



Mingo Creek Park Observatory

# The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

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

Website: 3ap.org



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

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## 3AP NIGHT SKY NETWORK AWARD WINNER

By Marni Berendsen & Vivian White  
Night Sky Network Administrators

We are pleased to inform you that the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh has won the quarterly drawing for a Solarscope! It was actually your Radio Field Day Star Party that you held on June 23rd that was one of five winning event logs out of over 450 that were received.

Congratulations to your club for the outstanding outreach that you are involved with. We are so glad to be able to honor your dedication to increasing the public's under-

standing of astronomy. These Solarscopes are donated by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific in recognition of the worthwhile outreach you do. Keep up the good work and keep looking up! Here is what we won:



## GETTING TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS

**DAN FUNDO:** My interest in astronomy began on my ninth birthday. I'll save you the math, that was 1956. My older sister bought me a Gilbert Sky Master 3-inch reflector. I think she was interested too. I was fascinated with what I could see from my backyard in the South Hills. I became Mr. Popularity on October 4, 1957....I was the only kid in school with a telescope. It was downhill from there.

My Dad enrolled me in Saturday astronomy classes at the old Buhl Planetarium. The first few I took were taught by Arthur Draper. During the summer, I took the first of several telescope making classes taught by James Mullaney. (I had that first 8x 50mm telescope until the move to Memphis...it got lost then.) In the fall of 1959, there was a class on grinding a 6-inch mirror. The classes started in the old A.A.A.P. shop in the basement. The shop was closed and I eventually finished the mirror and telescope at the Brashear Center on the South Side. That was where I met Bob Hoehle and Glenn Winterhalter. They taught me a lot about all phases of mirror making and ATMing.

Someone didn't have the patience and sold their mirror blank to me. It was in bad shape, so I worked it down to a f/5.2. I was going to make a Richey Field, but there was a seed just below the surface, and I didn't want to chance it. That mirror, finished in 1962, is still in use today. By

PDL (pure dumb luck), I managed to get the figure down to the 1/20 wave area. Someone had a Byers drive that was damaged, and Glenn helped me rework it to the drive that I used on the f/5.2.

Someone else with a lack of perseverance asked me to finish their mirror for them. With Bob's and Glenn's help, I got it in shape and finished it in 2-3 weeks. Before I could catch my breath, I was asked to finish another, then another. Eventually, Glenn started pulling mirrors off of the shelves and giving them to me to finish. I wish I had marked all of those mirrors. With several I made for myself, I believe that I have made or finished 25 mirrors from 6" to 12.5"

**SHERRY O'NEILL:** My thoughts go back to my own introduction to the night sky. All of us have our story about how it all began. With me it was with, and because of my dad. My dad was a brilliant man. He never got the chance to go to college. But that never stopped him from his quest for learning. His goal the last few years of his life was to read the entire encyclopedia. He figured he would have the equivalent of a college degree if he did that. He didn't quite get finished with all 26 volumes before he passed away. Being the youngest, and a midlife surprise, I got a lot of attention. My mom did not care about the sky. I think a flying saucer could have landed in our back yard, and she wouldn't have even bothered to look out the window. But it was much different with my dad. The two of us would go out in the yard and he would show me the stars. I couldn't even say for sure the first time I ever saw Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. "See there's the Big Dipper. You take those two stars on the end and go up. Then you come to the Little Dipper."

One of my earliest memories of observing with him was a particular lunar eclipse. As best as I can figure, it occurred on April 13, 1968, which would make me a couple months short of being 6. He and I stood on the hill behind our house and watched the ever-increasing bite being taken out of the moon. All the while he was explaining to me why it was happening. A few years later we were in the process of moving. This one particular Saturday morning we had an appointment with our real estate agent. My dad was getting more fidgety by the minute the closer it got to noon. The two of us had big plans for the afternoon that weren't going to wait for anything. It was the day of the March 1970 total solar eclipse. The TV station was afraid that people would be curious and go out to look at the sun, so they televised the entire eclipse on WIIC-TV Pittsburgh. Another fun activity we did was plotting the moon rise. He and I would sit in our little breakfast room with our charts and binoculars and watch the eastern horizon for the moon to rise. By sixth grade in 1973-74 he thought I was old enough for my first trip to Buhl Planetarium. That really lit the fire. And the rest is all history. I have spent the 33 years since totally consumed in what couldn't be called anything less than a passion. We spent countless hours when I was a teenager watching meteor

showers. The last time that we got to do any observing together was the July 1982 total lunar eclipse. Don't ever underestimate the time you spend with your kids. It does matter to them. A professional astronomer, no. But it was what I wanted to be, more than anything when I was a teenager. Maybe it would have happened had my math skills been a little better. I don't think I would not have impressed too many people saying, "Huh? As long as I can share my passion with others, especially children, maybe I can get the next generation turned on to something that can bring them a lifetime of pleasure. It's my plan to share my love of the stars with anyone who will listen to me."

