

The Springfield

News from the STARS

"Sharing the Wonders of the Night Sky"

SINCE 1934



Stars Club



July, 2005



"On the Horizon"

This summer, the Stars Club celebrates an important anniversary, as our annual picnic and star party turns twenty-five. Always the highlight of the club's many events throughout each year, the 2005 picnic will be even more special thanks to the efforts and contributions of many who have assisted with the recent project to restore the Gemini Observatory. As many of you know, the Gemini, which was originally built by late Stars Club member Dick Gerry as his backyard observatory, has been home to the picnic throughout the years. Since Dick's passing in 1999, his wife Edith has been kind enough to allow the club to continue to hold the picnic at her home in Buckland so that we could carry on the tradition in Dick's memory.

In recent years, the observatory faced an uncertain future, as the ravages of many New England winters began to take their toll on the structure. The situation noticeably worsened each of the last few years, as the interior of the observatory became exposed to the elements. But then, through a tremendous response from members of the Stars Club and those of other astronomy organizations in the area, a restoration project began last fall under the guidance of Dave Kelly. Work parties replaced the roof and began the task of replacing the observatory's exterior last September, which was documented at last February's club meeting. Then, during June aluminum sheeting was added over the exterior. Although additional work still remains to be done, the Gemini Observatory has been saved and is ready to welcome visitors for the silver anniversary picnic later this summer!

Of course, anniversaries are always special occasions, times to reflect on wonderful memories. Over the years, the club picnic has had its share of memorable moments, including recent ones such as the sight of a spectacular double-rainbow that appeared over the Gemini Observatory in 2000 and the presentation of the club's Korkosz Award to Dave Kelly in 2003. The 2005 picnic will long be remembered for the efforts of so many who helped to save its icon. But an even more special anniversary lies ahead. In just three years, during its 2008-2009 season, the Stars Club will turn seventy-five years young. The Executive Committee is already looking ahead to planning the club's diamond anniversary celebration and is seeking suggestions and ideas from all members. As we add another chapter to the club's history this summer, it's also time to start reflecting on all the wonderful memories of the last seven decades that have made the Springfield Stars Club what it is today.

- Mike Kozicki, Editor

Celebrating
25 Years

THE STARS
CLUB'S



SUMMER
PICNIC AND
STAR PARTY

Saturday, August 13, 2005
AT THE NEWLY RESTORED
Gemini Observatory

Astronomy Association Trip to Howe Caverns

Following the success of a bus trip to the Boston Museum of Science last March, the Astronomy Association will be conducting a trip to Howe Caverns in New York on Saturday, August 20th. For more details, including a complete trip itinerary and registration information, visit <http://amastro.ecsdom.com> online or contact Kevin Collins by email at bippen.kcc@verizon.net or by phone at (413) 586-2395 evenings after 6pm. The cost of the trip per person will depend upon how many attend.

Back to School

Members of the Stars Club volunteered to share the wonders of the night sky with students at four area schools during the past several months. Highlighting these efforts was **Paul Cardone's** eleventh annual observing night for the students of Mountainview School in East Longmeadow. Additionally, the club made visits to Westfield, Brimfield and Palmer. Thank you to everyone who helped out! Programs such as these help to inspire young future astronomers and are a great way for club members to share their interests.

A New Club Telescope

Thanks to a generous donation from Russel Seelig, the Stars Club is pleased to announce that it will be continuing a long-standing tradition of offering a club telescope to members for monthly loan. The telescope is a 4.5-inch, f/8 Celestron Firstscope reflector on an equatorial mount with two eyepieces. For more information or to request to borrow the telescope, contact Jack Megas at 782-3962.

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.

Club Elections - After more than ten years of service, **Paul Cardone** has decided to step down from his position as a Star Club Director at the end of the year. Through his efforts, Paul has served as an inspiration to us all and we thank him for the time he has generously given to the club. Nominations for 2006 officers and directors are now being accepted. The next election will be held at the November 22nd club meeting.

Mirror Grinding Equipment - Club member Charles Rice has no longer used mirror-grinding equipment available, including a homemade Foucault tester. For details, contact him by email at virchas@rcn.com or by phone at 788-0132 (leave a message if he is not there and he will return your call).

Membership Dues - Club dues for 2006 will remain at \$20. Please send a check for \$20, payable to the Springfield Stars Club, to **Rich Sanderson** at P.O. Box 2793, Springfield, MA 01101 by December 31st. 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 - Although much of the work has been completed in the Gemini Observatory restoration project, you can still make a monetary donation to this effort by contacting **Rich Sanderson** or at the observatory during the upcoming Stars Club picnic.

THE OBSERVING LOG

Mars Beckons As Hollywood's remake of the classic science-fiction thriller *War of the Worlds* plays in theaters this summer, the Red Planet will draw closer to Earth and brighten in our skies. Although it won't come as near to Earth this year as it did in August, 2003, Mars will be about thirty degrees higher in the sky for northern hemisphere observers at this year's opposition on November 7th in Aries. We won't see Mars this well again until late in the next decade. Public interest in Mars will likely be high again courtesy of the new film.

Perseid Meteors Conditions for this summer's annual Perseid Meteor Shower will be very favorable since the Moon will be at first quarter phase as the shower peaks on the morning of August 12th. With the Moon setting before midnight, the sky will be dark in the hours before dawn when meteor rates are typically at their highest.

Full Moon Dates: July 21, August 19, September 17, October 17, November 15, December 15

New Moon Dates: July 6, August 4, September 3, October 3, November 1, December 1, December 30

Autumnal Equinox (Start of Fall) - September 22, 2005 at 6:23p.m. EDT.

Winter Solstice - December 21, 2005 at 1:35p.m. EST.