

The Skyscraper

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The monthly publication of



Amateur Astronomical Society
of Rhode Island

47 PeepToad Road
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www.theskyscrapers.org

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See back page for directions to
Seagrave Observatory.

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Sunflower Circle, North Providence, RI
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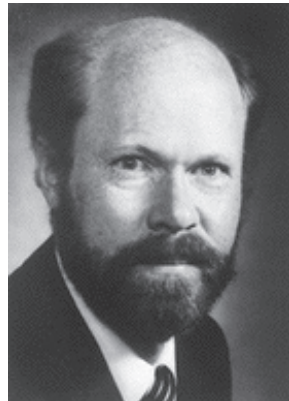
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The Skyscraper

August 2005

August Meeting

THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 7:30PM AT SEAGRAVE OBSERVATORY



Our guest this month is Nobel Laureate Dr. Robert Wilson, currently a Senior Scientist at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. He is best known as the co-discoverer in 1964 of the 3-degree cosmic background radiation, thought to have originated in the early stages of the expansion of the universe. He is currently the technical leader of the sub-millimeter array, an 8-element synthesis radio telescope which SAO is building in conjunction with ASIAA near the summit of Mauna Kea, Hawaii. Professor Wilson is the recipient of the 1978 Nobel Prize in Physics, co-recipient of the Henry Draper medal from the US National Academy of Science and the Herschel medal from the Royal Astronomical Society, London.

AUGUST 2005

6
SATURDAY

8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory

11
THURSDAY

7:30PM **August Meeting**
Seagrave Observatory

13
SATURDAY

8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory

20
SATURDAY

8:15AM **Presidents' Tour of
Historical Astronomical
and Literary Sites of
Providence's East Side**

8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory

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8:00PM **Public Observing Night**
Seagrave Observatory

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President's Message

Dave Huestis, President

Splash and Dash... Patter and Scatter... Just a few words to describe fifteen minutes of our wonderful Skyscraper picnic.

Despite the soaking we got, our July cookout and monthly meeting was a huge success. A special thanks to Dolores and her helpers for preparing such a sumptuous feast. If you went away from the event hungry, it was your own fault!



Thank you Gerry Dyck for providing three different views of the Sun. And thank you to Dan Lorraine for his presentation on the Skyscraper trip to Nantucket. See news elsewhere in this issue announcing a new field trip.

Also, we had a great speaker, Dr. Hanner, who spoke about comets in general, Deep Impact and Stardust in particular. She and her husband Jim had a wonderful time with our group. We hope to invite her back sometime next year after she has had time to analyze the results from the Stardust aerogel collectors (what a neat way to collect dust particles!)

A special thank you to long time member Scott Tracy for donating a much needed wireless lapel mic system. Scott even installed it in time for Dr. Hanner's talk. What a difference it made. Whether she was facing left, right, forward or even toward the screen, everyone in the room heard every word. Thank you Scott for your continued support of Skyscrapers.

And finally, please note the change in date of our August meeting, August 11, to accommodate our speaker, Nobel Laureate Robert Wilson. This is one meeting you don't want to miss. See a bio elsewhere in this issue to see why we are so thrilled and privileged to have him visit Skyscrapers. A special reception is planned to welcome him to Seagrave Observatory.

Presidents' Tour of Historical Astronomical and Literary Sites of Providence's East Side

During the morning of August 20, 2005, join President Dave Huestis and past President Dan Lorraine for a Presidents' Tour of Historical Astronomical and Literary Sites of Providence's East Side.

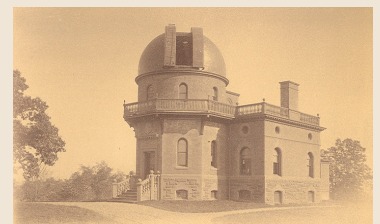
We will meet at Seagrave Observatory at 8:15 am and depart at 8:30 am, car pooling to Providence's East Side.

Very limited walking required.

