

# THE FOCAL POINT

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The Newsletter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club

March 1990

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Casual Astronomer: March 1990 .....	1
Program Preview .....	2
Astronomy Magazine Available! .....	2
Book Report: The NGC 2000.0 .....	2
Classified Ads .....	3
Who's Doing What In The AAC .....	3
Comet Austin Star Party .....	4
Observer's Clinic .....	4

## CLUB CALENDAR

**Next Meeting:** March 16, 8:00 p.m. at Bradley Observatory.  
**Program:** Fernbank Science Center astronomer Anita Kern will speak on "Wandering The Southern Sky".  
**Observing Session:** March 24 at Villa Rica. Rain date will be March 31.

*Editor:* ..... Steve Gilbreath  
*Contributing Editors:* ..... Dr. Ralph Buice, Hal Crawford,  
Richard Jakiel, Mark Lancaster

The Focal Point is published monthly during the academic year by the Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc. The AAC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of amateur astronomy. Meetings are held the third Friday of each month (except the second Friday in December) at the Bradley Observatory on the Agnes Scott campus. Dues are \$35 annually for a family membership and \$25 for a student membership and include a subscription to Sky & Telescope magazine and use of the club observatory in Villa Rica.

*Submissions:* Article submissions are welcome, and may be delivered to the editor for consideration. Articles on computer floppy disk are encouraged.

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Bud Rosser .....	<i>Recording Sec</i> .....	879-0304
Hal Crawford .....	<i>Treasurer</i> .....	320-9156

## THE CASUAL ASTRONOMER: MARCH 1990

by Hal Crawford

### Changes, Facelifts...and Additions

Agnes Scott students entered the Bradley Observatory classroom late November, only to be greeted by piles of fallen plaster. The unusually heavy rains of 1989 had finally taken their toll on the building, causing a substantial portion of the ceiling to give way. Although in itself an unfortunate circumstance, it meant that the official meeting place of the Atlanta Astronomy Club would receive some very badly needed renovations.

Those who fondly remember the peeling strips of paint from the walls darkened with time will be disappointed. The entire room has been repainted. A new suspended ceiling has been put up, complete with new light fixtures. It gives the room a whole new appearance, and I think that it will only add to the image of the AAC.

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm shamelessly dedicating this article to the new arrival at our household, Melissa Kate Crawford, born January 5th at DeKalb Medical Center at 9:19 pm. This should explain why I wasn't able to get a column in by January...or February...whew! Yes, I have been busy.

There are certain milestones in one's life where things simply aren't the way they used to be, and will never be again. For example, when you were (are?) in high school, most people live life for the moment, and think that this is the way things are; and then BOOM! You're in college, or you're working in the real world, and things just aren't the same anymore. Friends are gone -- or just different. Your life has, well, changed. It's not bad, mind you -- it's just a new orientation, a new way of looking at things. The same "future shock" experience occurs when you graduate college, or get married, or even change jobs.

But as of January 5th, 1990, my perspective of life flew out the window. Everything is different. Entire new responsibilities. A whole new lifestyle. You're looking forward, not just a few years, but decades, and planning (well, you should be planning) for the future of this new child.

Parents in the Astronomy Club are giving me these knowing looks -- they've all been through this before. But there is simply no comparison to anything I have ever been through. No longer can I work on consulting projects until 2:30 am. I have to go to bed by 10:30, leaving Margaret to put the child to bed. Hopefully I can be reasonably awake when Melissa Kate demands to be fed at 5 am...well, 5 am is certainly better than it was last month! Steve Gilbreath used to kid me that I liked to get up at the crack of noon, well, that's over now!

I'm spending lots of time with her...changing her, talking to her, feeding her, changing her again...valuable time that last year I would have spent reading about astronomy. But now, the



January astronomy magazines are still in my in-basket. On Friday and Saturday nights, evenings that I would have tried to go to the observatory, I have to wash bottles and prepare formula. Conference notes, article writing, these must all take a back seat to my little girl.

Now I'm setting aside money in the bank for her future. What sort of future can I plan for her, or should I plan for her at all? I think it would be neat to raise an astronomer -- although I think I'm going to have a great piano master and singer like her mother. Who knows?

