

Saturn, April 19, 2008; 1500 frames AVI video, taken with DBK CCD astronomy camera, processed and stacked in Registaks. Taken through the Meade 16" LX200 at Seagrave observatory. Photo by Tracey Haley.

The Skyscraper

Vol. 35 No. 5 May 2008

SKYSCRAPERS, INC · Amateur Astronomical Society Of Rhode Island · 47 Peepetoad Road North Scituate, RI 02857 · www.theSkyscrapers.org

May Meeting with Arne Henden

Friday, May 2 at Seagrave Memorial Observatory

Arne Henden, director of the AAVSO. Presentation about the AAVSO and variable star observing followed by a live hands on demonstration of actual variable star observing the night after by members, Gerry Dyck, Dave Hurdis and Scott Tracy.

Variable Star Workshop

Saturday May 3rd at Seagrave Memorial Observatory.

8:00pm: Orientation in the Meeting Room.

9:00 Tutored observations of variable stars

Program Highlights: Gerry Dyck will show a PowerPoint introduction to finding the three target stars: R Leo, X Leo, Z Cam. Star charts, JD calendars, etc. will be distributed. The three targets will be located using the club scopes, then participants will be assisted by Dave, Scott & Gerry in finding the targets in their own telescopes and in making and submitting their results.

Sign up with Arne henden at the Friday may 2nd meeting or if you can not make the meeting e-mail Gerry Dyck at geraldpdyck@yahoo.com

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Renewal Reminder:

Dues for the 2008-09 fiscal year are now due. There is a renewal form in the April issue of The Skyscraper.

May 2008

2 Friday	7:30 pm	May Meeting with Arne Henden Seagrave Memorial Observatory
3 Saturday	1:30 pm - 9:30 pm	ASSNE Astronomy Day Barrington Green
	8:00 pm	Public Observing Night & Variable Star Workshop Seagrave Memorial Observatory, weather permitting
10 Saturday	10:00 am - 4:00 pm	Astronomy Day Scituate Green
	6:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Astronomy Day Activities & Public Observing Night Seagrave Memorial Observatory, weather permitting
17 Saturday	8:00 pm	Public Observing Night Seagrave Memorial Observatory, weather permitting
24 Saturday	8:00 pm	Public Observing Night Seagrave Memorial Observatory, weather permitting
31 Saturday	8:00 pm	Public Observing Night Seagrave Memorial Observatory, weather permitting

President's Message

Glenn Jackson

"Home Sweet Home" sure is good to be back at the Observatory for our regular monthly meetings and other activities. I find the Community Center accommodating but the comrade at the Observatory is much more satisfying, as experienced at the last meeting with Dr. Alan Guth. Great meeting with a full house attendance. It is good to see the energy and enthusiasm of the membership on our home territory.

April was filled with multiple star parties. Cranston East High School was a major success. The observing site was great, good horizons, clear skies, and a group of very interested students, teachers and parents. Skyscrapers put on a good show with eleven member telescopes that were able to zero in on the occultation of the Moon and Pleiades, Saturn, Mars, open clusters and other mysteries of the night sky.

May is shaping up to be an exciting month. Arne Henden will present a talk at the monthly meeting on Friday May 2nd which is going to be followed up by a "Variable Star" workshop on Saturday May 3rd at the observatory. Arne Henden, Gerry Dyck, Scott Tracy, and Dave Hurdis have a program organized to introduce all members to the possibilities of observing variable stars. This is going to be a hands on workshop using both the telescopes at the Observatory and member tele-

scopes. Mark your calendar and watch for clear skies. This is one workshop not to be missed.

Also on May 3rd ASSNE, Skyscrapers and Brown University are collaborating on an Astronomy Day on the Barrington Green. We are expecting in excess of 30 telescopes during the day session, with 10 of those being members of Skyscrapers. Last year there were in excess of 1000 people would participated in the Astronomy Day in Barrington. If you would like to help out it is not to late to get on the list of volunteers.