## REMEMBERING RICH BAILEY

By Ann Norman  
Photo by Dave Smith



Last month we lost "a fixture in the club." Rich Bailey, a twenty-one-year AAAP member and past president collapsed on Saturday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007 while running at the high school track and never regained consciousness. He was 52. We are shocked and saddened and our hearts go out to his wife, Linda, and their daughter, Jill—two more integral parts of our community. Like Rich,

Linda has served the club in many capacities, most notably in her past work as Guide Star Editor. Preschooler Jill is a delight at club events from picnics to meetings.

John Mozer remembers, "When I first joined the AAAP three and a half years ago, and attended my first AAAP meeting at the CSC, it was Rich who came over to me, introduced himself and welcomed me to the club". Bill and Maureen report that at the first Christmas party they attended they were welcomed by Rich and Linda who sat and ate with them. "Talking with them, we knew we had made the right choice by joining this group". Kathy DeSantis, says "He was very *human*. He was inclusive. He found commonalities with people". We all know that Rich was a family man, but fewer know that Rich reached out and cared for an extended family, that included sick parents and relatives. It seems this inclination extended to his AAAP "family" as well.

Rich was elected president in 2005. When Rich took office, Mingo Creek Park Observatory had just been completed, incredibly quickly, and we had just received a \$120,000 inheritance from an umbrella organization that the AAAP had been part of that ceased to exist (The Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburgh). Ironically,

these were very positive developments and also may have contributed to anxiety in the club about our ability to continue at this level of activity and success in the future. Some worried that volunteerism would not keep pace with the needs of two observatories, and that Wagman Observatory would lose manpower to Mingo, while others noted the advantages of Mingo as a facility for existing members and an outreach to the public and new members to the South.

Rich and I began our terms as president and vice president at the same time. He had been called on by the nominating committee and answered the call. He approached the task cheerfully and directly, saying he was happy to do his part. I had to miss the first executive committee meeting and afterwards Rich called and briefed me on all that went on. Though we hadn't known each other that well before the election, he made sure to involve me right away as we took on our new roles and his style was purposely inclusive. It was his attitude that a good leader should surround himself with good advisors. He deliberately had selected his executive committee members to include all perspectives, balancing those associated with Wagman and those associated with Mingo, and selecting those with particular areas of expertise that would be needed, including optics, IT, and fund raising. I don't know if it was intentional or not, but there sure were a lot of women on the executive committee that year!

Immediately a number of emotionally-charged issues presented themselves. I saw Rich diffuse a crisis on at least three separate occasions. He addressed divisive issues head on, improvising a solution (in one case, right on the spot) that acknowledged the complaints and respected the persons on each side. He never ducked the problems.

In one case, there was a dispute about money that the club had put out to complete Mingo on schedule. (Most of the money for Mingo's construction had been solicited through private grants, but this small portion of the total had come straight out of club funds). Some claimed that the Mingo Committee had "borrowed" this money from the club and had promised to pay it back. This side was worried that the new \$100,000 would be used to pay for Mingo expenses. Rich decided this was the wrong way to frame the issue. Since the Mingo Committee is part of the club and we all own Mingo Observatory, it is incorrect to say that the Mingo Committee "borrowed" from the club. How does a club borrow from itself to build itself something? Rich championed the view that 1) we were all one club, so Mingo cannot "owe the club" or "pay it back"; the club as a whole is responsible to "pay back" this sum, 2) the bulk of the new money we'd received ought to be preserved as a permanent endowment for recurring club expenses into the future (this motion passed). 3) So new and old capital expenses for BOTH observatories should be paid for through further club fund raising. Rich proposed the formation of a Development Committee for this purpose. The committee was formed, and went to work. It was headed by Rich.

Sometime later, the Development Committee came back to

the Executive Committee (I believe during Ed Moss's term) with a list of options, that were well thought out. However, by that time, with new grant money coming in, the situation seemed less pressing, and no action was taken by the Executive Committee. Still, we have Rich to thank for framing that issue correctly (in my humble opinion) and steering us through that rocky period. (I note the "all one club philosophy" continues today with regard to the acquisition of new eyepieces, turrets, and ladders for both observatories).

