



November, 2004

Volume XXXIV, Issue 8

Executive Board

PRESIDENT

Bob Vanson '05

Radio Astronomy Chair
631-218-2350

bvanson@aol.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Chuck Cardona III '05

Programs & Publicity Chair
631-727-6769
chaz@owl.net

TREASURER

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631-722-3850

barbaraleb@aol.com

SECRETARY

Anna Verticchio '05

631-727-8393
akam10@optonline.net

FINANCE CHAIR

Warren Hamburger '05

631-563-6106

DIRECTORS

Alarico Verticchio '05

631-727-8393
akam10@optonline.net

Dr. Jeffrey Katz '05

631-696-3333

katz@scientific-consultants.com

Jeff Johns '06

631-586-3068
cityslob@aol.com

Kurt Massey '06

631-325-2123
kamassey@peconic.net

Another Year, another Jamboree

Custer's 26th annual Astronomy Jamboree although lightly attended, had many notable speakers in attendance. Friday night, October 15th, saw the opening of this year's jamboree with a stirring read of some of the more notable Astronomical poems with Custer member and life-long Amateur Bob Chapin leading the group. The evening concluded with the singing of the Astronomers Drinking Song, with this editor being a member of the repertoire. Saturday morning, October 16th featured Ryan Wyatt of the Rose Center / Hayden Planetarium who spoke about Partiview, an exciting digital, 3D exploration of the Universe. This incredible software can be downloaded free of charge from the Hayden Planetarium's web site at

<http://www.haydenplanetarium.org/hp/vo/du/download.html>. Susan Harder and Gary Citro of Dark Skies presented a talk on all the exciting progress that's been made on the light pollution front, most notably the recent signing of Suffolk County's landmark legislation explicitly designed to curb light pollution. Saturday afternoon, Stellar evolution from birth to death was explored in a two-part lecture beginning with Dr. Michael Inglis discussing Nebulae. Dr. James Lattimer, professor of Astronomy at S.U.N.Y., Stony Brook concluded with a lecture on Neutron stars. The two lectures were interspersed with an enjoyable lecture on Mars and Saturn from a historical context, entitled 'Paper Planets'. Custer's own Dava Sobel, retired journalist and notable author of 'Galileo's Daughter', spoke eloquently about the contributions of Galileo and the global reach and impact his observations had, even at the beginning of the 17th century. After dinner, Saturday's events concluded with a compelling lecture on NASA's current missions to Mars and Saturn by NASA/JPL's Dr. Richard Terrile.

AOS First Light Dedication

Saturday, October 9th, saw the festive dedication and first light ceremony of the just-completed AOS observatory on the grounds of Custer. Please see details and pictures from the event inside. Overshadowing this memorable event was the tragic loss of AOS members Bob Gunneson and Joe Peselli. Bob and Joe were returning home to Albany in a Cessna 172 with Bob at the controls when, for reasons that are still being investigated by the NTSB, it crash landed with 2 souls onboard and no survivors.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|----|
| November, 2004 | Volume XXXIV, Issue 8 | 1 |
| Executive Board | | 1 |
| PRESIDENT | | 1 |
| VICE PRESIDENT | | 1 |
| TREASURER | | 1 |
| SECRETARY | | 1 |
| FINANCE CHAIR | | 1 |
| DIRECTORS | | 1 |
| Another Year, another Jamboree | | 1 |
| AOS First Light Dedication | | 1 |
| Table of Contents | | 2 |
| Announcements & General Interest | | 2 |
| Satellite Internet Access and other Gifts | | 2 |
| Lunar Eclipse, Wednesday, October 27 th | | 2 |
| Telescope Construction and Optical Fabrication Team Formed | | 2 |
| Editor's Column | | 3 |
| HEAVENLY EVENTS TO WATCH FOR November, 2004 | | 4 |
| Gift Corner & Classifieds | | 5 |
| WELCOME TO OUR NEW OR RETURNING MEMBERS: | | 5 |
| Eulogy for Robert Mahnken | | 6 |
| Two prominent astronomy clubs joined forces | | 7 |
| A Beautiful Night at Custer | | 8 |
| Bob Gunneson and Joe Peselli, Requiescant in Pacem | | 9 |
| High Flight (An Airman's Ecstasy) | | 9 |
| Two Events Remembered in Images | | 10 |

Announcements & General Interest

Satellite Internet Access and other Gifts

Through a generous donation by our friends at Spartan Securities, facilitated by life-time member and Custer vice president Chuck Cardona, Custer will be receiving the following:

1. A minimum 2-year subscription to high-speed Satellite internet access, complete with installation of the state-of-the-art, two-way satellite dish;
2. Large scale flat-screen television;
3. Computer interfaced image projection system that will enhance future lectures and programs at Custer.

