

# The Custer Comment

★ For The Curious ★

June 04

Volume XXXIV, Issue 5

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## ***Venus During Daylight!***



Image, courtesy, Tom Madigan

View of Venus through Custer's pier mounted, GOTO enabled C-14 during daylight hours. This image was captured at 2:15 PM, EST and during Custer's annual Family Day festivities, April 24. Although aiming the instrument at Venus during daylight hours would have proved to be a relatively simple task for a seasoned observer under the exceptionally clear sky, the C-14's GOTO control honed in on our sister world flawlessly.

## ***Transit of Venus, June 8<sup>th</sup>!***

For U.S. East Coast observers the transit is underway at sunrise and ends shortly thereafter, around 7:25 a.m. EDT. More info at <http://www.transitofvenus.org>.

## ***Cassini-Huygens Encounters Phoebe, June 11<sup>th</sup>!***

**June 11, 2004 (19:32 UTC):** Flyby of the furthest moon orbiting Saturn, Phoebe, at an altitude of 2,000 km (1,243 miles). For more info, browse to <http://cassini-huygens.jpl.nasa.gov>.

## ***Action Alert***

Light Pollution Bill, S3003 update. Please see details inside, page 6.

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### **Announcements & General Interest**

- Saturday, June 12;  
Annual Membership Meeting and Elections will begin at 6:00PM. It will be preceded by Custer's annual barbeque and pot-luck, covered-dish dinner from 3:00 – 5:30 PM. Please see full page announcement, page 7.
- Cassini-Huygens  
The intrepid Cassini-Huygens spacecraft will officially commence operations at Saturn on June 11<sup>th</sup> when it arrives at Saturn's most distant satellite, Phoebe, followed by orbital insertion on June 30<sup>th</sup>. NASA Press kits in "PDF" format are available at <http://tmadigan.home.netcom.com/custer> .

## Editor's Column

<p><b>Tom Madigan, Editor</b> Tom Madigan 99 North Summit Ave. Patchogue, NY 11772-2226 <a href="mailto:tmadigan@optonline.net">tmadigan@optonline.net</a> 631-447-5339</p> <p>Cutoff for submissions is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication</p> <p>Visit the new Custer Website at <a href="http://www.custerobservatory.org">http://www.custerobservatory.org</a></p>	<p><b>The Custer Comment is published monthly by</b></p> <p>Custer Institute P.O. Box 1204 Main Bayview Road Southold, NY 11971 631-765-2626</p>
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## Gift Corner & Classifieds

<p><b>We have meteorites.</b></p> <p><b>Great sets mounted in beautiful display cases. Perfect for gifts.</b></p>	<p>The Gift Shop still has a dwindling number of copies of ASTRONOMY FOR ALL AGES, by Philip Harrington &amp; Edward Pascuzzi, just \$20. As an added bonus, copies are signed by Ed Pascuzzi. We also have copies of <i>PARALLAX</i> by Alan W. Hirshfeld, guest speaker at the 2003 Jamboree. Quantities are limited so hurry and add this well-written and informative volume to your collection while supplies last.</p>	<p><b>Back by popular demand</b> We again have the <i>exclusive, 2004 Custer</i> Astronomical Pocket Diary, based on Custer's coordinates. The price is still just \$9 and quantities are limited.</p> <p><b>New</b> <b>Custer logo coffee cups</b> <b>ONLY \$4 EACH</b></p>
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## HEAVENLY EVENTS TO WATCH FOR June 04

“... the difference between sun rising  
and a sunrise  
is between jungle drum and symphony,  
paleolithic grunt and poetry.  
Sun rising is common  
but this morning promises  
uncommon sunrise.”

- Margaret Evelyn Singleton

Don't look for MERCURY in June, for it passes the farside of the Sun at midmonth. But on the morning of June 8, VENUS passes between Earth and Sun in spectacular fashion, and its slim crescent phases can be glimpsed in twilight as the month begins and ends. MARS and SATURN can be seen at dusk early in the month, very low over the west-northwest horizon. JUPITER is fairly high in the west-southwest at dusk, and sets around midnight by month's end.

2 Full Strawberry Moon tonight is near perigee. Tides.

- 6 Use binoculars to find the star Alphard, • Hydrae, low over the west-southwest horizon (well beneath Jupiter) by 10 PM. Just to the left of the star, perhaps the Comet C/2002 T7 (LINEAR) can be seen. We won't get a better view of it after this.
- 8 Sunrise brings a rare transit of Venus, the first to be seen since December 6, 1882. No person alive today has ever seen a transit of Venus before today! (To highlight this event I reprise the poem "Difference" which I also used in May, 2003 for the transit of Mercury at sunrise that month.) Today's uncommon sunrise, around 5:25 AM, will reveal the silhouette of the planet Venus well below the center of the Sun's blazing disk. The round spot, 58 arcseconds across (about one-thirtieth of the Sun's diameter,) will move toward the lower-right edge until it leaves the Sun's disk at 7:26 AM. It is absolutely necessary to stress the importance of **TAKING ALL PRECAUTIONS TO AVOID BEING BLINDED BY THE SUN!** This means use of proper solar filters on the objective end of our telescopes and binoculars. An image of the Sun's disk may also safely be projected on a sheet of white paper or cardboard. Do not try to view this transit of Venus **UNLESS** you are in the presence of someone who has experience in solar viewing!
- 11 News from the outer planets: Today the Cassini-Huygens spacecraft flies by the small Saturnian moon Phoebe, imaging its 130-mile diameter surface. Also, Pluto is at opposition today, at a distance of 2 billion, 770 million miles out beyond the Earth.
- 14 Earliest sunrise is around this date, about 5:20 AM. Latest sunset will be around the 25<sup>th</sup>, at about 8:30 PM. (About halfway between these dates, summer begins.)
- 19 This evening the slim waxing crescent Moon sets to the right of 1.8 magnitude red Mars, and just underneath the even brighter star Pollux.
- 20 Summer begins at 8:57 PM, after sunset. As it reaches the northernmost declination in the sky, the Sun is actually "accelerating" southward at the maximum rate to bring winter back to us.
- 23 Jupiter and the crescent Moon drift westward together this evening.
- 26 The Cassini-Huygens spacecraft is due to arrive at Saturn and will be inserted into orbit around it.

