

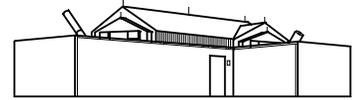
# The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.

A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh

June, 2003

Vol. 37, No. 3



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

## Wagman, Mingo, LHSC, Picnic and More

# N, S, E or W: AAAP Has Full June Menu



## June 6 and 7 SPs at Wagman and Mingo

**June 6 and 7** are both “D” Days for the AAAP, standing for “Dual” star parties at Wagman Observatory and the new Mingo Creek park observatory site in Washington County. There are no set rules on how you provide help at these star parties. We’ll be glad if you simply show up and mingle with members and guests alike. But we certainly appreciate help with specific tasks such as setting up scopes, helping park cars, handing out literature, answering questions, speaking to groups of kids, assisting visitors with set-up of their own scopes, etc. When General Eisenhower planned for the real “D” Day in 1944, his biggest concern was the weather. Let’s hope the soggy Spring we’ve had so far will dry up in time for the June parties.

## June 23\* - 29: Laurel Highlands Star Cruise

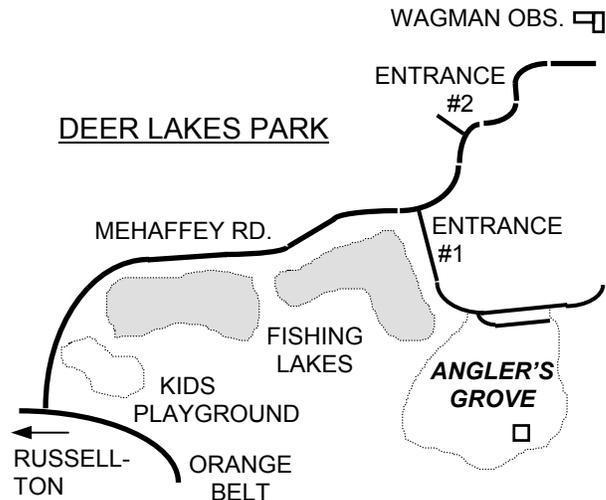
What started out as a modest tri-state star party several years ago has ballooned into one of the nation’s leading regional star conventions. Laurel Highlands Star Cruise 2003, from **June 23\*** to **29** (\*scheduled events begin June 25), provides the total spectrum of events and attractions: Contests, swap meets, kids programs, clinics, major guest speakers, camping, bike hikes, rocket launches, door prizes, astro-merchandise...and don’t forget good old fashioned star gazing miles and miles away from major city lights. When you receive this Guide Star, you will still have a little time to register for LHSC, but don’t dally or dawdle. Call up last month’s newsletter for a copy of the registration form. Better yet, go to <http://www.lhstarcruise.org> for an on-line form, and to review the fantastic program our LHSC committee has arranged this year. PS: Any volunteer help with the event is also appreciated at this stage

## June 17 – Summer Horizons at Bushy Run

Repeating from May GS: “Continuing an ongoing program started several years ago, the Penn Trafford School District’s “Summer Horizons” Family Star Party is set for Tuesday **June 17** (rain date is **June 18**). This program will also be held at Bushy Run Battlefield and should draw about 15 to 20 families. Bob Mickey is your contact person for this event.”

## June 21 Club Picnic In Deer Lakes Park

It’s been so wet and stormy this Spring, it might as well still be Winter. We’re still spending too much time indoors...talk about prolonged cabin fever! Let’s hope the highest-of-the-year Sun angle will have dried things out in time for the AAAP picnic **June 21**, at **Angler’s Grove** in **Deer Lakes Park**. The annual picnic is among the least structured of our events. You can indulge in any activity you please, whether it be a chasing a wayward frisbee, reading a book, tending to a barbeque grill, playing cards, catching a softball, or riding on one of the kids’ apparatus in the park. As before, we head up the hill after dark to enjoy an evening a star gazing at Wagman Observatory, this time with the place all to ourselves. Be sure to bring your favorite snacks and refreshments, as well as your telescopes!



