

March 2004

Volume 20, Number 3



Martian Chronicles

Newsletter of the Museum Astronomical Resource Society

Upcoming Events

Newsletter Help:

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

Dome Sky Watch Help Needed:

Craig MacDougal needs volunteers and telescopes for the MOSI Spring Sky Watch on top of the dome. Contact Craig MacDougal.

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March 2004

Saturday 03/06, MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 6:34 p.m. EST

Friday 03/12, Club Meeting

Monthly Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the MOSI planetarium.
Program: Presentation by Mr. Frank Locke of Englewood

Saturday 03/13, MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 6:38 p.m. EST

Friday 03/19, MOSI Spring Sky Watch

On the Dome -Volunteer

Saturday 03/20, SPAC Star Party

From dusk until dawn at Hickory Hill (possible, call SPAC to confirm) Sunset – 6:41 p.m. EST

Saturday 03/27 MOSI/MARS SkyWatch

Sunset - 6:45 p.m. EST

April 2004

Saturday 04/03, MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 6:49 p.m. EST

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 MOSI/MARS SkyWatch

Sunset – 8:00 p.m. EDT

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, FEBRUARY 13, 2004

The monthly meeting of the Mars Club was called to order at 7:30 p.m. in the MOSI Planetarium. There were 43 people in attendance.

Frances Ferguson, President, presided.

Frances Ferguson presented; 2003 A Year in Review, a slide presentation depicting the astronomical highlights of 2003.

At 8:35 p.m. the Business Meeting was called to order. Frances Ferguson asked for the Committee Chairman reports.

Doug Ordetx, Vice President, announced that any ideas for monthly presentations were welcome and to be directed to him. Mr. Ordetx introduced Mr. Frank Locke, an Englewood teacher of the year for the county. Mr. Locke is also in the teacher astronaut program. He will be giving a presentation in the future. Mr. Ordetx announced that he would like to do a presentation on the new sodium light binoculars in May. The program in April will be on the Venus transit. Paul DeVillier offered to bring in his Astroblast binoculars, which have solar filters.

Mildred Simpson, Treasurer, introduced our new member Paul DeVillier. The treasurer reported that the expenditures from the last meeting were \$11.25 and \$20.24 paid out for stamps and printing leaving the operating fund with a total of \$234.55.

Jimmy Thomas, Education, was unable to be present, but he invites everyone interested to a presentation on the Sun and the NASA Genesis Mission. The presentation will be on March 5, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. in the planetarium.

Frances Ferguson announced that Paul DeVillier has volunteered to serve as the Astronomy Day Coordinator and the club liaison to his school. His students will help make posters for the event. Astronomy Day is scheduled for April 24, 2004. This years theme is: The Transit of Venus.

Frances Ferguson will contact Craig MacDougal to find out how to operate and check out the club telescope.

Frances Ferguson passed out a proposed brochure on the Mars club asking that it be read, corrected, and critiqued for any changes. She will submit the brochure to MOSI for approval.

Joe Wasielewski announced and passed out a Schedule of Activities for 2004.

Paul DeVillier moved to cancel the star observation for Saturday because of the forecast for rain. The motion was seconded and passed.

Wade Holland announced that the Salerno Theatre Co. was presenting Lii' Abner in Hyde Park at the end of February and beginning of March.

Treasure's Report From Mildred Simpson – As of March 1st, 2004

Total paid membership: 29

Working balance brought forward:	\$234.55
Memberships paid in February: Denny Family:	33.75
Casey Flippen:	12.00
Henry Molesky:	<u>15.00</u>
Subtotal:	\$295.30

Reserved fund brought forward:	\$163.13
Donations from Paul De Ville:	36.00
Mildred Simpson:	<u>2.87</u>
Total:	\$200.00

March Meeting Program:

Guest Speaker: Mr. Frank Locke will be discussing the NASA Teacher Astronaut Program and other interesting facts.