Lunar Eclipse, Wednesday, October 27th

A total Lunar Eclipse will occur Wednesday, October 27th for residents of the East Coast of the United States. Please see full page flyer inside for further details.

Telescope Construction and Optical Fabrication Team Formed

We're still looking for volunteers to work on Custer's exciting new telescope project. If you're interested, please contact Kurt Massey using his contact info on the cover page.

Editor's Column

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| <p>Tom Madigan, Editor Tom Madigan 99 North Summit Ave. Patchogue, NY 11772-2226 tmadigan@optonline.net 631-447-5339</p> <p>Cutoff for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication</p> <p>Visit the new Custer Website at http://www.custerobservatory.org</p> | <p>The Custer Comment is published monthly by</p> <p>Custer Institute P.O. Box 1204 Main Bayview Road Southold, NY 11971 631-765-2626</p> |
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Much has happened since the last issue of the Custer Comment was published and I've tried to include it all to the extent that I can. For those of you who receive the printed version, you will have noticed the new method of delivery. I trust this meets with everyone's satisfaction. Using the self-sealing mailers reduces the likelihood of lost and/or damaged copies, while increasing the efficiency of the mailing process. If you have a PC and would like to *receive the Custer Comment electronically*, please send me an email with 'Custer Comment Electronic Version' in the subject to my email address, above. There are many benefits to receiving the Comment electronically, not the least of which is the immediate cost savings realized by Custer.

Best,
Tom

Tom Madigan, Editor

HEAVENLY EVENTS TO WATCH FOR November, 2004

“ I know the stars
are wild as dust
and wait for no man’s discipline
But as they wheel
from sky to sky they rake
our lives with pins of light. “

- Lenard Cohen

In November morning continues to be the better time for seeking out the bright planets. MERCURY is very low in the evening sky after sunset in late November but will be very hard to see. It’s at greatest elongation east of the Sun on the 20th. VENUS is still up in the southeast at daybreak but is clearly losing altitude and lustre during the fall. MARS is beneath Venus and can be seen sneaking up closer to her by month’s end. JUPITER glides by Venus during the first week, and by Thanksgiving it’s rising over the eastern horizon by 3 AM. SATURN is low in the the east-northeast by 9 PM at Thanksgiving and is high in the south, in Gemini, at 3:30 AM. URANUS and NEPTUNE can still be hunted down low in the southwest after nightfall.

- 1 Algol, β (Beta) Persei, is in mid-eclipse at 9:02 PM, and again at 5:51 PM on the 4th. (Add 3 days minus 3 hours, 11 minutes for each successive minimum of this eclipsing variable.)
- 3 Saturn and the waning gibbous Moon share the eastern horizon late this evening.
- 4 Venus and Jupiter are in conjunction today. Compare how they look together at 5 AM this morning with their appearance at the same time tomorrow.
- 8 Saturn begins to retrograde westward just inside the Gemini-Cancer border.
- 9 Enjoy the waning crescent Moon rising above both Jupiter and Venus by 4 AM. Today, Jupiter will be occulted by the Moon. As it is a daytime event, the crescent Moon will be hiding in bright sunlight, about 38° to the west (right) of the Sun. (Tip: Draw a 38° angle on cardboard and use it to search for the Moon WITHOUT having to look at the Sun. Then binoculars might help locate the Moon; then acquire it by telescope to enjoy the occultation.) Around 11:08 AM Jupiter will slide behind the lighted lower-left edge of the Moon, and around 12:15 PM it will emerge at the invisible right edge. (Remember, the Moon is circular, whether or not you see it that way. And DON’T LOOK AT THE SUN! A safe option is to ignore this event and wait for next month’s occultation on the 7th.) If Jupiter’s moons happen to be visible, Europa will be ahead of Jupiter and Io and Ganymede will be bunched behind (east of) the planet.
- 10 At dawn Venus is above the Moon, and Mars is beneath it.
- 11 Retrograde ends for Uranus tonight. Look for some Northern Taurid meteors streaking away from Taurus the Bull.
- 17 Leonid meteors are due in the early morning hours, with no moonlight to get in the way.
- 21 Algol is at mid-eclipse at 10:44 PM, and again at 7:33 PM on the 24th.
- 26 Full Beaver Moon sets around sunrise and rises before sunset.
- 30 Waning gibbous Moon rises with Saturn around 8 PM.

