

# The Focal Point

The Atlanta Astronomy Club  
Established 1947  
November 2002

Vol XV No. 6

Editor: Keith Burns

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## Anna Belle Close 1914 - 2002

The Atlanta Astronomy Club's senior member, Anna Belle Close, passed away on October 18, of Alzheimer's disease. Anna Belle was present at the 1947 formative meeting of the Club in Agnes Scott's Science Hall. (Bradley Observatory had yet to be built.) She remained a member for the ensuing 55 years. There are other founding members still living, but only Anna Belle and her husband, Bill, remained members until their deaths.



Born in Guatemala, the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries, Anna Belle was named after both her maternal and paternal grandmothers (but everyone called her "Annabelle").

She was living with her parents in Washington, DC when she met Bill, who was attending art school at the Corcoran Gallery. Along with our founder, Bill Calder, this dynamic family team was largely responsible for the successful early development and survival of the Club.

Bill was handy with tools, and while attending the Club's mirror grinding classes he built a 6" reflector. About 1950, a small batch of war surplus 16" Pyrex disks came on the market. Such large mirror blanks were almost unheard of at that time, and Bill Calder was successful in obtaining three of them. One of these went to Bill Close. Four years later, Bill completed his 16" f/4 reflector, and mounted it in their back yard. It was the largest amateur telescope in the south, and people came from all over the region to see it. This gave the Close family a unique identity – they had a 16" telescope.

The Club soon began to publish a monthly bulletin – *The Atlanta Astronomers' Report* – and it was outstanding among astronomy club bulletins. Its fame was such that it appeared on the shelves of major observatory libraries. For a number of years Anna Belle was the editor; and she was always the typist (the *Report* was mimeographed – no computers in those days!). Anna Belle was an amazing typist. She could surpass 100 words per minute; and on a mechanical typewriter this was a great accomplishment! Bill was equally skilled in his artistic renderings for the covers.

Anna Belle served as AAC president for three terms, and she presided over many important decisions which gave our club



its present character.

Anna Belle loved the stars; she also loved the beauty of nature here on Earth. She reveled in hiking, canoeing and the study and photography of animals and plants. The AAC was not her only club affiliation. She was a past president of the Georgia Canoe Association. She was also a member of the Alpine Camera Club, the Appalachian Trail Club the Audubon Society and the Georgia Botanical Society. After their retirement, Anna Belle and Bill traveled to Canada to observe a total eclipse of the Sun, to South America for a really good view of Halley's comet (we only got a watered-down view in this country) and finally they went on a photo safari in East Africa where she saw and photographed just about every exotic animal she had ever heard of. She was especially thrilled by the beauty of Mount Kilimanjaro.

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Anna Belle and Bill produce the cover for *The Atlanta Astronomers' Report*. Bill is exposing the paper with the master he has drawn. Anna Belle is developing the sheets with ammonia fumes. This cover is from the January, 1953 issue.

My own relationship with Anna Belle and her family had a profound influence on my life. I joined the Club in 1951 at the age of 12. As a young stripling I was, of course, intimidated by many of the talks which were far over my head. Anna Belle took me under her wing, eased my entrance into the Club, and helped to stoke my enthusiasm for it. After one meeting (I was still a stripling), she came up to me and said "Some people are coming over to our house after the meeting. Would you like to come?" Wow! Would I!

When I arrived (I don't remember how I got there) I found a living room full of everybody who was somebody. It was like the meeting had transferred from Bradley Observatory to the Close's house. I felt very important. She always made me feel important, and she always treated me as an adult. I thought, "This must be the high point of my life." But guess what? I discovered that these late-night meetings were a permanent feature of life in the Atlanta Astronomy Club. We observed, we talked, we listened, and we learned. Famous astronomers and scientists of other persuasions

made regular appearances. Even a theologian was occasionally seen. Anna Belle presided over it all. It was a salon reminiscent of those of seventeenth-century France.

