheets of six to ten stamps, according to the size and event. These will be issued to collectors in a booklet style. There will be one booklet pane of the stamps included in each booklet; the outer covers will have background information printed on them that pertains to the event. The booklets will be sold to collectors at about 60¢ to 90¢ each, according to the issue. These prices will be adhered to as long as inflation allows it. The main idea will be to get a collectable item to interested collectors and at a reasonable cost. In this way the issues can be used publicizing the U. S. space program, the past, present and the future events. Many "experts in science" today exhort the fact that our future may well depend on how well we develop and use outer space. We may truly be entering upon a new age...that of space and our dependence and utilization of it...and hopefully in a peaceful way.

SCCS PRIVATE EXPRESS MAIL FIRST DAY COVERS

These will be made available to collectors and at a nominal cost of about 60¢ each. Since the duty will already have been performed and the stamps cancelled on the first day of issue, there will be no need to charge a higher price for them. Again, the goal is to get the covers to interested collectors in the most economical way for them. This will be one stamp-issuing entity that will always maintain the lowest possible price and not the highest possible one.

SPACE CITY COURIER SERVICE

Our identification by the "SCCS", mark, which has been used on our covers produced by the Space City Cover Society for some time now, will be retained. Since the private courier service has been set up under the name of "Space City Courier Service," those initials are still applicable. The Space City Courier Service has been registered at the Harris County (of Texas) Courthouse in Houston. And the Space City Courier Service has been designated as the only other authorized user of the NASA Local Post; the other being the Space City Cover Society.

ISSUE NUMBER ONE OF THE SCCS PRIVATE EXPRESS MAIL ISSUES

Private delivery of "extremely urgent" letters had its first day of service on November 26, 1979. For this new change in delivery of first-class mail, the NASA Local Post sheet of ten Apollo 11 "stamps" was surcharged by hand-stamp in red ink with the new value of \$3.00. Since that sheet has two design varieties (se-tenant) in it, one of each was used on a cover as well as the se-tenant pair on one cover. These covers were postmarked with the NASA Local Post hand-cancel in black ink on November 26, 1979. This was not only the first day of service for this new type of mail delivery, but also the first day of the first issue of the SCCS new type of service stamps.

The special mark of SCCS is on each cover and this issue is designated as the "Cachet #1" in the SCCS Private Express mail. This is shown in the cachet. Additional rubber stamped markings appear on the covers. One is a two-line marking in green ink reading, "This letter delivered by NASA Local Post with minimum service fee of \$3.00 charged." The other two line marking is in red ink and reads, "EXTREMELY URGENT Must be delivered by 5:00 p.m. of postmarked date."

\*\*\*\*\*

SPACE SHUTTLE FLIGHTS BOOKED THROUGH 1984

NASA has firm payload commitments for the first 37 operational Space Shuttle flights beginning in 1981. The Shuttle is thus almost completely booked through early 1984. The 47 payloads supported by these flights represent commitments by 14 government, commercial and foreign users, and range from the European Space Agency's Spacelab to weather, communication and navigation satellites.

NASA payloads are expected to account for 32% of these payloads, the Department of Defense about 15% and all other users about 53%. These payloads normally are assigned to flights on a first come first served basis. However, missions that involve national security will be given priority, as well as missions with significant scientific and technological objectives or time-critical launch windows. Flights for which NASA will be fully reimbursed also will be given preference over routine scientific and technological experiments.

A range of services are available to Shuttle users. Standard services, which are uniform for all non-government users, include a basic Shuttle launch for a one-day mission with a standard orbital altitude and inclination, three person crew and standard support services. Optional services are available at extra cost upon request. These services could include special hardware, analysis and testing, use of Kennedy Space Center facilities and services, and special orbital operations such as extra-vehicular activity and longer duration missions.

In addition to the 47 large payloads that will occupy much or all of the Shuttle's cargo bay, more than 200 organizations and individuals have reserved room for some 300 small self-contained payloads, called Getaway Specials. These universities, companies and researchers, for \$3,000 to \$10,000 will send their own 200-pound or less payload into orbit aboard Shuttle. These Getaway Specials must be of research and development nature.

The Shuttle's first payload, one of three preliminary payloads scheduled to fly before the Shuttle becomes operational, will ride the second orbital flight test scheduled for next year. Named OSTA-1 for NASA's Office of Space and Terrestrial Applications, the payload will consist of six Earth-sensing experiments designed to enable scientists to pinpoint natural resources and to study air pollution, lighting and ways to locate and track surface features and clouds. The payload will include also a life sciences experiment designed as a prototype for an experiment to be flown aboard the Spacelab, a pressurized manned orbiting laboratory designed to fit in the payload bay.