## “Whazzup” With The Guide Star?

Your Guide Star News Editor is on another 60-hour/week work project that forces him to limit the newsletter to a few pages this month. However, you will begin to see a leaner and meaner news section from now on as we move more stuff to the AAAP GSOL web site. To subscribers of the printed GS: Fear not. Every news item and feature story will be covered or referenced in the news section. We’re simply moving some of the longer retrospective articles, photo essays, etc. to the web page to help control printing costs. If you have comments, questions, concerns or suggestions, contact Eric Fischer at 412-688-2438 or [emfischer@switch.com](mailto:emfischer@switch.com)

## AAAP News: Heretofore, Thereof, Hereunder and Thereafter

♣ And more schedule update note from *Ann Norman*: “On **June 20** Professor John Stein of Geneva College will giving a talk on “Backyard Astronomy” as part of the continuing **Allegheny Observatory Public Lecture Series**, held at A. O. Refreshments are at 7:00pm, the lecture is at 7:30 pm, and their is an observatory tour at 8:30 pm. Admission is free but reservations are required. Call 412-321-2400. Last month so many people wanted to come, some had to be turned away.”

♣ Congratulations to **George Guzik**, our new President, **Charlotte Tunney**, our new Corresponding Secretary, and all the winners from the club’s 2003-2004 elections. Our new cast of characters now includes:

President: **George Guzik**

Vice President: **Bill Yorkshire**

Corresponding Secretary: **Charlotte Tunney**

Recording Secretary: **Dennis Derda**

Membership Secretary: **Brent Hudock**

Guide Star Editor: **Eric Fischer**

Treasurer: **John Holtz** (continuing his 5-year term)

All our best to **Larry McHenry**, **Terry Trees** and **Alison Conte** for their exceptional service to the AAAP over the past several years. And just one more “thanks” to **Bill Roemer** and his Nominating Committee for their efforts as well.

♣ Congratulations to CSC/Buhl Director (and AAAP member) **John Radzilowicz** for his brilliant idea of having an asteroid named after the late Mr. Rogers. See Ann Norman’s and John Radzilowicz’s articles on page 3 for more about of this well-deserved honor.

♣ Your GS News Editor extends thanks for the friendly response to his talk on artificial satellites at the May meeting. It was quite a thrill to make a presentation in the Buhl Planetarium itself. Reminder: We’re now in the thick of satellite observing season. See how many you can rack up in a single night (the club record is 82).

♣ Boy, was it cloudy on the night of the Lunar Eclipse (May 15). How cloudy was it? It was so cloudy we couldn’t even tell where the Moon was or when the sky got darker. Oh well, we have one more shot this year on November 8. PS: Clouds and rain also ruined the debut of our Mingo Park observing site.

♣ A heap of thanks to those members who tended to Wagman observatory guests on the weather-crummy weekend of May 9 and 10. **Bill Hayslip**, **Frank Pastin** and others (sorry, we don’t have your names at press time), performed “A-B-C-D” (Above and Beyond the Call of Duty) for the club.

♣ The AAAP’s first appearance at “Venture Outdoors” on May 17 went well, despite clouds, cool temps and a threat of rain. We aimed scopes at local buildings, handed our literature, sold a few items, and entertained Abraham Lincoln, no less. Many thanks to the AAAP members who pitched in for this event (more about Venture Outdoors, including photos, in the upcoming Guide Star On-Line Web Features.)

♣ The entire AAAP extends best wishes to long-time member **Tom Ferezan** who has been ill in recent weeks. Tom has been a familiar and friendly face at many club events.

♣ As a measure of how much the AAAP has grown in recent years, we needed to have the club’s extensive and complex financial records certified by a CPA, Thomas Gaitens & Co. Contact John Holtz if you would like to review a copy of the CPA’s report.

