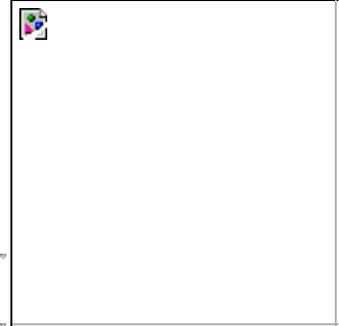


# *The Guide Star*

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association  
of Pittsburgh



*A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh*

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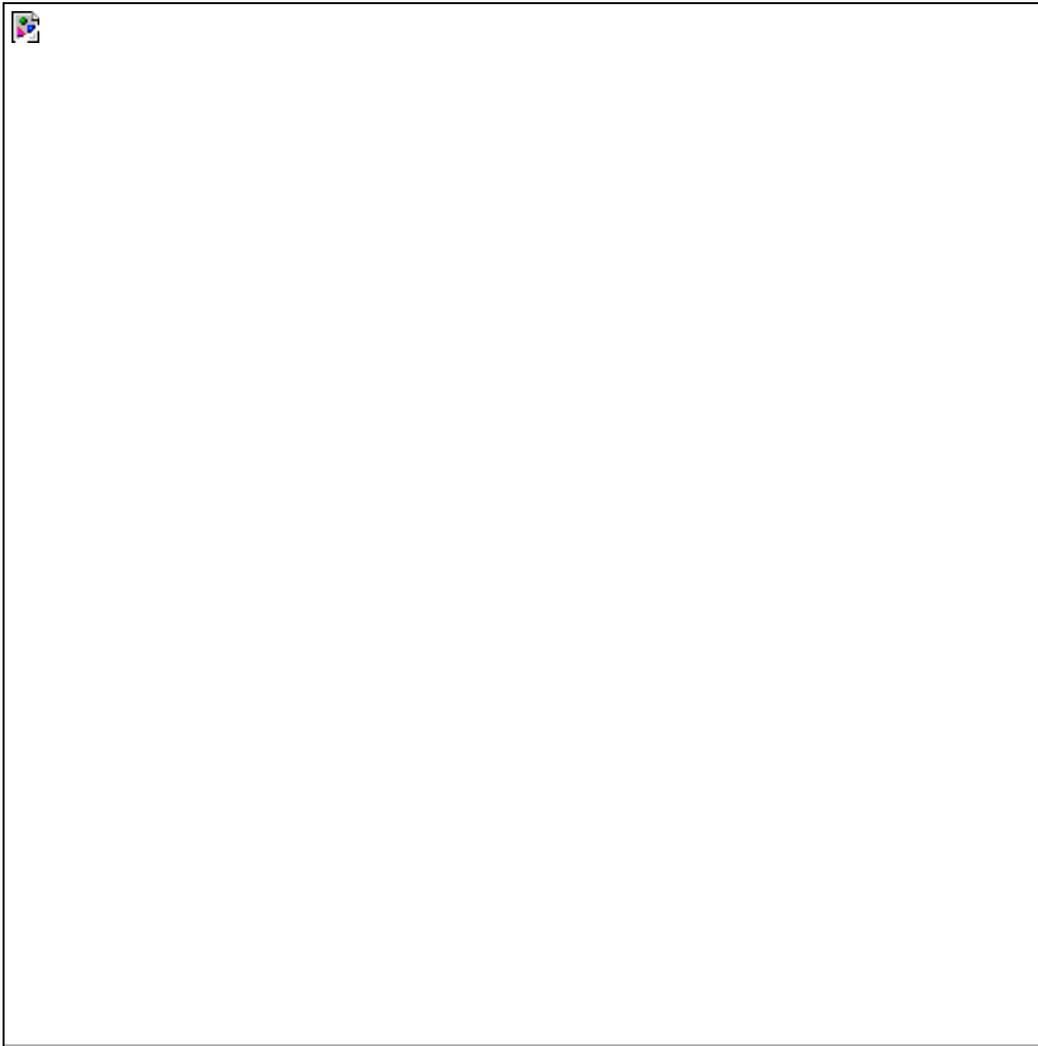
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**Next Wagman Renewal Not 'Till 2010!**

## **2001: THE LEASE ODYSSEY IS OVER**



*With the new lease in hand, Wagman star parties will flourish for years to come.*

**For Flacc Stifel, the battle** to conclude a new and improved lease for Wagman Observatory must at times have seemed like a nightmare, rather than a routine engagement with local government. After 14 months, hundreds of phone calls/e-mails/snail-mails, scores of meetings and countless editing sessions at the computer, Flacc's persistence has earned us a new lease with Allegheny County for use of the Wagman Observatory and site.

The Big Moment occurred on December 4 during the regularly scheduled 5:00 pm meeting of County Council. First up on the agenda was the Living Wage legislation, followed by the County budget and a new tobacco sales ordinance. We finally 'caught the bus' at 9:35 pm when the Wagman lease ordinance was brought up for consideration and voting. The vote was unanimous with one abstention (law firm conflict of interest). At *Guide Star* press time, the only remaining step to actual enactment of the lease was placing signatures on the official document.

Even more significant than the lease's 10-year term is the protocol for the next renewal in 2010: If we and the County have no problems to that point, the Wagman lease is automatically renewed for another ten years (something the Park Director wanted also). The new lease is vastly improved over the original in many other respects as well. For example, if the County plans to terminate the lease (fear not...a near-zero probability),

they must inform us a year in advance. Also, the document has been cleansed of various irrelevant provisions the County had copied into the original from other leases (e.g. regarding ownership of vehicles). In the February *G.S.*, Flacc will walk us through the details of the new lease.

Here's a synopsis of the all the two-steps-forward/one-step-back events over the past 14 months that led to the new AAAP/Allegheny County agreement.

- Original lease was for 10 years, and ran until 1996.
- 1995: Wagman Phase II addition/Brashear scope completed, lease extended to end of 1999 (5 years).
- 1999: Lease only extended 1 year, to end of 2000, because of County Government change in structure.
- October, 2000: Special report prepared for County, long-term lease requested.
- December 2000: County requests February 2001 meeting.
- February 28, 2001: Reiland and Stifel meet with the County. Five-year renewal is suggested. County Council Public Works Committee meets about prospective ordinance. After discussions with Council members, County Manager and Public Works Director decided in following months to revise the lease and try to make extensions automatic.
- June-July 2001: AAAP gets legal help to review and re-draft the agreement. First draft submitted to County.
- August 2001: County replies with their review and modifications.
- September 2001: AAAP agrees to most County proposals and sends final draft to County.
- November 20, 2001: Additional copy sent to County and agreement is finalized.
- December 4, 2001: Council approves ordinance authorizing lease extension for 10 years, with automatic extensions if there are no objections from either party.

While Flacc Stifel performed the lion's share of the Wagman lease negotiations, our thanks to **Tom Reiland**, **Roy Lahet** and others who either attended meetings or made informal contacts with various officials to help the process along. And now we can get back to having one heckuva good time at Wagman observing the Universe and enriching the visiting public.

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## Tip of the Month

**If you would like to make a brief presentation at an upcoming AAAP meeting, or bring up an issue that may require some discussion time, please notify the club President in advance so that agenda time can be allocated.**

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## Jan. Program: Buhl Staffers Review Joys, Challenges of Their Professions



We've always felt a strong kinship with our colleagues at the CSC's Buhl Planetarium. Even though we and the Buhl staff conduct most of our public programs in very different venues (e.g. star party sites vs. planetariums) with very different tools (e.g. telescopes vs. planetarium projectors), we both face the daunting task of making the sky accessible to the general public. At the **January 11** AAAP meeting (Allegheny Observatory, **7:30 pm**), **Jenny Pon** and **Barb Albert** of the CSC's Buhl Planetarium will describe some of the tools, techniques and experiences of their 'cosmic' professions. Jenny Pon's lecture, *Bringing the Sky Down to Earth -- Planet Watching Made Easy*, reviews her secrets for

producing the popular *Abrahms Planetarium Sky Calendar*. She will also take a look at the 5-planet gathering coming up in April and May of 2002. Jenny is Buhl's Staff Astronomer and Digistar Programmer. Barb Albert, Production Assistant of the Buhl Planetarium, will give a brief overview of her role as artist and production assistant for the planetarium.

It's not a coincidence that we feature Jenny and Barb this month. Next month's (**Feb. 8, 2002**) AAAP meeting is our 2nd annual trek to Buhl for a free planetarium show.

