

## The Skyscraper

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the monthly publication of



The Amateur Astronomical Society  
of Rhode Island

47 Peepload Road  
North Scituate, RI 02857

[www.theskyscrapers.org](http://www.theskyscrapers.org)

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See back page for directions to Seagrave Observatory.

Please submit items for the newsletter by October 15 to Jim Hendrickson, 1 Sunflower Circle, North Providence, RI 02911 or e-mail to [jim@distantgalaxy.com](mailto:jim@distantgalaxy.com)

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# The Skyscraper

October 2002

## AstroAssembly 2002

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Friday, October 4 & Saturday, October 5 at Seagrave  
Observatory

### Friday night:

Informal talks and observing at Seagrave Observatory.

### Saturday

Registration begins at 9:00am. • Visit the Swap Table where you can buy, sell or swap anything astronomical. • Enter competitions for Astrophotography, Telescope-making and the Astro-Bake-off. Match your wits with others in the AstroQuiz. This year, we will also hold a new competition! Details will be available at AstroAssembly. • Win one of many door prizes and enter the big Raffle of things astronomical. This year we are pleased to include a Meade ETX AstroTelescope in our drawing. • Afternoon speakers include Pete Kandefer, of the Litchfield Hills Amateur Astronomers, who will speak about "The Secret Life of Edmund Halley" and "Wild Bill" Luzader who will present his annual AstroQuiz on the topic of Mars. • Get a chance to visit with other participants and old friends. • Have lunch at the Skyscrapers Grill. • Wine & Cheese, Banquet & Evening program at St. Philip's Parish Center (advance registration required) featuring Dr. Peter Schultz, Director of the Northeast Planetary Data Center and the RI Space Grant Program.

## 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.

**October 4  
Friday**      **7:30pm AstroAssembly – Friday night informal talks**  
at Seagrave Observatory. Observing will follow, weather permitting.

**October 5  
Saturday**      **AstroAssembly 2002. Registration begins at 9:00am**  
at Seagrave Observatory

**October 12  
Saturday**      **7:30pm Public Observing Night** at Seagrave  
Observatory

**October 26  
Saturday**      **7:30pm Public Observing Night** at Seagrave  
Observatory

# President's Message

*Steve Hubbard*

One of the things that I enjoy, is to attend star parties held by clubs in other parts of New England. This month, I was fortunate to travel to Northfield MA and attend an event called "The Conjunction." Like our AstroAssembly, it's put on every year by the Springfield Stars club and is one of my favorite astronomical destinations. There were many fine speakers during the day and as so often happens, the observing was great that night too. The skies were velvety black, lots of telescopes were on hand and this year, we were treated to a spectacular, albeit all too short display of the Northern lights. This was a very strong display with not only the common green color many of us have seen before, but lots of strong reds with bright arcing streamers and curtains. It's been a long time since I've seen a good aurora and even longer since I saw one this good. I'm still kicking myself for not having a camera along.

Many of the people I met at the Conjunction told me how much they were looking forward to coming to our AstroAssembly and felt that it was one of the highlights of their year. They like the chance to renew friendships, hear some great talks and just relax in a colorful Fall atmosphere. I often wonder why more Skyscrapers no longer attend some of the local conventions. You miss out on such a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and enjoy our calling together. With many of us facing ever more hectic schedules, we all forget sometimes that a large component of our interest in Astronomy, is the chance to socialize with and learn from others not only in our club, but thru out the area. It's a great touchstone that can be relied on to help center our lives.

What makes events like AstroAssembly and the Conjunction so special and something that we work on all year, is this sense of comradery. I can't understand why more of our members don't take advantage of what we have to offer and attend. I can't encourage enough those of you either on the fence or not interested in coming at all to take a chance, see what it's all about and learn why this too will be your must do Fall destination year after year. I guarantee it!

# Secretary's Report

*Pat Landers, Secretary*

## E-Board Meeting - August 24, 2002

AstroAssembly was the primary topic of conversation. Given that this is the 50th AstroAssembly, it is hoped that as many Skyscrapers as possible attend. Everything is basically in place. The schedule of speakers includes Alan in the late morning, Tim Barker, Bill Luzader, and Peter Kandeher. Dr. Schultz will speak in the evening. There will be a contest for CCD images and bakeoff entrants are encouraged. Lunch prices were set. There may be a CCD demonstration on Friday night.

