

ATLANTA ASTRONOMY CLUB NEWSLETTER

MEETING: Club President, John Parker 977-2387
The March meeting will be held at 8:00 PM, on Friday, March 21, 1986
at the Bradley Observatory of Agnes Scott College.

PROGRAM: Program Director, Dr. Joe Gibson 255-1621
Unannounced at press-time.

TREASURY NOTES: Treasurer, Liz Peterson 767-4674

THE UPPER HALF: Upper Halver, George Reight 633-1202

Last IV moon - Tues. April 1

New Moon - Wed. April 9

Observing Session April 4 & 5, (Fri. & Sat.) but for observing and
photographing Halley, set your alarm clock and hope for clear nights
throughout the month.

Best Times:

April 2-3: You are able to observe Halley under a completely dark
sky from 1:00AM to 2:30AM. Nucleus a few degrees from the scorpis' tail.

April 4-5: Halley rises at 12:50AM. Moon rises at 4:00AM.

April 9-11: Halley rises at 11:20PM - new moon. April 11 the best
date for observation.

April 14-15: Halley rises at about 9:30PM and transits at about
11:30.

In keeping with tracking Halley, Sharone Franklin received a
delightful letter from a BRITE STAR in La Grange, Georgia, by the name
of Merle Johnson, a club member since 1970.

He writes ...

Dear Secretary Franklin:

Please tell club members I saw halley's Comet as an eleven year boy
in 1910 up in Ohio. No full moon ever looked so big and bright. It
hung in the sky halfway from horizon to zenith. I'm anxious to
compare it now that I'm nearly 87 years old.

Sincerely yours

Club Member Merle G. Johnson

The Upper Half is getting a good response to the request for dealer
and suppliers of astro-equipment evaluations. Sharone Franklin submits
the following about her experience in simply trying to do business
with Orion, "Orion Telescope Center in Santa Cruz, California has good
quality products but has difficulties completing their orders. It
takes them two or three months to have your product delivered."

This month's Upper Half is written by Leonard Abbey, an enthusiastic
club member since 1951. He has served in virtually every capacity in
the governing body which includes the unique distinction of being
elected president on three different occasions.

He has contributed his recognized talents as editor of the newsletter
and in the past, editor of two defunct but highly acclaimed
publications, "The Atlanta Observatory Notebook", and the "Atlanta
Astromony Report."

His interest lies in Observational Astronomy and is currently active
in the ASO and ALPO organizations.

Leonard is a professional photographer. He writes:

ABEY'S EYEBALL EXPERTIZER

At the December meeting, we were treated to a really first rate discussion of the different types of telescopes and their individual characteristics. We learned how to analyze the diffraction patterns of out of focus star images to detect defects in a telescope's optical system.

This reminded me of a little test I discovered about 15 years ago which is a little more difficult to perform, but is much easier to analyze.

This test is much like the familiar Foucault test which is used by every amateur telescope maker. The idea is to use a star for our light source and the iris of the eye for the knife edge.

First pick a moderately bright star which you can comfortably observe through the telescope without assuming an awkward position. Very bright stars such as Sirius are not suitable because of the great amount of atmospheric turbulence that they seem to always be able to find. Remove the eyepiece and if you wear glasses, take them off. Rack the focusing tube in as far as possible and look through it, resting your eyebrow against the end of the tube.

If the telescope is aligned properly, and if you are very lucky you will see the mirror or objective fully illuminated by the star. If this not the case, you will have to move the telescope tube around a little to find it. Once the mirror is fully illuminated, move the telescope tube, along with your eye (which should remain immobile against the focusing tube) towards your right. You should see the black edge of your imaginary "knife" moving across the mirror from the left, as in any Foucault test. Now rack the focuser out a little and try again. If your "knife edge" moves in from the right, you have moved outside the focus, and must back up a little.

When you finally find the exact focus, and it does take quite a bit of work, you will see the mirror darken all over at once, and just before the light completely disappears, every detail of the mirror's figure will stand out in amazing relief.

There are two words of caution that you must bear in mind. First, since the light rays are parallel instead of diverging, the apparent figure of a perfect mirror will be absolutely flat. And last of all, be careful of your footing. You do not want to undergo enucleation. Enucleation is the removal of the eyeball by surgical means (or otherwise)!

SELLING:

Lumicon delux piggyback camera mount \$25; 11 7/8 I.D. Sonotube 6 feet, unpainted - suitable for a 10" mirror \$15; Parks spider for Sonotube and diagonal holder \$15; 4 1/4" F5 parabolic mirror by Star Instruments \$25. Contact: Wayne Hutcherson 427-0766.

WANTED:

Super C8 or equivalent Meade. Contact: Bob Brady 457-9907.

LAST MINUTES: Sharone Franklin, Recording Secretary 934-8796
Patrick Frank presided over this year's "STAR BOWL" and asked numerous questions to two competing teams: Lee Wilson, Bud Rosser, Leonard Abbey, Don Berry and John Marsh, Rick Clark, John Parker, Bob Lowenthal.

THE SCOOP on THE SCOPE: Don Hall, Telescope Chairman

The 20" telescope should be completely operational by this club meeting. Preliminary tests show excellent images. You should go look through it. There are a few rules governing the use of the observatory instruments. The major ones are:

(1). DO NOT attempt any repair or adjustments to ANY component. Please contact one of the following if problems arise: George roberts 949-1400

Don Hall 938-8139

Mark Wilkinson 427-2652

Lee Wilson 872-8534

(2). All eyepieces/photographic accesories are for observatory use ONLY. NOT for personal use.

(3). Use handles on tube and fork to change telescope position.

(4). DO NOT STAND on mount for any reason.

(5). Unplug all drive components and turn off power at pole when leaving observatory grounds.

SIGNED: Don Hall, Telescope Chairman.

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Just moments before the newsletter went to press Dr. Gibson, program director, called to announce the April and May programs.

May Program: Dr. Harold A. McAlister, Professor of Astronomy at Georgia State University will speak on High Angular Resolution Astronomy or Seeing the Unseen.

April Program: Our annual Show and Tell Program. Remember to bring your slides and photos for this special program.

THANKS DR.GIBSON