90 Years Ago - 1928
April 11: First manned rocket-powered car tested by Fritz von Opel, Max Valier and others at Berlin, Germany, 62 miles per hour top speed.

85 Years Ago - 1933
April 3: First airplane flight over Mt. Everest.

60 Years Ago – 1958
April 2: President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposes establishment of NASA in a special message to Congress.

April 25: First successful launch and inflation in space of a sphere by NACA on Nike-Cajun rocket, WFF. Test launch for Echo 1, the world’s first communications satellite.

55 Years Ago - 1963
April 2: Explorer 17 launched by Thor Delta at 9:00 p.m., EST from Cape Canaveral, Fla. Launch established a new record in altitude and weight for the NASA sounding rocket program. NASA launched 85 pound scientific payload to 208 mile altitude.

April 2: Luna 4 launched by Molniya rocket at 8:04 UTC from Baikonur. Soviet lunar flyby mission. First Soviet lunar probe tested in Earth “parking orbit” before resuming flight to moon.

50 Years Ago – 1968
April 2: “2001: A Space Odyssey” has its world premiere at the Uptown Theatre in Washington, D.C.

April 4: Apollo 6, also known as AS-502, launched by Saturn V at 7:00 a.m., EST from KSC. Final qualification of the Saturn V launch vehicle and Apollo spacecraft for manned Apollo missions. Despite failures, including early cutout of two engines, next Saturn V was flown as Apollo 8 rocket.

April 7: Luna 14 launched by Molniya rocket at 19:25 UTC from Baikonur. Final flight of the second generation of Soviet Luna probes.

45 Years Ago - 1973
April 3: Salyut 2 launched by Proton K at 9:00 UTC from Baikonur. Station tumbled out of control and lost electrical power seven days after launch.

April 5: Pioneer 11 launched by Atlas Centaur at 9:11 p.m., EST from Cape Canaveral, Fla. First spacecraft to conduct a Saturn flyby and first to photograph the planet. Also first spacecraft to photograph Jupiter’s polar regions.

40 Years Ago – 1978
April 26: Heat Capacity Mapping Mission (HCMM/AEM-1) launched by Scout at 2:20 a.m., PDT from Vandenberg AFB. First of the Applications Explorer Missions (AEM) Explorer satellite series.
35 Years Ago – 1983
April 4: STS-6 (Space Shuttle *Challenger*) launched at 1:30 p.m., EST from KSC. Crew: Paul J. Weitz, Karol J. Bobko, Donald H. Peterson and Story F. Musgrave. Landing: April 9, at 10:53 a.m. PST, Edwards AFB, CA. Mission Duration: 5 days, 0 hours, 23 minutes. First flight of the Space Shuttle orbiter *Challenger*. Deployed the first Tracking and Data Relay Satellite, the first of a series of satellites designed to provide continuous communication with the Space Shuttle and NASA earth-orbiting missions. TDRS-1 launched from STS-6 on launch day. The IUS stage malfunctioned leaving the TDRS satellite tumbling in a useless orbit. Still the satellite was gradually maneuvered into its correct parking orbit using its reaction-control thrusters. Don Peterson and Story Musgrave conducted the first EVA of the Shuttle program. First Space Shuttle flight to fly with a lightweight external tank and lightweight solid rocket booster casings.

April 4: A US satellite uses the Global Positioning System (GPS) as a navigational tool for the first time. Landsat 4 orients itself using data from a NavStar satellite, reducing need for ground stations to send routine navigational commands.

April 20: USSR launches Soyuz T-8 aboard Soyuz rocket from Baikonur at 13:11 UTC. Crew: Vladimir G. Titov, Gennadi M. Strekalov, and Alexander A. Serebrov. Ferry flight to Salyut-7 space station. Crew were unable to dock with space station.

30 Years Ago – 1988
April 21: Canada announces its participation in the International Space Station (ISS) program. Will provide a “Canadarm” with updated technology and expanded capability.

25 Years Ago – 1993
April: Using data from the Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer (TOMS), scientists from the Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md., determined that ozone levels over the mid-latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere had reached record low levels in the second half of 1992.

April 8: STS-56 (Space Shuttle *Discovery*) launched at 1:29 a.m. EDT from KSC. Crew: Kenneth D. Cameron, Stephen S. Oswald, C. Michael Foale, Kenneth D. Cockrell, and Ellen Ochoa. Carried Atmospheric Laboratory for Applications and Science-2 (ATLAS-2) as payload. Landed April 17, 7:37 a.m. EDT, KSC. Mission duration 9 days, 6 hours, 8 minutes. On this flight, Ellen Ochoa became the first Hispanic female astronaut.

