The ASTERISM

as' ter ism ~ a recognizable pattern of stars
con stel la' tion ~ an internationally designated area of the sky

Volume XX No. 8 **April 2009**

PARTIAL ISSUE

What's Inside…

Note: Use bookmark panel in Adobe Reader.

Additional content will be inserted later today and in the days ahead.

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Contacts & Schedules

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MEMBERSHIP DUES

Regular Membership:	$21
Sustaining Membership:	$31
Sponsoring Membership:	$46
Family Membership:	$5
First Time Application Fee:	$3
Sky & Telescope:	$32.95
Astronomy subscription:	$34

(Subscription renewals to *S&T* can be done directly. See "Membrship-Dues" on website for details.)

AAI Dues can be paid in person to Membership Chair or Treasurer, or by mail to: AAI, PO Box 111, Garwood, NJ 07027-0111

DOME DUTY

April 24	Team A
May 1	Team B
May 8	Team C
May 15	Team D

FRIDAYS AT SPERRY

April 24, 2009
"Ask Dr. Lew" Karl Hunting / Dr. Lew Thomas

May 1, 2009
"What's Up? A Down to Earth Sky Guide" Kathy Vaccari

May 8, 2009
"New Horizons Mission to Pluto - An Overview Helder Jacinto

May 22, 2009
"Shedding Light on Dark Energy" Jim Stekas

All schedules above were accurate at time of publication. Please check www.asterism.org for latest information (click on "Club Activities")

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DR. LEW'S SEMINARS

See Dr. Lew Thomas for possible up-coming seminar topics.

(Choice of topic at Dr. Lew's seminars is determined by participants' interest)

Special thanks to Gordon Bond for the "Theater in the Sky" page design.

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Special thanks to Justin Shapp for the design of the masthead and other graphics.

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EMAIL

Theater in the Sky

by Ron Ruemmler

May 2009 is a quiet month. Saturn is the only planet easily visible before midnight and, after that, only Jupiter is prominent before morning twilight.

Saturn does, however, put on a pretty good show. The Ringed Planet starts each evening at its maximum altitude above the southern horizon and stays visible for most of the night. We have been pulling away from Saturn since its opposition in March, but the planet has lost less than half a magnitude of brightness since then because the rings have opened up a bit. After the 13th, when they are at their temporary maximum tilt angle of 4.148 degrees, the rings begin to flatten out again heading for their edge-on configuration in September.

May Sky Calendar

1 Fri 4:44pm First Quarter Moon
2 Sat 9:00pm Regulus upper left of Moon
3 Sun 9:00pm Saturn upper left of Moon
9 Sat 12:01am Full Moon
13 Wed 10:00pm Saturn's rings at maximum tilt
17 Sun 3:26am Last Quarter Moon
17 Sun 2:00pm Saturn resumes eastern motion
18 Mon 6:00am Mercury passes between the Earth and the Sun
21 Thu 4:45am Crescent Moon above Mars and upper left of Venus
24 Sun 8:11am New Moon
27 Wed 3:00am Neptune just above Jupiter
30 Sat 11:22pm First Quarter Moon

Saturn spends the entire month 15 degrees to the lower left of **Regulus**, the heart of Leo the Lion. The planet has been moving retrograde (backward) toward the star since New Year's Eve and resumes direct motion on the 17th. Saturn will not be this close to Regulus again for twenty-eight years.

Near the end of the month **Jupiter** passes 0.39 degrees below **Neptune**. The two planets fly in close formation for the rest of the year presenting a lovely sight in a telescope. They have two more conjunctions this year, in July and December, but this month's is the closest.

Surely the most beautiful event of the month occurs on the morning of the 21st. That's when the thin crescent Moon forms a nearly perfect equilateral triangle with **Venus** and **Mars**. At magnitude 1.1, Mars might be hard to find were it not conveniently located six degrees directly below the thin crescent Moon. At magnitude minus 4.4, Venus is unmistakable, off to the right, six degrees from each of the other two objects.

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