ASTRAL PROJECTIONS

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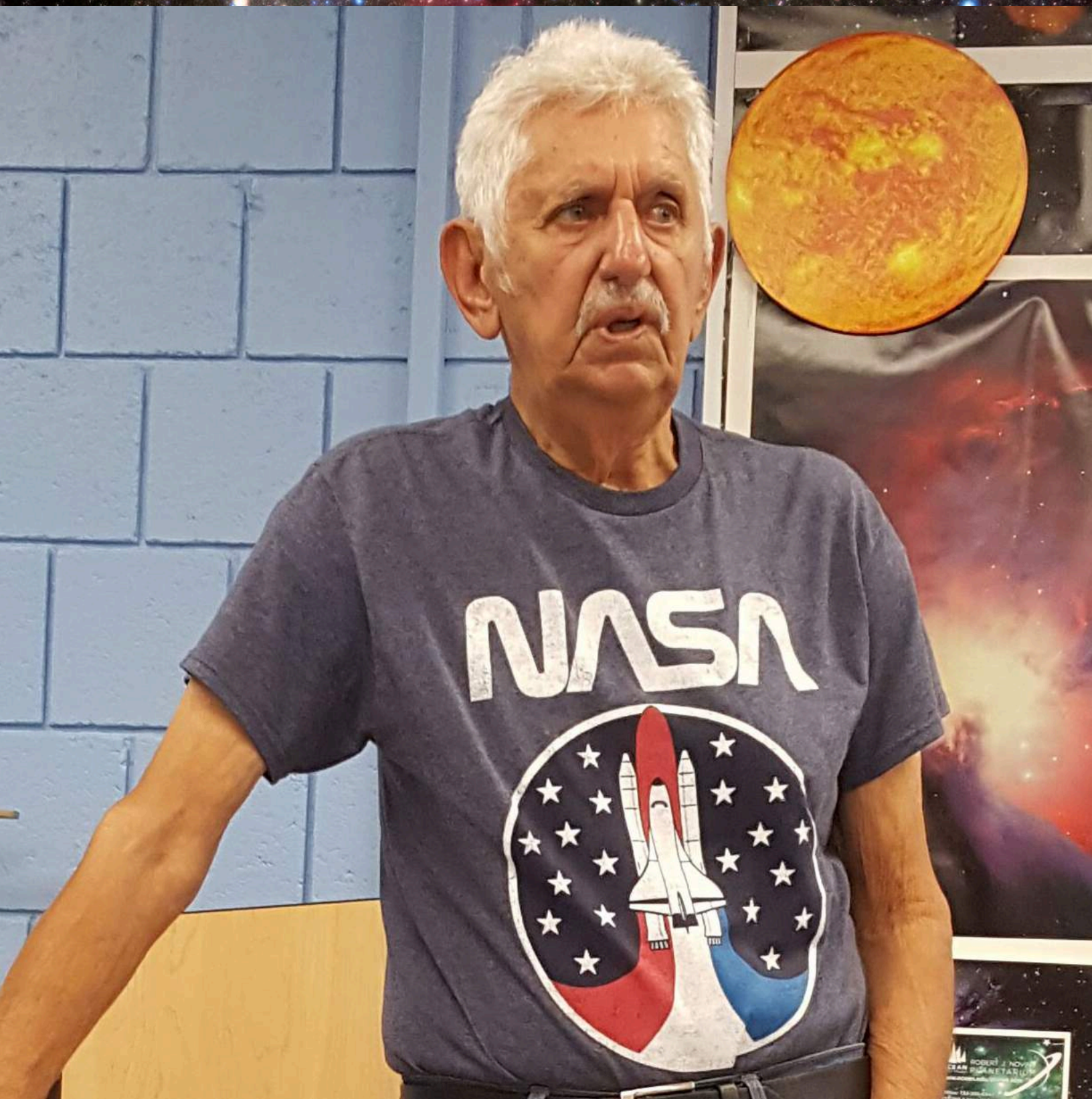

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What's Inside?

Cover Photo

Sam giving his last ASTRA presentation for 2019, as captured by Jim Webster on September 13.

