The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.

A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh

Niovember, 2002 Vol. 36, No. 8

Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

"Attention Shoppers: There's a Moonrise Special On Planet III"

Cold, misty air and a low cloud deck turned the September 27 Wagman star party into a non-starter. Still, a few members such as Tim Manka and visitors did show up, if nothing else, to admire our fine observatory telescopes. But the gloom of that night was offset when a woman came up to Tim and asked what was for sale with the "Moonrise Special". Obviously she thought our special star party had something for sale ala K-Mart's "Blue Light Special". In fact, at most Wagman star parties Mari-Jo and Wayne Meyers have many fine items for sale, but don't use a blue strobe light to help shoppers find them. :-) Our thanks to this nameless visitor for brightening up and otherwise drab night at the observatory.

Hubble and Photo Contest

All Images Great and Small At November Meeting

You may think that, thanks to the Internet, you can learn everything there is to know about the latest discoveries from the Hubble Space Telescope (HST). However, there is still no substitute for rubbing shoulders with a staffer from the Space Telescope Science Instiute (STSI), the HST's research nerve center run by Johns Hopkins University. To get the absolute latest scoop on HST programs and findings, come to the ***November 15*** AAAP meeting at the ***Carnegie Science Center*** to hear from ***Mark Kochte*** of the STSI. Mark has lectured at several of our most recent LHSC conventions and has gained a reputation for turning up the most fascinating aspects of HST studies (promise….no mathematical graphs or equations). Start making a mental compilation of your HST questions now (e.g. your G.S. editor wants to know if the HST primary shows any signs of meteorite damage after 10+ years).

Note: Mr. Kochte is coming all the way from Baltimore. Let's show our appreciation for his efforts with an "S-R-O" sized crowd.

Like last month, the meeting starts in the CSC's Science Stage lecture hall at ***7:30 pm***. And unlike some of our other venues, there is plenty of extra seating for friends.

Get The Picture? Enter Photo Contest

by Alison Conte

Once again it is time to get your entries together for the astroimaging contest! This year there are no changes to the rules, but our timing is a bit different because of the new meeting schedule. As always, the contest will be held at the November meeting, which will be Friday, November 15, 2002, at the Carnegie Science Center. *The deadline for entry submission is 10 days before the meeting, Tuesday, November 5.*

Please review the rules, which are shown below, and then review your collection of astroimages taken since November 9, 2001. Pick your best and get your entries to David Conte, Contest Coordinator, in one of the following ways:

(continued on page 2, column 1)

Initial Site Survey Approved

AAAP Meets With Washington Co. Commissioners to Discuss South Hills Observatory

by Wayne Gondella

On October 8th, Dick Haddad and myself finally met with the Washington County Commissioners to discuss building a Club Observatory in their Mingo Creek Park location. I asked several officers of the club to try to attend as well, and Larry McHenry, John Holtz, Dave Smith and Ed Moss were able to be there for support. Together, we gave a fine presentation to the two Commissioners in attendance, John Bevic and Bracken Burns, plus the Park Planning Commission.

(continued on page 2, column 2)

Just in: Good news on S.H.O.: See your December Guide Star!!!

Photo Contest Deadline Approaching

(continued from front page)

- Mail them to 313 Ritter Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143
- Drop them off at the above address, or at Dave's office on McKnight Rd., #109, Northland Medical Bldg.
- E-mail them to allybiz@att.net

He can also scan your negatives into a digital format for projection. Questions? Contact Dave Conte at: allybiz@att.net, or 412/366-4846 (day) or 412/741-3216 (evening).

AAAP Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest Rules

1. The contest is open to all active members of the AAAP.
2. The contest date is the November 15 meeting of the AAAP. Entries will be viewed and judged by all AAAP members present at this meeting.
3. All images entered must be originally captured by the contestant.
4. Entries are limited to images concerning areas of interest within the AAAP.
5. Images may be submitted as 35mm transparencies or negatives, photographic prints, or as digital media (in formats accepted by the AAAP Audio-Visual Committee).
6. Only images taken since the date of the previous contest are eligible.
7. There are 3 categories:
   A. Astronomical images taken with optics no longer than 150mm
   B. Astronomical images taken with optics longer than 150mm
   C. Images of atmospheric phenomena
8. No more than 5 entries per contestant per category are allowed for each contest.
9. Entries must be received by the contest coordinator no later than 10 days before the contest date.
10. Entries will be judged for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in each category, with each voting member assigning points respectively (3, 2, and 1). The entry with the highest total number of points in each category will be declared the winning entry, and will be eligible for prizes. Entries that place 2nd and 3rd in total points in each category will be recognized by the AAAP.

More and more CCD camera images in AAAP photo contests.

One of the current attractions in Mingo Park is the Henry Covered Bridge. Hopefully, the park will also be known for its astronomical observatory some day.