♣ Nothing earthshaking to report on the South Hills Observatory project; nominal progress continues on all fronts. Project Manager Ed Moss continues to check out the 16-inch Autoscope, which will serve as the observatory’s permanent reflector. The basic design of the building is being modified somewhat from the “Y” shape shown several months ago, but will continue to have three basic wings. Planning for the access road also continues. The search for additional major funding also continues. Your donation, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated.

♣ What does the Swiss Army have to do with the AAAP? Winners of the club’s non-Wagman service awards for 2002 are receiving Swiss Army knives as a gift of appreciation for their efforts. Mari-Jo Meyers handed out several such knives at the May meeting. If you are a service award recipient, contact Mari-Jo regarding your prize.

♣ The following new members were gladly admitted to the AAAP at the May meeting: **Richard H. Gibbs**, **Michael F. Hyrczyk**, **Mark Kessler**

♣ John Holz reports two favorable asteroidal occultations of stars this month and early next: June 26, asteroid 976 Benjamina, and July 6, asteroid 469 Argentina. For more details, contact John directly or see the upcoming Guide Star On-Line features pages on the AAAP web site.

### 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*

#### 2003-2004 Officers:

President:	George Guzik	724-863-8008
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Treasurer:	John Holtz	724-352-7596
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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

## ***"I'm New. What Kind of Telescope Should I Buy?"***

*(Compiled by Ann Norman from AAAP Listserv)*

**(Michael J. Halyak)** Hello everyone! I just joined AAAP yesterday and am looking forward to the future benefits of the AAAP. I need some "pointers" on what kind of telescope to buy-- basically just to start to learn "how to's" and later I will get a better and larger one.

**(John Close)** I recommend that first you obtain a decent pair of binoculars (7 x 50s or thereabouts) and then an 8" to 10" Dobsonian. Have fun making your choice.

**(Bill Hayeslip)** If you are not in any hurry, we are just entering the beginning of Star Party season. There are always a good selection of telescopes there of all sizes, types, and price ranges and the owners are always willing to show them to you and answer all your questions. The club also has a number of "loaner" telescopes and binoculars that you could borrow for a couple of months. [Contact Joe McCafferty at 724-586-9345 JAMccaf4u@aol.com to see what is available.] So there are a lot of different ways to work your way into astronomy and buying a telescope doesn't have to be the first step. Oh, and welcome to the madness!

**(Eliot Gminder)** I have an 8" Meade LX200 GPS scope that I use in the summertime, however, because it is cold I purchased a Meade 70AT scope from E-Bay because I can set it up and tear down more easily. When I started out I used a similar Meade 5" to learn with and had a lot of success with it. If you look on E-Bay and type in "Meade ETX" you can usually find smaller scopes to bid on at decent prices. Just check out what they would cost regularly to make sure you do not pay too much.

**(John Peak)** Get a copy of *Nightwatch* by Terence Dickinson. It is a great beginner's level book and you will learn a lot about telescopes/binoculars and the different objects you can see with them. Go to one of the AAAP Star Parties this spring and look through as many instruments as you can. Strike up a conversation with any of us about our opinions concerning a first optical instrument. You will probably get more advice than you know what to do with! ☺

**(John Cheng)** Get a six-inch dob. It's economical, relatively light and portable, not encumbered with gadgetry to get in your way, so you can concentrate on the sky, not the equipment and it's large enough to actually show you something worthwhile. But why take my advice on what to buy? The absolutely wisest thing you can do is get out to a few star parties and see and use some of the scopes lined up on the field. You'll begin to get an idea of what you might require--too large a scope never gets dragged out. Some small scopes are relatively useless for some applications. You might also come away with an idea of what a quality image is and whether you might prefer one type of observing over another.