Mr. Locke is a teacher from Englewood and the Teacher of the year for Sarasota County.

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

Astronomy Day is Saturday, April 24. It is time for you to start thinking about what you are going to do. Paul De Villier has agreed to be the Astronomy Day Coordinator and MOSI has reserved the lobby for our use on that Saturday. Sky and Telescope and Astronomy Magazines have provided material to hand out again this year. As many of you know I have always enjoyed being part of the Astronomy Day activities and I believe it is important to let people know you don't have to be a rocket scientist to have fun under the night skies. If you are interested in serving on the Astronomy Day Committee, please let Paul or myself know as soon as possible.

I want to thank Mark Dixon for doing a nice job collimating my telescope Saturday night during the MOSI Skywatch.

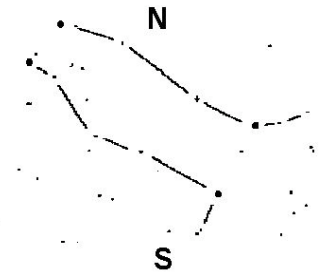
When I first got to MOSI I was holding my breath hoping the clouds would blow over. By the time we got the telescopes out we had clear skies. I want to thank everyone who came out and helped with their telescopes or just talked to the public. I kept hopping between the moon and Orion Nebula (the frog scope has trouble staying on one object). Oh how beautiful Saturn looked through the 12in MOSI scope.

Telescopes are needed for the Spring SkyWatch on top of the dome, Friday March 19th. Most of the MOSI telescopes will be traveling to another location that night. Volunteers are needed to bring their telescopes to the top of the dome and assist with showing the public the night skies. I will be unable to attend but the frog scope will be attending in my place. Let Craig MacDougal know if you will be able to help for this event.

Constellation of the Month - Gemini by Craig MacDougal

This month our prominent constellation is **GEMINI** (JEM-e-ny) the Twins. Go out at about 9:00 face south and look straight up. In fact, it would be better to get a lawn recliner to avoid getting a stiff neck. When looking straight up you should see two stars, pretty bright, but not as bright as Rigel. Although one is about half a magnitude dimmer, they will strike you at first as being about the same. They are separated on the sky by a little under 5 degrees, which is roughly the width of your four fingers held at arms length. A line between them runs towards the northwest (or southeast). Starting at each of these stars, and heading southwest, runs a ragged line of 4 or 5 stars. These lines are about 20 degrees long, which is the width from thumb-tip to pinky-tip when you stretch them as far away from each other as possible. If you are viewing from the city, the stars in these lines may be rather dim looking. If you live in the sticks, you will have to remember to ignore the dimmer stars all around there to spot the pattern of two ragged lines. These two lines represent the twins: **CASTOR** and **POLLUX**. The two bright stars at the head are named for the twins. Pronounce them just the way they look, with the accent on the first

syllable for both. Scan around with binoculars, and you will find a fine sprinkling extra stars since cosmically speaking, you are looking across our back yard. Down at the foot of the "Castor line", you will find a fuzzy patch. This is the open cluster M 35. If you can hold the binoculars steady enough, you might even resolve some individual stars. The mythology of the Twins is a bit complicated. According to the most common version their mother was Leda, Queen of Sparta (that's the easy part). However, they had different fathers and separate twin sisters. Castor's father was Tyndareus, King of Sparta, and his twin sister was named Clytemnestra. Pollux's father was Zeus, who sneaked into the kingdom as Cygnus the Swan, and his twin sister was Helen (later known as Helen of Troy). Furthermore, all four were born AT THE SAME TIME! Besides the interesting family, Castor and Pollux were known far and wide for being an inseparable team. They went with Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. They were so valuable to the sea faring Argonauts, that they became patron saints to sailors of ancient Greece.