Prepared by Robert Chapin

Gift Corner & Classifieds

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| <p>We have meteorites.</p> <p>Great sets mounted in beautiful display cases. Perfect for gifts.</p> | <p>The Gift Shop still has a dwindling number of copies of <i>ASTRONOMY FOR ALL AGES</i>, by Philip Harrington & Edward Pascuzzi, just \$20. As an added bonus, copies are signed by Ed Pascuzzi.</p> <p>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>50% OFF SALE: THE EXCLUSIVE 2004 CUSTER ASTRONOMICAL POCKET DIARY, BASED ON CUSTER'S COORDINATES. NOW JUST \$4.50 + TAX.</p> | <p>Back by popular demand</p> <p>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>New</p> <p>Custer logo coffee cups ONLY \$4 EACH</p> |
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WELCOME TO OUR NEW OR RETURNING MEMBERS:

Welcome one and all!

Eulogy for Robert Mahnken

The following eulogy was delivered on July 22, 2004 by Barbara Lebkuecher on behalf of the friends and members of Custer Institute.

Back in the late 70s, I became involved with activities at Custer Institute here in Southold, and at that time, came to know a very young amateur astronomer named Robert Mahnken. He was 11 years old. He and his friend, Charlie Cardona, would ride their bikes down Main Bayview Road every Saturday night to do their observing through Custer's many telescopes.

Since then, through the years, we have had many interesting experiences, such as the yearly trips to Stellafane, the famous Vermont star party, and a wonderful trip to the Ohio Star party in Mansfield, just to name a couple.

Time limits me from going into great detail. However, there was always a very reassuring feeling knowing that whatever astronomical event was happening at Custer, Robert would be there to help...sunspot observing, nebula observing, meteor showers, astrophotography, variable star observing, etc.

Robert was great with kids – he was usually on hand to help with the annual Family Astronomy Day activities. His gentle, polite, respectful manner always impressed me. His enthusiasm, intellect and artistry delighted me. His shyness, quietude and reticence mystified me.

All of us who know him and worked with him during his active years at Custer remember him with great fondness and admiration.

He will forever be a part of Custer's history, but he will also be remembered as a good friend who is treasured in our hearts and minds for always.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Custer Institute Dome Fund in Robert's name.
Thank You!

The board and membership of Custer Institute wish to extend a heartfelt and sincere '**Thank You**' to the Mahnken family for their generous donation of Robbie's telescope, eyepieces, books and photography supplies. These items will always hold a special significance to all who use them and who knew Robbie.

Editor: This eulogy should have been included with my tribute to Robbie in the previous issue of the Custer Comment. Please excuse the oversight.

Two prominent astronomy clubs joined forces

By Jeff Johns

In the light polluted sky of long island NY, two prominent astronomy clubs joined forces, to build an observing site in Southold, and the results speak loudly of fun, and friendship. One look at the new facility tells little of what happened, and just how very special it was to get there.

Custer Institute (with 140 members Suffolk County) invited the Amateur Observers Society of NY or AOS (200 members Nassau County) to rebuild and restore a site built in 1938, and years ago was used by Grumman to spy on the satellite Sputnik. The area was heavily overgrown, and walking was difficult, but the Pier, and the deck supports were found, and the project began. A schedule of events was made, and posted on line for the members to read, and the rest is history. The project then took on a life of it's own, absent of any final details of the outcome, twelve members arrived the first day of tree cutting, and nine the next.

