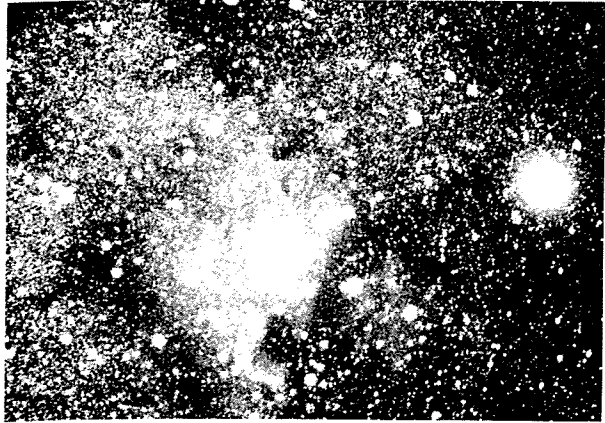


## IN SEARCH OF A DARK SKY



The North American nebula covers several degrees of sky which, combined with its low surface brightness, makes it one of the most difficult deep-sky objects to observe. During one of our fall observing sessions at our club's newly acquired observatory site near Villa Rica, Ga. the North American nebula was observed by a group of AAC members with their naked eye! This fine photograph was taken by one of our newer club members, Dean Mamalakis, near his home town of Savannah on August 28-29, 1976. Dean used a 180mm telephoto lens and camera attached "piggyback" using his 6-inch refractor to guide with. Exposure time was 20 minutes on Kodak 103aF film developed in D-19. The bright star to the right is Deneb in the constellation Cygnus.

-B.C.

wasn't going to be a particularly good night for star gazing. There seemed to be a long, thin band of clouds stretching diagonally across the sky. It was the Milky-Way!! I felt a pleasant thrill at being able to look up and see this wonder of the night sky. The Milky Way is only one of the many dark sky objects falling victim to smog and mercury vapor lights in all large metropolitan areas.

On this beautiful October evening our sky gazing party was serving a dual purpose. The members of The Atlanta Astronomy Club were searching for a remote dark sky area in which to locate a club observatory. We were looking for a place that is relatively free of smog and light pollution and still be approximately a one-hour drive, or less, from downtown Atlanta. The Barber farm appears to conform to the general requirements that we have set for our remote observing location.

Astronomy has been a life-long interest with Mr. Barber. His son, now deceased, was an

The gravel crunched softly under the car wheels as I drove slowly down the driveway. I had turned off the headlights and was guiding the car with the aid of parking lights. After parking the car near an oak tree I walked on down the driveway past Mr. Barber's house to join other members of The Atlanta Astronomy Club for a star-gazing party. Mark Christensen's 8-inch telescope was set up on the grass near a parked car. Several people were gathered around and looking at the Hercules Cluster (M13). In between two other cars Mark, Bob Campbell, Bill Close and Bob Hayward were assembling a telescope for Sally Hudson from a collection of parts in a long wooden box. Nearby on a grassy hummock David Spearing had his 6-inch telescope set up. He and two or three people were looking at the Ring Nebula (M57). Approximately 30 members of our astronomy club had made the 35-mile trip out Interstate 20 to the Barber farm.

As I walked around in the early darkness of a crisp October evening, getting my bearings and meeting people, a gray object in the driveway got up and moved out of the way. It was a shy dog. Another dark object was a shaggy little black dog who allowed me to pet him. Young Marko Passen came up and asked if he could borrow my 12x50 binoculars to look for the North American Nebula in the Constellation Cygnus. I said that I didn't think they would bring out the nebulosity as I handed him the binoculars. Then looking at the sky, I reflected that it probably

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The Atlanta Astronomy Club will hold its regular meeting on February 18, at Bradley Observatory, Agnes Scott College. As usual the meeting will begin promptly at 8:00 pm. We are privileged to present Dr. Robert Dukes, of Charleston S.C. The title of his presentation is: Oh, Be a Fine Girl-Kiss Me- an Historical Perspective. If you know something about astronomy you will know that this talk has nothing to do with girls or kisses! If you don't know what this means, be prepared to find out why the spectral classes of stars, when arranged in logical order, appear to form an alphabetical jungle. The tale of how they got this way is the story of the evolution of our knowledge of the stars. Dr. Dukes is uniquely qualified to tell this tale. He is an expert in the photometry and spectral analysis of variable stars. He holds degrees in physics and astronomy and is currently Assistant Professor of Physics at the College of Charleston, where he teaches courses in astronomy.

The Astro-Aid Committee will make its second presentation at 7:00, one hour before the meeting begins. This month the subject will be astro-photography. Last month's session was very well attended. It appears that this program (Al Beales' brain child) is a definite success. Future sessions will cover every phase of astronomy in which members express an interest.

For the past six months each issue of this bulletin has mentioned the progress which our Observatory Committee, chaired by Mark Christensen, has made toward the establishment of a club observatory. We are now ready to take the most important step forward in the history of our club. Final arrangements are being made with the Barbers for the transfer of land, and as soon as the ravages of winter are over, construction will begin. To do this we will need money. Our treasury is in good condition, compared to previous years, and a modest transfer of money to the Observatory Fund is possible. (This was authorized when the decision to go ahead on this project was voted.) But we will need much more. At the February meeting you will be asked to make a donation. Please bring your checkbook and help us to start out on a sound financial basis. We are asking every member to make a donation. We rarely try to raise money in this way, but this observatory is a one-time expense which will increase our enjoyment of astronomy much more than its cost would imply. Ask yourself what the astronomy club has meant to you and give accordingly. Of course, all donations are tax-deductible. If you will not be able to attend the meeting, or if you find a little extra money later on, you may mail your donation to the Treasurer. He is: Eugene A. Powell, 654 Cumberland Rd., N.E., Atlanta, Ga. 30306. Please mark your check: Observatory Fund. Everyone who contributes \$20 or over will become a Sustaining Member of the Atlanta Astronomy Club.

Our next observing party will be held on March 11, at the Barber farm. If it is cloudy that night, which is a Friday, it will be held on Saturday, March 12. Featured guests will be Jupiter, Saturn and several asteroids. Have you seen Saturn's Crepe Ring, or Cassini's Division? The largest instrument present will be a 10" reflector, and if the night is halfway decent, you may see these elusive objects.

We usually end our season with a banquet in May. For 1977 the banquet will be held in June. This will allow us to hold one additional meeting (in May) at Bradley Observatory.

Plans are now being made for our next session's programs (September-May). If you have any particular interests or requests please contact Linwood Beck. Perhaps you would like to volunteer to give a program.