RE: “What’s Up: Astronomy for Today – Jimmy Thomas” by Steve Dixon

Well, if you were not there, you missed a great presentation by Jimmy Thomas - “The Dynamic Sun 4.0.” Yes – even the sun has updates now. The biggest challenge of the evening was getting there! A “Lincoln Park” concert at USF created gridlock on the roadway and was the first challenge, followed by the locked East gate to the parking lot, the locked door to the building, and finally – doing Craig a big favor by installing QuickTime on his laptop so we could run the presentation. The MOSI library provided lots of great handouts, and Jimmy had copies of the CD presentation for the educators.

Here are some links provided by the Science Library at MOSI to explore as a follow-up to the presentation:

Genesis Search for Origins – <http://genesission.jpl.nasa.gov/>

Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO) Mission – <http://sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov/>

Solar System-Sun – http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/solar_system/sun/sun_index.html

Ulysses Mission – <http://ulysses.jpl.nasa.gov>

March Sky Watch Crib Notes by Mark Dixon

Compare solar system data with last month. You will see that Venus is closer, but the other planets are further away. Also note that this is the last Sky Watch before we switch to daylight savings time! I have included the distance to Messier object M35 because it is part of our Martian Challenge this month. I used Starry Night Pro set to Tampa and the MOSI/MARS Sky Watch night for the data.

<i>Object</i>	<i>Distance from Earth at 8 p.m. 3/27/2004, Tampa</i>	
Moon	.003 AU	.25 million miles
Venus	0.722 AU	67.15 million miles
Mars	1.897 AU	176.42 million miles
Jupiter	4.510 AU	419.43 million miles
Saturn	9.000 AU	837.00 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)		

<i>Object</i>	<i>Distance from Earth at 8 p.m. 3/27/2004, Tampa</i>
Castor	51.6 ly
Pollux	33.73 ly
M35 Open Cluster	2800 ly Magnitude 5.50
M42 Orion Nebula	1,600 ly
Andromeda	2,200,000 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

This month will be our last Eastern Standard Time Sky Watch until the coming fall. I thought it might be fun to challenge ourselves to be better observers. As our own sage Craig has been heard saying, "I want those photons hitting my eyeball!"

First, lets find and then share with the public Messier object M35. Read Craig MacDougal's "...Gemini" article in this months newsletter for some background to present to our guests. M35 is located at the bottom of the Castor line of stars. Actually, on Sky Watch night, locate Saturn. Then proceed down to the next star Tejat Prosterior (232.1 ly). About 1 degree below that will be the star Propus (350.7 ly). Now turn right and move over 2 degrees and you should find M35, an open cluster about 2800 ly away.

Challenge number two. Jupiter and Saturn offer great viewing this time of year. One of the best ways to sharpen your observing skills is to sketch what you see. Bring some pencils and sketch pad. Try sketching the surface features of these two giants. Draw in the position of any of their moons. I am sure that Craig would be delighted to see your version of his favorite planet, Jupiter. More importantly, you will see things in more detail, be able to coach your viewers to see what you see, and demonstrate to others that you do not have to be high-tech to enjoy astronomy!

Sketch a planet - get a chewy prize for your effort.

If you just have to have a puzzle, try this link. It changes every time you log in!

<http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/kids/activities-word-find.cfm>

Did You Know? Saturn – Lord of the Rings

"The hundreds of rings orbiting around Saturn are made up of billions of ice and rock particles, with sizes ranging from small debris to chunks as big as houses. The rings themselves are believed to be pieces of comets, asteroids or shattered moons that broke up before they reached the planet. Each ring orbits at a different speed around the planet. Data from the Cassini-Huygens mission will help us understand how they formed, how they maintain their orbit and, above all, why they are there in the first place.

While the other three gaseous planets in the solar system -- Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune -- have rings orbiting around them, Saturn's are by far the largest. With a thickness of only 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) or less, they span up to 282,000 km (175,000 miles), about three quarters of the distance between the Earth and the moon."

Source: <http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/news/features/saturn-story/rings.cfm>

About Our Organization...

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