

# The Focal Point

Vol XVI No. 4

The Atlanta Astronomy Club  
Established 1947  
September 2003



Editor: Kosmic Kow

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## September General Membership Meeting

The September 19th meeting will be an introduction to the “how, what and why’s” of imaging ranging from simple piggy back techniques to CCD imaging. In this mini-seminar, four different approaches to imaging will be discussed by club members. The basic approach is 1) “what” is it (a general description and setup), 2) “why” do it, and the advantages/problems with the method and 3) “how” much does it cost and how difficult is it. Leading off the presentation will be Phil Sacco on piggyback photography, followed by Chuck Painter on digital camera imaging, Dan the Planet showman on video imaging and lastly Chris Hetlage on basic CCD imaging. Each talk will last 10 to 15 minutes, followed by a general question round at the end of all the presentations.

Other notes - meetings for **November, December and January** will be on the **2ND FRIDAY** of the month due to accommodating speaker schedules and Chiefland Star Party (November) and the xmas holidays.

Oct 17th meeting: Dr. Ron Buta.

This month the meeting will take place on the Emory University Campus in the White Hall Building. White Hall is located across the street from the new Math and Science Building. Street access is via North Decatur Road. Take North Decatur to Dowman Drive (5 way intersection). Turn onto Dowman Drive and White Hall is second building on right side of road. Note that Dowman Drive changes names to Dickey Drive but still same road. Parking is available along Dowman Drive and a parking lot is located behind the Admissions Building. Access

is via first left after turning onto Dowman Drive from North Decatur Road. The date of the meeting is **Friday August 15th**. Refreshments and general socializing takes place from 7:30 PM to 7:55 PM. Meeting starts at 8 PM sharp.



Picture of Mars taken By Dan Llewellyn. Equipment used included a Planet Cam, Sony handheld camera, and 10 inch Meade SCT.

Picture of M101 taken by Chris Hetlage. Equipment used included 4 inch Tak Refractor, CCD camera, and laptop com-



Picture of M42 taken by Chuck Painter. Equipment used included a 4500 coolpix digital camera and 20 inch Starmaster telescope.

## September Observing Events

September 2-5 Fernbank will be open from 10PM to 2AM. Club members are welcome to set their scopes up. Observing Chair will be there Tuesday night, and maybe more nights. Check the AAC listserv (YahooGroups - AstroAtlanta) for updated information.

September 6 Mars Semi-Open House at VR. Because of all the club members being run ragged due to the popular Mars perihelic opposition, I have decided to call a "Semi-Open House at Villa Rica for Saturday, September 6th. This means that the general public is welcome, but we will have no official program. The public will view Mars and other celestial wonders through member scopes who are there. If someone in attendance who is trained on the 20 wants to open up the observatory fine, otherwise, it will be a gathering of members for another round of Mars.

September 20 Dark Sky Mentone, Alabama 7PM Two days after a last quarter moon. The moon does not rise until about 3am and should be quite spectacular, Mars is at it's peak at about 1am

Directions - Directions from Atlanta: Take I-75 North towards Chattanooga. Take exit 306, that is State road 140 Adairsville. Make a left on 140 towards Adairsville. (West) 140 will dead end into US Hwy 27. Make a right (north) towards Armuchee. US Hwy 27 will take you all the way into the town of Summerville. You will see a Waffle House on the left. Continue straight PAST the Waffle House and the red light, about 50 yards and make a left on State hwy 48 to Menlo. Pass through Menlo and come up the mountain. You will cross one bridge in Georgia, then cross the state line into Alabama, then cross another bridge. About 100 yards past that bridge, you make a left at an old service station that is closed. We will have a marker out where to turn. This should be county road 106, although the sign is a bit further down. Go up the hill, pass a field on the right and at the end of the field make a right on county road 9000. We should have another marker there. One quarter mile down there is a cabin on the left near the road. Turn right on the little road across from the cabin. Another marker should be out. Come up the hill and onto the observing field!

Saturday September 27 - Make up Rain date, Dark Sky Mentone, Alabama. The new moon is Friday the 26th, so we have an opportunity to have a rain date, if the Dark Sky on the 20th is cancelled due to in climate weather.

