

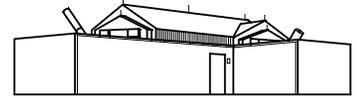
The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.

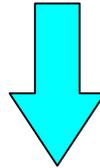
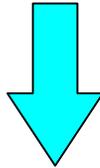
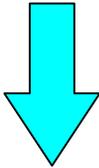
A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh

July, 2003

Vol. 37, No. 4



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory



Three Wagman and Mingo Dates

July SP's: Don't Let Those Well-Traveled Photons Go To Waste

Think of the journey that celestial photons have made when they finally arrive at your telescope or eyes: Transiting quadrillions of miles over hundreds or thousands or millions of years, dodging interstellar dust and gases along the way. What better way to celebrate the successful voyage of these surviving photons than to welcome them at this month's Wagman Observatory and Mingo site public star parties:

- July 5 – Wagman
- July 18 – Mingo
- July 19* – Wagman and Mingo

*July 19 was originally designated as a "Dark Sky-Moonrise Special" star party at Wagman, but there's no reason not to watch and wait for the Moon to break the eastern horizon from the Mingo site as well. If you've never attended one of these special star parties, you will be surprised and delighted by the public interest and "drama" of Moonrise as seen from a dark, flat-horizons site.

Urgent Notice #1: Wagman Door and Security System Changes In Effect

by Tom Reiland (adapted from AAAP Listserver posting)

We have made a mid-season change to the Wagman door combination. We feel that it is best to do this in conjunction (not a Venus and the Moon type ☺) with the arming of the alarm system. Changing the door combination will help keyholders remember that the alarm is now in operation. For the gate combination, all members should contact one of the following three people: **Tom Reiland, John Holtz or Flaccus Stifel**. We will use an up-to-date membership list to confirm your need for the new combinations. If you're a keyholder contact one of the three people who are listed above. You can get these new combinations by either email or phone. Thank you for your patience.



Friendly Nagging

As always, we need help with parking cars, directing crowds, talking to scout groups, helping guests set up their own scopes, answering questions, etc. at our regular public star parties. It's a small price to pay for the use of two excellent observing sites on public lands. Your assistance with these vital details will be recorded and recognized at the end of the year. All AAAP public star parties kick off at **sunset**.

Mingo Map Update/Advice

The map to the Mingo site included with last month's Guide Star Web Features showed entry to the observing site via the wrong gate. Gate "S-10" is the correct point of entry; see the Mingo map inset on page 4 of this Guide Star. Note: *If you haven't been to the Mingo site before, we recommend that you arrive well before sunset to navigate the park's narrow back roads.*

Urgent Notice #2: Web Site Password Change

We also recently changed the password to the member's section of the club's web site. Please contact **John Holtz** for the new password (the user name "aaap" is still in effect). John can be reached at 724-352-7596 or jwholtz@aol.com.

July Calendar Includes A.O. Lecture and Another Spruce Knob WV Event

- ♣ From Ann Norman: “Friday, **July 18** Professor Joseph Busche of Wheeling Jesuit University will be giving a lecture at Allegheny Observatory on “Life in the Universe.” Refreshments are at 7:00; the lecture is at 7:30; an observatory tour follows at 8:30. Reservations ARE REQUIRED. Call 412-321-2400 to get free admission. Call early so you don’t miss out. The Lecture Series has been very popular.”
- ♣ From Dave Smith: “We are invited again to a no-frills star party at The Mountain Institute on Spruce Knob, WV on **July 25, 26, and 27** (for details, go to <http://www.mountain.org/>)...The field is large with good horizons. This is also a very dark area. Check the light pollution scale on the “Clear Sky Clock”, (<http://www.cleardarksky.com/csk/>). Joe Morris, who is arranging things again, tells us that sometimes one can see Zodiacal Light. It can even become a nuisance lingering after twilight....It has some rocks and depressions but enough space to accommodate several hundred observers.... TMI has a nice bath house and two small dorms with bunk beds \$16.00. It is advised to bring one’s own bedding/sleeping bag. We were charged \$7.00 for camping. The dorms are near the bath house and toilets. If you are interested please let me know so that I can let Joe know. TMI even had two porta johns ready for us! I can be reached at 412-390-0780 or davesmithphoto@aol.com.”



Wagman Astronomy Course Renewed

by John Holtz

Plans for the next “beginning astronomy” course at the Wagman Observatory, Deer Lakes Park, are set. The 5-week class will be held on Thursday evenings, **Aug 7, 14, 21, 28, and Sep 4**. The classes will begin at 7:30 p.m. and last until approximately 9:30 p.m.. Weather permitting, observing will be held until 11 p.m.. Designed for the beginner, the classes cover a range of topics including naked eye observing, binocular observing, types of telescopes and their use, telescopic observing, and simple astrophotography.

The cost for the class is \$15 per person and is opened to any AAAP or Kiski Astronomers member. (The cost covers 80+ pages of handouts. Any excess is a tax deductible donation to the AAAP). Pre-registration is required. Class size is limited, so it’s “first sign up- first taught” basis. Contact the instructor, John Holtz, at 724-352-7596 or JWHoltz@aol.com to register.