Finally, Rich had a "glass half full" rather than "glass half empty" outlook on the club and its activities, and he articulated an upbeat message about volunteering. Some at that time were bemoaning the lack of volunteers. People would complain that only about 10% of the 550 members are truly involved. Rich, instead, marveled at the existing level of energy and activity, and recommended that every member get involved at a level that feels comfortable for him or her, depending on their own situation (work, family, interest level), whether that means serving as president or only attending star parties. I totally agree with that message.

He noted that he himself had been with the club a long time, pitching in to help when he could and just enjoying the club when he could not. There were times he was less involved, but when he was called to serve as president, he was willing and able to do that. Members remember that Rich would attend about 5 to 10 star parties a year. He may have been involved with the Brashear restoration. He contributed to Guide Star, especially while his wife was editor. He was an early participant in the Night Sky Network. I remember he was a natural with the children during a lesson at Summerfest. He was Coordinator of the Night Sky Network, when he died. An NSN official notes that Rich's "passion for astronomy and outreach will live on through his supportive community".

I should also add that Rich maintained his high level of involvement, often while pushing a baby stroller. His love for and pride in his family was obvious. He was patient, compassionate, forthright, and as others have said, just plain nice.

He leaves us "inspired by a life well lived" and we will miss him.

Contributors on background (aside from those cited) include Tom Reiland, Dave Smith, John Close, Dick Haddad, Larry McHenry, and posters to the Post Gazette memorial.



## REMEMBERING JOE BEGANDY

BY Al Paslow



Recently Joseph Begandy, 57, left this world for a better place suddenly during the morning hours of July 3, 2007. Many of us are greatly saddened by his passing but few had the chance to really understand the person I had the fortune to meet and know.

Joe Begandy, lifetime resident of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, was an amateur astronomer; telescope builder; as well as a lunar, planetary and avid Mars observer. Joe got his interest while still a child in the 1960's when dad brought a telescope home one day. Looking at the moon, young Joe was hooked!

After graduating from high school, Joe enlisted in the army to serve our country during the Vietnam War in 1967. While overseas, he became a loadmaster and flew on a number of helicopter missions. One day a sergeant asked him if he could hit the bull's eye with his rifle. Joe not only hit it once but over and over again! This earned him the title of expert marksman and he was categorized as a "sniper". The dark skies of the jungles often were prime for stargazing. Joe often told me his binoculars were more often pointed to the stars than was probably safe by his conscious!

Upon returning home from active duty, Joe and his cousin Chuck decided to build a homemade telescope. Using the classic paperback, *"How to Build a Telescope"*, by Jean Texerau, Joe & Chuck ground and polished an 8-inch telescope mirror; mounted it in a tube, and made an old style pipe-fitting mount. It was that instrument that gave them their first real views of the skies in more detail. The families would spend their summers in Conneaut Lake, Pennsylvania enjoying relatively dark skies using the home-built telescope.

Chuck eventually moved to the Meadville area and, unfortunately, took the 8-inch with him. Joe spent the early 1970's working for a steel mill near his home in Christy Park and married. A few years later, he attended college at California State, studying math, and graduated in 1977 with a degree in Political Science.

He worked at Community College in Monroeville teaching Astronomy and enjoyed teaching children if and whenever possible. Joe also became an Audio-Visual Engineer for the college and later a librarian.

It was about this time that I met Joe, by accident. I was working on telescope projects with famous lens maker,

Richard E. Brandt, of Prescott, Arizona when it came up in conversation that one of the instruments, a 6-inch folded refractor, was sent to the Pittsburgh area. The buyer was - Joseph Begandy of nearby McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Sometime later, I contacted Joe about the telescope and stopped by to see how he liked it.

Joe was very excited about the Mars Opposition of 1986 and claimed he saw more detail than with any other telescope before!

Joe & I quickly became good friends. We would talk about telescopes and astronomy all the time. I would stop by and we often watched the moon, Saturn and other objects under the bright skies of McKeesport. We took trips to Wagman Observatory to observe the heavens with the 12.5-inch reflector, now replaced by the Manka telescope. We frequently complained about impending light pollution and our thoughts remembering the blacker skies of Pittsburgh's past and of Vietnam; but Joe's Vietnam days brought other issues that included problems with his feet and legs. He was diagnosed with complications of diabetes and nerve problems, all from exposure to Agent Orange.