Major Progress On New Observatory

(continued from front page)

The presentation was a big success and the idea was received with open arms. The Commissioners gave us the go-ahead to have a formal survey done and submitted to the County to delineate the exact area we would need. Our thanks go out to member Dick Haddad for all his work prior to this in getting the right doors opened for us and a receptive ear placed in our direction. Also, through his efforts, he and other associates will be placing considerable financial backing behind the club to help make this observatory a reality.

I will be meeting soon with members of the observatory committee to discuss size and space requirements of the building and grounds, and to determine and place markers on the hill for the surveyor to reference to. The formal survey should be in the County's hands before mid-November.

Hopefully, there will be more good news to follow in the next Guide Star.

Observatory Web Site Update

From Shawn van Mastrigt: *"The Mingo Observatory Web Site has been updated. I have added directions, a map of Mingo Park, a topo map of the site, and the Terra Server aerial view of the proposed site. You can click on the location and directions link to see them".*
http://home.attbi.com/~vmaestro/SHOproj/southframes.htm

Good Membership Showing for 9-28 NEWO Star Party

by Tom Reiland (from AAAP Listserver)

Thanks to the 35 members who assisted with the September 28 star party. We had about 100 visitors at best and conditions were okay, but not great. The lack of wind, except for some of our members :>), the late clearing and the high humidity that turned into fog before midnight hindered what might have been a fine evening. We did have two ISS passes with the first one being the best. We were surprised to see another satellite following which turned out to be the supply pod, Progress. I was able to show many people the Nova in Sag., which has faded to about 7.1 mag., and the planets, Venus, Neptune and Uranus.

Occultations Everywhere You Look

by John Holtz

An occultation occurs when one object, such as the Moon or asteroid, passes in front of a smaller apparent object, such as a star. The occulted object winks out instantly. Total lunar occultations, where the star passes directly behind the Moon, are common. A grazing occultation, where the star passes in and out of the Moon's mountains along the limb, are less common but more exciting.

Around 6:15 pm on Sunday, ***November 10***, the Moon will graze a 7.5 magnitude star as seen from a narrow path crossing near Fort Necessity, Ohiopyle, and Confluence. (Grazes near Ohiopyle have been some of the best ones I've seen!) Since I'm sure you have nothing better to do at that time, why don't you join me for an expedition to view the graze? If you would like to go along, whether to see what a "graze" is all about, or to make scientifically useful timings, please let me know.

Asteroidal occultations are more rare. Firstly, the path of the occultation is about as wide as the asteroid, so they are typically only 100 miles across. Secondly, the precise path is difficult to predict due to inaccuracies in the known position of the asteroid (and to some extent the star). Thus, seeing an asteroid occultation is a bit like winning a AAAP 50/50 raffle. But thanks to the CCD revolution, updates are available for many events a few days in advance. With these updates, observers can travel to the predicted path with more confidence of actually seeing an event.

Here are the details for a favorable stellar occultation on ***November 25***. Favorable indicates that the predicted path crosses our area, the magnitude drop of the combined star and asteroid will be easy to see, the star is well placed, and so on. My homepage (http://members.aol.com/jwholtz/) will provide finder charts and links to other pages with prediction updates as the date approaches.

Date:	Nov 25	Duration (sec):	6
Time (EDT):	9:30 pm	R. Asc (h m s)	4 29 54.15
Asteroid:	Phereclos	Declin (° ' "):	18 45 26.4
Star Mag.:	10.6	Altitude:	46°.
Mag. Drop:	5.4	Azimuth:	106°. (ESE)

A "Click" We Want You To Join

Like 99% of other clubs and larger organizations, we occasionally get complaints of "cliques" within the AAAP. We try to be friendly and all-encompassing, but people will be people. But there is one kind of "click" we really want you to join, those AAAP members who click their way to the Guide Star On Line (GSOL). You've seen the litany of GSOL benefits many times before (fast receipt, remote access, multiple copies, etc). Give yourself, and your club a nice Christmas present this year by unsubscribing to the paper Guide Star. Write "I Want My GSOL" with your name and address, and e-mail it to Alison Conte at alison.conte@wordwritepr.com.

Place Your Orders for the "Year In Space" Calendars

by John Holtz (from AAAP Listserver)

Each year, the AAAP orders the "Year in Space Desk Calendars" at a special discount price for members. In general, these DESK calendars are about 6-inch x 9-inch and wire bound (so that they open flat). The left hand page has a space or astronomy photo. The right hand page has an entire week with the Moon's phase for each day, interesting astronomical events (conjunctions, meteor showers, etc) and space anniversaries. There is ample space to add your own events. For complete information about this amazing calendar, visit the calendar's web site: http://www.YearInSpace.com

The cost of the calendars will be $10.00 each (or $9 if 36 or more are ordered.) They are available only by ordering through me; please let me know if you would like to order one. The order will be placed after the November 15 meeting, and the calendars will be available for pickup at the December and January meetings.

