From the President’s Cushy Chair: A Look Back

By Ken Poshedly

Well, folks, the show’s about over. In a few days, the reigns of office will be passed over to yet another crew of AAC officers and several new board members.

All in all, it has been a good year for the club:

* Even with the usual drop-off of those who choose to leave the club, we still have a pretty nice net gain. The total number of memberships was just over 390 in mid-April; guesstimate how many of those memberships include couples who actively enjoy the hobby and the club, and it’s safe to say the AAC probably numbers somewhere near or over 500 persons.

* The club’s new 24-inch Tectron Dobsonian reflector has been getting one heck of a workout and lots of admiration from the masses. I understand the lines were long at its station at the PSSG. Observing Chairman Gil Shillcutt had lots to do with this.

* The club’s Amateur Telescope Making group purred along beautifully under the tutelage of master scope craftsman Tracy Wilson. Lots of photons to be caught shortly after completion of the newest batch of mirrors from his students.

* The programs over the past year again showed that we covered pretty much all the bases, with talks ranging from pure research with a personal observatory to obtaining some of the most beautiful astrophotos seen anywhere. Let Eugenia Abbey know what YOUR favorite program was.

* Our own newsletter, Focal Point, continues to provide the most and the best club and related material one can find. The growth of this publication as an “e-journal” — complete with sound — is the result of much hard work by Peter Macumber.

* The founding of an eastern chapter of the AAC at the Charlie Elliot Wildlife Management Area southeast of Covington offers organized club activities to a large concentration of astro-buddies who live perhaps a tad too far from our regular meeting site and observing locations. It was Phil Sacco — he who never sleeps — who shepherded this project from the get-go. Surely Phil would be a rich man today if he had been paid for all the many hours he donated to this project alone. But the club is richer today thanks to Phil’s work. Someday, Phil’s surname will be included in dictionaries as a synonym for “extended hours of hard work”, much like cramming for exams: “I’m gonna Sacco this project until it’s done right.”

* The club continues to explore new community liaisons and is studying a possible arrangement with the Boy Scouts for use of Camp Woodruff for some observing activities. Our own John Lentini is active with both groups and he knows what each side wants.

* Our Sidewalk Astronomy events have surely surprised a number of folks. First, those who didn’t think there were that many astronomy folks out there, and second, those who didn’t even know there is an astronomy club. Thanks to Mark Banks for ably managing this program.

* Visitors to the site of our Walter F. Barber Jr. Observatory at Villa Rica can now rest assured that their health and safety have been looked after with the addition of a considerably larger shelter building. I’m proud to have been the major “instigator” of this project and humbly accept the unofficial name for the building: “The Po-Shed”.

* The club’s dark site fund received its biggest infusion of capital yet following the recent Peach State Star Gaze. With just over 290 registrations and a couple of no-shows, the event netted just under $7K.

And so much more has been done by so many other people. We are truly lucky to have the high caliber of volunteers that have stepped forward. Whether it’s cutting the grass at Villa Rica or seeing to it that mail is forwarded in a timely manner or that other more mundane tasks are tended to, I thank you.

What of next year? From what I’ve learned so far, we’ll do just fine, and probably even better with your next set of “Fearless Leaders.” Some old faces, some new faces, but folks who have your welfare at heart any way you look at it.

See you on May 12.
Ladies of the Night...Sky at Tallulah Gorge

By Keith Burns

The forecast for Saturday didn’t look good at all. Most people would have seen the forecast and cancelled any outdoor events. Of course, we wouldn’t do that. It’s more fun getting rained on. So that is how the excursion to Tallulah Gorge started out. Joanne and I were to meet the Macumbers at their house. From there a caravan would make the trek to the Gorge. It was 10:35 A.M. when I arrived. Of course, Peter and Sharon were ready to go and waiting. We had to wait for a late Joanne. The looming rain on the radar screen also discouraged us from leaving for an hour. Finally about 11:45 A.M. we left. The ride was long and boring. I had 95% of my equipment in the cab of the truck just in case it rained. The aurora scope was home but I brought the 6-inch Schmidt-Newtonian telescope instead. Compared to the other folks, I hardly had anything with me.