My mundane family life was nothing like the life at the Close's. It soon developed that I had a standing invitation to their house  
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every Friday and Saturday evening, even if no one else was invited. So while other kids my age were dating, drinking and wrecking their cars, I was observing with a 16" telescope, going to art galleries and attending lectures at Atlanta's great universities with Anna Belle and Bill. I think I got the best part of that deal! The final rite of my induction into the Close family took place on the night they gave me my own water glass, with my name on it. Each member of the family had such a glass, and to see mine sitting on the shelf alongside those of Anna Belle, Bill, and their four children made me very proud.

Bill died in 1994, and the last time I had an opportunity to sit down and visit with Anna Belle was when she was selling her house in preparation for moving in with her son. She was holding an indoor yard sale to get rid of excess furniture. She was also offering for sale about a hundred of her mounted photographs of birds, elephants, interesting people and scenes of grandeur. She was puzzled because nobody was buying furniture, but instead they were fighting over the pictures! Both her father and Bill had been talented photographers – really artists with a lens. A lot of this talent rubbed off on Anna Belle, and every time she snapped the shutter an image of great beauty came forth. I had prided myself on my photographic ability, but I just wasn't in her league.

After her Alzheimer's diagnosis, she moved to Columbus where she was cared for by her daughter, Dixie Turman. I did not see her after that. But every time I think of Anna Belle, Bill and the "good old days" tears come to my eyes, and I am filled with both elation and sadness at the contemplation of the universe of learning to which I was so wonderfully introduced.

**Lenny Abbey**

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## November Charlie Elliott Chapter Meeting

November 16th 5pm - general meeting followed by a presentation by Larry Owens on CCD imaging. The November meeting is scheduled to start at 5pm. That should give us enough time to cover the minutes from the October meeting and the presentation by Larry Owens will start about 5:15-5:30. Following the meeting we will make our way out to the field to prepare for the Leonid Meteor Shower. The December meeting will be held on the 14th of December - Chapter Meeting / Partial Solar Eclipse for most of North America

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## Dark Sky Committee Meeting

November 16th, 4:30 P.M. - at CEWC

There will be a short planning meeting of the 'new' Dark Sky Committee at 4:30 PM at CEWC (before the main meeting of the Chapter at 5 PM. As the committee chairman, I am especially interested in AAC members who have 1) fresh/innova-

tive ideas 2) live on the east side of the metro area and 3) willing to contact State/County and Local resources in the quest for a new, long-term and club owned observatory site.

All interested members are invited to attend.

**Richard Jakiel**

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## November General Membership Meeting

This month's meeting will be held on Friday November 16th. Location is White Hall on the Emory University Campus. I've been a member of the club for five years and I still don't know what room the meeting will take place in. Just look for all the folks discussing astronomy. They are not hard to find. Snacks and Socializing will start at 7:30PM and run til 7:55PM. The meeting will start at 8PM. There will be some announcements of up coming activities scheduled plus other happenings. This will be followed by several brief talks including NASA news and What's Up in the Sky?



The featured speaker this month is Club member, Professor, and Author, Michael Covington. His talk will be his latest published books. That's right. Not one, but two new books. For those of you who have bought a fancy computerized telescope and haven't a clue on how to use it. Well, this is the book for you. The first book gives you a course in how to use that

modern computerized telescope. It's not as hard as you think. The title is "How to Use a Computerized Telescope." Okay now that you know how to use that fancy telescope, what do you look at? Book two is a listing of and discussion of objects you can see with that telescope. The title of this book is "Celestial Objects for Modern Telescopes." Both books will be available for sale at the meeting.

Background on the speaker. Michael is a professor at the University of Georgia. His speciality is Language and he is working on Artificial Intellegence designs. He has authored several books on astro-photography. A frequent observer at CEWMA and regular on the AAC listserv. He has years of astro photography experience. You can find out more about him at his website <http://www.covingtoninnovations.com>

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## Astronomy Calendars

The folks at Kalmbach are selling their wall calendars at \$6.00 each to AAC members. If you're interested, I need a check payable to the Atlanta Astronomy Club, by NOVEMBER 15 (you pick calendar at Dec meeting).

Please include Name, E-mail, phone, and Qty. No shipping or

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tax is required, just \$6.00 each (no limit). Mail it to: Harry Falise, 4300 Jimmy Carter #107, Norcross, GA 30093.

