

The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club
Established 1947

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Editor: Peter Macumber

From the Oval Office

By Philip Sacco

It's May and that means elections! It also means I will be turning the reins over to my successor. I have greatly enjoyed serving as President this past year and Observing VP the year before, and I will be making an address to the membership about the year in review at the May meeting. I hope you are all present to see who gets the Presidents Award as well as some of the other surprises! If you have been to any of the meetings this past year, you will have figured out that I mean to have a good time, and this last official meeting for me will be no exception. I plan to 'go out in style'...

I would like to take a moment and say welcome our new members.

Welcome to the club, and please don't be bashful! Your club has a tremendous amount to offer you in resources, so make use of your new contacts and get to know some of your new friends! Just ask Scott Shy how easy we are to get to know!

You will find enclosed in this issue the official list of nominees for this year's election. If you have an interest in a position, you will have one last opportunity for a floor nomination the night of elections. All the candidates for the slate this year have been listed, and unfortunately, a couple have taken their names off the list when they thought we had all the candidates we needed. I would like to point out that while this certainly is the prerogative of these individuals to do that, I don't believe it is in the spirit of elections to do so. Resigning your name from a nomination abdicates your voice to criticize the officers who do get 'elected' otherwise.

Elections are all about CHOICE, and without a choice, you may as well have the Nominating Committee select your officers for the following year. This would hardly merit being called an 'Election'.

As it is, we have a good group of candidates who have come forward to fill in the soon to be vacated positions, and I am sure that the coming year will be in most capable hands.

Maybe next year YOU will take some of those ideas and observations you have made about the club and its activities and take a little more part in the happenings, and run for a position yourself. Remember, it's not too late to get your name in for a role this year. If you are new to the club and do not feel 'experienced' enough to help make the decisions as an officer, consider a board position, or get active with one of our committees. The committees are where all the 'work' gets done anyway, and I am proud to say that the individuals running for positions this year have all been active with some committee this past year.

I don't know if KenPo will be posting a followup on the PSSG, which was held last month, in this issue soooo...Let me say this...If you weren't there...You missed a GREAT TIME!

We had our most successful PSSG of all time this past year, and it was the

largest yet. As an unexpected surprise, the AAC wound up the winner of the raffle scope thanks to the donation of several tickets in our name by a relatively new member. As I most certainly did not want the club to take possession of the scope, having wanted all along some newcomer to get it by chance, it was suggested that we auction the scope off on the spot. I felt this was a great idea, and the bid started at \$2, the price of a ticket.

If I were to say the bids were a little quick in coming, I would be making an understatement! Anyway, ... the scope went to the high bid of \$255 to one of our new members, Mr. Whipple. It was purchased by his wife's sister for him as a present. From what I understand, they have never used a telescope before, and their visit to the PSSG was out of curiosity.... Congratulations!

Hope to see you all at the May meeting for the year in review, and the elections....'Til then...

Clear Skies!

Philip Sacco

Raffle/Auction

By Richard Blackburn

I purchased tickets for the scope raffle because I wanted to support the AAC. Knowing I did not need the telescope, I donated my tickets to the club. If by some chance one of the tickets I purchased was drawn in the raffle, all the better for the AAC. And just think about it, in addition to the money brought in from the sale of raffle tickets, the auction brought in an additional \$255 and someone walked away with a good deal on a telescope! Had work not interfered, I would have attended the PSSG and acknowledged my wishes then and there. It's unfortunate that this has overshadowed the success of the PSSG.

I am pleased with the outcome of the raffle and auction, with the exception that I innocently put Phil in a difficult situation. No matter what he did, someone would have felt slighted. The allegation that the raffle was rigged not only dishonor Phil and all of his hard work, but do the AAC a great disservice. Thank you, Phil, for your hard work on the raffle, and especially the great job you have done as President of the AAC this year. I also thank everyone who participated in the auction of the scope, and thank you for letting me support the AAC in my own way.

the temperatures dropped. Nightfall had some really nice skies, very chilly temps in the 40s and winds that blew clouds across the skies in only a few minutes. It was also the first night of Dr. Richard Schmude's workshop on producing Mars drawings.

