

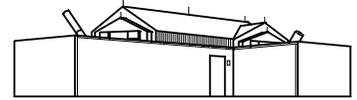
# The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.

A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh

February, 2003

Vol. 36, No. 11



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

## Feb. 14, Get An Early Seat

### Free Buhl "Sky Show" Highlight of February AAAP Meeting



In all honesty, we haven't checked with the Buhl Planetarium staff at the Carnegie Science Center to see if they still use "Sky Show" as a general term for feature presentations in the planetarium theater. It's a term that we have carried for decades since we used to meet in the old Buhl building and looked forward to a free program (once per year) in the "Theater of the Stars". Whatever the proper term today, the tradition continues at the **February 14, 2003** meeting at the CSC, nominally starting at **7:30 pm**\*. As of *Guide Star* press time, we had not learned if the "Sky Show" would be taken from Buhl's current roster of programs, or be a special presentation for the AAAP. Whatever the topic, we're certain to bring in a large crowd. In fact, it's been S-R-O at the past several years' meetings.

### \*You Snooze, You Lose...

...your chance to enjoy the planetarium show. Please take your seat no later than **7:15 pm**. After **7:30 pm**, the planetarium doors are closed until the end of the program. Afterwards, we make like a thundering herd and go to the CSC's main auditorium to conduct the balance of the meeting. If you have any doubts as to where to go or what to do when you arrive, simply check with any CSC staffer. If you cannot arrive before 7:30, simply go to the main lecture hall. Either way, be there!

### Shuttle Columbia Disaster Brings Disbelief, Much Sorrow

Like every Space Shuttle mission, the Columbia flight in late January triggered AAAP members' interest in possible visible passes over our area. STS-107 offered hope in this respect since its orbit was favorably inclined to Pittsburgh's latitude. Predictions indicated several early morning passes. Alas, the Orbiter was not observed because of bad weather. Who was to know this minor frustration would soon be replaced with utter horror when Columbia ripped apart in the upper atmosphere at the end of its mission?

Ironically, Columbia was the first space shuttle visible from the Pittsburgh area, when in made a series of spectacular early evening passes in December of 1983 (see photo below). In the years since, we have only been able to observe her sister ships.

Of course, our sorrow is for Columbia's valiant crew. At Wagman Observatory we have a plaque commemorating the Challenger crew; no doubt we will be raising a similar plaque for Columbia's. See page 7 for additional perspectives on this great tragedy.



*The Space Shuttle Columbia (mission STS-9) rises out of the southwest in this December 1983 photo taken by Tom Reiland from the roof of Allegheny Observatory. Before it entered shadow, the orbiter reached -1 mag.*

## Progress Continues

### No Stopping the South Hills Observatory Now

Many members will recall that planning for the Wagman Observatory took the better part of a decade, largely because of a then-reluctant Allegheny County Government. In contrast, progress on the club's South Hills Observatory in Mingo Park, Washington Co., is proceeding at blazing speed, thanks to the enthusiastic support of Washington Co. government and members such as Dick Haddad. Here are some of the latest developments:

- On January 18, several members marched through the snow at Mingo Park and marked off the proposed area for the observatory building. We've been in touch with the park office about removal of some obstructing low brush in that area.
- The proposed lease for the observatory site has been officially delivered to the Washington Co. Commissioners and law offices. The Commissioners have indicated they want to publicize the agreement signing (perhaps even TV coverage). Our thanks to members such as Flacc Stifel, Ed Moss and others for their help in drafting the lease.
- Even though major donations toward the observatory have been generously granted by member Dick Haddad, other members are welcomed and encourage to make their own donations (please contact Treasurer John Holtz to make your contribution).
- Handicapped access is a major item of interest in the design of the South Hills observatory. Specific donations are welcomed in this regard, as well as advice on design and installation of handicapped-related equipment.
- A preliminary design for the new observatory has been drafted. Sorry, you'll have to wait for your March *Guide Star* to see it.



## Expect Big Crowds At Winterfest '03

Now that Sky & Telescope has given prominence to Wagman Winterfest (see S&T page 84), we're certain to draw a larger-than-usual crowd, especially from out-of-town visitors. Make sure to keep your schedules clear for **March 8, 2003** and begin planning your contributions for the event (telescope set-ups, refreshments, merchandise for hand-out or sale, etc.) In particular, hook up with Mari-Jo Meyers if you would like to help in any way with food and refreshments. More about all this in the March Guide Star and, of course, hope against hope for reasonable weather, maybe even clear skies. But don't wait for the March GS to get your Winterfest act together.