### **AO Meeting Protocols**

Yes, yes, you read it here before: Please do not call Allegheny Observatory for last-minute meeting information or directions. Contact any AAAP officer for this information. See the [map](#) (below) for directions to A.O. If winter weather seems to threaten the meeting, check with our officers or the club's internet Listserv for rescheduling updates. And whereas Wagman Observatory has acres of parking space, Allegheny has almost none. Carpooling with your AAAP brethren will help a lot.

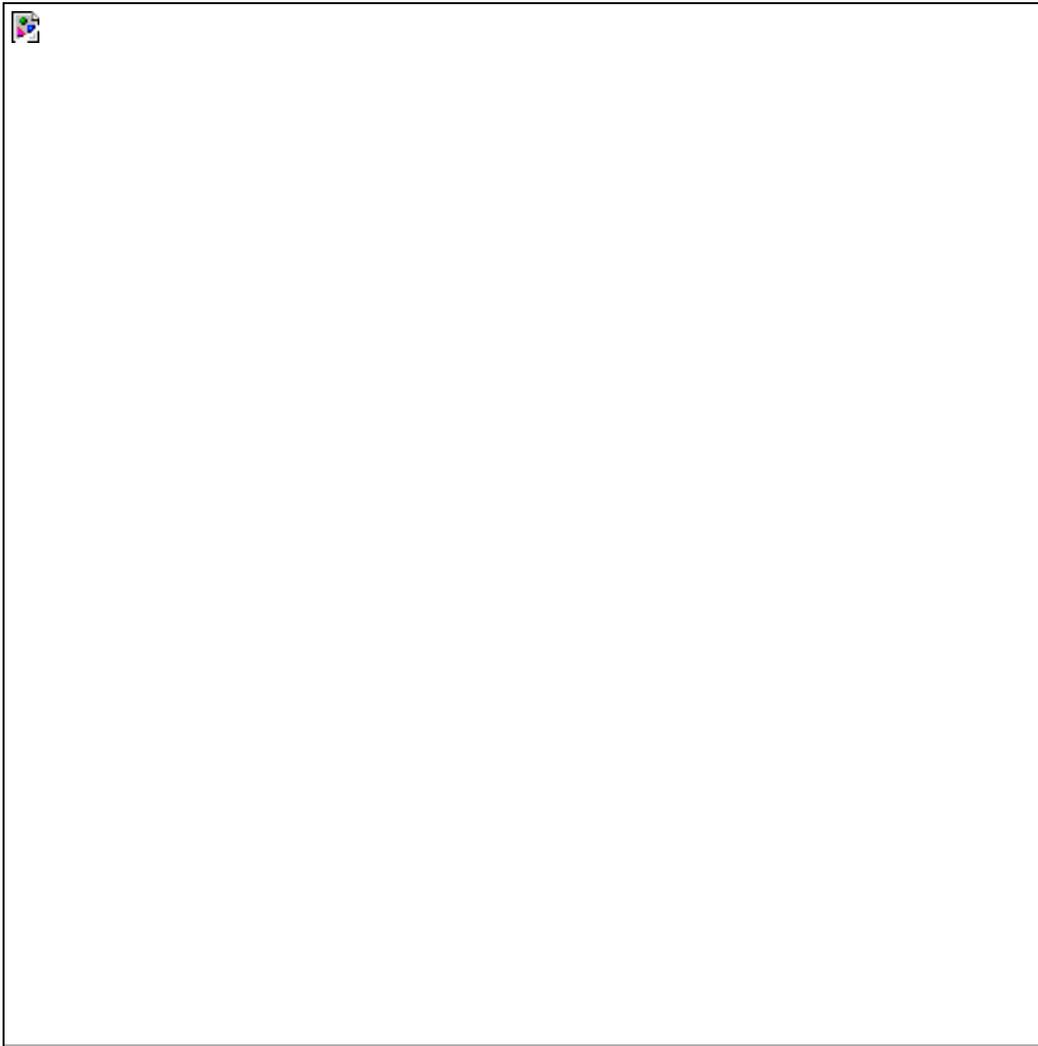
### **Bring Cans for Recycling**

The AAAP can recycling program lives on. Member **Roy Lahet** will be gathering cans at the January 11 meeting with, presumably, some very large trash bags to carry away all the cans in one swell foop. Note: In recent years, the club's can recycling program has been very profitable, raking in hundreds of dineros.

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**Flacc Stifel, Ann Norman and the Browns**

## **No Debate About AAAP Service Award Winners**



*AAAP Service Awards Winners for 2001: Flacc Stifel and Ann Norman. Not shown: Steve and Charleen Brown  
(Photo by Rich Bailey)*

Strictly speaking, AAAP service awards are offered as an incentive for members to volunteer for club programs (volunteering is the life blood of all non-profit organizations). But we genuinely enjoy presenting these awards each year, even if some very deserving members must be passed over from time to time. For the 2001 term, the Executive Committee had no trouble picking out four outstanding members:

**George Lindbloom Award** (best overall service to the club): *Flacc Stifel* was the hands-down winner for his relentless pursuit of the new Wagman lease (which absorbed a great deal of his personal time), as well as his multi-faceted contributions to other endeavors such as maintenance of the Wagman Observatory and its scopes, and helping drive Laurel Highland Star Cruise. Flacc is the first two-time winner of the Lindbloom Award.

**Lois Harrison Award** (best service from a female member): *Ann Norman* has been a standout at just about every AAAP program or event, including Wagman star parties, LHSC, Astronomy Day, etc. She has also volunteered her time "off-campus" so to speak, with presentations to outside groups. Ann often brings her twin sons to Wagman star parties.

**Nova Award** (best service from a new member): The AAAP "Rookies of the Year" are *Steve and Charleen Brown* who, like Ann Norman, have rolled up their sleeves for a wide variety of club events and programs. (Nova winners face the added challenge of working, at least initially, with a group of total strangers.) The Browns are our first husband/wife co-winners of an AAAP service award. Congratulations again to all of this year's service award winners, and thanks for helping the AAAP to keep going strong.

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## Wagman Winterfest Fast Approaching

Let's hope that recent mild fall weather foretells a mild winter, and that Wagman Winterfest 2002 will escape major snow and/or cold conditions to continue its tradition of success. Make sure **February 16, 2002** is marked on your calendars for the AAAP's unique cold-weather public star party and kick-off of the 2002 star party season. Winterfest founder [Pete Zapadka](#) is once again coordinating this year's event. Let him know this month if you are planning to bring refreshments, prizes, etc. or plan to set up a dealer's booth. Pete can be reached at 412-487-9363.

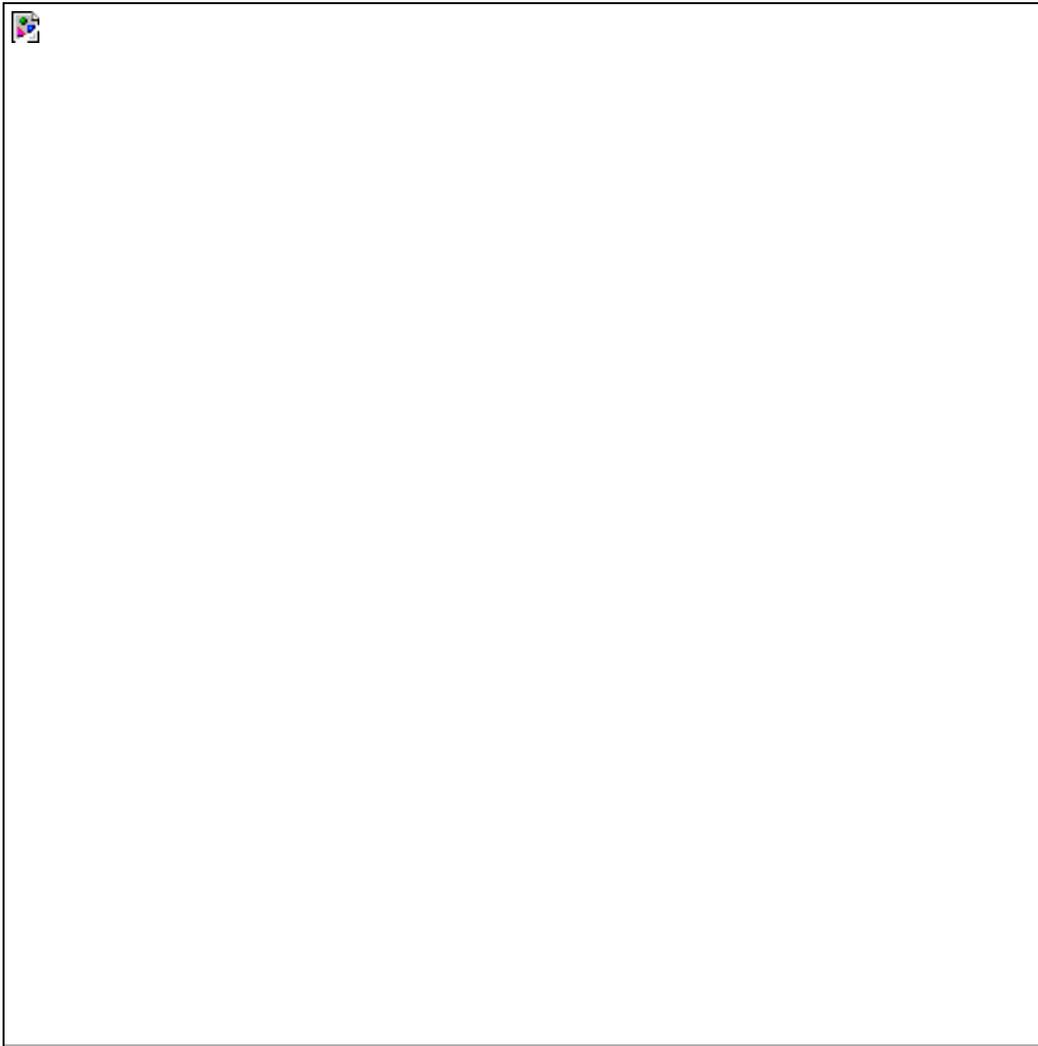
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## Don't Touch That Dial: Wagman Lock Combos Change

