

The W.A.S.P. newsletter

August 2005



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2005 WAS OFFICERS

// August, 2005

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The WASP (Warren Astronomical Society Paper) is the official monthly publication of the Society. Each new issue of the WASP is mailed to each member and/or available online www.boonhill.net/was. Requests by other Astronomy clubs to receive the WASP, and all other correspondence should be addressed to the editor, Cliff Jones, email: cliffordj@ameritech.net

Articles for inclusion in the WASP are strongly encouraged and should be submitted to the editor on or before the first of each month. Any format of submission is accepted, however the easiest forms for this editor to use are plain text files. Most popular graphics formats are acceptable. Materials can be submitted either in printed form in person or via US Mail, or preferably, electronically via direct modem connection or email to the editor.

Disclaimer: The articles presented herein represent the opinions of the authors and are not necessarily the opinions of the WAS or the editor. The WASP reserves the right to deny publication of any submission.



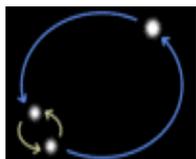
Astro Chatter

by Larry Kalinowski

Here's a view of Comet Temple 1 right after the impact. The fly-by probe took this picture from behind the comet. The comet shows an illuminated phase of a little less than 90 degrees, putting the Sun to the right in the picture. The plume still exists and probably will be visible for quite some time after the impact. The Deep Impact probe may have another comet to investigate. If funding comes through, comet 85P/Boethin will be the next comet scrutinized by its cameras. That'll be sometime in 2006.



discovery of a three star system with a large planet has astounded astronomers. The planet is slightly larger than Jupiter and it takes about three days to orbit the larger star. The planet is too close to its parent sun to have any life on it because of the extreme radiation. It was thought that such a three star system couldn't support planets because of the weird gravitational interaction. In this case, the other two stars are in a long elliptical orbit which keeps them far from the planet. Our theories concerning planetary formation are way out of touch with reality.



How would you like to see three suns in the sky? It could happen, in some other planetary system. The



One of science fiction's most beloved actors passed away recently. James Doohan, the chief engineer on the starship Enterprise, was lovingly known as "Scotty". He was also the man

that transported the Enterprise team down to

bridge of ships (especially military) are now patterned after the bridge of the U.S.S. Enterprise.

So, even though we can not presently have our atoms disassembled, sent to another room and reassembled in perfect order, here is to you, James Doohan, may the energy of your life and that which surrounded it, continue to spark the interest of people everywhere to the importance of science in general and astronomy in particular.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ken Bertin



BOARD MEETING, 7-11-05 by Bob Berta

Cranbrook Meeting started at 6:48

Members in attendance:

Ken Bertin, Norm Dillard, Bob Berta, Jim Shedlowsky,

Bob – minutes read and approved

Norm – Asked for change to Xmas dinner policy to ask attendees to dress upscale a bit.

Ken – Asked that we have policy that speakers must be done by 10:00...will give a 5 minute remaining signal to speaker.

Jim – Trailer report...recommend 5'x8' or 6'x10' maximum. Price range from \$1800 - \$2900 new.

Ordered 30 calendars

Discussion on New observatory site.

Banner...will follow up with Marty.

7:15 adjourned board meeting.



WAS Meetings scheduled for 2005

Cranbrook Meetings – Every 1st Monday

August	1	September	12
October	3	November	17
December	5		

Macomb Meetings – Every 2nd Thursday

August	18	September	15
October	20	November	17
December	15 – Banquet		

August 2005 Calendar

Thursday, Aug 4 • 5:48 pm: The Moon is at apogee (252,669 miles from Earth); 1:05 pm: New Moon

Sunday, Aug 7 • Midnight: The Moon passes 1.2° north of Venus

Monday, Aug 8 • Noon: Neptune is at opposition

Wednesday, Aug 10 • 4:00 am: the Moon passes 1.3° south of Jupiter

Friday, Aug 12 • Perseid meteor shower peaks; 10:30 pm: First Quarter Moon

Sunday, Aug 14 • 9:00 am: The moon passes 0.4° north of Antares

Thursday, Aug 18 • 7:00 pm: The Moon passes 5° south of Neptune.

