

April 2004

Volume 20, Number 4



Martian Chronicles

Newsletter of the Museum Astronomical Resource Society

Upcoming Events

April 2004

Friday 04/09, Club Meeting

Monthly Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the MOSI planetarium.
Program: Venus Transit

Saturday 04/10, MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 7:53 p.m. EDT

Saturday 04/16, SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (possible, call SPAC to confirm) Sunset – 7:57 p.m. EDT

Saturday 04/24, Astronomy Day

At MOSI, details on page 4

Saturday 04/24 MOSI/MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 8:00 p.m. EDT

May 2004

Saturday 05/08, MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 8:09 p.m. EDT

Friday 05/14, Club Meeting

Monthly Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the MOSI planetarium.
Program: Binoculars

Saturday 05/15, MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 8:13 p.m. EDT

Saturday 05/22, SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (possible, call SPAC to confirm)
Sunset – 8:17 p.m. EDT

Saturday 05/29 MOSI/MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 8:21 p.m. EDT

Newsletter Help:

All contributions to the next months Newsletter must be received by the 15th of the current month.

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MOSI SkyWatch: Observing sessions are normally held on the Saturday evening nearest the First Quarter Moon and the two Saturday evenings following. SkyWatch sessions are held at MOSI. Call to check on any schedule changes. The Saunders Planetarium: 813-987-6360; MOSI Information Desk: 813-987-6012

SPAC Star Parties: Hosted by the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club (SPAC). Held on the Saturday evenings nearest the new moon, at Hickory Hill near Brooksville. For more information call the SPAC hotline: 813-792-0721

Have You Checked the Calendar?: Our online club calendar is now being updated with important dates related to club, astronomy, and space events. If you have a question about an upcoming event, be sure to check the calendar. Either go to the club website (www.marsastro.org) and click on the "Online Club Calendar" link near the top of the page, or access the calendar directly by going to URL: <http://calsnet.com/marsastro>

Martian Happenings

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2004

The March meeting of the MARS Club was called to order by Frances Ferguson, president, at 7:45 March 12, 2004 at the MOSI planetarium. There were 27 members and visitors present.

Doug Ordetx introduced the speaker, Frank Locke.

Mr. Locke is a High School Physics, Chemistry and Astronomy teacher in Englewood. He is also involved in NASA's Educator Astronaut Program, which he had agreed to share with us. He began his program with a "Star Trek" introduction with the history of space flight.

He shared with us a position open application for an educator astronaut. Then he led us through the steps he had to take to apply. One of the questions was on what is your classroom like? Which he answered with all of the things he has in his room as well as what all he leads his students through. Other questions were, "Why do you want to be an astronaut? And "What do you think you can do? The application was 22 pages long.

He continued by going through the letters he received and he told about them. His last letter informed him that he was not a finalist for the program.

The program ended with audience participation with a discussion of memories of space flights.

The business meeting included a request for people and telescopes for Viewing on the Dome for the 19th. Al said to please come.

The next programs will be; April, the Transit of Venus and May a program on binoculars. Doug Ordetx requested the members either volunteer for a presentation or name a subject they would like to hear about.

The treasure's report was a balance of \$270.43 with the reserve fund at \$200.00.

We have 29 paid members.

Jimmy Thomas was not present to report on his program on the sun he gave for the library.

Paul DeVillier, chairman of Astronomy Day discussed what he has done so far. Joe Wasielewski has been assisting him. We know we will have 11 tables and may be able to use a classroom for hands on activities.

Craig showed a computer program he has on a transit. This explained what a transit is.

We adjourned at 8:54 so a sleepover group could use the planetarium. Submitted by Mildred Simpson, substitute secretary.

Treasure's Report From Mildred Simpson – As of March 29th, 2004

Total paid membership: 29

Working balance brought forward: \$295.30
Expenses -
New Balance: \$270.43

Reserved fund brought forward: \$200.00
No changes \$ 0.00
New Balance: \$200.00

April Meeting Program:

"The Second Rock from the Sun"

Mildred Simpson will be facilitating the presentation on Venus and the upcoming transit across the sun.

From the "Keeper of the Frog Scope" by Francis Ferguson, President

I really enjoyed meeting Frank Locke and listening to him talk about the process he has gone through with the NASA's Educator Astronaut Program. I have to make a correction from my last month's article. Mr. Locke is Charlotte County's Teacher of the Year. Thank you for inspiring the youth in your classroom and the youth in each of our hearts.

It is been a busy time in the night sky with the five planets lining up to parade across the sky. I hope every one has had an opportunity to view the planets. Maybe it is fitting to have this planetary parade as we approach "Astronomy Day 2004". There has been an increased interest by the public. Many people at the last SkyWatch

asked about the planets and ood and awed while looking at the different planets.