## January's Speaker Reveals a Very Dangerous Profession

Our appreciation to guest speaker **Mike Ramsey**, who spoke about space-based and other types of sensing of active volcanoes. Not only did Mr. Ramsey deliver a very informative lecture, he did so after a 30-hour flight from Hawaii (where he had just done some field research at Mauna Loa); in the process, he experienced a 70°F temperature drop when he got off the plane during Pittsburgh's single-digit cold snap. Here are some of the highlight's of Mike's talk:

- ➔ Volcanologists suffer by far the highest injury/mortality rate among the field sciences – close to 30%
- ➔ The typical lava outflow from a Volcano like Mauna Loa generates enough heat energy (in melting rocks) to match the world's entire man-made energy production
- ➔ Geologic records show evidence of explosive volcanoes in North America (e.g. Yellowstone) that spread ash over much of the entire continent (vastly larger than Mt. St. Helens). Geologically speaking, these happened just the other day and could happen tomorrow.
- ➔ Worst of all for astronomers: The great observatories (Keck, Subaru, etc.) sitting on Mauna Kea are atop a dormant volcano, not an extinct volcano! In fact, geologic sensors are placed around the mountain just in case things begin to stir.



## News Youz Can Use

- Repeat Memory Download #1 – As of February 1st, the password to the club's web site has been changed to **Vega**. Make sure to type in this famous star name with initial caps.
- Repeat Memory Download #2 – If you forget that Wagman Observatory has new gate and door/security combinations, you'll have a decidedly tough time getting in (especially our fortress-like building). Check with **Tom Reiland** or **Flacc Stifel** about these changes.
- The next lecture in the Allegheny Observatory Public Lecture Series will February 21 on "*Imaging the Universe: The Sloan Digital Sky Survey*", to be given by Professor Andrew Connolly of the University of Pittsburgh. Admission is free, but reservations are needed, call 412-321-2400.
- Wagman Mud Alert!!!! – Getting into that time of the year when the observatory grounds begin to turn to mush. To avoid leaving potentially ankle-twisting ruts, please park on the gravel area close to the gate during those "squishy" days.
- Looking ahead to Astronomy Week 2003 (April) – **George Guzik** reports: "*One of the themes we're working with for this year's Astronomy Weekend is the contributions that amateurs make to the field of astronomy. I can think of quite a few and I'm sure that there are many, many more. Please contact me (georgeguzik@aol.com) to identify your favorites. We'll highlight them in the info presented to visitors at AW 2003.*"
- A note to "AAAP Star Trek Junkies" from **Truman Kohman**: "*I know some of you are out there! At the Spectroscopy Society of Pittsburgh Technology Forum, February 19, 5:30 PM, Duquesne University, Mellon Science Hall, there will be a talk "Chemistry of Star Trek" by Penny Chaloner, University of Sussex, free and open to the public.*"
- Even though we are now into the second month of the year, 2003 astronomy calendars are still available from our Merchandise Coordinator **Mari-Jo Meyers**. Contact her at wmeyers1@comcast.net or 724-339-3447 for calendars, Observers Handbooks and lots of other neat stuff.
- A belated "Get Well Soon" from all of us to **Dave Houggy**, who is recovering from shoulder replacement surgery late last year. Dave "shouldered" a lot of the work during the construction of the Brashear scope wing at Wagman observatory in the mid '90's.
- As we grind ever closer to Tax Time in April, Treasurer John Holtz reminds us to consider any financial donations to the club as tax-deductible contributions to a not-for-profit organization. Contact John to clarify your tax deduction status.
- Another reminder to those\* with hundreds of great old astronomical slides just sitting in storage, bring a five or so to the Feb. meeting to help fill out the images portion of the meeting. Who cares if the slides are seven years old? In some cases, the celestial light that formed them may have been traveling for hundreds or thousands of years. (\*Mark Arelt, Ed Honkus, John Holtz, etc. - you know who you are.)

