

# Fireworks light up your night sky

THE SKY'S  
THE LIMIT



NEEL ROBERTS

If you remember Debbie Boone's *Light up my life* back in 1977, yes you're definitely showing your age. Now that we've dealt with the bad news, time for the opposite. Fireworks have been around long before you were thought of, so relax on the growing old syndrome. They are a popular source of entertainment while turning your back yard into an awesome display for miles. Off course you can't beat the year round celestial sky, but occasions like Victoria Day give us reason to set off those roman candles with their cousins, so go for it.

Canadians are no doubt lucky earthly inhabitant for many reasons. Not only is our country blessed in so many ways, but we have a good reputation around the globe. If you've travelled much of the world like I have, I don't have to tell you what a valuable asset a Canadian passport is. I remembering travelling in Europe 11 years ago, an American co-tourist asked me in his traditional Georgia accent "How come folks like y'all so much?" Realizing I'm 99 per cent likely to give a politically dangerous answer, somehow I compellingly answered "Don't you know? We have two official fireworks day (compared to

their solo July 4)." After five minutes of the deepest introspection of his life, he wasn't sure to conclude if I was Mork from Ork or on the verge of the ultimate truth. I guess I found the "opening"!

Okay, back to work. Astronomy and fireworks are a great mix for the simple reason that they interest people of all walks. Granted the fireworks tends to be more excited and are man-made, but they are practically impossible without the cosmos background. Sure, I suppose in a big stadium it's possible, but it's like diluted root beer; just not the same thing. If you're not planning to spark up your back yard but I got your attention, hang on, I have good news!

So you want to know more about the night sky? There's lots of good information on the net and bookstores, libraries, etc. but there's nothing more like the real thing if you want to learn about the universe. This is where a local observatory or astronomy club can help you. Not only are they usually more equipped, but they are an excellent source of knowledge. Our members enjoy the privilege of using the observatory at their leisure, have access to free equipment like telescopes and we host our annual Star B Q during the Perseid's meteor shower in August for starters. As a bonus, we are able to get special deals which are not available to the public. The Big Sky Astronomical Society is

pleased to be a partner in the International Year of Astronomy and as such we are planning to purchase and distribute Galileoscopes. These telescopes are working replicas of the telescope that Galileo used 400 years ago and come in kit form. They are easy to build and will provide you with a view of the Moon, Venus, and Jupiter, similar to the view that Galileo had four centuries ago. Check it out at [www.galileoscope.org/gs](http://www.galileoscope.org/gs).

## ■ Sky watch for the next month

1. Saturn — After a winter of having its rings in perfect plane Saturn is now starting to open up and will be visible from about 10 pm to 4 am in the south west sky. However, this becomes hard to see later in the summer and won't be an evening event until next year.

2. Venus — Will be an early morning event coming up with the sun. If you look straight east before sun rise (around 5 a.m.) that big bright one is our neighbouring planet and if you have a powerful enough telescope, you'll notice it's dark yellow in colour.

3. Summer Triangle — One of the surest signs the warmer weather is coming are the trio of Vega, Deneb and Altair. If you're seeding into the wee hours, look north, east, east about a third of the way up and that's the heart of it. At this time of the year they're usually there until about 3 a.m.

4. Big Dipper verses Little

Dipper — A favourite in the North American sky and although they are present all year round, the Big is almost top dead center while the Little follows it day and night in the strangest way. At night time, the Big actually pours into the Small while during the day it's the opposite. There's no constellation show like that anywhere!

Also, check out [www.whatsuptonight.net](http://www.whatsuptonight.net), [www.astronomy.com](http://www.astronomy.com), [www.space.com](http://www.space.com) and [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov). They have much more detailed information and great stuff for kids — free.

## ■ Upcoming observatory events

1. Members Meeting — This Friday, 8 p.m. at the observatory. We're located at the Twin Valley Dam on Secondary Highway 529 right by the parking lot south of the dam. Public is most welcome.

2. Victoria Day Fireworks Special — Monday, May 18, 10 p.m. at the observatory. Bring a chair or bed and tell your friends. We want to make this a regular event. Remember to dress warm for all events as this is not Hawaii and all meetings always are pending weather.

Happy Victory Day and keep reaching for the Sky!

Neel Roberts is the VP of Big Sky Astronomical Society and can be reached at [Neel\\_Roberts@ptccanada.com](mailto:Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com). The members meet once a month on Friday evenings by Twin Valley Dam and it is the observatory for Vulcan County. Visit the website at [www.bigsky.ab.ca](http://www.bigsky.ab.ca)