Over the years, his health worsened and observing began to suffer. In the summer of 1994, we traveled to Wagman Observatory to see Comet Shoemaker-Levy impact Jupiter. This was the last time Joe was able to walk. Within a year, he was in a wheelchair. We continued the trips to Wagman and Joe's favorite instrument was the 11-inch Brashear. Many times, he could not observe at the eyepiece without help but felt good to be seated in his chair next to the mighty 11-inch. On those trips to the observatory, Joe would tell me how he often looked forward to seeing Flacc and the Brashear instrument. Perhaps his best recollections were the views of Mars in the Brashear during the 2001 & 2003 opposition, which fired-up his interest in the planet. Joe just loved those big refractor telescopes! In 2003, with the hint of a club-built observatory to be erected in Mingo Creek Park, Joe and I joined the venture and became Mingo Creek Park Observatory Committee members. This group would often meet in what was South Park High School to plan and work details out for the new observatory. In the planning stages, Joe was consulted for his opinions to ensure handicapped accessibility. At Mingo, Joe often attended star parties when his health would hold up. This observatory was very important and dear to him as was Wagman. The 10-inch D & G refractor fit right in, as it would for anyone who likes classic instruments and the 24-inch really provided a comfortable view of the heavens with objects near overhead for Joe in his chair.

Inspired by the 10-inch reactor, Joe sent a deposit to D & G for an 8-inch telescope; but unfortunately, he died before its completion. I was glad to give him a last trip to Mingo Creek Observatory on Saturday June 30, 2007. On that day, we talked about a trip to Mingo, but the weather was questionable then cleared and sunshine prevailed. For some reason,

despite a full moon that evening, we stopped at Eat 'N Park in Bethel Park for a snack and decided to proceed on to Mingo. I signed us in then opened up the 10-inch refractor. I looked at the moon and Jupiter and Joe was able to see Arcturus, Alcor and Mizar with the big scope and other objects. Within two hours, we closed up—Joe complaining of the cold. We drove back to Joe's home and I carefully watched him go up the wheelchair ramp to his house for the last time and made a joke about putting reflector lamps on the thing so he didn't drive off it at night!

That evening before he arrived home, Joe gave me a deposit to obtain material for an equatorial mount, after examining a design of mine. That night was the last time I spoke to him, as he passed away early Tuesday morning.

I will say that for over 20 years that I have known him, Joseph Begandy was one of the finest people I have ever met. He never said bad things and got along with everyone. He was also quite upbeat despite his restrictions. Joe always made the best of his situation. In 2003, his grandson, David, was born. He became a very happy grand dad. He was especially happy with David in his arms. Joe would ride him to the park just up the street in his wheelchair. David was often first even before trips to Mingo. Joe really loved and cherished every minute with him. At the funeral wake, I returned the money Joe gave me to start the refractor mount to his family. Joseph Begandy is survived by two sons; Sean 30, Adam 27 and a daughter, Suzanne, 33. Joe's youngest son, Adam, was featured in several ads in Sky and Telescope magazine standing next to the 6-inch folded refractor that Richard Brandt and I sold in 1987 and 1988.

## MESSAGE FROM MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

By Mark Schomer

All changes of address, email, telephone, receiving Guide Star online or in the mail, etc. should be directed to me, and I will see that the person in charge is notified. By doing it this way, we keep all the membership records up-to-date.

## MEMBERS ONLY OBSERVING DATES FOR WAGMAN

By Tom Reiland

Members' only weekends at Wagman Observatory for the rest of this year are:

August 11-13    September 7-9  
October 12-14    November 9-11  
December 7-9

## TENTATIVE STARHOPPING CLASS DATES AT WAGMAN OBSERVATORY

By Tom Reiland

September 17 or 18 and 24 or 25  
October 1 or 2

Let me know if you're interested ([TRCassiopeia@aol.com](mailto:TRCassiopeia@aol.com)). There will be no charge for this and it will be for members only.

## 2008 PUBLIC STAR PARTIES AT WAGMAN OBSERVATORY

February 16 Winterfest  
April 11 & 12  
May 9 & 10  
June 6 & 7  
July 11 & 12  
August 8 & 9  
September 5 & 6, 20  
October 4 & 18  
The Club Picnic will be June 28, 2008

## MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

By Ed Moss

The following are the dates of the membership meetings:

September 21, 2007  
October 19, 2007  
November 16, 2007  
December 14, 2007  
January 11, 2008  
February 15, 2008  
March 14, 2008  
April 18, 2008  
May 16, 2008

## IMPORTANT DATES

Almost Heaven Star Party West Virginia August 9-12 See [www.ahsp.org](http://www.ahsp.org) for more information.

Raystown Lake August 4, 2007 at 7:30 p.m.