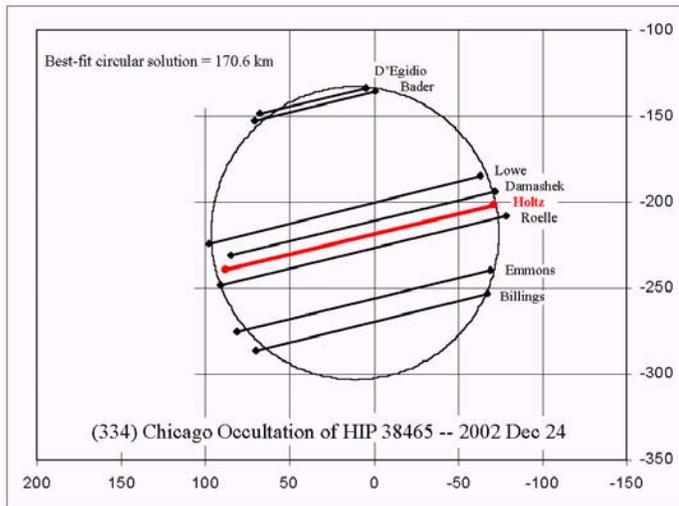


## This Month's Occultations

by John Holtz

February and early March will be a good time for occultations if the occultation predictions hold true and the weather predictions give us favorable conditions. The asteroidal occultations are all predicted to be in or close to our region. Updates on these could move them closer or farther away. If the conditions are very favorable, I will post finder charts on my web site (<http://members.aol.com/jwholtz>). And now, this month's occultations are:

- Feb 8, asteroid 275 Sapiientia will occult a 10.6 magnitude star (R.A. 8h 57m 26.06s Dec +17° 18' 2.9") at 1:36 am EST (6:36 UT on Feb 8)
- Feb 9, asteroid 726 Joella will occult an 11.7 magnitude star (R.A. 7h 46m 53.23s Dec +0° 35' 44.2") at 12:43 am EST (5:43 UT on Feb 9)
- Mar 1, asteroid 36 Atalante will occult a 10.3 magnitude star (R.A. 12h 25m 34.42s Dec -3° 0' 15.1") at 6:03 am EST (11:03 UT on Mar 1). The current prediction has this event occurring in Pittsburgh!
- Mar 4, a 100% guaranteed event. The 4% sunlit, super-thin crescent Moon will cover a 6.3 magnitude star at 7:09 pm EST (0:09 UT on Mar 5). This should be a beautiful event visible in any size of scope, and maybe even binoculars!



This interesting diagram presented by John Holtz at the January meeting shows how individual amateur's occultation observations (including his) contributes to better understanding of the size and shape of an asteroid. Timings from different observers make it possible to discern the asteroid's form from the imaginary "shadow" it casts on the Earth. Congrats to John for being "On Track".

### ☞ Deepest Sympathies ☜

We regret to report the recent death Janet's Greenberg's mother. Janet is one of our most active and involved members, especially with star parties at the South Park Wave Pool and lectures at Border's Books & Music in Bethel Park. Our condolences to Janet and her husband Jack.

## "Aloha" to New Members

The following folks were enthusiastically voted in as new members at the January meeting:

**Jessica McCafferty** (returning after a short absence)  
**Maureen S. Moutz**  
**Breiner L. Porter**

## Follow-Up to "Most Different Observations" Article

Several members responded to last month's Guide Star article on total different observations possible in one's observing career. Here are some additional suggestions:

Venus near inferior conjunction (less than 1% illuminated)  
 Asteroidal occultation  
 All Messier objects                      8 planets - Dusk to dawn  
 All Messiers - Dusk to dawn      Naked eye Supernova  
 Zodiacal light                              Milky Way  
 Gegenshein                                  Moon < 24 hours of New  
 Collision of bodies (like comet SL9)  
 (Thanks also to Gus Johnson for finder charts on as-yet unseen objects - Editor)

### 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

#### 2002-2003 Officers:

President:	Larry McHenry	412-884-4924
Vice President:	Terry Trees	724-337-3231
Treasurer:	John Holtz	724-352-7596
Corresponding Sec:	Alison Conte	412-741-3216
Recording Sec:	Dennis Derda	724-224-4688
Membership Sec:	Brent Hudock	724-437-5990
Guide Star Editors:	Eric Fischer (news)	412-487-7011