Other topics included the ongoing restoration of the anteroom in the Clark Building, the cataloging of Skyscraper archives (some which may be scanned), and the removal of gasoline cans from areas around the building.

The need for rest facilities was also discussed; the pros and cons of an electric toilet in the basement were listed. Such a utility would only have the capacity for club members. Or, the possibility of a Champlin Foundation grant for a building extension to house restrooms was mentioned.

Finally, it was reported that the Meade 12 inch needs refurbishing.

## Editor's Note:

### *The Skyscraper online*

In the process of updating and improving the Skyscrapers web site (<http://www.theskyscrapers.org>), we now have the ability to publish and post *The Skyscraper* on the web as a downloadable and printable PDF file. With the cost of postage on the rise, added to the regular printing expense, it has been determined that Skyscrapers could achieve a significant cost reduction if members who had access to the web and email opted to receive the newsletter electronically rather than traditional mail. Another advantage is that the newsletter is posted to the web at least a week sooner than printing and post mail can deliver it.

If you would like to forgo the paper version and instead get your monthly newsletter from the web, please send your name, address, and email address to [jim@distantgalaxy.com](mailto:jim@distantgalaxy.com). Your postal mail subscription to the newsletter will discontinue, and you will instead be notified by email when the new newsletter is published on the web.

# August Perseids Update And Meteor Shower Prospects for October

*David A Huestis, Librarian*

For once in who knows how long, the skies were clear for the August Perseid meteor shower! Now only if the shower itself could have cooperated!! The usually reliable Perseid meteor shower fell well below expectations this year. And it wasn't just here in southern New England. All the data I have seen to date indicates the shower only produced about half of the normal peak rate of 60 meteors per hour.

During a two-hour period on Tuesday the 13th of August, from 2:15 to 4:15 am, I observed 32 Perseids from the dark skies of Burrillville. Other Skyscraper members reported similar observations from throughout the state. Thus far I have seen no explanation for the diminished activity, although last year's numbers were equally low. I hope this reduction isn't a new trend for the Perseids. Of the ones I did observe, only a small percent were very memorable for their brightness and duration. Better luck next year I hope.

Normally I would now turn my attention to the fourth best meteor shower of the year, the Orionids of October. Unfortunately they peak this year on the night of October 20-21. With the full Hunter's Moon occurring at 3:21 am on the 21st, only the brightest of the meteors will be seen.

You might want to try observing the Draconid meteor shower on the night of October 8-9. A waxing crescent Moon will not pose any problems with observing, which is a good thing, as one might see only 10 meteors or less per hour. The Draconids have surprised observers in the past, so be diligent and you might be surprised as well.

The area of sky from where the meteors seem to radiate will be high in the northern sky during early evening, Face north and you'll see Ursa Major, the Big Dipper. Draco stretches between Ursa Major and Polaris, the pole star (which is also the end star in Ursa Minor's (the Little Dipper's) handle, and climbs higher into the sky to the left of Polaris. It would be best to scan this entire region of sky for Draconids.

And last but not least, remember that on Sunday, October 27 at 2:00 am, most of the U.S. reverts back to EST. (Eastern Standard Time). Don't forget the old

saying: Spring ahead, Fall behind! Set your clocks back one hour before retiring on that Saturday night, or you'll be an hour early for everything first thing Sunday morning!!

## For Sale

**Aluminum Storage Case:** Brand New, never used still in the box. Reinforced corners, Triple latched with one locking, Piano hinge with 2 reinforced corner hinges, Recessed padded metal handles, Foam liner 3/8", Four rubber feet, Internal measurements: 23 1/8 (L) x 17 1/8 (D) x 19 1/8 (H).

Price - \$75.00. If shipped, add shipping.

Contact Bruce at 508-856-0514 or email at [bcard17@yahoo.com](mailto:bcard17@yahoo.com)

### 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  
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