EVENT CALENDAR

October 5th - Jakes Branch Star Party
Location: Jakes Branch County Park, Beachwood, NJ
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

October 11th - Monthly Meeting
Location: Ocean County College, Novins Planetarium, Building #13
Following club business, ASTRA treasurer Ro Spedalieri will present part two of her Messier object presentation.
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

The Astronomical Society of the Toms River Area
www.astra-nj.org

A.S.T.R.A.
Robert J. Novins Planetarium
Ocean County College
P.O. Box 2001
Toms River, NJ 08754-2001

EVENT CANCELLATIONS

Members will receive an email notification of an event cancellation, or call the ASTRA Hotline: 609-971-3331

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Friday the 13th of September Recap

by Chris Savia

Whenever Sam Micovic is scheduled to present, it always gets ASTRA members talking whether it's his pacing or the provocative topics he addresses to his fellow club members. Friday the 13th of September 2019 was no different as Sam let us know this was going to be his last presentation. Personal and family matters have been coming to a head and he may not be able to attend meetings for the rest of the year. Tonight's topic: NASA's space missions!

Sam Micovic with ASTRA President John Endreson.
Image credit: Chris Savia

Except he threw a curveball. Sam talked about how he discovered and joined the Astronomical Society of the Toms River Area about ten years ago and meeting current ASTRA President John Endreson. While John is President, in Sam's eyes John is royalty since he's held office so many times throughout the existence of ASTRA. He waxed poetic about John being a "can-do" guy who doesn't understand the meaning of "no", in addition to being everyone's friend. Also, Sam gave a couple of shout-outs to other ASTRA members like Ro's dedication and being at nearly every meeting and star party. Rich Brady for being a fellow teacher who also has a thing for Italian ladies. How Sarah Waters shares her enthusiasm for the club and astronomy, mentioning our humble group when the topic arises in conversation. Sam doesn't forget Matthew McCue for the numerous presentations he's given throughout the years, volunteering at star parties, in addition to other contributions. He went on to praise Bob Salvatore and Ryan Knipple for their exceptional presentations, Phil Zollner for his astrophotography and travelogues, and Vic Palmieri for being a stellar example of what embodies a member of ASTRA.

After buttering everyone up, Sam took advantage of his bully pulpit to talk a bit about himself. Originally from Yugoslavia, he lost his mother shortly after being born and he was raised with his cousins. In 1945 he found his stepmother had died, his father passing away two years later, then losing his sister leaving him alone with his brother.

He found himself working as a tech, inspecting buildings and hiring laborers before coming to America in 1950 to visit his brother. His brother had moved with his girlfriend before and wanted his brother to be nearby. After visiting Manhattan, Sam realized he wanted to become an American citizen and wound up marrying an American woman.

Before he met his wife, he saw a Russian girl. He could speak a little Russian, they also played

SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

Members are invited to submit articles, photos, news, or stories for inclusion with Astral Projections. Please contact Chris Savia at **newsletter@astra-nj.org**.

musical instruments, but it didn't work out between them. Soon after he was introduced to his wife. Sam says he knew she was someone special when he visited her place and could smell how clean she kept it. Two weeks later they wed, despite Sam not speaking a lick of English. They've been together for sixty years and it's still just as hot as it was back in the day. Over the years in the U.S.A., he had many jobs but he's most proud of his successful career as a teacher. He taught kids 'til he retired at the age of 65 and since it was his passion Sam continued to tutor and teach kids at home.

