

The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club
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Editor: Keith Burns

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Our March Meeting...

By Alex Langoussis

The next meeting of the Atlanta Astronomy Club is on Friday, March 16, at Emory University's White Hall. Refreshments are at 7:30, followed at 8:00 by the business meeting and program.

Our guest speaker this month is the newest faculty member of Georgia State University's astronomy department, **Dr. Todd Henry**. He will talk about his specialty, the study of nearby stars. As part of his work, Dr. Henry is also the deputy project scientist and coordinator of research for NASA's Nstars Project. Nstars's mission is to be the most current, complete and accurate source of scientific data about all stellar objects within a radius of 25 parsecs. Please join us for what promises to be a most interesting and informative talk.

The April Banquet...

Our April meeting will be our annual banquet, held on Friday, April 20, 7:00 p.m., at Emory University's Winship Ballroom.

Our special guest speaker will be **Leif J. Robinson**, editor emeritus of *Sky and Telescope* magazine, who will present "*Reflections of the Artist's Moon*." This will be an event the whole family can enjoy, so make plans now to attend. We will

Continued on next page.

Calendar

March 16th-General Membership Meeting at Emory. 8PM. Speaker GSU's Dr. Todd Henry. NASA NearSTAR Project.

March 17th-GASP Sidewalk Astronomy at Tallulah Gorge. Topic: Women in Astronomy. Talk starts at 7PM. Sidewalk astronomy to follow. Rain or Shine.

March 17th-Charlie Elliott Chapter Meeting. Starts at 7:30PM. at the Visitor's Center. Election of Officers. Messier Marathon to follow.

March 24th-Deep Sky Observing at Woodruff BSC at the Bee/Beaver Field.

April 20th-Annual AAC Banquet. Location: Emory University. Speaker Leif Robinson, editor emeritus of *Sky and Telescope*.

April 21st-Deep Sky Observing at Mentone, AL. Joint Star Gaze with the folks of the Von Braun Astronomical Society of Huntsville.

April 21st-Charlie Elliott Chapter Meeting at the Visitor's Center. Topic: TBA. Observing after meeting at the observing field weather permitting.

April 28th-GASP-FDR State Park near Pine Mountain, GA. General Astronomy talk. Bonus: Mythology talk by Philip Sacco. Sidewalk astronomy to follow. Rain or shine.

May 5th-Astronomy Day. Bradley Observatory at Agnes Scott College. Runs from 8AM to 6PM. Speakers: Mel Bartels(Keynote), Chris Butler, Michael Covington, David Hanon, Chris Depree, and Philip Sacco.

May 18th- General Membership Meeting. 8PM at White Hall at Emory University. Dr. Amy Lovell of Agnes Scott College. 8PM. Topic: Studies of comets Hale-Bopp and Hyakutake.

May 19th-Deep Sky observing at Woodruff Boy Scout Camp Bee/Beaver Field.

have final details available at the March meeting.

And Looking ahead...

In May our speaker will be Agnes Scott College's **Dr. Amy Lovell**.

In the Speakers own words

Suspicious Characters Lurking in the Solar Neighborhood

Dr Todd Henry

Not always is the obvious what it seems...

The sample of stellar neighbors within 10 parsecs of the Sun will be explored. Some of the Sun's nearest neighbors are familiar, but a surprising number remain undiscovered, and the makeup of the population may surprise you. The RECONS (Research Consortium of Nearby Stars) effort to find and characterize nearby stars will be discussed, with special attention paid to the those objects near the stellar/substellar break. The nature of the many paired nearby star systems will be outlined, as well as how their dances are being mapped using the Hubble Space Telescope. Finally, new initiatives to discover planets around the nearby stars will be discussed.

RECONS can be found at <http://www.chara.gsu.edu/RECONS/>

From the Prez's Desk....

By Sharon Carruthers

Rain, thunder, tornados.... gee, it must be springtime in Georgia! And, with clouds every weekend, the start of the AAC's spring schedule of events.

The biggest event we have coming up in the spring (since the PSSG has been moved to the Fall) is (the First Annual) Atlanta Astronomy Expo 2001 to be held on May 5 at the Bradley Observatory at Agnes Scott College. A full day of events, with speakers (Mel Bartels, David Hanon, Chris Butler and more); vendors; an AstroImaging contest; poster displays; and demonstrations of radio astronomy & solar viewing, are being planned. If you think you some talent you can contribute to the day (sorry, no tap-dancing cows!), or you want to help out during the event, contact me, Tom Crowley or Art Russell.

The Peach State has been moved from the spring to Sept 13 - 16 to avoid unpredictable spring weather and the "floating" Easter Weekend. However, Ken Poshedly, is not using all this extra time to take easy. He is planning his traditional "fold & staple" party for the upcoming month to get the PSSG'01 registration packets ready for mailing. He will be looking for "helping hands" for this and other PSSG jobs in the upcoming months.

Our first sidewalk event with the GA State Parks will be on March 17 at Tallulah Gorge, under our new name of GASP

(formerly FoGSPA). Read Joanne Cirincione article for the details.

Woodruff is moving forward - the slab is scheduled to be poured this week with the building to follow ASAP.

The permit has been pulled for the electrical work to be done at Villa Rica. As soon as we can schedule a work party, the lines can be laid to our new hot house.

Elections are coming up (at the May meeting). If you would like to run for an officer's position or know someone you would like to nominate, contact Bob Smith or Art Russell.

And for a little bit of real astronomy - at the end of March, Venus will be seen both in the morning AND the evening. This happens once every eight years. The sky always seems to produce fresh new delights for us, doesn't it?