April 25: Array of Low Energy X-Ray Imaging Sensors (ALEXIS) spacecraft launched by a Pegasus booster at 5:56 a.m. PDT from the wing of a B-52 flying out of Vandenberg AFB. First satellite with all instruments sponsored by the Department of Energy (DOE)

April 26: STS-55 (Space Shuttle *Columbia*) launched at 10:50 a.m. EDT from KSC. Crew: Steven R. Nagel, Terence T. Henricks, Jerry L. Ross, Charles J. Precourt, Bernard A. Harris Jr., Ulrich Walter, and Hans W. Schlegel (Germany). Carried the second reusable German Spacelab, D-2. Landed May 6, 1993, 10:30 a.m. EDT at Edwards AFB. Mission Duration 9 days, 23 hours, 39 minutes.
20 Years Ago – 1998
April 1: Transition Region And Coronal Explorer (TRACE) spacecraft launched at 6:43 p.m. PST by Pegasus XL carried under the wing of a L-1011 flying out of Vandenberg AFB, CA. Satellite was designed to study the Sun's atmosphere.

April 17: STS-90 (Space Shuttle Columbia) launched at 2:19 p.m. EDT from KSC. Crew: Richard A. Searfoss, Scott D. Altman, Richard M. Linnehan, Dafydd Rhys Williams, Kathryn P. Hire, Jay C. Buckey, and James A. Pawelczyk. Carried Neurolab payload to study neurological and behavioral changes in space. Landed May 3, 12:09 p.m. EDT at KSC. Mission duration 15 days, 21 hours, 50 minutes.

April 21: Cassini Venus Flyby.

15 Years Ago – 2003
April 25: Expedition 7 International Space Station Crew (ISS) launched by a Soyuz FG rocket from Baikonur at 3:54 UTC. First American, Edward T. Lu, to launch as the Flight Engineer of a Soyuz spacecraft (Soyuz TMA-2) Soyuz commander - Yuri I. Malenchenko. Due to the Columbia accident in February 2003, this expedition would also mark the first time an American, Ed Lu, launched and landed in a Soyuz spacecraft.

April 28: GALaxy Evolution eXplorer (GALEX) was launched at 7:00 a.m. EST by a Pegasus XL rocket released from a L-1011 cargo plane flying out of Cape Canaveral. GALEX was a NASA ultraviolet astronomy satellite designed to explore the origin and evolution of galaxies, stars and heavy elements.

10 Years Ago – 2008
April 8: Soyuz TMA-12 launched by a Soyuz FG rocket from Baikonur at 12:17 UTC. Crew: Sergei A Volokov (Russia), Oleg D. Kononenko (Russia), and Yi So-Yeon (South Korea) to the International Space Station (ISS) and docked automatically with it at 16:00 UTC on April 10.

April 19: Soyuz TMA-11, returning from the ISS with a crew of Yuri Malenchenko, Peggy Whitson (US) and Yi So-Yeon (South Korea) underwent a ballistic reentry and had a rough landing 400 km away from the planned location. Crew was only mildly injured.

April 25: Tianlian 1, the first data-relay satellite of China (PRC), launched by a Long March 3C from Xichang satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province at 15:35 UTC. It was to be activated with the launch of the manned Shenzhou 7 mission later in 2008. It covered about 50% of Shenzhou 7 orbit, rather than the coverage of 12% without the relay.

April 26: GIOVE-B (Galileo In-Orbit Validation Element-B) was launched by a Soyuz-Fregat from Baikonur at 22:16 UT. The satellite is the second of the test versions of the 30 craft European Union navigational fleet that is planned to be launched beginning in 2010 (A similar test satellite, GIOVE-A, was launched in December 2005.) The Galileo system is designed to be a Europe-based global positioning system, eliminating reliance on the US-based GPS.

5 Years Ago – 2013
April 21: Alexander, Bell, and Graham cubesats launched at 4:00 p.m. EDT by an Antares rocket from Wallops Flight Facility (WFF). The cubesats are the first use of off-the-shelf smart phones as satellite control and navigation computers. Also, launch marked the first operational flight of the Antares rocket.