

The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club
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Editor: Keith Burns

FROM THE PREZ'S DESK

Sharon Carruthers

Greetings everyone! Welcome to the AAC's new year. My new executive and I are planning to make it a great one.

When I considered taking on the role of president, I saw the need for work in a few areas - improving the training program to get more people trained to use the Club's equipment; scheduling events at Woodruff to "test" its suitability as a potential dark site; finishing up the improvements at VR and turning the old "hothouse" into a computer room; and reaching out to other astronomy clubs and the public in new ways.

Just my luck that my executive handed me all these things on a silver platter!

Rich Jakiel, our Observing Chair, has a full slate of activities planned until Dec with plans to re-vamp the training and "Open Houses". Ralph Bauman has agreed to supervise the work to finish up the grounds at VR, to get the new warm-up shed up and running and to fix up the 20". Keith Burns has been working with VBAS, the Huntsville astronomy club, to arrange joint observing events. He and Carlos are trying to set-up a tour of their observatory AND the NASA space facilities (tentative date: August 12-13, so circle that weekend on your calendar). Joanne Cirincione has been working with the Friends of the Georgia State Parks to arrange for the LoN...S to put on sidewalk events at state parks in Georgia (Guys, you are included - as Keith Burns says "I'm an honorary lady"). They want to do a story on the LoN...S for their newsletter which will bring the AAC to the attention of a whole new audience.

While our May Dark Sky at Woodruff was a bust, weatherwise, all who attended were impressed by the field and facilities; and the Scout's eagerness to have us there. They are planning \$5 million in upgrades for this site over the next few years, adding to their outdoor activity programs. The AAC would be their astronomy program; in return we get a dark site dedicated to our Club use (and exposure to thousands of scouting families as potential members).

Alex Langoussis has committed to a speaker program that offers a wide range of topics: lunar, planetary deep sky and more.

Dan Ford donated computer equipment to the AAC which Stef Whetstone is assembling (remember Stef, Tab A in Slot B) to be installed at VR. (Dare I dream of the day when we would be doing CCD photography out at VR using the 20"?)

Our new chapter at CEWMA is off and running, thanks to the tireless efforts of Phil Sacco, bringing in 40 members to the AAC who may not have joined due to their distance from Atlanta. This is a model of how we can reach out to other regions around Atlanta.

Matt and Peter Macumber have already set-up our new AAC website (www.AtlantaAstronomy.Org) and Matt is cooking up some ideas for it. Keith Burns is "mooving" on some ideas of his own to improve the Focal Point.

Our unsung heroes who are continuing their positions are: Julie Moore, Refreshment; Mark Banks, Sidewalk Astronomy, and Tom Buchanan, Light Pollution Committee.

When we Club members get to fussin' and feudin' over trivial issues we tend to forget the great things that we are doing in so many areas. (Read the last issue of the Reflector to see how other clubs can't or don't offer as many opportunities as the AAC.) I am very proud to be associated with the AAC and the fine people who are its members. Let us all work to make it our best year yet.

Investigation of Planetary Nebulae

Richard W. Schmude, Jr., Associate Professor of Chemistry

A planetary nebulae is a dying star that is surrounded by a gas shell; generally this gas shell has a circular shape. Early astronomers believed that these circular gas shells were planets and were thus named "planetary nebulae". Understanding planetary nebulae will help astronomers learn more about how a star lives out its life.

During the past 12 months, Dr. Schmude has been using the 20-inch telescope out at Villa Rica to measure the brightness of three planetary nebulae, which are NGC 6210 (in Hercules), NGC 2392 (in Gemini) and M57 (in Lyra). The purpose of this work is twofold: 1) determine the intensities of different wavelengths of light that are given off by these nebulae and 2) combine brightness measurements with improved distance measurements to compute the total amount of light given off by these objects. In astronomy, the brightness of an object is given in "magnitudes". For example, the full moon has a magnitude of around -12.7 whereas the North Star has a magnitude of +2.1. The more positive a magnitude is the fainter is the object. The brighter planetary nebulae have magnitudes of around +8 to +9.

The Hubble Space telescope has allowed astronomers to compute approximate distances to some planetary nebulae. The approximate distances have uncertainties of around $\pm 30\%$. These distances along with accurate brightness measurements have allowed me to compute the total amount of light given off by NGC 6210 and NGC 2392. Both of these objects give off about 300-1000 times the amount of light that the sun gives off.

I am hoping to submit a paper in 2001 covering NGC 2392 and M57 measurements, one thing that I would like to include in this paper are pencil drawings of these two objects along with NGC 6210. The drawings and person making them will be acknowledged in the paper and in the talk.

