



Winnicentrics

The Journal of the Winnipeg Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

RASC and Variety Camp Brereton

June 15 – 17, 2007

by Marni Dangerfield

Variety Camp Brereton is a welcoming, supportive gem of a place where Variety kids and their families can enjoy many activities thanks to the efforts of numerous 'Proud Volunteers'. The anticipated arrival of the bus carrying anxious guests is evident as last minute details are finished up and a snack is prepared.

The common building where the kitchen, dining and great room activities are held, is the first gathering of the families for a brief introduction, orientation, rules reminder and review of the upcoming days events. Everyone is encouraged to participate as boat rides, fishing trips, kayaks and canoes are all awaiting eager passengers. There is a new play structure, various games, books, a ping pong table, crafts and a beach area for swimming all waiting to enhance the memories of visiting campers. And as a special treat, this weekend boasts an astronomical presentation followed by some up close and personal glimpses of our sky and solar system made possible by members of the RASC.



The atmosphere around camp is consistently enthusiastic, encouraging and supportive as guests enjoy the casual structure that works so well in such a beautiful surrounding. A large triangle dinner bell heard throughout the camp repeatedly summons the group to reassemble, reflect and share stories. Once a home cooked balanced meal is finished, everyone disburses and returns to another activity.



Marni and Samantha serve a hungry crew a hardy meal.

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MEETINGS

Room 118, St. John's College,
University of Manitoba Fort Garry Campus

Friday July 13

7:00-7:30 Beginner's session: Peter Toth: Observing Astronomical Events.

7:30-7:40 Welcome and announcements: Ron

7:40 to 7:50 Constellation of the Month: Cygnus the Swan: Gail Wise

7:50-8:00 What's up: Jay Anderson

8:00-8:30 Report from National GA and What's New: Jennifer West

8:30-8:50 Break

9:00-9:50 Guest Speaker: **Lindsay Price: Biography of the Star Family**

Borrowing an analogy from A&W, our own Lindsay Price is going to tell us about Grandpa Stars, Papa Stars, Momma Stars and Baby Stars. There are differences in how they are born, how they live, and how they die, giving their remains to the interstellar medium for new stars to be born and the cycle of Star Life continues.

10:50-10:00 Clean up and head out for Pizza and Beer

NOTE: August's Meeting will be held the THIRD Friday of the month, August 17, instead of the usual 2nd Friday due to the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party being held from August 9 through 12.

Friday August 17

7:00-7:30 Beginner's session: Gerry Smerchanski

7:30-7:40 Welcome and announcements: Ron Berard

7:40 to 7:50 News

7:50-8:00 Constellation of the Month: Hercules the Strong Man: Gail Wise

8:00-8:10 What's up: Jay Anderson

8:10-8:30 What's New: Jennifer West

8:30-8:50 Break

8:50-9:00 Picture of the Month: Speaker TBA

9:00-9:50 **Main Event: A special presentation of: Giants of Universe:** This one hour production highlights the current theories of super massive black holes located at the center of most galaxies including our own. Leading Astronomers are interviewed, and their research highlighted, with cutting edge observations showing the tell tale activities of a super massive black hole in the center of our own, Milky Way galaxy.

9:50 - 10:00: Adjourn and head out for Pizza.

News in a minute . . .

- The Members Observing Night has been cancelled for July due to lack of darkness.
- As this is being written the GA is going on in Calgary. According to one of our members who is there, it is going very well, except for the food being overpriced. The speakers are all good. Jamie Matthews, (the MOST scientist) is there and speaking again, and they really enjoy seeing and hearing him. Alan Hildebrandt gave some of them a tour of the University's meteorite lab, and our member has now touched a piece of Mars, and seen the moon, not through a telescope, but through a microscope!
- Make plans to attend SSSP from August 9 to 12 in Cypress Hills.
- Make even more plans to attend SWSP from September 7 to 9 in Spruce Woods Provincial Park. More details to follow.
- There are always lots of our members heading to these events, so if you want to share the driving and the cost of gas, ask at a meeting or on the RASC-list.

Welcome to our newest members!

Barry McKay, Winnipeg

Peter Schreibmaier, St. Andrews



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Members' Observing

The following members are working towards their:

Messier Certificates:

Eugene d'Auteuil	41
Murray Rennie	26
Lindsay Price	40
Kris Keller	109
(almost there!)	

