



# The Countdown to Spacefest

by Diane C. Taylor

5...4...3...2...1...Spacefest! Spacefest IX, "Bringing Space to Earth" is coming July 5-8, to the Starr Pass Marriott. This is the first year that Spacefest has been held in July, but not the first time in Tucson.

Yes, Spacefest IX is almost here. It's your chance to meet an astronaut, see some outstanding space art, meet authors of space-related books, hear talks and panel discussions by leading space authorities, buy space memorabilia, and just learn lots more about outer space.

For the third year, emphasis is on STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics. This part is free for everyone and is especially designed to get children interested in all things space. The STEAM program will include demonstrations, exhibits and hands-on activities, organizer Sally Poor explained. Tim Dodd, better known as "Everyday Astronaut" will be a highlight.

Attendees will have the opportunity to meet some 15 Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, Space Shuttle and International Space Station astronauts, as well as mission control engineers and others providing support, she continued. "Many of these astronauts are not young any more, so it may be folks' last chance to see them. We've lost four of our regulars since last year's event: Dick Gordon, Gene Cernan, Paul Weitz and Bruce McCandless."

More than 25 of the best space artists and illustrators around will show their work. Many are members of the International Association of Astronomical Artists (IAAA), a group that sprang from workshops organized by a small

group of space artists in 1982 and 1984. Spacefest founder Kim Poor was the first president of the group, which now has 130+ members in more than 15 countries.

Space authorities – journalists, authors, astronauts, scientists, engineers, consultants and managers – will talk about a variety of space topics. Some highlights: Dr. Beatrice Mueller of the Planetary Science Institute will describe observations of Oumuamua, the first confirmed object from outside our solar system, and what these observations can tell us. Long-time space journalist Leonard David will talk about our future in space. Author Francis French will lead an Apollo panel made up of Neil Armstrong's son Rick and former astronauts Charlie Duke, Fred Haise and Walt Cunningham.

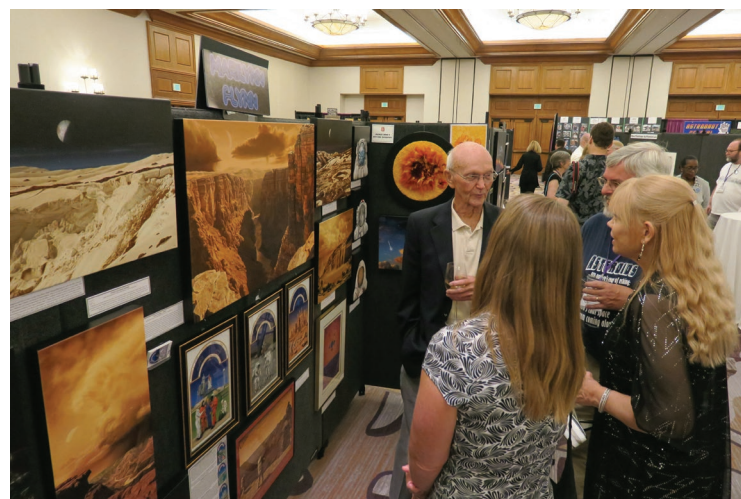
Events will be held in two large ballrooms. In one, you'll find the artists with their art, the astronauts who will sign autographs and chat with folks, and vendors of space memorabilia and space-related items. The other will be split up for the various talks.

Three films will be shown during the event. Dwight Steven-Boniecki's new *Searching for Skylab, America's Forgotten Triumph* will be shown several times. A recent addition to the schedule is *Chesley Bonestell: A Brush with the Future*, a film produced, written and directed by Douglass M. Stewart, Jr. Bonestell is generally credited with being a major influence on science fiction art and illustration. According to space author/illustrator and IAAA member Ron Miller,

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Left: Shuttle and ISS astronaut and space artist Nicole Stott (left) poses beside one of her projects for charity. Bottom Left: Shuttle & ISS Astronaut Clayton Anderson talks with a group of Swiss students. Bottom right: Apollo astronaut Michael Collins admires space art of Marilyn Flynn (right).



his paintings “not only anticipated 20th century space exploration, they helped to bring it about.”

A highlight on Friday will be a discussion of the Apollo 13 mission by Fred Haise, Lunar Module pilot of the ill-fated flight, and several of the Apollo 13 mission control staff. A collaboration between Spacefest IX and The Loft Cinema will follow this with a showing of the 1995 film *Apollo 13*, starring Tom Hanks, at the Loft Cinema.

On Saturday evening Spacefest will offer a free star party on the hotel lawn, the chance for visitors to view the planets and stars thanks to Starizona, a local telescope sales company.

Spacefest is the brainchild of Kim Poor, who was born and raised in Phoenix. After marrying Sally in 1978, he traveled the Southwest, participating in art shows and getting assignments for magazines and books. An award-winning artist and illustrator who specialized in space topics, he got to know former NASA astronaut Alan Bean, also an artist, at an art show in Houston, Sally Poor explained. Over time they got to be good friends, and Kim had an entrée into the world of the astronauts, specifically those of the Apollo missions.

From there, he and Sally set up Novaspace, which includes Novaspace Art ([novaspaceart.com](http://novaspaceart.com)), a unique and now online-only gallery of space art and Astronaut Central ([astronautcentral.com](http://astronautcentral.com)), which offers astronaut autographs along with autographed books, photos, art and memorabilia.

By 1994 Kim was no longer able to paint because of the progression of MJD (Machado-Joseph Disease). MJD is a form of ataxia, a neurodegenerative disease that results in loss of muscle control and coordination of the extremities. In spite of this, Kim continued to offer other artists the opportunity to sell original artwork and prints.

The first Spacefest was held in mid-August 2007 in Phoenix. Since then two have been held in California, with the rest in Arizona, though a year here and there was missed, Sally said. After Kim died August 16, 2017, his family – widow Sally, daughter Kelsey and son Nathan – decided to carry on the business. Kelsey has added a monthly newsletter plus Facebook and Instagram to publicize events.

Working with a very small paid staff and many dedicated volunteers, Sally explained that Spacefest is self-supporting. That is, support comes only from attendees. Admission ranges from \$30 for a day (\$12 for Sunday) to \$995 (including preferred seating at all events, Spacefest banquet, VIP Astronaut/ Art Reception, Astronauts’ Lunch, Apollo Panel, all speakers / talks / panels / movies pass, and a Spacefest T-shirt). For children 12 and under, it’s free. All STEAM activities are free and open to everyone.

*More events are being added as they are confirmed, so it’s best to check the website at [spacefest.info](http://spacefest.info) for more information. Diane Taylor is a journeyman member of IAAA and has volunteered at Spacefest in the past. ■*