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## Georgia Astronomy in State Parks

All events start at sunset on Saturday. They begin with a slide presentation on basic astronomy then followed up with an observing session. Club members and guests are encouraged to participate. We only have 2 to 3 scopes on average and can really use the help! You can bring your scope, binoculars or just

yourself. It is a lot of fun and a great way to relax and get to know other club members! The state parks and campers really appreciate us being there. If you have any questions, please contact: Joanne Cirincione - [starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org](mailto:starrynights@AtlantaAstronomy.org)

The following are the dates for the rest of 2003:

**October 4 - Florence Marina State Park, Omaha, GA.**

**November 15 - Unicoi State Park, Helen, GA.**

<http://www.gastateparks.org/>

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## Charlie Elliott Chapter

The next meeting of the chapter is Saturday September 20th, 7:00 PM. Location is the meeting room of the visitor's center. This month Phillip Sacco will be providing a lively talk on Astro Mythology. Observing is planned afterward weather permitting at the astronomy field.

There will be no meeting October because of the PSSG 2003 planned for that weekend.

Additional information on the Chapter including pictures, can be seen at the following website. New location for the CEC website is the following. <http://www.AtlantaAstronomy.Org/CEWMA>

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

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.

Note that material you see in the Focal Point has been sent to me is for use in our newsletter only. If anyone wants to use the material elsewhere, please contact the author of the article or photographer who has taken the picture. With rare exceptions, most people will grant you permission.

## Atlanta Observers' Notebook, September, 1977

### An Observatory for the AAC.

By Lee Wilson

A privately owned observatory for the exclusive use of members is a rarity among amateur astronomy. The members of the Atlanta Astronomy Club are well on their way toward acquiring this new status. Out at the Barber Farm we had a groundbreaking in April, a cement-pouring in June, and now in September roof raising is planned.

Beautiful observatory facilities and instruments to look at the sky with are nice things to have, but everyone must realize that it doesn't come as a free lunch. Money is necessary for buying materials. Volunteers are needed to transform the materials into an observatory. The money and the volunteer labor is being furnished by club members. Some are contributing in both ways. All should be proud to say that they have contributed in at least one way. Remember many small contributions can mount up to one large contribution. Everyone should be able to say that he, or she, has given an amount equal to the price of one movie.

At the end of July approximately \$1,200.00 had been contributed toward the construction of the observatory. So think about it club members. It's a valuable club asset for a small effort from each individual.

- Lee -



Picture above from June 8, 1977. A memorable day in the history of the AAC. The pier for the 16-inch telescope was poured on our new observatory site at the Barber farm. I asked Mark Christensen (the guy who ramrodded the 20" into existence) if he could identify the people in the picture. Here is his reply: *Well, think I would score 50%. The gent in front of the cement truck shoot is Dave Sperling. The guy in the middle looking down is Ray DuVarney. To his left (our right) is Bob Campbell. The gentleman in the tee shirt in front of Bob with his back turned to the camera looks familiar but*

*I can't remember his name. Ditto the bearded gents on either side. They look familiar but. At the time the photo was taken, we did not know if the telescope was going to be a 16" or 20". Mark Christenses managed to convince NASA that it should donate the 20" mirror to us.*

#### Historical Note:

Lee Wilson joined the club in the late 60's. He was a quiet person, but worked hard in the background. He held most offices, and was president for the year 1987-1988. In the early 90's he sold his telescopes at a small fraction of their value. Then he stopped coming to meetings. I later learned that he was a patient at Budd Terrace, Wesley Wood's Alzheimer's unit. I called his family, but they were very reluctant to discuss his illness or condition. We never heard from, or of, him again. It is sad that we did not get to say goodbye to him, but we did give him what he wanted in his time of trial – privacy. Lee Wilson was a good and faithful friend to the club.

-Lenny

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### August 15<sup>th</sup> General Meeting Minutes

By a show of hands, 3 new members were acknowledged, as were 2 guests.

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 by acting President Rich Jakiel, presiding in the absence of our President Jim Moore.

Observing announcements included: August 27<sup>th</sup>- A special Mars observing event is scheduled with Mitzi Adams and the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville. August 27<sup>th</sup>- Fernbank Science Center will host a Mars viewing sessions from 10pm-2am. This will also be a joint sidewalk astronomy event with the AAC, Aug. 28<sup>th</sup>- Phil Bracken is hosting a Mars viewing from the parking lot near his office in Mableton, Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>- in conjunction with Fernbank- Mars on Stone Mountain

Rich Jakiel announced the Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> meeting will be an imaging seminar with Philip Sacco- Piggy-Back camera use, Chuck Painter-digital camera use, Chris Hetlage- CCD's, and Dan the planet Man on Video.