First Annual Atlanta Astronomy Expo

May 5, 2001 ~ Bradley Observatory

8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The beginning of the new millennium marks the first annual Atlanta Astronomy Expo! The Atlanta Astronomy Club will co-host this event with Agnes Scott College on **May 5, 2001** at the **Bradley Observatory**. **Speakers will include Mel Bartels, Chris Butler, Chris DePree, David Hanon, and our very own Philip Sacco.** There will also be planetarium shows, poster displays, vendors, art works, books, and a swap meet – there is something here for everyone! Our mission statement is to provide a forum for amateurs, professionals, and the Atlanta community for this event. We are confident this will bring astronomy awareness to the public here in Atlanta! Mark your calendars, join in the fun, and come support your club! Watch for flyers and details.

We can still use volunteers to lend a hand with this event. If you would like to help, please contact either of the co-chairs: **Tom Crowley** at crowleytj@hotmail.com or **Art Russell** at artrussell@mindspring.com.

Amatuer Telescope Makers Group

Interested in building your own telescope? Want to enhance your current scope with some features or fix problems with it? Do you want to grind your own mirror or learn how it is done? This is the group for you. The ATM group meets every couple of weeks at Skip Cook's house. He has generously offer this location for this purpose. Contact him via phone (404-325-4987) or email (scz9@cdc.gov) for more information and directions. Tracy Wilson runs the group and has much expertise to offer. You can contact him via email (tracywilson@alltel.net). Announcements of meetings will be posted on the AAC listserv.

Continued on the next page.

You can also find out about upcoming meetings from Skip. There are other folks that attend these meetings that may have some expertise to offer to help you with construction project you are working on. They are looking for a new place to hold meetings. They need a room that is fairly large and you don't mind it getting dirty. If you know of a place or have one available, please contact either Skip Cook or Tracy Wilson. Thanks.

Getting The Focal Point Online

Did you know that there are two versions of the focal point available? One is the standard 8 page b&w photo copied that is mailed to members. The other version is available on the web. It is 10 to 15 pages long. Web version is in color with pictures and an extra article (or two).

The Focal Point is available online in PDF format. The free Adobe(R) Reader allows you to view, navigate, and print PDF files across all major computing platforms. Download the free reader at www.adobe.com

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 Peter Macumber an e-mail and Keith Burns will stop sending you a snail-mail copy. The Focal-Point web can be entered by using the Username of **AAC** and a password of **Orion**. These names are case sensitive! Type **AAC** in all capitals, type **Orion** exactly as you see it here.

Elliott Chapter News

by Philip Sacco

This is a happy notice for the AAC. A permanent new addition will be made to the Focal Point. It may very well be called the *Elliott Corner* or something to that effect. This will be the area of notification of all the ongoing events scheduled to occur at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Management Area.

As of last month, the formal by-laws were presented to the AAC for the inauguration of the new chapter of astronomy at the CE Area. Upon approval of the AAC, the chapter will then become official.

The next chapter meeting will be March 17, 7:30 at the visitor center at the CE Area. A map can be downloaded from the AAC website. For more information, please call Alesia Rast at 770-784-3059.

At the next meeting, Provisional officers are to be selected for the chapter, pending bylaw approval and full elections in May, concurrent with the AAC elections.

Proposed officers for the Chapter are: Chapter Director, Observing Supervisor, and Chapter Liaison. The Director will function for the chapter in the capacity of 'president', running the meetings and directing events at the direction of the Chapter members. The O.S. will operate under the Observing VP

of the AAC, assisting in setting up observing events for the chapter, and helping direct other observing events. The Liaison officer is to be a staff member of the Elliott area, so that the club may stay abreast of what is happening at the Chapter as well as keep the Management Area abreast of the chapter events.

If you are a new member to the AAC living specifically on the East side of Atlanta and you would like to be recognized as a chapter member, now is the time to make yourself known. The chapter will need to have active participation for the new members east of Atlanta to make things happen and you are encouraged to come on to the March meeting and get involved in the new beginnings.

The chapter meeting format is a little different than the membership meetings of the AAC. The chapter meets on the 3rd Saturday of each month, at the visitor center. The time is set dependant on Daylight Savings. For the next few months, the time is 7:30. The meetings generally include a speaker dealing with a topic of astronomy geared towards the beginners. This is generally followed by some aspect of training, or concentration on one of the Astronomical Leagues Observing Clubs.

There is a high level of camaraderie among the new members out there, and many of them have already discussed having a regular 'meeting before the meeting' at the Log Cabin before the Chapter get together. This is much the same as the AAC get together after the general membership meetings, but as the Chapter follows their meetings with observing sessions, grabbing some grub before the chapter meeting helps make it through the long night...

The meeting generally runs 1 hour, and is followed by observing at the Observing Field, and a celestial mythology talk when scheduled.

This has been a long time in coming, and with the activities of the Friends of Ga. State Parks sidewalk astronomy events with the parks service and the inception of an astronomy chapter in league with the AAC, I see a broadening horizon for the AAC.

March 17th general meeting and provisional officer selection, followed by training and observing. Mythology talk will be presented on the field.

