

ATLANTA ASTRONOMY CLUB NEWSLETTER

MEETING

Don R. Hall 938-8139

The May 1985 meeting will be held at 8:00 P.M. on Friday, May 17th at the Bradley Observatory of Agnes Scott College.

PROGRAM

Dennis Holmes 926-1142

"COMET HALLEY", a program given by one of our club members, Jerry Armstrong, who is an experienced observer/astrophotographer. This will be an informative program that you don't want to miss.

TREASURY NOTES

Herb Teeple 394-5784

We welcome the following new members this month. They are:
Julian T. Crusselle, 1473 Briarcliff Rd. NE Atlanta, GA 30306 ph 373-1058
W. Stanley Davis, 1365 Sanden Ferry Dr., Decatur, GA 30033 ph 934-8472
Richard G. Evelyn, 3611 Ridgewater Trail, Marietta, GA 30067 ph 971-2925
Ray Lego, 466 Sherwood Greens, Stone Mountain, GA 30087 ph 498-3832
John J. Steffee, 4164 Oak Crest Dr., Tucker, GA 30084 ph 491-1043
William Steiner, 3232 Rock Port Dr., Lithonia, GA 30058
Larry & Rebecca Thompson, 4115 Chadd Walk, Marietta, GA 30062 ph 565-8220

If your mailing address label has a RED sticker, you need to see our treasurer promptly about renewing your membership!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Don R. Hall 938-8139

This is the last regularly scheduled meeting of our 1984-85 year and we'd like to see all of you there. We have an excellent program scheduled and we'll vote on the nominees for our 1985-86 officers and board members. Mark your calendars NOW and we look forward to seeing you there!

We want to extend a big thank you to Randy & Carolyn Collins for the superb job they've done as our refreshment committee. They've made sure we've had plenty of great things to eat and drink during the year.

Those of you who missed the May 4th workday really missed a great time! We had 20, that's right-20, people who took care of spring cleaning/fixup chores. We painted, fixed the observatory floor, made benches, built shelves, and pulled weeds. It's beginning to look like an operating observatory. For more details, ask one of the following who attended: George Reight, Linwood Beck, Frank Winecoff, Tim Puckett, Dave Roberts, Rick Clark, John Marsh, Tim Rockwell, Dennis Holmes, Pat Frank, Liz Peterson, Sharone Franklin, Larry & Becky Thompson, Julian Cursselle, George Roberts, Mark Wilkinson, Don Hall, Ray DuVarney, Lee Wilson

Deserving special mention are Julian Cursselle and Larry & Becky Thompson. These are "brand new" members who contributed alot to the Saturday outing.

SEE YOU AT THE MEETING!!!!!!

THE UPPER HALF

George Reight 633-1202

NEW MOON-- Sun. May 19
1st Qtr -- Mon May 27

Observing Session-- Sat. May 18, Sun. May 19

NOTE: For those who are candidates for "M Club" membership, remember the deadline for a plaque award is Sept. 15th. Be sure to keep me posted of your progress this summer.

In May, Saturn starts oppositions on the 15th in Libra, rising at sunset, then Jupiter makes its appearance in the middle of the night. Mercury is gone. However, if you wish to see Venus, you'll have to dismiss the remark by an ancient Roman Aristocrat who said "Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere". (It is foolish to rise before light) and do rise before light.

Speaking of early rising, mark on your calendar that on Sept. 4th just before dawn, Mercury and Mars will be in one of the closest conjunctions of all time and will appear to be nearly touching. Regulas will also be nearby. A great challenge for you astrophotographers.

This month's showpiece is known as the "Field of the Nebular" - an incredible array of galaxies in the constellation Virgo. It is the only great cloud of galaxies available to the amateur as there are about 100 that can be seen with an 8" telescope.

Finding this area without coordinates is simple. Start by following the curve in the handle of the Big Dipper down to the bright star, Arcturus. Then continue the curve to the next bright star which is Spica in Virgo. Now by using Arcturus Spica as the base of an equilateral triangle pointing west, the scene of the action will then be just inside the apex. The coordinates for the approximate cloud center is RA 12 hr 24' + 13'.

Now have fun! Simply explore and sweep. By going back and forth, up and down, you'll find small grey patches of light - all sizes and shapes - each a universe of stars. The sight may be unimpressive but the knowledge of what you are seeing will be humbling. If you want to carefully identify your finds, check on pg 81 of the Jan. '85 issue of Sky and Telescope. You'll soon discover why amateurs return again and again to this area.

Each galaxy has a different story. M-104, the Sombrero with its dark line of separation; M-87 with its jet extending 4100 light years; M-100 boasting of a brilliant super-nova a few years ago are just a few among the unusual objects that abound in this fertile hunting ground that form this cluster at roughly 42 million light years away.

Finally, for those who have a 10" or larger telescope (also blessed with a crystal clear night) you may wish to try for the most enigmatic and profound object in the sky - 3C-273, the nearest quasar at over 2 billion light years away. The coordinates are: 12 hrs 26.6' RA + 02 19' (1950), and the magnitude is 12.8. A finder's chart is located in Burnham's Celestial Handbook, volume III, pg 2101.

I saw it once with the help of a club member who had a 12" Newtonian. The sight, frankly, was unimpressive, a very faint blue star - but the realization of what I saw was overwhelming. The light that entered the telescope that night at the Barber Observatory left this incredible object when the earth was young. The only life forms here were primitive blue-green algae and fungi. Primeval animal forms did not appear until the light had traveled about three-fourths of its journey to the earth. How does one grasp this brush with infinity? One does not.

Some try, however. Wm. Willingham (1829-89) sums up his attempt by the remark, "I don't pretend to understand the universe - it's a great deal bigger than I am." (To say the least!)

FOR SALE: C6 Newtonian with clock drive, polar axis finder scope \$650
Contact: Wayne Hutcherson phone 427-0766