

The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club

Es tablished 1947

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Editor: Peter Macumber

June 1999

From the Prez

By Ken Poshedly

Thus begins another AAC club year, and with it comes a slight changing of the guard. Check the list of officers, directors and chairmen elsewhere in this issue of *Focal Point*. Some folks have chosen to leave office and take a break, some are new to office, and others who held one office last year have moved to a different office this year to try a new challenge.

To the new members of the board, I look forward to working with you.

To those who have chosen to leave office, I thank you for the hard work you've done. Phil Sacco, I swear I don't know where you got the energy and inertia over the past year; was it the kind of coffee you drink? From your spirited discussions of a new, improved calendar to your truly informative segments at the general membership meetings on constellation mythology to your unabashed support for any and all observing programs, you're a hard act to follow. As the new prez, I plan to consult with you — both on club matters and the coffee you drink.

Rich Jakiel, while you've chosen to leave the program chairman position, you've decided to put your talents to work as new team member on the Observing Committee. Long-time members already know your skills as a sketch-artist and your work in bringing to us some top-notch speakers; and let's not forget that you also served as the *Focal Point* editor in years past, too. The Observing Committee will do well with you onboard.

And Tom Crowley, I thank you for your visible support as chairman of the club's board of directors (when Art Russell was president) and your more discreet support with opinions, guidance and equipment assistance. And, by the way, welcome back to Atlanta from your work-assignment in New York City!

Here's looking forward to a smooth and productive year.

From the Observing Chair

By Gil Shillcutt

With the changing of the guard, a few changes are in the air. I hope you all like the new structure. I'm excited about the coming year, and look forward to the AAC accomplishing a lot. Several new positions have been appointed since the Observing Chair has become such a big job. The new positions are:

Villa Rica Coordinator — Keith Burns

Keith's job will be to make sure that the observatory and grounds are taken care of. Keith will make sure that when you go out to VR, the observatory is ready to go. We're going to have a new checkout procedure in place soon.

Once it is in place, you'll need to contact either Keith, myself, or Ken Poshedly to get access to the site.

Charlie Elliott Coordinator — Phil Sacco

Phil's job will be one of the more difficult in the club this year. Not only will he be responsible for the new 24" scope; he'll also be working with CEWMA to set up scheduling and to promote our goal of a permanent observatory at the site. As with Villa Rica, if you want access to the 24" scope, you'll first need to be checked out on the scope. After that, you'll need to contact Phil, myself, or Ken Poshedly to get access to the scope for the evening.

Orientation Director — Art Zorka

The scheduling of the public open house and orientation will be changed to reflect the changing needs of the club. Check the schedule, published elsewhere in this issue, for dates and times for the Public Open House and Orientation (POHO) will be held on a quarterly basis at Villa Rica. These are being changed to be big events so that we can work with large groups of people.

Training Director — Rich Jakiel

Rich has long supported the cause of the club delivering club-specific training and the development of coursework for the purpose. This training will be specific to the club's equipment, and will be required coursework for checkout and/or certification to use the club's equipment. The training will be held on a quarterly basis. Checkouts will be held separately, and will be scheduled with Rich and/or those that he specifies as his assistants. We'll be doing a lot of training in the next couple of months so that all that want to get checked out will have the chance.

Astro Techniques Director — TBA

I'm still looking for someone to deliver on this section (might be myself in the interim). The will be general astronomy topics, geared towards learning about advanced astronomical techniques, such as astrophotography, drawing, observing with filters, CCDs, etc. These training sessions will be held on a quarterly basis.

AL Observing Club Mentors — TBA

I'm looking for volunteers from the current crop of those that have received various AL Observing Club certificates. Individuals that can help people get their pins. If you're interested, please contact me, and I'll get you set up. This is a great way to get involved in working with folks that are new to astronomy, and with the club leadership.

ATM Chair — Tracy Wilson

Tracy has been doing a fantastic job with the biweekly ATM workshop, and has said that he wants to continue this. The biweekly Saturdays will be the official ATM meetings. The schedule for these meetings is published elsewhere in this issue.

