

## The Skyscraper

Vol 32 no. 5

the monthly publication of



The Amateur Astronomical Society  
of Rhode Island

47 Peepoad Road  
North Scituate, RI 02857

www.theskyscrapers.org

**President**

Dan Lorraine

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President**

Steve Hubbard

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President**

Bob Horton

**Secretary**

Joel Cohen

**Treasurer**

Bill Kirby

**Trustees**

Ted Ferneza

Jack Szelka

Richard Arnold

**Members at Large**

Ken Dore

Mercedes Rivero-Hudec

**Membership Committee Chairperson**

Pat Landers

**Librarian**

Dave Huestis

**Editor**

Jim Hendrickson 354-4906

See back page for directions to Seagrave Observatory.

Please submit items for the newsletter by May 15 to Jim Hendrickson, 1 Sunflower Circle, North Providence, RI 02911 or e-mail to jim@distantgalaxy.com

**Email subscriptions:**

To receive *The Skyscraper* by email, send email with your name and address to jim@distantgalaxy.com. Note that you will no longer receive the newsletter by postal mail.

© 2005 Skyscrapers, Inc.

# The Skyscraper

May 2005

## May Meeting

Friday, May 13, 2005; 7:30pm at Seagrave Observatory

Due to many of our members being away in Arizona during the first week of May, we have changed the usual meeting date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday..

This month's meeting features a talk by **Mark and Carlyn Collins Peterson of Loch Ness Productions**. They are a unique pair of producers who meld astronomy and media into educational and entertaining planetarium shows.

They'll talk about how they got started, what they produce and play samples of the programs they've created. They started their company 25 years ago in the living room of their first apartment in Boulder Colorado. Mark, the company's president, is an accomplished space music composer and show producer. He has created more than 40 shows, 7 albums of space music and performed live in several planetariums in the U.S. and Europe. Carolyn Peterson is vice-president and an award winning science writer. She is also a former editor at *Sky and Telescope* Magazine and has spent more than a decade in astronomy research. She has written (or co-written) six books including "*Visions of the Cosmos*" and "*The New Solar System*."

The swearing-in of the 2005-2006 officers will take place at the end of the May meeting.

## Skyscrapers Calendar

Public observing is held every Saturday at Seagrave Observatory weather permitting.

**May 7  
Saturday** 8:00pm **Public Observing Night** at Seagrave Observatory

**May 13  
Friday** 7:30pm **May Meeting** at Seagrave Observatory

**May 14  
Saturday** 6:30pm **Whitin Observatory Trip** star party for members. Depart from Seagrave Observatory.

8:00pm **Public Observing Night** at Seagrave Observatory

**May 21  
Saturday** 8:00pm **Public Observing Night** at Seagrave Observatory

**May 28  
Saturday** 8:00pm **Public Observing Night** at Seagrave Observatory

**Note: Membership renewals are now due.  
Membership form is enclosed.**

# President's Message

*Dan Lorraine, Departing President*

Wow, it's hard to believe that two years have passed since I was first elected President of Skyscrapers! In two years the membership has grown to over 140 individual and family memberships. The wonders of the universe have been opened to literally thousands of people from the general public that have visited us during the Saturday evening public observing sessions, or from the star parties that we've held at and away from Seagrave Observatory. Who knows which one of them may be the first human to walk on Mars ... and hopefully we had a little something to do with that! We've been on more field trips than at any other time in the history of Skyscrapers – The American Museum of Natural History, the University of California's White Mountain Research Facility, Van Vleck Observatory, Harvard's Oak Ridge Observing Station, the Historic Hartness House Inn, and Mystery Hill to name a few. We're about to embark on another major trip to Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff Arizona and then off to

the beautiful island of Nantucket in June, home of astronomer Maria Mitchell! We've had two outstanding AstroAssemblies and some of the best speakers in the history of this organization, thanks to Bob Horton and Steve Hubbard respectively! The organization is alive and healthy thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Executive Committee, Trustees, and volunteers that I've been privileged to serve with. I would like to thank all of those who worked with me over the past several years for making this a wonderful experience for all of us.

Please join me in wishing President elect Dave Huestis and the new administration the very best of luck in the upcoming years!

Respectfully yours,  
Dan Lorraine

## Shooting Stars of May

*Dave Huestis*

I trust by the time you read this column the April showers will have subsided, and we stargazers can finally enjoy some clear skies. I can understand why so many of my associates are talking about retiring to the desert southwest to escape the cold winters and the persistent precipitation here in the northeast.

Skyscrapers has had to cancel many star parties for local schools this spring. It's extremely frustrating to have to deprive the students, parents and teachers an opportunity to observe some of the magnificent views the heavens have to offer. Nothing stirs my soul more than having a child gaze upon the golden image of Saturn and his system of rings through one of our telescopes. Who knows? That youngster may be inspired to continue his or her education in the sciences and could possibly be the first person to walk on Mars!