#### 2000-2001 Executive Committee (in addition to officers):

Wade Barbin** (724-443-3404)	Tom Reiland* (412-487-8326)
Ed Moss (412-734-0255)	Dave Smith (412-390-0870)
Bob Novack (724-538-4242)	Flacus Stifel** (412-486-8067)
John Radzilowicz (412-388-1562)	Bill Yorkshire (412-793-9552)

\*Wagman Observatory Director, \*\*Associate Directors

Group Scheduling Coordinator:  
 Paula Meddings (724-745-2447)

AAAP Homepage: 3ap.org  
AAAP Webmaster: Kenn Lippert (lippert@nauticom.net)

#### Guide Star Associate Editors

Ann Norman (412-242-6806)      Cathy Rivi (412-782-4605)  
Guide Star Classified Ads: Cathy Rivi (crivi@mindspring.com)

#### AAAP Member Dues\*\*\*:

AAAP Dues:	\$18.00
Junior Member (under 18):	\$13.00
<u>Sky &amp; Telescope Magazine:</u>	Add \$30.00
<u>Astronomy Magazine:</u>	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

# AAAP 2002 Fiscal Report

by John Holtz

Following is the fiscal statement for the year 2002, as of Jan 19, 2003. Anyone desiring more details should contact me directly.

## INFLOWS

50/50 Raffles.....	\$225.50
Astronomy Class.....	120.00
Banking Fee Reimburs.....	6.00
Donations, general.....	2,841.85
Alum. Recycle.....	68.70
Fish Bowl (star parties).....	478.97
Food.....	364.00
Raffles.....	25.00
SSP.....	800.00
Subtotal Donations.....	4,578.52
Interest (savings).....	1,059.22
Keyfee (Wagman usage).....	490.00
Memberships:	
Astronomy Subcr. (68).....	1,998.00
New (76).....	1,368.00
Renew (404).....	7,272.00
Junior: New (12).....	156.00
Junior: Renew (22).....	286.00
S&T Subscr. (180).....	5,399.90
Stamps.....	9.00
Subtotal Memberships.....	16,488.90
Overpayment.....	498.02
Sales:	
Books.....	10.00
Buttons.....	29.00
calendar.....	290.00
cash return.....	130.00
glow sticks.....	10.00
hard hat.....	10.00
hats.....	100.00
magazines.....	28.98
misc.....	63.75
mouse pad.....	27.00
Observer Handbook.....	175.00
sweatshirts.....	225.00
T shirts.....	329.00
Subtotal Sales.....	1,427.73
South Hills Observ. Fund.....	50,009.55
Star Cruise:	
cabin rental.....	328.00
camping rental.....	2,848.00
day registr.....	270.00
donations.....	197.50
Door prize raffle.....	939.00
family registr.....	2,095.00
individual registr.....	2,130.00
Pins.....	306.00
RV site rental.....	518.25
souvenirs.....	717.00
Sweatshirt.....	1,195.00
T-shirt.....	945.00
Subtotal Star Cruise.....	12,488.75

## Stock:

3M dividend.....	161.20
Dupont dividend.....	91.00
JCP dividend.....	46.52
<u>Kellogg dividend.....</u>	<u>165.64</u>
Subtotal Stock.....	464.36
Wagman Fund.....	950.00
<u>Scanlon dome fund.....</u>	<u>10,150.00</u>
Subtotal Wagman Fund.....	11,100.00

**TOTAL INFLOWS ..... \$98,956.55**

## OUTFLOWS

Astro kids.....	\$35.00
Awards.....	23.71
<u>Volunteer prizes.....</u>	<u>196.56</u>
Subtotal Award.....	220.27
Bank Fee.....	112.35
Food.....	48.52
<u>Christmas party.....</u>	<u>314.25</u>
Subtotal Food.....	362.77
Gift:	
Cards.....	32.85
<u>Christmas Party.....</u>	<u>148.29</u>
Subtotal Gift.....	181.14
Guide Star:	
labels.....	87.58
misc.....	40.77
printing.....	2,662.37
<u>stamps.....</u>	<u>9.40</u>
Subtotal Guide Star.....	2,800.12
Mail:	
3rd class mail fee.....	150.00
bulk mail deposits.....	860.00
<u>PO Box rental.....</u>	<u>51.50</u>
Subtotal Mail.....	1,061.50
Meeting.....	718.10
Asset.....	58.81
honorarium.....	584.36
<u>Light Pollution.....</u>	<u>75.00</u>
Subtotal Meeting.....	1,436.27
Membership IDA.....	200.00
Merchandise:	
Astronomy class.....	55.98
books.....	833.96
calendar.....	488.38
cash out.....	130.00
clothing.....	1,157.00
<u>hats.....</u>	<u>504.00</u>
Subtotal Merchandise.....	3,169.32
N.E. Wagman Obs.....	75.00
Equipment.....	200.00
furniture.....	213.98
<u>security system.....</u>	<u>355.25</u>
Subtotal NEWO.....	844.23