Don't be caught in the numbing cold with the wrong numbers for the Wagman Observatory entrance gate and front door locks. We change the door combo at the top of each year to prevent entry from any past "bad-apple" members who still have a key to the building (happily, this has never been a problem). Current keyholders can contact [John Holtz](#) to obtain the new lock sequences and pay their \$10 annual Wagman key fee. John will be glad to explain the particulars of the fee.



## Holiday Party "Gifts" Were More Than Just Door Prizes



**Like previous AAAP holiday parties**, the Dec. 13 affair featured laughter, applause, chatter and that general "happy-mellow" feeling that is familiar to most such parties, that is, until we watched the Moon swallow Saturn, meteors pelting the sky every second, or auroral curtains drape the Wagman northern sky. At these moments, the happy-mellow feeling was displaced with the spellbound silence we experience year-round with astronomical phenomena. Thanks again to all who made this year's party yet another grand success, including those who were unable to bring any items, but had a good time nonetheless. See Emily Bell's [thank-you article](#) (below) for all those members who did provide contributions of time and goodies.

### **What Is Known About "Unknowns"**

Plaudits to Tom Reiland for his intriguing and fresh look at the subject of UFOs. In the best tradition of astronomers, Tom reviewed the broad range of known phenomena and objects that are frequently mistaken for UFOs such as aircraft, weather balloons, satellites, cloud formations, distant lamps, etc. Among astronomical sources, Venus is a commonly reported UFO because of its brilliance, position and scintillation effects close to the horizon. Capella is a similarly mis-observed object in the fall northeastern sky. Tom recounted some of the hundreds of UFO calls he has received over the years at Allegheny and Wagman Observatories, as well as his own observation of a diamond-shaped object while traveling on I-79 South about 15 years ago. He refers to the 5% or less of UFOs that cannot be explained as simply "unknowns" that

have no conceivable explanation, including alien spacecraft. Looking at the psychology of the UFO phenomena, Tom suggested that many of the more ardent UFO followers are really looking for an "Alien Messiah" to come down from space and solve all our problems.

### **...And You Is the "Awardee"**

It was nice to have most of the past year's contest and service award winners present at the party (such as Flacc Stifel, Ann Norman, Mark Arelt and Frank Weilgus). We gave Flacc a spontaneous "Standing-O" when he was presented the Lindbloom Award. (True to form, Flacc had to be coaxed to come up front to receive the award.) Brunelle Photo contest winners were presented with photo finishing certificates from Sulkosky-Brunelle Photographics. Dave Smith has been instrumental in maintaining our association with S-B over many years now.

While on the subject of member recognition, Tom Reiland also presented Wagman hats and patches to all the [members who helped](#) at last year's star parties.

### **Every Mode of Astro-Imagery**

Zowie! If you bypassed the 2001 holiday party, shame on you for missing a marvelous selection of fixed and moving astronomical imagery, with lots of good shots from the recent all-sky aurora, Leonid meteor storm and Saturn occultation. Larry McHenry and Jerry Zhu provided totally amazing real-time video footage of the Saturn slipping behind the Moon and meteors bursting out from Orion, respectively. Tom Reiland ran vivid slides of recent auroras, including nice displays over Wagman and the great November 5 display. Dave Pensenstadler and Bob Kepple showed equally cool slides of the Leonids as seen from Arizona. (Note: Dave Pensenstadler is taking up hands-on meteorite hunting by taking up meteorites he finds during his observing expeditions. He showed pictures of several recent finds made during his Arizona trip.) And thanks to the wonders of modern technology, Terry Trees was able to show a few shots of the same-day partial solar eclipse in the sunset sky.

### **Another Fine Door Prize Collage**

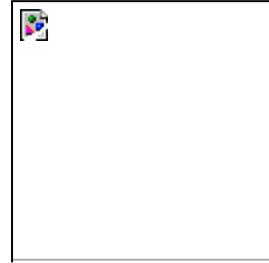
This year's door prize table looked like a slice of merchandise from one of those "dollar" stores...one of just about everything. Our thanks to all the members who contributed items such as a Telrad, T-shirts, books, calendars, CDs, a "Wave Lamp" (?), binoculars, right-angle prism, a telescope eyepiece, red-lens flashlights and much more. Special mention is made for a set of Bob Kepple's famous Astro Cards, a daylight-film developer tank from Mark Arelt, AAAP gift membership certificates from Emily Bell and T-shirts from Tim Hagan's [Helix Co.](#)

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## **My Holiday Party "Thank You" List**

*by Emily L. "Ma" Bell*

It is my pleasure to serve as "Party Princess", but it is each of you who bring food and/or help clean up who make our holiday gathering so enjoyable. Thanks to Mary Hall for running the kitchen and doing virtually all the clean-up (I hope your back is feeling better). Thanks to Dave Houggy and Phil Breidenbach for making special trips to get the things I forgot: tablecloths and condiments. (This year I missed Jean Reiland very much because she always thought of all that stuff). Miranda Arelt was nice company in the kitchen, too.



Debbie Marshall brought cookies; the Melchars - potato salad and brownies and they helped in the kitchen; Ariel Kelly - the KFC chicken; Larry Circosta - pop and chex mix; Kevin Van Horne - taco salad and chips and dip; Rich and Linda Bailey - date and nut cake; Gary Myers - pineapple upside down cake; Dave Smith - cookies; Bill Roemer - pop; Alison Conte - muffins; Rich Hansen - grapes; the Yorkshires - petit fours (or is that petits four?); Kenn and Josh Lippert - rummmm balls; John Holtz - ice creammmm; Flacc Stifel - hot butterscotch sauce; Ed Moss - cappuccino and did kitchen duty; Dave Houggy - shrimp sauce; Phil Breidenbach - cookies; Mary Hall - baked beans; Don Shepherd - kolbassi barbecue; the Arelts - cookies and brownies.

And those are the just the people whose names I was able to write down. I know there are others, so please refresh my memory and I will add you to the thank you list. I remember cole slaw and strawberry/banana/pretzel pie and potato salad and brownies, and the plates and utensils, and probably forgot other stuff, too. It takes an astronomy club to have a party! Thanks again.

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## Recent *Trib* Article Covers AAAP and Buhl History, Achievements

*by George Guzik (from AAAP Listserver)*

Congratulations to Terry Trees, John Holtz, Flacc Stifel, Mark Arelt, John Radzilowicz, and Frank Wielgus for their fine contributions to the article on local astronomy activities that appears in the December 2 edition of the *Focus* magazine in the Pittsburgh *Tribune-Review*.