Strangers Not In the Night

by George Guzik (from AAAP Listserver)

One of my fellow volunteers in the Pittsburgh Regional Science & Engineering Fair recently made the trek to NEWO with his family to see first-hand the place that I have been telling him about. Alas, he chose to visit on a night when I was off-site at another event. Minus one familiar face, his visit could have turned into one of those uncomfortable "alone in a crowd" experiences.

Not at NEWO, however. He recently recounted his visit to me and had nothing but good things to say about the welcoming hospitality of AAAP members and their eagerness to show his family the wonders of the night sky. He also appreciated the members' willingness to share their wealth of knowledge on telescopes and optical equipment. He and his family enjoyed their experience very much. Thanks to the members for making my friend's visit a pleasant one!

Tip of the Month

Not getting your Guide Star? Contact the Corresponding Secretary. Not getting your Sky & Telescope or Astronomy magazine? Contact the Treasurer.

November News Narrative

- Congratulations to ***Willard McCalla***, the AAAP's longest-lived member (93 years) for appearing in a major Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article (Oct. 15) on the secrets of longevity. Willard was an AAAP President in the early 1940's.
- If you missed the club's October meeting, a thousand lashes with a wet star chart. Guest speaker Jeff Peterson (of CMU) gave a "cool" presentation on studies of the Cosmic Background Radiation left over from the Big Bang. CMU is operating liquid helium-cooled detectors near the South Pole, the most favorable environment for this equipment. Most interesting comment of the night: Even though winter temperatures hover near -100F deg., to the super-sensitive detectors the surrounding territory looks like a field of "glowing hot embers".

- But if you missed any of the late September or October Wagman star parties, or other informal observing events, you didn't miss much. As we all know, October seems to have switched places with November as far as the weather is concerned. Thanks to all those members who trekked to Wagman to greet the few visitors who did arrive.
- Even though the cold end of Fall and Winter is approaching, there is still time to hold telescope training at Wagman. Contact Flacc Stifel to learn about requirements and sign up.
- AAAP officers are currently bandying about possible candidates for this year's various AAAP Service Awards (Lindbloom, Harrison, Nova, Brashear). However, suggestions and nominations are certainly welcome from any club member. If you want to recommend an award winner, speak with any AAAP officer.
- Time is fast approaching for ordering your 2003 "Observer's Handbook", still generally regarded as the best observer's pocket guide to celestial ordering. Contact Mari-Jo Meyers next month if you want to order a copy so that we can work up a total order quantity as soon as possible.
- Kudos also to our friends and colleagues at Allegheny Observatory regarding the recent PG story about the observatory's vast library of star parallax data and calculations. This priceless data is now accessible to astrometric researchers via the Internet, thus greatly simplifying work for the AO staff. Until now, the sometimes tattered records were photo-copied and sent by snail-mail. The great value of AO's database lies in its age: Astronomers can check the prior positions and motions of stars well back into the last century.

(news continued at lower right)

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

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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

- We're also closing in on the next edition of the AAAP's unique Membership Directory, which lists members' interests and rosters of astronomical equipment. If your directory entry is sorely in need of an update, contact Brent Hudock, our Membership Secretary.
- And speaking of AAAP publications, the initial AAAP Star Party Brochure (the green one) for the 2003 season is now available. A stack of The Green One will be provided at all club meetings through the Fall and Winter so that you can pass these out at schools, libraries, stores, etc. Contact Eric Fischer (emfischer@switch.com) if you would like an electronic copy. Note: When Astronomy Day and South Park dates are firmed up, we'll publish a updated edition.
- From the "We're 99.99% Perfect Dept.": Last month's Guide Star article on the Black Forest Star Party was incorrectly attributed to Tim Hagen, who did attend the event. The article was written by ***George Guzik***.

Wish Comes True for An Aurora

AAAP Listserver Excerpt from Tom Reiland

(Editor's note: The following except is from October 8 when Tom Reiland and others enjoyed a fine night of observing at the Wagman site.)

"…I hoped to see was an aurora. I got my wish. I thought that there were hints of a display, faint rays and a low arc, in the bowl of the Big Dip around 8:30, but I wrote it off as Aurora Butleralis. At 11:50 I spotted a definite low arc and by midnight it was more pronounced and soon after that it developed some bright rays and patches. It was primarily green, green/white, with some faint patches of red. The Aurora was active, pulsating and shimmering and the rays went up about 25 degrees. It stretched about 70 degrees from NW to NNE. By 1:10 AM the event was over, except for two brief flurries of faint rays. I took about 10 or 12 slides of the event on Ektachrome 200. I hope they turn out."