Faint Fuzzy Forum of the AAC

By Richard Jakiel

It has been over 10 years since I last served in the position of observing chairman. Since that time, the club has grown from ~ 80 memberships to almost 400 today. In a similar manner, the AAC has expanded from one observing site at Villa Rica, to three primary sites (the others are at CEWC and Woodruff BSC). The role of Observing Chair was certainly a "one man band" before the mid- 1990's; today it is broad committee of many active members. It has become a position that has grown far too large for the single person to manage. Among those working with me are Steph Whetstone (training), Keith Burns (VR 'advisor'), Phil Sacco (CEWC liaison and chapter coordinator), John Lentini (BSA liaison), Mark Banks (sidewalk astronomy), Ralph Bowman (VR work coordinator) and the Ladies of the Night Sky. On May 20th, many of these and other members attended a planning meeting at Phil Sacco's place. The primary structure of the observing calendar was laid out for the next 6 months.

Major changes are in "the works" at both CEWC and Woodruff, and it should be an exciting year for all of us. Both Phil Sacco and John Lentini promise to keep us informed as things develop. Both the ATM and Astro-imaging groups appear to be on hold, hopefully these sections will be re-activated when the renovations at Bradley are completed.

2000- 2001 Schedule of Observing Events

Here is the upcoming schedule of observing events for the AAC for the next few months. Training sessions at Villa Rica and CEWC will be added when the dates are finally set. Of special notice are several events sponsored by the Ladies of the Night Sky (LNS). Thanks to the legwork done by Joanne Cirincione, the LNS will give talks (On the topic: Women in Astronomy) at several North Georgia State Parks. These are open AAC events and all members are encouraged to attend.

The dark sky events are scheduled to maximize the best seasonal sky conditions. Most of the deep-sky events are located in some of the best observing sites in Northern Georgia. The skies at Woodruff and Chiefland approach 7th magnitude and are among the best in the southeast. Some of the more distant events such as Chiefland (Fla.) and PARI (NC) have closer alternative locations co-scheduled. So if driving 5 ½ hours to Chiefland is too far, go to the closer site instead.

Scheduled Events: (still tentative)

June:

24th CEWC Chapter meeting, training at VR

July:

1st Fort Mountain (LNS)

22nd Tallula Gorge (LNS)

29th Brasstown Mtn. (deep-sky)

August:

5th Location to be determined (LNS)

19th CEWC Chapter Meeting

26th PARI, North Carolina - special deep-sky event. CEWC alternative

deep-sky site.

September:

4th Brasstown Mtn. (LNS)

22nd – 23rd "Zombie party" at CEWC

23rd AAC Open House at CEWC; training on 24-inch

30th Woodruff BSC – deep-sky event

October:

21st Villa Rica – Annual Picnic

27- 29 Chiefland, Florida – special deep-sky event.

28th Fort Payne, Ala. – alternative deep-sky event.

November:

4th Open House at Villa Rica

25th Woodruff BSC

From The Guy Who Edited This Newsletter

By Keith Burns

You would expect to hear something from me about this month's observing adventure. Lately I've been silent on the matter. Matter of fact the good observing nights have been few and far between. Those of us dedicated fools (and I'm only talking about certain individuals) usually get rained on or clouded out. We still manage to have a good time camping out in the fresh air. Our telescopes sit begging for some photons to hit their glass or mirrored surfaces. Even *bonvinus stargazus* stand in their fields waiting for that spectacular view. On occasions, the skies bring forth wonderful sights for those of us lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time. Soon this silent pen will pour forth with words of inspiration. Until then, stay tuned.

This is my first time doing the focal point. It's not that hard of a job to do. Everyone makes it sound like the ultimate death sentence. I disagree...for the moment. I'm having fun. Once I get the bugs out of the system, it will be even better. Of course, the famous software learning curve is real steep this month. If there are any mistakes, it's too late for me to do anything about it. Look for some interesting stuff in the coming months. Thanks to everyone who has sent me articles and pictures. The more members we have submit articles and pictures, the better this newsletter will be. Do you have an astronomy related story to tell, project you are working on, review of some product or book you have tried, or pictures you have taken? It can be serious or humorous. Send it to me via email or snail mail. My email and home address are on the back of this newsletter.

Contacting Dr. Schmude

Richard W. Schmude

Gordon College

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General Meeting May 12, 2000 (8:24p)

by Joanne Cirincione, Recording Secretary

Number in attendance: 60

Number of new members: 10

Our guest speaker was Mitzi Adams of the Marshal Space Flight Center in Huntsville, AL. She is also a former member of the AAC. Mitzi's talk was on "The Active Sun". It was a fun talk with short movies of the sun and a pop quiz with prizes (The Dynamic Sun – CDs)! There is an open house at the Space Center in Huntsville May 20 from 9:00am – 6:00 p.m.

Ken Poshedly, President, presented Dr. Ralph Buice with a framed picture of himself (Dr. Buice), Mr. & Mrs. Antonin Rukl and Mr. Walter Haas. (The photo was taken at the Jim Cherry Planetarium at the Fernbank Science Center a few days before the Rukls departed for their home in Prague and Mr. Haas departed for home in Las Cruces, New Mexico.)