May 10th brings Astronomy Day to Scituate. We have activities planned from 10:00am to 4:00pm on the green in Scituate. Solar viewing, walk the solar system and other demonstrations. There are several activities planned at the Observatory from 6:00pm to 10:00pm, that include making a star wheel, historical walk at Seagrave Observatory, and Public Viewing. Of course to make the event a success we will need lots of support from the membership.

Looking ahead the White Mountain trip has been postponed until a future date. However, Bob Horton is putting together a trip to Washington DC to visit the Old and New Naval Observatories, and other interesting sites. Watch for details.

News & Announcements

1# We are working on handouts for Astronomy Day May 10th. One of our thought was to provide a list of our favorite Astronomy and Space related web sites. Please send your favorite web sites to Dave Huestis at dhuestis@aol.com before May 1st.

2# Our long time neighbor and friend Charles Hebblewaite passed away on April 11th. See obit in the Sunday Projo.

3# May 2nd monthly meeting with Arne Henden from AAVSO

4# May 3rd "Variable Star Workshop" with Arne Henden, Gerry Dyck, Scott Tracy and Dave Hurdis interested? If you are planning on attending contact Gerry Dyck

geraldpdyck@yahoo.com

5# May 3rd Astronomy Day on the Barrington Green in collaboration with ASSNE, Skyscrapers and Brown University. Volunteers still needed. Contact Glenn.Jackson@cox.net

6# May 10th Astronomy Day on the Scituate Green and Seagrave Observatory. Many volunteers needed contact Joe.Sarandrea@cox.net

7# May 30th - June 1st Cherry Spring Star Party <http://www.astrohbg.org/s4/index.php> (one of the best!)



The Skyscraper is published monthly by Skyscrapers, Inc. Meetings are usually held on the first Friday of the month. Public observing is usually held every Saturday night at Seagrave Memorial Observatory, weather permitting.

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Directions

Directions to Seagrave Memorial Observatory are located on the back page of this newsletter.

Submissions

Submissions to *The Skyscraper* are always welcome. Please submit items for the newsletter by May 15 to Jim Hendrickson, 1 Sunflower Circle, North Providence, RI 02911 or email 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.

May Astronomical Highlights

Dave Huestis

There's nothing like waking up during the early morning hours to observe a few shooting stars blaze across the sky. Even if you live near a medium-sized metropolitan community, after midnight street noise is at its minimum and some outdoor lighting gets turned off, leaving the sky less light polluted. You may be the only person for miles around who can really appreciate the beauty such a morning adventure can provide.

If you wish to experience firsthand a predawn scenario like that described above, then mark the morning of May 5th on your calendar. The annual Eta Aquarid meteor shower peaks a couple of hours before dawn's early light brightens the sky.

Though this stream of particles shed by Comet Halley and left in orbit about the Sun is better observed from the southern hemisphere, we do see a fair amount of activity here. And this year astronomers believe we may see a dramatic increase in the number of meteors during the peak time. They've noticed a recurring increase every 12 years, and the beginning of that period starts in 2008 and ends in 2010. So the Eta Aquarids definitely deserve your attention.

Another beneficial factor this year is the Moon phase: the Moon will be New so it will not be present to brighten our view of the sky. We can only hope the sky will be clear!

My suggestion is to set your alarm for about 2:30 am or so and set up outside as soon as you can. Get comfortable in a lawn chair or chaise lounge and face east. The constellation Aquarius, from where the meteors will appear to radiate, only rises low in the east-southeast around that time. As the morning progresses, Aquarius will rise higher into the sky, and with it the number of meteors should increase as well.

Normally about 15-20 meteors per hour can be seen during this shower's maximum activity, but astronomers' forecast of heightened activity means this number could possibly double or even triple at its best in the southern hemisphere. Here in southern New England I think perhaps 25-35 meteors per hour around the 4:00 am time frame might be

more realistic should the increase come to fruition during 2008 at all.

