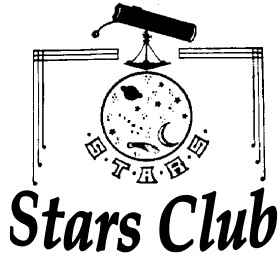


The Springfield

# News from the STARS

*"Sharing the Wonders of the Night Sky"*

**SINCE 1934**



July 2008



## "On the Horizon"

Seventy-five years ago, during the depths of the Great Depression, a small group of Westinghouse employees led by Wilbraham native Carl Alsing became interested in making telescopes. Alsing had attended the Stellafane Convention, hosted by the Springfield, Vermont Telescope Makers, where he met Russell Porter, considered to be the father of amateur telescope making. To share his interest in telescope making with others here in Massachusetts, Alsing formed the Springfield Telescope and Reflector Society (STARS), which was modeled after the Springfield, Vermont group. In order to join, new members had to build their own telescopes. For one of the club's first projects, the original Stars Club members acquired a 20-inch diameter glass disk which they began polishing into a concave telescope mirror that they hoped would be installed in a telescope to be located on Wilbraham Mountain.

World War II interrupted the work and nearly ended the Stars Club as gasoline rationing prevented members from meeting on a regular basis. Following the war in 1948, West Springfield resident Jack Welch reorganized the Stars Club, dropping the requirement that new members must build a telescope. By the late 1950's the Stars Club was flourishing, as interest in astronomy peaked thanks to the dawn of the Space Age. During the 1960's the club resumed work on the 20-inch mirror, which would eventually be installed in a telescope at the Springfield Science Museum. The club also designed and built a Foucault Pendulum that it donated to the museum during the 1960's.

In recent decades, the Stars Club has transformed from a group primarily interested in telescope making into an organization with a variety of astronomy-related interests, including observing, photography and public education. Just as the launch of Sputnik in 1957 brought an increase in club membership, so too did the appearance of Halley's Comet in 1986. During the 1990's, Comets Hyakutake and Hale-Bopp brought even more members and by 1999 the club had expanded to one hundred members. As the Stars Club begins its seventy-fifth year this fall, we will devote a small portion of each meeting to reviewing the club's history decade-by-decade, beginning with the 1930's at the September meeting. Join us for what is sure to be a memorable year as we celebrate the long and remarkable history of the Stars Club.

## *Stars Club's Diamond Anniversary*

**THE STARS  
CLUB AT 75**

THE SPRINGFIELD STARS CLUB

*Celebrating*

**75**

*Years*

**2008 - 2009**

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY SEASON

**A YEAR LONG  
CELEBRATION OF  
CLUB HISTORY**

- *Mike Kozicki*, Editor

## ***Introducing the All-New Stars Club Website***

To help celebrate the Stars Club's seventy-fifth anniversary, we have an all-new website. The new site went operational on May 26<sup>th</sup> and as of press time has already had nearly one thousand visitors. The new site features sections on club history, our meetings and events, the latest club news, articles on astronomy, an image gallery and a variety of links. This is the third version of the website, which was first created by Ed Faits, Alan Rifkin and Rich Sanderson in 1996. If you haven't already done so, visit the new site at <http://www.reflector.org>. If you would like to contribute material, including articles, photos, or astronomical observations to the new website, please contact Mike Kozicki.

### ***Flash Astronomy***

If you haven't already done so, take a look at the "Focal Point" column on page 104 of the July 2008 issue of *Sky & Telescope* magazine. You'll notice the author is none other than Stars Club president Alan Rifkin. In the column, "Rif" promotes what he calls "Flash Astronomy," short observing sessions that rely on equipment that's fast and easy to set up, quick to reach thermal equilibrium, and easy to pack up. Flash Astronomy is great for those summer nights filled with mosquitoes or winter nights when it's too cold to stay out for long. To learn more, see the column or visit the official website of Flash Astronomy at <http://www.flashastronomy.com>.

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

Each year, the Stars Club presents the Korkosz Award for Outstanding Contributions to Astronomy to an individual from the northeast in memory of Dr. Frank Korkoz, Stars Club member and planetarium pioneer. If you would like to nominate someone for the award, please contact one of the club officers or directors.

### **NOTICES**

**Executive Committee Meeting** - The next Stars Club Executive Committee meeting will be held during the 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** – Club dues for 2008 are \$20. If you have not yet done so, please send a check for \$20, payable to the Springfield Stars Club, to **Rich Sanderson** at P.O. Box 2793, Springfield, MA 01101 as soon as possible. Your dues offset costs of running the club, mostly the museum room rental fee and mailings. PLEASE help to support your club!

**Sky & Telescope** – One of the benefits of membership in the Stars Club is a reduced-rate subscription to *Sky & Telescope* magazine for just \$32.95 per year. If you are already a club member and wish to renew your subscription, return the renewal card you receive 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. You can also renew your subscription online at <http://www.skyandtelescope.com>.

**Club Election** – The annual club election is held at the November meeting. If you would like to nominate a club member for an elected position, or perhaps run for office yourself, please let one of the current club officers or directors know.

**Telescopes Needed** – Your help is needed at our "Stars Over Springfield" program. The success of this event depends upon the efforts of club members, especially those who can set up a small telescope outside the Tolman Auditorium for visitors to look through. If you have a small telescope, please consider volunteering at a "Stars Over Springfield" event this fall.

### **THE OBSERVING LOG**

***Perseid Meteors*** Catch the year's best meteor shower in the hours before dawn on the morning of August 12<sup>th</sup>. This year, the Moon is a waxing gibbous when the Perseid shower peaks, leaving several hours between moonset and the start of daylight when you may see a meteor per minute.

***The Evening Stars*** The two brightest planets, Jupiter and Venus spend the second half of 2008 in the evening sky. Jupiter is easily visible in the south in Sagittarius throughout this time, reaching opposition on July 9<sup>th</sup>. Venus remains very low in the west until autumn, and the two planets will be in conjunction on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

***Planetary Challenge*** Have you ever seen Uranus without optical aid? Around the time of its September 12<sup>th</sup> opposition in Aquarius, the seventh planet shines at magnitude 5.7 – just bright enough to be seen with the unaided eye if you have a dark sky and know exactly where to look.

***Full Moon Dates:*** July 18, August 16, September 15, October 14, November 13, December 12

***New Moon Dates:*** July 2, August 1, August 30, September 29, October 28, November 27, December 27

***Autumnal Equinox*** (Start of Fall) – September 22, 2008 at 11:44a.m. EDT.

***Winter Solstice*** – December 21, 2008 at 7:04a.m. EST.