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**Treasurer's Report for 2002**

*(continued from page 4)*

Membership IDA .....	200.00
Merchandise	
Astronomy class .....	55.98
books .....	833.96
calendar .....	488.38
cash out .....	130.00
clothing .....	1,157.00
hats .....	504.00
Subtotal Merchandise .....	3,169.32
N.E. Wagman Obs .....	75.00
Equipment .....	200.00
furniture .....	213.98
security system .....	355.25
Subtotal NEWO .....	844.23
Officers:	
Corresp Sec .....	96.97
Treasurer .....	194.85
Subtotal Officers .....	291.82
Promotion:	
Brochures .....	143.49
web (domain rental) .....	108.00
Subtotal Promotion .....	251.49
Refunds .....	498.00
Stamps/ mailing .....	9.62
Corresp Secr .....	21.20
Memb Secr .....	103.03
Treasurer .....	264.86
Subtotal Stamps .....	398.71
NEWO Star Party	
NEWO .....	802.38
star finders .....	650.07
Subtotal NEWO .....	1,452.45
StarCruise .....	536.95
camping fees .....	3,694.25
goods .....	1,642.01
Insurance .....	31.00
photo copies .....	21.24
prizes .....	606.04
promotion .....	765.58
rental .....	1,623.19
speaker fees .....	1,349.66
staff supplies .....	138.00
Subtotal StarCruise .....	10,407.92
Subscriptions	
Astronomy .....	1,969.00
S&T .....	5,395.99
S&T Honorary (5) .....	149.75
Subtotal Subscriptions .....	7,514.74
Tax filings .....	350.00
Trailer .....	3,173.22
Utility:	
Electricity .....	184.63
insurance .....	2,156.00
lawn care .....	385.75
phone .....	601.71
porta john .....	1,043.25
Subtotal Utility .....	4,371.34
<b>TOTAL OUTFLOWS .....</b>	<b>\$39,132.66</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$59,823.89</b>

*(continued at right)*

**Ukrainian Observer Finds Camaraderie,  
Astro Mentoring From AAAP**

*by Cathy Rivi*

"How do you do, dear friends!" began the letter, tucked in a thin airmail envelope with a return address of Kharzyssk, a small town in southeastern Ukraine. It arrived unannounced in P.O. Box 314, Glenshaw (AAAP's mail drop).

"For a long time I have been trying to make contact with astronomy amateurs from U.S.A. And lately I had a chance to get the journal "Sky and Telescope" and "CCD Astronomy." There were addresses of astronomy-lovers there. I decided to write and I hope that somebody'll answer me. Let astronomy amateurs of any age write me... I'll be very glad."



*Alexandr*

A few exchanges later, a unique correspondence has begun between AAAP member George Guzik and Alexandr Reshetnyak, a 48-year old engineer with a life-long love of astronomy. Alexandr, whose wife Valentina is an accomplished vocalist and piano teacher at a local music school, and whose 11-year-old daughter Irina is a talented violinist, is interested in astronomy from a philosophical standpoint.

Using his small Newtonian reflector, Alexandr has observed a comet, a partial eclipse of the sun, eclipses of the moon, the rings of Saturn, Jupiter and its satellites, and star clusters. He is very interested in the achievements of American astronomers and in NASA space programs. In addition to astronomy, Alexandr enjoys reading fiction and popular scientific literature.