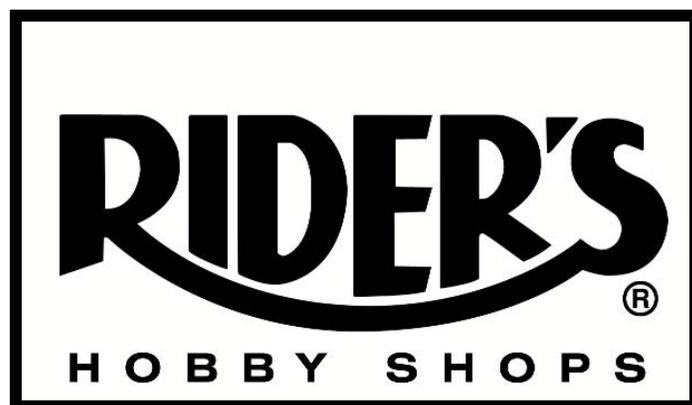
Friday, Aug 19 • 1:36 am: The Moon is at perigee (222,074 miles from Earth); 12 hrs later, Moon is Full

Tuesday, Aug 23 • 7:00 pm: Mercury is at greatest elongation

Thursday, Aug 25 • 3:00 am: The moon passes 6°

Friday, Aug 26 • 11:18 am: The moon passes 6° north of Mars

Wednesday, Aug 31 • 10:35: pm: The Moon is at apogee (252,409 miles from Earth); 11:00 pm: Uranus is at opposition



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(Editor's Note: Bob Berta, our club Secretary, submitted the following 'Must Read' article for publication. Rather than paraphrasing his intro I am including it as it was written to me. Enjoy!)

Cliff,

This is taken from the San Jose Mercury news and is in reference to a documentary movie that is coming out about John Dobson. He was one of the members of my old SF club and still very active...he still teaches telescope making and does sidewalk astronomy. This article was a compilation of many interviews...some of the information was taken in a on line interview Glenda did with me, fellow SF Amateur Astronomy club member and now project outreach head for Cassini Program...Jane Houston, and Bob Naeye (my friend now senior editor at S&T) and famous astronomer Alex Filippenko. As you can see from the article...John is a very "interesting" person...weird cosmology ideas but certainly influenced a lot of people to get involved in astronomy. Many of our members own Dobsonian style telescopes so this will be of interest to them.

Bob Bert

Posted on Sat, Jul. 16, 2005

Apostle to the star-struck shows itinerant life in film

**'SIDEWALK ASTRONOMER' INSPIRES
ADMIRATION AND IRRITATION
By Glenda Chui
Mercury News**

John Dobson, legendary founder of the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers, is a beloved and controversial figure among people who gaze at the stars.

A former Vedantan monk who still lives in self-imposed poverty, he travels the world teaching people how to make cheap telescopes out of junk. For 40 years, he has brought astronomy to the people, dragging his "Dobsonian" telescopes from city streets to national parks.

Yet critics say he has used his fame as a platform to spread nonsense about science and the nature of the universe.

Both sides of Dobson are on display in a documentary, "Sidewalk Astronomer," that opened Friday in the Bay Area. And friends and fans are preparing to celebrate his 90th birthday with a party next month in San Francisco.

"I go to a lot of places. I live out of two bags that go on and off a plane," says Dobson, who spends just

two months a year in his basement apartment in San Francisco.

"If we get the telescopes out to the public," he said, "then when you go to bed you feel you've done something useful."

Nearly 50 years ago, he started building telescopes out of things like porthole glass, cardboard tubes and old record albums, revolutionizing amateur astronomy and giving thousands of people their first direct look at the heavens.

With his white hair pulled back in a ponytail and often topped with a crocheted tam-o'-shanter, he depends on others to keep track of his schedule and get him from place to place. "I can't imagine that anyone has had a life like his," said Andrew Fraknoi, an award-winning astronomy educator at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills.

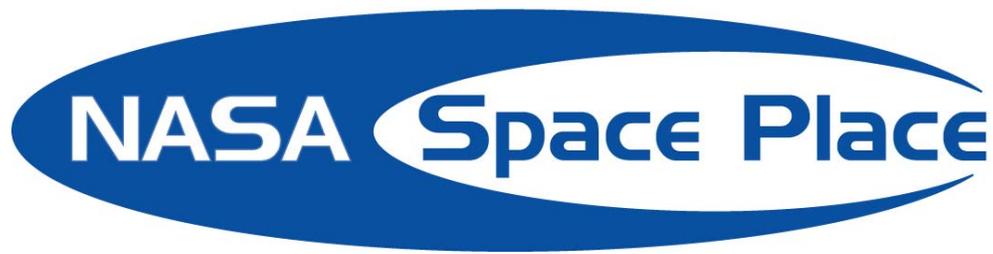
"In the old days we had itinerant songwriters and singers who would go around from community to community to bring the news and sing the songs. They would be a connecting force. That's how I see him, and it's wonderful to watch. He really is a roving ambassador for astronomy."

