

Triton Fun Company

Science Newsletter September 2007

# Science Newsletter

## September 2007

### How I decided to join an astronomy club

K. Frank

#### Special points of interest:

Astronomy clubs

Triton Fun stuff

Superfluous questions

When I was a little girl, I really had no interest in science or science fiction. I remember, at age 8, seeing the movie about the *Fifty Foot Woman* and had nightmares for weeks afterwards that the 50-foot woman was after me. When *Godzilla* first appeared on my TV screen, I shivered with fright, until one of my older brothers began making fun of the monster. Still, I was wary of monsters and as a child couldn't even watch the *Twilight Zone* without getting scared. In spite of my fears of visual science fiction, I managed to get fairly good grades in my science classes, except chemistry which I really struggled with. While I fought my dislike of chemistry, my brothers began reading science fiction and once in awhile I'd borrow one of their books and find reading science fiction didn't scare me as much as seeing it on TV or at the movies.

In the 1960's something began to change for me when the original *Star Trek* series came on the TV. We lived in Los Angeles and my parents were good friends with a man named Gene Coon. Gene was both a writer and producer for *Star Trek*. Every week when the show came on, my entire family sat down to watch it, since our good friend Gene was involved in the show.

We felt compelled to watch. Gene was a writer and/or a producer on 39 of the original *Star Trek* series episodes. His writing credits include such *Star Trek* favorites as "Devil in the Dark" and "Errand of Mercy". At the time I knew him, Gene was married to a woman named Joy and I believe they had about 14 cats, a goat and a dog. He was a smoker, though, and I believe that is why he had a heart attack at a young age, and eventually died of lung cancer at age 49. Gene was such a good friend that he even got a few of the show's actors to come to a fundraiser my parents had at our house for the Jonas Salk Institute in La Jolla, California. I remember meeting Leonard Nimoy and DeForest Kelley at that fundraiser. However, as a teen-ager, I don't think I realized how important they were. I just knew that our friend Gene had helped get them to our house. Gene also arranged for my brothers and I to visit the set with our parents. When it was my turn to go, I remembered Scotty and Kirk doing a scene. For some reason, every time Shatner had to say the words "tape recording", he kept cracking up. Eventually, my parents and I stood off to the side, when DeForest Kelley came over to talk to us. We chatted with him for over an hour. I don't remember what it was about, but he was very kind to us.



**Gene Coon: *Star Trek* writer/producer**

Because of *Star Trek*, I began to develop an interest in science fiction, so that when the movie "*2001, A Space Odyssey*" came out, I saw it about six times. My brothers and I loved it, whereas my parents hated it. However, even this movie *2001* couldn't help my hatred of college chemistry. My dad was a physician but after a quarter at school of chemistry class, I sadly informed him that I would not be following in his footsteps to become a doctor. During this time, anthropology overtook my interest in science and *Star Trek*. It wasn't until the late 1970's when a friend invited me to a *Star Trek* convention that I began to like science fiction and science again. In December 1980, after a car accident that left me with severe back pain, I often read science fiction to distract me from my pain.

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**Astronomy Club, continued;** Photo: [memoryalpha.org](http://memoryalpha.org)

Eventually, I returned to Los Angeles to live with my parents. As my pain problems got worse, and my medical HMO was unable to help, I began to do research on my own at the UCLA Medical Library. As I read all these medical articles I began to develop an interest not only in medicine, but in other sciences as well. Meanwhile, I'd also become hooked on Star Trek reruns and all the various spin-offs like *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, and *Star Trek: Enterprise*.

This led me to become interested in the real space program and astronomy and I wanted to buy a telescope. One night when I was out to dinner with my brothers and my mother, I asked them about buying a telescope. Both my brothers said "Don't waste your money. Join an astronomy club instead." So I took their suggestion and called a local planetarium who told me about a local astronomy club affiliated with them. I attended my first meeting in 1996 and joined in 1997. In the club, there were talks about astronomy, star parties and of course, other astronomy enthusiasts with whom I found kinship and common interests in our love of the stars, and who became my friends.