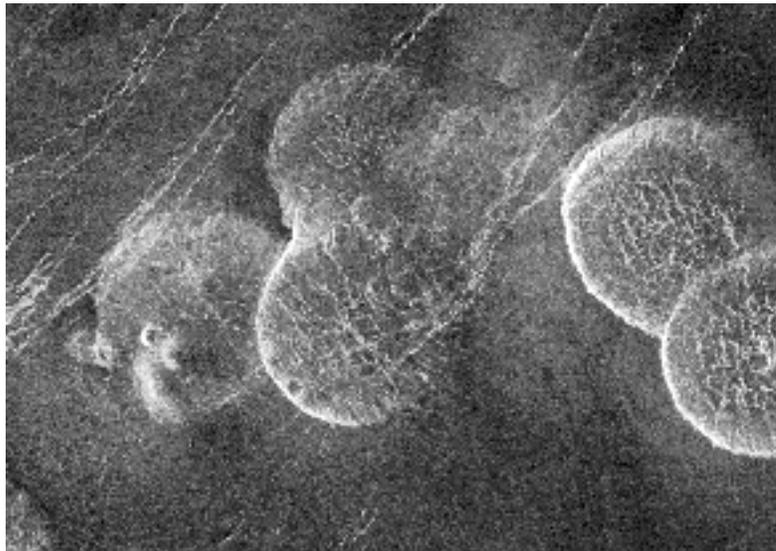
April 21st, general meeting. Topic to be announced. Observing following meeting.

May 19th, officer elections. Meeting topic to be announced. Observing following meeting.



Strange Objects on Venus

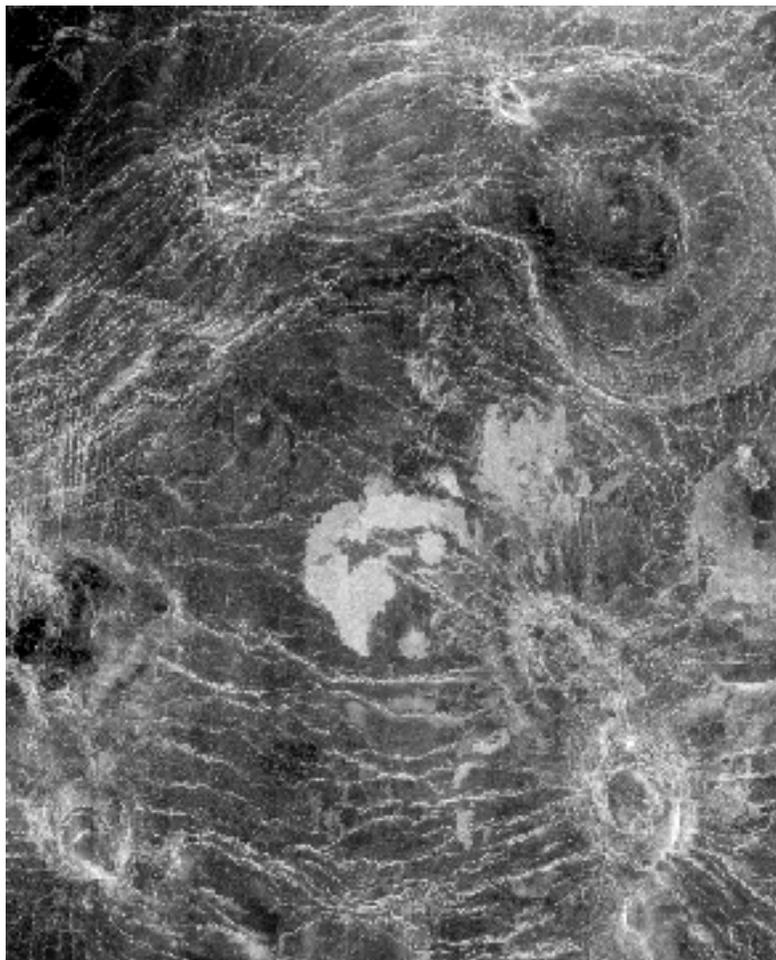
Since Venus has been on my mind these past few days, I decided to put something in the Focal Point this month about Venus. Not just words, but also pictures. Below are several pictures taken from the Jet Polpulsion Laboratory out in rainy southern California. If you want to check them out yourselves, enter this address. <http://pds.jpl.nasa.gov/planets/welcome/venus.htm> The captions with each picture also comes from their website. I figure they do a far better job explaining this stuff then I would.



Pictured to the left is something that looks like breakfast food that landed on the floor. Is this seven pancakes or something else? Actually it is Domical Hills. Read the paragraph below the picture to find out more info.

Seven circular domes can be seen on the eastern edge of Alpha Regio. They average 25 km (15 mi) in diameter with maximum heights of 750 m (2475 ft). Some scientists believe they are the result of eruptions of thick lava that flowed from a [vent](#) on level ground, resulting in an even lateral pattern of lava. The concentric and radial fracture pattern on the surface of the domes suggests

