

ALANTA ASTRONOMY NEWSLETTER

MEETING: Club President, John Parker 977-2387  
The January meeting will be held at 8:00 P.M. on Friday, January 17,  
1986 at the Bradley Observatory of Agnes Scott College.

PROGRAM: Program Director, Dr. Joe Gibson 252-3482  
Well noted for his Dobsonian telescope, John Dobson will be our guest  
speaker. His topic: "Einstein, Physics, Astronomy".

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: President, John Parker  
Happy New Year! The year of Halley is finally here and many of our  
members are keeping daily (weather permitting) watch on the  
astronomical visitor. This will be a red letter year for the AAC with  
the 20" going into full operation. All of the club owes the many  
members who devoted so much of their own time to the completion of  
this major project a debt of thanks. If all goes as planned we all  
may get a chance to view Halley with the 20"!

TREASURY NOTES: Treasurer, Liz Peterson 767-4674  
Please send all membership renewal and new membership checks to:  
Liz Peterson  
2485 Batavia Street  
East Point, GA 30344  
Present Dues: \$25.00 and includes a one year subscription to SKY &  
TELESCOPE magazine as well as observing privileges to the Villa Rica  
Observatory.

SELLING:  
3 inch f8 reflector \$100. 8 inch model 8D Newtonian with tracking  
motor, beral coated mirror, barlow, and extra eyepieces \$800. Call  
Mrs. Tofflemire 761-3523.  
Criterion 18mm eyepiece. Never used. Make offer. Call Nasir at home  
926-7490 or work 980-3632.  
Celestron Comet Catcher \$200. C6 Newtonian f5 adj. equitorial tripod  
\$475. Call Wayne Hutcherson 427-0766.

THE UPPER HALF: Upper Halver, George Reight 633-1202  
The big news this month is that finally Mr. Halley's comet should be  
visable to the naked eye. Of course you must have superb eyesight and  
very clear sky with no clouds or interference from the moon and be  
well from the city lights.  
If you catch it without optical aid, treat yourself to a calorie laden  
chocolate bar (Milky Way?) and perhaps even a second one on January 24  
to celebrate the USA spacecraft flyby of Uranus. What astronomical  
pictures will be forthcoming!  
Observing sessions at Villa Rica Barber Observatory: Week of January  
18. New Moon Friday, January 10.

## DO WE REALLY WANT CLEAR SKIES ALL THE TIME?

This question will probably go against the grain of most amateur astronomers. However, because of where we live in the country, we need to explore available aspects of our hobby, other than realizing the joy of sitting behind a telescope. During the past several years of involvement with the Astronomical League. I have had little time to actually observe, but I feel that astronomy - wise, I am at the busiest. Well, how does one practice astronomy without observing? Several thoughts pop into mind.

With all the excitement of Halley's Comet, I found that I really knew little of comets. Nevertheless because we are amateur astronomers, the typical man-in-street assumes that we can answer all questions about the comet. Frequently, club members are asked to lead discussions on various topics for civic groups or whatever. I was once asked to deliver a 22 minute discussion on Mars. We all recall the notoriety of the solar eclipse during May, 1983. The public is eager to learn astronomy, but only if something is topical. These thoughts, although appearing to be random, are leading to a point. That is, there is a lot more to our hobby than observing.

I am suggesting that you undertake a program similar to one I have begun. Each month, I select a topic related to astronomy and I explore the literature. The topics are unconstrained and are suggested by current apparitions such as the comet or eclipse. Perhaps I just became curious about radio-telescopes. I may have seen an article in Sky and Telescope or Scientific American which led me down a curious path. Perhaps I was asked to speak on a particular subject for science class at the high school. Most of us are aware that some club members such as Tom Buchannon and Herb Teeple have specialized their skills; Tom with spectrography and Herb with computer indexing. You may want to find a similar type niche.

Should you have a strong interest in a particular area of astronomy and want to learn more, let me know. We'll see if we can find others with a similar interest. The important aspect is this: when the skies are finally pristine, I believe that we will find more enjoyment, because we will realize that we have seen a great deal more than just the stars.

Jim Brown