We arrived at the Tallulah Gorge state park about 1PM and we headed for the visitor’s center. Karla who was the lady that arranged the astronomy night in the park was surprised to see us. She expected us to call and cancel the event. Like I said, not us. After making sure all the arrangements for the evenings events were set up, we headed for the campground. It started to rain before we got there. Joanne and I decided to wait before we set up our campsite. Peter and Matthew went ahead and set up their tents. Whenever it rains, it seems that Peter is always standing out in it. At least that is my observation. I could be wrong about that. Finally Joanne caved in and set up her mini tent. It’s amazing how lavish such a tent can be. I didn’t know you can put an exercise room, pool, bedroom, kitchen, and study inside one. Once there was a break in the rain, I set up the Hillary

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Bradley Notes

What’s All that Noise on the Hill?

Chris De Pree, Department of Physics & Astronomy

For the first time since its dedication in June 1950, the Bradley Observatory is in the midst of a major renovation. The addition to the Observatory will be located in the former parking lot behind the building, and the façade of the building (as seen from McDonough St. to the west) will be essentially unchanged. Inside the old shell, however, the building is being transformed.

A New Planetarium: Seating up to 70 students and guests, and with a Zeiss ZKP-3 planetarium projector located at the center, the new planetarium will serve both as a state-of-the-art astronomy classroom and location of the Open House lecture series. On cloudy nights, students will even be able to set up and align telescopes under our artificial sky.

An Atmospheric Research Facility: In conjunction with the Georgia Tech Research Institute, students and faculty at ASC will use a LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) system to probe for the presence and abundance of pollutants in the skies above Atlanta. Data will be used to model the movement of these pollutants across the city.

A Student Research Area: Junior and senior level majors in the department will carry out astronomical research and remote observing in conjunction with astronomy faculty on the workstations located in this area. A renovated photography dark room will be located here as well.

General Use College Classroom: The former auditorium on the north side of the building, complete with wooden stage, will be made available as a general use college classroom. Standard technology items (projection screen, computer, white boards, etc.) will be installed. The classroom will seat up to 34 students at desks or up to 70 when configured for a musical performance.

Modernized Dome Area: The Beck Telescope will be housed in a modernized dome area that will have a solar-powered backup battery system to both rotate the dome and open and close the shutter. Images taken with the telescope will be able to be transmitted in real time to the planetarium and to monitors set up in the foyer area.

A New Observing Plaza: Night lab telescopes will be set up on a new 30 foot diameter circular observing plaza located in front of the Observatory. Students will use lightweight Meade ETX-EC90 telescopes set up on field tripods.

Finally, a “night garden” will be located to the north of the building in front of the new planetarium addition, and the lighting around the Observatory has been optimized for observing and student safety. The new, low lights will provide as dark an environment as possible for observing. You’ll hear more about the dedication of the building in the fall—we have many exciting events planned, so stay tuned.

And for all of you students who are wondering: Yes, the building will be air-conditioned.

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Ladies of the Night...Sky at Tallulah Gorge

By Keith Burns

The forecast for Saturday didn’t look good at all. Most people would have seen the forecast and cancelled any outdoor events. Of course, we wouldn’t do that. It’s more fun getting rained on. So that is how the excursion to Tallulah Gorge started out. Joanne and I were to meet the Macumbers at their house. From there a caravan would make the trek to the Gorge. It was 10:35 A.M. when I arrived. Of course, Peter and Sharon were ready to go and waiting. We had to wait for a late Joanne. The looming rain on the radar screen also discouraged us from leaving for an hour. Finally about 11:45 A.M. we arrived. The ride was long and boring. I had 95% of my equipment in the cab of the truck just in case it rained. The aurora scope was home but I brought the 6-inch Schmidt-Newtonian telescope instead.

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tent as we call it. I covered the top of the tent with a tarp and put plastic under the floor. This little bit of information is for later in the story.

The rain started again and we went to work setting up a covered area over the picnic table at the Macumber's campsite. The skies seemed to open up and pour a river of water upon us. There were occasional flashes of lightening and sounds of thunder. The rain would lighten up for a minute only to intensify again. About 5:00 P.M. there was talk that we would be rained out but I reassured everyone the rain would end. The skeptics were giving me a hard time. As the time was approaching 6:00 P.M., I was beginning to have doubts myself. I had after all believed the forecast that gave us the best weather for that night. I may not be realistic but I liked the approach. At 6:00 P.M. the rain ended and there were breaks in the cloud cover to our west.

