Thursday, March 11, 2004

Vol. 9, No. 18

MESSENGER arrives for processing at KSC

Apply soon for NASA scholarships for dependents

▲ **ELV Update:** NASA's MESSENGER spacecraft (artist drawing above), the first Mercury orbiter, arrived in Florida from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. MESSENGER – short for MErcury Surface, Space ENvironment, GEochemistry and Ranging – will be launched on a six-year mission aboard a Boeing Delta II rocket on May 11. Secured in an air-conditioned transportation van, MESSENGER arrived at the Astrotech Space Operations processing facilities near KSC, where it was offloaded and taken into a high bay clean room. After the spacecraft is removed from its shipping container, employees of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, builders of the spacecraft, will perform an initial state-of-health check. Then processing for launch can begin, including checkout of the power systems, communications systems and control systems. The thermal blankets will also be attached for flight. Liftoff aboard a Delta II rocket is targeted for 2:26 a.m. EDT on Tuesday, May 11.

▲ **Scholarship deadline nears:** The NASA College Scholarship Fund Inc., a non-profit organization, awards scholarships to qualified NASA dependents who are pursuing a course of study in science and engineering fields. Five scholarships are being awarded this year. Information on the guidelines for applying for a scholarship are at **http://jscpeople.jsc.nasa.gov//ncsf.htm**. Applications must be received by the corporation scholarship committee at Johnson Space Center no later than **March 22**. For additional details, please contact Debbie Bitner at 867-0510 or via e-mail at *Deborah.L.Bitner@nasa.gov*.

◆ **NASA seeks 2004 Software of the Year Award nominations –** This prestigious award gives recognition to developers of exceptional software created for or by, and owned by, NASA. Every NASA Center and Facility is invited to participate in the competition. The award includes the NASA Software Medal, a certificate signed by the Administrator, and as much as $100,000. The NASA Inventions and Contributions Board Web site **http://icb.nasa.gov** contains information about the last 10 competitions. Eligibility information and selection process for the Software of the Year Award is at the Web site **http://icb.nasa.gov/swoyinfo.html**. The deadline for nomination packages is April 9. All applications must be submitted through the appropriate Administrative Offices to YA-C1/Carol Anne Dunn, 867-6381.

◆ **Did You Know?** An international team of scientists from NASA and other research institutions has embarked on a three-week expedition of discovery that will take them from the lush, dense rain forests of Central America to the frigid isolation of Antarctica. Despite these harsh, exotic locales, this expedition won't encounter a single snake or spider, and parkas are definitely not required. That's because the team's savvy tour guide is an all-weather imaging tool, the Airborne Synthetic Aperture Radar, or AirSAR, developed and managed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. For more information, visit **http://airsar.jpl.nasa.gov** and **http://www.dfrc.nasa.gov/Research**.

KSC Countdown is published every Tuesday & Thursday. Deadlines are 10 a.m. Mondays & Wednesdays.
E-mail news to Anita Barrett at *Anita.Barrett-1@ksc.nasa.gov*. For questions or information, e-mail or call 321-867-2815
Find KSC Countdown on the Internet at http://www-pao.ksc.nasa.gov/kscpao/ksccount/2003.htm