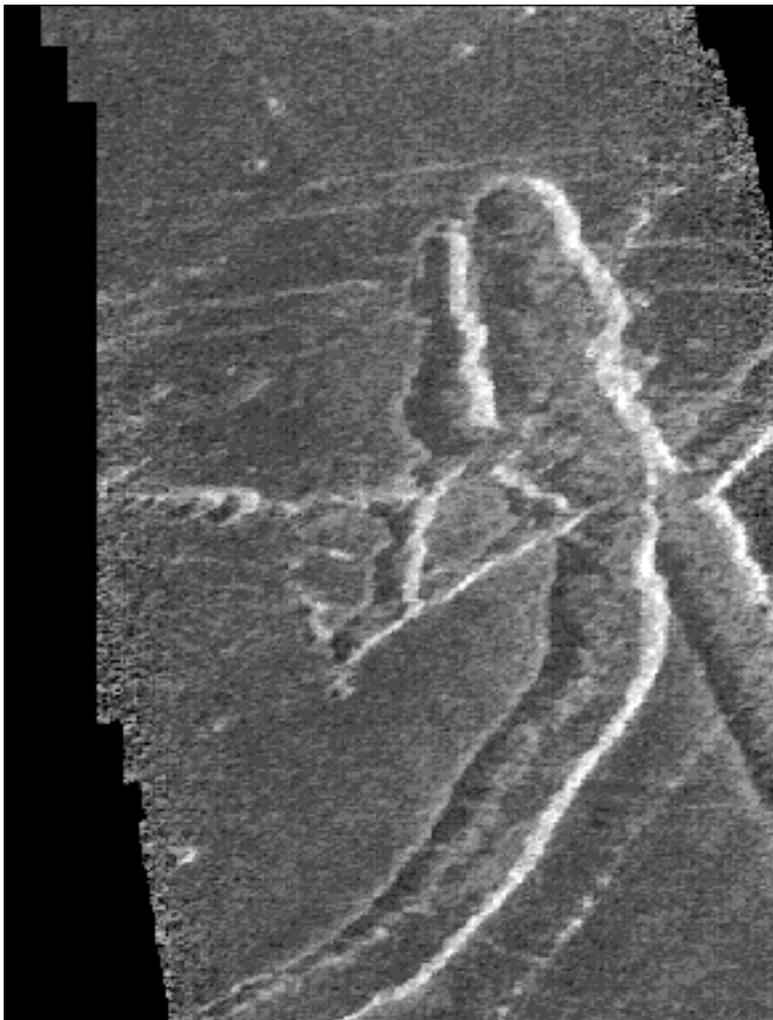
that lava welled up inside the domes, causing the surface to stretch



Pictured to the left are Arachnoids. Named by the Soviets for their spider and cobweb-like appearance, arachnoids are one of the more remarkable features found on Venus. They are 50 to 230 km (30 to 138 mi) diameter circular structures, with a central volcanic feature surrounded by a complex network of fractures. Arachnoids are similar in form but generally smaller than coronae. The radar-bright lines extending for many kilometers beyond the arachnoids may have been caused by an upwelling of magma from the interior of Venus, which pushed up the surface to form cracks.

The picture at the top of the next page is a gummy. Besides being known as that green cartoon or clay character, a gummy is someone very new to the hobby of astronomy. To the upper right corner of the next page is more info on this strange shape.

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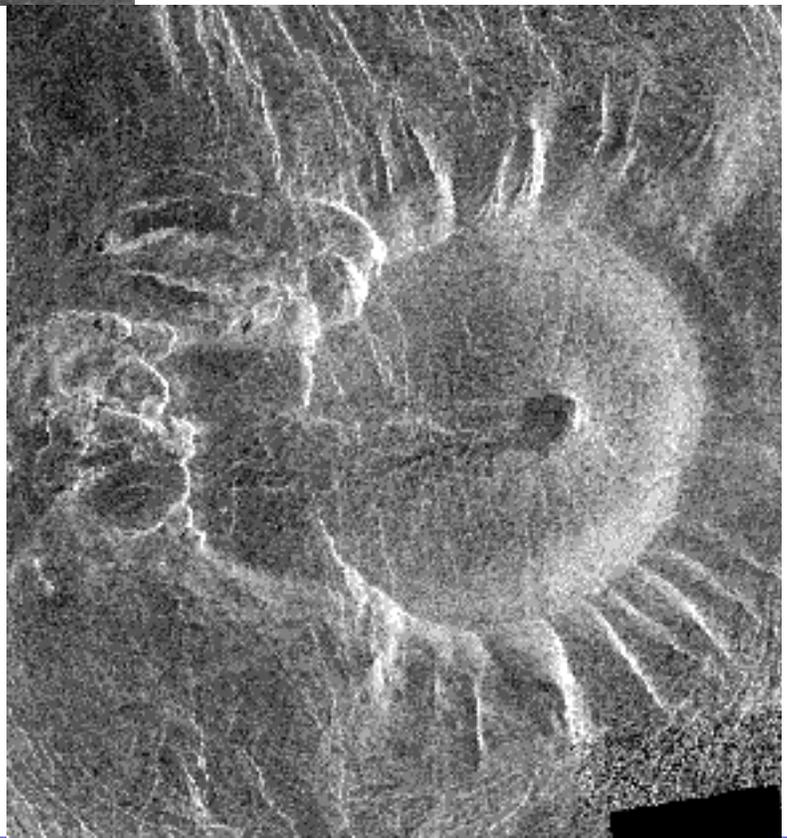
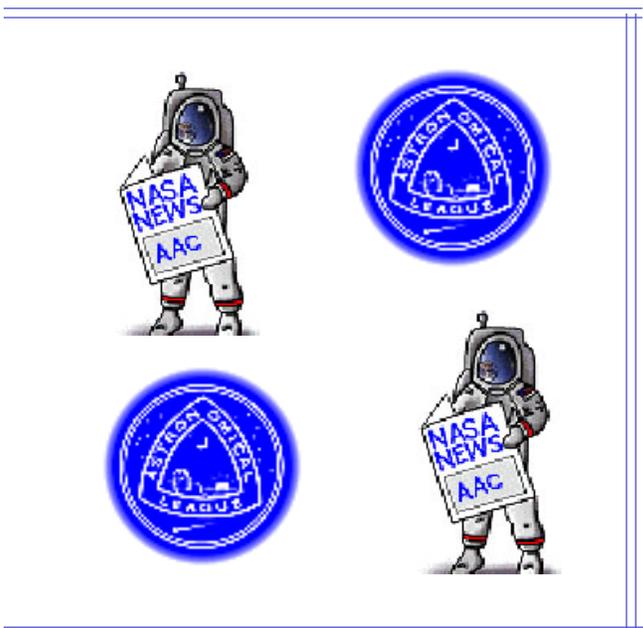