Keith Burns announced the new criterion to post info in the Focal Point- No more late submissions. All submissions must be in by the first of the month, or they will go in the next newsletter.

Ken Poshedly spoke briefly about the PSSG, announcing over 60 registrants. This will be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event. A call for volunteers went out, if interested contact Ken or Joanne Cirincione.

Tom Crowley announced the Chiefland Star Party, Nov. 16-23. Cost is \$40.

*Continued on the next page.*

Tom Buchanan announced a light pollution issue in Fanning County concerning a Billboard lighting ordinance. It was also noted that we are getting cooperation from our neighbors across the street from our Barber Observatory. They have refocused their house lighting.

Carol Abernathy introduced the night's speaker: Mitzi Adams from the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville. Mitzi gave a very informative talk on "The Sun Thru Time." We were treated to some unique optical and x-ray images of our Sun, as well as Coronal Holes and Prominences.

### 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). He is the one who sends out the notice when the monthly issue is available on the website for download. Note that you **do not need** a password or user name to access the newsletter.

### Amateur 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. Tracy Wilson runs the group and has much expertise to offer. You can contact him via email ([tracy@c2optical.com](mailto:tracy@c2optical.com)). Announcements of meetings will be posted on the AAC listserv. The ATM group is still looking for a site to hold their meetings and work on projects. Please contact either Jim Moore (President) or Dan Llewellyn (Vice President) if you may have a location for such use.

### The Astronomical League

As a member of the AAC, you are automatically a member of the Astronomical League. AL for short. I am the ALCOR for the club. My job is to relay information from the AL to our membership. The AL consists of a national organization. Members in the AL include individuals and other astronomy clubs. Check out the website for the AL at [www.astroleague.org](http://www.astroleague.org) to see what they offer. You also get the AL newsletter called The Reflector four times a year. If you have any questions about the AL, please contact me at either [Keith\\_B@Bellsouth.net](mailto:Keith_B@Bellsouth.net) or phone at 770-427-1475.

### Minutes of Board Meeting Aug. 19, 2003

The Board of the Atlanta Astronomy club met Tuesday Aug. 19, 2003 at 7:30 PM at Fernbank. Alex Langoussis moderated. Present were: Jim Moore, Alex Langoussis, Rich Jakiel, Brigitte Fessle, Art Russell, Dan Llewellyn, Evelyn Whalen, Ken Poshedly, Keith Burns, Dan Llewellyn, Julie Moore, Mike Boni, Mark Banks, and John Lentini.

Action items for next meeting: Loaner scope policy review, Website committee preliminary report, and Banquet location.

- 1) The minutes of the last board meeting were approved.
- 2) Evelyn Whalen was appointed treasurer by board.
- 3) Rich Jakiel reported on upcoming speakers: The January speaker would be from the American Astronomical Society, which is meeting in Atlanta, and therefore the **meeting will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in January**. The **December meeting will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday** as is traditional for the Christmas party. The banquet was discussed as possibly being on a Saturday night in April. Due to scheduling problems with the speaker, the board voted to hold the **November meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday** (Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>).
- 4) Keith Burns announced that the **article submission deadline would be the first of each month**. This will allow enough time for the Focal Point to be received before the next meeting.
- 5) Ken Poshedly reported that registration for the PPSG is going smoothly.
- 6) Dan Llewellyn had quite a few things to report on: Villa Rica: All scopes are working. Motion approved to allow up to \$200 for the repair of the Mak dome roof on the Sept. 6 work-day. Motion made and approved to allow \$200 for repair of lawnmower at Villa Rica. **Volunteers needed for maintenance**. Motion approved to buy a ladder if needed for safe entry and exit from the Mak dome. Motion made and approved to spend \$120 on a motor for the Mak. **All observing events must be approved through the observing chair**. Please contact Dan Llewellyn at 404-735-9661 or [zoser@mindspring.com](mailto:zoser@mindspring.com). Please contact observing chair before removing club property from club sites. (contact info above). **An inventory of club equipment has been called for**. Please contact Dan if you have anything that belongs to the AAC. Check with observing chair before working on AAC equipment. Loaner scope policy needs to be discussed. Action and review planned for next meeting .
- 7) The club website was discussed. Officers are to send information to Peter at webmaster address ready for publication. Ad hoc committee is to be formed for website development and update. Peter Macumber will be asked to chair, with 2-3 others involved. Website should be redesigned every 1-2 years to sustain interest. Committee to report to board in 90 days with a goal of January 2004 for implementation.
- 8) Next meeting of the AAC board will be 7:30 PM October 7<sup>th</sup> at Fernbank.