*Prepared by Robert Chapin*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

I would like to remind all members of the ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, which will be held on June 12<sup>th</sup>, rain or shine. The day's events will start with a no cost BBQ and Pot Luck Dinner from 3:00 – 5:30 PM for members and their families only. At 6:00 PM, the Membership Meeting will begin in the lecture hall. Besides the Nominations of Officers and Directors, and Audit of the Books, there is an updated and corrected Constitution and By-Laws to be voted on. Copies of the proposed Constitution and By-Laws were mailed to all members of record last month for your review.

As many of you may not know, the old wooden dome has finally succumbed to dry rot and major mechanical problems, though Jim Eagan has been and continues doing yeomen duty keeping it working with Duct Tape, Bailing Wire and Chewing Gum or similar. We now have rain working its way down to the Library. Your Board has been looking into purchasing a new dome and contracting to have it installed. Thanks to a very major donation of stock, led by members of Custer last fall, and a subsequent partial sale to raise cash, Custer has the funds to make this major repair. It now requires the membership's approval, YOUR APPROVAL, before Custer may expend such a large amount of funds.

The membership meeting will be followed by a lecture by Herbalist Alyce Giorgi at approx. 7:30 PM. I ask all members to make every effort to attend the June 12<sup>th</sup> meeting and let your voice be heard. See you there!

*Bob Vanson*

## **WELCOME TO OUR NEW OR RETURNING MEMBERS:**

Howard Zelizer of Wading River, NY. Welcome one and all!

## **Action Alert**

### NYS light pollution legislation

Yesterday the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee "reported out" the light pollution bill, S3003/A6950. The legislation has now gone on to the Rules Committee, which as you probably know is in charge of "traffic control"--deciding which bills will go the floor for a vote in the hectic closing days of the session.

The principal sponsor of the Senate bill, Carl Marcellino, will need to communicate very forcefully to the Senate leadership his desire to see the bill come to the floor. If you have not already done so, please write Senator Marcellino and urge him to press for release of the bill from Rules.

S3003 also has 12 co-sponsors, listed below. One of the responsibilities of being a co-sponsor is to assist in moving the bill. If your senator is on this list, PLEASE contact him/her immediately with the same message--i.e., urge the Senate leadership to bring the bill to the floor for a vote.

It is a very good idea in these letters to \*ask for a response\*--for example, "please let me know how soon S3003 will come to the Senate floor for a vote"...this helps put a little more pressure on the sponsor to follow through. And please let me know of any replies you receive!

If your senator is not among the co-sponsors, please pick one (or more!) that is in your general area and write to him/her. The location of the district office will give you a clue.

DeFrancisco, Syracuse  
Fuschillo, Freeport  
Hoffman, Syracuse  
Johnson, Babylon  
LaValle, Selden  
Marchi, Staten Island  
Maziarz, Lockport  
Mendez, parts of the Bronx and Manhattan (no district office listed)  
Padavan, Bellerose  
Rath, Williamsville  
Trunzo, Hauppauge

(The 12th co-sponsor, Senator Velella, went to jail last week and is presumably not receiving mail there!)

If you're not sure who your senator is, visit <http://map01.elections.state.ny.us/boe/main.asp> .

Please send a copy of your letter to Joseph Bruno, the Senate Majority Leader who also chairs the Rules Committee (909 Legislative Office Bldg., Albany 12247).

Please do this **\*\*ASAP\*\***! The Legislature is scheduled to adjourn in less than three weeks, and the closer it gets to the end of session, the tougher will be the competition to get action on the Senate floor.

***Your help now is \*\*\*\*\*really\*\*\*\*\* important!*** Please spread the word to everyone you know and ask them to help too. Might you be able to enlist help in this regard from any organizations in which you're active? We think there is a better-than-even chance the Governor will sign the bill if it reaches his desk, but first we've got to get it out of Senate Rules!

***Editor:*** I had recently distributed a packet to the entire membership concerning this very important legislation. The time to act is NOW. If you need additional materials or another packet, please, PLEASE contact me via email or telephone. Thanks.



Saturday, June 12th

**\*\* Annual Membership Meeting and Elections \*\***  
6:00 PM

**\*\* Annual Barbeque & Covered Dish Dinner \*\***  
3:00 PM; Members only!

**\*\* Work Party \*\*** All hands on deck at 10:30 AM

### Upcoming Programs

Sat, July 10: 7:30 PM Alyce Giorgi Herbalist Local Medicinal Plants;  
765-0033

Fri – Sun, July 16, 17, 18 SHELTER ISLAND STAR PARTY AND PIRATES OF  
THE PECONIC KIDS ADVENTURE CRUISE

**Directions:** LIE (495) Exit 73 east Route 58 becomes Rt. 25. Follow 17 miles east,  
make sharp right at Gulf gas onto Main Bayview Rd. Custer is ¼ mile down on left.



## Custer Institute

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

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## CUSTER EVENTS CALENDAR

### **OBSERVATORY DUTY**

Any staff on hand will be more than glad to assist in the operation of the telescope.

### **AT THE INSTITUTE**

Public observing every Saturday night, weather permitting.

**The Custer Comment**

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**CUSTER COMMENT**

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FOWARDING AND ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**FIRST CLASS**