

STELLAFANE

1926-1987

Saturday, July 25, 1987

The 52nd Convention of Amateur Telescope
Makers on Breezy Hill in Springfield, Vermont.



Friday evening, July 24th, at 8:30 p.m., Doug McGregor of the Springfield Telescope Makers will conduct the informal program under the tent behind the Stellafane clubhouse. If you wish to contribute a short talk during this session, you must submit a brief description of your planned presentation with your registration form. Talks are limited to 10 minutes and 20 slides. A 35-mm slide projector is available. Following the informal talks there will be observing (weather permitting) with the Porter Turret Telescope in front of the clubhouse.

The Hartness-Porter Museum of Amateur Telescope Making, located in the underground rooms of the Hartness Turret Telescope at Hartness House in Springfield, will be open for convention-goers on Saturday morning from 9:00 a.m. until noon, and Sunday morning from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Light meals and snacks are available at Stellafane Friday evening and throughout the convention on Saturday. Barbequed chicken dinners are available for Saturday's lunch and dinner. Cooking is allowed in the camping area, and drinking water will be provided at the camping site beginning Friday afternoon. Camp stoves, charcoal grills, and the like are allowed, but no open fires are permitted anywhere at the convention site.

TELESCOPE COMPETITION

This is a convention of amateur telescope makers. If you have built a telescope, we encourage you to bring it and also enter it in the competition. Awards are presented for mechanical and optical performance. There are also awards for the best junior telescope (made by a person under 16 years of age) and other special categories. Judging for mechanical excellence begins at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, so please register your telescopes at the clubhouse and have it on display as early as possible. Registrations will not extend beyond noon. We try to have the judging completed in time for all to attend the afternoon talks. Judging for optical excellence begins immediately following the evening program (weather permitting). Only telescopes that are operative both mechanically and optically will be accepted in the competition. However, telescopes do not have to be judged in both categories. We also welcome all home-made telescopes in the display area; they do not have to be entered in the competition. The Porter Youth Award acknowledges the junior exhibitor (under 16 years of age) who shows the most promise for a career in science and technology.

SWAP TABLE

The swap table is where convention participants can trade or sell their astronomical and telescope-related items such as eyepieces, lenses, cameras, mirror-making materials, and observing accessories. This table is not for commercial sales. Participants must be responsible for their own material at the table, which is located near the clubhouse and operates all day Saturday until 7:30 p.m.

CAMPING/PARKING AREA

We are continuing to clear the land at our new convention site, and we will also have limited use of the old camping field. Convention officials at the registration gate will direct participants to the appropriate camping and parking areas. Controlled traffic is allowed to the clubhouse for unloading and picking up telescopes. Unless otherwise allowed by a convention official, there is no parking allowed around the clubhouse. There is no assurance that light-free conditions will be maintained in the camping area. If you must avoid lights, especially car headlights, please bring your telescopes and cameras to the display field by the clubhouse. Furthermore, since there will also be observing from the camping area, we ask everyone to be considerate of others and avoid any unnecessary use of bright lights at night.

AFTERNOON PROGRAM

The Saturday afternoon program, which begins under the tent behind the clubhouse at 2:00 p.m., covers topics of interest to telescope makers and observers.

Observing the Sky with Binoculars -- Phil Harrington

All too often people mistakenly believe that a telescope is the only suitable way to study the sky. In fact, a simple pair of binoculars can add a whole new dimension to viewing the heavens. Phil Harrington has spent years sweeping the night sky with binoculars. He will discuss how to choose a pair and what to look for with them. "Many of the best binocular objects are not plotted on any star atlas," he writes, "and they therefore remain unknown to observers."

Laser Telescope Alignment -- Gayle Riggsbee

With more and more people turning to portable telescopes in order to escape urban light pollution, the problem of keeping the optics properly aligned becomes more critical, especially with large-aperture instruments. At the 1986 Stellafane convention Gayle Riggsbee displayed his trailer-mounted, 17.5-inch reflector and a special laser device for precisely aligning the optics. He will demonstrate this alignment method during his talk this year.

Telescope Making Panel

This will be an open discussion with the audience. Any question concerning telescope design, construction, and use is welcome. The panel members include Berton C. Willard, Paul Valleli, and George H. East; all long-time telescope makers with expertise in many areas. Bring your problems and questions to this panel discussion, which should be one of the most interesting parts of the formal Stellafane program.

EVENING PROGRAM

Welcome

Presentation of Awards

Stellafane Shadowgram -- Walter Scott Houston

The evening keynote speaker is John Dobson of the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers. In the early 1970's he revolutionized the world of amateur telescope making when he showed us that large-aperture telescopes could be made with thin glass, unconventional techniques, and "junk" parts. Furthermore, he taught us that these lightweight instruments worked beautifully with altazimuth mountings. What got John Dobson started was not a desire to change people's thinking about how to make telescopes, but rather a desire to show as many people as possible the sights the heavens have to offer. His solution was to build an inexpensive, large-aperture, portable telescope -- and these instruments have become known throughout the world as Dobsonians. Along with other members of the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers, John Dobson has given countless thousands of people at national parks around the country their first look at the sky through a telescope.

A Statement on Commercial Exhibits

To maintain the strict spirit of amateur telescope making unique to Stellafane, no commercial exhibits are allowed at the convention site (this includes the camping field). A commercial exhibit is interpreted as a display of any commercial product that is the property of the parent company. Handing out of any company literature, and solicitations for periodical subscriptions and other business ventures are also not allowed.