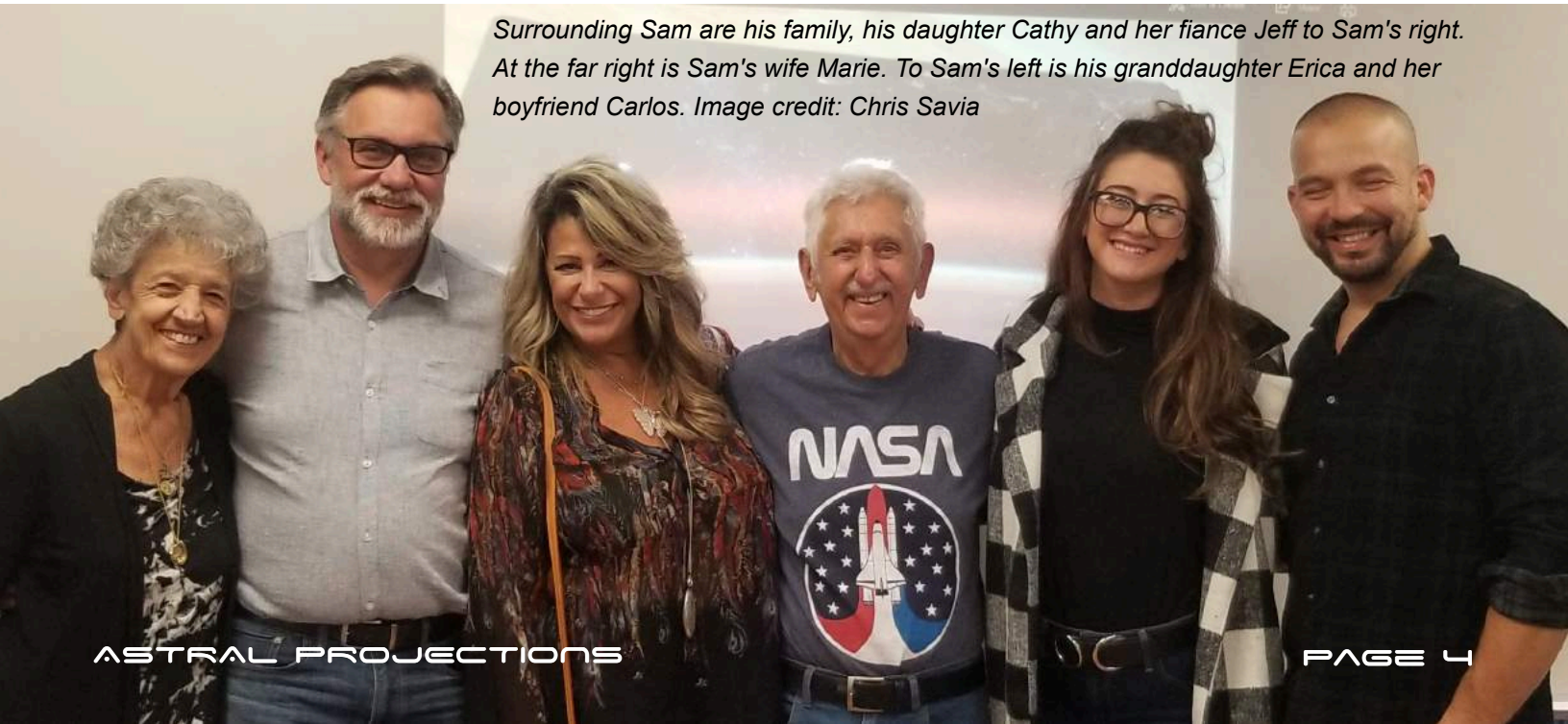
Sam was always interested in astronomy, feeling awed by the scale of the universe, and the bold steps being taken by NASA to reach outer space. Many of the missions and ideas he reads about NASA today sound like science fiction to him. From here, Sam finally decides to broach the topic of NASA's missions.

While the Soviet space program was the first in space, they only won the battle but not the war. NASA followed the Soviet Sputnik with Pioneer which paved the way for the Apollo missions to the moon. America's history in space wasn't all starshine and moonbeams in light of the Apollo 1 fire which claimed the lives of Gu Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee. Not to mention the space shuttle Challenger disaster on January 28th, 1986, and the space shuttle Challenger breaking up over Texas on February 1st, 2003. Sam didn't forget NASA's triumphs like the historic docking of a Soyuz 19 capsule with a leftover Apollo command and service module in July of 1975 illustrating how science can overcome personal and political differences between two nations. From here, Sam read off a laundry list of success from the Galileo spacecraft to Jupiter, many of NASA's Mars missions, the launch of the Hubble Space Telescope, New Horizons's Pluto flyby, along with upcoming missions like the launch of the James Webb Telescope, the possibility of terraforming Mars, among many others.

Over the years, Sam visited many places and he recommends visiting our nation's capital Washington D.C. and Barringer Crater outside of Winslow, Arizona. The same Winslow, Arizona where a girl in a flatbed Ford slowed down to take a look at Glenn Frey.

It'd be facetious to say ASTRA needs more members like Sam Micovic, considering how so many other members of our club contribute so much, but Sam has set a standard we can all aspire to achieve.