Please RSVP to me by email at dhuestis@aol.com by August 17, or see me at the August meeting. There is no rain date. If the weather fails us, I will reschedule for sometime in the fall.

SITES TO VISIT:

- Home of Frank Evans Seagrave
- Home of HP Lovecraft
- Home of Edgar Allan Poe
- Cemetery where both Poe and Lovecraft got inspiration to write a story
- Transit Street where 1769 transit of Venus was observed
- Site of tavern where John Brown, et al plotted the burning of the British ship Gaspee
- Ladd Observatory
- Swan Point Cemetery final resting site of Frank Evans Seagrave, HP Lovecraft, plus many Civil War "celebrities" who were prominently featured in Ken Burns' Civil War series on PBS, and also member and past president of Skyscrapers, Brian Magaw
- Lunch at a local restaurant



Meeting Captain Alan Bean

Gerald Kimber White

On June 8, the Skyscrapers had the pleasure of meeting and hearing from Captain Alan Bean, the Lunar Module Pilot for Apollo 12, fourth man to walk on the moon, and Commander of Skylab Mission II. Captain Bean was the guest speaker at the annual Celebrity/Scholarship Dinner hosted by the Center for Business Research at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. In the entire history of humanity, out of the billions and billions of people who have ever existed, only twelve people have walked on the Moon. It was an awe-inspiring experience that night to meet one of those twelve.

There was a VIP reception with Alan before the dinner, which many of us attended. It was a nice opportunity to meet Alan in an intimate setting, speak with him for a few moments and have him sign various memorabilia. People brought copies of Alan's book, Apollo, Apollo-era photos, maps of the Moon and Dan Lorraine even brought a set prop from "That's All There Is," the Apollo 12 episode of the From the Earth to the Moon series.

When I had a chance to speak with Alan during the reception, I told him that my stepfather worked at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, AL, and was the engineer who figured out the angle that the Saturn V rocket had to tip prior to lift-off to avoid colliding with the launch tower. He smiled and responded, "It worked!"

When we weren't speaking with Alan, many of us sat at tables, chatted and enjoyed being in the presence of greatness and historical significance. At the end of the reception, there was a raffle and our own Jim Hendrickson won a beautiful Alan Bean print ("America's Team . . . Just the Beginning," a mural at Space Center Houston) that had been signed and framed.

After the reception, we moved on to the dinner. In a nice show of community support, several businesses had donated tables for the dinner so that local children could come hear Alan speak. Out of the 550 people in attendance at the dinner, 240 were children. Before the dinner, Alan went to each of the kids' tables so that they could have their pictures taken with him. They were thrilled and it would be interesting to know if the dinner and listening to Alan is going to be the spark that propels one of those children to be an astronaut some day. Who knows? Maybe the first man or woman to walk on Mars was sitting with us that night.



After dinner and the rest of the evening's ceremonies, including another raffle in which Steve Hubbard won a signed and framed photo of Alan Bean on the moon, Alan spoke to the crowd about the Apollo 12 mission and the space program. It was a very inspirational, personal talk. He was at times funny, at times motivational, at times educational - always uplifting. Here are some memorable moments from his speech:

- As Alan was talking about how each of us has unlimited potential, he looked out and said, "There are a lot of kids here tonight who have taken and will take many tests in their lives. But you need to know that there is not a test in this world that can tell you what you will accomplish in the future. That is up to you."



- As Alan was talking about space flight and the then-current grounding of the Space Shuttle due to the Columbia accident and subsequent NASA review, he said, "There will never be safe space flight. There will be more accidents and more deaths. But we can't let that stop us anymore than the fact that we know people will have car accidents today can stop us from getting in our cars and driving. We must explore."

- Alan shared a fun insider story from the Apollo 12 mission. He and Pete Conrad discussed bringing an arrowhead to the moon and tossing it onto the ground during their EVA. As they walked back and forth with their video camera, they could casually sweep across the area with the arrowhead and wait for Mission Control to call out in their headsets a few seconds later, "Wait! Wait! Go back!" They decided not to do it because they figured they would get "strung up."