Fault-Bounded Troughs

The large [fault-bounded trough](#) in the center of the image was nicknamed Gumby (after an animated cartoon figure) by [Magellan](#) scientists. Located in the Lavinia region at the intersection of two [tectonic](#) trends, Gumby measures 5 km (3 mi) wide and 100-200 m (.06 - .1 mi) deep. An example of one of the trends is the bright lines running E-W through Gumby's head. A second example is the bright lines running SW to NE through Gumby's legs and hips. The line of pits (by Gumby's elbow) suggests some [igneous](#) or volcanic activity may have accompanied the faulting.

Pictured below. Okay Mr Whetstone. What does this shape remind you of? Better get out the raid bug spray. There's ticks on the loose.

Scientists nicknamed this type of volcano a tick. About 66 km (41 mi) across at the base, this volcano has a flat, concave summit 35 km (22 mi) in diameter. The sides of the volcano are characterized by radiating ridges and valleys. To the west, the rim of the volcano appears to have been breached by dark lava flows that emanated from a shallow summit pit (5.4 km/3.3 mi in diameter) and traveled west along a channel. The black square represents missing data.



Call for Designs

By Richard Blackburn

We need your help! We are planning to create lapel pins as a prize for completing the Peach Fuzzies at this years Peach State Star Gaze. If you have an idea, even if you are not artistic, please contact me at rblackburn@mindspring.com, by phone at 770-815-7387, or see me at a meeting.

We will be making the pins in 1/2" size, so limit the complexity of your ideas & drawings.



Georgia Astronomy in State Parks (GASP)

Joanne Cirincione

This is a start of a new season and a new name. Though we have changed our name from FoGSPA (Friends of Georgia State Parks Astronomy) to GASP (Georgia Astronomy in State Parks), we have not changed. We were originally working with the Friends of Georgia State Parks, but after a trail year with them we found out we can work better with the state parks on our own. There is no middleman. So, after our first year of doing this we have worked out some of the kinks.

For those who are not familiar with us let me explain. We go to state parks around Georgia and do sidewalk astronomy for them at the campgrounds, or an area without lights. We camp over night and have a great time touring the park on Sunday before we leave. In other words we have a blast! We have had

tremendous turnouts and expect this year to be better.

Some of the parks we have visited were Tallulah Gorge, Fort Mountain, Amicalola Falls, Unicoi and FDR State Park. This year we will be at Tallulah Gorge for 3 events, Amicalola for 1 event (and working on another one), Unicoi and FDR. We still have some open dates and will be working on getting some other parks we haven't visited yet on the schedule.

So please stay tuned for announcements in the Focal Point, our website and on our GASP listserv. To get on the listserv just follow these directions below. To subscribe to the mailing list, simply send a message with the word 'subscribe' in the Subject: field to the -request address of that list

To: GASP-request@atlantaastronomy.org

Continued on the next page.

Subject: subscribe

To unsubscribe from the mailing list, simply send a message with the word 'unsubscribe' in the Subject: field to the -request address of that list

To: GASP-request@atlantaastronomy.org

Subject: unsubscribe.

Although, at this time, the list is not moderated, please restrict all discussions and comments to GASP events.

GASP Observing Schedule

For those wanting to attend any of the following events will be responsible for their own camping arrangements unless otherwise noted. For reservations call (770) 389-7275 or (1-800) 864-7275.

March 17 - Tallulah Gorge State Park

Ladies of the Night...Sky presentation. March is Women in History month and this will be the 3rd year we will be doing the Women in Astronomy presentation and sidewalk astronomy. This is not just for women so please join us. If you would be interested in helping out please let me know. If you have never been there then you are in for a treat! Moon: 1 day past last quarter - Rise: 3:00a (3/18) Sun Set: 6:47.

April 28 - FDR State Park

General Astronomy - Also Mythology talks with Philip Sacco. Moon: 2 days before 1st quarter - Rise: 9:53a Set: Midnight Sun Set: 8:19pm. July 28 - Tallulah Gorge State Park. "Myths and Legends of the Night Sky". Philip Sacco will be our storyteller for the night! Moon: 1st quarter - Rise: 2:19p Set: 12:35a Sun Set: 8:41pm.

September /Labor Day Weekend Amicalola Falls State Park (Specific days not yet worked out). Full Moon Weekend. Moon Theme. Moon: Full - Sun Set: 7:03pm. November 10 - Unicoi State Park. General Astronomy. Moon: 2 days past last quarter - Rise: 2:55a (11/11) Sun Set: 5:38.

November 24 - Tallulah Gorge 1:13a Sun Set: 5:30. All sidewalk astronomy sessions will start with a slide.

Tallulah Gorge State Park - March 17

By Joanne Cirincione, GASP

Since March is Women in History month, Tallulah Gorge has asked us to come up and do a presentation on Women in Astronomy. This marks our 3rd annual visit to Tallulah Gorge doing this presentation.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, March 17. We will start out around sunset with Sharon Carruthers, President, doing the presentation on Women in Astronomy at the Visitor's Center. This

is a great presentation that everyone will enjoy. Afterwards we will do our sidewalk astronomy either at the Visitor's Center or at the Helicopter Field next to the campground. Keith Burns and Peter Macumber, as always, are our "scopemen". They can help you set up your scopes and get you started while the presentation is going on.

