

ATLANTA ASTRONOMY CLUB NEWSLETTER

MEETING

Don Hall 938-8139

The December 1984 meeting will be held at 8:00 P.M. on Friday, December 14 at the Bradley Observatory of Agnes Scott College.

PROGRAM

Dennis Holmes 926-1142

"MARS UP CLOSE", a NASA slide show presented by Herb Teeple showing dramatic pictures taken of the red planet from orbit and by the Viking landers. We also plan a more "sumptuous" refreshment period to celebrate the holiday season. Please plan to come and join us.

TREASURY NOTES

Herb Teeple 394-5784

We welcome one new member this month: Bruce McFarland, P.O. Box 143, Decatur, GA 30031; Phone: 292-5630. Club members should know we have returned the AAC's annual certification of the special rate plan for SKY AND TELESCOPE to Sky Publishing Corp. This certificate enables you to receive "S&T" at a reduced rate through the AAC.

Also, Club members should know the ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE membership list has been updated as of 12/07/84. AAC members in good standing on that date should receive the "Reflector", the NL of the League. Included with the NL is "Dark Skies for Comet Halley" which provides a periodic update of this spectacular event, which begins to peak for us Earthlings during the latter part of 1985.

The current Treasury Report is as follows:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Bal. Nov. 8, 1984..... | 1013.12 |
| Add Rev. (Dues)..... | 220.00.....1233.12 |
| Less Expenses | |
| S&T Subs..... | 117.00 |
| Nov. NL..... | 40.59.....157.59 |
| Bal. Dec. 7, 1984..... | 1075.53 |

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Don Hall 938-8139

I want to wish all of you and your families happy holidays and the best for the coming new year.

THE UPPER HALF

George Reight 633-1202

M-Club Candidates. As of now we have 15 club members who are after M-Club membership. They are Pat Frank, Jay Rhoads (who has 80-some objects already logged), Dr. Joe Gibson, David Roberts, Rick Clark, John Marsh, Bud Rosser, Randy Falkenberg, Gene Powell, Liz Peterson, Wes Bergman, Annabelle Close, John Parker, Al Beales and Bill Zinkow. Anyone else who would like to get on the list, please let me know. Its not too late to get started. Remember - Membership with a league certificate requires either 70 or 107 objects found and logged with no time limit. To get an engraved plaque, however, you must find and log either 70 or 107 within ONE YEAR, ending Sept. 15, 1985.

There are many beautiful and a few challenging objects to be found in the December skies that you will add to your log book. They are as follows: (1950 coordinates)

1. M103 - 1h 29m, +60° 27' - a beautiful open cluster
2. M76 - 1h 38m, +51° 19' - a miniature "Dumbbell" nebula
3. M31 & 32 - 0h 00m, +41° 00' & +41° 36' - Fabulous!
4. M33 - 1h 31m, +30° 24' - faint - use low power
5. M34 - 2h 38m, +42° 34' - loose open cluster - use low power
6. M77 - 2h 40', 0° 14' - Bright galaxy
7. M45 - 3h 43m, +23° 58' - Pleades - naked eye open cluster.

There are many interesting legends associated with the Pleades, including

the one that has the seven virtuous sisters being chased by the "turned-on" Orion and the one that was an accepted theory in the early 1800's that Alcyone, the major star in the cluster, was the gravitational center of the "universe of stars composing our astral system and about which all are revolving".

Last month in the Upper Half, I mentioned that the globular cluster M30 was the only M-object not visible during the Messier marathon in March. You will probably want to chase this one down now at RA21h37', DEC-23°25'. Its magnitude is 8.1 and it's about 40,000 light years away. It's an easy find and while you observe this phenomenon of stars, let your imagination stray for a moment and picture our planet orbiting a central star in the M-30 system.

Nights, as you would guess, would be brilliant with stars. You would never experience night as we know it. You would probably be able to read your evening newspaper at 10 P.M. in the back yard (...just like Atlanta-ed.). Astronomers would have a tough time trying to zero in on distant cosmic objects and would therefore probably be totally unaware, visually, of the close proximity of the Milky Way. In spite of the compact central area of the cluster, the stars are not really within shouting distance. For example, if each star in an average cluster were reduced to a ball one inch in diameter, the cluster could be contained in a spherical volume 10,000 miles in diameter and each ball would be separated by about 100 miles. Even at the most dense area of the core, there would be separation of approximately 33 miles. It would be like your next door interstellar neighbor living 40,000 miles away. Quite a distance to go to borrow a cup of sugar!

December observing sessions at the Barber observatory are Friday, Dec. 21 or/and Saturday the 22nd.

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE!

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