You've got a very limited observing window, since the Sun rises at approximately 5:30 am locally and dawn begins more than an hour before that.

The Eta Aquarids enter our 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. They are swift and yellow in color.

Good luck with your meteor observing, and enjoy the peace and quiet of a predawn mid-Spring morning.

Astronomy Day 2008

Saturday, May 10

Have you ever observed spots on the Sun through a properly filtered telescope? Have you ever walked a scale model of the solar system? Do you have some unanswered questions regarding topics in astronomy? Want to join the second oldest continuously operated astronomical society in the United States?

Then please join the members of the Skyscrapers astronomical society on Saturday, May 10, 2008, 10am – 4pm, on the Scituate Common opposite the North Scituate Public Library on Route 116. Our knowledgeable volunteers will be available to enlighten on these and other astronomical topics.

Are you looking to buy a telescope and don't know where to start? Skyscrapers can assist you. Have a telescope and can't seem to get it to work? Bring your telescope and let our experts help you put it in working order.

Back at Seagrave Observatory (directions can be found at <http://www.theskyscrapers.org>) in the evening at 6:00 pm there will be a hands-on children's workshop for the children to construct and learn how to use a Star Wheel for locating constellations in the sky.

In addition, Skyscrapers historian Dave Huestis will be conducting historical walking tours of Seagrave Observatory from 6 to 8 pm. And at 7:00 pm there will be a public lecture titled "Mysteries of the Night Sky."

Afterwards our guests will be encouraged to observe with the observatory's four main telescopes, as well as with our members own instruments. The almost First Quarter Moon and Saturn will be just a couple of astronomical objects we will be observing.

Skyscrapers looks forward to sharing

our love of the sky with you as we celebrate Astronomy Day on Saturday, May 10, 2008.



Astronomy Day Activities Schedule

All activities are free of charge.

Scituate Common, All Day

- 10am- 4pm Solar Observing
- Walk a scale model of the solar system
- Telescope workshop
- NASA and other astronomical handouts
- Skyscrapers membership info

Seagrave Observatory, evening

- 6pm Make a Star Wheel Workshop and learn how to use it
- 6pm- 8pm Historical Walking Tour of Seagrave Observatory
- 7pm Power Point Presentation "Mysteries of the Night Sky"
- 8pm- 10pm Public viewing at Seagrave Observatory

Mars Meets the Beehive

One other astronomical event I'd like you to view this month occurs over the course of two nights, May 22-23. The Sun sets around 8:10 pm, so you must wait until it gets dark. Face west and look about halfway up the sky from the horizon. You'll first notice a bright, reddish looking star. Well, that's no star. It's Mars! And once the sky darkens you'll observe it is very near a cluster of stars. This cluster is known as the Beehive.

Watch Mars move through the

Beehive cluster these next two nights. While your naked eye will definitely be able to resolve this scene, grab a pair of binoculars for a more splendid view. And if you have even a small telescope, focus your view towards this beautiful apparition. You'll be rewarded with a spectacular sight. (Telescopic observing tip: Start with a magnification/power that provides a view of the entire cluster.)

Mars will be very far from the Earth at this time (approximately 169 million miles), so only a large telescope will

reveal any surface detail. However, with a fair amount of magnification and a few minutes of observation, an observer should be able to see Mars move relative to some of the brighter stars in the cluster. Good viewing!

Don't forget to visit Seagrave Memorial Observatory on any clear Saturday night for a tour of the heavens. Visit our web site for additional information: www.theskyscrapers.org.

Keep your eyes to the skies.

Stellar Compass for Space Explorers

Patrick L. Barry



In space, there's no up or down, north or south, east or west. So how can robotic spacecraft know which way they're facing when they fire their thrusters, or when they try to beam scientific data back to Earth?

Without the familiar compass points of Earth's magnetic poles, spacecraft use stars and gyros to know their orientation. Thanks to a recently completed test flight, future spacecraft will be able to do so using only an ultra-low-power camera and three silicon wafers as small as your pinky fingernail.