We left the center about 6:30PM and began to set up the equipment both inside and outside. Sharon and Joanne worked on the slide show they were going to do. Peter and I set up telescopes just outside the main doors on the front patio. About 6:45PM I looked up and noticed that the clouds were almost completely gone. I set up the 6-inch telescope while Peter set up the 12 Newtonian telescope. The Moon was visible in the sky along with Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

The talk ended about 7:30 P.M. Sharon and Joanne brought out the six or so people who had gone in to listen to the talk. Planets and the moon were the most interesting objects to view. I did point the scope at several star clusters and the Orion nebula. Clouds would occasionally move in and block the view for a minute. Most questions were about which constellations were up. So we did a mini tour of the late winter and early spring sky. Both Sharon and Joanne used their expertise in astronomy to answer questions. Even with the moon up, there were more stars visible in Orion then we are use to seeing. The park does have street lights and they are the right kind to. The only problem we had is that one of them was only 30 feet from us. So we had to move over to a darker area of the parking lot in order to see the sky. About 9:30PM we packed up the telescopes. All our visitors had already left.

Back at the campground we cooked steaks for supper. That’s what I call roughing it. The wind was blowing hard by then. The skies also clouded over. It was cold to. We ate late and went to bed soon after.

All night the wind was howling through the woods. Would my tent be there in the morning? Would I be there? Those were the questions running through my mind. I’m sure the others were thinking the same about themselves. I woke up in the morning to find the tent still there. I also found a small lake in the bottom of my tent. The only thing that kept me dry was the rubber mat I was sleeping on. The air was cold. The wind still blowing. How dare winters return to Georgia? He did. It was a winter hat and heavy jacket type this morning. For the Canadians, it was a warm day. Do you want to wear a short sleeve shirt? Eh. The sun was shining and the skies were clear. Of course, it’s always clear on Sunday. After breakfast we started to break down the campsite. It wasn’t til about 12:30PM that finished the task.

This trip included an interesting mix of people. We had Peter the soaked. Sharon was the group skeptic and speaker. Matthew was the quiet one(most of the time). David (the restless one) was constantly on the move. Tom and Kat were the invisible ones. Joanne was the sinus sufferer. Oooohhh man, does my head hurt. Of course, she was the super assistant in the talk. As for myself, well you are going to have to read on to find out.

Back to the visitor’s center we went. After a visit with Karla, we signed up to go hiking down into the gorge. Sharon, Joanne, David, and I decided to take the hike. Peter and Matthew stayed behind. The trail is short but filled with many grand views of the gorge below. Pretty to look at from a distance for some and close up for others. I preferred the distant view. Hint, hint! I hated walking across the bridge but it was the only way to get to the south end of the gorge. The fact that it is a five-lane road bridge made of steel and concrete was not much of a reassurance. So quickly I crossed and waited for the others. Flowers were blooming along the trail and the local wildlife was making its presence known.

We reached the stairs. Now only 600 steps to go before we reach the bottom. David was first down followed by the ladies. I was the last and slowest one. It wasn’t the hard work but the fact that there was such a deep drop to the gorge below. The hand rail became my new best friend. The ladies found this entertaining to see. Finally after what seemed like an eternity we reached the bottom of the stairway.

The view is spectacular to say the least. We had to climb out onto a rock legend in order to see Hurricane Falls located about 30 feet up the river. Sharon, Joanne, and David were already out on the legend when I got there. I joined them. Hurricane Falls drops 96 feet and ends at the right side of the river crashing into the gorge wall. Up in the sky above us was the crescent moon. The moon was one day shy of first quarter. Between the moon overhead, the gorge sides (and above), and the trees surrounding us at the bottom, this would have made a cool picture in one of the astronomy magazines. The truth is that we climbed to the bottom of the gorge just to view the moon overhead. Okay, I said it. Who said you can’t do astronomy in the daytime at the bottom of a gorge?

David successfully crossed the river and made a return trip without getting wet. The rest of us decided not to do that. I was tempted to do it. The cold feel of the water made me change my mind. The trip back up the stairs was much easier for me. As long as I didn’t turn around and look down. I only made that mistake twice. David scurried up the stairs. I followed him much fast this time. Sharon and Joanne brought the rear. Is that a little steep Joanne? After reaching the top of the stairs, we headed down the trail to see the last three overlooks. At one of the overlooks there was a small stream on the north rim of the gorge that cascaded down the walls. Sunlight produced a rainbow.

We headed back to the visitor’s center parking lot. Along the way we discussed the different types of phobias people can have. It was an interesting subject matter to be discussing. The ladies had to torture me one more time by stopping on the bridge and looking over the railing. Of course, they asked if I wanted to take a look. I declined and continued on. Back at the visitor’s center Peter and Matthew were wandering around. Another fifteen minutes visit with the ladies there and we left for Atlanta. Any weekend observing trip would not be complete without a stop at either Wendy’s or Waffle House. We stopped at Wendy’s for a short time.
**Teaching Astronomy at Summer Camp**

*By John Lentini johnlentini@yahoo.com*

We are close to a deal with the Scouts that will allow all AAC Members to use the Woodruff Scout Reservation any time they want to take advantage of the exceptionally dark skies there.