If you are planning on helping out please let me know as soon as possible. (starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org) Or if you just want to come up, hang out and camp with us that is great! Tallulah Gorge State Park is a beautiful and fun place to be! Hope to see you there!

Tallulah Gorge is located on U.S. Hwy. 441 within the city limits of Tallulah Falls, GA. Park information (706) 754-7970 and for camping reservations (706) 754-7979.

General Meeting February 16, 2001

Number in attendance: 60 - **Sharon Carruthers, President** - Before Sharon opened the meeting she thanked Julie Moore for doing the refreshment. Some new members/guests were in attendance. Sharon asked for reports from the officers and committee heads. **Rich Jakiel, Observing Chairman** - Announced a Training Session at Villa Rica on February 17. Also announced was Woodruff for 2/24. **Keith Burns, Corresponding Secretary** - Announced March 1 deadline for March's Focal Point and a deadline of **April 2, 2001** for **April's Focal Point**. **Alex Langoussis, Program Chairman** - Announced upcoming speakers: March 16 - Dr. Todd Henry, GA State, key member of NASA's NSTAR project.; 4/20 - Annual Club Banquet with special guest speaker, Leif J. Robinson, former Editor of Sky and Telescope Magazine. The will be held at Emory University. More information will be announced. May 18 - Amy Lovell, Asst. Professor of Astronomy at Agnes Scott College. Her talk will be on comets. **Friends of Georgia State Parks Astronomy** - March 17 - Tallulah Gorge. Celebrating Women in History month this is our 3th annual Women in Astronomy presentation. All are welcome. Come up and camp! **John Lentini, Woodruff Coordinator and Board Member** - Woodruff session - 3/24; **Phil Sacco, CEWC Coordinator** - By-Laws were presented to Sharon. Waiting for the Board's approval. Meetings/observing sessions are 3rd Saturday of each month. **Bob Smith, Board Member** - Please contact Bob or anyone of the officers or Board Members if you are interested in becoming an officer/board member of the club. Nominations from the floor are also being accepted. **Ken Poshedly, PSSG Coordinator** - Plans are moving along. Mailings should be ready to fold, staple, label and mail in March. **Peter Macumber, Treasurer** - Put your order in for AAC Sweatshirts and Polo Shirts. Email Peter for

Continued on page ten.

From the past: Ark Observing

By Keith Burns

Original date July 12, 1999

I left the house about 3PM on Saturday afternoon heading for Brasstown Bald. I brought two telescopes and a pair of binoculars. Thoughts of praying that the skies would be clear entered my mind. Of course the radar image I saw at 2:30 p.m. told me that it was not looking good up in the mountains. After a quick stop at Kmart, I headed up I-575. North of Canton I drove through a quick shower. The sun returned soon after. Just south of Jasper I decided it was time to load some film into the camera. The skies ahead had a blackish appearance to them. Strong winds whipped around while lightning bolts hit the ground. Soon the heavy rains began to fall. The vertical rain became horizontal. I proceeded onward at a slow pace. About 10 miles up the road the storm finally ended.

I pulled off the road at the scenic overlook. There I was able to take some photos of the backside of the storm. Scud clouds moved along the tree tops in the valley to the west with more anvil top's visible to the northwest. I got back into the truck and drove on. The rains soon started again. The rain finally ended north of Elijay. The rest of the trip was dry and uneventful. I pulled into the parking lot of Brasstown Bald.

Peter and Sharon were already there. Several other folks from



the astronomy club were also there. The skies were cloudy. The air was much cooler than in the valley below. So I changed into warmer clothes. Soon other people arrived for the observing event. Perhaps we should call it the attempted observing event. Several folks began to setup their scopes while the rest of us decided to wait and see what the weather would do. Out to the

west we could hear the sound of thunder. A sucker hole opened up the sky's overhead. We could see a cap cloud above a thunderstorm. The cloud had multiple colors. Some phenomenons know as Iridescence. I was about to take several pictures before the clouds moved back in.

I decided to take a hike to the top of the mountain and see if I could see any of the storms. After a 10 minute hike up the trail, I made my way to the observation deck. Off to the west there were two thunderstorms. From the bottom of the southern most cells, I could see clouds moving down the mountain valley below. That's when it dawned on me that I was seeing a

microburst. So I took several photographs of the event. I could see and hear the rain moving in from the west. I took cover under the main building. The clouds from the storm engulfed the entire mountain top. I could occasionally see flashes of red lightning. It appeared to be coming from all directions. After 30 minutes of rain and lightning, the rains subsided. To the south I could see one of the thunderstorms. Bolts of lightning would come out of it from time to time. It was strange to be at the same height as the bottom of the thunderstorm. With a break in the weather, I hurried down the trail to the parking lot. The mountain was shrouded in clouds and fog. There were occasional rumbles of thunder echoing through the woods. Then the rains started to pickup again.

Upon reaching the bottom, I noticed that the group had set up several tarps. They were sitting underneath the structure to stay dry. The rains finally ended 30 minutes later. We came out from the cover and were enshrouded in clouds and fog. Finally the clouds moved out but the skies did not clear. We packed up and left about 10:30 p.m. and headed to the nearest Waffle House. The Waffle House became a Huddle House. After the grazing was over, Peter, Sharon, Matthew, David, Chrissy, Joanne, and I headed home. The ironic thing is that the skies were clear when we entered the northern suburbs of Atlanta metro. I was much too tired to take advantage of the clear skies.