"The wafers are actually very tiny gyros," explains Artur Chmielewski, project manager at JPL for Space Technology 6 (ST6), a part of NASA's New Millennium Program.

Traditional gyros use spinning wheels to detect changes in pitch, yaw, and roll — the three axes of rotation. For ST6's Inertial Stellar Compass, the three gyros instead consist of silicon wafers that resemble microchips. Rotating the wafers distorts microscopic structures on the surfaces of these wafers in a way that generates electric signals. The compass uses these signals — along with images of star positions taken by the camera — to measure rotation.

Because the Inertial Stellar Compass (ISC) is based on this new, radically different technology, NASA needed to flight-test it before using it in important missions. That test flight reached completion in December 2007 after about a year in orbit aboard the Air Force's TacSat-2 satellite.

"It just performed beautifully,"

Chmielewski says. "The data checked out really well." The engineers had hoped that ISC would measure the spacecraft's rotation with an accuracy of 0.1 degrees. In the flight tests, ISC surpassed this goal, measuring rotation to within about 0.05 degrees.

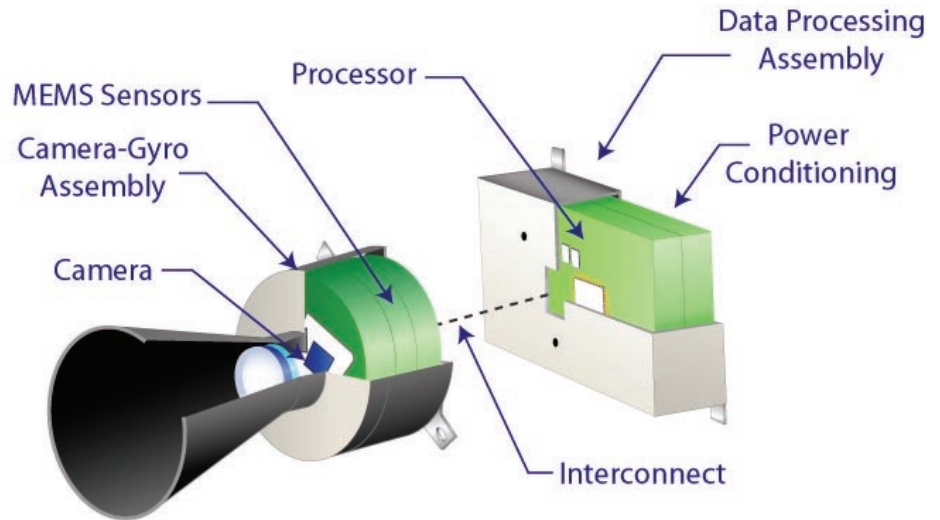
That success paves the way for using ISC to reduce the cost of future science missions. When launching probes into space, weight equals money. "If you're paying a million dollars per kilogram to send your spacecraft to Mars, you care a lot about weight," Chmielewski says. At less than 3 kilograms, ISC weighs about one-fifth as much as traditional stellar compasses. It also uses about one-tenth as much power, so a spacecraft would be

able to use smaller, lighter solar panels.

Engineers at Draper Laboratory, the Cambridge, Massachusetts, company that built the ISC, are already at work on a next-generation design that will improve the compass's accuracy tenfold, Chmielewski says. So ISC and its successors could soon help costs — and spacecraft — stay on target.

Find out more about the ISC at nmp.nasa.gov/st6. Kids can do a fun project and get an introduction to navigating by the stars at spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/st6starfinder/st6starfinder.shtml.





This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



Compass is built as two separate assemblies, the camera-gyro assembly and the data processor assembly, connected by a wiring harness. The technology uses an active pixel sensor in a wide-field-of-view miniature star camera and micro-electromechanical system (MEMS) gyros. Together, they provide extremely accurate information for navigation and control.

