

MASA PLANET

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Minnesota's Mousenik

By Art Gibbens

It was a cold and windy night when Philip, my six-year-old son, and I ventured into the vast boundless farmland of southern Minnesota. We found a campground just outside of Hope where we could pitch our tent and build a roaring fire. Because we were the only tent in this retirement community of RVs, we were given a campsite out by the newly sprouted cornfield. They had a nice little store where we could procure the nectar of the gods on a cold morning, instant hot chocolate. While we were visiting this little grocery that first night, the cribbage players looked up, with bemused looks between them, wondering. None of them spoke to us, they just kept counting out the fifteens, glad to see us make our purchase and leave them to their tournament. We retired to a thin tent on a night thick with clouds and intrigue. Would our mecca be fruitful? Would we be able to visit that historic site? Or would we get lost on our quest because the shrine would not be clearly marked?

Morning broke cold and brisk. I got the fire going and the water boiling before Philip became cognizant of his surroundings. He rose to a hot cup of cocoa to sip on while I got the bacon and eggs done up. The homemade bread his mother sent along toasted up golden brown and rounded out the corners of our bellies, giving us the nourishment necessary for that last leg of our journey. We broke camp

with high expectations for the day. As we headed towards Brownsdale the rain started to fall again, casting an air of uncertainty with its arrival. The miles rolled away under our trusty steed, a 1986 S10 pickup.

We were headed east on County Road 2 when the road took a jog to the south just outside of town, and there it was, big as day! The road bends back to the east and on the outside of the corner was the memorial. We had made it. About ten minutes before we got there the rain had quit. Knowing I had just a few minutes at best to squeeze off a few shots with the camera before the storm would catch up with us again, I had Philip stand between the rocket, Mousenik, and the placard which had the following inscription on it:

“MOUSENIK ROCKETS

On 5 Jan 1957 at the Red Rock Proving Grounds ¼ mile south of this marker the Austin Rocket Society launched a 4' 10" rocket "Mousenik II". The rocket carried a live mouse as a passenger. The launch received international attention and coverage including ABC-TV's David Brinkley, MN State Senator Ed Thye and Capt. Charles Woody of the DOD Missile Office. The "Mousenik I" rocket achieved an altitude of 1642 ft and a velocity of 221 mph.

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In 1958 the Austin Rocketry Society set an altitude record of 3250 ft. The Austin Rocket Society was founded in 1955 by Richard King, Leonard Paul Germer, and Gary Solyst. 1957 members included Calvin Aaby, James Budd, Gordon Cassidy, Phil Grunewald, Carl Harwood, Gary Hitzemann, Wally Jensen, Steve Johnson, Bob Maile, and Robert Simon, ages 14 - 18. Science Advisor Sister Duns Scotis the Pacelli High School Science Teacher.”

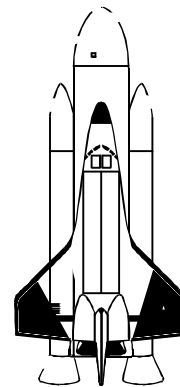
We got the pictures for proof and a tale to tell of our quest for the earliest documented rocket memorabilia in the state of Minnesota. We settled back into the warmth of the cab and headed back home with smiles on our faces knowing that we had looked upon a bit of history.

What the Prez Says

By Russ Durkee

I don't know about you , but once the August launch is over, I started thinking about what projects will be taking over my bench during the winter months. I am also reflecting on our first three years as a club and the future of MASA in the 2001 flying season. In November we will be nominating officers for 2001. It is time to ask yourself whether you would like to become a MASA officer. It is clear to me that the time is right for a new MASA administration. Mark, Damian, and I have agreed that we are ready to finish our terms at the end of the year and will not seek re-election in 2001. This means that all three officer positions, President, Vice-President, and Secretary will be vacant at the end of the year. So, it is time to start thinking about who will be the next group of leaders in our club.

The club has been a great success for three years and in the last ten months the membership has taken a much more active role running club launches and meetings. But that does not mean the club can run itself! MASA needs committed officers who are eager to put in a lot of work behind the scenes before, during and after all club activities. There are many people in the club who are well suited for the job of President, Vice President, or Secretary. These positions require not only a time commitment for the individual but they also require the officers to be the most active and enthusiastic members of the club. We will continue to be active members of MASA in 2001 and will assist the new officers in any way we can during the transition. We are eager to see the club under the control of a new group of enthusiastic rocketeers. Think it over, by January a new MASA "administration" will be elected. Will it include you?



Events

October 10 - Meeting

Location: Science Museum of Minnesota
Classrooms 11 & 12
Time: 7 - 8:30 pm
Topics: Photo night! Bring your photos of model rockets, full-scale rockets, rocket displays, rocket museums...

October 28 - Launch

Location: TBD
Time: TBD

MASA Planet
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