Keystone State Park August 11, 2007 at 8:00 p.m.

Second annual East Coast Conference on Astronomical Imaging (ECCAI), to be held on Sept 28-30th 2007, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Please visit our website for more details: [www.pennastroimaging.com/eccai2007/](http://www.pennastroimaging.com/eccai2007/). Please call me with any further questions. Steve Mazlin, 215-860-9046.

## MINGO 2007 PUBLIC STAR PARTY DATES

August 3 and 4  
August 17 and 18  
September 7 and 8  
October 6 and 20

## MORAINE STATE PARK STAR PARTY

By Gary Shannon



Bill Hayeslip with members of the public

First, I want to thank all that showed up to help out: Bill and Maureen, Dave Koren, Bill Hayeslip, Denny Hill, John Labrecque, Tony Orzechowski, Ray Montgomery and his wife, and Donna and myself.

We had a pretty good turnout considering the weather all day and the skies were great—just a few puffsies when we first started then it cleared up to a beautiful night. Bill, Maureen, and Dave were the first ones there and were busy showing Sun spots. Bill gave a quick talk on the size of Earth, as he had printed out the pictures that came over on an email. Also, using his *Night Watch* book by Terrence Dickinson, he talked about the universe in 11 steps. Maureen took lots of pictures and handed out literature about light pollution, what Amateur Astronomers do and also flyers about Wagman and Mingo.

As it grew darker, we showed Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Albi-  
reo, Antares, Mizar, Alcor, M4, M81, M57, M16, M8, Po-  
laris, lots of other doubles, and the Veil Nebula. We also  
pointed out many constellations and how to find the North  
Star and Little Dipper. Bill said, "it's amazing to be able to  
see all of Scorpius, it is much darker here than at Wag-  
man".

Around 11:00 PM, Bill found the Andromeda galaxy in his  
binoculars. I think the public had a good time looking at  
the sky and the different types of scopes we all had, from  
Tony's big Cat to Donna's Sky Window and all in between.

This place is definitely worth doing another star party  
again. It has easy access, restrooms, plenty of parking, a  
lot of room, and flat terrain with a good horizon, and most  
of all, it's very dark!

## Outhouse Observing

Cedar Creek Park  
Belle Vernon, PA  
By: Dennis Morton



The Amateur As-  
tronomers Association of Pittsburgh was  
asked to provide even-  
ing sky observation  
at Cedar Creek Park,  
Belle Vernon, Penn-  
sylvania on June 29  
for a group of weary  
bikers participating in  
the Rails to Trails

Conservancy Program. There were over 500 bikers par-  
ticipating in this event where bikers averaged over 44  
miles a day riding from Washington D.C. to Pittsburgh in 7  
days.

I arrived at Cedar Creek early so I could set up my camp-  
site for the night. By 5:30 p.m., I hooked up with a few  
other AAAP members including Bill and Maureen Moutz  
and John Mozer. The sky was overcast all day and their  
attitudes were "down the drain." The evening was not a  
complete "wash out" because a Northwestern wind  
"flushed" the clouds away to let Bill do some solar observ-  
ing for a small crowd.

By 6:00 p.m., he had quite a group of people around him.  
The crowd had "runs" of questions for Bill and other AAAP  
members. We answered the same questions over and  
over again. "How big is that sun spot?" "How hot is the  
sun?" "What are you looking at?" The sky continued to  
clear during the evening and our anticipation for a clear  
night sky was "bubbling over the rim."

Once we knew that the sky was going to stay clear, we  
moved to our new location next to an outhouse! This was  
one of the only locations that we had access to electricity.  
A large white sheet was hung over the side of a bathroom  
wall where a PowerPoint presentation was going to be pre-  
sented around 8:30 p.m. We set up several telescopes  
around the restroom area. Tired and weary bikers started  
to slowly "trickle" in before the PowerPoint presentation.  
We were able to observe Venus and Saturn early in the  
evening sky. By then, Don Hoecker, Kathy DeSantis and  
Fred Klein were there to "jump in" the fun.

As we were viewing the planets, several bikers heard a  
gurgle of running water. One of them "dipped" their head  
in a nearby bush to discover a six-inch waterspout of what  
smelled like raw sewage. I quickly grabbed my bags that  
were on the ground and moved them to a dry and "less  
offensive smelling" location. By the time I got back to my  
scope, water was "trickling" under my equipment so I  
grabbed the mount, telescope, tripod and weights and  
"pushed" it to a new location. I felt like a "drip" for setting

up next to a sewage outlet. Most of the observers said not to worry about it and they kept telling me, "urine all right guy"!



