

# AURORA

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The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada - Windsor Centre

July 2003



## The Big Dipper and a Big Love by Juliana Grigorescu

My story goes back in time, many years ago, in Romania. I was a little girl, wandering in a splendid country site (my grandma's property) together with my sister and my 3 cousins (4 crazy girls and a poor guy).

One night my uncle (my father's brother ) took us outside to show us the stars. What a night it was: summer time, warm and nice, a light breeze was refreshing the air, Milky Way was shining like a ribbon of pearls, the stars were diamonds, and we, we were just looking at them in amazement, barely following my uncle's explanations.

His challenge for us was to find something special about one of the seven bright stars of Big Dipper. I looked at them all, one at a time, over and over and I could clearly see the companion of Mizar, Alcor, a visual double (in fact a quadruple system). I was the only one to make that discovery (maybe the others didn't really care...). Well, my vision was good enough, but what is all this business with Astronomy? What is Astronomy anyway?

My uncle was pleased with me, he congratulated me and told me that there are some Astronomy books in the attic, in case I'm ever interested. Five minutes later I was there searching for books. I found 2 Astronomy books, old books from the 50's which I still have in Romania. They belonged to my father and my uncle and had many drawing of pretty women, (Hollywood-style) on the margins showing interest in something else besides Astronomy... A fire ignited in my heart. I wanted to know everything about Astronomy, which I still want now, even though I now know it is not possible, there is simply too much. At least know **the essentials**.

In those books I read about a **spectacular total solar eclipse** that was going to take place in the year 1999, being at its' greatest in Romania, exactly in my area of central Romania. What a coincidence...

In 1998 I emigrated to Canada. In 1999 I was unable to make the trip to Romania as I was expecting a child. I've been waiting for that eclipse for so many years and now I couldn't witness it. That's life! (thank God there is an Internet!)

And so Astronomy became more and more important for me every day. I'm still looking forward to seeing a **spectacular total solar eclipse** soon. Maybe the one in March 2006, in Africa.

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## Calendar of Events

### Our next meeting...

Tuesday, September 16, 2003  
8:00 p.m.  
at  
St. Stephen's Church  
Howard Road, 1.4 kms. south of  
Hwy # 3

### Main Speaker...

To Be Announced

### Topic...

"To Be Determined"

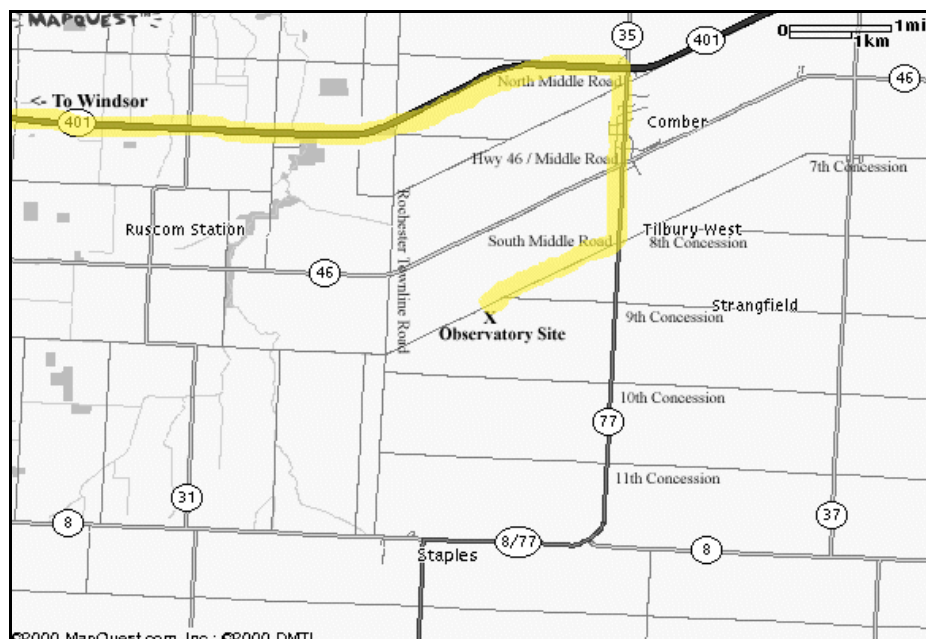
### Activities...

**Summer Solstice:** Summer officially begins at 3:10 p.m. EDT on Saturday June 21 for the Northern Hemisphere.

**Mercury and Venus:** June 21st is also the day when you can observe Mercury and Venus just 1/2 degree apart. This will be a morning daytime observation but should be interesting for those of you with telescopes.