TILT! Time To Prep for AAAP 2002 Holiday Party

The "TILT" we're referring to is the Earth's axis, which is placing the North Pole further away from the Sun. In plain English, we're closing in on December, the month of the Winter Solctice and the annual AAAP Holiday Party, which will be held at the Middle Road Fire Hall in the North Hills on December 13. This is one of the club's best-attended and all-around jolly events. As always, we need members to provide treats and beverages, and help with acquisition of party trays. Donations of gifts for door prizes (except those $#@&% telescope counterweights!) are also very much appreciated. Contact any club officer to offer your assistance.

Greetings and Felicitations*

A sincere "Welcome to the AAAP" is extended to these latest inductees:

Josh Barbara	Joe Lutz
Matthew Barbara	James Riley
Rich Barbara	Dan Robb
Robin Barbara	Mark Stauffer
Elizabeth Barry	Sam Stein

(*Which guest character from the Classic Trek series made this quote? Answer on bottom of page 10.)

Some Digital Images Worth Seeing

Member Lou Coban, who also works at Allegheny Observatory, was kind enough to post the image below of M27, using the following equipment setup at AO: *"The picture is a five minute exposure of M27 under a nearly full moon taken through the Meade 10" f6.3 Schmidt Cassegrain telescope…using an SBIG ST-2000XM camera coupled to an AO-7 adaptive optics module set to correct every quarter of a second. The image has been dark subtracted, flat fielded and blurred to take away the grainy appearance.*"

Larry McHenry also continues to post many fine video-derived images on the club's listserver. The picture below of M17 is the result of a combination of six individual images, each a 2 second exposure at prime-focus. (gain set to max 18dB). Too see more of Larry's video stills, go to http://home.attbi.com/~lemaaap/vidcap/video1.htm

Ideas Welcome for Next Year's Sci-Tech Festival

by GeorgeGuzik (from AAAP Listserver)

Our friends at the Carnegie Science Center are already planning for next year's Pittsburgh International Science and Technology Festival. Astronomy Weekend is one of the key events in the Sci-Tech Festival. Astronomy Weekend this past Spring featured great participation from the AAAP with many exhibits and many individuals involved. It also featured impressive displays from two local rocketry clubs, lectures by Phil Plait (author of "Bad Astronomy"), a fine exhibit from Brashear, science demonstrations by the irrepressible Dr. Bunhead, a theatrical presentation of the life of John Brashear, and even a visit from *Galileo*.

Which leaves us with an interesting question. What can we do at next year's Astronomy Weekend that will make it bigger and better than this year's event? I'm interested in hearing your ideas for exhibits and events.

November 2002

Fridge Calendar *by Cathy Rivi*

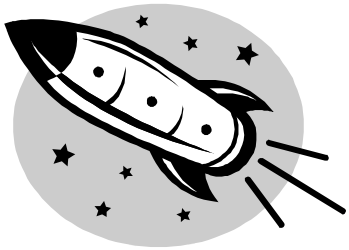
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 	2
3	4 	5 Entries for Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest due!!!	6 	7	8	9
10 Lunar occultation. (See page 4)	11 	12	13	14	15 AAAP Meeting 7:30 p.m. Carnegie Science Center	16
17 	18	19 "Geese Going Moon"(Dakota Indian) 	20	21	22 	23 Nov. 23, 1930: Dedication of Leo Scanlon's Valley-View Observatory
24	25 Asteroidal occultation. (See page 4)	26	27 	28 	29	30

Looking ahead: Wagman Winterfest: 4 p.m. Saturday, March 8, 2003

"Space isn't remote at all. It's only an hour's drive away if your car could go straight upwards." Sir Fred Hoyle (b. 1915), British astronomer

AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule

Dec. 13, 2002 (Holiday Party!)
Jan. 17, 2003
Feb. 14, 2003
Mar. 14, 2003



A Hymn to Amateur Astronomy

A Book Review by John Cheng

REVIEW of "Seeing in the Dark: How Backyard Stargazers are Probing Deep Space and Guarding Earth from Interplanetary Peril" by Timothy Ferris. Simon & Schuster. (2002).

Timothy Ferris's new book is a report on the current state of our hobby and a wonderful smorgasbord of things astronomical. It's unique in my astro-related reading experience in ranging across so many topics in so few pages.

Ferris reminisces about his youth in Florida, where he began to observe and learn the night sky and had a front row seat to the early missions of the American space program. He describes his romantic attachment to the American highway system of the 50's and 60's and his discovery of black music despite the segregated airways.

He provides an informative tour of Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto and a good selection of their moons. Ferris covers physical properties of each of these objects, their appearance, and discovery. He notes the salient features of the wilder satellites and records the public furor that resulted when Hayden Planetarium decided to demote the ninth planet to a mere Kuiper belt object.