Finest NGC's:

Sean Ceaser	79
Ray Andrejowich	110
Berni Plett	45

Herschel 400's:

Stan Runge	178
Sean Ceaser	139
Mike Stephens	147

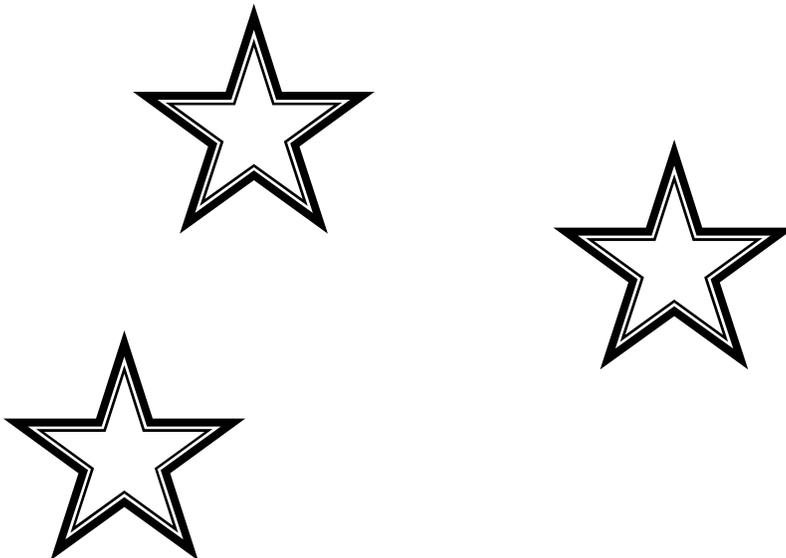
Explore the Universe:

Peter Toth	57
Stan Runge	13
Tim Kennedy	58
Judy Starr	22
Ray Starr	21
Eugene d'Auteuil	12
Murray Rennie	6
Sandy Shewchuk	47

Isabel Williamson Lunar

Mike Stephens	138
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If you are interested in using the Warm Room please contact Lindsay Price for a key (\$10.00 deposit required). If you would like training on the LX200 Lindsay will be running training sessions, but not on Members Observing Nights. You can contact him at 227-4684 or flprice@mts.net or talk to Lindsay at a meeting.



President's Corner

*Ron Berard, President,
RASC Winnipeg Centre*

Now that summer has arrived, it's time for us to crawl out from our winter cocoons and get some fresh air. Finally, after a winter of short, chilly observing sessions in the backyard, freezing finger tips to thumbscrews, and dreaming of extended observing sessions in comfort and warmth, we can finally get in some serious observing, right?

Wrong!! Somehow the winter has a way of fading our memories of swarms of mosquitoes landing on the only 2 square inches of exposed skin that hasn't been slathered in repellent. Nor do we remember just how low the ecliptic can get in the south, dragging our favorite solar system objects down into the murkiest regions of the atmosphere. And of course, there's the absence of darkness for most of May and June. Add to that the seemingly endless monsoons that have always marked the onset of our brief growing season and you quickly realize that this is not our prime observing time.

For many, spring and early summer are the favorite seasons, bringing forth new life, warmth and mild weather for late evening strolls in the bright twilight. For astronomy aficionados, this season can be a frustrating time of coming to terms with the fact that Manitoba is not the most accommodating province for our hobby. But enough of the observer's lament, because Astronomy is a hobby of diverse pursuits.

I'm impressed to see that people are still posting regularly on our email list. Instead of observing reports, we read of projects that people are undertaking, new charts being scrutinized, new books being read and reviewed, preparations for getting accessories and equipment ready for the prime time observing sessions of late July, August and, eventually, the fall months.

For myself, the hectic schedule of spring events has settled somewhat, giving me a few moments to spend on my own projects and, of course, family activities. I've finally managed to get my 8" Dobsonian back into service, and even re-collimated my 4.5" binoscope. I'm planning to mount a pier in my back yard, and may even set up a permanent mount for the binoscope on the roof of my porch.

June the 8th was also our Annual RASC Barbeque at Glenlea. Thanks to a break in the weather, we were able to enjoy a couple of hours of solar observing through a 70mm Corenado telescope belonging to the Rolling River First Nation. We enjoyed a perfect, mild and mosquito free evening with about 30 or so members eating, drinking, chatting and laughing about all manner of topics, astronomical or otherwise.

Of course, there are always RASC activities to keep me occupied as well. We've been approached by a number of people about collaborations. The Manitoba Opera will be producing an opera based on the true story of Le Gentil, a tragic figure who sacrifices all for an adventure to travel to a distant location to observe a "Transit of Venus". We will have the CEO of Manitoba Opera, Larry Desrochers coming to speak to us in October. Further, there will special planetarium co-productions of the story taking place, and when the Opera premieres in November, Scott Young will be providing a special presentation to set the scene for the story from an astronomer's perspective.

