

Cowichan Valley

StarFinders

Astronomy Society



Uli Steinerstauch 1955 - 2007

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web
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Editor

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President's Message

With the passing of our newsletter editor, Uli Steinerstauch, the job of putting together the monthly newsletter falls to me, at least for the time being. It is not a job that I dislike doing, it's just the reason for having to do it that weighs on me. Uli did a splendid job of editing the newsletter, adding his own style of humour and energy. Indeed, he provided nearly all the material and added a long editorial to each edition. He never complained about the task, even toward the end, when he apologized for not having the January newsletter prepared on time.

Uli had been a member of the CVSF for several years, when we approached him to take on the job of editor. His first issue was January 2005, according to the back-issues he kept. It was at this point where I started to get to know Uli, on a more than casual basis. Through the two years he was editor, I found him to be a great asset for feedback. Taking over the presidency, and feeling my way around, Uli was always supportive, and ever ready to step forward to help me run the club. When I suggested to the members that it would be good to get more member participation in the content of the meetings, Uli was the first to step forward and do a presentation. He was even planning on doing a presentation this past January, but at that point I knew he had to conserve his energy. I suggested he concentrate on his health. Though unspoken, we both knew that even his strength and endurance was going to be no match for the disease that would ultimately claim him.

In the two years that Uli edited this newsletter, many of you expressed to him your appreciation of his effort, and his style. Uli did not say much to these expressions of support, but I know he was pleased to be able to contribute to the club. We did not get a chance to say good by, but we did get a chance to say thank you. In the end, I think that counted the most.

“Now take off your lens caps and turn on the red light.”

Norm Willey

ASTRONOMY PICTURE OF THE DAY



This image was taken on January 26, in Perth, Australia. The fireworks were celebrating a national holiday, but were upstaged by nature's own aerial display. It is just one of the many images available from Astronomy Picture of the Day (APOD), and can be viewed on your computer desktop. I know that some of the members are already aware of this feature, but for the benefit of those who do not, I thought I would mention it. APOD will put a new image on your computer desktop every evening, saving you the effort of changing that pleasantly banal image that came along with Windows! To get these wonderfully diverse daily pictures, go to <http://nightskylive.net/software/apod/> and follow the steps.

CVSF Newsletter on the Net

Our webmaster, Brian Robillard, is working on upgrading the web page so it can be more interactive. I gather Darryl is providing some technical assistance as well. The objective is to produce a web page that can be used to tie CVSF members together, even if they cannot make the meetings. If we proceed with the proposal that all participants on the Island Star Party will also be registered members of the CVSF, we will end up with a fairly large, albeit "virtual" membership. To keep this community together, the newsletter will be a valuable tool in providing not only news, but also a sense of belonging.

Upcoming Events

Astronomy Day is creeping up on us! International Astronomy Week starts April 16, while International Astronomy Day is Saturday, April 21. To mark the day, we will once again be setting up a display at the Farmer's Market, which will be at its new location behind Serious Coffee. I have talked to the Market people and indicated we would be there on the 21st if the sun is likely to make an appearance. Otherwise, we will be there

the following Saturday, again if the sun cooperates. Last year the morning was cold, windy, and threatening rain, so we never did get the scopes set up for viewing the sun. Instead, we just talked to people as they came by, some of whom had some “interesting” ideas (yes, that is the theme song to Twilight Zone you are hearing!). It was my impression that we really need the focal point of solar viewing to draw the interest of the public, and to encourage prospective new members.

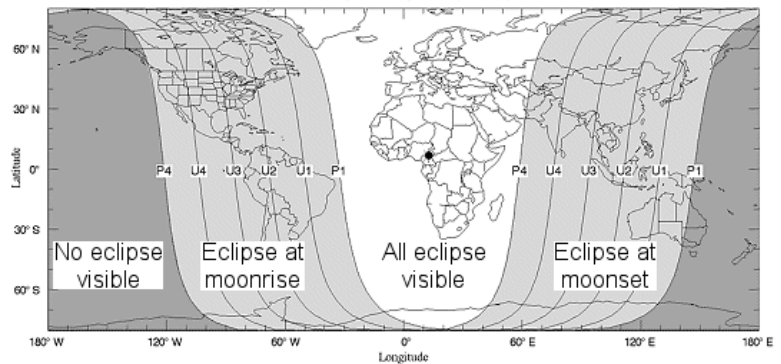
One item we could use for such displays is a sign that identifies who we are. We can afford to have a professional sign made if we can keep the price reasonable (less than \$200 ??), but I have no ideas what it should look like. So please give me some feed back about signs and sign makers! I will also need to know who will be able to help and what equipment you might have for viewing or display.