The amateur astronomers Ferris describes are far from average; he focuses on the superstars of the hobby. Some have logged significant time at large observatories or have been given time on the Hubble Space Telescope. He introduces us to Barbara Wilson, an amateur who can find the jet in M87 at star parties, and Stephen O'Meara, her rival for the title of most acute visual observer alive. Ferris's visit with planetary imager Don Parker was filled with the latter's hard-won wisdom about equipment and sky conditions and included the funniest line in the book.

Preparing to show Ferris Mars, Parker "rummaged around in a drawer full of eyepieces and emerged with one in hand, announcing exuberantly, "I got a clean eyepiece here!"

The quotes that head the chapters are wonderful. I had never noticed Emily Dickinson's:

> Either the Darkness alters –
> Or something in the sight
> Adjusts itself to Midnight –
> And Life steps almost straight.

(No wonder so much good observing gets done after twelve.)

I have a few criticisms. Ferris constantly refers to amateur astronomers as "stargazers," a name which, for some reason, makes me cringe. Second, the subtitle of the book, "How Backyard Stargazers are Probing Deep Space and Guarding Earth from Interplanetary Peril" is ludicrous and makes the book

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sound chintzy. I passed up this book up numerous times because of it. Some useless star charts seem to have been thrown in as an after-thought. Perhaps the publisher insisted.

In the end, the book is a hymn to amateur astronomy. It's informative, well written, and a welcome change from the manuals, handbooks, and historical and cosmological texts that populate the astronomy shelves. There's something here that'll interest most anyone in the hobby. It's a good read.... But that 'stargazer' stuff has got to go.*

*(*See related story on page 9.)*

Secrets of the Space Race Revealed

by George Guzik

REVIEW of Challenge to Apollo: The Soviet Union and the Space Race, 1945-1974 (NASA, Washington D.C., 2000, NASA SP-2000-4408), by Asif A. Sadiqqi.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the opening of its archives provided many new opportunities to view the achievements of Soviet science and engineering. In the late 1950s the Soviet Union stunned the world by orbiting *Sputnik*, Earth's first artificial satellite. It then unleashed an even bigger surprise in 1961 by placing cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin in orbit and returning him safely to Earth. These events ignited a fierce competition between the Soviet Union and the United States that culminated in Neil Armstrong's first footstep on the Moon in 1969. Our effort to reach the Moon occurred mostly in open view with joyous successes and heart-rending failures televised during prime time. The Soviet effort, however, was obscured by secrecy and by misinterpretations of those few details that did emerge.

Challenge to Apollo: The Soviet Union and the Space Race, 1945-1974 by Asif A. Sadiqqi, is a fresh and revealing view into the history of the space program. Sadiqqi prepared this massive and comprehensive work (over 1000 pages) based on archival materials from the former Soviet Union and upon interview with individuals involved in the program. Not just a dry recitation of facts and figures, Sadiqqi augments the story with examinations of the individuals and institutions involved in space exploration and with investigations of the technical innovation resulting from the Soviet program.

If you grew up with the space race, this book will greatly expand your knowledge of that exciting time in history. I you *weren't* glued to the TV on the evening of July 20, 1969, then you owe it to yourself to read this book. Highly recommended!

Wade Barbin doesn't want you to read this! Forty years with the AAAP

by Ann Norman and Wade Barbin

I drove onto the hill of Wagman Observatory under a first quarter moon and gauzy clouds that you could kind-of see through. Not a good night for observing, but not totally hopeless either, so I wasn't surprised to see a gathering of our most hard core members standing around in a circle in front of the building.

"Hey, No Girls Allowed!" someone called out. The group broke into laughter and invited me into the circle. I don't know who the joker was, but in retrospect it probably wasn't Wade Barbin, the member with the forty-year AAAP anniversary that had very reluctantly agreed to meet me for an interview. Wade is famously shy of the spotlight. Nevertheless, in this issue we will figuratively beam our car headlights at him to expose an astronomer behind our Brashear telescope.

Wade settles into a chair in the warm-up room, a pair of binoculars around his neck. "I was hoping to see SS Cygni erupt," he explains. He submits the following biography, assuring me that he won't be disappointed if it doesn't run this month, or this year, or ever.

At a young age, my interest in astronomy was sparked by a combination of religious wonder, comic books, and science fiction movies. My first astronomical observations were of Venus. I read of a fighter pilot who crashed after mistaking Venus for a UFO, and I had to check if such a thing was possible.

At age ten, I convinced my dad to enroll me in a beginner's course at the Buel Planetarium, where I learned the constellations that I still enjoy today.

It was several years before I got my first telescope, a three-inch Gilbert Astronomical telescope on a tripod with a ball and socket mount for Christmas. I used it to look at the moon, Jupiter, and Saturn. It wasn't long that I began saving every penny I could get hold of to buy a ""good'' pair of binoculars. I was thirteen.

