



Martian Chronicles

Newsletter of the Museum Astronomical Resource Society

Special Interest Articles:

- "Keeper of the Frog Scope"
- Auriga – Constellation of the Month
- Crossword Puzzle
- Spirit Lands Successfully

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Upcoming Events

January 2004

Friday 01/02, 7:00 p.m. What's Up

The Planet Mars and the Current NASA Rover Missions.

Friday 01/09, 7:30 p.m. Club Meeting

Monthly Meeting at MOSI, Program: The Year 2003 In Review.

Saturday 01/17 SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (possible, call SPAC to confirm)

Saturday 01/24 SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (possible, call SPAC to confirm)

Saturday 01/31 MOSI SkyWatch

Sunset at 6:09 p.m.

February 2004

Saturday 02/01, SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (possible, call SPAC to confirm)

Friday 02/13, 7:30 p.m. Club Meeting

Monthly Meeting at MOSI. Program: To Be Announced.

Saturday 02/21, SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (possible, call SPAC to confirm)

Saturday 02/28 MOSI SkyWatch

Sunset at 6:29 p.m.

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

Martian Happenings

Last Meeting:

We had a great time at the December 12th meeting socializing and sharing our favorite snack foods. A special thanks to all who brought items to share.

Before moving to the planetarium for the “Tis’ the Season” show presented by Craig MacDougal, we held our annual election for officers and volunteer appointments. To everyone’s delight, many of our members actually volunteered to take on new positions and responsibilities. Those wonderful people are:

- Frances Ferguson – President
- Douglas Ordetx – Vice President
- Wade Holland – Secretary
- Mildred Simpson – Treasurer
- Steve Dixon – Editor/Web Master
- Jimmy Thomas – Education Outreach
- Mark Dixon – Asst. Editor/Web Master
- Alvin Dozer – Astronomy Day Contact

January Meeting Program:

Frances Ferguson will present “2003, A Year in Review,” or “A Lot of Pretty Pictures.”

Treasurer Report: from Mildred Simpson

My first act as treasurer was receiving a \$2.00 donation from a viewer at Sky Watch. Starting next month, there will be a treasurer’s report printed in the monthly newsletter.

I will gladly accept any membership dues or donations at any time. The dues for new members for January through August are \$11.25.

SkyWatch Reports by Mark Dixon

December 19, Solstice SkyWatch:

I attended the Winter Solstice viewing on top of the Imax dome. My father and I, along with Al Peche, Darren Frazier, Tanja Diederich, and Lisa Adkins manned a total of five telescopes. These five scopes included 16-inch MOSI reflector, three 8-inch reflectors and an 8-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain. A total of 95 people made their way up the stairs to view the night sky from the top of the dome. All were very excited to be there. They “Oohed” and “Aahed” at many different objects including; Mars, Venus, Saturn, The Orion Nebula, and The Andromeda Galaxy, just to name a few. Overall it was a very fun and exciting time for both viewers and astronomers.

December 27, MOSI/MARS SkyWatch:

Club members present at the SkyWatch were Steve Dixon, Frances Ferguson, and Mildred Simpson. Francis and Mildred had their Frog Scope while my dad (Steve) brought his PowerBook with Starry Night Pro. Al Peche and his entourage manned the MOSI telescopes. There were an estimated 75 to 100 MOSI patrons that took advantage of the free viewing.

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

Or otherwise known as Francis Ferguson, MARS President for 2004.

For those of you who may not know me, here is a little of my story. I have always been interested in science. I benefited from growing up with brothers who understood what they were viewing in their homemade telescope during those dark nights on our farm in Tennessee.

After I moved to Florida, I missed the friendship and activities that a club provides. I first learned of the MARS Club during a live satellite viewing of Neptune in 1988. I have been a member ever since that event.

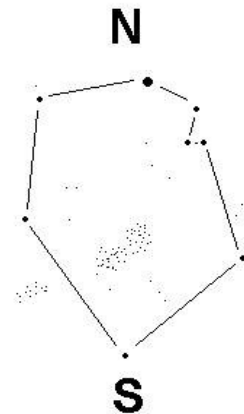
Members have come and gone over the years, but the purpose of the MARS Club has remained the same - providing free telescope viewing of the sky to the public. I enjoy showing people their first view of the moon through my telescope and hearing them say "Wow" regardless of their age.

I look forward to serving as your president through the coming year. This is the first year I can remember when all officer positions have been filled with willing members. I know Doug Ordetx, Wade Holland, Mildred Simpson, Steve Dixon and I will serve the club to the best of our abilities.