- Alan talked about how the writers of the Bible pictured the Garden of Eden as lying in the Tigris/Euphrates river valley. But when he was at the black and white, sterile Moon and looked back at the colorful, dynamic Earth, the whole Earth looked like the Garden of Eden to him. He said, "We all live in the Garden of Eden and don't even realize it."

- In talking about our uniqueness as individuals, Alan said that we are each a unique combination of thoughts, feelings and experiences and that the "song" in each of us is unique, that "if we don't sing the song in our soul, that it will never be sung in the entire universe ever."

- When Alan splashed down in the Pacific Ocean, he looked out the window at the bobbing blue ocean and the passing clouds and thought they were the most beautiful things he had ever seen. He said he was seeing them with alien eyes after being away for only 10 days. Now, he never complains about the weather, or traffic or standing in line because he is so blessed to

be sharing this beautiful Earth with all of us.

After his talk, Alan stayed as late as his flight would allow and signed autographs for the kids. It was great to hear 8-year olds running away with their eyes on fire as they excitedly told their friends and parents that they "got his autograph!" Actually, I guess we all felt the same way that evening. As Alan was leaving for the night, we grabbed him for a final group picture:

Overall, it was an amazing night. It was certainly one



of the top ten experiences of my life and something I will never forget. We all owe Dan Lorraine a huge thank you for helping the CBR market the event and helping us all to be part of it.

Stardust Shower in August

Dave Huestis, President

Will 2005 be the year we finally break the curse of the clouded out Perseid meteor shower? For more years than I care to remember, despite favorable viewing prospects with a moon-less sky, we've had more than our fair share of clouds on the Perseid peak night(s). The Red Sox finally exorcized the Curse of the Bambino. Can we do the same for this year's August Perseids? Let's see what we have to look forward to.

Fortunately the almost First Quarter Moon will set before midnight during the peak time of the Perseid meteor display. However, though there are

two distinct peaks to the meteor shower, both occur during the daylight hours of the 12th for us in New England. That means that, although we will most likely not see the peak rate of 60 meteors per hour, we will possibly see a good steady rate of shooting stars over the course of two nights.

What nights are those? Mark your calendar for August 11-12, and 12-13. We're lucky the Perseids remain active for several days. So, I would suggest you wait until midnight on either or both nights and find yourself a dark observing site to watch the

meteors streak across the sky. Of course you can try your luck earlier in the evening, but the Moon will be bright enough to “drown out” all but the brightest members of the shower.

Will Mother Nature cooperate and provide clear skies for this celestial fireworks display? You know how fickle the weather has been. We can only hope she has saved some of the good stuff for the remainder of the year.

The Perseids appear to radiate from an area of sky, called the radiant point, in the constellation Perseus. Perseus is well up in the northeast sky after midnight. As he moves up and across the sky, the number of meteors will increase as the night progresses.

Don't forget, a dark sky away from any light pollution is the best way to maximize your viewing opportunities. Also, get comfortable. Don't stand out in a field and simply look up. You'll destroy your

neck that way! Use a lounge chair or place a blanket on the ground, face northeast, protect yourself with mosquito repellent, and enjoy the show. Be careful about deer ticks as well. And don't observe alone.

If we get lucky, the usually green, red or orange Perseids do not disappoint a diligent observer. Fireballs (brilliant and exploding meteors) often accentuate this meteor display. The Perseids are really fast shooting stars too, coming in at around 134,222 miles per hour. If you happen to see a Perseid that looks like a quick flash of light with no streak, think about what is happening. We used to call it a “stationary” meteor. If it appears like a point source, it's heading right for you! Duck!

Let's hope for some decent observing conditions. We don't want to wait 86 years like the Red Sox did, do we??

Keep your eyes to the skies.

Secretary's Report

Joel Cohen, Secretary

Monthly Meeting

July 9, 2005; Skyscrapers Meeting Hall and Grounds

After enjoying the start of the annual cookout, dozens of Skyscrapers and their guests took refuge in the meeting hall as a torrential downpour threatened the continuation of the repast. The rains very quickly let up and the sun again regaled us with marvelous views through Gerry Dyck's twin refractor setup. The grill was relit and all present ate their fill. There were a number of doorprizes given away to the delight of those present.