The PowerPoint presentation was a hit for a crowd of 75 or more bikers. They "squatted" in the grass to see what Bill had to "spout out." About two hours after the presentation, most of the bikers were "pooped out." We were all "drenched" by the dew because we were located in a valley next to a creek.

because we were located in a valley next to a creek.

As members were trying to head home, around 11:00 pm, they discovered that the front gate to the park was locked. They were "wishy-washy" about what to do and the last I heard; they called the cops to unlock the front gate. Overall, I think that everyone was "relieved" to see either the toilet rings or the rings of Saturn in the sky. Fortunately, no one got "mooned" because of our location in the valley and its location low on the horizon.

## MASON-DIXON STAR PARTY

Larry McHenry: According to the York club members, this was one of the biggest conventions they've ever had! I didn't get the final tally of attendees, but there must have been well over 300 there, based on the number of camps. Representing the AAAP were Bob Kalan, Bob Novak, John O'Hare, myself and also a number of folks from other Western Pennsylvania clubs.

Burgess was the main vendor present, along with May's Munchables! There was a good selection of raffle prizes with the two "biggies" being an Astroscan and a Coronado PST! (both of the "Bobs" won a prize!).

The convention site is a small grass airport (closed for the weekend), and had good horizons and a very flat/level field, which made for easy walking around at night. There was a bunkhouse, flush restrooms with showers, and a nice pool. The speakers' presentations were held down near the pool clubhouse in a finished barn. I only made it to two of the talks, "How Far Can You See?" by John Goss Chair of the Mid East Region of the Astronomical League, and "The Astronomy of Mason and Dixon" by Bob Mentzer, a retired science teacher from the area (the second talk was really interesting on the details of how they were able to run the boundary line thru hundreds of miles of wilderness with such great accuracy). The observing field had the usual assortment of equipment one would see at a star party convention, but there seemed to be more Dobs than anything. The highlight had to be a monster 300mm TAK RCT, piggybacking 102mm & 80mm TAK refractors on a humongous TAK German EQ mount! You should have seen the image he took Saturday night of M31! Even the satellite galaxies were showing dust lane details).

I wasn't able to successfully image anything, as 'Mr. Murphy' paid an extended visit to my equipment! (everything that could go wrong did!)

Finally, I really couldn't get a good feel for what the skies there are like. Friday afternoon, it clouded over and even sprinkled a little. It didn't start to clear until sometime after 2:00 am. Saturday was good for solar observing, but the clouds started building again after lunch, making it difficult. I did get my Coronado PST & CaK running split video feeds to my monitor for a several-hour stretch. Saturday evening, the clouds dissipated, but a lot of haze and humidity remained, giving the sky a soft, dull look. It also greatly enhanced the light domes from Harrisburg to the North, York to the East, and even Gettysburg to the South showed! (Both Bobs agreed that it was a bad night, and it was usually much darker there).

John O'Hara: After a few years of low attendance and a struggle to find a good site, the Mason-Dixon Star Party is on the rebound. I have to guess that the attendance was easily over 150, maybe much more. It's a tough job for small clubs to host events in Pennsylvania these days. With the black skies of Cherry Springs State Park and Spruce Knob within an easy day's drive, what's a small club to offer stargazers in Southeastern, Pennsylvania, with its dense population and associated artificial lighting?

First, the site is not bad. I can see M-13 and the Milky Way with no problem. Yes, there are light domes and the limiting magnitude on a transparent night is about 6.0, but that's a far cry better than the urban and suburban skies most people have to deal with in this region. The site is scenic rolling farmland mixed in with woodlots. It does indeed offer an escape from the rat race, a nice outdoor experience, but with enough amenities to satisfy non-stargazer family members. The site is not so remote as to place one completely in the wilderness. I noted that this event is far more family oriented than the more "hard core" dark sky events in remote settings. I saw many more non-astro spouses and small children at this event than at most.

The location aside, the event was very well organized, with a fantastic picnic dinner included in the price of admission, offering enough food to satisfy anyone. The quality of the food was excellent, and we got to enjoy it under the shaded patio of the Shreveport Airport/Footlight Ranch. Some attendees enjoyed the swimming pool, a blessing in hot July weather.