## Careful Planning and Quick Improvisation Succeed in Space Biz

By Tony Phillips

On December 18, 2001, ground controllers at JPL commanded NASA's Deep Space 1 (DS1) spacecraft to go to sleep. "It was a bittersweet moment," recalls Marc Rayman, the DS1 project manager. Everyone was exhausted, including Deep Space 1, which for three years had taken Rayman and his team on the ride of their lives.

DS1 blasted off atop a Delta rocket in 1998. Most spacecraft are built from tried-and-true technology—otherwise mission controllers won't let them off the ground. But Deep Space 1 was different. Its mission was to test 12 advanced technologies. Among them: an experimental ion engine, a solar array that focused sunlight for extra power, and an autopilot with artificial intelligence. "There was a good chance DS1 wouldn't work at all; there were so many untried systems," recalls Rayman.

Nevertheless, all 12 technologies worked; the mission was a big success. Indeed, DS1 worked so well that in 1999 NASA approved an extended mission, which Rayman and colleagues had dreamed up long before DS1 left Earth—a visit to a comet. "We were thrilled," says Rayman. And that's when disaster struck. DS1's orientation system failed. The spacecraft couldn't navigate! What do you do when a spacecraft breaks and it is 200 million miles away? "Improvise," says Rayman.

Ironically, the device that broke, the 'Star Tracker,' was old technology. The DS1 team decided to use one of the 12 experimental devices—a miniature camera called MICAS—as a substitute. With Comet Borrelly receding fast, they reprogrammed the spacecraft and taught it to use MICAS for navigation, finishing barely in time to catch the comet. "It was a very close shave."

In September 2001, DS1 swooped past the furiously evaporating nucleus of Comet Borrelly. "We thought the spacecraft might be pulverized," Rayman recalls, but once again DS1 defied the odds. It captured the best-ever view of a comet's heart and emerged intact.

By that time, DS1 had been operating three times longer than planned, and it had nearly exhausted its supply of thruster-gas used to keep solar arrays pointed toward the Sun. Controllers had no choice but to deactivate the spacecraft, which remains in orbit between Earth and Mars.

Rayman has moved on to a new project—Dawn, an ion-propelled spacecraft that will visit two enormous asteroids, Ceres and Vesta, in 2010 and 2014. "Dawn is based on technologies that DS1 pioneered," he says. Even asleep, DS1 continues to

amaze. Find out more about DS1 at <http://nmp.jpl.nasa.gov/ds1>. For kids, go to <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/ds1dots.htm> to do an interactive dot-to-dot drawing of Deep Space 1.

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



*This was the final image of the nucleus of comet Borrelly, taken just 160 seconds before Deep Space 1's closest approach to it. This image shows the 8-km (5-mile) long nucleus from about 3417 kilometers (over 2,000 miles) away.*



## Atlanta Astronomy Club Listserv

If you have email access with a computer, then you can subscribe to the Atlanta Astronomy Club Listserv. This is a 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.

Subscribe to the Atlanta Astronomy Club Mailing List: The name of the 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.yahoogroups.com/group/AstroAtlanta>. This list is owned by Lenny Abbey.

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## Atlanta Astronomical Imagers Listserv

To join the AAI group simply subscribe to the AAI listserv described below. Once subscribed, you will be connected to a wealth of knowledge and content.

As stated above, the AAI will also maintain a Yahoo Groups listserv. The name of this Yahoo Group is Atlanta\_Astro\_Imaging. To learn more about the Atlanta\_Astro\_Imaging group, please visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AtlantaAstroImaging>. To join the AAI listserv simply send an email to; [AtlantaAstroImaging@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AtlantaAstroImaging@yahoogroups.com). If you wish to unsubscribe simply send an email to [AtlantaAstroImaging-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AtlantaAstroImaging-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com). All are welcome to join, even if you just want to see the wonderful images produced by this group. The moderators are Chris Hetlage, [mailto:chrishet@attbi.com](mailto:mailto:chrishet@attbi.com) and Donovan Conrad [mailto:donovan@donconrad.com](mailto:mailto:donovan@donconrad.com).