It was apparent, this is what they wanted, and were arriving in droves to achieve it. Fifty-eight people in all were responsible for the project's success, and the AOS is bursting with experts in every field. Experts that would rise to the occasion again and again, encouraging others to follow, and they did.

The project took two years to the day, to complete.

When they were hot, they brought water, when it was cold, they worked harder.

The most difficult tasks were performed with smiles and kind words, and not a sour note to be heard, it was like a dream, a dream not soon to be forgotten.

After the work started, an old dome, and a c-14 telescope were donated, then the deck, and pier were built, but that's not the whole story.

The work required was shadowed by the personal commitment to the project, and the overwhelming participation by the members has been staggering to say the least. From the very start, and throughout the project, the board of directors of both clubs, continually demonstrated a cooperative effort that can be easily seen by the decisions that were made, and by the speed they were implemented.

This is the stuff great clubs are made of.

Having just recently returned from the first light party, I can say with certainty, the only thing that truly separates the two clubs, ***are their names.***

A Beautiful Night at Custer

By Gary Citro

Last night, October 9, 2004, was a beautiful night at the Custer Institute Observatory, and I don't mean so much weather wise. Members of the Amateur Observers Society (AOS) and the Custer Institute celebrated "First Light" on the C-14 telescope located inside the newly built AOS Observatory Dome on the Custer property. After the ribbon cutting ceremony officially opened the dome, a monitor placed outside the dome and linked to the scope offered the opportunity for those outside to experience first light simultaneously. The first light object was the star Vega, in the constellation Lyra, The Harp.

The achievement represents a major breakthrough for both the AOS and the Custer Institute, as this alliance has already benefited both organizations and will continue to do so. Appropriately, many photographs were taken of AOS President Susan Rose and Custer Institute President Bob Vanson shaking hands together in front of the dome and at a ceremony held inside Custer's presentation area. During the ceremony, after a slide show presentation detailing the dome construction, Susan Rose and AOS Observatory co-manager Jeff Johns presented awards and pins to conceivably everyone who supported the project, either through manual labor, financial donation, equipment donation, or behind the scenes support. Each person was brought up to the front and their deeds were described by Mr. Johns over the microphone. A plaque permanently mounted inside the dome lists the names of these 60+ individuals. Even the spouses of many of those who dedicated their time and energy were presented a bouquet of flowers.

Additionally, special lifetime AOS Memberships were awarded to Jeff Johns, Bob Buskirk, Dennis Wilde, Bill Bogardus, and Chuck Cardona. All of them went above and beyond in their support of the project. Mr. Bogardus, among other things, donated the scope itself. Mr. Cardona supported the project in innumerable ways, and added an additional surprise at the event by presenting the AOS with a new CCD Camera for the telescope.

A special plaque was presented to Bob Vanson and The Custer Institute, and Mr. Vanson made a moving speech encouraging more people to come out to Custer and to become part of the Custer community. He then presented AOS with the keys to the Custer lavatory!

Food and refreshments were served, and a stunning and scrumptious cake was provided by Jimmy Kay for the cake cutting ceremony. Sue Rose and Bob Vanson made the first cut.

Gary Citro

Bob Gunneson and Joe Peselli, Requiescant in Pacem

Sat was a glorious night that is now being overshadowed by the terrible event of a plane crash that took the lives of AOSers Bob Gunneson and life member Joe Peselli. I have no words to tell you of my grief in hearing this news. Joe was a guiding force in so many things. He paid for the commemorative plaque that bares his and Bob's names. They will be remembered by us all and greatly missed.

Sue Rose

High Flight (An Airman's Ecstasy)

*Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew.
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

Editor: In remembrance of Bob and Joe and while opening the Friday night poetry readings that began this year's Jamboree, Bob Chapin cited the famous poem by *John Gillespie Magee, a [US] Army-Air Force pilot serving in the RCAF. What more appropriate remembrance than to attribute this famous poem of a heroic pilot to Bob and Joe. Bob, a pilot, while doing one of the 2 things he loved in life was just a bit closer to the object of his other love, the stars, spoken of, if only indirectly, in the poem.

The investigation into the plane crash that took Bob and Joe's life is still ongoing by the NTSB. Additional details can be found at

<http://www.capitalnews9.com/content/headlines/Default.asp?SecID=33&ArID=98664&&>

and

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=293818&category=REGIONOTHER&BCCode=&newsdate=10/11/2004>

Via con Dios, Bob and Joe!