Astro-Imaging Chair — Geoff Powers

Geoff has been working on astrophotography for the better part of the last couple of years, and has learned some neat tricks for getting impressive results without having to spend a whole lot of money. We'll be running the ATM meetings until completion of the CCD Cookbook Camera that I've been working on this year, and when completed in August, Geoff's AstroImaging sessions will take over.

As you can see, we've got some fun and interesting things going on this year, and some folks that really know their stuff that can help you get there too. Please call or email me or any of the above individuals if you want to participate. It's going to be great!!

Astronomical League Spotlight: The Messier Binocular Club

There is a line in my copy of Phil Harrington's book. It simply says that two eyes are better than one. Now this is clear to anyone who has done any observing. This time we part ways with the telescope. Pick up that pair of binoculars you have laying about. Whether you are a seasoned observer or new to astronomy, this list is for you. See those Messier objects in a new way.

There is no great mystery surrounding the Messier Binocular Club. The Telescopic Messier Club is the list used. The objective is to observe 50 of the 110 objects on the Messier list. You use a pair of binoculars instead of a telescope. The astronomical league will award you a pin and certificate upon successful completion of the club. Binocular size does not matter either. You can use anything from a pair of 7 X 35's to the huge 11 x 80's.

The list is broken down into two appendices. Objective size of your binoculars determines whether or not you use appendices (A or B). Appendix A is for objectives between 20 mm and 50 mm (7 X 35, 7 X 50, and 10 X 50). B is for objectives between 56 mm and 80 mm (11 X 80). The objects are listed in three categories. The categories are easy, tougher, and challenge. Note that there are only 76 Messier objects listed in Appendix A. There are 102 objects in Appendix B. So not all the Messier objects are visible in a pair of binoculars. You have to observe 42 objects from the easy category and 8 objects from the tougher category to qualify for Appendix A. All the objects can come from the easy category to qualify for appendix B. You can pick more objects from the tougher or challenge categories for either appendix if you want.

Upon observing an object, your log should contain the following information. This information is for each object observed. Object name, time (of observation), date (of observation), binocular used, seeing conditions of the sky, and a short note of what you see. Make sure that any logs you submit include the name of the club on them, our club name, and binoculars used.

Once you finish observing 50 objects, you can submit your log to one of two people. You can give your logs to the Gill Shillcutt who is the new observing chair of the AAC. Look for his email address and telephone number listed in the focal point. Two is to submit your observing log to the Messier Binocular Club Coordinator who is John Wagoner. His mailing address is John Wagoner, AL Binocular Coordinator, 1409 Sequoia Drive, Plano, TX 75023. You can telephone John (1-214-422-1886 or email him (stargate@gte.net). While I can't submit your observing logs, I can answer any questions you have. I can also be contact by either telephone (770-427-1475) or email

(Keith_B@Bellsouth.net).

Here are a few suggestions that might help your observing experience when dealing with binoculars. The use of a tripod will make the observing experience much more enjoyable. Anyone who has tried to hold a pair of binoculars will know what I mean. Stars become lines instead of points. Now if a tripod is not in your budget then try one of these other suggestions. A cheap folding chair that you can lay flat on works. Several club members have rested their binoculars up against the top of the car and even the top of a fence post. The easiest thing to do is to lay a blanket or sheet on the ground. Then lay down on it and scan the skies with the binoculars. Comfort and your ability to hold the binoculars steady is the key to successful and enjoyable observing.

Binoculars provide a much larger field of view than a telescope does. Large extended objects that are difficult to see in a telescope come into view with binoculars. This is what makes binoculars so great for viewing. Some objects that look great in a pair of binoculars include M-45 (Pleiades), M-44 (Beehive Cluster), M-31 (Andromeda), M-101, or Collinder 399 (Coathanger). With a telescope, you can only see a small part of these. Galaxies M-33 and M-101 have another problem when it comes to telescopes. Although they are bright, their light is spread out over a large area making it difficult to see them in a telescope. A pair of binoculars gives you the ability to see them since you are looking at larger area and seeing more of the light from the objects. While a telescope provides you with close up detailed views of objects, binoculars give you a better general view. Binoculars also allow you the ability to observe with two eyes instead of one. Therefore, you double your light grasping capability.