My interest deepened when I met the downstairs neighbor of a schoolmate, Bob Schmidt *(whose fifty-year AAAP anniversary was celebrated in the September of Guide Star).* Bob and his wife Nancy frequently set up a small telescope on the sidewalk outside their front door. I made a special effort to visit my friend on clear evenings.

Bob and I soon became friends and my first attempt to grind a telescope mirror wasn't far off. Bob was active in the AAAP and invited me to go observing with him at Leo Enie's. I had heard so much about him from friends that shared by astronomy enthusiasm that, for me, meeting Leo was like meeting a god! At Leo's I remember seeing the Dumbbell and Ring nebulae for the first time. Retiring into their house for coffee, I was astounded to find my cousin Donald living there. Donald had been taken into to Leo's home on East Ohio Street, when Donald's family had been forced to move from the neighborhood to make way for the

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Etna bypass. Leo's interest in astronomy apparently rubbed off on Donald who became a mechanical engineer and later worked on modifying the Thaw telescope at Allegheny Observatory.

In August of 1962, at age sixteen, I joined the AAAP with Bob Schmidt as my adult sponsor. I became an active member of the club's newly opened Advanced Optical Workshop at Allegheny.

The instructor of the shop, Bill Herdman, owned Three B Optical Company and invited me to work at his company, at first part time on weekends. Also, when he became busier with his company, I took over the instructor's job at the workshop. I held the position until 1972 when the shop closed. The focus of the club was changing from telescope making to observing.

Young Mr. Barbin at A.O. (Photo courtesy of Bob Schmidt)

I spent the next four years at Three B and another four at Goetz optical company, before moving to the gas company. At the optics companies we worked on projects for the military and NASA. I even worked on a telescope sent to the moon as part of the Ranger Six project. It was a small Cassegrain designed to take pictures as it crashed towards the moon's surface. As luck would have it, "my" scope went off course and missed the moon completely.

I ask about Wagman's 11-inch Brashear telescope. "Is it special just because it's an antique--for sentimental reasons--or is it optically special?"

The Brashear is optically special, because it is a research telescope built for visual observing. Specifically, it was build for the purpose of viewing Halley's Comet in 1910. The comet, of course, turned out to be plenty bright and was best viewed with the naked eye. Soon after, the focus of serious astronomical work turned from visual observing to black-and-white photography. The Brashear is a refractor optimized for visual observing, not black-and-white photography. Its spherical aberration makes it a poor instrument for black-and-white photography. Surprisingly, a black and white photograph of the moon taken at the eyepiece of the Brashear would turn out blurry. So a beautiful visual-observing telescope fell into disuse and that's how we were able to get it. (Also the Brashear is rock solid. Nobody makes visual observing telescopes out of iron anymore.)

Wade confides that he played a central role in the fierce dome versus sliding-roof controversy, shaking his head as if to say the episode is best forgotten. He argued in favor of a sliding roof for the new Wagman observatory. (For one thing domes, like water towers, attract hunters who shoot at them for target practice.) The debate went back and forth until Wade produced some drawings. Consensus converged around these plans, resulting in the functional, aesthetically appealing observatory we all know and love.

(continued on page 9)

Stargazers Battle Amateur Astronomers for Soul of AAAP

Compiled by Ann Norman from the AAAP Listserver

What should we call practitioners of our hobby? Many sympathize with **John Cheng**, who hates the term "stargazer." To some, this term sounds derogatory and conjures up an image of a dazed or day-dreamy astrologer. Meanwhile, a "pro-stargazer" contingent worries that the politically correct alternative-- “amateur astronomer”--is too pretentious a label for those of us who enjoy the stars but do not expect to further the frontiers of science. **Charlie Pritt** suggests "recreational sky observer" as a compromise. Here are some other thoughts:

Joyce Osbourne-Fischer wonders if occultation enthusiast John Holtz would be offended if we referred to him as a “starGRAZER”

Old AAAP members would rather be called "stargazers" than "starGEEZERS."

Eric Fisher wants to be known as "That Astronomy Dude," which is how my teenage son announced him when he called our house on *Guide Star* business.

Star Trekkers feel that the term "stargazer" has been tarnished by its association with imaginary tragedy. As one fanATIC pointed out, Starfleet Officer Jack Crusher (Beverly Crusher’s husband) was killed while serving aboard the *U. S. S. Stargazer*. [Editor's note: This was in 2354. Wesley was only five at the time.]

Perhaps the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh should consider replacing its long, clunky name with a more poetic Indian name. **John Peak** informs us that the **Tohono O’Odham people** of Arizona had to create a word for "astronomers" to use in their written agreements with the U.S. Government regarding Kitt Peak National Observatory, which is sited on sacred Indian grounds.Their wonderful choice translates as "The People with Long Eyes."

Finally, **Tom Reiland** cautions, "When stargazing in Green County, watch out for the starGRAZERS."