These random thoughts are only a part of the upside-down changes that I have had to make in only the past couple of months. Is it worth it? Of course it is. After all, I am counting the days when I can take my girl outside, show her the constellations, point out the planets, and begin a long and eventful education of what's really out there.

#### PROGRAM PREVIEW: WANDERING THE SOUTHERN SKY

A tour of the sky as seen from the Southern Hemisphere will be featured on our March program. Fernbank Astronomer Anita Kern, an experienced explorer, will be our guide. Her illustrated adventure will feature slides from recent trips to Kenya and Chile.

Chile was selected for a brief visit to view Halley's Comet when it was prominent. The comet and the sky as seen from an observatory near Santiago will be featured.

More recently, Ms. Kern lead a two week photographic safari to Kenya. The highlight was Lake Nakuru and the adjacent Soda Flat Lakes, considered the world's greatest ornithological spectacle. Samburu, a large game park, Mountain Lodge and the Masai Mara plains were also featured. Ms. Kern will present slides of the sky over Kenya with earth-bound local color as well. Binocular stellar objects will be especially featured, binoculars being more practical for the majority of explorers!

As always, there will be observing through the Bradley Observatory telescope after the meeting, weather permitting.

#### ASTRONOMY MAGAZINE AVAILABLE!

In a special arrangement only for astronomy clubs, *Astronomy Magazine* is now available by group subscription. A subscription for the May-Dec 1990 fiscal year (8 issues) is \$10.00 (subscriptions are only available on a yearly basis; one year subscription price is \$15.00). Interested members should contact Hal Crawford at 320-9156 or see him at the March meeting. Orders will be placed immediately after the March meeting!

#### BOOK REPORT: THE NGC 2000.0 EDITED BY ROGER W. SINNOTT

by R. Uyematsu

Brevard Astronomical Society

As the 20th century winds down, the Epoch 1950 coordinates for all deep sky objects contain small errors due to earth axis precession and proper movement of these objects. This may require a new reference source to obtain the positions of objects. Although the actual displacement over 50 years is very small, I felt it necessary to obtain a catalog with Epoch 2000 coordinates. I discovered the book titled *The NGC 2000.0 Edited by Roger W. Sinnott* available from Sky Publishing (*Sky and Telescope*) for about 20 dollars. This catalog contains not only the revised NGC but the IC as well as cross references to Messier objects and popular names. Over 13,000 objects are listed, all out there somewhere. Now this is right up my alley, just think, over 13,000 attempts at frustration in bad seeing and the other assorted problems of telescope operation, might just keep me busy until the 2050 Epoch occurs. So with utmost haste, I ordered the book.

The objects are placed in order of Right Ascension; this lists IC 5370, a 15th magnitude galaxy in Andromeda first. IC and NGC entries are mixed to form one table containing all 13,000 plus entries. Each entry contains coordinates, type, magnitude, size, constellation, and description. So now I thought this is "GREAT"; all that information in one book and so easy to find. Whoa!, over 13,000 items 13,226 to be exact, well maybe not so easy to find. As I examined the table, I noticed a cryptic code under description. For instance the IC 5370 galaxy mentioned above has the following glyphs listed for description: "pB, S, R, stell N". Now that tells me everything I every wanted to know. Well to save space the editor is using the original code used by J. L. E. Dreyer over a century ago to describe the information in great detail in the least space. In the front of the book is the required information to decode these glyphs to regular words. Now "pB, S, R, stell N" becomes pretty bright, small in size, round, stellar or point like nucleus. Unfortunately, this code has continued to be used as others have added to the NGC. Also while the codes are descriptive qualitatively, they lack quantitative measurements. These measurements of magnitude, size, and type (galaxies were an unknown in the time of Dreyer) have been included when determined. However, there are still many unknowns listed in this catalog. Usually these objects are very dim or extremely small. Also there have been revision to add the following types: galaxies, asterisms, open clusters, clusters with nebulosity, stars, and nebulas. Of course all of the positions have been updated to Epoch 2000.