Copies of the Messier Binocular program are available from the following sources. One is to download the club from the Astronomical League website (www.astroleague.org). Second, the American Association of Amateur Astronomers has provided a wonder service by posting certain Astronomical League programs as PDF's. The PDF's are at this website address (www.corvus.com). Third is to contact either Gil Shillcutt or Keith Burns to get copies of the list.

Most people's first piece of observing equipment is a pair of binoculars. You can do much observing with them. When I started in this hobby, I went out and bought a cheap pair of 7 X 35 Bushnell binoculars. I've upgraded to bigger equipment since then, but I still have the binoculars. It's always fun to take a pair of binoculars outside and scan the Milky Way.

Calendar of Events - New Program

June 19 — Training, 6:00pm, VR

This is the first of our Training sessions on AAC club equipment. Information required for checkout on the club's Walter F. Barber, Jr. Observatory, including the 20", the 10" Cave, the 8" Maksutov, and the various loaner scopes.

June 19 — ATM Workshop, 9:00am, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for the ATM Workshop. The ATM group is building a 16" f7 dobsonian, and is continuing work on the mirror. Various other scopes are also in progress. Come find out how to build your own scope, or bring your own materials for expert instruction with Tracy Wilson.

June 26 — Training, 6:00pm, VR

Training session on AAC club equipment. Information required for checkout on the club's Walter F. Barber, Jr. Observatory, including the 20", the 10" Cave, the 8" Maksutov, and the various loaner scopes.

July 2 — ATM Meeting, 8:00pm, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for ATM discussions. This month, we will be continuing work on the CCD Camera Cookbook. This is an astronomical CCD Camera that is being built by Gil Shillcutt. The interfaces completed, we'll be continuing work by putting together the camera head.

July 3 — ATM Workshop, 9:00am, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for the ATM Workshop. The ATM group is building a 16" f7 dobsonian. Various other scopes are also in progress. Come find out how to build your own scope, or bring your own materials for expert instruction with Tracy Wilson.

July 10 — Dark Sky, Dusk, Brasstown Bald

Remember this one? This was one of the club's most popular outings last year. The AAC's monthly Dark Sky event will be held at Brasstown Bald's visitor parking area. The site offers skies so dark, several members packed it in for the night when the Milky Way rose, because it looked like a bank of clouds had moved in!! We'll try to keep interlopers with headlights to a minimum this time. This is a members-only event.

July 17 — POHO, 6:00pm, Villa Rica

Public Open House and Orientation. This is sure to be a big event. We'll need help with refreshments, parking, and scopes. Come and show what you've learned with the public. Volunteer's meeting will begin at 6:00. The event will be well publicized throughout the Atlanta area, so we expect that there will be a large public attendance.

July 17 — ATM Workshop, 9:00am, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for the ATM Workshop. The ATM group is building a 16" f7 dobsonian. Various other scopes are also in progress. Come find out how to build your own scope, or bring your own materials for expert instruction with Tracy Wilson.

July 24 — Quarterly Work Party at VR. 9:00am

The call is out for all members to attend!! This quarterly work party will be dedicated to getting the new composting toilet installed, as well as work on the annex. We'll have a bobcat on site to do some of the heavy work, so come on out and see if we can avoid tearing down the old buildings. (Come and contribute to the new toilet. *ed*)

July 24 — Training, 6:00pm, CEWMA

Training session on AAC club equipment. Information required for checkout on the club's 24" Tectron telescope at Charles Elliott Wildlife Management Area. Meet at the Visitor's Center.

July 31 — ATM Workshop, 9:00am, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for the ATM Workshop. The ATM group is building a 16" f7 dobsonian. Various other scopes are

also in progress. Come find out how to build your own scope, or bring your own materials for expert instruction with Tracy Wilson.

August 6 — ATM Meeting, 8:00pm, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for ATM discussions. This month, we'll be continuing work on the CCD Camera Cookbook. This is an astronomical CCD Camera that is being built by Gil Shillcutt. We should be ready to complete the camera, and may get to first light!