Mr. Barbin’s 40th Year In AAAAP

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Wade has found the 800 brightest NGC catalogue objects down to about magnitude 12 using his backyard observatory. Though an optical specialist, Wade still enjoys naked eye observing--for a while he wrote regular column in Guide Star about the constellations.

When Flac Stifle rebuilt the Manka reflector, Wade “only” contributed a base adapter. But don’t count him out for future projects. He is now involved in the plans for a future South Hills observatory and may be needed for work on its future telescope(s). Don’t expect to see Wade at every meeting and star party. These tend to fall on weekends that his 9-year-old granddaughter visits. She’s the biggest “star” in his life, right now.

Wade begins Ditch-Witch “Voyage” during early NEWO Construction.

What has he enjoyed most about astronomy over the past forty years? He says it’s “the nice people I’ve had the pleasure of knowing.” Of the prizes he’s received for his years of AAAP services, the one he most treasures is his Grass-Shear Award (a spoof of the more prestigious Brashear Award). He can’t remember what he did to earn the attention of his fellow astronomy ”nuts” on that particular occasion. And he claims not to understand the fuss about his forty-year anniversary. “I’ve just been around a long time, that’s all.’’

WADE BARBIN’S AAAP RESUME

1964 - 72: Instructor at the club’s Advanced Optics Workshop at Allegheny Observatory (now closed).

1972: On the AAAP executive Committee. Involved with construction designs and finding a location for Wagman observatory.

1976: Constructed a backyard observatory, an eleven-foot homemade plastic dome.

1979: With Bob Schmidt and Bob Shear constructed a ten-inch Schiefspigler to go in the backyard observatory.

1987: Constructed the pier for the twelve-inch Optical Craftsman Telescope and also designed and manufactured new mounting rings.

1992: Helped acquire the eleven-inch Brashear refracting telescope for the club.

1993 - 95: Helped restore the Brashear telescope over a period of three years. Involved in design and construction of new wing of Wagman—the Brashear Room.

1995: President of AAAP. Brashear completed and installed in new wing.

TURKEY HUNTING and STAR GAZING

by George Guzik

NWTF-WITO. That's quite an acronym, isn't it? It stands for the National Wild Turkey Federation's Women in the Outdoors program. Earlier this year a local NWTF member, Michelle Kuhns Fitchko, requested our assistance in providing an astronomy program at a summer event she was organizing.

After volunteering, I learned that NWTF is a nonprofit organization that "supports scientific wildlife management on public, private, and corporate lands as well as wild turkey hunting as a traditional North American sport." The NWTF has 450,000(!) members in 50 states and 12 other countries. The WITO program was designed to provide the participants experience in a number of outdoor activities conducted by volunteer instructors. The agenda included:

Stream ecology
Wildlife conservation
Hiking and backpacking
Archery
Birding
Firearm safety and clay pigeon shooting
Scuba and snorkeling techniques
Rock climbing
Mountain biking
Wild turkey hunting and calling
Fly Fishing
… And, of course, Astronomy

Given that this event would be my first try at conducting a class on astronomy, it led to an interesting question. What could I present in an hour or so that would be interesting and useful to someone just getting started in astronomy? The question was even more relevant since I'm really still getting started myself so I couldn't stray too far from the basics.

After wrestling with the problem for some time, I put together a presentation that introduced the AAAP, discussed some of Leo Scanlon's adventures, described the types of objects and phenomena visible in the sky, discussed the motion of stars and planets, and concluded with a list of helpful resources.

I was very fortunate that Jean Philpott, Office Manager for Buhl Planetarium, also volunteered as an instructor. She offered to conduct a tour of the night sky and to provide instructions on using star charts. Taken together, it looked as though our individual plans might form a good introduction to astronomy.

Just prior to the event, Michelle sent out an email to the instructors listing the number of registrants for each of the WITO events. I became more than a bit apprehensive when I didn't see the astronomy class on the list. Were we relegated to the dustbin due to a lack of interest? I inquired and Michelle's response was encouraging. ALL FORTY of the WITO registrants signed up for the astronomy class.

August 16 arrived with clouds, heat, and humidity but with a promise for better conditions toward evening. The sky was partly cloudy, if a bit hazy, by the time I arrived at the Ligonier

(continued at upper right)

Camp and Conference Center (LCCC) where the WITO event was held. It's worth mentioning that LCCC is an interesting place in its own right. A soccer field occupies the lowest elevation of the campus. A main building containing meeting facilities and overnight accommodations sits at the middle elevation. Camping facilities are nearby. Further up on the hill are additional camping facilities and an open-air pavilion big enough for several basketball courts. LCCC is affiliated with local churches so the pavilion also functions as a "chapel-in-the-woods." Impressive to say the least! LCCC also has facilities for the more adventurous including hiking trails, a 45-foot climbing tower, and a tight-wire and pulley arrangement that allows the VERY adventurous to glide down the hillside suspended about 20 feet in the air. The wire and pulley arrangement looked like it might be fun but if I'm flying at least 20 feet in the air I really prefer to be seated comfortably in a Boeing product, thank you very much.