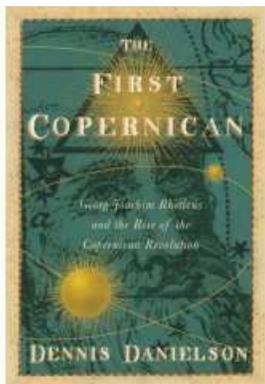
In summary, this is a family-friendly event run by friendly people. If you have a spouse or child that is hesitant about camping, this would be an easy introduction for them. If tent camping is out, there is a bunk house that can be rented. Showers are available to all attendees. I'm a hardcore deep sky observer, and I won't be giving up Cherry Springs anytime soon. Still, I'd be hard pressed to give up my annual pilgrimage to Mason-Dixon, a very relaxing, enjoyable event.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

John C Kaiser  
Charles A. Krznicaric  
Edward J. Troiana III

## BOOK REVIEW

By John Cheng



The evening of March 25, 2007, the lunar terminator swept by an irregularly shaped formation located almost at the selenographic center of our moon.

Crater Rheticus is named for the German mathematician, teacher and astronomer, Georg Joachim von Lauchen, who following the scholarly practice of the day, adopted

a name associated with his birthplace, Rhaetia.

Georg Rheticus is also the subject of a recent biography, "*The First Copernican*", which recalls that if it weren't for Rheticus, we'd likely have had no Copernicus. As a young academic, Rheticus spent two years with the ageing Copernicus, encouraging him to finish "*De Revolutionibus*" and eventually carrying a transcript to the Nuremberg publisher who gave it to the world. The biography (by Dennis Danielson) is well researched and, maybe in consequence, a bone-dry read. It's a true biography of Rheticus who went on to do work in trigonometry and encountered problems economic, moral and academics in later life. One wouldn't call it an astronomy book.

His association with Copernicus is most of the book, however, and some things were new to me:

For example, Rheticus wrote a life of Copernicus, which, unfortunately, is lost.

Also, some might recall that a forward was added to "*De Revolutionibus*" saying its contents were only a computational device for getting planetary positions - a hypothesis.

This unsanctioned "addition" was written by Andreas Oslander. Rheticus, knowing Copernicus first hand, had an angry reaction to it, another indication that Copernicus meant the book to be a description of reality.

Plus, in the 1980's, Rheticus was identified as the author of a work on the compatibility of the Bible and Copernicanism, an early skirmish in a long battle.

The role of the acolyte, the loyal student or follower, usually forgotten, deserves to emerge from the shadows now and then.

## OBSERVATIONS

[Craig Smith](#): I checked out the Greene County site for about three hours last night. It is really much darker than the other sites. The Milky Way was easily visible across the sky with lots of structure visible and a high contrast to the background sky. The horizon isn't dark in every direction, but quickly darkens overhead. The Lagoon Nebula was shockingly bright in my XT10. The Ring Nebula was visible but a little dim. I could almost see structure in M51. Many other Messier objects were quite easy to locate and brighter than I have seen before.

When I arrived, the herd was located toward the older gate (as described in the map). I set up nearer the new gate, which caused a row of trees to block the horizon to the NE and E, but it was no big deal. I am not normally a nervous person, but neither am I used to cows. This herd is all black and quite stealthy, at least visually. As the evening wore on, I could tell the herd was moving closer, but by around 12:30, there was a semicircle of a few dozen cows around me of about 20-30 feet away. I guess I may have set up my scope on a particularly sweet patch of pasture. Around this time, I decided to pack it in rather than move and set up again.

In any event, the darker skies made things easier and prettier and I would definitely travel there again. The drive isn't really so much farther than going to Mingo Creek.

[Truman P. Kohman](#): Last night (actually this morning), I took my Celestron-8 out onto the Covenant lawn. It was partly cloudy at first, then cleared but became hazy. Is this what is meant by transparency less than 100%? Besides the crescent Moon and Jupiter (3 moons; Ganymede was in transit but couldn't be seen because of the haze), I observed the globular M3 (while looking for comet C/2006 VZ13 LINEAR), at 100X and 310X. At the higher power, stars were clearly visible. I was able to see the comet, but just barely because it was very faint and diffuse. I observed the asteroid 86 Semele. This leaves me with only five of the first numbered 1-100 unobserved. To complete the list, I will have to wait till they come to opposition again in late 2007 and early 2008.

