

## The Skyscraper

Vol. 29 no. 8

the monthly publication of



### The Amateur Astronomical Society of Rhode Island

47 Peepthead Road  
North Scituate, RI 02857

www.theskyscrapers.org

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See back page for directions to Seagrave Observatory.

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

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# The Skyscraper

August 2002

## “From Earth to the Moon”

Friday, August 2, 7:30pm at Seagrave Observatory

**Andrew Chaikin**, 44, is a Renaissance man. His major occupation is as a writer, having been an editor at Sky & Telescope magazine for many years, and co-authoring The New Solar System, which is the bible for planetary scientists and space artists. In 1986, Andy took a leave of absence from the magazine to complete his pet project—the most complete chronicle of the Apollo project. The result, A Man On The Moon took eight years to complete, and is a classic. This book was the basis for the HBO multi-part series on Apollo, entitled From the Earth to the Moon produced by APOLLO 13's Tom Hanks. Andy has also written numerous articles for magazines such as SCIENCE DIGEST, FINAL FRONTIER, OMNI, DISCOVER, AIR & SPACE, POPULAR SCIENCE, and WORLD BOOK.

While studying geology at Brown University, he worked as an intern on the Viking-Mars project at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Upon graduation, he worked as a researcher at the National Air and Space Museum.

Andy also is a skilled artist, though rarely has time to paint, along with his other activities, such as the guitar, at which he is also quite adept.

Andy's presentation will review Project Apollo, his experiences with the astronauts, and lastly his experiences with Tom Hanks and Hollywood in the making of FROM EARTH TO THE MOON.

NOTE: Andy will be more than happy to sign copies of any of his books that you bring to the meeting.

## Skyscrapers Calendar

Public observing is held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month at Seagrave Observatory, weather permitting.

**August 2  
Friday**      **7:30pm**    **Members' Cookout & August meeting at Seagrave Observatory**

**August 10  
Saturday**      **dusk**      **Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory**

**August 24  
Saturday**      **5:00pm**    **Executive Committee meeting at Seagrave Observatory**

**dusk**      **Public Observing Night at Seagrave Observatory**

# President's Message

*Steve Hubbard*

I am writing this to all of you the day after our first annual (hopefully) club cookout. What a GREAT day it was!. The weather cooperated, we had over 50 people attend and saw many faces that had been absent for a long time return to visit us. There were even members of the ASGH from Conn. and some people from the ATM's of Boston who came. There was a lot of work that went into this and I want to thank Dan Lorraine for spearheading it, Dolores Rinaldi for providing so much help, the trustees for getting the grounds in shape and everyone else who had a hand in making this one of the highlights of our year. I received many positive comments from members about how much everyone enjoyed this and the feeling of camaraderie that it brought to us all.

For this month, we start off with a bang with Andy Chaikin speaking to us for our monthly meeting. From there, we have Stellafane to look forward to and the often great nights of observing that August can bring. Twilight starts earlier, many of the bugs and humidity of July are gone, the night time temperature is moderate and we start to get into some of the late summer/fall constellations with all that they bring. I don't know about you, but I generally forget about much July observing around here, but always look forward to some fantastic nights in August. I hope that all of you consider joining us at the observatory to see what all the August observing buzz is about.

Don't forget about AstroAssembly this year. Plans are moving forward for our annual October event and if you want to volunteer to help make this THE late fall

destination for many of our members and friends from all over New England, see Bob Howe. I'm sure that he can find something for you to do.

# Secretary's Report

*Pat Landers, Secretary*

## Monthly Meeting

**July 13, 2002**

Call Meeting to Order: 8:40 p.m.

**Treasurer's Report**--Not read. To be put in newsletter.

**Trustees' Report**--The sticking problem exhibited by the slit in the Clark Building has been diagnosed. Hopefully, Bob Horton reports, it will be fixed soon.

**AstroAssembly:** Bob Howe reports that volunteers are needed for setting up the tent, the grill, and the Sunday cleanup. He also needs judges for the astrophoto, telescope, and bake-off. Depending on the speaker, this is the outside chance that the present date, October 5th, may change.

**Good of the Organization:** There is a meeting with the Rhode Island Network for Educational Technology (RINET) tentatively scheduled for August 17, 2002. Jim Hendrickson gave updates on his work on the website, including plans for a database integration, bulletin boards, and more current updates.