Guzik is perfectly suited to serve as Alexandr's astro pen pal. Also an engineer, Guzik chose to reply to the letter because of access to a co-worker who knew the language. Guzik, whose employer does business in eastern Europe, was once in search of a translator for a Russian technical document. He found a co-worker who not only had lived in Ukraine but also shared an interest in astronomy and photography. She has provided

*(continued on page 6, column 1)*

**ASSETS (as of Dec 31, 2002)**

Cash (in transit) .....	\$1,076.13
Checking account .....	179.80
Savings account .....	40,455.05
Scanlon Dome Fund* .....	32,116.60
South Hills Observ. Fund* .....	50,009.55
Star-Cruise Fund* .....	2,598.65
Stocks .....	18,530.71
<b>TOTAL ASSETS .....</b>	<b>\$144,966.49</b>

\*Subset of savings account

## Australian Telescopes Melt in Fire: AAPers Offer Support



Photo from Sydney Morning Herald

(Compiled from the AAAP Listserver by Ann Norman)

It has been a tragic few weeks for the astronomical community. Eleven days prior to the Columbia shuttle disaster members of the AAAP were opening their hearts (and wallets) to fellow observers in the Southern Hemisphere. On January 19, a bush fire swept through Canberra, Australia, taking four lives, consuming 530 homes, and destroying the St. Stromlo Observatory, including at least six telescopes, some very large and some historic. Damage to the facility is estimated at \$20 million. (No lives were lost at the observatory itself.)

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**Tom Reiland:** “The loss of Mt Stromlo Observatory is also a loss for the Brashear Company and for all involved in astronomy in Western Pennsylvania. The Brashear Company made the 26" refractor lens in 1923. It was ground, polished and figured by John Brashear's son-in-law, Mr. McDowell. It was originally made for an observatory in South Africa and later moved to Australia. I felt like I'd lost a friend when I read the news release on the Internet.”

**Truman Kohman:** “The Mount Stromlo destruction by fire is indeed sad news, not only for Australia, but for the World. Jane and I had an enjoyable several hours visiting the observatory on 1983 June 5 while on the way to see the solar eclipse in Java on June 11. A former post-doc of mine is living with his family in Canberra, and I'm anxious to find out whether they escaped injury and damage.”

**John Close:** “In case you have not had a chance to read all the details, not only is a fine observatory's equipment in ruins, including a historic Brashear lens, but priceless and irreplaceable astronomical records are gone. A nearly completed, \$5 million spectrograph [the NIFS] that was ready to ship to the Gemini scope in Hawaii was destroyed as well as a workshop that was to begin work on a \$6.5M adaptive optics camera destined for the Andes. This camera was hoped to provide images equal or better than the Hubble Space Telescope.”

(continued on page 7, column 1)

## AAAP Member Adopts Ukrainian “Pen Pal”

(continued from page 6, column 2)

translation services as well as a virtual tour of Alexandr's homeland via a Ukrainian travel Web site. Although Alexandr's letters are written in English, Guzik's co-worker prepared the Russian address label needed for the mailings.

Guzik also knows firsthand the motivational and educational benefits of belonging to a club. He says that becoming active in AAAP was key to completion of his 8-inch Dobson, which had lain virtually untouched for 3 years until he joined the club. In addition to his newfound U.S. friend, Alexandr has managed to find a “little union of astronomy fans” (12 in all) in his town. One member is a graduate of Kharkiv University in Astrophysics.

To date, Guzik has sent historical information about AAAP, its founders, and NEWO. The last shipment included more AAAP and NEWO literature, postcards from Allegheny Observatory, a *Sky and Telescope* reprint on the Brashear restoration, an issue of the Guide Star, and details from NASA Web sites on the Mars Pathfinder and Global Surveyor missions, something that has recently peaked Alexandr's curiosity.

Ukraine has several astronomical and solar observatories, including those in Kiev, Odessa, and Kharkiv. The 2.6m Shajn Reflector in Crimea is the largest optical telescope in Ukraine. The Kiev Planetarium, which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2002, is some 450 miles from Donetsk.

(continued at right)

Kharkiv is in Ukraine's Donetsk region, one of the largest metallurgical centers of the Ukraine. Home to 5 million people, the region has coal mines, coking plants, iron and steel mills, machinery works, and chemical plants. Donetsk's profile reads very much like a portrait of an earlier Pittsburgh, an industrial region with roots in coal mining and steelmaking.

Donetsk city, with a population of 1.2 million, has a university and a polytechnic, medical and trade institutes, and more than 30 scientific research establishments. Cultural amenities include several theatres and a philharmonic hall.