Mark Banks, Sidewalk Astronomy, announced a few sidewalk astronomy dates: May 23-Winnona Park Elementary – Decatur. June 10-Cherokee High School, 6:00pm-Solar View and Star Gaze. Contact Mark at: bank4@mindspring.com or (404) 257-2766.

Joanne Cirincione, "Ladies of the Night...Sky", talked briefly about the Ladies' Tallulah Gorge "Women in Astronomy" presentation. Also announced was Friends of Georgia State Parks would like the Ladies to do more presentations around different state parks. Once the scheduling is complete we will announce the dates.

Stef Whetstone, Training, announced that we now have 30 members trained on the scopes. 18 are certified on the 24". Also announced, June 3 – AAC Dark Sky, Charlie Elliot Wildlife Management Area – Training on the 24" for members only. Training starts at 4:00p. June 24, telescope and equipment training at Villa Rica. (for members only).

Philip Sacco, CEWC Coordinator, announced that the next Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center (CEWC) Chapter Meeting would be held June 24. Also announced, the Marben Farm Road observing site will be CLOSED. You are not to use this field. A map with details was passed out at the meeting with the new location. For more information please contact Philip Sacco at (404) 296-6332; e-mail ppsacco@mindspring.com.

Keith Burns, Villa Rica Rep., announced that the new building is in place and has been painted. Grass seed has been planted. There is more improvements in the works.

Tom Buchanan, Light Pollution, announced that Cherokee County Commissioner submitted an ordinance to protect the skies around the Einstein Project.

We did have well over 25 members in attendance to start the nomination for new officers and board members so Mark Banks, Nominating Committee, announced the nominations for 2000-2001. They were:

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

Nominations were accepted!

Rich Jakiel, New Observing Chairman, announced an observing committee

planning meeting to get the observing schedule in place. It will be held at Philip Sacco's house on May 20th at 3:00pm.

Meeting was adjourned.

Board Meeting Minutes

By Joanne Cirincione

Thursday, May 25, 2000 Time 7:40pm

Location: Fernbank Science Center

Board Meeting #1 Year 2000-2001 term.

In Attendance:

Sharon Carruthers – President, Alex Langoussis – Program Chairman, Rich Jakiel – Observing Chairman, Peter Macumber – Treasurer, Keith Burns – Corresponding Secretary, Joanne Cirincione – Recording Secretary, Bear Simmons – Board Member, Tom Crowley – Board Member, Jim Moore – Board Member, John Lentini – Board Member, Matthew Macumber – Web Master, Philip Sacco – CEWC Coordinator, Ken Poshedly – PSSG Coordinator, and Julie Moore - Refreshments.

Points Covered:

President – Sharon Carruthers opened the meeting by asking for nominations for Chairman of the Board. Bear Simmons' name was thrown in the hat, and Bear accepted. The group then unanimously voted him in.

Treasurer, Peter Macumber - Items covered were: Peach State Star Gaze, Dark Sky Fund, Cash on hand, and What budget is left to work with this year? We work with a January – December budget year. In the past it was a June-May.

Observing Chairman, Rich Jakiel – Summarized the Observing Committee planning meeting: A tentative schedule was set which was posted on the listserv including Dark Sky events, Ladies of the Night...Sky events, Open Houses, and Picnics. 1st open house won't be until November due to renovations being made at Villa Rica Observatory. Keith Burns gave his report on what needs done at VR and will find out cost. Training Schedule will be posted when completed (Stef Whetstone). Work Party Schedule will be posted when completed (Ralph Bowman). Need more attendance. Need incentives. Loaner Scopes – A schedule will be created to loan out club scopes.

Corresponding Secretary, Keith Burns – Discussed what budget is need to run the Focal Point. Articles are ready. Debates on whether to receive on-line version or U.S. Mail version. Points made: E-mail version will have extra pages with color photos. It's is cheaper for the club to have the Focal Point on-line. Easier to access when on the road. Will encourage members to receive on-line version.

Program Chairman - Alex Langoussis – Announced some up coming speakers for June and July. Looking to do something different for our Christmas meeting. Wide variety of talks. More observers as speakers. More up-to-date notices on schedule changes.

Standing Committees Reports:

Refreshments – Julie Moore - Will continue to do refreshments for the club meetings. Donations help maintain the refreshment fund.

Ladies of the Night...Sky – Joanne Cirincione - Announced upcoming observing events: July 1 – Fort Mountain State Park and July 22 – Tallulah Gorge State Park. We hope to continue to add events on the observing calendar. These are not just for women; all is encouraged to come out. Slide presentation on a variety of topics, mainly “women in astronomy” followed by sidewalk astronomy. Help is always welcomed. Suggestions were made to share information with the State Parks we visit on proper lighting. This most likely will involve GA Power.

Woodruff Boy Scout Camp - John Lentini - There has been a memo of understanding created to allow members of the AAC to use certain areas of Woodruff Boy Scout Camp. You must call John Lentini first so he can inform the park rangers and to let members know what location to go to. Burt Adams is another Boy Scout location being considered for AAC use. The conditions:

- AAC needs to provide volunteers to help with the boy scouts this summer during the week in June and July.
- This is summer camping season for the scouts. Each week is a new group of scouts.
- Applications for registered scouters are available – benefits come with being a registered scouter.

Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center Coordinator - Philip Sacco - Sign-up extended until December 31, 2000 for the new chapter members. Steering Commission informally set up. New president (from the AAC) will sit in for the by-laws. Employee from CEWC will be on staff. June 24 next meeting – Aquatics Building. New Field is great. Marben Farm Road Observing Site is CLOSED. Only ONE spot is set aside for observing. “Observing” tents approved. Mail-box sign-up sheets a MUST. If you did not sign up you will be asked to leave.

Peach State Star Gaze - Ken Poshedly – PSSG will be moved from spring to fall. September 13-16, 2001 will be the new date. Wil Trion is looking forward to next year’s PSSG. GA Power – VP of Customer Service wants to appear at the next Board Meeting to apologize for the way the power outage was handled at the PSSG this year. Looking for a better/darker site. State Parks look like the better places.

Insurance – John Lentini- New coverage was discussed and agreed upon.

Web Site – Matthew Macumber - New web site and name was approved. The new name (when implemented) will be Atlantaastronomy.org. For a certain monthly dollar amount there could be space on the AAC site for members. This will be ASTRONOMY related. Guidelines will be set if this is implemented. A committee was voted upon to help “police” the web space sold to member. Tom Crowley, Bob Smith, Rich Jakiel and Matthew Macumber.

Liability Forms - Peter Macumber - Release of Liability forms. Some suggestion on how to approach this: Members need to fill out forms. Are other clubs doing this? Some star parties have participants sign form. After being certified on scope may be a good time for form. For PSSG maybe in the initial application form. If not filled in and signed by not be registered? Will re-visit this issue at next Board Meeting.

Tabled Fund-raiser discussion.

Meeting Adjourned 9:40pm

Next meeting will be July 20, 2000 at 7:30p

Correction on Astronomical League Double Star Observing List

By Keith Burns, Astronomical League Correspondent

Anyone who is doing or has done the astronomical leagues Double Star observing list has run into a few problems along the way. The biggest one is the fact that one of the stars listed on the original list is not a double star at all. Well I did some checking and here is the correction. The Double star Sigma Ophiuchi

is actually suppose to be Omicron Ophiuchi. The star is located at RA 17hrs 15 min .3 and DEC -26 36'. The magnitude of the individual stars are 5.4 and 6.9. The separation is 10.3".

Now as for this naming of stars Otto Struve and Struve. These are the names to a father and son team of astronomers. I would give you more details but it is up to you to figure out the rest. Just follow the coordinates given. You should be able to find these stars on any decent star chart. Happy double star hunting.

From Walter Haas

Below is the complete text of the letter I received from Walter Haas. The letter was accompanied by a check for \$100. I invite you to write to Walter personally.

— Ken

Walter Haas

2225 Thomas Drive

Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure to thank you for a most enjoyable week spent in your beautiful city and lush, green countryside — and in such delightful company, too. In truth, you have given me one of the most happy experiences of the 67 years in which I have followed the stars. You are all certainly to be congratulated on putting on the Peach State Star Gaze year after year. It is a lot of work — in ways both visible to the casual onlooker and invisible in terms of advance planning and foreseeing problems.

You also have an outstanding club observatory at Villa Rica. It is clearly growing, too. I must selfishly hope that you will occasionally put the instrument to work on ALPO projects. Indeed, I understand that Richard Schmude sometimes does photometric research with the 20-inch.

I think I recall that you are engaged in raising funds for improving the society’s 24-inch telescope. Please allow me to assist this effort with the enclosed modest check. Perhaps the 24-inch can have some fancier “clothes” at the PSSG in 2001.

It was impressive to see how many of you work hard in so many ways on the numerous, and very worthy, projects of the Atlanta Astronomy Club. Such participation is critical to a club’s growth, and even survival; but never have I seen elsewhere so many willing, and even eager, hands. You also have in Ken Poshedly a chap with amazing organizing skills. In truth, he never appears to forget or to overlook anything! We have different talents, but in Ken you certainly possess a truly remarkable person.

It was certainly a privilege to be with someone like Tony Rukl and his gracious wife Sonja. He always spoke so very well, even when the electric power failed (I would have been terribly upset!). Let me thank you again for your many acts of hospitality and kindness and extend my warmest personal good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Walter Haas

Focal Point Deadline

The deadline for the July Focal Point is **June 29th**. Please submit your articles for publication to me by then.

Keith.