I had some time to spare after preparing for the presentation so I set up my scope in front of the main building just after sunset. I never cease to be amazed with how a telescope attracts attention! Several passers-by who were involved in other activities at LCCC stopped to catch a glimpse of the Moon and Venus.

Dusk arrived as the WITO participants returned to the main building from their class on stream ecology. Venus was heading down toward the trees so we started the astronomy class a bit out of order by jumping right into observing the Moon and Venus. Once everyone had an opportunity to observe these two objects we moved inside to the LCCC's meeting room for the presentation phase. How did it go? Actually, the "classroom instruction" went reasonably well with only a couple of minor errors on my part. One was dropping my CD copy of Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" on the floor. (It really was an integral part of the presentation – trust me!) The jewel case popped open and ejected the CD, which rolled neatly across the floor with me in hot pursuit.

Following my part of the presentation, Jean took over and gave the participants a good primer on using the star charts that she provided. We then exited the meeting room and reentered the great outdoors for more observing. Perhaps the "merely OK outdoors" is a better description. Clouds were rolling through, so we had to wait for the breaks to see our favorite objects. Jean worked with the participants, showing them how to locate constellations and stars using the charts. I worked with the scope to give close-up views. Although we were near the entrance to a well-lit building (a location I chose for convenience and to avoid navigating hilly terrain in the dark) we managed to continue our earlier observations of the Moon and we also viewed M57, Vega, Alcor, and Mizar.

Judging from the feedback, the astronomy class went over pretty well. If I were to do it over again I'd rely less on a formal presentation and spend more time on the observing. The word from Michelle is that next year's WITO event will be held from August 22 to 24. I'm looking forward to an opportunity to redeem myself for that incident with the Floyd CD!

(Answer to Trek trivia quiz from page 5: "Trelane" from "Squire of Gothos")

CLASSIFIEDS:

FOR SALE: 5 inch Meade ETX, original price $895, will sell for $500 or highest bid over that. Call Paul Hawkins at 412-824-7146.

FOR SALE: Meade 8" Starfinder, equatorial mount, motor drive, 3 eyepieces with eyepiece case, Barlow lens, declination attachment. Like new, hardly used. $500.00. Call Emil Schafer at (412) 381-2005

FOR SALE:
- Astro-Physics Quick Release Bracket (850QRB) - New - $35
- Celestron Binocular Tripod Adapter (93512-A) - New - $15
- LaserMax Collimator (TLC) - Used a few times - $125
- Losmandy GM-8 - Used sparingly (2 1/2 yrs old) - $850, includes 7# weight, tray, aluminum motor covers, case for head, universal dovetail plate)
- Manfrotto Padded Tripod Bag (3283M - 8"x39") - New - $50
- Rainbow Optics Star Spectroscope - Used twice - $80, not a professional spectroscope, but an educational device).
- Tele Vue Everbright 2" Diagonal (Old Style) - Used - $50 (not the new model with compression ring).
- Vixen 7x50 Finder with Bracket (#3546) - New - $75

Contact John Peak at 412-821-5180 (leave answering machine message between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm weekdays). E-mail: Peak_John@msn.com. Only interested in selling locally; not interested in shipping items. If you live close to Etna/Millvale or Wagman, seller will meet you to drop off the item(s).

FOR SALE: Televue 7mm Nagler T1, $125.00. Contact Gary Felton Phone at 304-329-2186, or contact Charlie Pritt (charlie@pritt.com)

FOR SALE: Orion XT6 Dobsonian. Not in perfect condition, but a good starter scope. Includes padded tube case, Rigel quickfinder, several eyepieces, Baader solar filter, etc. Contact Eddie Jones at 412-421-7659 or egj@andrew.cmu.edu for more details.

FOR SALE: New 8" Meade scope. Contact Mark Zaborowski for details (724-226-2847).

FOR SALE:
- 10" LX Meade 2000 model with JMI auto-focus, dew shield, and 26mm 4000 series Plosel. $2000.00.
- "The Sky" CD version 4.0 level IV, telescope control, 19 million objects. $50.00.
- Psion hand-held computer, 32 Megabytes (MB) RAM, 16 MB ROM, Office Suite and Prycon astronomical software (sky map), 56K modem. $100.00

Contact Jack Dull at jdull@alleghenyludlum.com or (724) 226-5220 (W), (724) 845-7754 (H)

FOR SALE: Meade ETX90-EC with Autostar and Celestron 25mm eyepiece. $250.00. Tripod not included. Contact Larry Curcio at 412-939-2640.

WANTED: Good used astronomical telescope. Contact Susan Parker at 412-492-7021.

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