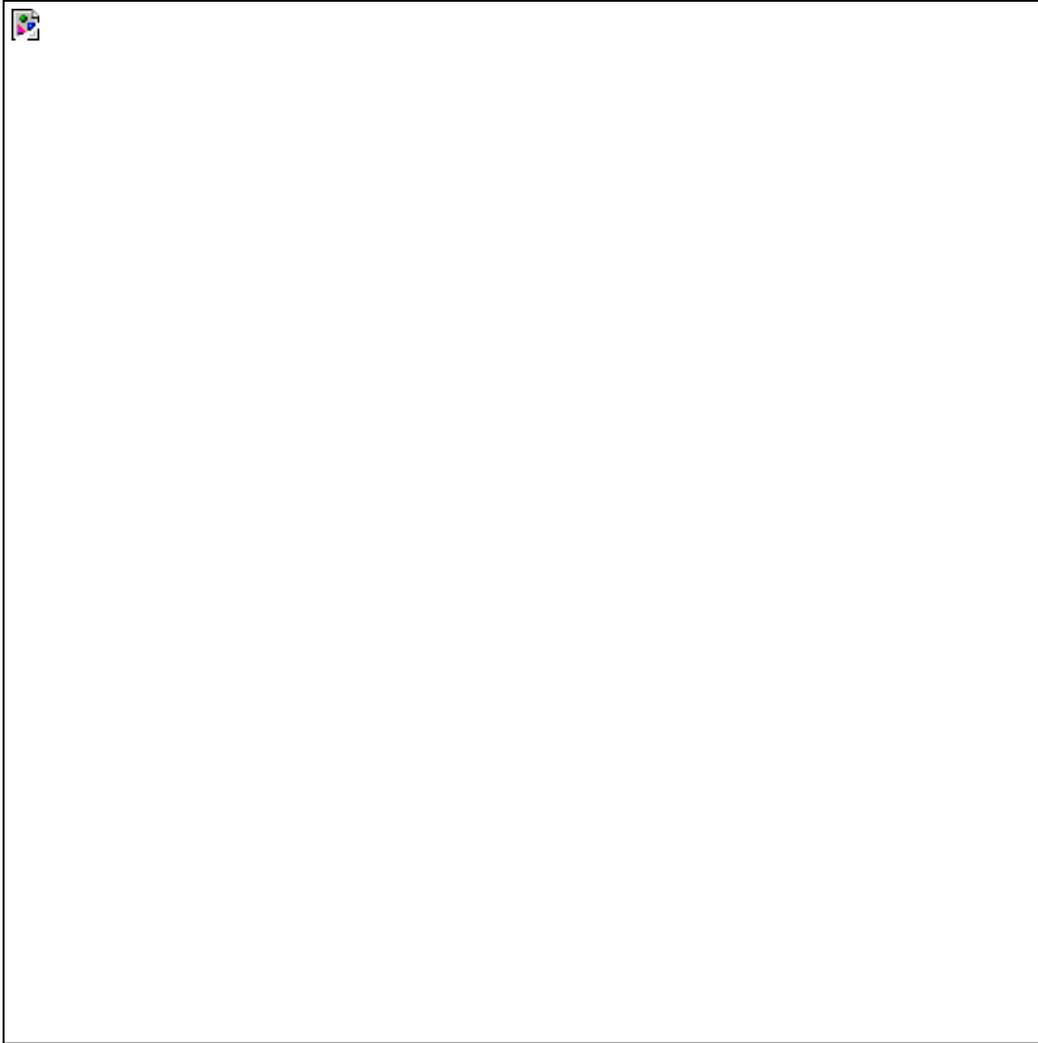
"The 'WOW' Factor: Astronomers Have Eyes Toward the Sky," by Gerard DeFlicht, discusses the histories of the AAAP and Buhl Planetarium. It then provides an overview of the current activities of the AAAP, Buhl, and the observatory at the Carnegie Science Center. Terry Trees and John Holtz describe observing and their astronomical interests/pursuits and John Radzilowicz discusses his work at the CSC.

The article has a good photo of Flacc Stifel working with the Manka Reflector and gives examples of the photographic excellence of Mark Arelt and Frank Wielgus. The Brashear even made it to the cover of the magazine along with John R. and the Meade at CSC! Highly Recommended Reading!

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## New AAAP Planetarium Reassembled and Tested

*by Larry McHenry (from AAAP Listserver)*



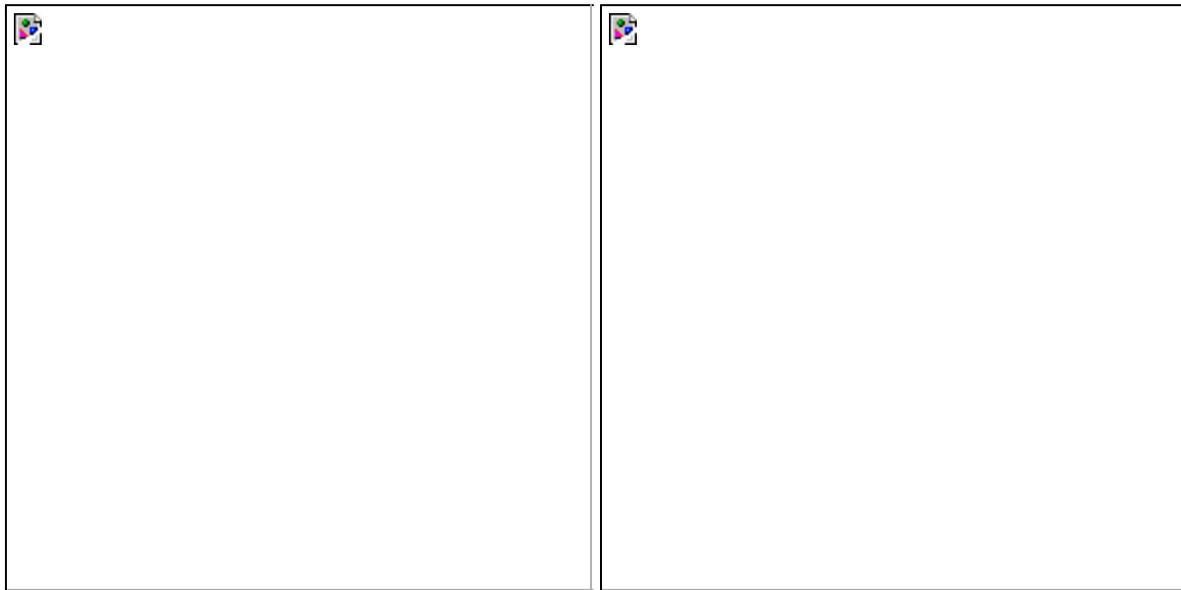
*Photo by David L. Smith*

Ed Moss, Dave Smith, Kyle McHenry, and I got together at Dave's place on the afternoon of December 8 to work on the club's recently purchased planetarium. We hauled the machine and accessories out of Dave's storage area, and moved them to his studio where we could work on it in comfort. We proceeded to disassemble the machine (as best as we could) and cleaned up the insides. We also cleaned the accessory projectors.

After it became dark enough outside, (Dave has big curtainless windows!) we turned on the projector and tried out the various control settings. I'm very pleased to report that, with the exception of a few burned out light bulbs (which we didn't bother to replace at the time), everything is in working order.

During a break for pizza, Kyle studied one of the program manuals (Jupiter: The King World). Afterwards, he installed the needed accessory projectors, initialized the control panel settings, set the proper meridian and RA/Dec positions, inserted the program slides, 8-track audio, and digital program board. Kyle then proceeded to run the planetarium show in auto mode, and was only off in his timing by 1 slide! Not bad at all for a first attempt! (and a 14 year old operator at that).





Thank the heavens, so to speak, that so many AAAP members continue to help out so many times at Wagman star parties. The parties have become popular with the general public such that a 300-guest night is now considered average attendance. At last month's holiday party, Wagman Director Tom Reiland had the distinct pleasure of handing out Wagman staff hats and patches to so many deserving members. Here's the list Tom has compiled over last year's star party season, based on members' sign-ins to the Wagman logbook:

<b>Name</b>	<b>SPs</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>SPs</b>
Ed Moss	18	Terry Trees	9
Eric Heckathorn	16	John Cheng	7
Tom Reiland	15	John Close	7
John Holtz	15	Joyce Osborne-Fischer	7
Flaccus Stifel	15	Roy Lahet (1)	7
Pete Zapadka	14	Jean Roemer	7
George Guzik	13	Bill Yorkshire	7
Bill Hayeslip	13	Tim Colbert	6
Don Hoecker	12	Tim Manka	6
Bill Roemer	12	Larry McHenry	5
Frank Pastin	10	Brian Melchar	5
Dave Smith	10	Marca Melchar	5
John Diller	9	Dan Reed	5
Eric Fischer	9	Goeffrey Trees	5
Bob Florida	9	Paula Meddings (2)	1
Ed Honkus	9	Mari Jo Meyers (3)	4+
Les Johnson	9	Wayne Meyers (4)	4+
Trevor Lewis	9	Wade Barbin	2

**Contribution Notes:**

- (1) Includes can recycling
- (2) Includes booking groups
- (3) Includes sales
- (4) Includes building repair

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## Recent Light Pollution Issues Need Our Attention

*by Larry McHenry*

I'm asking members to write to the PA Senate committee (address below) which now has the Outdoor Lighting Control Act (HB 300), and request that they have a public hearing on the legislation. Hopefully, we will be able to convince the senators to amend the bill. The committee address is:

Senator Mary Jo White  
Environmental Resources Committee  
168 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA. 17120



I would like to ask again for volunteers to serve on the "Light Pollution" Committee and work on the issues that affect the AAAP. With all of the other club activities that I am currently involved with and committed too, I really don't have the time to put into this committee. The reason that I've been involved to this extent has been due to the short time frame we had to respond to these issues. Going forward, I am not going to have available free time to put into this.