Lectures criticized

While no one denies Dobson has had an enormous impact, scientists say his lectures on cosmology are pure pseudoscience. He insists, for instance, that Einstein was wrong and the big bang never happened.

Alex Filippenko, an astronomer at the University of California-Berkeley, praises Dobson for his public outreach with telescopes, but threatened four years ago to resign from the California Academy of Sciences if it allowed Dobson to teach a cosmology class there.

"He's an interesting character and he's definitely a free thinker, but in science that's not enough," Filippenko said. "His views on cosmology are completely misguided, wrong and not based on observational or experimental evidence." For his part, the first-time director who made the documentary "A Sidewalk Astronomer" said he thinks Dobson has a lot of courage to champion beliefs that are so far out of the mainstream. "It would be a lot easier for John if he became sort of a senior member of the community based on his invention, his generosity with it and his sidewalk astronomy," said Jeffrey Fox Jacobs, who filmed 45 hours of footage while following Dobson. "But no, he has to speak about a cosmology that goes against the established norm. I think John should be allowed his opinions and his feelings on the matter, given his contributions to all of us."



Newest Weather Sentry Takes Up Watch

by Patrick L. Barry

Today, we've become accustomed to seeing images of the Earth's swirling atmosphere from space every night on the evening news.

Before 1960, no one had ever seen such images.

The first-ever weather satellite was launched that year, kicking off a long line of weather satellites that have kept a continuous watch on our planet's fickle atmosphere—45 years and counting! The high-quality, extended weather forecasts that these satellites make possible have become an indispensable part of our modern society, helping commercial aircraft, recreational boaters, and even military operations avoid unnecessary risk from hazardous weather.

But satellites don't last forever. Parts wear out, radiation takes its toll, and atmospheric drag slowly pulls the satellite out of orbit. Many weather satellites have a design life of only 2 years, though often they can last 5 or 10 years, or more. A steady schedule of new satellite launches is needed to keep the weather report on the news each night.

In May 2005, NASA successfully launched the latest in this long line of weather satellites. Dubbed NOAA-N at launch and renamed NOAA-18 once it reached orbit, this satellite will take over for the older satellite NOAA-16, which was launched in September 2000.

"NOAA always keeps at least two satellites in low-Earth orbit, circling the poles 14 times each day," explains Wilfred E. Mazur, Polar Satellite Acquisition Manager, NOAA/NESDIS. "As Earth rotates, these satellites end up covering Earth's entire surface each day. In fact, with two satellites in orbit, NOAA covers each spot on the Earth four times each day, twice during the day and twice at night," Mazur says.

By orbiting close to Earth (NOAA-18 is only 870 km above the ground), these "low-Earth orbit" satellites provide a detailed view of the weather. The other type of weather satellite, "geosynchronous," orbits much farther out at 35,786 km. At that altitude, geosynchronous satellites can keep a constant watch on whole continents, but without the kind of detail that NOAA-18 can provide.

In particular, low-Earth orbiting satellites have the ability to use microwave radiometers to measure temperature and moisture in the atmosphere—two key measurements used for weather prediction that, for technical reasons, cannot be sensed by distant geosynchronous satellites.

With NOAA-18 successfully placed in orbit, the 45-year legacy of high-tech weather forecasts that we're accustomed to will go on.

Find out more about NOAA-18 and the history of polar-orbiting weather satellites at <http://goespoes.gsfc.nasa.gov/poes>. For kids and anyone else curious about the concept, the difference between polar and geosynchronous orbits is explained at http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/goes/goes_poes_orbits.shtml.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



NOAA-18, the newest in a long line of weather and environmental satellites, launched May 20, 2005.

One final note:

Thanks to Space Place partner Tom Larson of the San Bernardino Valley Amateur Astronomers for the notice of this upcoming show:

Discovery Channel Explores Deep Impact

The Discovery Channel is bringing its unique perspective to NASA's Deep Impact mission. [The show premieres on Sunday, July 31 at 10 p.m. EDT/PDT.](#)

The Discovery Channel's digital animation depicts comets hitting planets as well as scenes from the Deep Impact mission.

The mission, which successfully crashed into Comet Tempel 1 at 1:52 a.m. EDT July 4, is the subject of a two-hour documentary, "Comet Collision!"

The show will use state-of-the-art digital imaging to recreate the craft's journey, ending with NASA footage from the impact itself.

