

World and Nation

Space shuttle countdown delayed

From Associated Press reports

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA postponed the start of the countdown for space shuttle Discovery by eight hours Sunday because of lagging preparations, but still aimed for a Thursday morning liftoff.

"We're still on the timeline for launch on the 29th, and that's the plan," said launch director Bob Sieck.

The countdown was rescheduled to begin at 8 a.m. EDT Monday for the first manned American space flight since the Challenger blew up over the Atlantic 32 months ago.

The space agency had added 27 unprogrammed hours to the countdown as insurance for last-minute problems, and Sieck said eight hours of that time would be used in advance to complete the work of replacing

panels and work platforms.

"We don't want those people to have to do that under the gun with the clock counting," he said. "So we said, 'Take all the time it takes,' and we'll delay the call to stations to accommodate that."

NASA had planned to start the countdown at midnight, but "buttoning up" the aft end of the spaceplane — akin to closing the hood on a car — was delayed by a problem that had the potential of postponing the launch for two days.

Low voltage readings were found in an electrical circuit that triggers the explosive charges used to separate the shuttle from its fuel tank when the tank is empty. Eventually engineers determined that the fault was in a

ground circuit, which does not affect the flight.

The winged spaceplane rides aloft attached at three points to the 154-foot-long external tank. At 8 1/2 minutes into flight — just before the shuttle reaches orbit — the explosive devices release the tank, and it breaks up in the atmosphere as it falls toward the Indian Ocean.

Discovery's launch date has been changed five times in the past as new problems cropped up in getting ready for STS-26, the 26th mission of the Space Transportation System.

The Cape Canaveral area was bracing for an influx of visitors comparable to the first flight of the space shuttle in 1981 when more than 1 million crowded the roads outside

the launch center.

When Discovery lifts off, with five veteran astronauts aboard, it will be a far different vehicle from on its six previous flights. The orbiter has had 210 changes, and the solid fuel rockets have had 145.

Navy Capt. Frederick H. Hauck and his four-man crew of astronauts will fly to the launch site from their Houston training center Monday afternoon for last-minute briefings and some practice landing on the Kennedy runway in an aircraft that handles like a shuttle.

Discovery's cargo will be a \$100 million communications satellite that NASA needs for communications with future shuttles, as well as 11 scientific experiments.

'First brother' Billy Carter dies after battle with cancer

From Associated Press reports

PLAINS, Ga. — Billy Carter, the former "first brother" and beer-drinking good ol' boy whose candor and business ventures amused and sometimes embarrassed the Carter administration, died Sunday of cancer. He was 51.

The brother of former President Jimmy Carter suffered for a year with pancreatic cancer — the disease that killed his father and a sister — and lived longer than his doctors expected. He died three days after leaving the hospital for his home in this southwest Georgia hamlet.

Carter "died quietly and peacefully in his sleep ... with his family at his bedside," according to a statement issued by the Carter Presidential Center on behalf of the former president and his family.

Billy Carter, who once defined himself as a beer-drinking good ol' boy, was forced into the spotlight when his older brother rocketed from their tiny hometown into the White House.

He put his name on a brand of beer that flopped, got into hot water with remarks denounced as racist or anti-Semitic, accepted money from Libya and was forced to sell some properties to pay a debt to the Internal Revenue Service.

But underneath the mask of the court jester was a perceptive man, an avid reader, a fighter who refused to go down quietly under the pressure of alcoholism or cancer.

JFK vigil planned

WASHINGTON — Network documentaries, a string of new books, an all-night Capitol vigil and memorials by former Peace Corps volunteers and PT boat veterans will help commemorate the 25th anniversary in November of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

But family members plan a low-profile remembrance, much different from the 1983 nationally televised observance of the 20th

News in Brief

anniversary of that fateful day in Dallas.

"They have tried to get away from commemorating the day of his death and try to celebrate the day of his birth," said Melody Miller, an aide to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. The senator and other family members have said they will not grant interviews.

Some family members likely will follow tradition and quietly visit JFK's grave site at the Arlington National Cemetery, while others join family matriarch Rose Kennedy at her regular daily Mass at the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port, Mass., said Miller.

Doctors' pay reviewed

BOSTON — A long-awaited study being released this week could dramatically change the way doctors are paid, sharply reducing fees for many kinds of operations while raising charges for office visits.