Well the problems listed above are not uncommon in any attempt at maximizing information in some order and minimizing space. But I had hoped that someone may have come up with a better mousetrap. Then it hit me like a wet mop, a computer

## Atlanta Astronomy Club Membership List

Last Name	First Name	Address	City	St Zip	Phone
=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====
Abbey	Mr. & Mrs. Leonard	1002 Citadel Dr.	Atlanta	GA 30324	634-1222
Alexander	John	5781 Four Winds Drive	Lilburn	GA 30247	921-5381
Amico	Salvatore	83 Pine Ridge Rd. NW	White	GA 30184	386-8358
Barber	Mr. & Mrs. W. F.	P.O. Box 157	Villa Rica	GA 30180	459-3197
Beales	Alvin and Rita	101 Keith Lane	Kennesaw	GA 30144	924-0141
Beck	M. Linwood	1892 Greystone Rd. NW	Atlanta	GA 30318	355-6635
Beitzel	Victor	927 Rosedale Rd. NE	Atlanta	GA 30306	872-1876
Block	Adam	590 Simone Way	Stone Mountain	GA 30087	469-9479
Boland	Mrs. Emily	1825 Clifton Rd N.E. Apt 1005	Atlanta	GA 30029	636-7260
Bracken	Phillip and Suzanne	4719 Crest Knoll Dr.	Mableton	GA 30059	941-6517
Brady	Robert F.	3886 Rains Court NE	Atlanta	GA 30319	457-9907
Braiden	David	2250 Willivee Place	Decatur	GA 30033	634-5662
Bricker	E. I.	845 Wilson Rd. NW	Atlanta	GA 30318	355-4677
Brown	James B.	3920 Parkcrest Drive	Atlanta	GA 30319	458-9749
Brown	John & Dorothy	3100 Pete Shaw Rd.	Marietta	GA 30066	
Buchanan	W. Tom	105 Carriage Station Circle	Roswell	GA 30075	587-0774
Buice Jr.	Ralph	2447-F Morosgo Way	Atlanta	GA 30324	237-0212
Byrne	George	3618 Underwood Road	Conyers	GA 30208	922-0717
Calder	Dr. W. A.	1078 Berkely Rd.	Avondale Estate	GA 30002	284-6591
Chastine	Raleigh	1681 Pharrs Rd.	Snellville	GA 30278	972-9285
Chewing	Dr. Rich	119 Runnymede Rd.	Griffin	GA 30223	
Clark	Rick	584 S. Mt. Carmel Rd.	McDonough	GA 30253	946-9412
Close	Mr. & Mrs. William	225 Forkner Drive	Decatur	GA 30030	373-3945
Cochran	Jackie	2854 Staunton Dr.	Marietta	GA 30067	955-0145
Coffey	David	PO Box 477	Lithonia	GA 30058	482-6442
Copenhagen	Jim and Karen	4616 Garden Hills Dr.	Stone Mountain	GA 30083	299-1144
Corbett	Dewey	3600 Preakness Drive	Decatur	GA 30034	
Covault	Dr. Donald	2000 La Vista Cir.	Tucker	GA 30084	939-3149
Cowart	Robert H.	9 Ascot Manor	Atlanta	GA 30327	955-2312
Crawford, Jr.	Hal	1690 Oak Grove Rd.	Decatur	GA 30033	320-9156
Crusselle	T. Julian	1473 Briarcliff Rd. NE	Atlanta	GA 30306	373-1058
Davis	Avery	2252 Turtle Club Dr.	Marietta	GA 30066	928-6084
Davis	William R	PO Box 1317	Loganville	GA 30249	267-7702
DeRoberts	Richard P.	682 Amsterdam Ave. NE	Atlanta	GA 30306	876-5370
Dewaal	Donald E.	4242 North Mountain Rd. N.E.	Marietta	GA 30066	977-4560
Dhaenens	Richard	4940 Keota Run	Roswell	GA 30075	926-5264
Douglas	Toni	1626 Anita Place	Atlanta	GA 30306	
Dreyer Jr.	H. M.	842 Old Center Point Rd.	Carrollton	GA 30117	834-7594
Dundee	David A.	546 Rockborough Drive	Stone Mountain	GA 30083	469-2155
Dunn	Frank A.	8279 Winston Way	Jonesboro	GA 30236	478-6867
Dyches	Paul	4704 Dunnover Cir.	Doraville	GA 30360	452-0709
Emory	Shelby and Richard	1534 Knox Dr.	Marietta	GA 30060	423-7399
Erickson	Alan	3983 Spalding Hollow	Norcross	GA 30092	448-4750
Falcon	Rosie	1261 Lavista Rd. NE Apt. N8	Atlanta	GA 30324	982-0837
Felts	Bob and Becky	4388 Osceola Court	Duluth	GA 30136	448-8779
Ferguson	B.J. and Scott	347 Callaway Rd.	Fayetteville	GA 30214	461-9501
Ferry	Robert	2384 Greylock Place	Decatur	GA 30030	373-2090
Fiederlein	Dennis	3371 Hollyridge Drive	Marietta	GA 30060	425-0961
Fields	Paul and Jennifer	9960 Timberstone Rd.	Alpharetta	GA 30201	751-0732
Franklin	Cathy	753 Penn Ave. Apt 1	Atlanta	GA 30308	874-2217
Franklin	Sharone	3662 Doroco Dr.	Doraville	GA 30340	934-8796
Gall	Chuck and Dodie	161 Mt. Vernon Dr.	Decatur	GA 30030	