To check it out, search for "2003 Calendar" at <http://shops.astronomy.com/>

The AAC does not make anything on this. I just thought it was a good deal... the photos are pretty sharp, plus they include current and historical astro events. Sorry, I can't mail them to you, you must pick them up at meeting. Thanks. Harry

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. Membership fee's are **\$30** for a family or single person membership. College Students membership fee is **\$15**. These fees are for a one year membership.

Magazine subscriptions to Sky & Tel or Astronomy can be purchased through the club for a reduced rate. The fees are **\$30** for Sky & Tel and **\$29** for Astronomy. Renewal forms will be sent to you by the magazines. Send the renewal form along with you check to the Atlanta Astronomy Club treasurer.

**Club address is:**

Atlanta Astronomy Club  
PMB 305  
3595 Canton Road A9  
Marietta, Georgia 3006

**Treasurer's address is:**

Harry Falise AAC  
4300 Jimmy Carter Blvd, Apt #107  
Norcross, Georgia 30093

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>

Send suggestions, comments, or ideas about the website to [webmaster@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:webmaster@AtlantaAstronomy.org). Also send information on upcoming observing events, meetings, and other events to the webmaster.

## GASP – Georgia Astronomy in State Parks

By Joanne Cirincione

**FDR State Park – 8/30-9/2** – We had a nice turn out with our club members. I want to thank, as usual, Sharon Carruthers, Peter Macumber, David Macumber, Keith Burns, Harold & Claudia Champ, Tom Faber, Kat Sarbell, and Holly & John Ritger. We had a great turnout of about 50 some campers with both nights being clear and dark!

### **Cloudland Canyon State Park – 10/19/02**

We had another fun event at Cloudland Canyon. We had clear skies on Friday but the clouds moved in on Saturday, the night of the event. Sharon still put on the slide presentation with 24 campers in attendance and prizes were given out to the children. We had our loyal members attend; Sharon Carruthers, Peter Macumber, Keith Burns, Tom Faber, Kat Sarbell, Harold & Claudia Champ and Holly & John Ritger. The night was not wasted. We retired to Harold & Claudia's campfire and hung out with good friends.

We encourage seasoned and new members to come out, relax, camp and have some fun. This is a great way to meet new

people and just hang out! Whether the weather is cooperative or not we always have a blast! Our next events are November 2 at Unicoi State Park and November 16 at Red Top Mountain State Park.

Hope to see y'all soon!

### Newsletter Deadline and Info

Please send 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 hard copies of pictures. Articles can either be sent to Keith Burns 3740 Burnt Hickory Road Marietta, Georgia 30064 or email at **Keith\_B@bellsouth.net**. You can submit articles anytime up and including the deadline date. The **deadline** for the **December issue** is **November 30th**.

## AAC Board of Directors Meeting Oct 27

**General.** AAC Chairman of the board, Chuck Painter, called the meeting into order at 3:15PM and closed the meeting at approximately 5:30PM. AAC members attending were Bear Simmons, Ken Poshedley, Sharon Carruthers, Harry Falise, Gil Shilcutt, John Lentini, Chuck Painter, Carol Abernathy, Keith Burns, and Art Russell. **Actions.** The following actions were made or reviewed during the meeting. **AAC Vice President – Observing, Sharon Carruthers.** Loaner Telescope Program: Revise and publish guidelines for the club's Loaner Telescope Program. Equipment Spreadsheet: Distribute the Equipment Spreadsheet to board members and determine replacement value of listed items, as well as note errors and omissions. Survey 20 inch telescope at Villa Rica: Tentatively scheduled for 16 November. Determine location and disposition of 6 inch Dobsonian telescope. Determine location and disposition of 12 inch telescope. **Treasurer, Harry Falise.** Resolve identity of cash on hand funds with previous treasurer. Investigate investment opportunities and make a recommendation to the Board about club funds currently in savings and checking. Revision of Membership Packet. Reimbursement of AAC Member Tom Crowley for Atlanta Astronomy Expo related expenses. **AAC BOD Member, Ken Poshedley.** Research actions to secure copyright of AAC Logo. **AAC BOD Member, John Lentini.** Research the cost of building additional telescope pads on the observing field. **AAC BOD Member, Rich Jakiel.** Organize the Dark Site Committee and prepare a recommendation on duties and responsibilities of the Dark Site Committee to the board modeled on that of the Membership Committee. Act as Chairman of a committee to coordinate documentation of AAC activities. **Agenda-Officers' Reports. President, Bear Simmons.** Bear is pleased with the results of this year's Peach