Guzik plans to continue the correspondence, which is sure to bring as many new discoveries as their mutual observing. He's glad that the initial letter found its way to a sister town and to a kindred observer. Any AAAP member who wishes to correspond directly with Alexandr can contact George at [GeorgeGuzik@aol.com](mailto:GeorgeGuzik@aol.com) for a Word copy of the Russian address. George will also forward any questions from club members to Alexandr.



## Commentary On Mt. Stromlo Observatory Fire

(continued from page 7, column 2)

**Kim Sebo** [who was apparently working on Mt. Stromlo prior to the fire]: *"The powers-that-be are keen that the department is rebuilt on the mountain. I managed to get access to the mountain today, which is still quite dangerous. There are power lines down over the roads, some trees are down and some trees are still burning and unstable. Driving up, every single pine tree is just a stick, the soil is just ash. The largely completed NIFS was in the workshop and was effectively destroyed by the heat. The roof falling in on top it put the issue beyond doubt."*

*"The aluminum domes of the [26"] Yale-Columbia and the Uppsala and 50" [Great Melbourne telescope] are completely melted and caved in. The telescopes are all still hanging on their mounts, but are not recoverable. The 50" looks like it is parked, but the lower end of the mount is melted and the mirror is a pile of goo on the floor; the Yale lens is on the floor; and the 74" mirror [of the Grubb-Parsons reflector] is damaged far beyond repair. As far as I'm aware, all Stromlo staff are safe."*

**Larry McHenry**: *"After talking with our VP, Terry Trees, we both like John Close's idea of sending an AAAP donation to help the Mt Stromlo redevelopment fund. Especially, as there is a Pittsburgh connection in that one of their destroyed telescopes was made by Brashear. Therefore, I am authorizing our club Treasurer, John Holtz, to write a check for \$200 to send to their fund. If anyone would like to individually participate, and help increase the AAAP contribution, please send a check (made out to the AAAP, but with a note that it's for the Mt Stromlo fund), to John Holtz, Treasurer, 176 Hidden Hill Rd, Sarver, PA 16055-8907 no later than February 12th, so he can get it deposited."*

*"We'll wait until after the February 14th club meeting before sending the check, in case anyone wants to make a small cash donation at the meeting."*

**Eric Mamajek**: *"I attended AAAP meetings as a teenager in the early 90's, and am now a grad student at Univ. of Arizona in Tucson at Steward Observatory studying star and planet formation. I had the honor of using the 74" at Stromlo for 1-2 weeks in '98 and '99 when I lived in Canberra for a year on fellowship. One of my fondest memories was of walking out of the 74" dome at 3 AM on a (rare) clear, moonless night. I walked across the parking lot looking at the lovely southern Milky Way. From a few feet away a heard a loud snort, almost like the sound deer in PA make. I ran like hell back into the dome, and when I opened the door and illuminated the parking lot, I saw a huge red male kangaroo staring at me. I apparently was invading his turf. I stayed in the dome and observed like a good graduate student for the rest of the night."*



Photo from Sydney Morning Herald

# Waiting for Columbia

by Jeff Miller of Florida

I've only lived in Florida for 18 months and I've paid attention to all Shuttle launches (stepping outside to see it go up) and landings (bracing for the "sonic booms"). It has become "commonplace" to the point that most native Floridians pay little or no attention to the launches or landings.



My mother is down here visiting for a while. She watched the Shuttle go up sixteen days ago and we were sitting at the breakfast table waiting for the "sonic booms" that always accompany the landings. I told her that the whole house would shake. I even got a stopwatch out and was ready to calculate the time from the "boom" until it touched down so that in the future I could guesstimate the time of the "boom" based on landing time.

By 9:10, I was wondering if perhaps the weather was delaying the landing. I knew that there was another window about an hour-and-a-half later. I turned on the local TV station to watch the landing and they mentioned that they had lost communication, but explained that they sometimes do briefly upon re-entry. At 9:17, they mentioned that NASA had no visual nor could they find Columbia on the radar. At that point, I knew there was something wrong.

A few minutes later, ALL of the networks were covering the "mystery." Around 9:30, NBC was talking to somebody who said that witnesses heard a boom and saw debris falling from the sky near Dallas. MY HEART SANK. I almost threw up and I started to cry. My Mom was shook up as well. Some of my friends from Pennsylvania were calling me and asking me if I had heard about the Shuttle. I will always remember this date because I was waiting to share the thrill of the "sonic booms" with my mother, but they never came.

