



Focal

The Atlanta Astronomy Club
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Editor: Peter Macumber

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OF MUKLUKS AND MESSIERS

By Steven "Saratoga Smitty" Smith

Winter skies are a treat for me; the view of the heavens at night is usually crystal clear and rock steady. These sky conditions happen seldom during the warmer months because moisture in the air degrades the seeing.

Oh baby, it's cold outside! Ever wonder how soldiers in a foxhole and sailors out at sea cope with the cold, frigid temperatures? It all has to do with trapping air in pockets around you and insulating your body from the outside air.

Long underwear, boots, gloves, etc. are made now days with many new and modern materials, such as Thinsulate, but even they need some added help. If you are snow skiing, ice skating, mountain climbing, cutting firewood, or shoveling snow out of your driveway in Cleveland, Ohio, then yes, - that "new and improved" pair of gloves or long johns will keep you toasty warm. Stand around next to your 8-inch Dobsonian telescope for 2 or 3 hours and you will think it is Christmas in Korea and you are on artillery duty! Astronomers viewing the Universe and military people on watch have one major factor in common - we are not moving around very much. Since we are not very active, our bodies are not generating enough heat to replace what is lost to the outside air. This is why we need to cover our bodies in layers, including the head, hands, and feet - to minimize our heat loss.

Long underwear is the first layer. Wear both the bottoms and the tops, not just the bottoms. The one-piece style union suit is fine too but I have always felt funny about the "trap door" in the back. Wear an undershirt or a T-shirt under the long underwear. Next, put on a sweatshirt, thermal shirt, or sweater. My personal preference is a sweatshirt with a hood. Wear heavy pants, such as jeans, not thin polyesters. Better yet, wear a pair of bib overalls. Yes, you will feel like a farmer, but they help trap air around the trunk of your body.

Now you are dressed in a fair amount of layers and you think your winter coat will keep you warm. Forget it! Leave the coat in the closet or you will be sorry! The final topping to this ensemble is a one-piece insulated coverall. I call them walking sleeping bags and have slept out under the stars in mine numerous times. They are made with a tough cotton or a lightweight nylon outershell. Workmen call them coveralls; hunters - hunting suits, recreational types - snowmobile suits. They come in all sorts of colors from camouflage to day-glow orange. I myself prefer the more rugged cotton or brown duck outer type simply because it is more durable.

A good selection of insulated coveralls can be found in the Sears Workwear catalog. You can also find them in K-Mart, Wal-Mart, and Army-Navy Surplus stores. Here's a tip for you, if you've never been in one of these surplus stores, you don't know what you're missing. Every major city has one of these stores and if you are looking for cold weather gear definitely put it on your agenda.

Now you have the major parts of your body covered with at least three

layers of clothing, the last being a very thick one from the insulated coveralls. Don not expect any admiring looks from the opposite sex because, in all seriousness, you look like a waist gunner in a B-17 bomber flying on a mission to Berlin. Now that the big stuff is protected let's, go on to the extremities.

We lose an enormous amount of heat from our heads. I know many people do not like to wear hats, and many say that it's not their head that's cold, it's their feet or something else. Well, what they are feeling is correct but their reasoning is wrong. You see our bodies metabolism is designed to keep our two most important organs, the heart, and the brain, warm and functional. When we get cold, our circulatory system is pumping all the warm blood it can to the head to keep the brain working. An uncovered head acts like a nice radiator and gives up this heat to the cold air! It is like a game of chess and your body is a smart player. The body is not too concerned about toes or feet being cold because they are just pawns and they are expendable. It is protecting the brain, the King. Loose the King and you lose the whole shebang. So, even if your head is not cold, wear head protection and the warm blood that is not needed at the brain will be circulated to the other parts of the body.

When it's chilly, you will see me wearing a wool knit hat, when it gets cold I will have the hood from my sweatshirt on over my hat. At Jack Frost temperatures, I put on two knit hats. The temperature at which French-Canadian fur trappers start crossing the observing field is when I put on a balaclava under everything else. (Bal-a-cla-va - a close fitting woolen covering for the head and neck. *Webster's*)

Wearing winter gloves while observing is a problem since it is hard to manipulate eyepieces, focusers, and especially setscrews. I like to wear glove liners when it is really cold. These thin gloves are worn inside the regular gloves. Army-Navy stores or a well-stocked motorcycle shop will carry these. I wear these liners and a pair of snowmobile type mittens, when I have to pull the mittens off to change eyepieces, the glove liners keep my hands away from direct contact with the cold air and my fingers can grasp and function reasonably well.

The part of the body hardest to keep warm is your feet. They are the farthest from the heart and your footwear is in direct contact with the cold ground. Wet feet get cold very fast, so good insulated leather or rubber boots are nice when walking around dew-laden grass or in snow.

Leather insulated boots can be found for as little as \$30.00 but beware, the toe may not be insulated. Look closely before you buy. Also keep leather boots treated with preservative or water will soak through the leather.

Rubber insulated boots are usually made with rubber lowers and a cloth or nylon from the ankle up. They usually have a removable insulated liner and are similar in design to Eskimo mukluks. These type of boots can also be purchased for around \$30.00.