August 7 — Training, 6:00pm, VR

Training session on AAC club equipment. Information required for checkout on the club's Walter F. Barber, Jr. Observatory, including the 20", the 10" Cave, the 8" Maksutov, and the various loaner scopes.

August 13-15 — Dark Sky, Perseids, Zombie Party @ Cox Field

This August, the Perseid Meteor shower coincides with the new moon. What more reason do we need to hang out for a couple of days with our friends of the Flint River Astronomy Club?!? Join us at Cox Field, for beautiful summer and dark southern skies. This is a members-only event.

August 14 — ATM Workshop, 9:00am, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for the ATM Workshop. The ATM group is building a 16" f7 dobsonian. Various other scopes are also in progress. Come find out how to build your own scope, or bring your own materials for expert instruction with Tracy Wilson.

August 21 — Astro Techniques, 6:00pm, VR

General astronomy training on advanced topics. Topic to be announced, but it WILL be worth your time.

August 28 — ATM Workshop, 9:00am, ASC Bradley Observatory

Meet us at Agnes Scott College's Bradley Observatory for the ATM Workshop. The ATM group is building a 16" f7 dobsonian. Various other scopes are also in progress. Come find out how to build your own scope, or bring your own materials for expert instruction with Tracy Wilson.

AAC Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 1, 1999.

Several Documents were provided:

Agenda with Budget, Observing Chair Organization, Observing Schedule, Building Stars, Bylaws, Member's Handbook

Attending Officers & Members:

Ken Poshedly, Eugenia Abbey, Gil Shillcutt, Sharon Caruthers, Peter Macumber, Phil Bracken, Bear Simmons, Tracy Wilson, Tom Faber, Art Russell, Bob Smith, Rich Jakiel, Lenny Abbey, Chrissy Mondell, Richard Blackburn,

Keith Burns, Eric Shelton, Stephen Blalock

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:45pm

The first order of business was new President Ken Poshedly's General Remarks.

The recent scope discussions on the listserv. To this end, Ken invited his insurance agent to present options to the club.

* Committees need to be made up of groups of people, rather than individual people. For committee heads, if resources are required, please ask for help.

* Ken will need to meet with Richard Blackburn, the dark site committee chair, to set goals for the year.

Comments included (Richard Blackburn)

- * Member handbook requires updates.
- * A welcome letter from Ken needs to be written.
- * New dues structure (when determined) needs to be included.

Second order of business: Election of Chairman of the Board

Nominees: Bob Smith, Ken Poshedly, Phil Bracken

Bob Smith was elected.

Next order of business was a presentation by John Moore, an independent insurance agent.

- * AAC presented history of club, liabilities and desired coverages.
- * Mr. Moore outlined the principles of coverage:

Liability, Medical, Property, including physical hazards and removeable assets.

* Expected rates:

\$356.00 for liability (all club functions), \$90.00 for 24" Tectron scope

* Coverages would include members at all club functions, officers as named individuals in the policy.

* Point made that members should be required to sign a waiver releasing the club and officers.

Next order of business was the budget.

* Budget carried over from previous year, with expenses increasing for AL dues and Insurance coverage.

* Dues will need to be raised to maintain a balanced budget due to increased membership, member directory and newsletter.

* Discussion of budget ensued without conclusion

* Budget tabled until next board meeting (later scheduled for Tuesday, June 8, 7:30pm)

Next order of business was the reorganization of the Observing Chair and attendant committee.

* Schedule for Public Open House and Orientation (POHO) changed to be quarterly, rather than monthly.

* POHO to be well publicized

* Large number of public expected

* Rain dates should be included

* This will be a large event, to be worked by club members

* Other two months of quarter set aside for Training, Astro Techniques sessions.

— Motion made to accept the new organization. — Motion carried.

Final order of business was to schedule the next board meeting.

* Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, June 8, 7:30pm at Fernbank Science Center

* Agenda to include Budget and Dues

AAC Board Meeting Tuesday, June 8, 1999.