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## Charlie Elliott Chapter Website

For those who don't know, we have a chapter of the Atlanta Astronomy Club called the Charlie Elliott Chapter. They meet monthly at the visitor's center on the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Management Area property. Visit their website at <http://www.AtlantaAstronomy.Org/CEWMA>.

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## Atlanta Astronomy Club Website

While this newsletter is the official information source for the Atlanta Astronomy Club, it is only up to date the day it is

printed. So if you want more up to date information, go to our club's website. The website contains pictures, directions, membership applications, events updates (when available) and other information. <http://www.atlantaastronomy.org>

### AAC Contacts

**President:** Jim Moore 7-242-6735  
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**Program Chair:** Rich Jakiel 7-577-2330  
[rjakiel@earthlink.net](mailto:rjakiel@earthlink.net)

**Observing Chair:** Dan Llewellyn 6-579-9661  
[zoser@mindspring.com](mailto:zoser@mindspring.com)

**Corresponding Secretary/ ALCOR:** Kosmic Kow  
[Keith\\_B@Bellsouth.net](mailto:Keith_B@Bellsouth.net)

**Treasurer:** Michael Nischan 770-753-9390  
[uwe@mindspring.com](mailto:uwe@mindspring.com)

**Recording Secretary:** Julie Moore 7-242-6735  
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**Elliott Observing Chair:** Fred Taylor 7-385-9106

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**Elliott Coordinator:** Alesia Rast [Alesia\\_Rast@mail.dnr.state.ga.us](mailto:Alesia_Rast@mail.dnr.state.ga.us)  
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**Obser. & Telescope Training:** Stef Whetstone 7-460-7678  
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## *The Focal Point*

Newsletter of The Atlanta Astronomy Club, Inc.

FROM:

Kosmic Kow

3740 Burnt Hickory Road

Marietta, Georgia 30064

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

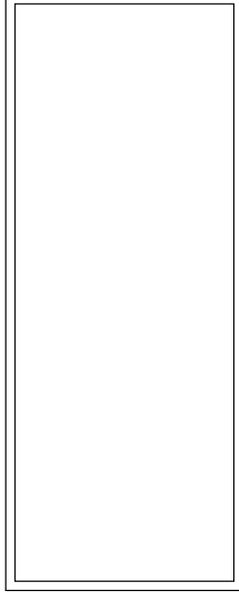
Atlanta Astronomy Club

PMB 305

3595 Canton Road A9

Marietta, GA 30066

FIRST CLASS



### Calendar

**September 19th: General Membership Meeting.** Featured speakers are Philip Sacco, Chuck Painter, Dan Llewellyn, and Chris Hetlege. Four short talks on various aspects of Astro photography. Meeting starts at 8PM sharp. Meeting to be held at Emory University.

**September 20th: Charlie Elliott Chapter Meeting** and observing. Phillip Sacco will be providing a lively talk on Astro Mythology. Meeting at Visitors Center. Starts at 7PM. Meeting rain or shine. Observing to follow weather permitting.

**September 20th: Deep Sky Session at Mentone, Alabama.** Starts at Dusk.

**September 27th: Deep Sky Session Mentone** Raindate.

**Oct 1st: Focal Point Article and Information Deadline.** Time no later then 11:59 PM.

**Oct 17th: General Membership Meeting.** Featured speaker Dr. Ron Buta. Meeting starts at 8PM sharp. Meeting to be held at Emory University.

**October 22nd- 26th: PSSG 2003.** Registration fee required. No walkins. Observing and talks.

### 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 Kosmic Kow via my spokes person at the following address. Send it to Keith Burns 3740 Burnt Hickory Road Marietta, Georgia 30064 or email my spokes person at [Keith\\_B@bellsouth.net](mailto:Keith_B@bellsouth.net). You can submit articles anytime up and including the deadline date. **The deadline for October is 11:59 PM Oct 1st.** Submissions will no longer be accepted after the deadline. Note that the **October issue** will be published **October 1st**. Sometimes it takes me a week to do the newsletter. So don't expect to see it til about the 5th.