Some excellent boots of both types are to be found in the \$90-\$150 price range but, unless you are spending a lot of time in the cold, less expensive models will work. If you dislike the thought of spending at least \$30.00 for warmer and more comfortable feet well... they're your feet *not* mine! A cheap pair of insulated work or hunting boots beats a pair of sneakers no matter what they cost! The more expensive boots are of better quality, will feel more

comfortable, and will probably keep your toes and feet a little warmer. It does not matter whether your feet are clad first class or economy; there are benefits by layering clothing here too.

First, apply powder liberally to your feet to help keep them dry, remember wet feet are cold feet. Put on a pair of thin socks first, then over these, a pair of the thickest wool hunting socks you can buy. This is the minimum you should wear. Purchase a pair of "Dr. Scholl's Double Air-Pillo" cushioned insoles, which are twice as thick as the regular insoles. These will add a layer on insulation between your foot and the cold bottom of your boot. If your boots have removable liners, put these insoles under the liners.

We have all probably known someone who has tried to cram 6 or 8 inches of insulation into a 3-1/2 inch wall space in their home, expecting it to insulate better. Well, it does not because insulation is just material which keeps the air from moving and being lost. Trapping more air is what keeps our houses and our bodies warm. Now with these extra layers of clothing trapping the air around your feet, don't expect your size 10 feet to fit comfortably in a size 10 boot. It is going to be a tight fit and you will squeeze all the air you have been trying to hold around your feet right out of your boots. When purchasing your insulated boots, buy them at least one full size larger than the size you found to fit. Okay, you will feel like you are wearing Bozo the Clown shoes but you will have the extra room to wear another pair or two of socks. I've got a second pair of boots that are two sizes larger than I need and have room to put a couple of large chemical heat packs in the toes!

Above all, remember we need to insulate from the cold by trapping air in layers. Try to dress with thin layers at the skin and gradually build thicker layers outward. My recommendations are flexible and you can add or change anything you wish, such as, more shirts, hooded coveralls, neck warmers, thinsulate socks, etc. but do not depend on anything by itself, build boundary layers. A loose fit is also important. You will want to be able to bend over, move easily, and maneuver in the restroom!

Winter has the most number of the easy to find Messier objects and it is a good time to start earning your Messier certificate, It is a great time for binocular observing! You'll see me too. I'll be the farmer on the observing field who looks like he just parachuted out of a B-17, wearing clown shoes, letting some trappers look through his telescope.

Minutes from General Meeting on November 20, 1998

Philip Sacco presented the AAC Board recommendations for the purchase of a large Dobsonian telescope, which will ultimately be the cornerstone of the new dark site observatory. The "Scope Package" includes the 25" Dobsonian telescope and accessories, which include a ladder, lens, setting circles, and a temporary storage shed until a permanent structure can be built. The estimated cost of the "Scope Package" is \$9000.00. The proposal before the membership was that a minimum of \$4500.00 be raised through fund raising before the "Scope Package" is purchased. The \$4500.00 plus any excess from the fund raising project will be supplement from the Dark Site Fund. The amount to come from the dark site fund is not to exceed \$4500.00. The Dark Site Fund currently has approximately \$10,000.00. The proposal was passed unanimously.

Other new business — Philip proposed the creation of a "memorial star" for the AAC to be used to recognize AAC members that have greatly contributed to the club. The nominating committee will be taking recommendations for club officers for the next fiscal year. The next board meeting will be December 6th at Agnes Scott College.

From the Oval Office

by Philip Sacco, President

Well now.... How's this for the coldest winter in recent memory?!

I would like to take a minute and welcome all of our new members to the AAC: Rob Archer, Richard Blackburn, Tom Clarke, Bill Davis, Eric Eschenbach, Frank W. Hiller, Salvatore Mascia, John Sawyer, Lloyd & Melissa Smith, John M. Swan.

I hope that you will all decide that this is a club you can contribute something to, and make yourself at home! On that note, I want to say 'Thanks' to all the members who came to the special committee meeting and the Board meeting on the 6th of December. That is the first simple step to becoming a contributing member.

Just a brief 'Thanks -You' to all the members and guests attending last months meeting. We had 58 attendees, 48 of whom where members.

I called the meeting to order promptly at 8pm and as I mentioned in last months Focal Point, briefly recapped the Boards recommendation of the 'Telescope Package' and called a vote. The vote passed unanimously in favor of the Boards recommendation.

On a related matter, it is my pleasure to announce it IS Official! We have been granted formal permission to use a plot of land at the Charles Elliott Wildlife Management Area. The details are being worked out currently, and I will keep you all appraised of the developments. If you are interested in working with this project, and it is a GOOD one to work on, contact Gil Shillcutt. His number and e-mail address are listed at the back of the Focal Point.

I want to congratulate all the members of the club who have been working so hard on their observing programs. We had 8, count them, 8, members listed in the last issue of 'The Reflector' receiving observing awards. I think that is more in a three month period than the club had TOTAL, two years ago! (How about them LUNATICS...wubba-wubba...?!)

For those not in the know, Lee Troski's brother donated to the AAC a 16" mirror blank which the ATM group began grinding on at the beginning of the month. With a little elbow grease and some dedicated ATM'ers...we hope to have first light with TWO NEW LARGE APERTURE scopes this coming spring.

I announced the forming of the Nominating Committee at the last club meeting. I hope you will each consider your future involvement in focusing the efforts of this great club, and consider one of the positions for yourself. Please discuss your interest with the Nominating Committee members or me. It really is an easy thing to do (putting your name in, that is...). The alternative is to be nominated, or worse yet APPROACHED by the nominating committee...hehehehe...