**RASC General Assembly:** Come and celebrate the 100th anniversary of the RASC at the GA being held in Vancouver, BC from June 27 - 29. Contact Craig Breckenridge at (888) 924-7272 or the National Office website [www.rasc.ca](http://www.rasc.ca) for more details.

**Mars Observing Night:** Saturday August 30 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the home of Dan and Carol Taylor. See page 5 for more details.



### Hallam Observatory Site

At left is a map showing the Comber area and it includes the major highways (401, 77, 8 and 46) that are in the area of the observatory. I "highlighted" the most direct route from Windsor on this map which is to take 401 East to Highway 77 South to South Middle Road. While on South Middle Road you will cross some railroad tracks (they just removed the tracks) and just after the barely discernable point where Concession 9 joins it you will find the observatory site on the South side of the road. If you hit the Rochester Townline Road (i.e. you come to a stop sign and have to turn left or right) you have gone too far. On most clear nights someone is usually out there observing but if it happens to be a clear, moonless, weekend night you should have many observing buddies.

## Submissions

Aurora is published monthly except for August. The September, November, January, March, May and July issues are full newsletters (usually 6 pages) with a number of member submitted articles. The October, December, February, April and June issues are short flyers (2 pages) with one short article. Submitted articles can be of any length from a paragraph to multiple pages. I can scan pictures and/or diagrams (both prints and film) to support your article and the originals will be returned to you.

Submission deadline is the 1st of the month. I will accept Emails at the address below, floppy disks, or written submissions.

Editor: Steve Mastellotto

Email: [mmastellotto@cogeco.ca](mailto:mmastellotto@cogeco.ca)

## Membership

The Windsor Centre of The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month (except July and August) at St. Stephen's church. In addition to regular meetings the centre hosts a number of observing nights, a picnic and a December social. Members receive a copy of the Observer's Handbook, the RASC Journal, a subscription to SkyNews magazine and access to the Centre's library and telescopes.

Annual Membership Fees are Regular - \$44.00, Youth - \$27.50 and Life - \$880.00.

Contact Ken Garber at (519) 966-3478 or visit our website at: [www.mnsi.net/~rasc](http://www.mnsi.net/~rasc) for more information.



## RASC Windsor Centre Picnic 2003 - Saturday, June 7th





## Earth Day 2003 - Sunday, April 27th





## Summer Star Parties by Steve Mastellotto

**Gateway to the Universe Star Party:** July 25 - 27 at the Munro Family Campground, Powassan, Ontario. Contact Tom Ouellette at (705) 474-7666 for more info.

**Mt. Kobau Star Party:** July 26 - August 3 on the summit of Mt. Kobau near Osoyoos, British Columbia. Contact Guy Mackie at (250) 861-3074 or visit [www.mksp.ca](http://www.mksp.ca) for more info.

**Stellafane:** August 1 - 2. The 68th Convention of Amateur Telescope Makers on Breezy Hill in Springfield, VT. The star party is hosted by the Springfield Telescope Makers, Inc. For more info visit the website at [www.stellafane.com](http://www.stellafane.com)

**Nova East:** August 1 - 3 at Smiley's Provincial Park, near Brooklyn, Nova Scotia. Contact Gary Weber at (902) 454-8264 or visit [halifax.rasc.ca/ne](http://halifax.rasc.ca/ne) for more info.

**Starfest 2003:** August 21 - 24 located at the River Place Campground near Mount Forest, Ontario. Contact Andreas Gada at (416) 221-7375 or visit [www.nyaa-starfest.com](http://www.nyaa-starfest.com) for more info.

**Great Manitou Star Party:** August 27 - 31 at Gordon's Park on Manitoulin Island. Contact Mark Oldfield (705) 897-4518 or the website [www.manitoulin-link.com/starparty](http://www.manitoulin-link.com/starparty) for more info.

**Astrofest:** September 18 - 20. This annual star party and merchandise festival is held at Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See near Kankakee, Illinois. For more information visit [www.chicagoastro.org/af/index.html](http://www.chicagoastro.org/af/index.html)

**Huron Star Party:** September 24 - 28 at Camp Saulaine near Ivy, Ontario. Visit [www.cois.on.ca/~ssaa](http://www.cois.on.ca/~ssaa) for more info.

## Dan and Carol Taylor

Wish to extend an invitation  
to the members of the RASC Windsor Centre  
for an evening of family fun, fellowship and  
hopefully observing  
In honour of this year's rare, and singular  
opposition of the planet

## Mars

**Date:** Saturday, August 30th

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

**Location:** Our home  
138 W. Concession 8, 1 km. East of Kimball's  
lumber off the Arner Town Line

Please bring your usual star party gear,  
friends, and Mars stories

No rain date

(519) 776-4493 or [dtaylor@wincom.net](mailto:dtaylor@wincom.net)  
for further info.