**(Phil Hughes)** I'll just say I agree with the advice regarding a good pair of binoculars and a Dobsonian. I bought an Orion 8 inch Dobsonian and have been very pleased with it. Later I bought a pair of 11x70 Oberwerk binoculars and really wonder why I didn't get them sooner. I found I was using them more than the scope. I would set up, look through the scope a bit, then lay down and get lost with the binoculars for hours. I travel a lot and the binoculars are a permanent fixture in

the car. At night when I get tired of driving I'll pull over and do some observing. Binoculars can be found at <http://www.oberwerk.com/bigbinos>. Welcome to the club!

**(Suzanne "Suzy" Coholic)** I agree with the advice about the celestial binocs. If you need a "large" and "very fine" scope to look thru, the club's star parties and Wagman scopes are THE BEST! And there are lots of folks who will show you how to use scopes, binocs, charts, etc. so you really get to know the sky if not already well acquainted with it.

**(Wayne Gondella)** Go buy yourself a scope. No initial scope you will buy will be so wrong or so expensive that it won't be worth having. As time goes on you can sell it and buy an even better one! Or keep it and add to your collection. My suggestion: Buy a refractor on a German mount with clock drive. A refractor will give you the best views of the types of things you will initially view--the moon, planets, doubles and bright deep sky objects. They perform better under a given seeing condition. They have the least hassles with cool-down and require less adjustments and maintenance than reflectors. The Dobsonian mount is inexpensive, but counter-intuitive. Its motions are up and down and sideways, and nothing in the sky moves that way. Everything moves in arcs and circles about the poles. The German mount teaches one the natural movements of the sky, the geometry, how to read, set, and understand celestial coordinates. Once set up properly, the scope moves along all by itself, and its motions are logical and relate to the natural hour angles and declination positions shown in star charts. You can walk away from the scope, come back, and the object is still there, or at worst, only needs a turn of a knob to re-center.

**(Dave Smith)** What do you plan to observe? Refracting telescopes usually do better on the planets and Moon. The deep sky objects--galaxies, nebulae, and star clusters--are much fainter and can be seen better with a larger aperture objective. Reflecting telescopes are usually the choice here because they are generally less expensive per inch of objective. Most of our telescopes have been purchased mail order. I would recommend two local sources to buy a telescope. The shop at the Carnegie Science Center and One our members Tim Hagan has a company Helix that carries some nice telescopes. ([www.helix-mfg.com](http://www.helix-mfg.com); 724 316-0306). I would also recommend our telescope loner program.

*(Editor) Check the classifieds in Guide Star for great deals on used telescopes!*



## What's the neatest thing about an asteroid named Misterrogers?

(Top answers from a website poll)

by *geekculture.com*

**Its comforting to know Misterrogers is up there looking down on us, ... not the NEAR-est, but perhaps our dearest neighbor. (11%)**

**It's great that good guys get immortalized, ... Misterrogers is very good, despite that mean distance from the sun. (24%)**

**It brings a little piece of humanity to outer space, ... Fred Rogers was pretty good at bringing it to inner space too. (8%)**

**It proves how special was the man who thought we were all special, ... we are stardust, but some are more star than dust. (26%)**



## IAU Responds Quickly to Mr. Rogers Asteroid Proposal

by *John Radzilowicz (from AAAP Listserver)*

By now you may have heard the news about Mister Rogers' minor planet. I wanted to find a special way to pay tribute to Fred Rogers' life and work and to acknowledge his efforts in creating the Buhl Planetarium show "The Sky Above Mister Rogers' Neighborhood". So, right after Fred passed away, I proposed to the Minor Planet Committee of the IAU that an asteroid should be named in his honor.