(DRAFT)

Meeting was held at Fernbank Science Center 6/8/99

Quorum present, meeting called to order by Chairman Bob Smith 7:30pm.

Board members: Bob Smith, Ken Poshedly, Sharon Carruthers, Peter Macumber, Art Zorka, Tracy Wilson, Phil Bracken, Gil Shillcutt, Bear Simmons, Tom Faber, Art Russell, Eugenia Abbey.

Also in attendance: Richard Blackburn, Keith Burns, Leonard Abbey.

Minutes of previous meeting had been e-mailed to board members and were accepted as posted.

President Poshedly welcomed members and guests and remarked about his excitement of the year to come. We have many activities and opportunities for growth, with increased benefit to members. He is looking forward to the club forging ahead.

A motion was made and seconded to dispense with the treasurer's report in lieu of our focus on the budget. Motion was carried.

Motion was made, seconded and carried to dispense with the corresponding Secretary's report.

The treasurer's report was made available to all for discussion. It was explained that it was a balanced budget based on known available funds and expected income, rather than a wish list of what we'd like to have. \$65 was to be added to the budget for taxes on the property at Villa Rica. The budget was unanimously accepted

Observing Chair Gil Shilcut presented his committee report. Primarily a report of monetary needs for the upcoming year. Gil referred not only to upkeep of VR but also to the improvements in progress. This included everything from the installation of the new rest room to the painting of the new dome, to the building of the training annex. Also mentioned was the care and storage of the 24" Dob. It was estimated that the Observing Committee would need approximately \$3,655 to complete its mission.

Phil Bracken pointed out that the proposed budget was insufficient if we are to meet the needs and requests of all the committees.

Leonard Abbey questioned the wisdom of building a training annex adjacent to the observatory due to rising heat interfering with viewing.

The question was called to approve or reject the accepted budget.

Chairman Bob Smith pointed out the consequences of each decision.

1. To approve meant that available funds would be allotted to each committee based on each individual issue being presented for approval.

2. To reject would send the budget back to committee and would probably take several months to hammer out.

In both cases available funds would vary based on dues and fund raising, neither of which were known or unknowable at this time.

A vote was taken. The budget was approved in a vote of 8 For, 1 against and 2 abstentions.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm

NOTES:

Postal regulations are requiring us to change the address of the club! Please use the following address on all future mailings to the club.

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

If you have brochures or other literature, please correct the address.

Fundraising Opportunity

Mark Banks

In an effort to help the club raise money I have started a referral payment plan. I am a realtor with 20+ years experience. I have found that the best source of clients has always been personal referrals.

If any club member utilizes my services, I will donate 5% of my commission to the club. This can be a significant sum. For a typical house in the Atlanta area this could be \$200 - \$1000 or more.

For more information or to make a referral, please give me a call. Mark Banks @ Re/Max Elite 770-642-4371.

Sidewalk Astronomy

Mark Banks

It's that time of year again when we get a lot of requests for stargazing events. We are always in need of volunteers to help out. You don't even need a scope. If you can just come out and talk to people, answer their questions about the night sky, it would be of great help.

The first of 4 Public stargazes was held Friday night May 28th at the Conyers Pavilion. Due to cloudy weather and competition from the local county fair, the crowd was small. Everyone there had a great time.

Some upcoming events:

Saturday June 26th - 830PM Conyers Pavilion

Friday July 23rd - 830PM Conyers Pavilion

Friday August 13th - 830PM Conyers Pavilion

Saturday August 14th - Norcross Cub Scouts

September (TBD) - Camp Twin Lakes, Rutledge GA.

Wednesday September 22nd - 800PM Delmall Retirement Com., Law

If you have any request for a stargaze or would like to volunteer, please give me a call. Mark Banks @ 404-257-2766

Focal Point

July Focal Point will be published on July 5th. Articles must be received by Sunday July 4th to be included.