See you there!

# UNIVERSAL SCIENCE

Windsor's Astronomy And More Store

**New Hours! Please call ahead...**

**Friday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**New - \$899.00 Awesome Viewing. 10" Dobsonian by SKYWATCHER, f4.7, tension central balance system, pyrex mirror, 2" focuser, 2" 28mm Erfle eyepiece and 9x50 finder**

**8" Skywatcher DOB \$599.00**

**6" Skywatcher DOB \$399.00**

Contact Robin Smallwood  
Telephone: (519) 967-1655  
Email: [unisci@sympatico.ca](mailto:unisci@sympatico.ca)



# May Meeting Minutes by Dave Panton

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## General Meeting Minutes May 20 2003

**President, Randy Groundwater:** The April meeting minutes were read and a motion to accept them was made by Susan Sawyer-Beaulieu seconded by John Marn and accepted.

### Reports

**Correspondence Secretary, Joady Ulrich:** Joady reported there had been no correspondence.

**Librarian, Tom Sharron:** Tom was unable to attend the meeting.

**National Council Representative, John Welsh:** John had two proxies from members and asked for more. He needs them to vote in our interests at the annual National Council meeting.

**Newsletter Editor, Steve Mastellotto:** Steve is currently looking for articles from members describing how they first became interested in astronomy. Steve also serves as our "Webmaster". Past newsletters are available on our web site. Steve told us he had sent the most recent membership list to members via e-mail.

**Public Relations, Robin Smallwood:** Earth Day on April 27th was a success, significantly helped by the displays rebuilt by Mike Pataky. Robin will display photos of the event at the next meeting. Sun filter equipped telescopes allowed visitors to safely view sun spots.

**Public Education, Randy Groundwater:** Randy reported he had done presentations at Forest Glade and Dougall Avenue School. He has another set for June 29th to a small group of children.

**Light Pollution, Dan Taylor:** The town of Essex is still in the public review process preparing full cutoff light fixture legislation. Dan and Tim Bennett have reviewed the matter with officials and tried to help by providing useful information. Dan suggested there may be a usable depth of knowledge among our own members.

**Director of Observing, Steve Pellarin:** The planned observing night at Brennan High School was wiped out by overcast skies as was a sequel. Another may be held in June with help from volunteers with telescopes. Steve was surprised to find interest from other schools including several teachers who had learned of the event via e-mail postings.

Susan told of her excitement upon making her first variable star observation.

Steve Mastellotto was able to see his first views of Mars and reminded all to watch for it soon to see it grow as Earth passes by very close this summer. Early observations are important. Later observers may only see Mars shrouded in dust storms.

The perfectly timed May 15th Lunar eclipse was wiped out by cloud cover. Some observers saw later portions through cloud breaks.

Steve reviewed the many astronomical events to be seen during the next few weeks.

### Business

Randy reminded us all the June 7th **annual picnic** at the observatory will have more features than usual. There will be a swap table and a show of past events held by Windsor Centre. The observatory will be shown to visitors and an observing session held should we have a clear sky. Supper will be pot luck, the Centre providing burgers and hot dogs and members to bring salads and other goodies to complete the menu.

Ken Rounge's **reflective tape** has been to the steel gates with Dave Ainslie's permission and later compliments.

Dan Taylor has invited members to join he and his wife Carol on August 30th for a "**Mars Mania**" party at their country home.

**50-50 Draw:** was won by John Welsh.

**Main Speaker, Dr. Pierre Boulos: "Conceptualizing the Heavens".** Pierre prepared a well researched presentation to help us see how difficult it was for early observers to understand Sun, Moon and planetary motions.

In very ancient times people understood the Sun's rising and setting locations on the horizons determined seasons. Monuments such as the Pyramids and Stonehenge were carefully oriented to take advantage of the Sun's consistent movements proving accurate understanding thousands of years ago.

Pierre pointed out all in the room without prior knowledge would be totally convinced Earth was fixed in space. If so the question is to explain the mysterious motions of all other visible astronomical objects.

For thousands of years early observers, scientists and mathematicians struggled with the problem. From their point of view each theory seemed quite logical. Given the information they had and their perceptions (sometimes influenced by religious teachings) we too would likely be just as puzzled.

A big break came when early telescopes revealed moons swinging around Jupiter. Slowly the counter intuitive planetary motions were all worked out and came to be widely understood. Pierre emphasized how human perceptions influence what we believe and how difficult it is to see past them. He told how Einstein developed his theory after long pondering very scant and mysterious evidence. Then he looked at it from a completely new direction and deduced his famous equation relating mass and energy.

Randy thanked Pierre for his thoroughly researched and well done presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.