May 2008 Celestial Events

Craig Cortis

2	7:00pm	Mercury 2.0° SSE of the center of the Pleiades.
3	6:00pm	Saturn nearest (2.2°) to Regulus (magnitudes 0.6, 1.4).
5	pre-dawn	Eta Aquarids meteor shower peaks.
	8:18am	New Moon.
6	6:00pm	Moon 2.5° N of Mercury.
10	10:00pm	Moon 0.21° NW of the center of M44 (Beehive Cluster).
	11:46pm	First Quarter Moon.
12	early evening	Moon forms small triangle with Saturn and Regulus (< 3.5° per side).
14	12:01am	Mercury at greatest eastern elongation, magnitude 0.4.
	12:01pm	Neptune at western quadrature.
	10:11pm	Full Moon.
22	2:00pm	Saturn at eastern quadrature.
23	9:00am	Mars 0.28° NNE of center of M44 (Beehive Cluster), best viewing between 10:00pm on May 22 through May 23, see page 10..
	10:57pm	Last Quarter Moon.

Mercury is at its best appearance in the evening sky from May 1 - May 23. Between May 6 and May 18 it is at least 10° above the WNW horizon 45 minutes after sunset, with the best appearance on May 13.

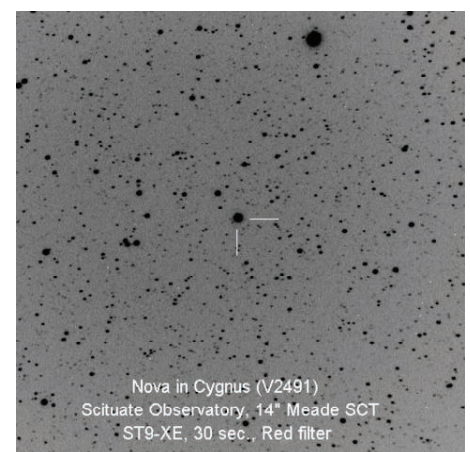
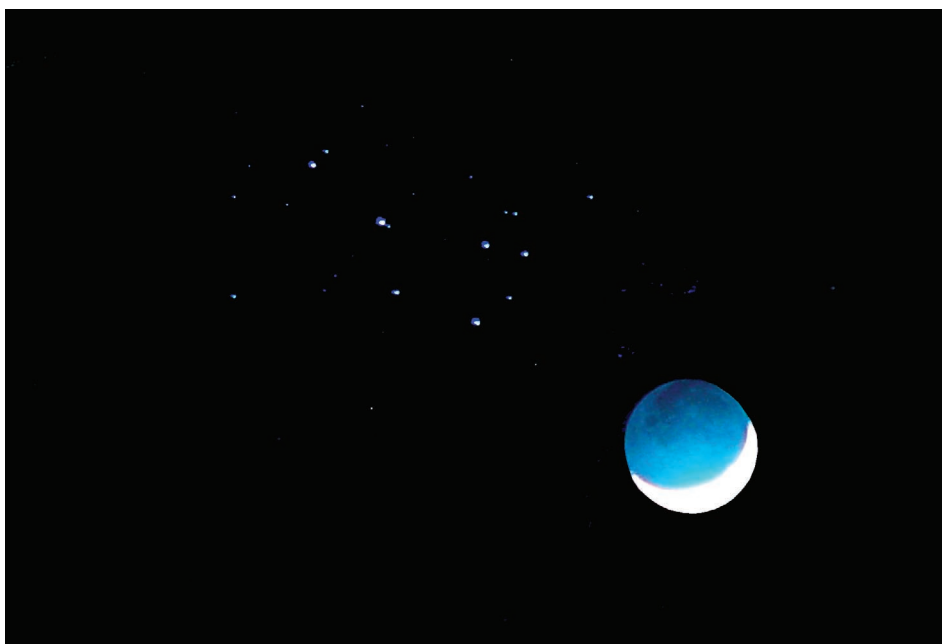
May	Magnitude	Illumination
1	-0.9	72%
9	-0.1	48%
15	0.5	32%
21	1.5	19%
23	1.9	15%

Venus is hidden in the glare of the sun, with superior conjunction on June 9. Venus will become visible in the evening sky at the end of July.