Video Lunacy

By Chuck Painter

Being a deep sky nut, I figure my observing sessions are over for another two weeks once the Moon gets more than about three days past new. However, this past month, I experimented with my video camera to see if I could get some decent images of the Moon. I'm no astrophotographer, but video is an easy, inexpensive (if you already own the camera for non-astronomy reasons) way to capture half decent images. The setup I use is a Sony digital handycam which I hand point into the eyepiece of my 8" Schmidt Cassegrain telescope. Sometimes I use a camera monopod or tripod to steady the camera as I hold it against the eyepiece. I typically use a 40mm eyepiece because of its wide aperture, and use the auto-focus and zoom capabilities of the camera to target specific regions. With the camera running you can do video 'tours' along the terminator by slowly moving the telescope north-south, stopping and zooming in along the way. For specific subjects, I zoom in until I find a happy medium between sharpness of image and magnification.

Once the imaging is complete, I upload the video images to my computer. Many new computers include a digital video upload interface, although I purchased an after-market Digital Origin board. From there I process the image with Adobe Photoshop. One of the really nice things about video is that you simply select the frames with the best image clarity. The advantage of stacking is that it averages out the noise present in each frame. Once I have a good stacked image, I just balance the brightness levels, adjust the contrast and do a little unsharp masking to firm up the detail. Finally, I flip the image horizontally to undo the mirror image created by my telescope.



Picture

The first shows some lunar rilles with the main one being Rima Hyginus

-the one which runs through the small crater, Hyginus. This crater has

a diameter of 10.6 kilometers. The other prominent rille to its right

is Rima Ariadaeus. The two large craters near bottom center are (from

top to bottom) Agrippa and Godin with sizes, 46 and 35 kilometers,

respectively. For those of you with the Rukl Atlas, we're looking at

Map 34.



Picture to Right

This picture shows the large craters from top to bottom, Hipparchus (150

kilometers), and Albegnetius (136 kilometers) sitting very near the

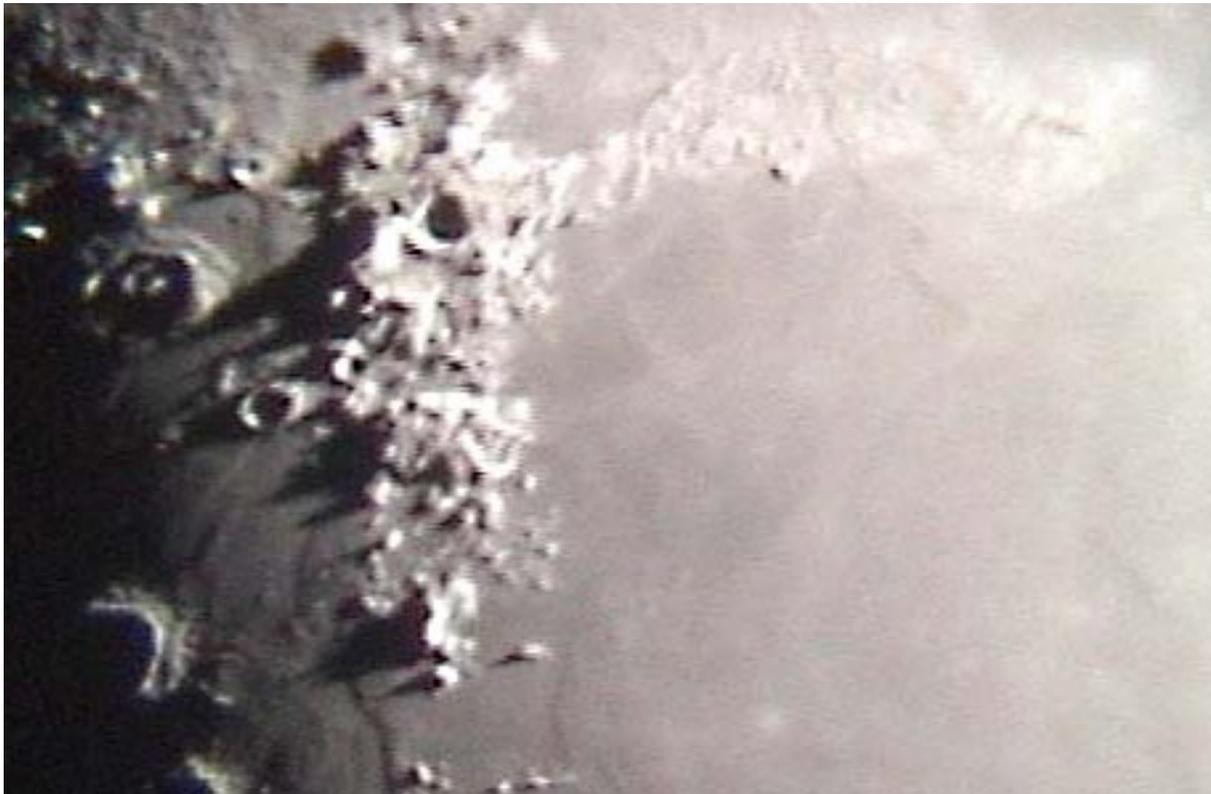
terminator. Note how the floor of Albegnetius is still partially in

shadow whereas virtually the entire floor of Hipparchus is lit. Rukl

Maps 44-45. It is interesting to note that the Apollo 12 landing site

is near the right edge of the image about one third of the way down from

the top edge. Can you see the lander?