* John Gillespie Magee (c. 1922-1941), U.S.-born pilot with Royal Canadian Air Force. High Flight (written 1941). first and last lines of the sonnet. Magee died while on a bombing mission over Germany. The verse was later quoted by President Ronald Reagan following the Challenger pace shuttle disaster in 1986.

Two Events Remembered in Images



Twin Domes of Mount Custer



First Light



Custer President Bob Vanson receiving award



Reception of Awards



Dr. Terrile with budding astronomer



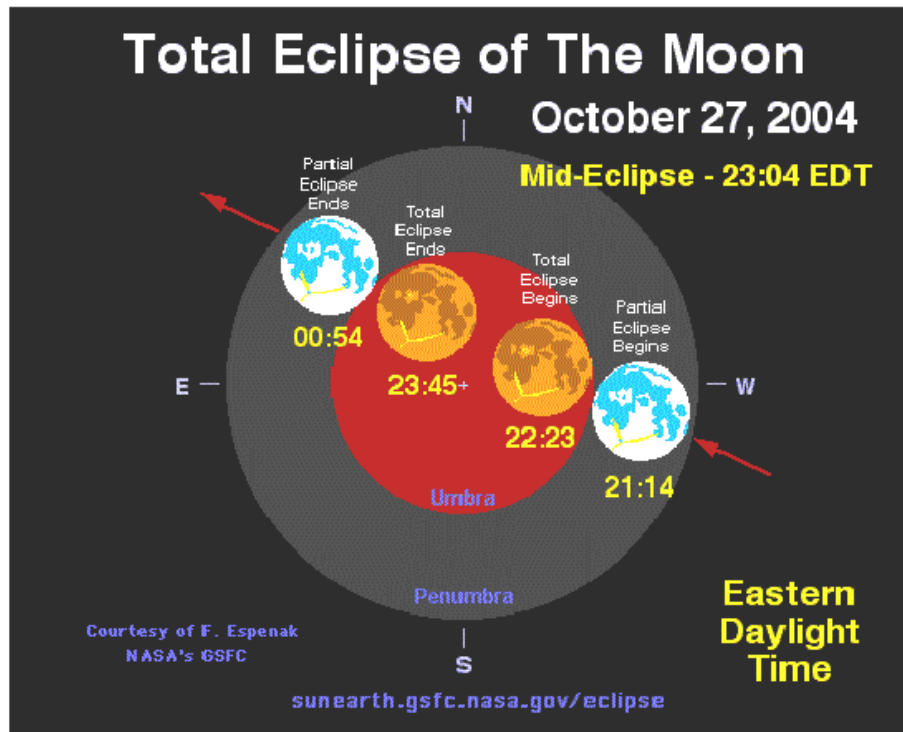
Dr. Terrile discussing Mars rovers

All images, courtesy Tom Madigan, Editor

TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE

WED. OCTOBER 27, 2004

at The Custer Institute, Inc.



Come join us for a wonderful Lunar Eclipse. The pre eclipse class will be conducted at 7:30pm. After which we will go outside and view the eclipse. For those wishing to take pictures, you should bring a tripod and cable release.

From start to finish the eclipse lasts almost 4 hours, not including the difficult to see penumbral phases. This should be a bright eclipse since the atmosphere is quite clear lately. The moon will probably be a bright red or orange color.

Upcoming Programs

Nov. 20 Sat. 7:30 pm David Cohn, Astronomer, The Ring World and the Red Planet

Nov. 27 Sat. 7:30 PM Wandering the North Fork with Mike Killele.

Dec. 4 Sat. 3pm *** CUSTER COVERED DISH HOLIDAY PARTY ***

Bring your holiday favorite dish & a Grab Bag gift. \$10 donation requested.

Must RSVP with headcount attending. Call Barbara Lebkuecher @ 631-722-3850

Directions: I-19 (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

Main Bayview Rd.
 Southold, NY 11971

631-765-2626

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

**TOM MADIGAN, Editor
CUSTER COMMENT**

99 North Summit Avenue
PATCHOGUE, NY

11772

FORWARDING AND ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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