

The Springfield

News from the STARS

"Sharing the Wonders of the Night Sky"

SINCE 1934



January, 2005



"On the Horizon"

Each of us can remember someone in our lives who has inspired us. Perhaps that person was a parent, a teacher or a friend. For many astronomers, amateur and professional alike, that person may have been someone who first introduced us to the beauty of the night sky or challenged us to think about what lies among the stars. Sadly, recent months have seen the passing of two such people in our area. On December 21st Carl Alsing of Somers, CT, founding member of the Springfield Stars Club, passed away at the age of 98. Over the years, Carl inspired so many through the club he started nearly seventy-five years ago. In a special insert to this newsletter, Rich Sanderson looks back at Carl's life and his many contributions to astronomy.

The Stars Club is not alone in mourning the loss of a founding member at this time. On November 13th, Charles Hammond of West Hartford, CT passed away at the age of 89. Possessing a lifelong interest in the sciences, Mr. Hammond studied astronomy at the University of California at Los Angeles during the 1930's where he also began teaching the subject. After moving to Connecticut, he started the Central Connecticut Amateur Astronomers, a group known today as The Astronomical Society of Greater Hartford (ASGH). Over the years, Mr. Hammond taught astronomy at the University of Hartford, St. Joseph College, Central Connecticut State University and Tunxis Community College.

In addition to astronomy, he also had a passion for chemistry, physics, meteoritics and seismology. From 1962 to 2003, Mr. Hammond wrote and annually updated the Chemical Elements section of the CRC "Handbook of Chemistry and Physics." He was also an original researcher of the Wethersfield, CT meteorite falls in 1971 and 1982. But his greatest passion by far was sharing his love of the sciences, particularly astronomy, with others, and especially with children. He remained active in the ASGH and continued to conduct tours and classes at his personal observatory until his death.

Indeed, each of us can remember someone in our lives who has inspired us. For so many of us with an interest in astronomy here in southern New England, Carl Alsing and Charles Hammond provided such inspiration. Whether we were privileged to have known them personally or simply fortunate enough to benefit from the astronomy organizations they started, all of us have lost two great friends. Each of them has left us with an enduring legacy and we must do what they did best – inspiring others – in order to keep their memories alive.

- *Mike Kozicki*, Editor

Astronomy Association Trip to Boston Museum of Science

On Saturday, March 5, 2005 the Astronomy Association will be conducting a trip to the Boston Museum of Science. Activities will include shows in the Hayden Planetarium and the Omni Theatre as well as visiting the Museum's exhibit halls. For more details, including a complete trip itinerary and registration information, visit <http://amastro.ecsdom.com> online or contact Tom Whitney by phone at (413) 256-6234. Registration deadline is February 12, 2005. The cost of the trip will depend upon how many attend.

In Memoriam

**CARL
ALSING**



1906 - 2004

*"To lose a friend is the
greatest of all losses."*

- SYRUS

**CHARLES
HAMMOND**



1915 - 2004

Astronomy for Kids

For an eleventh consecutive year, **Paul Cardone** will conduct an evening observing program for the students of Mountainview School in East Longmeadow. This year's event will be held on Friday, March 18th. For more details or to volunteer to help out, contact Paul. Over the years this program has grown from humble beginnings and has shown us all how many young astronomers can be reached with just a little effort.

NOTICES

Executive Committee Meeting - The next Stars Club Executive Committee meeting will be held in late spring. If you have ideas for events or speakers, notices for the newsletter, or anything else you would like to bring to the club's attention, please contact one of the club officers or directors prior to April 30.

Membership Dues – If you have not yet renewed your club membership for 2005, please send a check for \$20, payable to the Springfield Stars Club, to **Rich Sanderson** at P.O. Box 2793, Springfield, MA 01101. Your dues offset costs of running the club, mostly the museum room rental fee and mailings. PLEASE help to support your club!

Sky & Telescope – Club members are entitled to subscribe to Sky & Telescope magazine at the reduced rate of \$32.95 per year. Return the renewal card you received in the mail and a check for the proper amount, payable to the Springfield Stars Club, to **Rich Sanderson** at P.O. Box 2793, Springfield, MA 01101.

Help Save the Gemini – Additional work will be needed in order to complete the restoration of the Gemini Observatory this spring. Details will be announced at upcoming club meetings, particularly in February. If you would like to make a monetary donation to this effort, please contact **Rich Sanderson**.

For Sale – Meade 10" LX200 GPS SMT with all eyepieces and filters included in original packaging. Asking \$2300. If interested, call Joanna Keefe at 978-597-3211 (days) or 603-899-6603 (evenings).

Arunah Hill Events – Winter Star Party scheduled for January 8th and February 5th, Messier Marathon for the nights of March 11&12 and April 8&9. For details, visit <http://www.arunah.org>, Arunah Hill's website.

THE OBSERVING LOG

Don't Miss the Comet! As this edition of the club newsletter goes to press, Comet Machholz (C/2004 Q2) is brightening steadily while becoming better placed for evening observation from the northern hemisphere. During January it should be an easy target in binoculars and perhaps even faintly visible to the unaided eye under dark skies as it sweeps past the Pleiades on the night of January 7th. For more information, see the article in the January, 2005 issue of *Sky & Telescope* magazine, pp. 84-87.

Gas Giants Now five years removed from their last conjunction, Saturn and Jupiter dominate the evening sky in consecutive seasons. Saturn, in Gemini, reaches opposition on January 13th and rules the night sky this winter. Then, on April 2nd, Jupiter reaches its opposition and will be best placed for evening viewing during the warm evenings of spring.

Lunar Extremes As 2005 begins, the Moon's ascending node is located in the constellation Pisces, meaning the next few years will see extreme northerly and southerly lunar declinations. Coincidentally, Saturn reaches the ascending node of its orbit on January 9th, which will place it exactly along the ecliptic. So, in the months ahead, as the Moon passes Saturn, notice how far north of the planet it appears (closer to the bright star Pollux in Gemini). The Moon's orbit is inclined to the plane of the ecliptic by about five degrees.

Full Moon Dates: January 25, February 23, March 25, April 24, May 23, June 22

New Moon Dates: January 10, February 8, March 10, April 8, May 8, June 6

Vernal Equinox (Start of Spring) – March 20, 2005 at 7:33a.m. EST.

Summer Solstice – June 21, 2005 at 2:46a.m. EDT.