Picture to Left

The third shows the Caucasus mountains (north) and Apennine mountains

(south) which separate Mare Serenitatis (right), and Mare Imbrium

(left). The shadows cast by the various peaks cast dramatic shadows

against the floor of the maria. There is also an interesting wrinkle

ridge running North-South separating the two maria. Rukl Maps 12-13,

22-23.



So much for the travelogue. By comparing these against the Atlas, I've discovered that there really is a lot to look at on the Moon. Oh no, I feel myself slipping into lunacy!



Pictures By Chuck Painter

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New Members

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Ladies of the Night...Sky

By Joanne Cirincione

We are happy to announce that we have 2 dates scheduled for our "Ladies of the Night...Sky" slide presentation and sidewalk astronomy. July 1st we will be at Fort Mountain State Park (more detail to follow) and July 22nd at Tallulah Gorge State Park. This will be our 3rd time at Tallulah Gorge and we just love it!

The presentation is on the history of "Women in Astronomy" and we will be working in a variety of presentations as time goes on. We follow this up with sidewalk astronomy for the audience.

This is not for women only. We encourage all to come and have fun, camp and bring a scope if you want to help out.

July 22 – Tallulah Gorge – Slide presentation will take place in the visitor's center at 8:30pm followed by sidewalk astronomy in the parking lot. If you would like to help out please let me know! More detail on what field we are to set up on as a club will follow.

Watch our listserve for updates to the July 1st date. July's focal point along with the listserve will have more detail on July 22nd Tallaluh Gorge.

AAC Membership & Magazine

You are sent a membership renewal two months before your membership expires. Your magazine renewals are sent to you by the publisher. Magazine renewals must be paid by the club.

Remember to send renewals to the club with a check payable to the club.

S&T is \$30

Astronomy is \$29

Club membership is \$25 or \$10 for student.

VIEWING IN ANNA, TEXAS

By Kemper Smith

It has been three months since I left my friends in Georgia and moved back to Texas and almost two months since I've been in my new house. I have a small two acre plot surrounded by much larger platts of pasture and farm land. The first thing I noticed when I moved here was that my front yard skies are darker than Villa Rica's! Being very busy with moving, unpacking, mending the chicken coop, and lawn & garden maintenance. I haven't had much time to view through the 10" SCT, but I have been putting the binoculars and Pronto to good use as time permits.

I have poured a slab for the SCT. I cut the bottoms out of soda cans, inverted them, and shoved them level with each other in the wet cement in the spots where the tripod legs will go. After a one time polar alignment, set-up should be as easy as setting the tripod in the can depressions of the pad. I plan to mount a pier to replace the pad.

My house faces due west. My first night to really relax and watch the stars set in April was nice. I sat on the swing on my front porch and watched a couple of huge jackrabbits in the pasture. Soon thereafter, Lepus the hare had replaced them and followed them over the horizon. The rising Milky way leaves no question of its identity. Soon I will be able to show my goat, Capricorn, his namesake in the sky.

I decided to set up the Pronto. I went in to get the eyepieces. When I came back, one of my hens had decided the tripod tray was a good place to roost! Though a fresh omelet sounded good, I wasn't prepared to make one at that moment. During the next couple of hours the neighbor's cattle and their newborn calves wondered up to the barbed wire fence a few feet from me, apparently curious about a nocturnal creature that wasn't a coyote. Either that, or they wanted a peek a the mooooooon.

How nice to view and hear nothing but the sounds of the domestic and wild animals and the occasional falling of pecans as a gust of wind goes through. I don't even have to listen to the sound of a hairdryer de-fogging lenses or corrector plates. I am sure the dew will come, but f the last two months are any indication, it is the exception and not the rule. There is virtually no traffic after dark.

They may call Texas the "Lone Star State", but night skies here beg to differ! At least from Anna, Texas is the "Megastar State".

Thanks to Wolf Camera

Chuck Pisa and Mike Hale of Wolf Camera, were kind enough to help us buy at their cost, the 9 & 16 mm Nagler, as well as the 35 mm Panoptic eyepieces.

Special AAC discount to Wolf Camera at 14th Street

Greetings AAC members. My name is Mike Hale. I work for Wolf Camera and Video. I'm also a new member of the AAC. In the last year we at Wolf Camera at the 14th street location have greatly expanded our stock and range of telescopes and astronomical supplies. We have an excellent selection of top grade eyepieces, scopes, and accessory items. If you contact, and identify yourself as an AAC member, at 404-892-1707 I will offer special discounts to AAC members. It is important that you talk to me as the normal prices are quoted by the staff. If I'm not there my voice mail is #122. Please call anytime. Thank you.