I would like to encourage all of our members, especially our new members, to write a brief story of one of your encounters at a club function and submit it to the Focal Point to share with us all. I have heard some hilarious stories around the scopes about some of the escapades of our members, and would love to see them shared with everyone.

I look forward to seeing you all at Fernbank on the 18th...but for now...

The "Ladies of the Night...Sky" are cleaning up with their soap baskets! Make sure to order yours now while supplies last!

That's all Folks!

Your Prez.

ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE SPOTLIGHT

by Keith

A while back, I talked about the Messier Telescopic list club. That was when this series of articles originally started. The Messier article was in the observing notes section. I feel that many people missed the article so I am writing it again. This time I am including more information.

The first name you hear mentioned in astronomy is Charles Messier. Besides the planets, the first deep sky object most people look at is a Messier object. The person operating the telescope will tell you that you are looking at M-42 for example or M-31. So, what on earth does this M stuff mean anyway? The letter M refers to the first letter of Charles' last name, Messier. A designation that he thought of himself.

The Messier list started back in 1758. Charles was a comet hunter like his fellow Frenchmen and other astronomers of the time. Then, comet hunting was the only real job in astronomy. Astronomers became famous after discovering a comet. Messier was looking for Comet Halley in the sky. He was looking for comet Halley in the wrong part of the sky. This was because M. Delisle had incorrectly calculated the apparent position of the comet in the sky. Messier was looking for the comet in the constellation of Taurus. He came across a faint cloud that looked like a comet. Charles came back to the spot several weeks later and noticed that the cloud had not moved. Therefore, he marked the spot. The cloud in question is M-1 (Crab Nebula). Starting in 1764, he began to compile a list of objects that looked like comets but were deep sky objects instead. The first section of the list was printed in 1774 and contained 45 objects. The second section was printed in 1780 and included objects 1 to 68. The final section was printed in 1784 and included all 103 objects. Messier discovered some of the objects himself but other astronomers made most of the discoveries.

The current list as we know it contains 110 objects, but Messier only compiled a list of 103 objects. As it turns out, he had logged the missing seven objects. He died before the additional objects could be published. Notes of these objects were found in his personal copy of the list. Of course, some people still dispute the existence of some of those objects today.

Messier was also an excellent cartographer. He drew star charts of the comets he personally discovered. Many of his star charts contained notes and positions of M objects. He did all of his observing from Paris so that is why all the objects are visible from the Northern Hemisphere. Charles was a successful comet hunter for he found 12 comets and co-discovered six others. What is ironic is the fact that Messier is better known today for the Messier list of deep sky objects than for his comet discoveries. Messier also used many telescopes during his years of observing. He used a grand total of 11 different telescopes during his lifetime.

The Messier telescope observing club comes from this list. There are two levels of the program. You can get a regular messier certificate by observing and logging 70 of the objects. The honorary messier certificate is for those who observe and log all 110 objects. You also get a pin. This is the only observing club where you must find the objects by star hopping only. Your observing log should contain the following information:

1) Date of observation 2) Time of observation 3) Seeing conditions of the sky. 4) Aperture of your telescope. 5) Magnification or power. 6) A note describing in your own words what the object looks like in the eyepiece. The smallest telescope you can use is a four-inch. This list usually takes most people a year to finish.

There are many books available to you can get or buy about the Messier list. Here are several good books. Kenneth Glyn Jones wrote "Messiers Nebulae & Star Clusters." Cambridge is the publisher. Be prepared to pay \$65. Another good book is "The Messier Album" written by John Mallas & Evered Kreimer. Sky publishing is the publisher. This book only costs

\$22. The astronomical league also publishes a booklet titled "The Messier Objects" It only costs \$5. You must order it from the Astronomical League at Astronomical League Sales, P.O. Box 572, West Burlington, IA 52655. Here's recent book written by James O'Meara titled "The Messier Objects." The publisher is Sky publishing. You can order it at 1-800-253-0245 or email at orders@skypub.com. The book costs \$35.

Web site resources on the Messier list are many. Here are several I have found. The first is a site dedicated to Messier. It is a huge site. You have to see it to understand what I mean. I have used this site for three years now to get information. It is the University of Arizona's Students Exploration and Development of Space web site. The address is www.seds.org/messier/ Let me know what you think of it. The other web site is the Astronomical league's own site. This address takes you to the observing clubs section of their web site. www.astroleague.org/al/obsclubs/obsclub.html This is the site you can use to download a copy of the messier list and rules.

Besides books and web sites, it is good to talk to a real person about the messier club. You can contact Kathy Machin at email gmachin@sky.net or call her at 1-816-452-2086. She is the astronomical league messier club coordinator. You can also contact me for more information on the messier club and observing lists. Email me at Keith_Burns@Excite.com or call me at 770-426- 1797.