The deal is essentially this: The Scouts let the Club use their dark skies, and the Club helps the Scouts learn Astronomy.

We need to provide the Scouts with astronomers on SEVEN TUESDAY NIGHTS in June and July. I need Club members to volunteer to help.

The Scouts will provide dinner and a cabin to sleep in, so you don’t have to camp unless you want to. You will teach a small class (probably no more than 20 boys) about summer constellations, then show them some things through the telescope.

The great thing about scouts is that they have been up playing hard since 7 AM, and usually conk out by 10 PM. You can then have the rest of the night to yourself under the darkest skies in the state.

Woodruff is 100 miles from the intersection of I-285 and I-75. I will provide driving directions and any other assistance I can.

Please get in touch with me and sign up for one or two nights this summer, and help get the Scouts relationship with our Club off to a good start.

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**Membership Update**

This month’s new members, please welcome to the club:

- Paul & David Czachowski Lawrenceville
czachp00@dcor.state.ga.us
- Phil Danneman Roswell atlalbbsys@gw.total-web.net
- Brigitte Fessele Atlanta mrob@randomc.com
- Stephen Gelman Roswell BGelman@MINDSPRING.COM
- Lynda & Ken Gribek Clark’s Hill starry43@aol.com
- Brian Hanley Atlanta brigin@bellsouth.net
- Tom & Regina Harrison Atlanta tsh747@aol.com
- David Jacoby Gainesville djacoby@compuserve.com
- Rauna Long Snellville raunalong@hotmail.com
- Rebecca Long Tucker arlong@hcrc.org
- Rick McLees Atlanta rick_mclees@email.msn.com
- James & Melissa Norris Norcross jnorris@atlanta.glendayre.com
- Ken, Debora & Jonathan Ondracek Madison krypizza@aol.com
- Holly & David Roberts Duluth shanemscc@uno.com
- Tom & Jill Thomas Powder Springs jill.thomas@oca.gatech.edu
- Jerry D. Williams Hampton jdwilliams@mindspring.com
- Trevor Wine Smyrna tmw550@mindspring.com
- Matt, Susan, Jamie & Jacob Zimmer-Dauphinee Conyers mattz-d@mindspring.com

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**Goodbye, Mr. Elliott**

Mr. Charlie Elliott, hunter, forest ranger, first director of Georgia state parks (1937 - 1938), Game & Fish Commission director (1943 - 1948), author and inspiration for the “Mark Trail” comic strip, died on Monday May 1, 2000 of complications of cancer and heart disease.

He was Southern editor for Outdoor Life magazine in 1948 and outdoor columnists for the Constitution (1956 - 74) and JC (1985 - 87) Over his lifetime, he wrote several books on huntin’ and fishin’, and a biography of Robert Woodruff.

He is the only outdoor writer to have a state wildlife facility named in his honor, the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Management Center in his birthplace, Covington, GA.

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**VILLA RICA OBSERVATORY RENOVATION SAGA**

*Keith Burns, VR Observatory Coordinator*

Saturday April 22 we had a work party at the observatory. I want to thank the following people for taking a few hours or most of the day to help. Jerry Tarter, Ralph Bowman (and his wife), Peter, Sharon, (and Matthew) Macumber, Joanne Cirincione, John Lentini, Stef Whetstone, Karen Stiles, Gil Shillcutt, Charles (the memorial) Hinely, Chuck, Delaine Painter, Keith Burns, Andy Peltier and B. Vona all helped out. The following is a description of what has been done. A paint primer has been put on the new shed. The final coat of paint has been applied as of April 29th. The building looks great and I think everyone will be impressed when they see it. We still need to finish painting the exterior trim green. The roof of the Bowman dome has been fixed. A new layer of plastic sheeting was installed on the roof to stop the roof leaks. I not talking about regular plastic sheeting either. This is the stuff that is used on camper tops. It is made to take the weather. We need to finish putting in the new longer bolts that hold the upper slide roof track in place. It is only secured in two places right now. Last Saturday we discovered that a plate on the eight-inch Masutov telescope mount has cracked and broken. No doubt, it was do to temperature extremes, weight, and being made out of cheap metal. Ralph Bowman is working on a design for a piece to replace it. Unfortunately, the telescope is not usable.

