

# Orlando Enters the Jet (Passenger) Age

by A. Stephen Patrick

In the late 1950s Orlando faced the problem that Herndon Field, now known as the Executive Airport, could not support jet propelled aircraft because the runways were too short, and there was no room to grow. The McCoy Air Force Base was diminishing in importance, although it served an important role in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. It was later decommissioned and sold to the city of Orlando for \$1.

The city solved its problem by contracting a joint civil/military use of landing space at the McCoy Air Force Base. Temporary facilities were erected, and Orlando became the city with the airport with the “best runways and the dinkiest terminals known to modern aviation” according to the *Orlando Sentinel*. Orlando was rewarded with its first jet service on October 29, 1961, when a Delta Air Lines Corvair 880 landed from Atlanta. Sixteen passengers deplaned and were met by Mayor Bob Carr and other dignitaries in a ribbon cutting ceremony.

In 37 minutes on the ground the plane took on 4,000 gallons of fuel and 96 pounds (6,100 pieces) of mail for the flight to Los Angeles with a stop in Dallas. Included in the mail bag were covers from all 50 states and 20 foreign countries and the cover in **Figure D1**.



The business sized envelope was cancelled at 11:00 a.m., and the back stamp shows it arrived at the Airport Mail Facility in Los Angeles at 4:00 p.m. That included the Dallas stop and a gain of three hours in time zones. The plane carried mail under Air Mail – Contract 8 as designated in the cachet. In the lower left is a special place for the autograph of Orlando Postmaster L.A. “Jimmy” Bryant. The addressee is in Orlando at the main post office, so special arrangements were made to return the envelope to Orlando without markings.

The corrugated, metal – sided terminal may have seemed out of place for the jet age, but it did not bother the several thousand who watched from the 1,500 parked cars on the fringes of the airport. Charlie Voorhees, the city’s maintenance man had recently added sides to an open air shed. The city had also purchased \$200,000 of support equipment to service the aircraft.

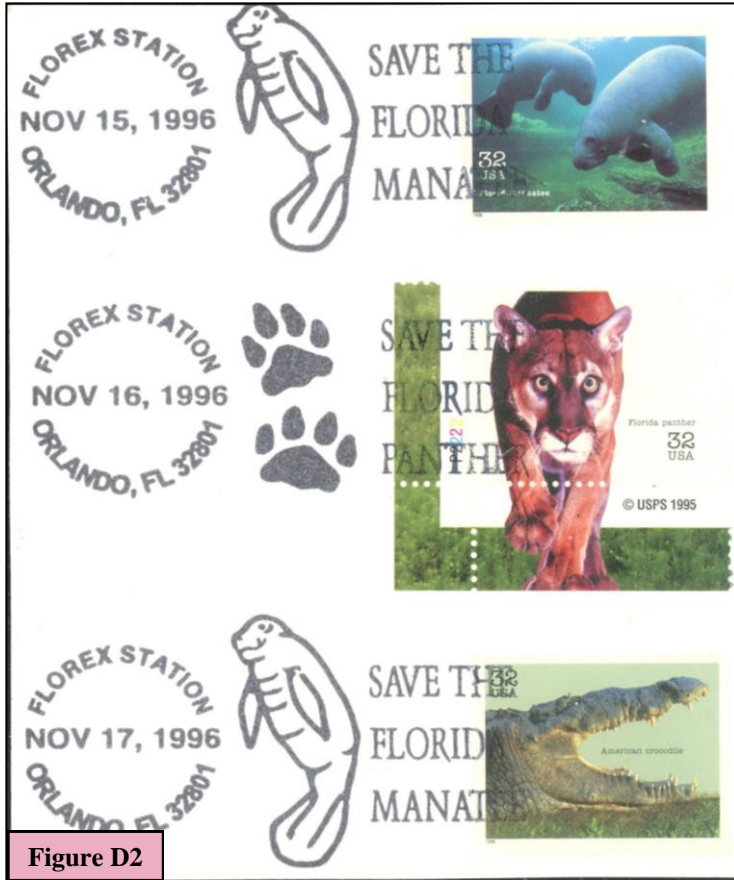
This marks the beginning of today’s Orlando International Airport. How many of you flew in or out of those temporary facilities between 1961 and 1981?

[Editor’s note: As a resident of Orlando since 1977 I flew out of the “new” old terminal many times before the current structure was built in the middle 1980s. I would be willing to wager a dinner that 99% of the folks who fly into Orlando have not a single clue what the airport designation of “MCO” actually means.]

# FLOREX History

by Phil Fettig

(Note: Ann & I first visited a FLOREX in 1971. In 1981 we worked the registration table and since that time I have been everything from volunteer to General Chair and Dealer. Now, we are back to volunteers! This is going to be the start of small tidbits of FLOREX History as well as I can remember!).



FLOREX always has a central theme that is used for cacheted covers, program articles and occasionally a program. The theme for 1996 was “Salute Florida Wildlife”. The show cancels illustrated a manatee and the tracks of a panther. **Figure D2** shows a sample of each day’s cancel. We were lucky to have support from an organization, Predators Plus, who brought a live Florida Panther to show. A photo taken with the panther was available for a donation. **Figure D3** shows the cover of the photo folder and **figure D4** is General Chair Phil Stager, me, and our furry friend.

I guess we couldn't have a manatee because the panther may have wanted lunch.