So let's hope that despite the recent inclement weather, those children and their families find their way out to Seagrave Memorial Observatory for one of our Saturday public open nights when a clear night avails itself. Our members are always happy to share their love of astronomy with visitors to our facility. See our web site for additional information: [www.theskyscrapers.org](http://www.theskyscrapers.org).

When the April showers bring May flowers, we hope it will bring clear skies for an early May meteor shower, the

Eta Aquarids. Unfortunately this shower is an old and declining one. The particles we see hitting our upper atmosphere were shed by Halley's Comet long ago. But this year sky conditions will favor viewing this shower, and I, for one, will welcome even a small display of shooting stars.

The Eta Aquarids peak during the predawn hours of May 5th. The waning crescent Moon will pose no serious hindrance to observing as many meteors as possible. So, my best advice would be to get up a couple of hours before sunrise and scan the sky from zenith toward the east and southeast. To better your chances of observing more meteors, try to observe well away from any light pollution source and also try to block the Moon from view. You shouldn't have any problem spotting some of these remnants of Halley's Comet.

The swarm of particles comprising the meteor stream hits the Earth's upper atmosphere nearly head-on at 41-miles per second. This high-speed collision results in forty percent of the meteors leaving long persisting dust trains. A keen observer can potentially observe 10 to 15 swift, yellow Eta Aquarids per hour.

Just get comfortable and enjoy the free show provided by Mother Nature. Next month I'll talk about my favorite planet in our solar system, Jupiter!

Just as I had finished this column and was ready to prepare it for distribution, we experienced a wave of great weather, with abundant clear skies. The views of Saturn and Jupiter through our telescopes have been incredible. The air has been steady and transparent, providing wonderful images of these planetary systems. In fact, many of our members even commented that they hadn't seen such steady viewing for quite some time.

## Secretary's Report

*Joel Cohen, Secretary*

### Monthly Meeting

Skyscrapers Meeting Hall April 8, 2005

Meeting Start - 7:38 P.M. Dan Lorraine called the meeting to order and asked for completed ballots for election of officers.

**Secretary's Report** - Accepted as published in Skyscraper

**Treasurer's Report** - Read and accepted as posted, call for membership dues

**Trustee's Report** - Rick Arnold announced that a new squirrel has been apprehended in the Clark building and safely relocated elsewhere in Rhode Island

**Librarian/Historian's Report** - Dave Huestis reported that many of the books and other items on loan over the winter had been returned. These items now filling the shelves to an almost overflow status. Dave invited members to take advantage of the many resources and to check something out. Dave also mentioned that he has transferred some of our older VHS format tape items to DVD format.

**Nomination Committee** - Ballots being tallied

**New Business** - New membership applications from James Van Hoff and Anthony Fascia have been received.

**Old Business** - None

**Good of the Organization** - Dan announced that there is a new date for the visit to Whitin Observatory at Wellesley College, May 14, 2005 8 P.M. (see website for directions) Bob Napier brought a video from the Planetary Data Center at Brown University regarding the Deep Impact Mission to Comet Tempel 1. Bob will be giving a presentation on Deep Impact June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at Roger Williams Park Planetarium. Al Hall

If you haven't visited Seagrave Observatory to take advantage of the clear skies recently, I hope for your sake our luck continues, and you will get similar great results at an upcoming Saturday public open night.

Keep your eyes to the skies.

regrettably announced the cancellation of StarConn due to speaker scheduling conflicts. Dan shared photos of this year's visit to Hartness House and the former estate of Robert Todd Lincoln, an amateur astronomer of the late 1800's.

Steve Hubbard announced the speakers for upcoming meetings: for May, 2005, Mark and Carolyn Collins Peterson of Loch Ness Productions, producers of widely acclaimed planetarium programs incorporating various media and educational material. For June, 2005, our scheduled speaker will be Dr. Martina Arndt of Bridgewater State College. Dr. Arndt will be recounting past trips to view eclipses. For July, 2005, Dr. Barbara Welther of Harvard Center for AstroPhysics will join us. Please check the Skyscraper website for dates as many of our upcoming meetings and events will have special times to accommodate schedules of our speakers and other special events.

Steve also announced that Dr. Robert Wilson, discoverer of the Cosmic Microwave Background Signals is tentatively scheduled to speak in August. Dan announced that our keynote speaker at this year's AstroAssembly will be NASA Shuttle Astronaut, Dr. Story Musgrave. Other speakers lined up so far will include Jim Head and William Sheehan. Further details to follow in coming Skyscrapers editions.

Adjournment - 8:06 P.M. Adjournment was followed by the remarks of Dr. Richard Binzel of MIT. Dr. Binzel spoke of Asteroids and the chances of collision with Earth as well as the upcoming mission to Pluto for which he is second in command of the science on the mission.