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State Star Gaze (PSSG). He is also pleased with the initial results of the latest changes to the format of club's monthly General Meeting. These changes continue to emphasize a shorter overall meeting format, but with the addition of two new program features; "What's Up," and "Astronomy 101." He is also hopeful that a club member can be found to host a "NASA Minute" to provide club members with a quick review of current NASA initiatives with an emphasis on those with an astronomy focus. **Vice President - Programs, Carol Abernathy.** In reviewing the nature of previous speaker presentations, it was suggested that the Programs Chairperson should ask future speakers how they would like to handle audience questions. Carol still has a number of books autographed by previous Peach State Star Gaze (PSSG) speakers Wil Tirion and David Levy. Discussed was how these books might be best disposed of to the club's best advantage. Suggested was sale of the books as well as their use as door prizes, or objects of raffles. Funds are still to be received for the purchase of books at the PSSG November General Meeting - The featured speaker will be AAC member Dr. Michael Covington who will speak about the publication of his latest two books. December General Meeting - The annual Christmas General Meeting is tentatively scheduled for 20 December at Agnes Scott College's Planetarium. **Vice President - Observing, Sharon Carruthers.** 15 AAC members attended the annual picnic, resulting in questioning the continued popularity of the event. Sharon reviewed the observing events for the next month that are listed elsewhere in the newsletter and on the AAC's website at <http://www.atlantaastronomy.org/docs/calendar.htm>. Improvements at the Walter Barber Observatory were discussed including a privet hedge and a survey of the 20 inch telescope. Also discussed was the addition of a 50mm or 80mm finder scope to the Woodruff 24 Inch Tectron telescope. Discussed was the disposition of three AAC telescopes not currently kept at either the Walter Barber or Woodruff Observatories: (1) 6 inch Dobsonian. Telescope was converted to a Dobsonian mount from previous German Equatorial Mount configuration. Intended to be a club loaner scope, its current location is unknown. (2) 8 inch C8 Celestron on a Super Polaris Mount. This scope is currently in the club's loaner program and is currently on loan to AAC member Steve Biegar. (3) 12 inch telescope of unknown configuration. This scope was donated to the AAC and was located at AAC member Jerry Armstrong's several years ago for storage purposes. Revision of the club's loaner telescope program was discussed as well as an accounting of club equipment. **Recording Secretary, Art Russell.** Minutes from the 15 September, 2002 board meeting were presented and accepted. **Corresponding Secretary, Keith Burns.** Deadline for submission of articles for publication in the November, 2002, Focal Point is 28 October, 2002. Reproduction costs for this month's Focal Point was \$123. Keith is continuing to research way to cut the publication costs and noted that fewer

Focal Points were mailed as an increasing number of AAC members have chosen to download the newsletter from the AAC website. **Treasurer, Harry Falise.** Income and Balance Statement: Harry presented a revised Income and Balance Statement, discussion of which consumed a major portion of the meeting. A copy of the current Income and Balance Statement is available upon request from him. Discussed also were revision of the membership packet and reimbursement of Tom Crowley for expenses associated with the Atlanta Astronomy Expo. **AAC BOD Member, Ken Poshedley.** PSSG: Ken provided a short review of the 2002 PSSG and noted its successes and shortfalls. Going forward he will inquire about acquiring exclusive use of the 2002 PSSG site for subsequent PSSGs. He also promised an article to come describing the event for publication in the Focal Point. It was also observed that now was the time to create a standing committee to run the PSSG with Ken Poshedley as its chairman. He asked that the "Ladies of the Night Sky" consider taking on the mission in an official capacity, given that they have unofficially performed in that capacity for the past several years. Ken will also continue to research actions to secure copyright of AAC Logo. **AAC BOD Member, John Lentini.** John is researching the cost of building additional telescope pads on the observing field at Woodruff. **Agenda-Old Business.** **Vice President - Observing, Sharon Carruthers.** Sharon discussed details of the capital budget for the club's Woodruff and Villa Rica facilities. Interested members should contact Sharon and Harry Falise for the details as discussed at the meeting. **Agenda-New Business.** The next board meeting will focus on establishing the 2003 operating budget. Treasurer, Harry Falise, will solicit ideas from officers and committee members for their requirements for the budget. **Next Board Meeting.** The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for 8 December, 2002, in the Druid Chase Office Complex meeting room.