So far, Dave Smith is the only member who has volunteered to work on the committee. Dave can't do it all by himself. I will help as much as I can, but again, my plate is already full. The same holds true for the other club officers. They are all already involved with multiple AAAP commitments. What we really need is for some of the other 550 club members to step forward and help out.

So please, if you're looking for something in the club to become active in, this is the area where we could really use some help. Contact either Dave or myself and let us know you can help.

*Up-lit billboards are a big light Pollution Problem (right)*

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## A.O. Open House "Troops" Stage Another Good Program

*by Lou Coban*

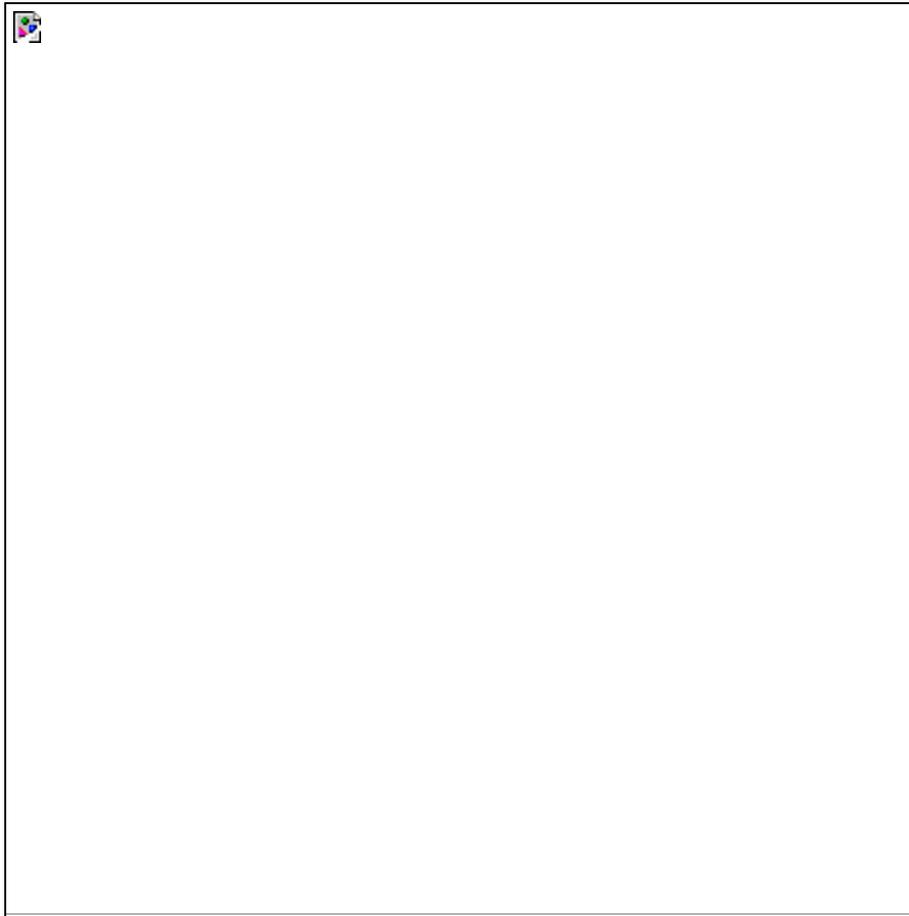
Here's the list of volunteers for the 2001 Allegheny Observatory Open House. Most of our outside help didn't come because of the weather with a few exceptions (one of which was club member George Guzik who braved the high winds and snow flurries to show some of our guests the downtown buildings close up). Although the weather was bad and there a few minor mishaps, the Open House was another great one. Many thanks to those who volunteered their time to help us out. Also a special thanks goes to Dave Turnshek and Richard Griffiths for rounding up the Pitt and CMU professors and students.

Umi Abbas	Richard Griffiths	Kavan Ratnatunga
Wade Barbin*	George Guzik*	Francesca Reale
Michele Belfort	Mike Hahn	Lorenzo Rimoldini
Yvette Blair*	John Hillier	Rachel Roberts
David Burkhard*	Doc Keeley*	Nancy Robinson
Joseph Busche	Brenda Keeley	Jill Schaefer*
Eric Canali*	Kevin Kepes	Bob Schmidt*
Cristian Catone	Truman Kohman*	Sam Schmidt
Will Chase	Bob Kramer	Ramin Skibba
Bryan Clark	Ryuichi Kurosawa	Rob Snyder
Pat Clevenger	Jack Greenberg*	Alex Sozzetti
Lou Coban*	Janet Greenberg*	Alex Stern
Brad Collins	Leslie Johnson*	Judy Stern
Andy Connolly	Theresa Lacombe	Lee Stern
Alberto Conti	William Locke*	Gary Sutton*
Burun Dhar	Bill Love	Mark Tomczak
Bill Donohoe	Neal Martin	Diane Turnshek
Maria Dumanis	Jason Molinero	Carolyn Weger
Terry Finnegan*	Ann Norman*	Nancy Worek
Eric Fischer*	Joyce Osborne-Fischer*	Ted Worek
Jeff Gardner	Nicolas Pereyra	Ching Wa Yip
Leonid Gueorguiev	Wayne Peternel*	Ling Xu
George Gatewood	Kiffy Purvas	Jerry Zhu*

\*Denotes AAAP membership

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## Rare Saturn Occultation A Visual Delight



*Video still image by Larry McHenry*

Compared to stellar occultations, passage of the Moon over a major planet is a more dramatic event with its own beginning, middle and end, for both the "ingress" and "egress". (Except in the case of a grazing occultation along the Moon's limb, occulted stars instantly wink out and wink back in.) On Nov. 30, club members were treated to a rare occultation of the planet Saturn; the event was even more visually appealing because of the extreme tilt of Saturn's rings. At last month's holiday party, Larry McHenry showed his "motion" video of Saturn's ingress to the Moon's bright limb. Here are a few members' written accounts of the event:

**Flacc Stifel** - *"The ingress didn't amount to much; totally clouded over...I opened the Manka Reflector and observed at 80 power...Lunar topography was very clear along the limb...Right at about 8:36 the rings began to appear, just a bit more "fuzzy" than the adjacent lunar topography...In a few more seconds the body of the planet appeared, then the rings cleared around 8:37 and some change..I expended considerable effort in trying to glimpse Titan a few minutes later, but could not..."*