The grass seed areas have been seeded and wheat straw placed on top. The new grassy areas are staked off and there is a layer of wheat straw over it now. Please stay out of this area. We have marked where the new parking spots will be and where the driveway will be to. This area will be graveled shortly.

The old warm up shed has been cleaned out again and reorganized. All the old bags of trash have been removed from the site. You will be surprised how much better the site looks now. Nothing like the old days.
The Focal Point is available in color online in PDF format. The free Adobe(R) Reader allows you to view, navigate, and print PDF files across all major computing platforms.

Visit NightSky.Org/aae 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 mizar. These names a case sensitive! Type AAC in capitals, type mizar in lower case.

Peter

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### Club Officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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### Board of Directors

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bob Smith, Chairman</td>
<td>770-886-8191 <a href="mailto:rsmith@mci.net">rsmith@mci.net</a></td>
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<td>Phil Bracken</td>
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### Standing Committees

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<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Blackburn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geoff Powers</td>
<td>Astro Imaging 770-454-6107</td>
</tr>
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### Calendar

#### May 27 -- Scouts Camp

**May 27 — Astro Techniques**

6:00pm, VR

#### June 3 — Dark Sky

CEWMA

#### June 15 -- General Meeting

Dr. Richard Schmude

#### June 24 — Training

6:00pm, VR

#### June 24 — CEWMA

Visitor Center. Part two of the ‘Universe Sampler’. Hand in those programs completed by participants. Subject and speaker to be announced. Constellations of the month: Bootes, Ursa Minor, Libra.

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### Woodruff Dark Sky Event, May 27

**By John J. Lentini, johnlentini@yahoo.com**

The Scouts would like to invite the Atlanta Astronomy Club to come and see the Dark Skies of Woodruff on May 27. So far, no AAC member who has been to Woodruff has failed to be impressed. This is your chance to find out why, and to do some observing under really dark skies.

We will be setting up on the Bee Field, the future home of the Woodruff Observatory. AAC members are invited to bring their tents and camp there. We will have some other; more developed camping facilities available, as well (picnic pavilions, latrines, running water), but those are a short drive away.

A number of Scout leaders, and possibly some Scouts will also be present for the observing session.

Woodruff is located between Blue Ridge and Blairsville. It is 100 miles from the intersection of I-75 and I-285. I can e-mail you detailed driving directions. Please contact John Lentini if you plan to attend.

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### ATM

**Tracy Wilson**

Since the temporary loss of their home at Bradley, the ATMers meet randomly but often. Watch the AACLIST and find out more from Tracy.
May Meeting

NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING DATE.

Our May meeting will be held at Emory University’s White Hall on Friday, **May 12 at 8:00 p.m.**

Our speaker will be former Club member, **Mitzi Adams**, of the Marshal Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Her subject will be:

**The Active Sun.**

Ms. Adams was a member of the AAC before she began her career as an astronomer. She was employed by Fernbank Science Center for a number of years.

She is currently assigned to the analysis of data from the Marshall Space Flight Center’s vector magnetograph. Analyses of these data produce insights into the changes of the solar magnetic field over a solar cycle.

In addition to research activities, Ms. Adams continues to be involved in education and public outreach activities which include tours of the solar observatory facilities, frequent presentations for local schools through MSFC’S LASER program, tutoring high school students, lectures at the college level, and presentations in the Von Braun Astronomical Society’s planetarium.

For a look at Mitzi Adams’ educational work:

http://science.nasa.gov/ssl/pad/solar/suntime/suntime.htm

The following is a list of candidates for the Election, to be held at the May meeting.

**President:** Sharon Carruthers  
**VP Program Chairman:** Alex Langoussis  
**VP Observing Chairman:** Rich Jakiel  
**Treasurer:** Peter Macumber  
**Corresponding Secretary:** Keith Burns  
**Recording Secretary:** Joanne Cirincione  

**Board Position:** John Lentini  
**Board Position:** Jim Moore  
**Board Position:** Tom Crowley
Elections

Elections for the Atlanta Astronomy Club officers and the board of directors will be held on Friday, May 12th, at the last General Meeting of the current term. Positions to be filled are president, 1st vice president (program chairman), 2nd vice president (observatory chairman), corresponding secretary, recording secretary, treasurer, and three openings on the board of directors. To submit your name or nominate someone else that you think will serve the club capably, contact the AAC electoral committee:

> Mark Banks, 404-257-2766, bank4@mindspring.com
> Rich Blackburn, 770-801-9759, rblackburn@mindspring.com