



# First Light

The Newsletter of the Cape Cod Astronomical Society



September 2006

Vol. 17 No. 5

It is somewhat of a rocky road for First Light this month. The traditional lead item is the "Mooncusser's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Almanac". However, author Jim Carlson is in the process of moving his residence; the Almanac will return in October. Then, the feature article was to be on club member Dan Burbank flying on the space shuttle Atlantis. Tropical storm Ernesto had other ideas. At least I have the two lead items for October set.

## September 7 CCAS Meeting

Jon Greenberg, our Society's president, will be speaking on "A Curious Incident Near Roswell, New Mexico". The meeting will be held at Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School in Room 401, 7:30pm. A map of the school on our website, [www.ccas.ws](http://www.ccas.ws), clearly shows the location of the room. Also, join us for a pre-meeting dinner at 6:00pm at the Hearth 'N Kettle in South Yarmouth on Rte 28.

## Dues Are Due

Yes, it is that time of year. Your annual society dues of \$30 are due. On the first of August, they were past due. With a membership that varies between 25 and 30, our annual revenue budget is between \$750 and \$900. That budget covers our annual liability insurance premium of about \$270. This last year it also paid for realuminizing the primary and secondary mirrors on the 14" scope, 40% of the cost for a new digital projector for our monthly meetings, a three copy license for Microsoft Office (which this editor is using at this very time), and a 40G portable hard drive and .5G stick drive to support the preparation of programs for our monthly meetings. Where else can you get such a deal. As the old late night commercial says "You can't beat it with a stick!" Come on folks, let's get your dues in.

## Astro Trivia for September

The trivia question for this month is "What is a parsec?" As usual, the question will be discussed and answered at this month's meeting.

## Call for Catalogs

The program for our October 5 meeting will be "So You Want to Buy a Telescope". The purpose of the program is to provide assistance to guests and members who are considering the purchase of a telescope. Various types and sizes of telescopes will be on display. We hope to also have a wide selection of catalogs available. If you have a fairly recent catalog that offers telescopes and accessories, please bring it to the September meeting. Thanks.

## Society Logo in Stone

Society member Ed Swiniarski is selling stone tiles with the society's logo laser etched into the surface. The 5 1/2" square, 1/4" thick slate tiles have the etching highlighted with either gold or silver colored paint. The slate tiles sell for ten dollars each. Tiles made from other stone such as marble or granite are available by special order with the price varying according to the cost of the stone. All proceeds from the sales will be donated to the Cape Cod Astronomical Foundation. You can contract Ed at [efswin@c4.net](mailto:efswin@c4.net) or 508-896-7270.

## An Untimely Definition

We have a new definition of a planet, or so says the IAU. Per the IAU2006.org website, a planet is as follows:

## RESOLUTION 5A

The IAU therefore resolves that "planets" and other bodies in our Solar System, except satellites, be defined into three distinct categories in the following way:

(1) A "planet"<sup>1</sup> is a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape, and (c) has cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.

(2) A "dwarf planet" is a celestial body that (a) is in orbit around the Sun, (b) has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape<sup>2</sup>, (c) has not cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit, and (d) is not a satellite.

(3) All other objects<sup>3</sup> except satellites orbiting the Sun shall be referred to collectively as "Small Solar-System Bodies".

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<sup>1</sup>The eight "planets" are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

<sup>2</sup>An IAU process will be established to assign borderline objects into either dwarf planet and other categories.

<sup>3</sup>These currently include most of the Solar System asteroids, most Trans-Neptunian Objects (TNOs), comets, and other small bodies.

So, absent the evidence of a cleared neighbourhood (sic), Pluto is no longer a planet. However, footnote number one of the definition clearly states that Jupiter is a planet. So, Jupiter, by definition, must have a cleared neighborhood, except for some thousands of Trojan asteroids which share their orbits with Jupiter. In the case of Earth, there are the near Earth orbiting asteroids still in the neighborhood. Perhaps the IAU does not consider asteroids to be pertinent to a cleared neighborhood. Tell that one to a dinosaur is you can find one.

Consider the very new and rapidly changing field

of extrasolar planets. But not until the existence of at least two types of planets are recognized, solar (as addressed in the new IAU definition) and extrasolar. Solar planets and extrasolar planets would appear to be subsets of a larger set of objects called planets. It would be interesting to see what determines membership in that larger set of objects. Did I hear someone say that the definition of a planet determines membership in that set?

## Items for Sale

Former society member Gary Derman has the following items for sale:

Celestron Ultima 2000 8 inch telescope, new 1998, cleaned and recalibrated 2005, excellent condition; remote control - 10,000 sky object vocabulary; carrying case; tripod; 7.5mm, 12.5mm, 25mm, and 35 mm eyepieces; f/6.3 focal reducer; moon and sun filters; sun shade (to see the remote in daylight); and dew shield

Original cost \$2,968, \$1,400 or best offer for entire package. Offers for separate items will be considered.

Gary Derman  
[gary@vipilot.com](mailto:gary@vipilot.com)  
508-240-0984

From Jarvis Hunt we have

Meade Starfinder -12 ½" Dob, Magellan object finder, \$495 or best offer.

Meade LX90 8" Go To" with 30,000 object in database, \$895.

Meade ETX90 3 ½" Maksutov -Cassegrain, very portable, excellent astronomical or spotting scope, electric drive, complete with carrying case and solar filter, \$250.

Contact Jarvis at [jhunt@c4.net](mailto:jhunt@c4.net) or 508-240-1793.



**Cape Cod Astronomical Society**

President	Jon Greenberg	508-255-8605
Vice President	Michael Hunter	508-385-9846
Secretary	Betsy Young	508-255-8448
Treasurer	Kelvin Parkinson	508-385-5982
First Light Ed	Michael Hunter	508-385-9846

The **Cape Cod Astronomical Society** meets at 7:30 pm on the first Thursday of every month at the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School in Yarmouth, Massachusetts. Meetings are open to the public. Membership dues are \$30 for adults, \$15 for students in two year colleges, no charge for students in K-12 schools.

**Cape Cod Astronomical Foundation**

Chairman	Werner Schmidt	508-362-9301
Vice Chairman		
Director R&D	Bill McDonough	508-394-5919
Secretary	James Carlson	508-432-4316
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Observatory Dir	James Carlson	508-432-4316
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