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## Boy Scout Sidewalk Astronomy Events

There are several sidewalk type events coming up where AAC members are requested to assist with teaching astronomy to scouts and their adult leaders, known as scouters. Anyone who would like to participate should contact John Lentini ([johnlentini@yahoo.com](mailto:johnlentini@yahoo.com)) or call 770-984-0175. (Posts to this list will not work.)

Saturday, November 23. There will be a "Scout Expo" at the Jim Bishop Complex in West Cobb. This is a daytime event. Some solar observing, and showing slides about our club and its activities.

Monday, November 25. Venture Crew at Woodruff. These are older co-ed scouts, ages 16-21.

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January 10-12, 2003. the “Scouter’s Winter Campout”, about 300 adult leaders—no boys—will happen at Woodruff. This is always a good time. The AAC has been there for the last three years.

There are lots of opportunities to observe and spread the word.  
John Lentini.

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## Black Holes: Feeling the Ripples

Astronomers have finally confirmed something they had long suspected: there *is* a super-massive black hole in the center of our Milky Way galaxy. The evidence? A star near the galactic center orbits something unseen at a top speed of 5000 km/s. Only a black hole 2 million times more massive than our Sun could cause the star to move so fast. (See the Oct. 17, 2002, issue of *Nature* for more information.)

Still, a key mystery remains. Where did the black hole come from? For that matter, where do *any* super-massive black holes come from? There is mounting evidence that such “monsters” lurk in the middles of most galaxies, yet their origin is unknown. Do they start out as tiny black holes that grow slowly, attracting material piecemeal from passing stars and clouds? Or are they born big, their mass increasing in large gulps when their host galaxy collides with another galaxy?

A new space telescope called LISA (short for “Laser Interferometer Space Antenna”) aims to find out.

Designed by scientists at NASA and the European Space Agency, LISA doesn’t detect ordinary forms of electromagnetic radiation such as light or radio waves. It senses ripples in the fabric of space-time itself—gravitational waves.

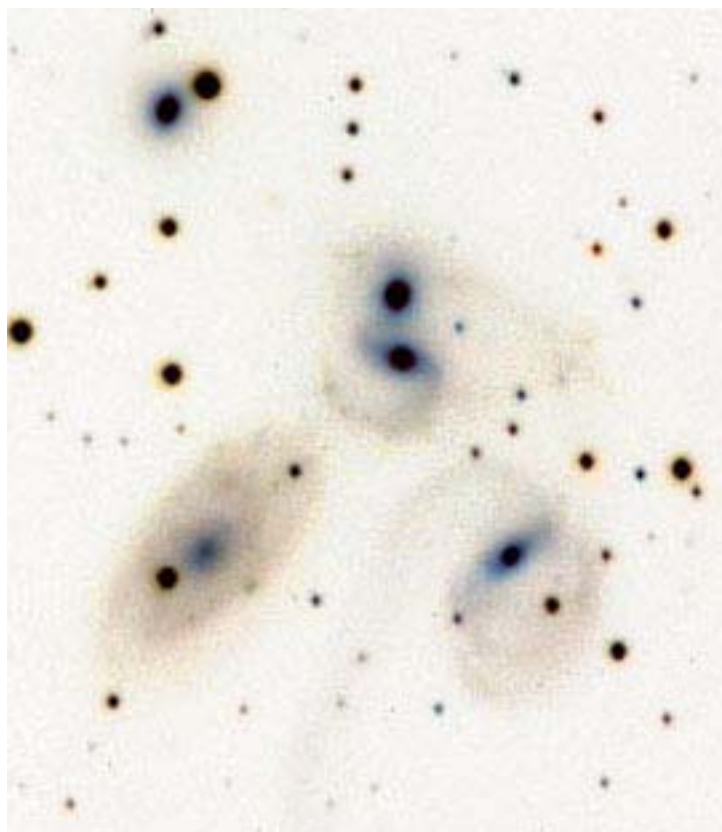
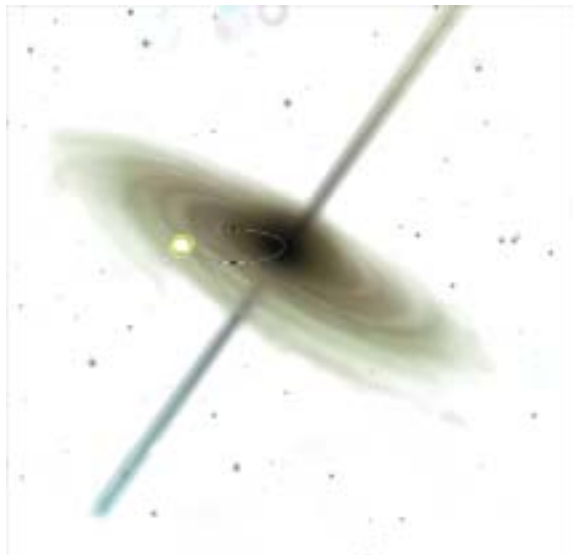
Albert Einstein first realized in 1916 that gravitational waves might exist. His equations of general relativity, which describe gravity, had solutions that reminded him of ripples on a pond. These “gravity ripples” travel at the speed of light and, ironically, do not interact much with matter. As a result, they can cross the cosmos quickly and intact.