December Meteor Showers

NAME	DATES	PEAK DATE	ZHR
Chi Orionids	Nov. 26 - Dec. 15	Dec. 2	3
Phoenicids	Nov. 28 - Dec. 9	Dec. 6	var
Puppilid-Velids	Dec. 1 - Dec. 15	Dec. 7	10
Monocerotids	Nov. 27 - Dec.17	Dec. 9	3
Sigma-Hydrids	Dec. 3 - Dec. 15	Dec. 12	2
Geminids	Dec. 7 - Dec. 17	Dec. 14	120
Coma Berenicid	Dec. 12 - Jan. 23	Dec. 20	5
Urisids	Dec. 17 - Dec. 26	Dec. 22	10

MOST EXCELLENT OBSERVER NOTES

by Keith Burns

November was a turkey of a month for observing. The weather was not good and so everyone's observing suffered. We set a new club record for the number of people attending an orientation. Yes there were a grand total of two people who came for the orientation. Art Zorka and I stayed for about 30 minutes, but we had to leave due to the size of the crowd. Of course, the rain falling that day did play a role in the situation. The weather was not any better for the Leonids meteor shower. People experienced rain showers instead of meteor showers. Wilkie Brown and I went out to Rockmart Tuesday night to do some meteor watching. The weather was clear. We saw several bright green fireballs and some minor activity. We logged about 10 meteors in an hour that night. The meteor shower ZHR had dropped off quite a bit from the Monday night peak. Besides the Leonid shower, the Taurids were also active that night. The weather the night of the deep sky session at Charlie Elliot was better. We only had clouds for most of the night but no rain.

Now with the month of December here, I am asking for only one thing on my Christmas wish list. Can we PLEASE have clear weather for the observing events this month? I guess this is a bit much to ask for but I thought I would try. The orientation will occur on December 12 and will take place at the club's Villa Rica observatory. Start time for the event is 4:30 PM. The orientation will be canceled if it rains.

December is the month in which the Geminids meteor shower occurs. This shower always puts on an impressive display. We have scheduled viewing of the meteor shower at the Dove Pond field at CEWC. The day of the Geminids meteor shower peak is (Sunday) December 13. The session will start at 5 PM.

December marks a new milestone in our club. This is the first time we will have a deep sky session taking place in another state. We move west this month to the neighboring state of Alabama and the city of Fort Payne. Please hold those Alabama jokes to a minimum this month as we are holding this event with the Von Braun Astronomical Society of Huntsville. I have had the pleasure of working with Jim Fly, Dave Gore, and Charles O' Donnell of the VBAS. Many of you know Jim from the ATM group.

The location of the observing site has moved from the overlooks along Little River Canyon to a HUGE farm field. The field is only a 1/4-mile from Little River Canyon National Preserve. Little River Canyon sits on of Look-out Mountain. What makes this park unique is that Little River runs it's entire length on top of the mountain. Waterfalls, overlooks, and hiking trails can be found all over the park.

Located on the north end of Little River Canyon National Preserve is Desoto State Park. Here you can also find waterfalls, hiking trails, and camping. Desoto has cabins, hotel rooms, chalets, and camping for those of you who don't want to camp at the observing field. Winter rates are in effect. Call one of these numbers for information, rates, and reservations. 1-800-568-8840 or 1- 256-845-5075. Desoto State Park is approximately 10 miles from the observing field. For those of you wanting a hotel room, the town of Fort Payne is only about 10 to 15 miles away from the observing field. You can also camp at the observing field if you prefer but remember that there aren't any facilities there. The start time for the DSS will be dusk. Remember that Alabama is on central time and the sunsets around 4:30 PM CST. Please call me at 770-426-1797 or email me at Keith_Burns@Mail.Excite.Com for more information. Directions to the site are printed in this focal point. BTW: It is exactly 92.2 miles from Downtown Fort Payne to the I-75 / Barrett Parkway interchange (exit 116).

January's deep sky session will take place on January 16 and the orientation is on the schedule for January 23. The location of the January deep sky session is unknown at the time of this writing.

Bradley Notes

The December Open House (December 11, 8 PM Bradley Observatory) Lecture will be given by Kevin Marvel of the American Astronomical Society. He will lecture on the topic: "The Earliest Telescopes: Who made them, how they were made, and what they saw". Dr. Marvel will be here for a three-day visit from Washington, DC. His research focuses on the environments of evolved stars.

We have also received news that Dr. Anneila Sargent of the California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech) will deliver the April 9 Guest Open House Lecture. Dr. Sargent is the director of the Owens Valley Radio Observatory (OVRO), and will speak about the search for extrasolar planets.

I wish you all a Happy Holiday season, and hope to see you at the Observatory this week.

Christopher G. De Pree (404) 471-6266 Office
Department of Physics & Astronomy (404) 471-5389 Fax
141 East College Avenue
Agnes Scott College
Decatur, GA 30030

NOTICES:

From Tom Buchanan:

"Mastering Adobe® Photoshop" A two-day workshop by CompuMasteer of Graceland College is being offered in Atlanta January 21-21, 1999 and February 16-17, 1999. Cost is \$399. Call 1-800-867-4340 for further information.

From RW Jakiel

Rich's collection of books and software is overflowing his shelves. In order to make room for new *stuff*; Rich has the following for sale:

(1991) Lonely Hearts of the Cosmos	\$10
(1984) The Solar System	\$5
(1977) Guide TO Mars (P. Moore)	\$2
(1981) A Complete Manual of Amateur Astronomy	\$6
(1982) The Sun - Our Star	\$5
(1991) The Astronomers	\$10
(1992) The Southern Sky	\$6
(1091) THE New Solar System (1 st Ed.)	\$5
Software on CD-ROM	
Pluto Guide 5.0	\$12
Orbits 3.0	\$4

If you want one of these items, please contact Rich. **Rich is donating 1/2 of the proceeds from anything he sells towards the New Scope!** (This is not a complete selection, there is more!).