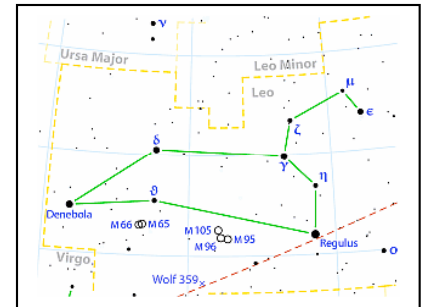
As Astronomy Day approaches I hope everyone will be coming out and helping Paul with the many parts of the Celebration. I am planning on having some of my old stand by displays to be used where they are needed. There is a project for everyone from helping set up the tables to talking to people to providing a smiling face for crowd control.

Remember the time has changed so it will be getting darker later each night. We do have SkyWatch planned for the next few months so keep planning on coming out to MOSI and looking up.

Constellation of the Month - Leo by Craig MacDougal

As we start Spring in earnest here in Florida, we can see the signs. The signs are not as obvious as they are farther north in the U.S. but there are a couple of "sights" that I have come to associate with the coming of Spring. The first is when, as I step outside in the deepening dusk to see if it's going to be a good night, I see the first bat darting around the sky feasting (I hope) on mosquitoes. The second sign, as you probably have guessed, is our constellation of the month. LEO the LION is high in the east at 9:30 in these April evenings. That makes it the perfect symbol of Spring for me. There have been many VERY clear and VERY cold February nights when I have been out very late with my scope. As I came to the end of these sessions of soaking up all the sights of the winter sky, and seemingly soaking up the cold as well, I've looked to the east and saw Leo, and knew that Spring was on it's way. Go out at 9:30 (our new time since Daylight Savings Time has kicked in) and face east. High in the sky, almost straight up you should see a pretty bright star. This is REGULUS, the brightest star in Leo. Regulus is at the base of a backwards question mark (or sickle, if you prefer). The question mark goes off to the left (north) of Regulus and is big enough that you can just cover it up with your hand outstretched, and your fingers together. In the standard depiction of Leo, this is his head with his beautiful mane. Go down from the head about the width of your hand,

with your fingers still together. Here you should find a pretty right-triangle that looks like it jumped out of page 24 of that Geometry textbook that you still have nightmares about. The stars are about the same brightness as the stars in the question-mark, and take up about the same amount of sky. This represents the hindquarters of Leo. In mythology Leo is in the sky mainly because the lion has always been considered the King of Beasts. This particular king is thought to be the one that lived in a cave near Nemea (southwest of Corinth in Greece). His skin was impervious to any weapon and he had this unsettling habit of coming out of his cave and eating the locals. Fortunately for the townspeople of Nemea, the first of the "Twelve Labors" of Heracles (Hercules) was to do in this ravenous beast. Hercules listened as the locals told him that Leo's skin was impenetrable, but tried shooting an arrow anyway. The arrow bounced off as predicted, but Hercules was undaunted. He chased Leo into his cave, wrestled with him and strangled him. He then skinned the lion and wore the pelt as a cloak. Thus if you want to get technical, Leo has been placed in the sky twice. Here in his full glory, and in the less flattering position of being a garment for Hercules, who will be our constellation for June.



Astronomy Day 2004: Theme Venus's Transit – Planets and Moons in Transit

When: Saturday April 24, 2004

10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Where: Museum of Science and Industry

4801 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa, Florida

What we will be presenting:

- Solar observing
- Telescopes from MOSI and club members
- Special activities for children
- "Making a Meteor Crater" demonstration
- Free materials available
- Displays on Astronomy
- Drawings held throughout the day
- Smiling people from MARS to answer questions
- SkyWatch after sunset, weather permitting

Program Coordinator: Paul DeVillier, 813-973-4418

What MARStians need to bring:

- Themselves – we need everyone's enthusiasm
- Provide Project Boards and demonstrations – in place by 10:00 a.m.
- Your telescopes, binoculars, solar filters, etc.
- Special requirements equipment such as extension cords
- Put ID labels on everything you bring
- Wear MARS Club ID tags
- Table covers, such as white sheets
- Old copies of magazines and reference materials to give away to the public

March Sky Watch Crib Notes by Mark Dixon

Compare solar system data with last month. You will see that once again Venus is closer, but the other planets are further away. Regulus is included as it is part of our constellation of the month, Leo. Find Jupiter, Regulus is between Jupiter and the zenith. I used Starry Night Pro set to Tampa and the MOSI/MARS Sky Watch night for the data.