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Last Name	First Name	Address	City	St	Zip	Phone
Galloway	Asher and J.C.	5331 Slater Mill Circle	Douglasville	GA	30135	949-2616
Gamba	Carlos	840 Lost Creek Circle	Stone Mountain	GA	30088	469-6469
Gibson	Joseph	6500 Vernon Woods Suite A-22	Atlanta	GA	30328	255-1621
Gilbreath	Steven	1410-C Druid Valley Dr.	Atlanta	GA	30329	634-7466
Gregory	Victor	605 Charity Lane	Mableton	GA	30059	948-4678
Gresham	Zachery	2561 Davis Circle	Austell	GA	30001	941-4110
Hall	Don & Ginger	2507 King Arthur Circle NE	Atlanta	GA	30345	938-8139
Harlan	Laurence	2075 La Vista Cir.	Tucker	GA	30084	
Hayward	Dr. Robert R.	447 Wynbrooke Parkway	Stone Mountain	GA	30087	498-9950
Holt	Dennis M.	577 W. Hickory Level Rd.	Temple	GA	30179	832-2237
Hood	Richard	2870 Cravenridge Drive	Atlanta	GA	30319	457-2812
Hutcherson	G. Wayne	2575 Big Oaks Drive SW	Marietta	GA	30064	427-0766
Jakiel	Richard	409 Independence Drive	Jonesboro	GA	30236	459-2466
Judge	Joe & Phyllis	3825 Ashford Knoll	Atlanta	GA	30319	458-4908
Kazmierczak	Mike	1789 Brandy Dr.	Conyers	GA	30208	760-8502
Kern	Anita K.	1501 Clairmont Rd. Apt. 223	Decatur	GA	30033	634-8159
Lancaster	Mark	1165 Woodington Circle	Lawrenceville	GA	30244	279-9137
Landis	Howard J.	50 Price Rd. West	Locust Grove	GA	30248	957-2976
Langoussis	Alex & Nelda	2936 Lowe Way	Marietta	GA	30066	425-0054
Lapeza	Chet	3650 Jim Moore Rd.	Dacula	GA	30211	962-6770
Loewenthal	Robert	2095 Mountain Creek Ct.	Stone Mountain	GA	30087	934-1237
Lyle	Wendell and Denise	125 Smokemont Drive	Fayetteville	GA	30214	461-5590
Lynch	David	1828 Jackson's Creek Point	Marietta	GA	30067	432-9732
Magri	Chris	West Georgia College, Physics	Carrollton	GA	30118	832-1249
Marsh	John K.	409 Independence Drive	Jonesboro	GA	30236	473-9873
Matty	Liz	2455 North Alvernon	Tucson	AZ	85712	
McDougal	Shane	925 Ellison Court	Austell	GA	30059	948-1975
McKinney	Norman	P. O. Box 249	Canton	GA	30114	479-4263
McNew	Barbara	4184 King Richard Ct.	Snellville	GA	30278	979-5001
Metz	Christine	564-A Goldsboro Rd.	Atlanta	GA	30307	584-6176
Miller	R. E.	3468 Valley Rd.	Atlanta	GA	30305	237-2403
Mitchell	Dick	2475 Howell Mill Rd. N.W.	Atlanta	GA	30318	355-0446
Mitchell	Tony	3212 Quince Tree Lane	Decatur	GA	30034	241-7909
Moreno	Ed	1025 Parsons Greene	Powder Springs	GA	30073	499-2225
Neal	David & Andy	3177 North Hembree Rd.	Marietta	GA	30062	973-6604
Page	Brian	3324 Timbercreek Dr.	Lawrenceville	GA	30244	921-8403
Peel	Allan and Jacqueline	5890 Clinchfield Trail	Norcross	GA	30092	
Powell	Dr. & Mrs. Eugene	1058 Amsterdam Ave.	Atlanta	GA	30306	872-0891
Preston	Charles	2285 Tally Drive	Chamblee	GA	30341	455-8147
Ratliff	Tex	3627 Northlake Drive	Doraville	GA	30340	934-9075
Reight	George	2735 Spicer Lane	Decatur	GA	30033	633-1202
Rhoades	Odell	2617 Wenatchee Dr.	Marietta	GA	30066	
Rhoads	Jay & Carol	764 Sage Lane	Conyers	GA	30207	929-1428
Rice, Jr.	Calvin W.	211 13th Street. #10	Atlanta	GA	30309	874-0366
Richardson	Jim	2036 Khyber Pass	Snellville	GA	30278	
Rogers	Will and Kara	4835 Wyndam Dr.	Stone Mountain	GA	30088	593-2727
Rosser	Bud	5198 Avanti Court	Stone Mountain	GA	30088	879-0304
Rush III	Eugene E.	1111 Rosedale Rd. NE	Atlanta	GA	30306	373-2174
Sammons	Pat & Gail	3916 Willowbrook Drive	Douglasville	GA	30135	949-9715
Sanders	James F.	1956 High Riggs Lane	Snellville	GA	30278	979-0999
Schmeiser	Stephen G.	9020 River Run	Atlanta	GA	30338	237-6317
Schulte	David and Cathy	1327 Peninsula Trace	Lawrenceville	GA	30244	923-0389



