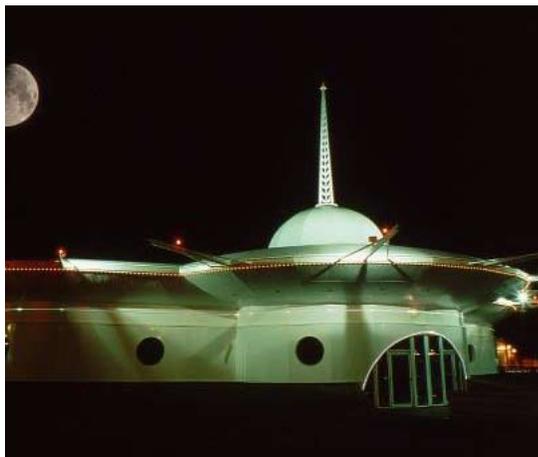


“Spock Size” Crowd Invades Trek Center in Vulcan

By Neel Roberts



The 1,800 populous Town of Vulcan almost doubles during its annual Spock Days of early June, however the 2 year old Friday monthly stargazing evenings put on by locals have been catching attention from all over Southern Alberta. In Late 2010, RASC Calgary and Vulcan Tourism entered into an agreement to host public astronomy meetings and since then it has seen hundreds make the trip to the small agriculture municipality. It has not only caught the attention of various media but is well matched with the town’s Star Trek theme.

Normally they get between 20-35 participants but in February they were completely taken off guard when about 100 showed up. “They just kept coming, filling up the parking lot and eventually on the street” explained an impressed Devan Daniels, tourism co-ordinator for Vulcan Tourism. Carl Ceber, assistant tourism co-ordinator spends lots of time during the month marketing the event on various radio stations, media publications and institutions like schools. “Sometimes it’s the right words and pictures” he describes. “Will we get these numbers each month? I’m aiming for that!”

Karl Iverson Jr., RASC member and main telescope operator had over a dozen enthusiastic new comers lined up waiting to check out Jupiter, Orion Nebula and more through an 11” Celestron telescope. Roland Dechesne, past president of Calgary RASC usually starts the evenings off with indoor presentations which take place in the “bridge section” of the Trek Center set up as a theater. “This is the year of the snake on the Chinese New Year calendar so I taught it from an astronomer’s perspective” which earned him a loud round of applause when finished. Special guest presenters were RASC members Ken From and Wade Williamson of All Star Telescopes

in Didsbury. From spoke on the “Joy of Astronomy” and how his earlier days as an African missionary in the pitch black forest (light up only by star light) inspired his calling to open his telescope shop on his grandfather’s farm just south of town. That risk taken 7 years ago paid off as All Star Telescopes is now the #1 Celestron dealer in “Canada”; even beating out big centers like Toronto!

Wade Williamson plans to be part of the regular professionals on hand showing off the heavens with his Dobsonian scope and bringing a variety of stock from the All Star shelves to demonstrate; possibly making it available to those interested in getting their own gear. “I’m delighted to be part of this” says Williamson. After 2 years, the idea of RASC Calgary partnering with Vulcan Tourism is not only paying off but has a bright future. The love for starwatching does grow every year but few centers offer the options as this project does. Every second Friday of the month starting at 19:30, this event offers refreshments with full facilities and small town amenities. All are welcome and there’s no charge.

For further information contact the Trek Center at (403) 485-2994 or check out the RASC special webpage for Vulcan. Come and see for yourself why they say Vulcan is “Simply out of this world”!

Rothney Astrophysical Observatory (RAO) Open House – March 16 “New Discoveries in our Solar System” Speakers: Roland Dechesne & Don Hladiuk (R.A.S.C.)

Gates open at 8pm to 11pm
\$20 per car OR \$10 per person**

Reaching out into our solar system with robotic explorations have yielded new information on the evolution of planets. Geologists/Astronomers Roland and Don will discuss the latest discoveries and what it all means.

In the sky – Look south and the bright star is Sirius, the brightest star in the constellation Canis Major.

**All proceeds to Rothney Astrophysical Observatory educational programming.