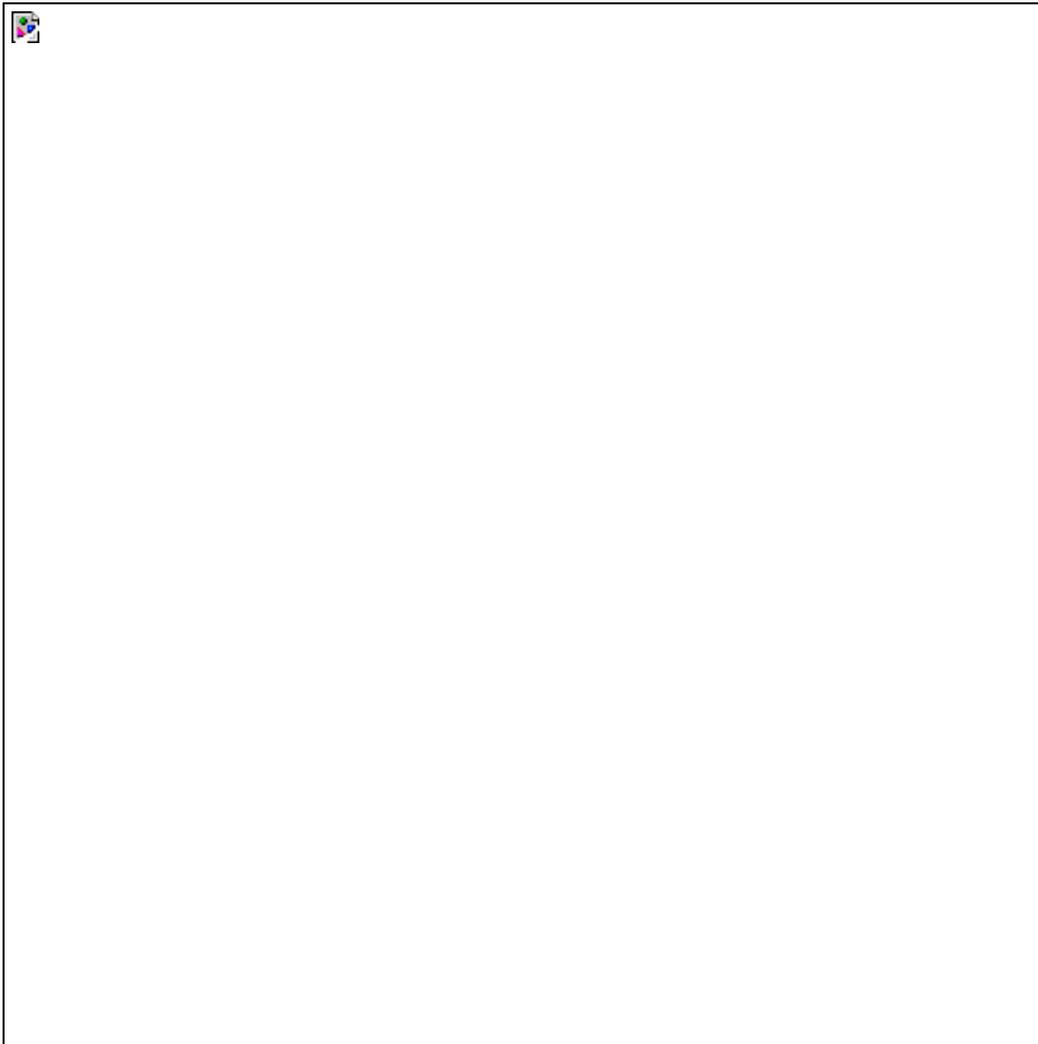
**George Guzik** - *"We had patchy clouds that were thin and moving quickly as the moon approached Saturn. Viewed through binoculars, the clouds added motion to the image so that the Moon and Saturn almost appeared to be flying in formation...After Saturn disappeared, I set up my scope and waited for its reappearance...Even though I had a lunar filter attached to the eyepiece, I could easily see the rings peek out from the limb of the Moon...I switched eyepieces to get a closer (and unfiltered) look and thoroughly enjoyed watching Saturn drift out from behind the Moon!"*

**John Cheng** - *"Naked eye, Saturn was lost in the glare of the full moon, but the pair were a great sight in 10x50 binoculars...The seeing looked good with Saturn steady and showing a band and Cassini in an 80mm refractor...No satellites were visible...Caught both the disappearance 'over' Procellarum and the reappearance off the limb west of Mare Crisium about 22 degrees north...Seeing both bodies in the same magnified field of view, Saturn, fainter and obviously farther away, seemed to give a new meaning to the term 'Solar System'..Can't believe my luck. All this without having to skip dinner..."*

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**Seen Well from Oil City, Laurel High-lands, Mass, Arizona, Etc.**

## **THE PERFECT STORM: Escapees from Local Fog Saw Fantastic Leonids Display**



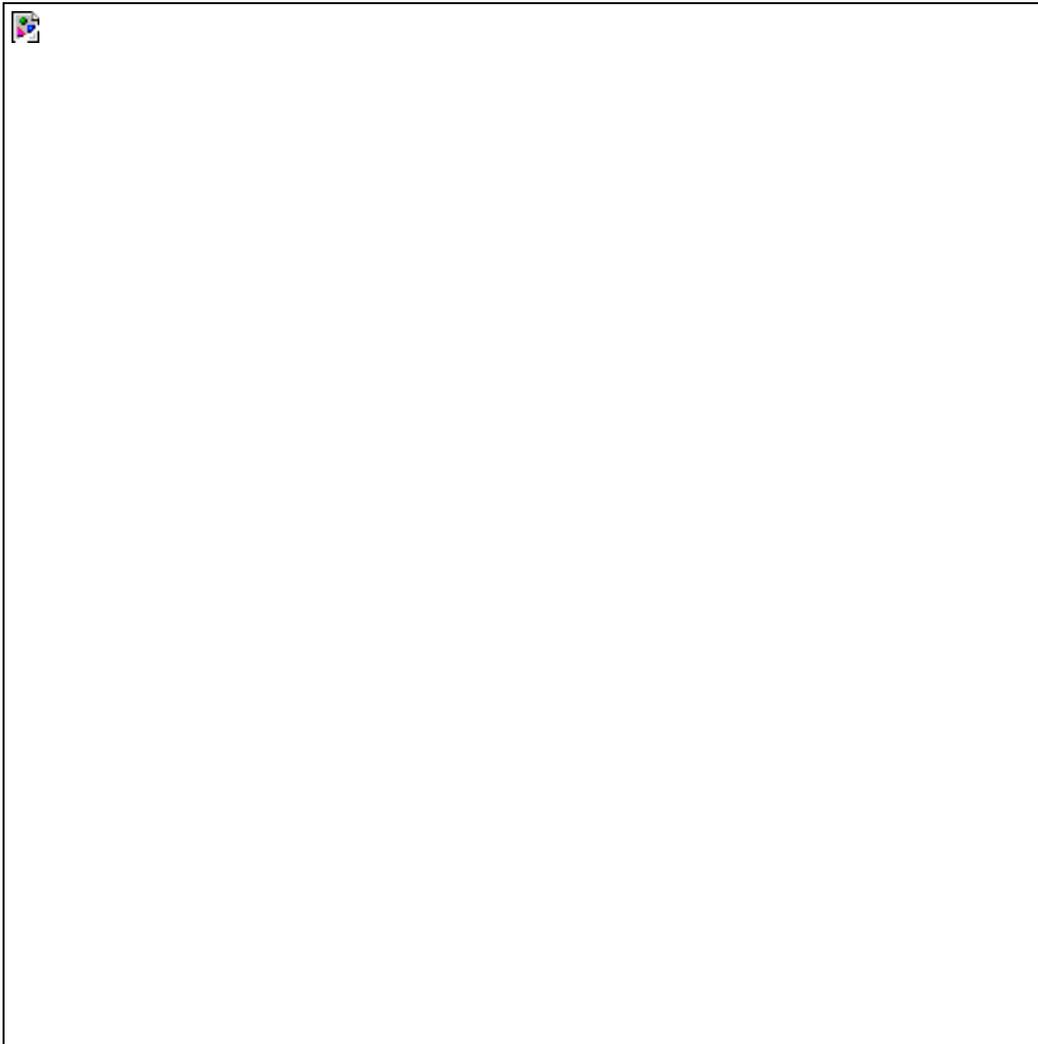
**John Pane** captured at least five Leonids trails in this photo (trails highlighted by Editor to ensure reproduction). "...photos taken with an ordinary 35mm SLR camera mounted on a tripod, with a

*"normal" 50mm f/1.4 lens. I used two Kodak films: PJM 640 and TMZ 3200."*

**Long time KDKA weatherman Bob Kudzma once joked:** *"No matter where you are, you only need to travel five miles to find clear weather...straight up!"* Or perhaps 100 miles if you go sideways. So it was on the morning of November 18 when, as predicted, the rare Leonids meteor storm poured from the sky, but only for observers outside of a huge bog of fog that covered the greater Pittsburgh area. Throughout the evening of November 17, many AAAP members kept checking out their windows in vain hopes that the fog would break. Others assumed the worst and packed their cars in preparation for at least several hours of fast driving on local highways, hoping to get clear of the fog boundary in time for the Leonids prime time of about 5:00 am.

The trick was to figure out which direction to travel. Members consulted a variety of local weather report sources such as internet sites from outlying towns, PennDOT travel advisories, calls to distant radio stations and other amateur astronomers. When our friends at the Oil Region Astronomical Society reported good sky conditions, an AAAP contingent (including John Holtz, Ed Honkus, Jerry Zhu, Charlotte and Jim Tunney, John and Wini Labrecque, Tim Hagan (and perhaps others)) headed north to the ORAS observatory. Others such as Bob Kepple and Dave Pensenstadler took no chances with tri-state weather and went to the U.S. Desert Southwest to be assured of jet black skies. If this had been a normal Fall with clearing cold fronts, many more Pittsburghers would have enjoyed the spectacle. See below for [poetic laments](#) about the fog from several of our members.