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Scigliano	Domenico	4611 Randalwood Court	Stone Mtn	GA 30083	297-0118
Sharpe	William	1906 Patton Place	Lithonia	GA 30058	981-4847
Shiver	Chris B.	1200 Trailmore Drive	Roswell	GA 30076	587-5054
Smith	David C.	201 Treehouse Parkway	Norcross	GA 30093	636-5042
Snell	Bill	3016 #4 Buford Hwy Ne	Atlanta	GA 30329	633-4050
Stenger	Raymond	3154 Briarcliff Way NE	Atlanta	GA 30345	938-3669
Stephens	George	3539 Parsons Ridge Lane	Duluth	GA 30136	497-0156
Strand	David A.	P.O. Box 612523	Dall/Ft.Wor. AP	TX 75261	
Sunmer	Gordon	1530 University Dr. Ap. #7	Atlanta	GA 30306	875-8594
Taylor	Robert	1817 Ledo Ave.	Decatur	GA 30035	289-5257
Tinsley	Mel	182 Carriage Trade Tr.	Marietta	GA 30067	
Torrey Jr & Sr	Cleston	2428 Ridgeway Drive	Doraville	GA 30360	458-4695
Turner	Richard	1348 Donnelly Ave	Atlanta	GA 30310	755-3513
Tyler	Herbert & Jane	612 Gordon St.	Thomaston	GA 30286	647-9541
Venable	Roger J.	3405 Woodstone Place	Augusta	GA 30909	
Wages	Tony, Melva, and Meghan	7396 Westwood Rd.	Douglasville	GA 30134	920-1274
Washburn	William A.	5 Lakeview Place	Avondale Estate	GA 30002	288-5553
Washburn Sr.	William	3925 Woodridge Way	Tucker	GA 30084	938-7019
Wert	James and Emily	1425 Lanier Place	Atlanta	GA 30306	876-6710
West	Earl	325 Royal Oak Terrace	Stone Mountain	GA 30087	564-1244
Whalen	Thomas & Evelyn	3131 Moss Oak Dr.	Doraville	GA 30340	840-9106
Whatley	Leigh Anne	P.O. Box 23828 Emory Univ.	Atlanta	GA 30322	727-1791
White	Jenny	5411 Sandy Stream Dr.	Stone Mountain	GA 30087	469-6380
Williamon	Dr. Richard M.	2686 Regency Dr. W	Tucker	GA 30084	
Wilson	Lee R.	1412 Piedmont Ave. NE Apt.1	Atlanta	GA 30309	872-8534
Winecoff Jr.	W. Frank	2734 Peachtree Rd. NW Apt.107	Atlanta	GA 30305	233-8673
Wood	Robert E.	3635 Winbrook Lane	Tucker	GA 30084	938-1636