Helping to make it a warm evening in his own way, AAC member Harold Champ secured a hot dog cooker cart and all the condiments. Set up outside the crafts building, Harold provided respite for those who could not make the walk all the way to the dining hall for pastries and coffee. Thank you, Harold, for a job well done and please repeat this next year.

Friday was a more settled. It was the arrival day for keynote speaker Phil Harrington, and it was the day of Rich Jakiel's workshop on general drawing and sketching; Rich described his session was fairly successful with about 15-20 individuals and some details given to electronic image processing as well.

A short meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club that evening served as a welcome to many who had never before attended this kind of event; many folks were even unaware that our club existed. Business matters included general introduction of candidates for office at the upcoming AAC election and discussion of the new club telescope.

Friday night skies were not as good as Thursday's, with more frequent cloudbanks rolling in and out. The temps also were still on the nippy side. It was also on Friday night that an envelope with approximately \$50 of coffee/snack money disappeared from the snack table in the dining hall. One witness thinks he saw a person do the deed, but saw no nametag and was unable to get a good look at the person's face.

Saturday morning saw the very successful and well-run pancake breakfast. With a cashier seated at a table just outside the kitchen and a staff of cooks and servers inside, things moved very smoothly. Congratulations to the "Ladies of the Night . . . Sky" for a job — and cooking — well done.

The Saturday afternoon activities, including the formal presentations and drawings, continue to serve as a main drawing point for PSSG attendees. Phil Sacco's personalized and animated presentation about celestial mythology — complete with period garb (toga and accessories) — indicated how much research Phil invested in his portion of the program. The talk by Eric Douglass on predicting the seeing conditions proved to be a very in-depth look at how lowly amateur astronomers can use readily available weather data to forecast the probability of steady skies.

Phil Harrington's look at amateur astronomy over the past century consisted of a slide presentation coupled with his own personal — often humorous — comments. We learned how "Sky & Telescope" magazine and "Astronomy" magazine came to be and we saw the gradual development and accessibility of highly technical equipment for the amateur astronomer. We even learned a bit more about a number of telescope companies that are sadly no longer here (Criterion and Cave are two which come to mind).

Thanks to the very generous support of a number of corporate donors, the door prize drawings saw more people than ever leave with great memories and merchandise as well. The drawing for the Meade 4500 reflecting telescope resulted at first in the AAC winning the telescope, thanks to the purchase of a number of tickets in the club's name by an anonymous benefactor. An impromptu decision by club officers on the spot resulted in the scope being auctioned on the spot.

The winner of the beautiful lunar photo by Geoff Power has a true masterpiece. It should be pointed out that while Geoff was seated at the rear of the dining hall, he and his lunar photo more rightfully should have been up front for all to see. It was a true oversight that Geoff was not asked to spend some time describing in detail how hard he worked on this photo.

The rest of Saturday was taken up by the traditional Saturday evening at Buckner's Family Restaurant and open observing back at the camp. It was also the night for Art Russell's workshop on star hopping and a repeat of Dr. Schmude's workshop on Mars drawings. And again, the night was clear — the

clearest of the three — and still chilly — even chillier than the other two nights.

Sunday was get-out-of-town day. Moreover, to the benefit of all involved, the observing fields were left virtually spotless. It is interesting to note that last year, when trash barrels were placed on the observing field, lots of candy wrappers and the like missed their target and lay on the ground. This year, with no trash barrels on the fields, the phrase "leave no trace" is what comes to mind. Nada, nothing, zilch was left on the fields by our fine crowds this year.

Thus, the 1999 *Peach State Star Gaze* is now history. And again, thanks to all for making it the best ever.

Moon Raffle

By Geoff Powers

Yes, there was a hurried, abbreviated raffle drawing for my full moon poster print at this year's Peach State Gaze. The impromptu event was done between the 4:00 PM door prizes and Phil Harrington's program about 4:40 PM Saturday. This caused some confusion and concern among ticket buyers. KenPo pulled a lady from the exiting crowd to draw the winning ticket.