Here is a list of the folks who showed up for the event. Chris, Ingrid, Chuck Hancock, Peter, Sharon, Matthew, David, Lynn, Chrissy, Joanne, Keith, John, Bill, Ute, Tom, Gil, Barret (and a son) and there were three others. And I suppose there was a man named Noah there to.

Venus, Jupiter, & Saturn

By Keith Burns

Now is the time to see three bright planets. Perhaps do a little sketching of each to. Venus is the bright object in the western sky at sunset. With each passing night, it is sinking lower and lower. While it is moving closer to the sun, it is also getting closer to the earth. The effect is that the planet's image is getting larger. It will be closest to earth on March 30th and look more like a crescent moon than a planet in a telescope.

Venus is also a planet in phases. Like the moon, it changes phases. Now the planet is approaching its new moon phase. With each passing day, the planet is becoming a thinner crescent shape. From March 19th to March 27 the shape starts to resemble a "c" shaped crescent. The crescent shape is shifting direction toward the southwest and eventually to the south along the edge of the planet. The crescent is also getting longer as the sunlit edge grows.

On March 30th, Venus will not pass in front of the sun but a few
Continued on next page.

degrees above it. Venus will be in it's new moon phase. At this point the horns(edges) of the crescent will have lengthen enough to touch each other. The crescent will resemble a light ring on the edge of the planet with a dark center. Few folks will be able to see this effect because venus will be a few degrees above the sun. You can observe this if you have a scope that can track Venus. This ring will only be visible during the daytime. The best time to see Venus is when the sun is low to the horizon. Care must be taken when observing Venus this close to the sun with a telescope.

After this passage by the sun, Venus becomes a morning object. The lighted surface of the planet will grow til it becomes full. Same effect as the moon after new moon. First quarter followed by full moon. The planet is also moving away from us. So it is getting smaller to.

Besides, Venus you can view the planet Jupiter. Jupiter is the bright planet overhead in the evening It offers four large moons and interesting cloud bands. It's fun to sketch the planet. Note any details on the planets surface and the location of the four moons. You don't have to be an artist to do this. Just use sketch paper or any blank white paper you can lay your hands on. I use a film canister as a tool to draw a circle. It's much easier then trying to do the shape freehand. Use a number two pencil. You can erase mistakes easier that way. Don't forget to note time, date, location, scope info, magnification, sky condiction, and note direction of north on the paper. This info will come in handy later. I usually write the info on the bottom of the paper.

Eight to ten degrees west of Jupiter is the planet Saturn. Saturn is another fun planet to observe and sketch. Besides the beautiful rings, there are its dim moons. They resemble little flies hovering close to the rings. Titan is the easiest moon to see and the brightest. It's nice to have a picture to remember the view by. That is part of the reason I sketch these objects.

There are several computer programs available on the net that give you the phases of the planets, locations of moons, and location of the planets in the sky. These programs are freeware. Free to download and use.

Planet's Visibility plots graphs showing what hours the planet you chose is visible. Also has a Jupiter moon simulator. Cool.

<http://www.alcyone.de/PVis/english/ProgramPVis.htm>

Meridian is designed for planetary viewing. It shows you the important info including phases, sizes, locations, and magnitudes of the planets. Excellent.

<http://pages.infinit.net/merid/index.html>

Spica 1.3 is a planetarium program with a wonderful simulator of the moons of Jupiter and Saturn.

<http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Code/7659/welcomee.htm>

Sat 2.5 is a program that draws a monthly line graph of the

moons of Jupiter or Saturn. Just like you see printed in Sky & Tel or Astronomy. You can print them.

<http://www.astrosoftware.net/>

Magazine and Membership Renewal

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 a student.

Directions to the Observing Field at Woodruff

From Atlanta: Take I-575 to GA 515. Follow 515 through Ellijay and Blue Ridge. Go 2.2 miles past the intersection of 515 and GA 60. Take a left on Loving Road, and follow it until it ends. Turn right on GA 325 and go about 50 yards to Boy Scout Road. Turn right again. The entrance to the Scout Camp is about 2.5 miles on the right.

From Blairsville: Take 515 East toward Blue Ridge. Turn right on GA 325. Boy Scout Road comes up on your left after about 2 miles. Go about 3 miles and the camp entrance is on your left.

(From the east side of Atlanta, it may look more direct to take 400/129 to Blairsville, but the last 40 miles of 129 are quite crooked. The route up 575 is faster and 4 lane for all but the last 10 miles.)

Take the main entrance road (Turner Gap Rd.) and follow it past the lake (on your left). The main road turns rough at the second ranger's house, but Chestnut Gap Road goes left, and is OK. Take the left. Go about a half mile, and again the road ahead gets rough, but you should turn right at a sign that says "private property, do not enter". Ignore the sign and go down the road, past an old cabin. There is a kiosk on the right side of the road across the road from the cabin. Club info will be located here in the future. Just past the cabin is a gate. Go thru the gate and drive for another 1/4 mile to an open field located on the right side of the road. This is the spot.

News Flash, Art Zorka Arp Award Holder

What's this I read? Art Zorka is number 18 on the Arp Observing Club award list. NOT. The AAC ALCORrespondent has checked his paper work and reassures I/me/himself that info is wrong. Check page 23 of the February 2001 Reflector. He is suppose to be number 18 on the Urban List. Art you had better check your award to make sure it doesn't say Arp. Maybe it's suppose to say Arp and not Urban. There is something Urban about this Arp.

Continued from page seven. Minutes of meeting.

prices and sizes at PMacumber@nightsky.org. **Mark Banks, Sidewalk Astronomy**, - announced a few sidewalk events.