Meeting Start - At 7pm, Dave Huestis gave a multi-media presentation on the Launch of a Saturn B rocket typical of those carrying the last of the Apollo Soyuz Joint Missions. The presentation marked the 30th Anniversary of the last flight of that type of rocket launch.

Dan Lorraine also gave a short presentation on the recent Skyscrapers field trip to the Maria Mitchell Observatory on Nantucket.

At 7:24pm. Dave Huestis called the July Meeting to order. Dave asked for a moment of silence to note the passing of Bob Howe's father, May 10, and Jim Hendrickson's father, June 21.

Secretary's Report - accepted as published in the Skyscraper

Treasurer's Report - (Bill Kirby not present, no report delivered)

Trustee's Report - Jack Szelka reported that the previous week's work party accomplished much as evidenced by the fine condition of the grounds. Jack noted the efforts of Jerry Jeffrey who cleared the overgrown brush from the perimeter of the parking lot and provided space for parking a number of additional vehicles.

Glenn Jackson mentioned the upcoming speakers, August 11th, Dr. Robert Wilson; September, Marcia Bartusziak; October, Astro Assembly; November, Howard Chun; December, Dr. Barbara Welther. Dave Huestis suggested that we make a video of the August speaker.

Ted Ferneza reported that one third of the available Astro Assembly tickets have already been sold and that announcements are being sent to hundreds of others. A word to the wise regarding the purchase of tickets! Ted mentioned the speaker list includes William Sheehan, Dr. James Head, John Briggs, Dr. Peter Boyce and of our Keynote Speaker, Story Musgrave.

Ted announced that the call for volunteers is out and there is now a sign up board available at the front of the Meeting Hall.

Dave Huestis commented on the upgrade to the



Left: Ted's home-built telescope with white-light solar filter provides safe solar viewing, photo by Marian Juskuv. Center: Skyscrapers enjoy the picnic after the brief rain squall, photo by John Kocur. Right: Dr. Martha Hanner from the University of Massachusetts Amherst gives a talk about comets, including the Deep Impact and Stardust missions, photo by John Kocur

newsletter accomplished by Jim Hendrickson this past month with the incorporation of new software. The on line version of the Skyscraper is now up to 10 pages and includes a number of color photographs. Dave also mentioned the inclusion of a recent article by Glenn Chapel, a noted author who currently writes for Astronomy Magazine. Dave invited contributions to the newsletter by other members.

Librarian's Report - Dan noted the contribution of 10 new items by Gerry Dyck and reminded all that the library is open for lending every meeting.

Historian's Report: Apollo-Soyuz 30th Anniversary presentation before meeting.

New Business - none

Old Business - Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports for June 05 were accepted.

Good of the Organization - Scott Tracy marked the 20th Anniversary of his donation of a Pubic Address system for the Meeting Hall by donating a wireless microphone set up to substantially upgrade the PA equipment. The microphone was subsequently utilized by the evening's featured speaker.

Gerry Dyck noted the AAVSO sponsored symposium, August 8th, at Harvard Center for Astrophysics in Phillips Auditorium will be free admission.

Dave noted that Bob Howe purchased the canopy that Dolores was using at the Cookout and various other occasions and donated it to the Organization.