Thank you, Sam.



Surrounding Sam are his family, his daughter Cathy and her fiance Jeff to Sam's right. At the far right is Sam's wife Marie. To Sam's left is his granddaughter Erica and her boyfriend Carlos. Image credit: Chris Savia

RECAP

ASTRA's Annual Picnic!

On Saturday September 7th, many of ASTRA's members met at John Bartlett County Park in Berkeley Township to celebrate their comraderie and shared passion for astronomy. Fortunately Jim Webster was in attendance to capture some candid moments from this gathering.

Find Strange Uranus in Aries

by David Prosper

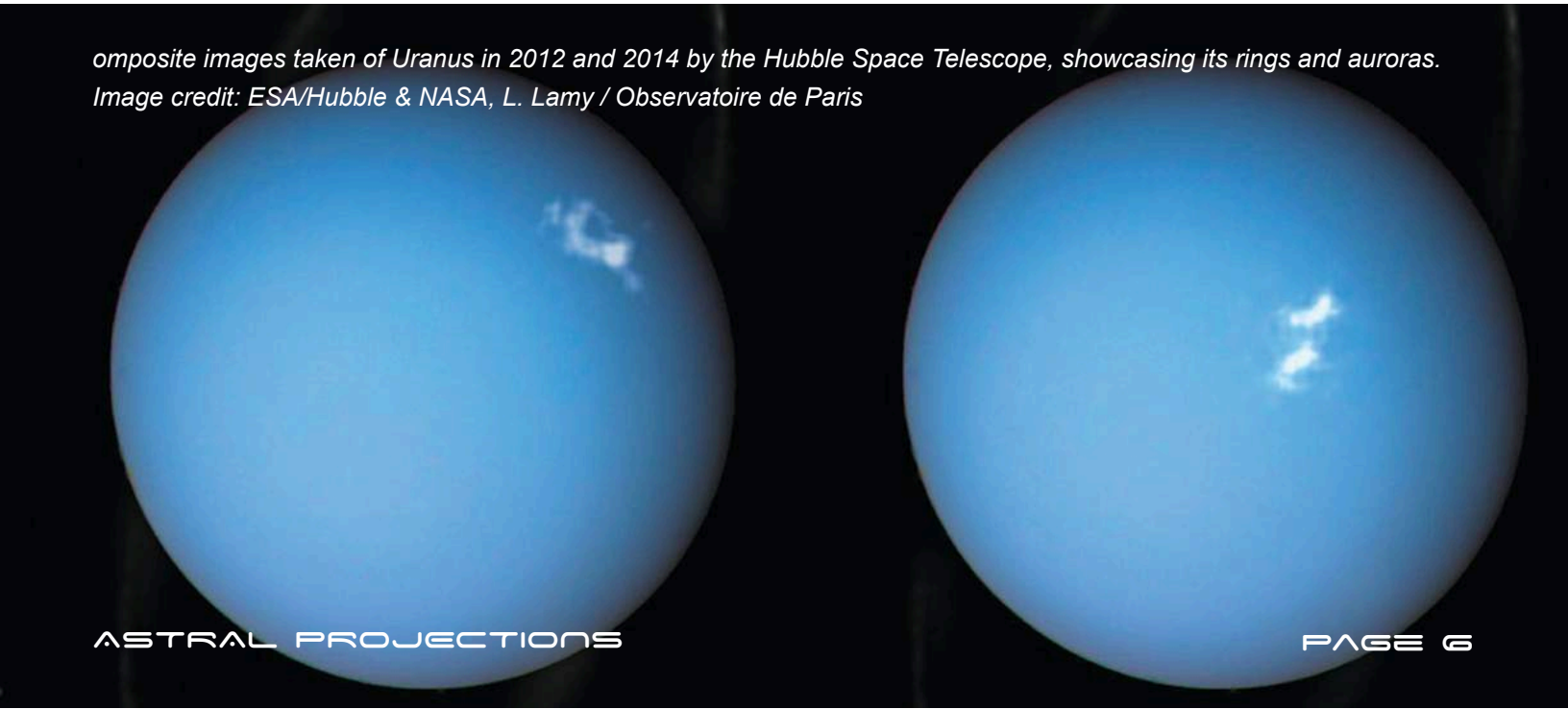
Most of the planets in our solar system are bright and easily spotted in our night skies. The exceptions are the ice giant planets: Uranus and Neptune. These worlds are so distant and dim that binoculars or telescopes are almost always needed to see them. A great time to search for Uranus is during its opposition on October 28, since the planet is up almost the entire night and at its brightest for the year.