Gravitational waves are created any time big masses spin, collide or explode. Matter crashing into a black hole, for example, would do it. So would two black holes colliding. If astronomers could monitor gravitational waves coming from a super-massive black hole, they could learn how it grows and evolves.

Unfortunately, these waves are hard to measure. If a gravitational wave traveled from the black hole at the center of our galaxy and passed through your body, it would stretch and compress you by an amount far less than the width of an atom. LISA, however, will be able to detect such tiny compressions.

LISA consists of three spacecraft flying in formation—a giant triangle 5 million km on each side. One of the spacecraft will shoot laser beams at the other two. Those two will echo the laser signal right back. By comparing the echoes to the original signal, onboard instruments can sense changes in the size of

the triangle as small as 0.0000000002 meters (20 picometers). With such sensitivity, astronomers might detect gravitational waves from all kinds of cosmic sources. The first, however, will probably be the weightiest: super-massive black holes. Will “feeling” the ripples from such objects finally solve their mystery, or lead to more questions? Only time will tell. Scientists hope to launch the LISA mission in 2011.



NGC 7317 aka Stephan’s Quintet. Image taken by Roth Ritter. Picture cropped to fit focal point. Picture also inverted for easier photocopying of this publication. Picture taken with a Celestron C11 SCT. Used a SBIG ST-BE, AO-7 CCD camera at F/10. Picture taken on one of the few clear nights we had at the PSSG this year.



## Atlanta Astronomy Club Listserv

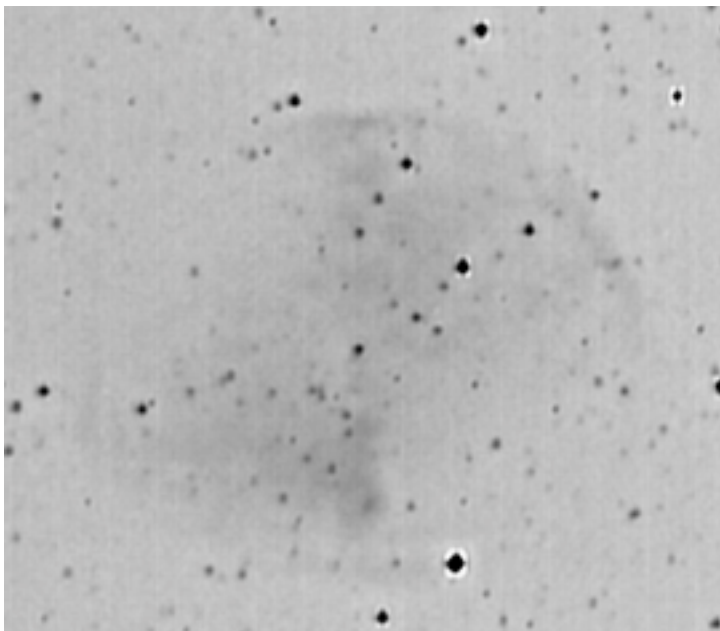
While the Focal Point is a good source for information among other things, it cannot be undated after it is printed. If you have email access with a computer, then you can subscribe to the Atlanta Astronomy Club Listserv. This is a great source for up to the minute info on observing events. You can also post questions about astronomy. You can talk to fellow astronomers about the hobby or other things related to it.