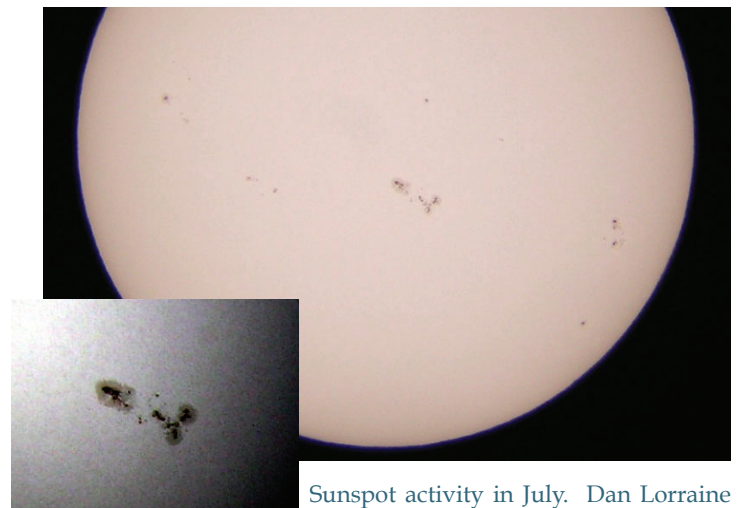
Rick Lynch noted that he had observed Comet Tempel 1 and inquired about others' sightings.

Craig Cortis was observing under fairly dark skies in

Douglas, MA but was unsuccessful. Bob Napier was able to image the comet using the 16" Meade at the Observatory. Dave Huestis thanked Dolores for again marshalling the efforts to stage a successful cookout.

Adjournment - 7:52pm.

Following adjournment, Glenn Jackson introduced the speaker for the evening, Dr. Martha S. Hanner of U Mass Amherst. Dr. Hanner spoke about comets. Her remarks included data regarding comets originating in both the Oort Cloud and the Kuiper Belt. As a lead scientist involved with the Deep Impact Project, Dr. Hanner brought very timely comments and images regarding Deep Impact. Dr. Hanner also provided great insight to the Stardust Mission and a chance to actually touch a sample of the silicate gel used to collect dust in space.



Sunspot activity in July. Dan Lorraine captured this image on July 3 at 9:30am EDT with a 4" Celestron f/10, 24mm Panoptic and Nikon Coolpix 3100. Inset: Ken Dore photographed this close-up of sunspot #783, on July 3 with an Orion 80ED, 7mmNagler, Nikon Coolpix 5600



SKYSCRAPERS INCORPORATED PRESENTS

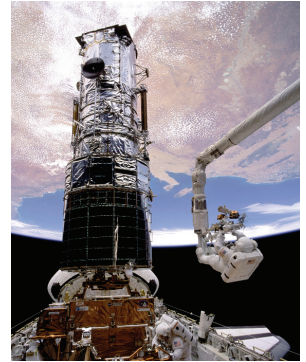
ASTRONAUT STORY MUSGRAVE

AstroAssembly 2005

Seagrave Memorial Observatory



Please join us on Friday September 30th and Saturday October 1st for what is sure to be our biggest and best AstroAssembly 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 presentation is informative, fun, and truly inspirational. **Skyscrapers will have for sale Musgrave's new book, DVD, CD, and photos, and he'll be happy to sign any item purchased at the event.** Also confirmed for Astro Assembly are Dr. Jim Head from the Planetary Data Center, popular science author Dr. William Sheehan, John W. Briggs, and Dr.



Peter Boyce ... with more to come!

Due to space constraints at our facility, attendance is limited and is sure to be a sellout this year! For that reason, **we strongly recommend that you pre-register.** Additionally, tickets for the banquet will not be sold at the door and can be pre-ordered for \$17.00. Our dinner banquet is an all you can eat buffet (see menu below) and has been very successful in past years.

BUFFET DINNER MENU

- Wine & Cheese Reception
- Fruit Tray
- Antipasto Salad
- Boneless Chicken & Gravy
- Roasted Pork with Apples
- Swedish Meatballs
- Pasta w/ sauce (meatless)
- Vegetables
- Rolls & Butter
- Pastry & Coffee

Menu subject to change slightly

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

_____ Registrations at \$25.00 each

Total \$ _____

_____ Banquet tickets at \$17.00 each

Banquet tickets must be pre-ordered. No tickets will be sold the day of the event.

Total \$ _____

Total \$ _____

I would like to give a short 20-minute talk on Friday evening:

Indicate the title of your talk below:

Send completed form and check (made payable to Skyscrapers Inc.) to:

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

Directions to Seagrave Memorial 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