# Gallery



Star Party and clear skies at Seagrave Observatory, Saturday, April 9. Saturn and Jupiter were prime targets, as well as M-44 and some spring galaxies. Photo by Ted Ferneza



The Audubon Society visited Seagrave Observatory on Friday, April 15<sup>th</sup>. Photo by Jack Szelka.



At the April 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, Dr. Richard Binzel talks about the New Horizons Pluto/Kuiper mission before his main presentation about dangers and benefits of asteroids.. Photo by John Kocur.



## *Astro Assembly 2005*



Please join us on Friday September 30<sup>th</sup> and Saturday October 1<sup>st</sup> for what is sure to be our biggest and best Astro Assembly ever! Our keynote speaker is astronaut Story Musgrave, a veteran of six space shuttle missions. Musgrave spent over 50 hours walking in space on the first Hubble repair mission. His 80-minute presentation is informative, fun, and truly inspirational. Also confirmed for Astro Assembly is Dr. Jim Head from the Planetary Data Center and author William Sheehan.

We will start to publicize this event next month to other astronomy clubs and the general public and we just wanted to give Skyscrapers members the first opportunity to sign up for this event **which is sure to sell out.** Attendance is limited so please send in your registration form as soon as possible.

-----

Send completed form and check to:

Ted Ferneza, Astro Assembly Registrar, 55 Francis Street, N. Scituate, R.I. 02857

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Registrations at \$25.00 each Total \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Banquet tickets at \$17.00 each Total \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

### Buffet Dinner Menu

Wine & Cheese Reception  
Fruit Tray  
Antipasto Salad  
Boneless Chicken and Gravy  
Roasted Pork with Apples  
Swedish Meatballs  
Oven Roasted Potatoes  
Vegetables  
Rolls & Butter  
Pastry & Coffee

*Menu subject to change  
slightly*

Make check payable to Skyscrapers Inc.



## Story Musgrave Links

- Space Story: The Official Home Page of Story Musgrave  
<http://www.spacestory.com/>
- Story Musgrave Biography at Johnson Space Center  
<http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/musgrave.html>
- Academy of Achievement  
<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/mus0pro-1>
- STS-61 Hubble Space Telescope Repair Mission  
<http://science.ksc.nasa.gov/shuttle/missions/sts-61/mission-sts-61.html>

# SKYSCRAPERS, INC. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DID YOU YEAR ABOUT US? \_\_\_\_\_

## Membership Dues

Dues are pro-rated on a semi-annual basis for the dues year starting in April. Amounts in excess of dues are gratefully accepted as a donation.

	Apr-Sept (& renewals)	Oct-Mar	
JUNIOR (13-17)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5	_____
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20	_____
FAMILY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	_____
SENIOR (65+)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5	_____
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> (any amount in excess of annual dues)		_____

## Magazine Subscriptions

- ASTRONOMY  \$29.95 (\$13 savings) \_\_\_\_\_
- SKY & TELESCOPE  \$32.95 (\$10 savings) \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Make check payable to Skyscrapers, Inc.)

Mail to:

Membership Chairperson  
Skyscrapers, Inc.  
47 Peepthead Road  
North Scituate, RI 02857

### **Directions to Seagrave Observatory**

#### **From the Providence area:**

Take Rt. 6 West to Interstate 295 in Johnston and proceed west on Rt. 6 to Scituate. In Scituate bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right onto Rt. 116 North. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

#### **From Coventry/West Warwick area:**

Take Rt. 116 North. Peeptoad Road is the first left after crossing Rt. 101.

#### **From Southern Rhode Island:**

Take Interstate 95 North. Exit onto Interstate 295 North in Warwick (left exit.) Exit to Rt. 6 West in Johnston. Bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right on Rt. 116. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

#### **From Northern Rhode Island:**

Take Rt. 116 South. Follow Rt. 116 thru Greenville. Turn left at Knight's Farm intersection (Rt. 116 turns left) and follow Rt. 116. Watch for Peeptoad Road on the right.

#### **From Connecticut:**

- Take Rt. 44 East to Greenville and turn right on Rt. 116 South. Turn left at Knight's Farm intersection (Rt. 116 turn left) and follow Rt. 116. Watch for Peeptoad Road on the right.
- Take Rt. 6 East toward Rhode Island; bear left on Rt. 101 East and continue to intersection with Rt. 116. Turn left; Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.

#### **From Massachusetts:**

Take Interstate 295 South (off Interstate 95 in Attleboro.) Exit onto Rt. 6 West in Johnston. Bear right off Rt. 6 onto Rt. 101. Turn right on Rt. 116. Peeptoad Road is the first left off Rt. 116.



**47 PEEPTOAD ROAD  
NORTH SCITUATE, RI 02857**