In the latest Minor Planet Circular you'll find the new designation. I was honored to be asked to write the citation below:

*(26858) Misterrogers = 1993 FR  
Discovered 1993 Mar. 21 by E. F. Helin at Palomar.*

*Fred McFeely Rogers (1928-2003) was a tireless and passionate advocate for children who taught that everyone is unique and deserving of love and respect "just the way you are". For more than 30 years he used his public television program "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" as a vehicle of service to the youngest members of the human family.*

Here's the orbital data:

(26858) Misterrogers = 1993 FR

Epoch 2003 June 10.0 TT = JDT 2452800.5 Williams, MPO 14480

M	10.25402	(2000.0)	P	Q
n	0.27508630	Peri. 247.16912	+0.00558529	-0.98834788
a	2.3414780	Node 204.06519	+0.99829541	+0.01434812
e	0.3448175	Incl. 21.90213	+0.05809550	-0.15153416
P	3.58	H 12.8	G 0.15	U 2

From 43 observations at 5 oppositions, 1990-2001, mean residual 0".71.

The absolute magnitude H suggests a diameter of perhaps 10 km, but we don't know the albedo.

I believe that Misterrogers brings to 11 the total number of minor planets named for Pittsburgh and/or Pittsburghers, as listed below. (Thanks to Pete Zapadka for helping me check that list.) If anyone knows of any others I've missed, please let me know: Pittsburghia, Alleghenia, Carnegia, Brashear, Keeler, Scanlon, Wagman, Hapke, Cassidy, Kohman and Misterrogers.

By the way, lest you think that professional astronomers lack a sense of whimsy, take note of Misterrogers preliminary designation - 1993 FR. Brian Marsden at the MPC hunted down an asteroid with those appropriate letters!

## Extreme Observation

by *Jerry Zhu (from AAAP Listserver)*

Despite the partly cloudy, hazy sky, and bright lights at my observation location in Green Tree, I was able to see the quasar 3C273 with an 8" telescope.

The star field was easily reached by star hopping from eta Virginis. The quasar was invisible in a 25mm eyepiece. Then I switched to a 9mm eyepiece (135x) to darken the background

and 3C273 became just visible. With averted vision I was able to see several more nearby stars and confirm the identity of the quasar.

3C273 looks just like a dim star (magnitude around 13). But this is probably the farthest object in the universe that I can observe – a thrilling and sober thought. I stood by the telescope and let my eyes enjoy the oldest photons for quite a while.



# June 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Don't forget the Laurel Highlands Star Cruise June 23 – 29 (Programs begin June 25)					6 Public Star Party Wagman and Mingo Park	7  Star Party Wagman & Mingo
1	2	3	4	5		
8 Birthday: Giovanni Cassini, 1625	9 First AAAP meeting on Pgh Northside 1929	10 	11	12	13 	14 
15 Father's Day 	16 	17	18 Sally Ride becomes first American woman in space 1983	19	20 Lecture: Backyard Astronomy-Allegheny Observatory Free but registration required. 7 p.m.	21  AAAP SUMMER PICNIC Summer Solstice
22 	23 Star Cruise (Camping) 	24 Star Cruise (Camping)	25 Laurel Highlands Star Cruise begins	26 Star Cruise Charles Messier B-Day! 1730	27 Star Cruise	28 Star Cruise
29  Star Cruise	30 Tunguska Impact 1908	QUIZ*: Name this 13 <sup>th</sup> century philosopher and Franciscan monk...		...known for his experimental research in alchemy, optics, and astronomy...	...JAILED because of "novelties" in his writing...and suspected of witchcraft...	...he claimed his telescope-like device could make distant objects appear nearer, and stars appear at will.

**Fridge Calendar**  
*by Cathy Rivi*

<p><b>Looking ahead:</b>     <b>July 5</b> Star Party at Wagman Observatory                                   <b>July 18, 19</b> Star Parties at Wagman &amp; Mingo Park</p> <p>* Answer to Quiz in next month's calendar.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Sep. 12</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Jan. 9, 2004</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct. 10</td> <td>Feb. 6, 2004</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nov. 7</td> <td>Mar. 5, 2004</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dec. 5</td> <td>Apr. 2, 2004</td> </tr> </table>	Sep. 12	Jan. 9, 2004	Oct. 10	Feb. 6, 2004	Nov. 7	Mar. 5, 2004	Dec. 5	Apr. 2, 2004
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