Subscribe to the Atlanta Astronomy Club Mailing List: The name of the new list is: AstroAtlanta. The address for messages is: [AstroAtlanta@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AstroAtlanta@yahoogroups.com). To add a subscription, send a message to: [AstroAtlanta-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AstroAtlanta-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). To cancel your membership, send a message to [AstroAtlanta-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AstroAtlanta-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com). Messages for the list-owner (me) go to: [AstroAtlanta-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AstroAtlanta-owner@yahoogroups.com) or to [LAbbey@mindspring.com](mailto:LAbbey@mindspring.com). The "home page" for the list, from which you can change your account defaults is: <http://www.yahoo.com/group/AstroAtlanta>. This list is owned by Lenny Abbey.

## Get the Focal Point Online

The Focal Point is available online in PDF format. The PDF version is also in color. 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](http://www.adobe.com)

Visit [www.AtlantaAstronomy.org](http://www.AtlantaAstronomy.org) on the web. The link to Focal Points is located at the top of the front page of the website. If it works for you and you want to get the FP via email, send Peter Macumber an e-mail at [pmacumber@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:pmacumber@AtlantaAstronomy.org). The Focal-Point web can be entered by using the Username of AAC and a password of **Crux**. These names are case sensitive! Type AAC and **Crux** exactly as you see it here.



Picture of M27. Still shot of video image. Taken by Dan Lewellyn at Woodruff with Meade 10 SCT scope. Picture inverted for easier printing and cropped to fit this page.

## AAC Contacts

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## *The Focal Point*

Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

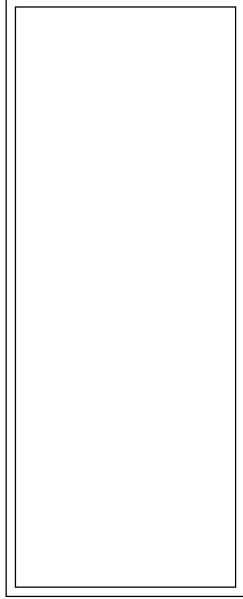
FROM:

Keith Burns  
3740 Burnt Hickory Road  
Marietta, Georgia 30064

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

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

**FIRST CLASS**



### **Calendar**

**November 9th- Orientation and Open House** at the Villa Rica observatory. Special on "How to Buy a Telescope?" Starts at 4PM.

**November 15th- General Membership Meeting** at Emory University at White Hall. Starts at 8PM.

**November 16th- Charlie Elliott Chapter Meeting.** Starts at 5PM. Meeting at Visitor's Center. Talk by Larry Owens on CCD imaging. Observing Leonid Meteor shower to follow at observing field.

**November 16th- GASP** sidewalk astronomy at Red Top Mountain State Park located on Lake Allatoona. Leonid Meteor Shower viewing.

**December 7th- Deep Sky** viewing at Woodruff. Starts at dusk.

**December 8th- Board Meeting.** Scheduled for 3PM at Carol's office board room. Contact Carol Abernathy or Chuck Painter for directions/ more information. \

Date and time for annual christmas banquet is still up in the air at this time. Note sure if it will be a Friday or Saturday evening. Possibly December 13th or 14th. Location Bradley Observatory. The location may change depending on date due to open house conflict at Bradley.

**December 14th- CEWMA open house.**

Visit the new Charlie Elliott Chapter Website for more information on upcoming meetings and happenings. <http://touchmoon.com/ce/index.shtml>