Art Russell, Astronomy Expo Co-coordinator - AAC is hosting an event to build interest in astronomy in the local community. We will be bringing in speakers and vendors. This will be held on the Agnes Scott College Campus on Saturday, May 5. If you are interested in helping out contact Tom Crowley at crowleytj@hotmail.com or Art Russell at artrussell@mindspring.com.

Alex Langoussis, Program Chairman – introduced our speaker, Member, Tom Crowley. His program was on “Searching Among the Stars”. He discussed the SETI League Amateur search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence.

Woodruff Observatory

By John Lentini

The road to the observing field at Woodruff has been graveled, and there is concrete being poured TODAY! Barring a week of monsoons, the warm up/storage building will be complete by 3/15, and the facility will be ready to be christened on 3/24.

If two new telescopes induce rain, what is likely to happen when we bring a new observatory on line?

AL Awards

Congratulations to the following folks for completing one of the many observing programs offered by the AL. Paul DiBono has or will receive the Urban Award. He is number 20. This next award is a surprise. I will tell you but you have to promise not to tell Philip Sacco. Philip will be the proud owner of the Planetary Award. He is number 9 on this list. Not bad considering he started this program four years ago. Of course, the program did not exist back then. Philip, if you are reading this, besure to come to the meeting Friday night to pick up your award. This also applies to Paul. If you don't, I have a nice place for them on my wall.

Music for the Lunatics in all of us

By Keith Burns

Here's something you might find interesting. I was visiting one of the local music stores and found this little gem. It's titled “The New Moon in the Old Moon's Arms”. It's a symphonic Poem written by Michael Kamen. On the DECCA Records label. Recorded by Leonard Slatkin and the National Symphony Orchestra. Recording Copyrighted 2000. The CD notes indicate it is an astronomy related theme.

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Astronomical League

As a member of the AAC, you also are a member of the Astronomical League automatically. This entitles you to many benefits. The most popular benefit is the 21 observing programs the AL has made available to us. The list of programs includes Lunar, Messier, Herschel 400, Planetary, Urban, Meteor, Sunspot, Universe, and Several Binocular programs. This is just a small sample of the lists available for you to take on as an observing project. You don't have to be a seasoned vertern of astronomy to do one of these programs. Just be eager to try and willing to learn. Contact Keith Burns at (keith_b@bellsouth.net) for more info. He is you AL representative .You can also find out more at the AL website at (www.astroleague.com). Once you get to the home page of the AL website look in the section labeled observing clubs. You can go down the list from there and find out which program is right for you.

Website Report

The website has proven itself in attracting new members and keeping members informed of club events. This can only happen if we are given the information to post on the website. If you have any suggestions, comments or ideas please send them along to the webmaster@AtlantaAstronomy.org.

Focal Point Article Submissions

I'm looking for articles, pictures, and drawings on anything astronomy related. All formats are acceptable. Pictures can be sent as either JPEGs, GIFs, or other formats. I can also scan in hard copy pictures. Articles can either be sent via postal mail or email. Address it to 3740 Burnt Hickory Road Marietta, Georgia 30064. Email address is Keith_B@bellsouth.net. You can submit articles anytime up and including the deadline date. The **deadline** for the **April issue** is **April 2, 2001**.

Joining the AAC

You can join the AAC by filling out a membership form and mailing it along with you dues to the address printed on it. These forms are available from our Treasurer (Peter Macumber). He carries copies of these forms to most club functions. You can also download the form from the club website at (www.atlantaastronomy.org). Once you find the form. Download it and print it. Fill out and mail the form in. Fee structure is \$25 for family and single members. Student fee is \$10. Student fee applies only to students currently enrolled. While the club does have PO Box address, it is best to mail the form to Peter's house. He get's the stuff much faster that way. If you want to get either Sky & Tel Magazine(\$30)or Astronomy Magazine(\$29), include that with you dues made payable to Atlanta Astronomy Club.



The Focal Point

Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

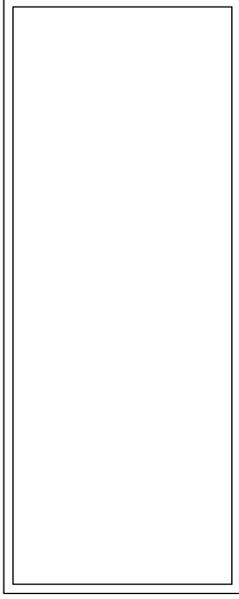
FROM:

Keith Burns Email: Keith_b@bellsouth.net

3740 Burnt Hickory Road

Marietta, Georgia 30064

FIRST CLASS



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

Atlanta Astronomy Club

PMB 305

3595 Canton Road A9

Marietta, GA 30066

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. Membership is open to all. Atlanta Astronomy Club Hot Line: Timely information on the night sky and astronomy in the Atlanta area. Call **770-621-2661**. Internet Home Page: <http://www.AtlantaAstronomy.Org>

Subscribe to the Atlanta Area Astronomers Mailing List: The name of the new list is: AstroAtlanta. The address for messages is: AstroAtlanta@yahoogroups.com . To add a subscription, send a message to: AstroAtlanta-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com . To cancel your membership, send a message to AstroAtlanta-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com . Messages for the list-owner (me) go to: AstroAtlanta-owner@yahoogroups.com or to (L.Abbey@mindspring.com). The "home page" for the list, from which you can change your account defaults is: <http://www.yahoooogroups.com/group/AstroAtlanta>. This list is owned by **Lenny Abbey** who is the **Club Historian**. You can reach him via phone at 404-634-1222.

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