The study has been the object of intense speculation and apprehension in the medical world since it was undertaken two and a half years ago by economist William C. Hsiao of the Harvard University School of Public Health.

The massive project attempts to determine the amount of work involved in everything doctors do — from checkups and well-baby visits to brain surgery and coronary bypasses — so they can be

paid what their services are worth.

There is widespread agreement, Hsiao said, "that the current payment system is unworkable. The fees are distorted and inequitable."

Hsiao's plan, requested by Congress, will try to correct that. It would pay physicians more for the time they spend thinking about patients, examining them and talking to them and less for specific procedures.

Japan's emperor Hirohito remains in serious condition

From Associated Press reports

TOKYO — Emperor Hirohito lay in serious condition Sunday but was alert enough to watch the finals of the autumn sumo tournament on television, and a daughter who paid a bedside visit expressed optimism about his health.

Thousands of well-wishers braved thunderstorms and cold rain to throng the gates of the moated Imperial Palace in central Tokyo under a sea of bright umbrellas. Palace officials say 300,000 have signed their names in a dozen registries set up nationwide to pray for Hirohito's recovery.

The 87-year-old monarch remained under intensive, around-the-clock care by a team of court doctors after vomiting blood from an intestinal hemorrhage on Monday. The emperor has sat on Japan's Chrysanthemum Throne for nearly 62 years.

His condition was serious but appeared stable. Palace officials acknowledged Hirohito discharged a small amount of blood Sunday morning.

The officials would not confirm published reports that the emperor has cancer of the upper intestine. Cancer is rarely acknowledged publicly in Japan.

Under the Constitution, the emperor has no political power but signs documents already approved by the government and serves as a symbol of Japan's unity.

The Imperial Household Agency said Hirohito viewed the final matches of the Autumn Grand Sumo Tournament on television. A noted fan of the ancient wrestling sport, the emperor watched grand champion Chiyonofuji claim his 25th tournament title with a 15-0 record and commented, "A perfect victory, isn't it?"

Candidates target N.C. as priority state in presidential race

From Associated Press reports

WINSTON-SALEM — Recent polls suggest — and state campaign leaders confirm — that North Carolina's 13 electoral voters will be up for grabs between George Bush and Michael Dukakis six weeks from now.

And whichever candidate wins them will have a potentially significant prize.

Not only is North Carolina the 10th largest state in the union, but its votes have backed the overall winner in every presidential election since 1960.

The Bush and Dukakis campaigns have targeted North Carolina as a priority state, and each candidate has appeared at an enthusiastic rally here since winning his nomination.

Campaign strategists on both sides, as well as most independent analysts, place the state for now in a category with three other states in the upper South — Tennessee, Kentucky and Arkansas — that could swing either way on Election Day.

The winner of those states will almost certainly also be the next president.

"We know how it's going to go in 48 days. It's going for George Bush," William T. Graham, the chairman of Bush's N.C. campaign, told the Winston-Salem Journal. "How it's going right now is it's still a horse race."

Sen. Russell G. Walker, D-Randolph, co-chairman of the state Dukakis campaign: "I certainly think we're in a very good position in North Carolina — the best in a long, long time so far as the national race is concerned. If we're not ahead, we're certainly in a dead heat."

A pair of polls suggests how close the presidential race may really be with less than two months remaining in the election.

The Charlotte Observer, in a poll of 802 likely voters across the state, reported Sept. 17 that it had found 48 percent supporting or leaning toward Bush, the Republican presidential nominee, and 47 percent supporting or leaning toward Dukakis, the Democratic candidate for president.

On Wednesday, The News and Observer of Raleigh, WTVD and WBTV reported that its poll of 806 likely voters found 49 percent supporting or leaning toward Dukakis and 47 percent supporting or leaning toward Bush.

Although the polling techniques were somewhat different in the two surveys, the results in both cases were well within the 3.5 percentage-point margin of error, making it impossible to determine if either candidate actually had an edge at the time the interviews were conducted.

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For the Record

In Tuesday's article, "In a medical emergency, students have 2 options," the DTH incorrectly reported that North Carolina Memorial Hospital charges a flat rate of \$75 for all visits to the emergency room. The hospital charges based on services rendered. Also, the article incorrectly reported that the emergency services available at Student Health Services are equal to those offered by NCMH. NCMH has a level 1 trauma center, the most sophisticated type, while SHS has a level 3 trauma center.

The DTH regrets the errors.

The Daily Tar Heel

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