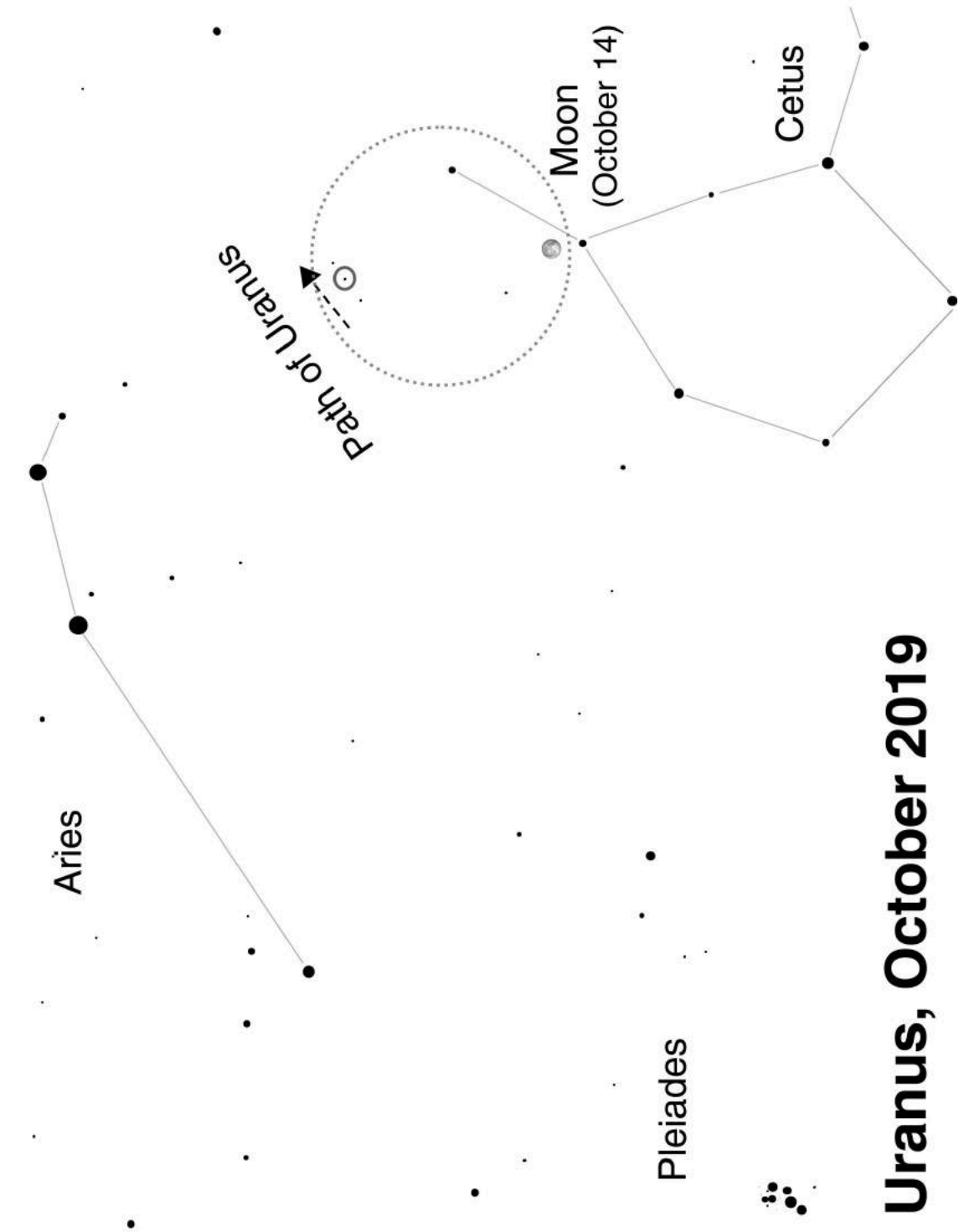
Search for Uranus in the space beneath the stars of Aries the Ram and above Cetus the Whale. These constellations are found west of more prominent Taurus the Bull and Pleiades star cluster. You can also use the Moon as a guide! Uranus will be just a few degrees north of the Moon the night of October 14, close enough to fit both objects into the same binocular field of view. However, it will be much easier to see dim Uranus by moving the bright Moon just out of sight. If you're using a telescope, zoom in as much as possible once you find Uranus; 100x magnification and greater will reveal its small greenish disc, while background stars will remain points.