For all who found clear air, the Leonids were utterly and absolutely awesome, spraying from the sky as fast, or faster, than one could blink. At times, six or more visible Leonids peppered the sky at the same time, many orders of magnitude better than the best Perseids or Geminids. At the AAAP Holiday Party, Jerry Zhu ran a video from a fixed camera aimed at Orion: Zing...zing...zing...zing...meteor after another shot out of that one constellation alone, some only fractions of a second apart. Many Leonids left trails, including one that lingered at least 15 minutes. According to Terry Trees, *"Several brief trains looked spectral to me, that is they started blue-green, went to yellow in the middle and red on the 'recent' end."*



*John Pane's close-up of a remarkable twisting Leonids Meteor trail (in color it shows blues and golds). "This meteor left behind a glowing trail that was visible for more than ten minutes as it was re-shaped by the air currents in the upper atmosphere."*

Here are excerpts from several members' recollections of the '01 Leonids, as recounted on the AAAP Listserv:

**Jim Garasich** - *"Here at my place near Meadville. Most are quite bright...One was bright enough to reflect off the side of my eyeglasses!...How about that?!...Two were so bright as to briefly light up the yard!...Momentary lulls in the action were to suddenly surge in several bright meteors...Again, a fantastic show!!"*

**Nelson Merrick** - *"...pulled off the PA Turnpike just the other side of the Tunnel, 1/2 hr. before Bedford. We were on the SIDE of the Turnpike where the BIG RIGS pull off and sleep, with yellow lights on their rigs, so even though the sky was black, we had yellow light pollution...That's what SO amazing; I can't imagine our count and the SHOW if we were without the truck LP..."*

**Jerry Zhu** - *"...Even as I was driving, I couldn't help but notice about 10 meteors which slid down almost directly above horizon in front of me...ORAS was so clear!...While setting up, I saw a purple-white fireball - an apparent sporadic - as bright as mag -4, with a double (parallel) tail...Then*

*there's the persistent train everybody is talking about: it started as a straight line, then curved into 'V' shape, and finally became 'll'..."*

**Joe Armata** - *"...vacationing in the Berkshire mountains of western Massachusetts with my family...I was impressed by the many doubles or triples - one meteor in one area of the sky quickly followed by a second or third right next to it. we saw many to the south, especially some bright ones...We saw a couple of bright flashes like sheet lightning ("heat lightning") in summertime...We figured those had to be bright Leonids in the haze, and the haze was scattering their light...A really wonderful shower, well worth the lost sleep."*

**D. J. Galanides** - *"I began my observing run at midnight from my farm here at Porter (about 1600 ft)...First hour with Leo just showing above horizon, I counted over 100 and it got better from there...At 5:30 the fall was constant and I could not keep up a count, but estimate ZHR of way over 2500 spanning many magnitudes...My wife says I must now stop complaining about missing virtually every meteor display over the last 10 years since we located to PA from Oregon."*

**Emily L. Bell** - *"I took Terry Trees' advice and headed for Franklin, PA...Pulled over off Route 8 before it splits and separates, probably ten or so miles south of Franklin...From 5 am until dawn, I saw maybe 100+ meteors, several with double bursts and others with trails."*

**Pete Swallow** - *"...decided to make a run for high ground to the southwest (Laurel Mountains)...Craig (10 yrs.) immediately started yelling from the back seat "I saw one, another, another!...I could hardly keep the car on the road with my head hanging out the window...Many Leonids left smoke trails that would hang in the air for several minutes and distort with upper level winds...many would come in faint then end in a brilliant flash...In a few cases the flashes were bright enough to cast shadows."*

**John Peak** - *"...viewed the Leonids from Harlansburg...north of Pittsburgh...There was very light fog at 3:15, but I could still see the Beehive cluster naked eye...By 4:45 the fog was heavy...I could only see Jupiter and about 10 other stars...I was surprised that I could still see the brighter Leonids through the fog...Despite the fog and low frequency count, I still am happy that I saw what I did...In my few short years in the hobby, this is the best meteor shower that I have seen."*

**Brent Hudock** - *"I observed the Leonids from a location near the Ohiopyle State Park area in the Laurel Mountains and we had clear skies all night long...the final aprox. count...was...are you ready for this...you sure...3100!!!!!!...No way you say...WAY!...This was definitely the most memorable night of observing that I have ever had in all of my observing years...My eyes couldn't keep up with all of them...We finally had "THE PERFECT STORM" in this part of the earth and I'm glad I was there to witness it."*

**Ron Pollack** - *"...went up to State College for the weekend for the game...Went out about 4:15 to 5:00 a.m. and the show was spectacular!...The skies were crystal clear!...The only obstruction being light pollution from downtown State College in the northeast...I did not get a count but there were many times we would see three at a time, some very big and bright ones!"*

**Roy Lahet** - *"I did it!...I have tried 5-6 times in the last 30 years to see a meteor shower and have failed...At the Donegal exit there was fog so I drove on to Somerset.The show was spectacular!...I saw two meteors, orange, drop perpendicular to the horizon (straight down)...The color was amazing...I*

*saw 4 in parallel simultaneously...From 4 to 5:30 am it was amazing...Some were just a momentary flash like a dot of light...Others left long wide streaks or long thin streaks...I noticed frequently that I had a big smile on my face...saw multiple meteors from different directions and it was giddy...Like being a kid having the time of his life!...I did it."*

**Bob Kepple** - *"Barb and I had a wonderful time in Arizona...we saw a brilliant fireball two to three times brighter than Venus which streaked across the sky at a rather slow speed...During the best fifteen minute period of the peak, I would GUESS that we were seeing 10,000 per hour if that rate had lasted for an hour...No matter how you figure, it was an awesome sight..."*

## Two Poems Lament the "Leonids Fog"

*by John Cheng*

There's a million frustrations,  
Let's list but three:  
First, is to wish  
What'll never be.  
Second's to purchase,  
What another gets free.  
Lastly, the plight  
Of skywatchers locally:  
To have something be there  
That you just can't see!

*by Dan Peden*

In tears I slip to sleep,  
My dreams of storms  
destroyed by fog,  
But what is worse,  
Others recount to me  
their clear sky Leonid log.

## My Stab At An Accurate Leonids Count

*by John Holtz (excerpts from AAAP Listserv)*

Here is a report of the Leonids I counted as seen from the Oil Region Astronomical Society's (ORAS) observatory near Oil City. I got out my clipboard, pen and paper, and began keeping a "careful" count. Hopefully, my numbers are not influenced too much by the shouts of others. For the most part, I believe I kept a faithful record of my observations. So here's the final tally:

<b>From (EST)</b>	<b>To (EST)</b>	<b>#Leonids</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>#/hr</b>	<b>ZHR</b>	<b>#Sporadic</b>
2:35	3:05	48	0:30	96	181	6
3:07	3:38	89	0:31	172	296	2
3:39	4:25	191	0:46	249	389	11
4:26	4:46	157	0:20	471	694	2

4:47	5:09	186	0:22	507	726	0
5:09	5:33	323	0:24	807	1129	3
5:34	5:55	231	0:21	660	908	0
5:56	6:18	147	0:22	401	546	1
		<b>1372</b>	<b>3:36</b>			<b>25</b>

This is based on radiant at 10h 12m RA, +22° dec (Nov 1999 *Sky & Telescope*, pg. 30), magnitude limit = 6.2 (by counting stars in Gemini, International Meteor Organization area 4), latitude approx. 41° 28.3' N, longitude approx. 79° 47.0' W. ZHR = [#hr / sin(alt+6°)]\*2.5^(6.5-mag limit) (Aug 1988 *Sky & Telescope*, pg. 133). As shown, the total is 1,372 Leonids in just over 3.5 hours of observing, and 25 sporadics. The ZHR is the Zenithal Hourly Rate or the number of meteors that a SINGLE observer would see IF the sky limit were magnitude 6.5 AND the radiant were at the zenith. This is the value that is published when discussions of meteor rates are given. To put this into perspective, consider the following tidbit from my observing logbooks:

- 1995 Jan 18 thru 2001 Nov 15: 2,494 nights, 1,378 meteors.
- 2001 Nov 18: 1 night, 1,397 meteors!

