

# Space Log



## SPACE CITY COVER SOCIETY

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MISSION 61-C BULLETIN

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### MISSION 61-C THE FINAL COMPLETED MISSION BEFORE THE TRAGEDY OF CHALLENGER

The 61-C mission of Columbia was historic in two very large ways. First, it was the final completed mission for a space shuttle before the tragedy of Challenger. And second, it was the first shuttle to be renovated and to fly again. After its flight in December 1983, it was ordered back to the factory for an 18-month overhaul. It went back to the Rockwell International Shuttle manufacturing plant in Palmdale, California.

At Palmdale, hundreds of modifications were made. Then in late 1985 it was transferred back to the Kennedy Space Center for a scheduled flight in December 1985. But because it has been out of service so long, Columbia was put through a three-day "launch confidence test" that ended on Dec 1, 1985.

Launch for mission 61-C and the first "re-flight" of Columbia did not come easily. After an unprecedented seven delays, and a month of trying, Columbia climbed from the launch pad at KSC on January 12, 1986 at 6:55 a.m. EST. It carried the youngest crew of astronauts to fly on shuttle and Gibson as the youngest shuttle flight commander. The crew was: Robert L. Gibson, commander; Charles F. Bolden, Jr., pilot; mission specialists Franklin R. Chang-Diaz, Steven A. Hawley, and George D. Nelson; and payload specialists Robert J. Cenker and Congressman Bill Nelson.

During the mission, Columbia performed flawlessly, and the crew successfully launched a commercial satellite for RCA. But experiments did not go as well. Photography of Halley's comet was done but a key piece of equipment failed to work despite two attempts at repair. A new device to carry experiments in the payload bay worked fine; the experiments did not.

The flight was originally scheduled for five days but officials ordered the craft home a day early. After some delays in flight, however, the craft came home a day later than planned and had to land in California rather than at the Kennedy Space Center. The landing was at Edwards on January 18, 1986 at 5:59 a.m. PST.

#### SCCS MISSION COVERS

As we have done on all past Space Shuttle missions, the SCCS has produced three different sets of covers for the launch and landing events. The first set of two has a launch cover machine cancelled at KSC on launch date. The landing cover in that set is machine cancelled at Edwards on landing date. Then, from the site of Shuttle Mission Control in Houston, we have two different sets of two. The first set is machine cancelled on launch date and landing dates. The second set is cancelled on launch date and landing date with the MPP hand cancel. (The SCCS has Houston permit #1 for the MPP hand cancel). The cachet for the three sets gives complete detailed information, with illustration.

(over)

RCA SATCOM K-1 LAUNCH FROM 61-C...This was the second of a planned fleet of three communications satellites operating in the Ku-band of the spectrum. It was launched successfully late during the first day of the 61-C mission. These RCA SATCOM satellites are designed to provide coverage to the continental 48 states or to either the eastern half or western half. Our cover is cancelled on launch date of the satellite (Jan 12, 1986).

CHAMP (COMET HALLEY ACTIVE MONITORING PROGRAM...Due to the tragedy of Challenger on January 28, 1986, the March 1986 flight of Columbia was grounded. It was on that upcoming flight that much CHAMP work was to be accomplished. As it turned out, the photographs taken on the 61-C mission would be the only completed Comet Halley photography done from space shuttle. Even though the equipment was not fully working, photos were taken on four days of the 61-C mission. We have a set of four covers for this final and only CHAMP investigations from shuttle. The dates are January 13, 14, 15 and 16, 1986. We offer these covers in a set of four, each correctly cancelled on each date with the MPP hand cancel.

MSL-2 (MATERIALS SCIENCE LABORATORY)...This is a new payload carrier developed for the Materials Science Laboratory program. This facility allows economical use of Shuttle Orbiter Vehicles for materials science processing. This MSL-2 is composed of an MSL carrier and three experiments and is managed by the Marshall Space Flight Center. Our SCCS cover is hand cancelled with MPP cancel on January 12, 1986, launch date of 61-C and cachet illustrates the position of MSL-2 in Columbia's payload bay.

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Enclosed is an order form for all of the covers detailed on this issue. With the 61-C mission being the final one for shuttle for quite some time, we feel that these covers are more important than usual.

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A RECAP OF ALL COMPLETED SPACE SHUTTLE MISSIONS:

Flight #	Launch	Landing	Shuttle Orbiter
STS-1	Apr 12, 1981	Apr 14, 1981	Columbia
STS-2	Nov 12, 1981	Nov 14, 1981	Columbia
STS-3	Mar 22, 1982	Mar 30, 1982	Columbia
STS-4	Jun 17, 1982	Jul 4, 1982	Columbia
STS-5	Nov 11, 1982	Nov 16, 1982	Columbia
STS-6	Apr 4, 1983	Apr 9, 1983	Challenger
STS-7	Jun 18, 1983	Jun 24, 1983	Challenger
STS-8	Aug 30, 1983	Sep 5, 1983	Challenger
STS-9	Nov 28, 1983	Dec 8, 1983	Columbia
41-B	Feb 3, 1984	Feb 11, 1984	Challenger
41-C	Apr 6, 1984	Apr 13, 1984	Challenger
41-D	Aug 30, 1984	Sep 5, 1984	Discovery
41-G	Oct 5, 1984	Oct 13, 1984	Challenger
51-A	Nov 8, 1984	Nov 16, 1984	Discovery
51-C	Jan 24, 1985	Jan 27, 1985	Discovery
51-D	Apr 12, 1985	Apr 19, 1985	Discovery
51-B	Apr 29, 1985	May 6, 1985	Challenger
51-G	Jun 17, 1985	Jun 24, 1985	Discovery
51-F	Jul 29, 1985	Aug 6, 1985	Challenger
51-I	Aug 27, 1985	Sep 3, 1985	Discovery
51-J	Oct 3, 1985	Oct 7, 1985	Atlantis
61-A	Oct 30, 1985	Nov 6, 1985	Challenger
61-B	Nov 26, 1985	Dec 3, 1985	Atlantis
61-C	Jan 12, 1986	Jan 18, 1986	Columbia
51-L	Jan 28, 1986	*	Challenger (*) Exploded/Launch

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