New Meeting Location

Starting with the March 2007 meeting, we will be in the side room at Serious Coffee, on Boys Road, just south of the bridge over the Cowichan River (“silver bridge”). This will cut down our costs, as the venue is free for our use.

Astronomical Events

By the time you read this, you will have missed the March 2 Total Lunar Eclipse! But don't worry, unless you were in central Africa, you would have missed most of it. As you can see in the diagram from NASA, the eclipse was in decline by the time the moon rose over the Coast Mountains (P4 refers to the last part of the penumbra, or partial shadow).



But don't fret, there will be another Total Eclipse on August 28. It is described in the RASC Observer's Handbook as being a “deep total lunar eclipse” and will be visible for the entire event in B.C. Sounds like a good excuse to get together for an observing party!

During the first two weeks of March, the zodiacal lights will be visible in the west after sunset. It will likely be best appreciated with a time lapse photo, using that new digital camera Mike Dobel is going to recommend during the March meeting! While you have that camera out, you might want to get a picture of the moon in amongst the Pleiades, on March 22. It will be a waxing crescent moon, so it won't totally blob out the stars with over exposure, but it won't be an easy shot.

Lint from the Web

Earth's moon destined to disintegrate

By David Powell

(SPACE.com) -- The sun is midway through its stable hydrogen burning phase known as the main sequence. But when the sun enters the red giant phase in around 5 billion years things are going to get a lot rougher in the Earth-moon system.

During the red giant phase the Sun will swell until its distended atmosphere reaches out to envelop the Earth and moon, which will both begin to be affected by gas drag -- the space through which they orbit will contain more molecules.

The moon is now moving away from Earth and by then will be in an orbit that's about 40 percent larger than today. It will be the first to warp under the Sun's influence.

"The moon's actual path is a wiggly line around the sun, with it moving faster when it is slightly farther out (at full moon) and more slowly when it is slightly closer (at new moon)," said Lee Anne Willson of Iowa State University. "So the gas drag is more effective at the farther part of the orbit and this will put the moon into an orbit where the new moon is closer to Earth than the full moon."

Willson's idea about the moon's demise, explained recently to SPACE.com, is an unpublished byproduct of her research into Earth's fate in the face of an expanding sun.

(The rest of this story is posted at

<http://edition.cnn.com/2007/TECH/space/01/22/moon.destiny/index.html>)

Teaching Astronomy with Science Fiction: A Resource Guide

by **Andrew Fraknoi**

Foothill College and Astronomical Society of the Pacific

The Astronomy Education Review, Issue 2, Volume 1:112-119, 2003

Abstract

One of the great challenges of teaching modern astronomy is that many of the concepts seem abstract and removed from everyday experience. One way to make astrophysical ideas become more concrete and easy to visualize is to introduce your students to science fiction stories based on accurate science.

Not All Bug-eyed Monsters

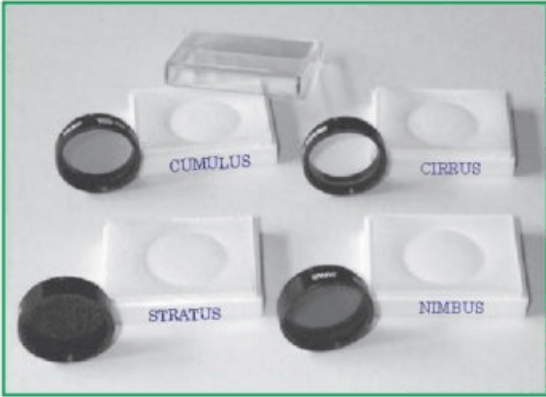
If you have not looked at science fiction writing recently, you may have the impression, reinforced by television and Hollywood, that all science fiction is about bug-eyed

monsters, UFOs, or magic unicorns. So it may come as a surprise that, when it comes to written science fiction, the field has become a lot more sophisticated in its portrayal of science than the popular media would have you believe.

For more information on science fiction written by scientists, visit:

aer.noao.edu/ then go to Back Issues, Volume 1, Issue 2_____

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and public star parties
when those irritating clouds just won't go away!

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