Mars moves from Gemini into Cancer on May 5; sets at 1:15am on May 10 (mag 1.3), 12:50am on May 20 (mag 1.4); diameter 5.22".

Jupiter, in eastern Sagittarius; begins retrograde (westward) motion on May 9. Jupiter rises 12:28am on May 10 (mag -2.4), 11:48pm on May 20 (mag -2.5). Opposition is on July 9.

Saturn, in Leo, Saturn halts retrograde motion and resumes direct eastward motion on May 3; sets at 2:40am on May 10 (mag 0.6), 2:03am on May 20 (mag 0.65).



Nova in Cygnus: April 16, 2008; about 7.5 magnitude. Photo by Bob Napier.

Crescent Moon crosses the Pleiades: April 8, 2008. Photo by Tom Thibault.

April Meeting Notes

Friday, April 4, 2008; Seagrave Memorial Observatory
 Glenn Jackson

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 by president Glenn Jackson

Secretary's Report was accepted as published in the April issue of *The Skyscraper*

Treasurer's Report was accepted as published in the April issue of *The Skyscraper*

1st Vice President Steve Hubbard announced the following speakers: June 6th Gerry Dyck "Cosmological Motifs in Southeast Bronze Drums" • July 12th Father Doug McGonagle "Science and Religion"

2nd Vice President Kathy SiokNo Report

Historian Dave Huestis reported only 6 75th year books remaining to be sold.

Librarian Tom Barbish reports that the library is open and ready for business

Star Party chairman Bob Forgiel listed the following Star Parties: April 8th Cranston East • April 10th Christian Home Educators • April 11th Steere Farm Elementary School cancelled • April 14th Boy Scouts

Trustees Bob Horton and Tracy Haley reported: Jerry Jeffrey resigned his Trustee position due to health reasons • 16" Meade scope out of operation • Work party to be scheduled soon

Nominations Committee:

The following officers were voted in for the 2008-2009 year: President, Glenn Jackson • 1st VP, Steve Hubbard • 2nd VP, Kathy Siok • Treasurer, Jim Crawford • Secretary, Nicole Mechnig • Member at Large, Roger Forsythe • Member at Large, Joe Sarandrea • Trustee, Jim Brenek • New Officers will begin their term at the end of the May 2nd meeting.

New Business: New members Norman and Iyawata Schneider were introduced • Joe Sarandrea was nominated for the position of Trustee.

Old Business: Motion to accept the 2008-2009 budget as proposed by the executive committee was accepted. • New members Graham

Pattison and Tom Thibault were unanimously accepted.

Messier Marathon 2008

Observing results: Robert Moore 28 observations • Jim Hendrickson 37 observations • Glenn Jackson 42 observation (admitted cheating with GO-TO telescope!)

Astronomy Day May10th Scituate Green 10am-4pm • Seagrave Observatory 6pm-10pm • Volunteers needed!

Presidential Information: Mission Moon: Past Present Future @ Roger Williams Planetarium • Membership for the 2008-2009 now due

Good of the Organization: May 3rd Variable Star Workshop with Gerry Dyck, Scott Tracy, Dave Hurdis and Arne Henden is proceeding as planned. • Pete Peterson, a member of Skyscrapers and Astronomical Society of Southern New England (ASSNE), gave a presentation on Astronomy Day in Barrington. Opportunity for collaboration with Skyscrapers, ASSNE and Brown University. Looking for volunteers to assist.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm

Alan Guth gave an enlightening presentation on "Inflationary Cosmology". His data suggest that we are now on the right track for understanding the universe in the period just after the Big Bang. Everyone left with much to think about.

Minutes submitted by Glenn Jackson.