God bless the family and friends of the astronauts aboard Columbia.

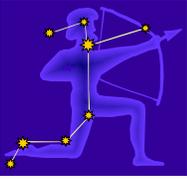
(Jeff's observation of a shuttle launch ran in the December issue of Guide Star - Editor).

## AAAP Tribute to Columbia Crew

Written by Kenn Lippert for AAAP Web Page

*"The AAAP joins with the world in mourning the loss of the crew of the space shuttle Columbia, and expressing our sympathies to their families and friends. In this age of technological wonder we often lose sight of just how dangerous space travel still is, and the courage of those who push the boundaries to extend our knowledge of the cosmos."*

# February 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 A few archers w/o hunting licenses.						 1
2	 3 Mercury at greatest western elongation 25°	4 Birthday, Clyde Tombaugh, 1906	5	6	 7	8 Haley's comet returns 1986
 9	10	11	12	13 Birthday, J.L.E. Dreyer, 1852 (Compiler of the NGC catalog)	14 AAAP Meeting Carnegie Science Center 7:30 p.m.	15 Birthday, Galileo Galilei Pisa, 1564
 16	17 "The moon is nothing but a circumambulating aphrodisiac." <i>Christopher Fry</i>	18 Pluto discovered by Clyde Tombaugh, 1930	19 Birthday, Nicolas Copernicus 1473	20	21 Allegheny Observatory Public Lecture Series FREE 7:30 p.m.	22 Birthday, Dr. Nicholas E. Wagman, 1902:
 23	 24	25	26	 27	28 7 DAYS UNTIL WAGMAN WINTERFEST!	

<p>"Unknowingly, we plow the dust of stars, blown about us by the wind, and drink the universe in a glass of rain." <b>Ihab Hassan</b></p>	<u>AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule</u>	
	<p>Mar. 14 Apr. 18 May 16 Summer PICNIC</p>	<p>Sep. 12 Oct. 10 Nov. 7 Dec. 5</p>

**Classifieds**

**FOR SALE:** Losmandy GM-8 Mount and Tripod. Used sparingly (2-1/2 yrs old). \$650. Includes 7# weight, tray, aluminum motor covers, case for head, universal dovetail plate. Up to 4"-5" short focal length refractors. Load limit ~30 lbs. Good semi-portable solution for casual viewing when you need tracking. Contact John Peak at (412) 821-5180 or Peak\_John@msn.com.

**FOR SALE:** Celestron CR-102 F-10 refractor, with CG-4 equatorial mount, clock drive, 9 X 50 finder, full aperture sun filter, 2 diagonals, 2 eyepieces, Celestron half-pier, minus violet filter, two 1-1/4" adapters. All in mint condition with investments over \$1000. Will sell complete for \$500. Will deliver within 50 miles of my home or meet you half way. Contact Bob Yajko at (724) 842-8202 or yaj@mymailstation.com.

**FOR SALE:** 10 Kodak Carousel 140 slide trays. Like new, very reasonable. Will sell individually, or per lot. Contact Bob Schmidt at (412) 821-3370 or saturnV@webtv.net.

**FOR SALE:** 2 flat mirrors, originally made (possibly by Contraves) for use in tank sight. 13-1/4" by 9-3/8" with 1" chamfers on the 4 corners. Very flat, but no paperwork to confirm. Scratch and dig map for both available. Unlimited uses. Asking \$75 each. Contact Phil Breidenbach at (412) 486-1450 or booksareme@hotmail.com.

**ADVANCE ORDERS:** New line of telescope eyepieces soon. By Thomas Back, preeminent designer of the TMB apochromats. Will surpass all other designs in transmission, contrast, freedom from ghosting, and absence of scatter. New design based on the monocentric format (only two air-to-glass surfaces). Will employ advanced glass-types and construction techniques, with special coatings and ultra-smooth polish. To be fabricated in Germany by Zeiss subcontractor. Initial run of 200 sets in four focal lengths: 4mm, 6mm, 8mm, and 10mm. Will have about a 40\* AFOV, with good eye-relief characteristics of .85 X the f.l., which is better than an Abbe. \$200 each, available separately or as a set. Collecting a head count for Tom. No money now. Deal directly with Tom later. Buyers to make 50% refundable deposit on their order with TMBOptical. Contact Wayne Gondella at (412) 882-1648 or gondella@stargate.net.



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