Editors Note:

If you want to trade, sell or swap astronomy related items, come early to a Meeting, Orientation, or DSS and bring your wares. I know there are a few others that have items for sale. Send me an e-mail or note and I will publish it in the Focal Point. (Please note: If a commercial or non-astronomy advertising space is required, please contact me.)

Lunatic Challenge #6

By Lunatic #82

Welcome to the Holiday Season! This month's Lunatic Challenge is a give away....! Have fun with it and have a Happy New Year!

Naked Eye Targets:

1. Rabbit in the Moon Hint: All major seas and oceans are part of it.
2. Mare Frigoris - Sea of?
3. Why do most of the eastern seas have names reflecting nice weather and the western seas have names that relate to stormy weather?
4. Challenge: Mare Insularum - Seas of?

Pickerings Naked Eye Challenge:

Can you see Mare Vaporum? This is a rated 7 challenge

Binocular Targets:

1. Sinus Amoris - Bay of?
2. Mare Spumans - the '.....' Sea
3. Palus Somni - Marsh of?
4. Catharina. Approx. how large in diameter is this feature in miles? What is this feature commonly referred to as?
5. Challenge: Mare Australe - the Sea

Telescope Targets:

1. Lacus Doloris - Lake of?
2. Rupes Altai - the Altai Scarp
3. Fra Mauro- What is the historical significance of this area?
4. Challenge: Rima Hypatia - What small named crater does this rille pass by?

Messier List

AAC members who have gotten a messier certificate as of this writing. Note that reg stands for a regular certificate in which 70 objects were observed. Hon stands for an honorary certificate in which all 110 objects were observed.

Joe Steed #90 Reg, James Brown #345 Hon, Robert Cowart # 382 Hon, J D Speering #384 Hon, George Reight #567 Hon, Mark Wilkinson #617 Hon, Elizabeth Peterson #635 Reg, Eugene Powell #636 Hon, Tim Rockwell #637 Hon, Curtis Rosser #638 Hon, William Snell #639 Hon, Dennis Holmes #640 Hon, Phillip Brachen #1018 Hon, Jacqueline Cochran #1031 Reg, Tom Buchanan #1051 Hon, Dave Riddle # 1093 Hon, Clay McHann #1195 Hon, Art Russell # 1219 Hon, Alex Langoussis #1409 Hon, Phil Sacco #1454 Hon, Larry Higgins #1484 Hon, Joe Sheppard #1485 Hon, Keith Burns #1531 Hon, John Ritger #1546 Hon, David Eason # 1582 Reg, Bob Smith II # 1583 Hon, Steve Smith #1629

This Weekend's Grinding Workshop

by Gil

I want to thank all who attended this last weekend's mirror-grinding workshop. Special mention goes to Tracy Wilson. His instruction, assistance, and patience with all of us glass-pushing rookies made the workshop fun and productive. We got about halfway through the 16-inch mirror donated by Lee Trosky's brother Kirk. Phil Sacco and Chrissy Mondell finished rough grinding on Chrissy's 10-inch mirror (about time!). Peter Macumber also made good progress on his 10-inch mirror. Finally, newcomer George Wynn started AND finished rough grinding on his 6-inch mirror. I think it was a great success.

Of particular note, Chrissy has come up with a new dance. It is called — what else — the “Grind.” Next time you see her, you should get a demonstration.

Lynn Bennett and his son, Matt were on-hand to provide support and grinding help. Matt (who is 7 years old) even had a shot at grinding on the 16 inch blank. Lynn has provided me with images, which I will have posted on the AAC Web page soon.

Other attendees included Tom Faber, Art Russell (doing research for his own mirror), and Chris. Dr. DePree came by a couple of times, and seemed pleased that mirror fabrication has resumed at the Bradley Observatory after a couple of decades hiatus.

Alix Vinson, Agnes Scott's safety officer, after seeing what is involved in grinding a mirror, decided that safety glasses and dust masks were not required. His “announcement” earned a not-so-silent cheer from those that were attending.

Tracy Wilson and I have discussed trying to do the workshop on a scheduled, on-going basis. Perhaps bi-weekly might make sense for the membership. I ask that those of you in the general membership of the AAC, PLEASE let me know if this would be of value to you.

Now, if only we can find some liniment for my aching arms, we will be in good shape!

Clear Skies and Good Grinding,

You Know You're a Planetary Observer When . . .

By Ken Poshedly; original list by Jay Reynolds Freeman

With so much emphasis on deep-sky observing, how about some attention to the kind of observing that Atlanta is MOST suited for — lunar and planetary?

This little “Jeff Foxworthy-ism” appeared on the Shallow-Sky listserv recently as well as sci.astro.amateur, so without further ado . . .

You know you are a planetary observer when...

- * You campaign for bond measures for urban street lighting, so you can read your charts more easily while observing.
- * You don't think it's funny at all when people tell you refractors make good finders.
- * You seek corneal surgery to improve your vision, and insist on a final polish with fine, washed rouge.
- * You see canals on the faces of people with acne.
- * You know where James Lick is buried, and envy him.
- * You have your nose surgically removed to provide increased clearance for Panoptic eyepieces in your bino-viewers.