Could it have been more random and impartial? No! Could it have been more visible for ticket buyers? Certainly. Sorry for the confusion. I just wanted to go along with the program and cooperate with Ken's wishes.

The lucky winner was Agnes Scott astronomy student, assistant and associate AAC member, Nola Taylor! I was delighted, because of all the folks I spoke with while selling the tickets; Nola really wanted this poster. Sure, she was glad the funds were going to help the club, but she really, really wanted the poster. It's a great great feeling to know it won't be drawing dust in the corner of an attic!

Everyone who bought a chance deserved to win, but alas, there could be only one winner. Kudos to all whom supported this effort. The gross take was \$174. After a small accounting error, (on account I miscounted someone's change!), the net proceeds came to \$164. Not so bad for 3 nights at Emory, 2 at Charlie Elliot and Saturday afternoon at the Peach State.

I truly enjoyed my carefree day in the sun Friday at the Star Gaze. Despite the way I looked (and felt) that evening, I didn't burn anywhere. Our heliospheric, thermo-nuclear friend seriously tanned my hide, though!

It was great fun meeting new folks, reacquainting with some from last year and checking out the vast array of equipment that made this year's event. With my main interest being photography, I centered on the equatorial scopes. There were gobs of dobs, too!

Saturday night was the only possible chance to shoot some film with my setup. Seeing was fair at best, and the transparency seemed to come and go. As everyone there that night knows, the biggest problem was dew, from sunset on. The moisture began to freeze on some of my equipment around 3:30AM Sunday, but my modified Cathy Lee Designer Series hot air comb prevailed over the dampness! I even had to defrost my primary mirror around 4:00AM so I could see to guide my rig.

The effort paid off. I got some OK wide-angle stuff, and on way cool zoom shot of the Trifid/Lagoon region. If my budget permits, I hope to have some blow-ups to show and share at this month's general meeting. See ya there!

A nice setup for those who like to rough it slightly.



Life at one of the swap tables.



It seems that people from *everywhere* go to the PSSG.



Lunatic Challenge #11

By Lunatic #82

Only one more to go folks....! I hope you have been keeping up with your dome hunt...remember to get a copy of Lunatic Challenge #1...it has a pretty good list of where some good domes are. I have enjoyed the comments so far from those of you working the challenges. Remember.... if you complete the Lunatic Challenge program, you automatically will be entered into the Astronomical Leagues Lunar Club.

Naked Eye Targets:

1. How many successful manned moon landings were made?
1. What is the largest amount of lunar material returned by an Apollo mission? Which Apollo mission?
2. Which Apollo mission spent the longest time on the moon? How long?
3. How is crater Proclus different from most?
4. What moon exploration event took place near crater Littrow?

Binocular Targets:

1. Crater Walter
2. Crater Langrenus
3. Crater Fracastorius

Telescope Targets:

1. Crater Proclus - How is this crater different from most?
2. Crater Littrow - What moon exploration event took place nearby?
3. Crater Lambert
4. Crater Hippalus
5. Crater Billy
4. Challenge: Ghost crater Lambert R

Observing Chair

By Keith Burns

UPCOMING OBSERVING EVENTS

The deep sky session for the month of June will be held on the 12TH. The location is the Marben Farms field in the Charles Elliott Wildlife Management Area. The observing field will have bathroom facilities.

OPEN HOUSES/ORIENTATIONS

Come on out to the Walter Barber Jr Observatory on May 22 for the open house. There will be a talk on astronomy including equipment, clothing, books, and etc. The talk starts at 6 P.M.. Following the talk there will be observing till late. If it's raining, then the open house will be canceled.

June's open house is scheduled for the 19 TH. The talk starts at 7 P.M.

VILLA RICA UPDATE

We recently purchased a motorized mount that will be used on Maksatov telescope. The mount comes with right ascension and declination motors and a hand paddle. Currently we are working on an adapter plate to attach the scope and mount to the pier. Stay tuned for more information.