We've also had the usual invitations to participate in a number of events such as the Portage Air Show. Thanks to the efforts of Ken Metcalfe, a good number of people at the show were able to wander through a RASC display and pick up some promotional material, as well as have some questions answered by Ken. Also, the Variety Club contacted us about providing a presentation at the Variety Kids Camp in Brereton Lake. Kris Keller, Marni Dangerfield and I were able to offer our help. As a reward for our efforts, we were housed and fed for the weekend, and had a great time with the kids and their families, promoting our hobby and enjoying some outdoor fun at a great location. Against all odds, the weather cooperated and the event was a great success. Read more about this in Marni's article on page 1.

Then, of course, there are preparations underway for events later on in the year. The Spruce Woods Star Party committee has been active preparing for another great weekend of fun under the stars in the beautiful Spruce Woods Provincial Park on the weekend of September 7, 8, and 9. Information on this event is available on our website at <http://winnipeg.rasc.ca/sprucewoods/>. It's always a good idea to sign up early and take advantage of the discounts for early registration.

Also, our awards committee has been busy establishing terms of reference, and rumor has it that there may be awards to hand out in the fall! We've also successfully applied for a generous subsidy from RASC National in order to acquire some professional display fixtures to use at future events to better represent our club and save the volunteers time and energy in the set up process. We have our National Representative, Jennifer West, to thank for bringing the opportunity to our attention, and for drafting the successful proposal. And with the GA occurring at the end of June, Jennifer and a number of other members have headed to Calgary to participate in the many meetings and events that will occur in a relatively short time frame. There will be a number of discussions and decisions impacting all RASC members, so you can count on hearing from Jennifer about the highlights at our next monthly meeting on July 13.

But alas, July will not have a Members Observing Session for the above noted reason of excessively late twilight. However, we'll be seeing noticeably shorter days by the end of the month, so August's Member Observing Night (MON) will be a go on Aug 11th for all of the members who haven't headed to Cypress Hills for the Saskatchewan Summer Star Party (SSSP). And with a new moon in the offing, and the Perseid meteor shower peaking on the 13th, the MON should offer a good number of "burners" through the night. Members should bring along blankets and lounge chairs to be prepared for kicking back and enjoying the sky from a comfortable position. Please note, because of the significant number of members that usually attend the SSSP, our August Meeting will be held on Friday the 17th instead of the 10th to give everyone a chance to attend.

While I may have just stated that this is not the prime season for observing, it's always a good time of the year for astronomy and all of the various activities that can engage us "astro-aficionados". As we all know, the warmer months seem to fly by quickly, and before you know it, we are again faced with a long and cold Manitoba Winter. Enjoy the warm season while it lasts!

Stellar WebPages

by *Darren Gillis*

Recently I was asked to contribute a column to our newsletter that reviewed astronomical web pages. Any review is blurred mix of fact, interpretation, and opinion – mine will be no different. As a result, any reviews should be treated as informed opinion rather than absolute fact. Feel free to disagree, discuss, and especially to contribute your own perspective to the newsletter in response. As a convention, I will use bold-faced type to indicate labels and links in the web pages discussed.

In this first column I would like to describe the web pages that I use regularly before each observing session. They provide up-to-date information that is not found in printed publications which are often prepared months in advance. I am sure they are known to many of us, but by listing them here I will place us all “on the same (web) page”. Before observing I always consult the RASC Observer’s Guide for the night’s events. Then, I start my computer and “surf” over to: The Clear Sky Clock, Heavens-above, and Space Weather.

The Clear Sky Clock (<http://cleardarksky.com/csk/>) is maintained by Attila Danko, a software engineer with over 20 years of experience and an interest in amateur astronomy. He has created an interface to the numerical models provided by the Canadian Meteorological Centre (CMC, Environment Canada) [Weather forecast for astronomy](#). A quick visit to the CMC’s site (<http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/astro/>) will help you to appreciate Mr. Danko’s work. His Clear Sky Clock is a colored matrix summarizing expected viewing conditions (cloud cover, transparency, seeing, and darkness) and weather (wind, humidity, temperature) over the next 44 hours. The **Image Control** options (on the left of the page) allow you to activate a color legend and a “mouse-over” display. The “mouse-over” opens a new window when you move your mouse pointer over a colored rectangle in the matrix. This window provides detailed information on the forecast represented by the rectangle. In addition, “clicking” on a rectangle opens a window containing a map of the regional forecast. If it looks like you will be peeking through a “sucker-hole” you can at least be better prepared emotionally for a less than ideal evening. But never say never: forecasts always contain a “margin of error”.