- * The batteries that came with your red flashlight have long since run down, and you never even noticed that it had batteries in the first place.
- * You name your pet dogs for the Martian moons “Phobos” and “Deimos”, and feed them “ALPO” dogfood.
- * Your no. 2 telescope was scavenged from the finder of a big Dobson: You kept the Dobson primary as a shaving mirror, and traded the rest of the telescope for two uncoated Ramsden eyepieces and a used yellow filter.
- * You wear an old Astro-Physics baseball cap to bed and in the shower: You save your new one for fancy dinners, ballroom dancing, and job interviews.
- * You own more bino-viewers than eyepieces.
- * You can spell “Schiefspiegler” correctly at least two times out of three.
- * You think the natural observing cycle is not the lunar month, but the synodic period of Mars.
- * You only buy eyepieces in pairs.
- * You actually own a Zeiss TeleMentor.
- * You can’t believe you are having marital difficulties, because the red planet is usually too close to the Sun for good viewing.
- * You can talk about garlands all night long without once thinking of the Wizard of Oz.
- * You have memorized the entire Takahashi catalog in Japanese, even though you neither speak nor read Japanese.
- * You know what Encke actually saw, and why it isn’t named for him: You think that’s not fair, but it doesn’t confuse you in the least.
- * The optics of your two-inch-barrel eyepieces have reverted to the original sand from lack of use.
- * You wish someone would turn off the Sun, so you could get a better look at Mercury.
- * You have fully multicoated contact lenses.
- * You have two wristwatches, synchronized to the two main rotational periods of the atmosphere of Jupiter.
- * You have tried to make a Coddington eyepiece by grinding a groove in a clear glass marble.
- * Your dream vacation is a deep-water luxury cruise in the oceans of Jupiter’s moon Europa.
- * You ask star party organizers to turn off the Milky way so you won’t get confused looking for faint outer satellites of gas giants.
- * You name your telescopes for members of Roland Christen’s family and staff, and none of your friends think that’s the least bit strange.
- * You don’t star hop because you have forgotten what stars look like, but that’s all right because you neither need to star hop nor care what stars look like.
- * You can’t say “A, B, C” without wondering what happened to the Cassini Division of Saturn’s rings.
- * Your idea of a Light Pollution Reduction filter is sunglasses.
- * The transparency is wonderful on the night of the New Moon, and you don’t look at anything outside the Solar System.
- * The only “central obstruction” you want anything to do with is the one between the opposite sides of the Crepe Ring of Saturn’s rings.
- * You can count the total number of celestial objects you have viewed on the fingers of both hands.

- * You have a compulsive urge to make detailed drawings of the subtle, low-contrast detail seen on light bulbs.
- * You neither know nor care that your mount has periodic error.
- * You know what “syzygy” means, and apply it to configurations of billiard balls on a pool table.
- * You no longer worry about shrinking pupil size with age.
- * You spend two nights at a deep sky star party, and never see a galaxy.
- * Your focuser has your own fingerprints permanently worn into the knobs. * You see color in all the objects you observe.
- * You time central-meridian crossings of terrestrial clouds.
- * You wait for the first quarter Moon to put your telescopes out.
- * You don’t know what a “light year” is.
- * You almost never remember how to spell “Schmidt-Cassegrain.”
- * You examine people’s trousers carefully, to see if their belts have festoons: You don’t bother looking at your own belts, because you already have the shapes and positions of their festoons memorized.
- * You find a spider in your tube, and fumigate.
- * During a favorable western libration, you find yourself wishing the Moon was full so you could see the Mare Orientale.
- * You think 180 mm is large aperture.
- * You are confident that “faint fuzzies” always refers to obscure low-contrast details in the Jovian atmosphere.
- * Deep what?



November 198

Dear Astronomers:

Thanks to all of you who helped make Science Night at Berkeley Lake Elementary a great success! It was enjoyed by students, parents and teachers. Your enthusiasm is truly contagious.

We really appreciate all of the effort that went into your presentation and hope to have you all back again - Thanks again -

Margaret Crawford
PTA Arts in Education
Berkeley Lake Elem.

Thank
You

To the guys that made it a very special night at Berkeley Lake Elementary,

Thank you so much for coming to our school! We really enjoyed seeing Jupiter, Saturn and the moon. It made our Science night a big hit! Thank you again for your time!!!! Sincerely,

Berkeley Lake PTA

DIRECTIONS TO LITTLE RIVER CANYON/ DESOTO STATE PARK from Atlanta

Take I-75 north from Atlanta. Exit interstate at Ga 20(exit 125) which is the Rome/Canton exit.

Turn left at end of exit ramp. Take Ga 20 west for 2 miles to US 411. Turn left onto US 411. Take VERY FIRST RIGHT onto entrance ramp. You are still on Ga 20/US 411 and now US 41. Proceed on road for 3 miles to exit ramp. Exit to the right. The road you are on now is Ga 20/US 411. Head west on the road for 17 miles to the Rome city limits. After you enter into the city limits of Rome, proceed for another 1 1/2 miles. The road will turn into a limited access highway. Take the SECOND EXIT and exit to the RIGHT. This takes you to Ga 27 north/Ga 20 west and downtown Rome. Continue on US 27/Ga 20 for 3 miles. After traveling for 3 miles, Ga 27 branches off to the north(right) BUT you should CONTINUE WEST(straight) on Ga 20. Take Ga 20 for 17 miles to the Georgia/ Alabama border. Upon crossing the state border the road changes names to Al 9. Continue heading west on Al 9 for 5 miles to Al 35. Turn right onto Al 35. Proceed on Al 35 for 19 1/2 miles to county 89 (Desoto Parkway/ Scenic Road). NOTE: If you turn left, you will be heading towards the observing site. If you turn right, you will be heading towards Desoto State Park. If you go straight, you will be heading towards downtown Fort Payne.