PEACH FUZZIES

The skies the three nights of the peach state star gaze were not the best. This factor contributed to the very small number of peach fuzzies certificates given out. It took me three nights to complete the list and I didn't finish until 4:30 A.M. Sunday morning. The names of the four people include Becky Lowder, Jeff Lackmeyer, Jim Fly, and Keith Burns. Perhaps your name should be on this list. If you have observed nine of the planetaries on the list, then you qualify for the peach fuzzies certificate. Send, email, or give me a copy of your log sheet. The log only has to contain a list of the planetaries you viewed during the event. Include your full name and address just in case I need to mail it to you.

HERSCHEL AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT

Now if your name is Rick Ozment, don't read this. Of course, Rick, you can read this but be sure to deny you knew anything about this. At the least act surprised when I give you the Herschel certificate. Rick has done what many of us have been working on for years. He completed his Herschel 400 observing program. These accomplishments are so rare these days considering how great our weather has been this past year. Rick started on this program back in 1991. This is also the same year I was bitten by the astronomy bug myself. Looking over his log sheets, I see that he has been to quiet a few star parties and moved often. He found almost all of the objects on his list by star hopping. Now many smudges of light later he is the proud recipient of the Herschel certificate number 186. Note that he did the entire list with a celestron eight-inch sct telescope.

CLOSING NOTE

My term as observing chair is up as of May 21. I will not be running for another term this year. This has been a busy year. Thanks to the effort of many club members, much has been accomplished. I enjoyed meeting and working with the members of this club and other astronomy clubs.

Sidewalk Astronomy

The following dates are for Sidewalk Astronomy in the City of Conyers, Outdoor Pavilion. Please volunteer for these dates.

Contact Mark Banks @ 404-257-2766

Friday May 28th Saturday June 26th Friday July 23rd

Friday August 13th

May 29th- CEWMA, 8 pm, "Mars" by Rich Jakiel. A look into the history of Mars discovery and exploration. The Multimedia presentation is to be followed by a viewing session on site. See next month for further details.

Atlanta Astronomy Club

Friday, May 21st

Emory University, White Hall

The speaker for the May meeting will be our own president, Phil Sacco. Mr. President will address the membership on the year in closing, and preside over the elections as his last official act. The Presidents Awards will be given. There will also be special mention to other notable volunteers within the club.

Elections

The following club members have volunteered to run in the upcoming election on Friday, April 21. All are members in good standing in the Atlanta Astronomy Club. Any other club members, who may wish to be placed into nomination, will need to do so at the night of the election, with nominations made from the floor.

President	Ken Poshedley
V.P. Programs	Eugenia Abbey
V.P. Observing	Gil Shilcut
Treasurer	Sharon Carruthers
Corresponding Sec.	Peter Macumber
Recording Sec.	Art Zorka
Board of Directors (3 positions open):	Tom Faber, Richard Blackburn, Bear Simmons, Bob Smith

The Atlanta Astronomy Club Inc., the South's largest and oldest astronomical society, meets at 8:00 p.m. on the third Friday of each month at Emory University's White Hall or occasionally at other locations (check the hot line for details). Membership is open to all. Annual dues are \$25 (\$10 for students). Discounted subscriptions to Astronomy, and Sky & Telescope magazines are available.

Hot Line: Timely information on the night sky and astronomy in the Atlanta area is available on a twenty-four hour basis on the

Atlanta Astronomy Club hot line: **770-621-2661**.

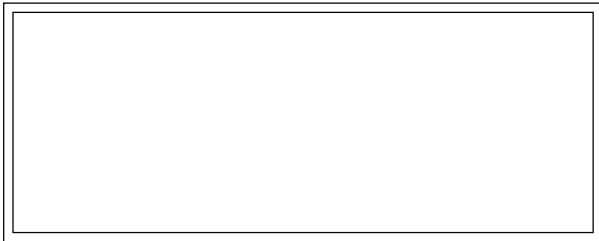
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FIRST CLASS



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