Thanks from the Boy Scouts

By John Lentini

Just a short time ago, the Boy Scouts of the Atlanta Area Council had no Astronomy program, and no resources with which to implement one. Now, thanks to the Atlanta Astronomy Club, there is much more interest in learning Astronomy, and the resources are in place to make something happen with that interest. There is an observatory at the Bert Adams Scout Reservation in Covington, and plans are coming together to bring a second observatory to the Woodruff Scout Reservation near Blue Ridge, under much darker skies. The Woodruff observatory will be open for use by any AAC member who wants to observe there.

Much remains to be done before we can say that there is a viable Astronomy program in the Scout Council, but it is appropriate at this time to recognize the contributions of those Astronomy Club members who have brought us this far.

First, thank you to the Club leadership for being supportive from the beginning. Art Russell, Tom Crowley, Bob Smith, Peter Macumber, Sharon Carruthers, Keith Burns, Ken Poshedly, Phil Bracken and Phil Sacco have all been instrumental in providing practical advice and moral support.

Thanks to those who have showed up at Scouting events to teach Scouts and let them use their equipment. Ralph Bowman and Phil Sacco, Ken Poshedly, Phil Bracken, Alex Langoussis, Keith Burns, Peter Macumber and Chuck Painter came out to observing events. The Club was well represented at the Scout show by several of the above members, plus Sharon Carruthers, John Brown, Tracy Wilson, and Smitty.

Thanks to those who have committed to teach at Scout Camps on Tuesday evenings this Summer: Ken Adams, Ron Wagner, Stef Whetstone and Ralph Bowman. (We are still looking for more volunteers).

Thanks to Chuck Hancock for putting the Scouts in touch with Ted Upchurch, who donated the 8 inch scope and observing dome that is now at Bert Adams. Thanks to Chuck Kibling for donating a Meade 8- inch f10 SCT for use at Bert Adams. Thanks to Ralph Bowman for donating the diagonal and 10 mm eyepiece to go with the Meade scope. Thanks to Chuck and Delaine Painter for the donation of the 21 mm eyepiece.

Thanks to Peter Macumber for bringing the Catseye and Cheshire to the last meeting so we could get the rebuilt 8 inch f8 Newtonian collimated, and thanks to Matthew Macumber and Stef Whetstone for keeping at it until the scope was dead on. Thanks to Larry Fruhwirth of the Camera Bug for making a great deal on the final accessories necessary to get the observatory up and running.

On a personal note, it has been an interesting time for me. My occasional dabbling in star-gazing has turned in to a serious hobby, and I have made many new friends. Thanks to everyone who has helped. It is a pleasure to be associated with such a fine group of people.

FRAC Member wins National Astronomy Award

By Smitty Smith AAC and FRAC member

Katie Moore, member and club librarian of the Flint River Astronomy Club was recently notified by the Astronomical League that she is the year 2000 recipient of the Jack Horkheimer Award for Exceptional Service by a Young Astronomer. This national award is presented to an Astronomical League member who is under the age of 19 and is based upon service to the League, either directly, or service to any Astronomical League society. Service areas recognized include outstanding educational outreach, astronomical knowledge, and public education skills at public star parties. The award includes a major cash prize, a plaque, and a trip to the Astronomical League convention at Astrocon 2000 in Ventura, California. Congratulations Katie, we are all proud of you.

Help for VR Observatory

Can someone go out to the VR observatory and mow the grass? You will need to bring some gas with. There is a riding mower sitting there on site for our use. It just needs some gas. You will be reimbursed for the gas and rewarded for you efforts.

We will need help with various projects that will be on going at the observatory in the next few months. Either contact me(Keith Burns) or Rich Jakiel if you want to help.

Friends of the PSSG

Letter From Antonin Rukl

Hi Ken,

Again at my office! This is mainly to tell you that we arrived safely home Thursday mornings at 10.30 a.m. as planned, well, without our main luggage. Fortunately, after several hours of activities of the local airport- and KLM offices the luggage was found in Amsterdam (together with some others lost bags) and we were assured that it should arrive with later plane. This actually happened later evenings and at Friday, 1.30 a.m. (not too late after midnight!) the luggage was delivered to us by a special airport service, in a perfect order, with all items inside. The driver of the van told us that during this night he should distribute about fourty lost (and again happily found) luggages, mainly from KLM flights. This company seems to be not the most reliable one.

Again, many thanks to you, to Karla, to your nice colleagues from AAC for all the care and hospitality, for so many kind words about my work and for the beautiful gifts for me and Sonja. Especially, I am most grateful for this magnificent scope , the greatest gift I ever obtained. Looking on the Moon through it, an accompanying picture will appear in my mind, showing my friends in Atlanta. The PSSG 2000 was an exciting event and we shall never forget so warm welcome given to us.

With best regards, also from Sonja.

Yours,

Tony

Part of Second Letter From Rukl

I was writing to Wil that he should really look forward to the PSSG 2001 (also, I recommended him to start training his hand for autographing!). The ETX scope is a beauty! There was a cloudy weather here but I caught two opportunities for moon gazing and what I saw was exciting. The lunar domes at Hortensius and Milichius, Rimae Hippalus and fine mare ridges in Mare Humorum, later also Marius hills, very detailed view of Schroeters Valley, sunrise over Gassendi, a narrow ridge on the elevated floor of lava-filled Wargentini and much more. Hard to believe that such a dwarf scope gives such a great view. I am most grateful to you and other friends from AAC for this wonderful tool!