<u>Object</u>	<u>Distance from Earth at 9 p.m. 4/24/2004, Tampa</u>	
Moon	.003 AU	.25 million miles
Venus	0.506 AU	47.06 million miles
Mars	2.122 AU	197.35 million miles
Jupiter	4.802 AU	446.49 million miles
Saturn	9.447 AU	878.57 million miles
Note: Cassini site reporting 31 moons for Saturn		
1 AU is 150 million kilometers or 93 million miles		
(All numbers are rounded and approximate)		

<u>Object</u>	<u>Distance from Earth at 9 p.m. 4/24/2004, Tampa</u>
Castor	51.6 ly
Pollux	33.73 ly
Regulus	77.57 ly
Mizar	78.22 ly
Polaris	432.0 ly
The "speed of light" is about 186,282 miles per second. The distance light travels in one year (ly) is 5,878,507,000,000 miles, or about 6 trillion miles.	

**Newsletter of the
Museum Astronomical
Resource Society**

Martian Chronicles is published monthly by the Museum Astronomical Resource Society (also known as the MARS Astronomy Club) to provide club news and other items of interest to its members. MARS is sponsored by the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI), Tampa, Florida. Annual club membership dues are \$15.00, which may be paid to any officer at club-sponsored events or mailed to the **CLUB MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL ADDRESS** listed below. Make checks payable to Mildred Simpson, our club treasurer. Newsletters are available to nonmembers by requesting a complimentary trial issue. Please send all inquiries, comments and newsletter contributions to the address below. The deadline for submitted contributions is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. Contributions may be delayed in publication due to available space.

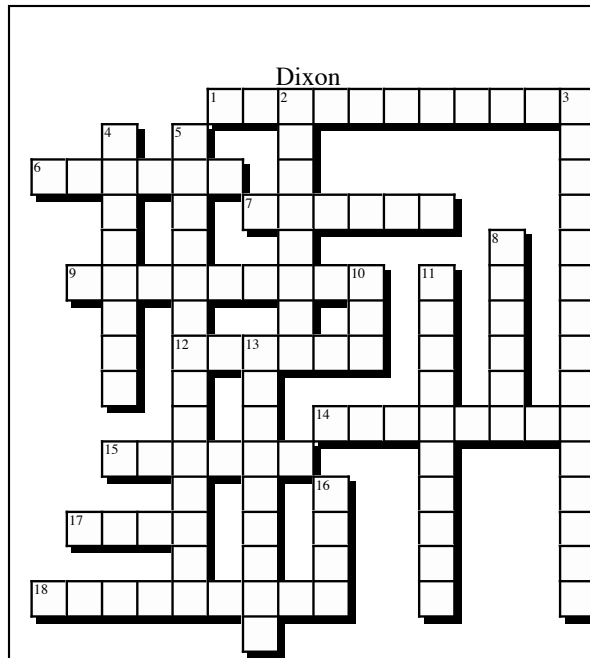
We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.marsastro.org

Membership/Renewal
M.A.R.S.
C/O Mildred Simpson
1522 West River Lane
Tampa, FL 33603

Martian Challenge By Steve Dixon



ACROSS

- 1 French term derived from Greek words for air and to sail.
- 6 The point on the celestial sphere that is directly above the observer.
- 7 A useful unit for measuring the distances between astronomical objects that is equal to 3.26 light years.

DOWN

- 2 The spin of an object around its central axis.
- 3 The apparent change in the position of a nearby star when observed from Earth do to our planets yearly orbit around the sun. (2 words)
- 4 The totality of space and time, and all the matter and energy in it.
- 5 NASA's oldest air launch carrier and research aircraft, the B-52B, is also known as the-----.
- 8 He derived three laws that describe planetary motion.
- 9 On giant planets storms can last for
- 10 Spirit drove ----- hundred meters during its 90 day mission
- 11 The orbital motion of one object around another.
- 12 Hubble's recent Ultra Deep Field photo containing and estimated 10,000 galaxies was taken in which constellation?
- 13 A telescope that uses a transparent lens to gather light and bend it to a focus.
- 14 First United States artificial satellite launched into space ----- 1.
- 15 The windiest planet in the solar system
- 16 number of eyes each rover has

- 17 The Mars exploration rovers mission's have been extended-----months
- 18 An instrument used to observe distant objects by collecting and focusing their electromagnetic radiation.

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Did You Know? – Ozone

“Around the world, the ozone layer averages about 3 millimeters (1/8 inch) thick, approximately the same as two pennies stacked one on top of the other. Source: http://www.nasa.gov/facts/Earth/earth_facts_archives.html

About Our Organization...

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