

FORECAST OF UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES -- FEBRUARY 2011

105 Years Ago -- 1906

February 7: Birthday of Clyde Tombaugh, discoverer of planet Pluto.

80 Years Ago -- 1931

February 2: First official rocket mail, cargo of 102 pieces, launched by Friedrich Schmiedl, Austria.

75 Years Ago -- 1936

February 23: U.S. rocket mail flight, New York to New Jersey, Greenwood Lake.

50 Years Ago -- 1961

February 1: First test launch of Minuteman ICBM.

February 12: Venus 1 (aka Venera 1) launched by a Modified SS-6 (Sapwood) or Molniya, 0210 UTC, Baikonur, USSR. The first spacecraft to fly by Venus.

February 14: James E. Webb took office as second NASA Administrator.

February 17: Discoverer 20 launched by Thor Agena, 3:23 p.m., EST, Vandenberg AFB.

February 18: Discoverer 21 launched by Thor Agena, 2:58 p.m., EST, Vandenberg AFB.

February 21: Transit III-B, LOFTI-1 launched by Thor, 10:45 p.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

February 21: Mercury Atlas-2 (MA-2) launched by an Atlas, 0:12 a.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla. A suborbital test of the Mercury spacecraft.

February 24: Explorer failure, orbit not achieved, Explorer S-45 launched aboard a Juno 2 rocket, 7:13 p.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

45 Years Ago -- 1966

February 3: Luna 9 soft landed on moon and sent first radio television transmission to Earth. Launched January 31, 1146 UTC, Baikonur, USSR.

February 3: ESSA-1 launched by Thor Delta, 2:41 a.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

February 26: Apollo Saturn 201 lifted off at 11:12 a.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla. Suborbital flight of Apollo spacecraft block I and Saturn IB launch vehicle.

February 28: ESSA-2 launched by Thor Delta, 8:48 a.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

40 Years Ago --1971

February 2: NATO 2, a military communications satellite, was launched by a Delta, 8:41 p.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

February 16: Tansei 1, a technological test satellite, was launched by an M-4S, 0400 UTC, from the Kagoshima Space Center, Japan.

30 Years Ago --1981

February 21: Comstar D-4 launched, 6:23 p.m., EST, Cape Canaveral, Fla.

25 Years Ago --1986

February 19: MIR Space Station launched by Proton Booster Plus Upper Stage from Baikonur at 21:28:23 UTC.

20 Years Ago --1991

February 7: Salyut 7 space station re-entered Earth's atmosphere at 04:00 UTC.

15 Years Ago – 1996

February 17: NEAR (Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous) launched from Cape Canaveral by a Delta 2 rocket at 3:43 EST. to orbit around a major asteroid, Eros which it encountered on February 14, 2000. On Monday, 12 February 2001, the NEAR spacecraft touched down on asteroid Eros, after transmitting 69 close-up images of the surface during its final descent.

February 21: Soyuz TM-23 launched from Baikonur at 12:34 UTC, carrying two cosmonauts (Yuri Onufrienko, Yuri Usachev). It docked with the MIR station at 14:24 UTC on February 23.

February 22: STS-75 (Space Shuttle *Columbia*) launched at 3:18: pm EST, KSC. Crew: Andrew M. Allen, Scott J. Horowitz, Franklin R. Chang-Diaz, Maurizio Cheli (Italy), Jeffrey A. Hoffman, Claude Nicollier (Switzerland), and Umberto Guidoni (Italy). Carried the Tethered Satellite System Reflight (TSS-1R) into orbit and deployed it spaceward on a conducting tether. Also flew the United States Microgravity Payload (USMP-3) designed to investigate materials science and condensed matter physics. Landed March 9 at 8:58 a.m., EST, KSC. Mission Duration: 15 days, 17 hours, 41 minutes.

February 24: Polar spacecraft, part of the International Solar Terrestrial Physics Project (ISTP) launched by a Delta 2 rocket from Vandenberg AFB at 11:24 UTC to measure polar magnetospheric hot plasma and to map auroral displays.

10 Years Ago - 2001

February 7: STS-98 (Space Shuttle *Atlantis*) launched 6:13 pm EST from KSC. Crew: Kenneth D. Cockrell, Mark L. Polansky, Robert L. Curbeam, Thomas D. Jones, and Marsha S. Ivins. Carried the Destiny module to the International Space Station (ISS). Landed February 20 at 3:34 p.m., EST at Edwards Air Force Base, California. Mission Duration: 12 days, 21 hours, 21 min.

February 12: NEAR spacecraft touched down on asteroid Eros.