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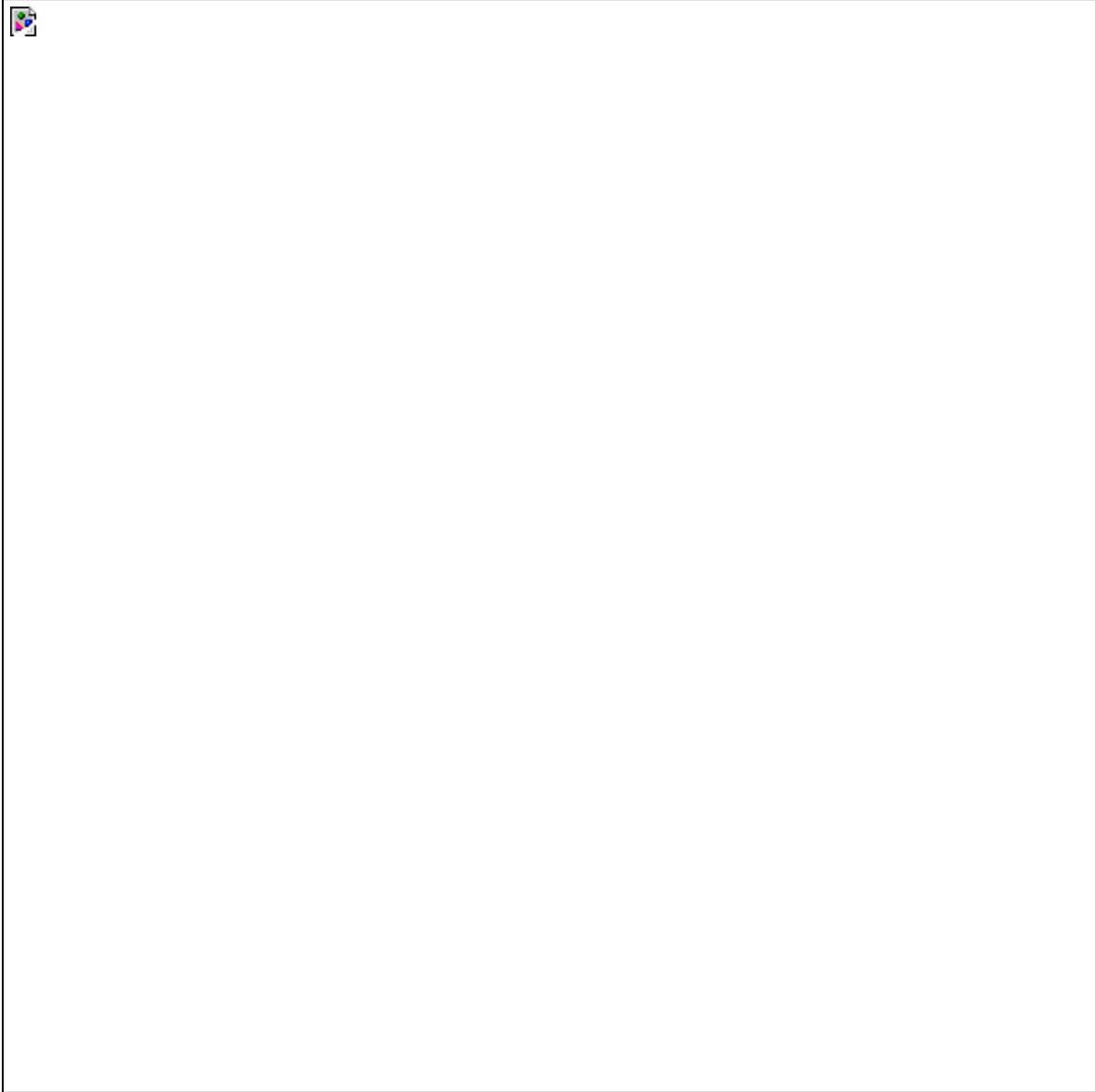
## Hot News For A Cold Month

- Check in with [George Guzik](#) if you have any interesting AAAP documents you think should be sorted, cataloged, filed and/or archived. George is volunteering for this project as part of his Recording Secretary duties. Some of the documents may be forwarded to the AAAP history archives at the University of Pittsburgh.
- Larry McHenry and Dave Smith held a meeting last month with Mr. Frantz of the River Life Task Force, to discuss AAAP concerns and suggestions about the proposed lighting of the Clemente bridge. According to Larry, "Mr Frantz came across as a reasonable person, who is aware of our point of view, and is willing to work with us to lessen the impact of the bridge lighting." Larry and Dave emphasized our concerns about uplighting of the bridge. Frantz offered to have us meet with the lighting designer when he comes to town.
- Flacc Stifel took advantage of the unusually warm weather in late November to perform some "tear-down" maintenance on the Brashear refractor at Wagman Observatory. Included in the work was a fresh coat of flat black inside the main tube. Our thanks Flacc for being serving as both Management and Labor at the observatory.
- Quantities Limited: Our stock of calendars and handbooks for 2002 is dwindling. Contact [Mari Jo Meyers](#) to obtain RASC Calendars at \$10 each, Astronomy Calendars at \$10 each, and Observer Handbooks at \$15 each.

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**AAAP MEETING: JANUARY 11, 2001 - 7:30  
PM ALLEGHENY OBSERVATORY,**

# RIVERVIEW PARK, PITTSBURGH NORTH SIDE



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## Welcome to Our Huge But Humble Organization

The following new members were accepted at the December meeting:

Michael R. Bovan

Galen A. Grimes

David Ravella

Andy Chope

Trisha Maeder

Marc L. Yergin

# Gus Johnson's 1/4 Century Leads Membership Milestones

## 25 Years

Gus Johnson (3/77)

## 10 Years

Jack Greenberg (2/92)

Janet Greenberg (2/92)

Mark Arelt (3/92)

James E. Parker (3/92)

## 15 Years

John Close (1/87)

S. Rand Werrin (1/87)

Richard Nugent, Jr. (3/87)

Donald Rose (3/87)

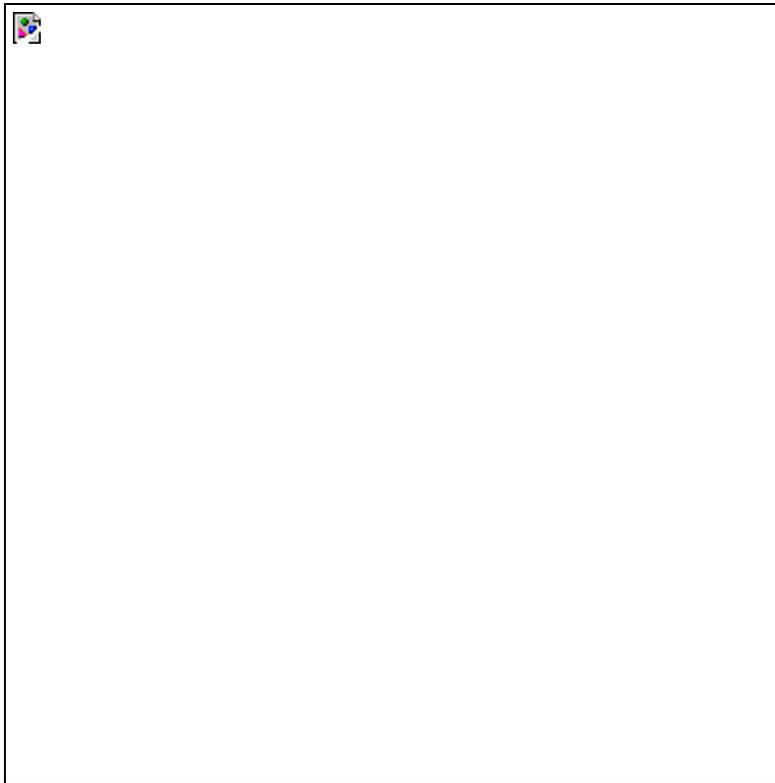
## 5 Years

James Kossis (1/97)

Alfred Kutschker (2/97)

Gary Van Drie (2/97)

Vern Cox (3/97)



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## Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

A section of the Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburgh

*Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon*

**2001-2002 Officers:**

President:	<a href="#">Larry McHenry</a>	412-884-4924
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Treasurer:	<a href="#">John Holtz</a>	724-352-7596
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Recording Sec:	<a href="#">George Guzik</a>	724-863-8008
Membership Sec:	<a href="#">Brent Hudock</a>	724-437-5990
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	<a href="#">Jean Reiland</a> (features)	412-487-8326

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<a href="#">Ken Lippert</a>	724-444-1045	<a href="#">Dave Smith</a>	412-390-0870
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<a href="#">Bob Novack</a>	724-538-4242	<a href="#">Bill Yorkshire</a>	412-793-9552

\*Wagman Observatory Director

\*\*Wagman Observatory Associate Directors

**Group Scheduling Coordinator:**

[Paula Meddings](#) (724-745-2447)

**AAAP Web Site:**

AAAP Homepage: [www.3ap.org](http://www.3ap.org)

AAAP Webmaster: [Kenn Lippert](#)

**AAAP Member Dues:**

AAAP Dues:	\$18.00
Junior Member (under 18):	\$13.00
Sky & Telescope Magazine:	Add \$30.00
Astronomy Magazine:	Add \$29.00

**Basic Procedure for Paying Dues:**

1. Make check payable to "AAAP Inc."
2. Send check to:

John Holtz, Treasurer  
176 Hidden Hill Rd  
Sarver, PA 16055-8907