Heavens-Above (<http://www.heavens-above.com/>) provides predictions of satellite passes for the current evening. In the summer, when we are never far from twilight, spotting and timing satellites can help to make up for the poor DSO conditions. In fact, the geometry that illuminates satellites is ideal under these conditions. Once you select your observing location you can get information on a wide variety of astronomical topics, but I go straight to the **Daily predictions for all satellites brighter than magnitude: 4.5**. The table displays the time and location for the start, maximum altitude, and end of the observation. Times are provided in 24 hour format for time zone of your location. Selecting (“clicking on”) the maximum altitude time displays **Visible Pass Details** including star charts and a table of distances. Finally, there is an option to display the satellite’s **Ground Track** at the top of the page. You never have to miss an ISS pass again! Of course, satellites often shift orbits, especially military surveillance hardware (smile and wave). Missing or unexpected observations are a source of fun and speculation. Any UFOs you spot are likely the product of “little green uniformed” men. Some “secret” satellites have been uncovered by amateur astronomers in this fashion (see <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.02/spy.html> for a story). You can get more information on the satellite by selecting its **Name** in the daily prediction table. In addition, a Google.ca search of the name often adds a more historical perspective to your observations.

Finally, a quick visit to Space Weather (<http://www.spaceweather.com/>) can prepare me for the day's or night's observations. The two items I check regularly are along the left margins: The **Daily Sun** provides a quick image of sunspot activity. If it looks interesting I'll set up my solar filter. Further down the margin, the **Current Auroral Oval** gives me an indication of how likely I am to be pleased or vexed by the auroral glow in the north. The remainder of the page lists lots of interesting stories and some upcoming **Earth-asteroid encounters**. I haven't tracked any of these yet (I'm waiting for a bright one) but it is an observing "project" for the coming months.

You can spend hours on these sites, but save that for a cloudy night. A few minutes of browsing will enhance your evening's viewing; just remember to turn down the brightness of your monitor to help your eyes' dark adaptation in the coming hours.

Mr. Bud . . . Does Astronomy

by Murray Toews



Variety Camp Brereton

continued from page 1

It is clear that Variety Camp Brereton is an anticipated event for families as many return each year to reconnect with old friends in a relaxing setting. And it is clear by the laughter heard throughout the camp that everyone is relaxed and happy.

As dinner winds up on Saturday night, kids are enlisted to help complete the props required for the astronomical presentation. As painted cardboard and balloons transform into the earth and other planets, guests have cleared a room and gathered around. An educational and interactive solar system review was just the warm up as the Moon, Venus, Saturn, Jupiter and other deep sky objects were all expected to make an appearance as the evening progressed.



A "hands on" presentation of the Solar System



And it was as if the gods were as anxious as we were because they cleared the sky enabling everyone to easily view the wonders of space. Lineups and questions were constant and 'ahs' and 'wows' made up the evening sounds. It was clear that memorable sights are etched into the minds of many first-time Saturn viewers. Many stayed up late to discover more of the wonders the deep sky had to offer.

As the weekend wrapped up, many thanks were given to RASC for 'Sharing the Passion', and after a thoughtful homemade gift presentation, a standing annual invitation was extended.

Clearly the weekend was enjoyed by all!!



THE PERSEIDS ARE COMING . . .

August 11 is the date
With an hourly rate
Of about 68
It's gonna be great . . .

The Perseids are one of the better meteor showers and since they occur in August, watching them can be quite comfortable. The radiant is in Perseus, so you will want to look away from the constellation. Lie on a reclining lawnchair (I told you this would be comfy) with your feet pointed southwards and wrap up in a sleeping bag if the night is chilly. When you see a meteor, mentally trace it back, and if it came from the direction of Perseus, it was probably a Perseid.

Decent numbers of Perseids can be seen about 22:00, but the best show picks up after midnight and continues until dawn. We are going to have a Members Perseid Night at Glenlea Observatory on Saturday, August 11. Since the peak is officially August 13 but is really quite spread out, we hope to see a good amount. The moon will be very close to new, so it will not get in the way at all.

Don't forget to bring what you will need: a lawnchair, sleeping bag, pillow (no snoring allowed), very warm clothes, coffee and cookies for a 2a.m. snack, and since I will be there, something chocolate please. If you are going to record the numbers you see, remember to bring paper, pencil and a red flashlight.

This is the weekend that some of our members will be heading to SSSP, so the ones that remain will also have a fun time.