Regarding the medallion, there is any web site about it as far as I know. To the astrolabe on the Prague astronomical clock you may find some explanation on the map of astronomical sights in Prague. The sculptures shown on the other side are from the Old-town tower of the Charles Bridge, founded 1357. The architecture of this tower shows in symbols the medieval picture of the universe, based on the well known celestial/crystal spheres. The explanation of this sophisticated architecture needs more place and some more illustrations. If you are interested, I would try to find something on that for you later.

Best Wishes,

Tony

NightSky.Org

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/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 **mizar**. These names are case sensitive! Type AAC in capitals, type mizar in lower case.

Peter

Club Officers

Sharon Carruthers	President	770-941-4640 <i>SCarruthers@NightSky.Org</i>
Alex Langoussis	VP Program Chairman	770-591-5776 <i>aleko@mindspring.com</i>
Rich Jakiel	VP Observing Chairman	404-352-0916 <i>DeepSky@mindspring.com</i>
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Jim Moore	770-242-6735	<i>hollin@dwcs.com</i>
Bob Smith	770-886-8191	

Standing Committees

Note that the listing of standing committees has been left off this month's newsletter. Some of the committees are being eliminated. Other committees are being headed up by new people. The new listing will be included in the July newsletter.

ATM

Tracy Wilson

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

Calendar

June 16 - General Meeting at Emory
8PM Dr. Richard Schmude featured speaker.

June 24 - Training
6PM, Villa Rica Observatory

June 24 - CEWMA

Visitor Center at 7:30PM. Chapter Meeting. Part two of 'Universe Sampler'. Hand in those programs completed by participants. Subject and speaker to be announced. Constellations of the month: Bootes, Ursa Minor, and Libra.

July 1 - Fort Mountain (LNS) Talk and sidewalk astronomy followed by deep-sky.

July 21 - General Meeting at Emory
8PM Dr. Chris Depree featured speaker.

July 22 - Tallulah Gorge (LNS)

July 29 - Brasstown Bald Mountain (Deep-Sky)

August 5 - To Be Announced (LNS)

August 19 - CEWMA Chapter Meeting.
7:30PM

August 26 - PARI North Carolina - special deep-sky event.
CEWMA alternative deep-sky site.

Astronomical League Stuff

Keith Burns AAC ALCOR

If your mailing address changes, please send Peter Macumber your new address. That way the focal points don't get mailed back to me. Also if your phone number or email address changes, please contact Peter so he can keep us updated.

Bobby Cole is the proud owner of a Lunar Certificate. He is number 215 on the list. However, we need him present at the next general membership meeting in order to receive it. Embarrassment is part of the process.

As of right now, I have ten observing awards somewhere in the pipeline. This includes two Herschel 400 awards. Many folks are busy observing. Keep up the good work. We are all proud of you.



June Meeting

Our next meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club is Friday, June 16, 8:00 P.M., at Emory University's White Hall.



We are pleased to welcome back as our guest speaker Dr. Richard Schmude. Dr. Schmude is the Remote Planets Section coordinator, and a board member, of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers, and is also an active member of the American Association of Variable Star Observers and the Atlanta Astronomy Club.



Since receiving his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from Texas A&M University in 1994, Dr. Schmude has been teaching Astronomy, Physics and Chemistry at Gordon College in Barnesville, GA. His primary areas of study include the solar system, variable stars and planetary nebulae.



In his talk, Dr. Schmude will be presenting the findings of his recent brightness studies of the Moon, including the brightness of the full moon. He will also briefly talk about the moon's coloration, and present plans for future lunar studies.



Looking ahead to our July 21 meeting, our guest will be Agnes Scott College Professor Dr. Chris Depree, who will talk about the exciting future of Bradley Observatory.





Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

FROM:

Keith Burns Email: Keith_b@bellsouth.net

3740 Burnt Hickory Road

Marietta, Georgia 30064

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

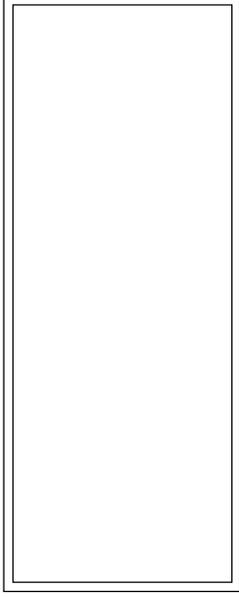
Atlanta Astronomy Club

PMB 305

3595 Canton Road A9

Marietta, GA 30066

FIRST CLASS



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://www.AtlantaAstronomy.Org>

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To tell me what a wonderful job I am doing, send messages to: **LAbbey@mindspring.com**