[James & Sue Schultheis](#): The conditions were GREAT on July 20, 2007 with 0% clouds, 8 out of 10 transparency and 68-degree temperature. Inspired by Sue French's article in the August S&T issue, I decided to plot all eleven Dolidze-Dzimselejsvili open star clusters on my Sky Tools program and observe what I could. I did locate and observe DoDz 6 as an "arrow of stars" then to DoDz 5 as a "boat anchor" and then onto DoDz 8,9,10, which were very poor open clusters and finally gave up to not being real impressed with what I was looking at. I must say though that plotting, and trying to find these poor clusters really helped sharpen my observing skills and was actually fun! One object designated as DdDm 1 was a different designation from DoDz and after emailing Sue French, I found out Dolidze-

Dzimselejsvili changed the designation due to it being a planetary rather than an open cluster. I observed DdDm only by isolating it by "blinking" it with an O-III filter. It was stellar looking at 680x though not much to look at. It was so clear out that I was able to observe NGC 6302 "The Bug Nebula" as a very interesting and bright nebula in Scorpius. Actually, it sort of looked like a squashed bug in the 15" f/4.5. I also found out that since we cut down our 30-foot maple, we now have a great view of the southern horizon, although slightly in the Scottsdale light dome. I then was surprised to find out that we could see all of Corona Australis and I set my sights on NGC 6723 a globular cluster at the top of this constellation. To my surprise, I did locate it and it was brighter than I expected. I then observed NGC 6712 and about pulled my hair out trying to locate IC 1295, which is right next to it as Tom Reiland indicated. I then put my O-III filter on and I could not believe how obvious this planetary was and as big as the globular NGC 6712. I had some more fun blinking this nebula and showing Sue the method of this technique. Sue called me over to her eyepiece to show me NGC 6905 in the O-III at 636x and I was amazed at the detail in this planetary. You could see a dark lane in it and definitely see a sort of "eye" shape. We also observed Comet 2006 VZ 13 with "Frac", our little 3.1-inch and I finished up the night finally finding and observing the Goldilocks variable star in the Dumbbell Nebula with averted vision, very faint! We stopped observing at 1:30 a.m. Now this morning, I feel like I have a hangover but it was worth it and tonight we will do it all over again.

Fred Klein: I had the good fortune and pleasure of attending star parties at Wagman Friday night and Mingo Saturday night and experiencing great clear skies and a lot of interaction with the public and other members.

The conditions were great both nights, clear transparent sky (a few clouds Saturday but not a big problem). The temperature was moderate, wind low and no dew (although when I left Wagman at 1 AM, it seemed that it might be coming). The sky was transparent so viewing nebula and galaxies was easy, even with the Moon. The Milky Way was visible both nights, a little better Friday at Wagman. I got a couple comments from visitors at Mingo that no one was watching the moon. That was because all the other things that often cannot be seen were being observed. (When I got the comments, the moon had descended behind my car. I told them to go ask someone else, and off they went) but I had been on the moon earlier when Venus set and it was still light.

Both nights I used my GOTO mount to find and observe Venus well before sunset Friday starting at 6:38. People who arrived in sunshine were impressed to see a planet in daylight and Venus is down to 18% illuminated and grew to 43 seconds diameter, it makes quite a sight. The best thing I observed was the Swan Nebula, M17, especially with an Ultrablock filter.

## CRESCENT MOON BY PAUL CAMPBELL

Paul Campbell of Washinton, Pennsylvania took this image last night using an old 8-inch "Orange Tube" Celestron. Camera used was a Sony Cybershot digital. All images were unguided - no clock drive engaged.



## M17 BY FRED KLEIN

The second night at Greenbank, I got setup and ready for astrophotography; aimed, focused, centered, autoguided, and setup an auto sequence of five-minute images. Shortly before the end of the first image in the sequence, the autoguiding lost lock. I tried to get it back and it would go for a little while and drop off again. I eventually found out that the battery was only putting out 10.2 volts, and the ST-4 autoguider does want more than this. This was the second night. The first night I had gone for about five hours running a computer, dew heaters, and the autoguider. I only brought my 1.5 amp charger, and it was just not enough to recharge during the day. Anyway, here is what I got for M17, the Omega or Swan Nebula. TMB 105/650, 2x Barlow, one five-minute image, slightly trailed Canon 20D (note, I still don't have my 20Da back yet so this was done with the 20D that I bought as a backup. It doesn't have the modified filter, so I'm surprised I got this much color. No color editing.)



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August 1—40th anniversary of the launch of NASA's Orbiter 5, the last of the pre-Apollo series of Lunar Orbiting craft

August 10—130th anniversary of the discovery of DEIMOS, the first known moon of Mars, by Asaph Hall at the U. S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.

August 12—New moon.

August 17—130th anniversary of the discovery of PHOBOS, the larger of the two moons of Mars, by Asaph Hall at the U. S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D.C.

August 20—30th anniversary of the launch of NASA's Voyager 2 deep-space mission to the outer planets Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

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