To Desoto State Park from Observation Field:

Turn left onto Al. 176 and proceed for 6/10 th of a mile to Jennings Rd(DeKalb 127). Turn right onto Jennings Rd. Proceed on Jennings Rd for 5.4 miles to end. Turn right onto Dogtown Rd(DeKalb 89). Proceed for 3.9 miles to Al.35. Cross intersection and proceed on Desoto Parkway(DeKalb 89)for another 5 miles to Desoto state park.

To Fort Payne from Desoto State Park:

Take Desoto Parkway south from the park to Al. 35. Turn right onto Al. 35. Proceed on Al. 35 for 2.4 miles downhill to Gault Avenue(US 11) . Turn left onto US 11(Gault Avenue). Take Gault Avenue to Al. 35 split. Turn right onto Al. 35 and proceed to I-59 interchange area..

To Desoto State Park:

From Al 35 turn right onto county 89(Desoto Parkway). Proceed north on county 89(Desoto Pkwy) for 5 miles. At this point you will enter onto park land. The cottages, motel, and lodge are located along the first road on the right after entering the park. To get to the camp grounds, information center, and country store, continue north on county 89 to county 618. This road is located just past the country store. Turn left onto county 618. Camp registration is done at the country store. County 618 takes you to the campground which is about 3/4 mile up the road on the left.

To Fort Payne from Observing Site:

Turn left onto Al. 176 from field. Travel for approximately 6/10th of a mile to Jennings Rd(DeKalb 127). Turn right onto Jennings Rd. Proceed for 5.4 miles to county 89. Turn right onto 89(Dogtown Rd). Take Dogtown Rd to Adamsburg Rd(county 78). Turn left onto (East)Adamsburg Road(county 78).

Take East Adamsburg Rd to end of road where it dead ends into 3rd Street. Turn left onto 3rd Street and Proceed to US 11/ Al. 35(Gault Avenue). Turn left onto US 11/Al. 35 and proceed to Al 35 turn off. Turn right onto Al. 35 and proceed to I-59 interchange area.. There are many restaurants, gas stations, and hotels along the way.

To Little River Canyon Observation Site:

From Al. 35 turn left onto county 89(Scenic Road). Proceed south on county 89(Scenic Road) for 3.9 miles to county 127(Jennings Road). Turn left onto county 127. Proceed for almost 5.3 miles to Al. 176. Turn left onto Al. 176. Proceed for 6/10th of a mile. Look for orange cones and drive on right side of road.

News Flash

[It's that Little River Deep sky info thing](#)

[From: Keith Burns <Keith_Burns@Excite.com>](#)

This is what happens when you type this stuff after midnight. You come up with a silly title like the one above. Anyway on to the real reason for this news flash. I spoke to Dave Gore who was the one who found the field we are going to observe at this coming December 19th. The access road we (Joanne, Geoff, John, Mike, and I) found was apparently the wrong driveway. Therefore, this means that there is a better way onto the field besides the minefield covered drive we had to drive over. Yes Joanne, your car is safe to travel this. Dave and I will be meeting early, finding, and marking the correct drive with the infamous orange cones. Look for these when looking for the drive. Several AAC people will be going to Desoto on Friday (Dec 18th) and camp the weekend. The benefit to observing in Alabama is that you gain an hour when crossing the border (but you lose it when coming back). Hope to see everyone on December 19th.

Pleasures of doing sidewalk astronomy

[\(with excerpts from Keith\)](#)

While you see information of upcoming sidewalk astronomy events all the time, no one ever reports what happen. So here is the report on Sidewalk astronomy at Baker Elementary up in Acworth. It was a science night event but we were the big event. I am happy to say that the planets of Jupiter, Saturn, and that moon thing were visible. The seeing was steady last night so the views of the planets were outstanding. I pointed the rain-maker at Saturn and ended up with a line of people for about 1 1/2 hours. We could see five of the seven visible moons. All the moons were close to the planet so everyone was able to tell that these were moons and not background stars. I could not tell who was more excited, the kids or adults. There were many oooo's ahhh's wows.

Many people were convinced that I had a picture of the ring planet inside the telescope. That opinion quickly changed when I showed them the front of the telescope. I guess seeing is believing. Many thank yous were said. For anyone who doubt's it, astronomy is alive and well in Cobb county. These kids are smart and interested.

Ralph Bowman had his 10-inch SCT pointed at Jupiter. All four of it's moons where position on the right side of Jupiter. Mark Banks had his 8-inch SCT pointed at the moon. Thanks to Mark for setting up these events. He is doing a great job. Thanks to Ralph Bowman for coming out too.

The placement of the two planets and the moon was perfect. This was a chance to show everyone the ecliptic plane.

More recently there was a sidewalk astronomy event at Berkeley Lake Elementary. Here is what they had to say!