Constellation of the Month - Auriga by Craig MacDougal

For our New Year's constellation we turn to one with an unmistakable beacon, and a pretty distinctive shape. However, even though the name and occupation of this celestial character goes back to the ancients, there are at least three different legends that account for what he did to deserve a place in the sky, none of which can be called the definitive story. Go out at our usual 9:00 PM, and face northeast. About three quarters the way up the sky you will come across a distinctly bright star. This is **CAPELLA** (ka-PEL-a), the brightest star in the constellation **AURIGA** (ar-I-ga), the Charioteer. (The what? A guy who drives chariots for a living.) Auriga forms an irregular pentagon shape in the sky that can't quite be covered up with your hand held at arm's length, and your fingers together. Those of you that have been following these monthly constellations on your own star charts probably have already noticed that one of the stars in the pentagon is the same star that represents the tip of one of Taurus' horns. Can two constellations share the same star? Well, yes, and no. Yes, the ancients did it that way, and did the same thing with at least one other pair of constellations. But no, in our modern times, when official boundaries between constellations were decided on, it was also

decided that such "fence sitting" might be confusing, so this star is officially a part of Taurus. But let's go back to Capella for a moment. Capella is a significant star to astronomers because it is believed to be about the same size, temperature, and age as our own sun. Therefore, studying Capella from afar can give us clues as to how our sun fits into the grand scheme of things in our galaxy. It has also been used as a standard brightness reference since it has generally been considered to be non-variable. Recently, some variability has been found, but not enough to mess up everybody's calibrations. Auriga is a fun constellation in binoculars. Just a casual scan within the pentagon will show a lot more stars in interesting chain-like patterns, plus three fuzzy patches that are open star clusters cataloged by Charles Messier. One reason for all this fun is that we are still looking along the Milky Way. Even though the Milky Way is generally mentioned in conjunction with the summer sky, this band of faint light runs from the summer constellations, through Cassiopeia, and after running through Auriga, heads past Orion (next month's constellation). Besides the conflicting stories of who's chariot Auriga drove and why, there is another puzzle. Capella means "she goat"



and the stars that form a skinny triangle next to Capella are called "the kids". Now, while there are some legends regarding a she goat and kids, and there are even some references to a lost constellation about them, nobody has yet found an explanation as to why Auriga, the great chariot driver, is left carrying around a mother goat and her offspring.

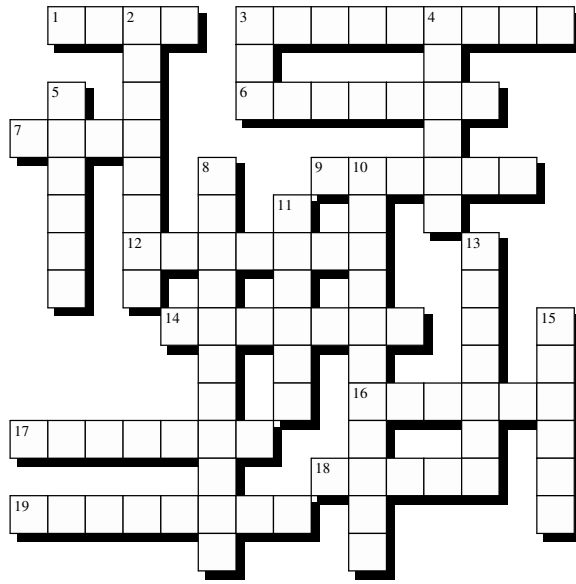
**Newsletter of the
Museum Astronomical
Resource Society**

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
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Martian Challenge



ACROSS

- 1 location of SkyWatch
- 3 Steve Dixon
- 6 <http://www.marsastro.org>

7 \$11.25 until August

- 9 Mars exploration rover
- 12 she goat
- 14 Keeper of the Frog
- 16 constellation of the

- month
- 17 _____ is mother-ship of Huygens probe destined for Titan
- 18 moon of 6th planet that is larger than Mercury or Pluto
- 19 sidewalk viewing at MOSI

DOWN

- 2 Winter _____
- 3 Our favorite word at SkyWatch
- 4 planet that could float in water
- 5 time to view
- 8 Spirit's Brother
- 10 Saunders _____
- 11 one of nine
- 13 _____Chronicles
- 15 seven of nine

Attention MARTIAN subscribers! Bring your completed crossword puzzle to the Web Master at the January meeting for a chewy prize.

NASA Press Release

Spirit Lands on Mars: Mars Exploration Rover Spirit successfully sent a radio signal after the spacecraft had bounced and rolled for several minutes following its initial impact at 11:35 p.m. EST on January 3. Spirit is somewhere in the Gusev Crater. For More info: <http://marsrovers.jpl.nasa.gov> or <http://athena.cornell.edu>

About Our Organization...

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