would be ideal for the job of processing this information to English as well as making searches and other catalog work easier. But alas, how to put over 200 pages of numbers into a computer without any mistakes dumbfounded me until I read the back cover of the book. There it has an offer to order a computer disc containing all the information minus constellation and descriptions that are in the book for only another 20 dollars. Of course such an opportunity at saving hours, possibly years with my typing skills, could not be passed up. So I purchased the disc. I thought all my troubles were over until the disc arrived.

I quickly opened the package and cranked up the old PC to see what my other 20 dollars had bought and WOW!, there it was; all 13,226 entries scrunched together in one gigantic file that doesn't even have a proper text End of File Mark sequence (CNTL Z RETURN). Also was a file that would cross reference NGC and IC entries by number, for alas the data was again in order of Right Ascension. There were two BASIC programs that provided examples of routines that access the filed data. Now I saw why they left out the constellation and description data, there was no space left on the disc. It would eat into the old profit margin to supply an additional 75 cent disc that contained that information. So that as my Calculus teacher used to say, is left as an Exercise for the student.

Now despite all of those inconveniences, the programs supplied do work, and the ol' PC can really crank through the data without any problems. If you want to write your own programs to read this data in Turbo Pascal, or some other language, it will require a good background in disc file access and other basic computer operations. The lack of the End of File Mark is a pain. However, it is possible as I have done so, only about a week of part-tome sweat involved. The lack of constellation and description information on the disc is a major drawback for the computerized version. I don't have any estimate as to how long it will take to write a program to take operator input and store them to disc as well as typing all that information in.

The actual book is as well organized and informative as such a catalog can be and still be portable. I recommend the book version for anybody who needs such a reference. The computerized version is workable, however the lack of the constellation and description data will probably keep the user busy during those cloudy nights; that is unless you buy both.

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#### CLASSIFIED ADS

For Sale: Cave Astrola 8 inch Newtonian, F7; \$795 or will trade for smaller 6 inch reflector.

Contact: Wayne Hutcherson  
427-0766

### WHO'S DOING WHAT IN THE AAC

by Steve Gilbreath

Do you ever wonder what's people in our astronomy club are doing; In your astronomy club? Sure, you attend the meetings and know other club members but do you ever wonder what they're doing in astronomy outside of Bradley Observatory.. Is it interesting? Is it fun? Is it something I can do or would even like to do? These are all questions we have asked ourselves. Well as a public service to all club members I thought I would tell you about some of our members and their astronomical specialties. They've had no advance warning that I'm going to write about them so there's a good possibility that I will be lynched after this article is published. If there is a new newsletter editor next month and my phone is disconnected, you'll know why.

#### Dr. Ralph Buice

Dr. Ralph Buice is a chemist at Fernbank Science Center in DeKalb County who not only teaches chemistry but also instructs in computers. However, unknown to most of the general population Dr. Buice is more than an amateur astronomer. He's been involved in astronomy for most of his life (I believe he was Galileo's roommate).