Treasurer's Report

4/1/2007 through 2/15/2008

Jim Crawford

Cash Flow	
4/1/2008- 4/23/2008	
Category Description	
INFLOWS	
75th Anniversary Bookincome	60.00
Other donation	308.10
dues	
Contributing	125.00
Family	650.00
Junior	10.00
Regular	1,240.00
Senior	220.00
TOTAL dues	2,245.00
Savings Acct Interest Inc	90.00
magincome	
Astronomymaginc	306.00
skytelmagincome	197.70
TOTAL magincome	503.70
Starparty	200.00
TOTAL INFLOWS	3,317.70
OUTFLOWS	
Charity	25.00
collation	83.99
membersubscriptions	
Astronomymagexp	306.00
Skytelexp	197.70
TOTAL membersubscriptions	503.70
Miscellaneous, Bus	10.16
Postage and Delivery	41.00
Trusteexp	285.00
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	948.85
OVERALL TOTAL	2,368.85
Checking Acct	\$5,304.54
Savings Acct	\$5,688.66
Capital One Acct	\$10,158.80
Total Cash Available	\$21,152.00



From the Archives:

Meteor observing has always been a keen activity among Skyscrapers. Here, from left to right (late 70's): Jim Lalime, Bill Seliga and Al Hall are blinded by a bright fireball ... -26.0 magnitude at least!



Saturn & moons: Sony DSC-F717, 30 seconds @ f2.4. ISO 400, Orion Shorty Barlow 2X, 40mm EP. 120mm refractor. Camera at maximum zoom, tungsten setting. Satellites from left are: Titan, mag. 8, Rhea, Dione, Tethys, mag. 10, and on the right side of the planet at the 3:00 position, Enceladus, mag. 11.7. Photos taken 03/30/2008., taken 03/30/2008. **Inset:** Saturn orientation shot: Sony DSC-F717, 1/6 second @ f/8, ISO 200. Orion Shorty Barlow 2X, 40mm EP. 120mm refractor. Camera at maximum zoom, tungsten setting, taken 03/30/2008. Photos by Bill Guca.



Above, setting up at sunset in Portsmouth, March 26, 2008. Photo by Steve Hubbard. Right, top to bottom: John Kocur's scope set up for a night of observing, Photo by John Kocur. April 2008. Bob Forgiel at the Portsmouth Star Party. Photo by Jack Szelka. Joe Sarandrea trains his telescope during the Cranston East Star Party, April 8, 2008. Photo by Roger Forsythe.



In Memoriam: Charlie Hebblewaite

Dave Huestis

It is with great sorrow that we note the passing of our dear neighbor Charlie Hebblewaite on Friday, April 11.

We hadn't seen Charlie for a few years as the progression of Alzheimer's forced him to reside in a nearby nursing home.

But before this debilitating disease began to affect him, Charlie was a very active individual. Soon after I joined Skyscrapers in 1975 I was informed by my uncle that the Hebblewaites were close family friends of the Huestis'. Camping and square dancing were activities these two families shared.

And Charlie and his wife Gail were great neighbors of Seagrave Observatory. For many years Charlie was an "unofficial" Trustee or caretaker of our property. On a regular basis he would "patrol" our property as he walked his dogs.

And who could forget two of those companions, Gus and Dewey, who accompanied Charlie on many of those walks. Remind some of us long time members to tell a few funny stories of our adventures with them sometime like the time Gus sauntered away with a child's small telescope in his mouth!!

On several occasions Charlie facilitated some work sessions by allowing Skyscrapers to run a hose from his house over to Seagrave.

This soft-spoken friendly man will be sadly missed at 47 Peeptoad Road. Our thoughts are with Charlie's wife Gail and their entire family.

Skyscrapers has sent a sympathy card to Gail, and a donation has been made in Charlie's memory to Trinity Episcopal Church Capital fund.

And I attended the wake to pay respects on behalf of the entire Skyscrapers organization.

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