Try this observing trick from a dark sky location. Find Uranus with your telescope or binoculars, then look with your unaided eyes at the patch of sky where your equipment is aimed. Do you see a faint star where Uranus should be? That's not a star; you're actually seeing Uranus with your naked eye! The ice giant is just bright enough near opposition - magnitude 5.7 - to be visible to observers under clear dark skies. It's easier to see this ghostly planet unaided after first using an instrument to spot it, sort of like "training wheels" for your eyes. Try this technique with other objects as you observe, and you'll be amazed at what your eyes can pick out.

By the way, you've spotted the first planet discovered in the modern era! William Herschel discovered Uranus via telescope in 1781, and Johan Bode confirmed its status as a planet two years later. NASA's Voyager 2 is the only spacecraft to visit this strange world, with a brief flyby in 1986. It revealed a strange, severely tilted planetary system possessing faint dark rings, dozens of moons, and eerily featureless cloud tops. Subsequent observations of Uranus from powerful telescopes like Hubble and Keck showed its blank face was temporary, as powerful storms were spotted, caused by dramatic seasonal changes during its 84-year orbit. Uranus's wildly variable seasons result from a massive collision billions of years ago that tipped the planet to its side.

omposite images taken of Uranus in 2012 and 2014 by the Hubble Space Telescope, showcasing its rings and auroras. Image credit: ESA/Hubble & NASA, L. Lamy / Observatoire de Paris





Uranus, October 2019

CLUB BENEFITS

OBSERVING CALENDAR

October 3 - Conjunction of the Moon and Jupiter. The moon and Jupiter will pass within 1°52' of each other in the constellation of Ophiuchus. Look south starting at 8:52 p.m. EDT. The pair will be visible untl 9:58 p.m. when they begin setting.

October 5 - Conjunction of the Moon and Saturn. The moon and Saturn will pass within 0°15' of each other in the constellation of Sagittarius. Look south starting at 6:49 p.m. EDT. The pair will be visible untl 10:45 a.m. when they begin setting towards the southwest.

October 13 - Full moon at 05:07 p.m.

October 17 - Mercury reaches its highest point in the sky. Mercury will be shining at -0.1 magnitude at a peak altitude of 8° above the southwestern horizon around sunset.

October 13 - New moon at 11:38 p.m.

October 28 - Uranus at opposition. Uranus will shine at 5.7 mag with a disk 3.7 arcsec in diameter in the constellation of Aries. Uranus will be visible at 7:47 p.m. until about 5:30 the next morning.

October 31 - Conjunction of the Moon and Jupiter. The moon and Jupiter will pass within 1°18' of each other in the constellation of Ophiuchus. Look south starting at 6:12 p.m. EDT. The pair will be visible untl 8:26 p.m. when they begin setting.

WHY JOIN?

For $15.00 a year, you can enjoy many benefits with the Astronomical Society of the Toms River Area. Members can borrow A.S.T.R.A.'s telescopes for observations, have access to private star parties, access to Island Beach State Park permits, in addition to camaraderie with local amateur astronomers. Contact one of our club officers today to join the fun.

ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK PERMITS

One of the perks of being an ASTRA member is the special permit for after-hours stargazing at Island Beach State Park. Please contact the executive board for more details about how you can acquire your 2019 permit.

ASTRA'S TELESCOPES

ASTRA has several different types of telescopes, telescope mounts, along with binoculars, eyepieces, and eyepiece filters available for members to borrow. If any member is interested, please check out ASTRA's website and contact John Endreson at **telescope-loan@astra-nj.org**, or 609-971-3331.

VOLUNTEER PRESENTERS

Members are invited to give presentations related to astronomy or space science at our monthly meetings. Please contact a club officer to make arrangements.