



SHENANDOAH ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

November 2009

A Celebration of Astronomy

TO CELEBRATE CARL SAGAN'S LEGACY on the 75th anniversary of his birth (November 9, 1934), and to increase public involvement in the excitement of astronomy and space exploration, a local coalition of science and reason-based organizations have created the *First Annual Carl Sagan Day*. It is particularly fitting that we celebrate this great scientist in 2009, the International Year of Astronomy. We hope to have November 9th officially designated as *Carl Sagan Day*. – Broward College in Florida in Skeptic email letter

(I thought the quote above was fitting since Carl Sagan was the outstanding spokesman for science.)

Program for November 11 at LFCC, 7:00 PM Room 160

Alan is bringing a presentation:
The Birth of Star Clusters by Dr. Steven Stahler

Two Observing Sessions planned:
November 14 – Shenandoah County Park at Mauertown

November 21 – Long Branch Estate

Meteor Showers – One Method

For those who like meteor showers but are often hindered by the clouds, here is a fun method and a quote by Herman Heyn, the Baltimore Sidewalk Astronomer – might work for the Leonid shower in November also.

“Here come the Geminids, yet another celestial event for which light pollution and/or weather may spoil the public's view. However, there is a meteor observation technique which can overcome both these liabilities--FM radio observations.

According to an article in December 1997's S&T, FM radio broadcasts reflect off the trail of ionized gasses left by meteors as they briefly streak through the sky. On your FM band, find a spot which is not being used or where the station is very weak. Mostly you will hear a steady hiss but, if you are lucky and a meteor produces an ionized trail in the right part of the sky, you briefly hear the signal of a distant FM station. It might be simply a short "ping", but it could be a few words or notes of music. Since meteor "broadcasts" are always short, a long signal will be something else. An outdoor antenna is preferable, so listing on a car radio may increase your chances of catching one or more.

Back to the Geminids, according to the experts, the shower gets underway between 9 and 10PM Dec. 13th for the east coast and peaks around midnight. The meteors radiate from the constellation Gemini but can pop up anywhere in the sky. They are thought to be debris sluffed off by the asteroid 3200 Phaethon. While they don't leave glowing trails, the bright ones come in a variety of colors. Under clear and dark skies, 50 to 60 an hour may be seen....maybe, that is!

Clear skies,
Herman”