During the early days of the space program he joined the Project MOONWATCH team, tracking satellites from the Clarence T. Jones Observatory in Chattanooga. Later at Fernbank he and another astronomer assisted COMSAT when they lost a satellite after being placed in orbit. Using secret military imaging devices they were able to locate the missing satellite. Dr. Buice also studies celestial mechanics and is an expert in writing computer programs to do astronomical calculations. If you are interested in tracking astronomical objects or interfacing computers and astronomy, you should be talking to Dr. Buice.

#### Bill Snell

Bill Snell has been into astronomy at least 13 years. I know this because he was one of the first people I met when I started visiting Fernbank when I was but a mere kid in high school. There aren't many people more into astronomy than Bill. Matter of fact, when I think of the word astronomer I always see a mental picture of Bill Snell.

Bill has been making telescopes since I met him and has made at least five that I can think of. He is also an fine astrophotographer and in fact he took what I think is one of the best pictures of Halley's Comet. Bill is an excellent observer with sharp, eagle eyes. He is able to spot and find objects from memory that I couldn't find with a star chart. I think this is



because every time I talk to him he's been up the night before, observing. If you want to go to Villa Rica and need an ace observer to guide you through the stars, call Bill; he's your man.

As you can see, we have discovered two unknown resources within our own club. There are many more and we will uncover them in future articles. In the meantime, if you have an astronomical talent, share it with the club so others can have the chance to enjoy it as well.

Next time, we learn about grazes and why three AAC members drove halfway to South Carolina to view one they couldn't see.

**COMET AUSTIN STAR PARTY**

Sharone Franklin will be hosting a Comet Austin star party Sunday, April 29, 5 a.m. at Villa Rica. The rain date will be the following Sunday, May 6.

Comet Austin is a new comet and is unusually bright given its distance from the Sun. By late April it will be approaching maximum as it prepares to swing around behind the Sun. It will disappear from view shortly after May 6 to reappear as an early evening object.

Binoculars are often best for viewing comets, so bring yours along to share. Bring hot drinks and Sharone will provide donuts. Sharone will be handing out maps to Villa Rica at the next few meetings. For more details or for the latest on Comet Austin, call her at 934-8796 after 7 p.m. and on weekends. Plan to bring family and friends to welcome Comet Austin!

**OBSERVER'S CLINIC**

Announcing a new AAC program feature! Wondering how to use that new telescope? Not sure how to find your way around a sky map? Wishing you could make better use of binoculars? This is for you!

Beginning with the March meeting an Observers' Clinic will be led by experienced observer Bill Snell following the formal program, rain or shine. Members visitors are invited to bring their instruments, maps and other puzzling astronomical paraphernalia. Weather permitting, the clinic will be held on the Bradley Observatory roof following the meeting. In bad weather the clinic will be conducted within the observatory.

This new feature is Bill's brain child and he enthusiastically awaits your questions. If the crowd is large, Bill invites other experienced members to assist. This promises to be an exciting learning experience for the whole family!

**ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS: RENEWAL INFORMATION**

Since we do not have an official renewal program (yet), we rely on your renewal notice from *Sky & Telescope* and the expiration date printed on each issue of *The Focal Point* to keep your membership in order. To make sure that you don't miss any issues of either journal, we recommend that you renew as soon you receive your S&T renewal form. You may send your check (for \$35.00) directly to AAC Treasurer Hal Crawford, at the address indicated on the back of the *Focal Point*; or hand him your renewal at any regular meeting. ~~To make things simpler, please include your S&T renewal form, and (if you can fit it in) the S&T reply envelope.~~

**THE FOCAL POINT**

First Class Delivery



Article submissions and address corrections to:  
 Steve Gilbreath, Editor  
 1410-C Druid Valley Dr.  
 Atlanta, Ga. 30329

AAC membership renewals to:  
 Hal Crawford, Treasurer  
 1690 Oak Grove Rd.  
 Decatur, Ga. 30033

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