Club Officers

Ken Poshedly	President	770-979-9842 <i>ken.poshedly@mindspring.com</i>
Eugenia Abbey	VP Program Chairman	404-634-1222 <i>eabbey@bellsouth.net</i>
Gil Shillcutt	VP Observing Chairman	404-467-1437 <i>Gil.Shillcutt@choicepointinc.com</i>
Sharon Carruthers	Treasurer	770-941-4640 <i>SCarruthers@NightSky.Org</i>
Peter Macumber	Corresponding Secretary	770-941-4640 <i>macumber@bellsouth.net</i>
Art Zorka	Recording Secretary	404-3251595 <i>magicart@mindspring.com</i>

Board of Directors

Bob Smith, Chairman	770-886-8191	<i>rsmith@mci.net</i>
Phil Bracken	770-941-6517	<i>philb@mindspring.com</i>
Tom Faber	770-923-6832	<i>tfaber@america.net</i>
Art Russell	404-373-4119	<i>artrussell@mindspring.com</i>
Bear Simmons	404-299-7511	<i>info2000@mindspring.com</i>
Tracy Wilson	770-270-9402	<i>tracy2@mindspring.com</i>

Standing Committees

Richard Blackburn	Dark Sky Site Search	770-801-9759 <i>rblackburn@mindspring.com</i>
Mark Banks	Sidewalk Astronomy	404-257-2766
Stephen Blalock	AAC Webmaster	770-948-9820. <i>stephen.blalock@gtri.gatech.edu</i>
Tom Buchanan	Light Pollution	770-521-2136
Lynn Crowley	Beginner's Contact & Socials	404-233-6886
Julie Moore	Hospitality and Refreshments	770-242-6735
Ken Poshedly	Publicity	770-979-9842 <i>ken.poshedly@mindspring.com</i>
Chrissy Mondel	Ladies of the Night ... Sky	404-296-6332 <i>chrissy@NightSky.Org</i>

NightSky.Org

The Focal Point is available in color online in PDF format.

Visit **NightSky.Org/AAC** on the web. In a private sub-web, the past year of Focal Points can be found. Check it out. If it works for you, send me an e-mail and I will stop sending you a copy snail-mail. It will also save the club a dollar. The Focal-Point web can be entered by using the Username of **AAC** and a password of **polaris**. These names are case sensitive! Type AAC in capitals, type polaris in lower case.

If you have any other questions or problems, let me know. Peter



Newletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

FROM:

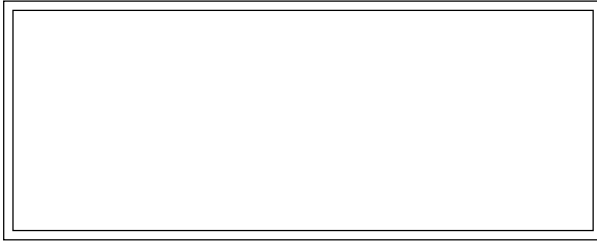
Peter Macumber - macumber@BellSouth.Net

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

Atlanta Astronomy Club
PMB 305

3595 Canton Road A9
Marietta, GA 30066

FIRST CLASS



Atlanta Astronomy Club

Friday, June 18th

Emory University, Geoscience Building

Our June meeting will be held on June 18 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium of Emory University's Geoscience building. Note: **This is a new location, which we will be using during the summer while White Hall is renovated.**

Our speaker will be Bob Fried, of Flagstaff, Arizona.

Bob, a former president of the AAC, is the epitome of the amateur-turned-professional astronomer. Many members will remember his talk to us two years ago, in which he described the construction of his observatory, and his selection of a site for it. This month, he will describe the research he has participated in – research which has resulted in over 60 papers in professional journals.

Read about Bob's work on page 94 of the June issue of *Sky & Telescope*. Then come to the June meeting and hear about it in person.



Bob Fried's Braeside Observatory in Flagstaff

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**.

Internet Home Page: <http://stislpb.gtri.gatech.edu/astrotxt/atlaastro.html>

Subscribe to the Atlanta Area Astronomers Mailing List!

Send SUBSCRIBE AAA-LIST Your Name to LISTSERV@SKYWATCHER.DORM.ORG

For further information send an e-mail to Eric Shelton shelton2@bellsouth.net