**Adjournment:** 9:00 p.m.

# Mid-Summer Meteor Shower

*David A Huestis, Librarian*

I always look forward to the Perseid meteor shower. It's one of those displays of shooting stars that provides observers in dark skies a consistent number of meteors from year to year. All we have to worry about is the phase of the Moon and of course our worse enemy, the weather!

This year we are fortunate that a waxing crescent Moon will set around 10:22 pm EDT on the Perseid peak night of August 12-13. Therefore it will not

interfere with our attempts to observe as many meteors as possible. We will just have to contend with whatever weather Mother Nature sends our way. Last year southern New England clouded over on peak night, not only obscuring our view of the meteor shower, but also denying our view of a display of the northern lights. Let's hope the weather will cooperate this year.

The Perseid meteor shower sports several peaks, so I suggest you start observing about 9:00 pm EDT on the night of August 12. Get yourself comfortable and cast your gaze toward the northeastern sky. The meteors will appear to radiate from the constellation Perseus, which rises in the northeast sky early in the evening. This star pattern will rise higher and higher as the night progresses. Continue to follow Perseus as he traverses the heavens.

Normally the Perseid shower produces about 60 meteors per hour, but a few years ago that number had risen to 120 or so per hour. Folks with clear skies last year only counted 20 to 30 Perseids at peak, but that was under a very bright and conspicuous Moon. Perseids are usually green, red or orange. Fireballs, brilliant and exploding meteors, have been more frequent as well in recent years. The Perseids are really fast shooting stars too, coming in at around 134,222 miles per hour.

If the weather forecast for peak night looks questionable, the two nights before and after peak night will provide you with a few Perseids to observe. We already know the sky will be Moon-free just after 10:00 pm on the night of August 12-13. Let's just hope the sky will be cloud-free as well.

Good luck with the August shower of stardust. Keep your eyes to the skies.

## From the Archives

The date of our August meeting--Friday, August 2--marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "First Annual Amateur Astronomical Convention" (known today as AstroAssembly) at Seagrave Observatory.

Below is a copy of the original announcement for the first AstroAssembly.

SKYSCRAPERS, INC.  
Seagrave Memorial Observatory  
Peep Toad Road  
North Scituate, Rhode Island.

P.O. Box 157  
July 8, 1952

Dear Fellow Skyscraper:

The members have voted to hold their "First Annual Amateur Astronomical Convention" August 2nd. and 3rd. at the Seagrave Memorial Observatory.

The plans have already been formulated and the invitations are being mailed to members of six other Amateur Astronomical Clubs. The clubs are as follows:

Springfield Telescope Makers  
Springfield, Vt.

Bond Astronomical Club  
Cambridge, Mass.

Aldrich Astronomical Society  
Worcester, Mass.

Springfield Stars  
Springfield, Mass.

Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston  
Cambridge, Mass.

Astronomical Society of New Haven  
New Haven, Conn.

Although there is not going to be a registration fee of 50 cents for the Skyscrapers, it is hoped that those members who can will be willing to put a few pennies in the kitty to help defray any small, unforeseen expenses which may arise.

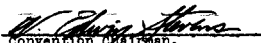
It was been decided that the Skyscrapers will not participate in the prizes, but it is hoped that you will participate in the White Elephant Swap Table. The latter should be fun.

Our ladies will serve another one of their delicious dinners (\$1.50). BE SURE TO GET YOUR TICKETS BEFORE JULY 30th,..... so the ladies will know the number to plan for.

This is the first time our club has undertaken such an affair which will entail considerable work, but the members feel that it will be a step forward and so feel it is a worth while project. We know that the Skyscrapers will be glad to help as they have always done.

Looking forward to seeing you August 2nd. and 3rd, I am

Very sincerely yours,

  
Convention Chairman.

P.S. At the last meeting it was voted for the club to rent a Post Office Box at the North Scituate Post Office, so that the club will have its mailing address at the Seagrave Observatory. Dr. Charles H. Smiley, Mr. Joseph E. Holgate, and Mr. Roy Moone, have kindly paid the box rental fee for one year.

The address will be: Skyscrapers, Inc.  
Seagrave Memorial Observatory  
P.O. Box 157  
North Scituate, Rhode Island.