

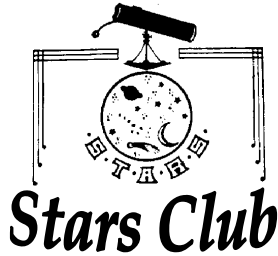
The Springfield

# News from the STARS

*"Sharing the Wonders of the Night Sky"*

**SINCE 1934**

July, 2004



## "On the Horizon"

As this edition of the Stars Club newsletter goes to press, the Cassini and Huygens spacecraft are just beginning a tour of the ringed planet Saturn and its moons following a nearly seven-year journey across the solar system. Launched on October 15, 1997, the Cassini mission is named for the 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian-French astronomer Giovanni Cassini, who discovered four moons of Saturn and the large gap in its rings. The Huygens probe, which should enter the thick atmosphere of Saturn's largest moon, Titan next January, is named for the Dutch astronomer Christiann Huygens, who discovered the moon in 1655 and was the first to study Saturn's rings in detail.

Consider for a moment how our new views of Saturn compare to our first close look of the planet, courtesy of the Voyager spacecraft, more than twenty years ago. If you haven't already done so, visit the Cassini mission home page at <http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov> and the Cassini Imaging Team home page at <http://ciclops.org> as new images are being posted daily. Doing so puts you on the cutting edge of discovery, allowing you to be among the first to see what secrets Cassini's cameras have revealed. The experience must be similar to what it was like for those who were at mission control during the Voyager missions, something the general public could only dream of twenty years ago.

And then there are the original Cassini and Huygens, who less than four centuries ago turned their very modest telescopes at Saturn to barely discern its nature. This is truly a great time for space exploration, a time when we can experience the best of both worlds. So, when you're finished taking in the latest views beamed back from the outer solar system, don't forget to take a look through your telescope and experience the sense of wonder that started us on the path to today's grand explorations.

## *Cassini Arrives at the Ringed Planet*

CASSINI



MISSION TO SATURN

- *Mike Kozicki*, Editor

## ***In Memoriam***

*The members of the Stars Club send our deepest condolences to Dr. Richard Scott, whose wife passed away this spring.*

## ***Reflections of a Transit***

Despite overcast conditions for most of the night of June 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> in Southern New England, the clouds broke shortly after sunrise to reveal the black silhouette of Venus on the disk of the Sun. If anyone has images or accounts of the recent Venus transit that they would like to share, please let one of the club officers or directors know. A few images have already been posted on the club website at <http://www.reflector.org>.

### ***And the Winner Is ...***

At the May, 2004 club meeting, members present were asked to vote for what they believed to be the top three events in astronomy in the last decade from among a total of 18 events. The results were as follows:

- 1) The 2001 Leonid Meteor "Storm"
- 2) The 1994 impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy9 into Jupiter
- 3) The 1997 apparition of Comet Hale-Bopp.

Thank you to all who participated in the May meeting and helped to make it a success, especially **Paul Cardone** for conducting the poll and tabulating the results. With a little luck, perhaps the decade ahead will prove every bit as exciting as the one just concluded!

### ***The Korkosz Award***

Congratulations to **Steve Pielock**, the latest recipient of the Star Club's annual Frank D. Korkosz Award for outstanding contributions to astronomy. The award was presented to Steve at last spring's Astronomy Association Dinner. He is scheduled to speak to the Stars Club at our upcoming November meeting.

### **NOTICES**

**Executive Committee Meeting** - The next Stars Club Executive Committee meeting will be held in late fall. 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 October 31.

**Membership Dues** – If you have not yet renewed your club membership for 2004, 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.

**Save the Gemini** – Work parties are being organized for late summer and fall to repair the Gemini Observatory in Buckland, MA. Details will be announced at the club picnic and at upcoming meetings. If you would like to make a monetary donation to this effort, please contact **Rich Sanderson**.

### **THE OBSERVING LOG**

***The Morning Sky*** Just as the evening sky seemed to be filled with bright planets last spring, the same will hold true before dawn on mornings this fall. Venus, now past its long-awaited encounter with the Sun dominates the predawn sky this summer and autumn. Venus will be joined there by Saturn in August, Mercury for a time in September, Jupiter in October and dim Mars in November. Mercury will pass close to the star Regulus for a few mornings around September 10<sup>th</sup>. Look for a spectacular conjunction between Venus and Jupiter on the mornings of November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> and keep watching as the crescent Moon passes them November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

***Eclipse!*** New England will be treated to its second total eclipse of the Moon in less than a year on the night of Wed. – Thu. October 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>. The partial stages begin at 9:14pm, with a long totality lasting from 10:23pm to 11:45pm. The partial stages end at 12:54am on the morning of October 28<sup>th</sup>. All times given are EDT.

***Full Moon Dates:*** July 2, July 31, August 29, September 28, October 27, November 26, December 26

***New Moon Dates:*** July 17, August 15, September 14, October 13, November 12, December 11

***Autumnal Equinox*** (Start of Fall) – September 22, 2004 at 12:30p.m. EDT.

***Winter Solstice*** – December 21, 2004 at 7:42a.m. EST.