I also joined The Planetary Society in 1997. Between the two organizations, I began a new adventure learning about astronomy, but also physics and the space program. In 2002, when I moved into my own house, I made sure I got a satellite dish to receive the NASA TV channel so I could watch shuttle launches, as well as news about the robotic machines sent to Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and other planets. Thanks to my brothers, Gene Coon, Gene Roddenberry, and the actors in Star Trek and all the spin-offs, I am now a member of a great astronomy club and an avid supporter of NASA and international space programs as well.



**Gene Coon Filmography**

**Star Trek episodes** he was connected with, either as writer (under his name or the name Lee Cronin) or as producer:

- The Man Trap
- Miri
- The Menagerie
- Conscience of the King
- Shore Leave
- Galileo Seven
- The Squire of Gothos
- Arena
- Tomorrow is Yesterday
- Court Martial
- Return of the Archons
- Space Seed
- A Taste of Armageddon
- This Side of Paradise
- Devil in the Dark
- Errand of Mercy
- Alternative Factor
- City of the Edge of Forever
- Operation—Annihilate
- Amok Time
- Who Mourns for Adonis ?
- The Changeling
- Mirror, Mirror
- The Apple
- The Doomsday Machine
- Catspaw
- I, Mudd
- Metamorphosis
- Friday's Child
- The Deadly Years
- Wolf in the Fold
- The Trouble with Tribbles
- A Piece of the Action
- A Private Little War
- Bread and Circuses
- Spock's Brain
- Spectre of the Gun
- Wink of an Eye
- Let that Be your Last Battlefield

**Join an Astronomy Club !**

If you love astronomy, then an astronomy club can be the best way to find other amateurs who love the sky as much as you do. The clubs have meetings where astronomy is discussed as well as star parties where astronomers camp out under the stars and observe the sky at night. Usually, you don't need to own a telescope; others are often very happy to let you look in their telescopes and share their joy of observing, or tell you what their favorite celestial objects are or what their wildest, coldest, or most interesting nights under the stars were like.

There are hundreds of astronomy clubs around the United States, and there are clubs in more than 100 countries around the world. It is a wonderful thing to see people united by their love of stargazing. Astronomy transcends borders and nationalities. It connects all of us that can see and appreciate the stars at night.

**See these resources** for information about astronomy clubs as well as planetariums and space organizations:

- <http://www.astronomyclubs.com>
- <http://www.lpl.arizona.edu/~rhill/alpo/clublinks.html>
- <http://www.astronomy.com/asy/community/groups/>
- <http://www.skyandtelescope.com/community/organizations>
- [http://www.skynewsmagazine.com/pages/astronomy\\_clubs.html](http://www.skynewsmagazine.com/pages/astronomy_clubs.html)
- <http://www.astronomyclubs.com/2/Planetarium.aspx>
- <http://www.nss.org/>
- <http://www.astronomyclubs.com/5/33/0/0/club.aspx>
- <http://www.hawastsoc.org/Pltium.html>

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\*\* Send us your superfluous questions for a future issue ! They can be on any subject. The funnier, the better. M.D., our editor, appreciates the help and will send you a free Triton Fun coffee mug as compensation for your question. Or write an article for us and be read by professional and amateur astronomers and scientists in the U.S. and Canada ! \*\*

## Superfluous Questions:

1. The CN Tower in Toronto, Canada is the world's tallest building. At 1815 ft, how much money would be accumulated if you stacked up Canadian dollar coins (called "loonies") to the height of the CN Tower ?  
a) \$ 102,402    b) \$ 283,205    c) \$ 806,782    d) \$ 93,456
2. A hogshead is a unit of *what* ?  
a) volume    b) mass    c) power    d) energy
3. In the movie *The American President*, Michael Douglas plays President Andrew Shepherd. What university was he teaching at before he became president ?  
a) Stanford University    b) University of Montana    c) Indiana University    d) University of Wisconsin
4. Double Gloucester is a kind of *what* ?  
a) bearing    b) cricket match    c) wrestling hold    d) cheese

—> ANSWERS in next months issue of the Science Newsletter ! <---

\*\* ANSWERS to August's Superfluous Questions: 1. d) infinity symbol 2. c) Saturn 3. c) Montana 4. c) Alabama