(n/a in printed FP)

Club Officers

Phil Sacco	President	404-296-6332
	<i>ppsacco@mindspring.com</i>	
Rich Jakiel	VP Program Chairman	
	<i>deepsky@mindspring.com</i>	
Keith Burns	VP Observing Chairman	770-427-1475
	<i>keith_burns@mailexcite.com</i>	
Sharon Carruthers	Treasurer	770-319-8970
	<i>macumber@bellsouth.net</i>	
Peter Macumber	Corresponding Secretary	770-319-8970
	<i>macumber@bellsouth.net</i>	
Wm Bower	Recording Secretary	770-723-9891
	<i>wbower@emory.edu</i>	

Board of Directors

Phil Bracken	Dark-Site	770-941-6517
	<i>philb@mindspring.com</i>	
Tom Crowley		914-425-0645
	<i>tcrowley@mfm.com</i>	
Don Hall		770-938-8139
	<i>donhall@mindspring.com</i>	
Art Russell	Chairman of the Bored	404-373-4119
	<i>artrussell@mindspring.com</i>	
Gil Shillcutt	Amature Telescope Makers	404-467-1437
	<i>Gil.Shillcutt@choicepointinc.com</i>	
Tracy Wilson	A.T.M.	770-270-9402
	<i>tracy2@mindspring.com</i>	

Standing Committees

Lenny Abbey	Membership	404-634-1222
	<i>labbey@mindspring.com</i>	
Mark Banks	Sidewalk Astronomy	404-257-2766
Stephen Blalock	AAC Webmaster	770-948-9820
	<i>stephen.blalock@gr1.gatech.edu</i>	
Tom Buchanan	Light Polution	770-521-2136
Doug Chessser	Club Graphics	770-457-5743
	<i>chesser@mindspring.com</i>	
Lynn Crowley	Beginner's Contact and Socials	404-233-6886
Alex Langoussis	Publicity	770-429-8384
	<i>aleko@mindspring.com</i>	
Julie Moore	Hospitality and Refreshments	770-242-6735
Ken Poshedly	Peach State Star Gaze	770-979-9842
	<i>ken.poshedly@mindspring.com</i>	

AAC CALENDAR of EVENTS

December 11, Friday	Bradley Open House	Bradley Observatory
December 12, Saturday	Orientation - ALQ 36%	Villa Rica
December 18, Friday	General Meeting	Fernbank
December 19, Saturday	Deep Sky	Little River Canyon
December 31, Thursday	New Years Eve	
January 15, Friday	General Meeting	Emory White Hall

Focal Point

The December Focal Point is here.

January's Focal Point will be published on January 11th, please submit your articles before **January 8th**. This should allow you enough time to recover from New Year's Partying.

The Focal Point is available in color online via e-mail in PDF format. The free Adobe(R) Acrobat(R) Reader allows you to view, navigate, and print PDF files across all major computing platforms. PDF stands for Portable Document Format. The reader, Adobe Acrobat, can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com>. This is a *free* product. More information is available at the ADOBE web site.

Send me an e-mail, I will send you a Focal Point. If you like it, we will stop sending you a copy snail-mail. It will also save the club a dollar. January will hit us with a postal rate increase. It only a penny you say! Three hundred mailings for twelve months (actually $312 \times 1 \times 12 = \37.44) is more than the price of a family membership.

The club membership is 331. Thirty-seven people receive their Focal Point via e-mail and like it better than the thing that was the best in the world before sliced bread..

Doug Chessser

, a member of the club since '91 has left us. Well, he is moving to Maui. He will be reachable at a new e-mail address after December 19 at CHESSER@FLEX.COM. Remember we can't all show up at the same time for his star party <G>. Let's wish Doug all the best and hope that LARGE telescope doesn't give him too many ideas.

Doug's leaving opens a large hole. Doug did a very good job at providing the club with graphics and CCD images. His position as Chair for Club Graphics needs to be filled. Anyone, who is sitting down and reading this at this moment, can call our prez, Philip, and volunteer for this job. If his line is busy, just keep trying. The ninth caller could be the prizewinner.



Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

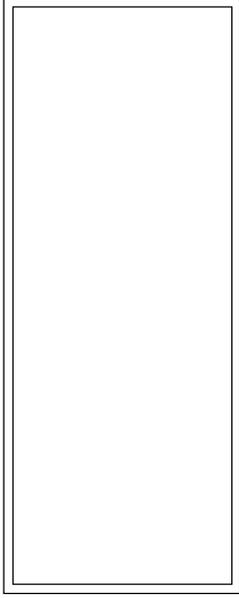
FROM:

Peter Macumber
3401 Velvet Creek Drive
Marietta, GA 30008-7619
macumber@BellSouth.Net

We're here to help! Here's how how to reach us:

Atlanta Astronomy Club
3595 Canton Road, Suite A9-305
Marietta, GA 30066

FIRST CLASS



Atlanta Astronomy Club

Friday, December 18th

Fernbank Science Center

General Meeting - Meeting Room II - 7:00 PM

Planetarium Show - 8:00 PM

The meeting will start at 7pm at Fernbank Science Center Meeting Room II. We will adjourn for the Planetarium show, which will begin at 8pm. We will not have a speaker for the meeting, but rather the AAC members and guests will be invited to attend a special Holiday Planetarium show. We will be given free admission.

Andromeda, Cepheus & Cassiopeia's beauteous daughter

Was chained to a rock to be Cetus' fodder

When Perseus on Pegasus' back, flew by

And snatched her to safety up in the sky

Now remembering these 5 will be no bother!