Plus Other NEWO News

Wagman Dodges Another Severe Weather Spell

- ☛ The June 12 F0 tornado that started up in the Greentree area and moved up the Allegheny Valley (see article on page 6), missed the Wagman Observatory site, but the NWS had already given us a scare when they reported that nearby Russellton was along the projected path of the twister. Other severe T-storms in that time frame also pounded the site, but the building didn’t even lose a shingle (as checked by Wade Barbin). It’s one tough little building!
- ☛ A reminder to all that training on the use of the Wagman scopes and movable roofs continues this summer. Training dates are not being set in advance. Instead, contact **Flacc Stifel** to sign up; Flacc will then set a date (typically a Saturday afternoon) suitable for all the attendees. Flacc can be reached at 412-486-8067 or flaccs@nauticom.net.
- ☛ Flacc extends a big thanks to member **Bill Moutz**, who recently cut some of the grass around the Wagman site. The perpetual wet weather last month prevented our regular lawn service company from keeping the site properly trimmed.

Summer News Summary

- ☐ From John Holtz: “It is with sadness that I report the passing of member **George Sommerman**, a long time member (since May 1970) who has lived in Maryland for the past several years....Many years ago, when I was producing calculations of bright satellite passes, George would call occasionally to find out when Mir would be visible.” (Editor’s note: George also gave several very interesting lectures to the club in the late 1970’s at the old Buhl).
- ☐ Tom Reiland has discovered that we missed the 100th birthday of AAAP Co-Founder **Leo Scanlon** back on April 30. The beloved Mr. Scanlon passed away in 1999, and is certain to be a key subject of the club’s 75th anniversary celebration next year. Note to new members: You can see a PA historic marker about Leo and his Valley-View Observatory along McKnight Rd. South, just before I-279.
- ☐ In last month’s report on the AAAP election, we neglected to note that **Bill Yorkshire** is a new officer (in addition to George Guzik and Charlotte Tunney), serving as Vice President. One of Bill’s main responsibilities will be to line up guest speakers for the Fall/Winter meetings; any recommendations you can provide therein will be appreciated.

(news items continued on page 3, column 1)

Several Interesting Total Lunar Occultations

by John Holtz

- Friday morning, **July 25**:
The waning crescent Moon uncovers 13 stars between 3:30 am and 5:42 am EDT as it traverses NGC 1746. These occultation reappearances will be visible in 8-inch and larger scopes. (Of course the Moon covers these same stars, but those events will not be visible as they occur on the Moon's bright limb.)



- Sat, **Aug 2**: The waxing crescent Moon covers a 6.1 mag star for a nice occultation. Even a small scope will show the star at the time of disappearance -- 9:21 p.m. EDT.

Never-Ending Supply of Asteroidal Occultations

by John Holtz

There are three good asteroidal occultations predicted for our area in July. Updates on these events could move the occultation path closer or farther away. If the conditions are very favorable, I will post finder charts on my website (<http://members.aol.com/jwholtz>). And now, the upcoming occultations are

- Sat, **July 12**, asteroid 747 Winchester will occult an 11.9 mag star (R.A. 16h 24m 34.15s Dec -2° 40' 33.7") at 22:44 p.m. EDT (2:44 UT **July 13**).
- Thurs, **July 24**, asteroid 336 Lacadiera will occult an 11.6 mag star (R.A. 18h 14m 5.24s Dec -15° 7' 44.8") at 2:12 am EDT (6:12 UT).
- Tues, **July 29**, asteroid 654 Zelinda will occult an 11.5 mag star (R.A. 18h 48m 47.40s Dec -17° 8' 51.3") at 2:51 am EDT (6:51 UT).

News Notes

(continued from page 2, column 2)

- ◆ On a related matter, our new President George Guzik will be forming the new Executive Committee for the 2003-2004 term. In addition to officers, several at-large members are invited to serve on the EC. Contact George by July 15 if you would like to be part of this year's EC.
- ◆ In case you were wondering, you didn't miss anything last month at the Wagman and Mingo star parties. For the most part, the sky continued to be a giant sponge, squeezing out rain storm after rain storm. Interestingly, on the night of June 7 at Wagman, which was predicted to be cloudy and rain-plagued, we had an unexpected clearing for several hours after much of the public had departed.

Two Half-Century Anniversaries Included In Latest AAAP Milestones

by John Holtz

Congratulations to **Wilma Cherup** and **John Schwartz** as they mark 50 years of membership in and service to the AAAP this year. Similar sentiments to **Bob Florida**, **Jim Garasich**, **Barb** and **Steve Piskor** for their 25-year memberships as well. Here is the complete listing:

50 Years

Wilma A. Cherup - 9/53
John F. Schwartz Jr. - 9/53

25 Years

Bob Florida - 9/78
James W. Garasich - 9/78
Barbara E. Piskor - 8/78
Stephen R. Piskor - 8/78

15 Years

Dave Conte - 9/88
Tim Manka - 7/88
William J. Shaheen - 9/88

10 Years

Joseph R. Armata - 9/93
Linda S. Bailey - 7/93
Emily L. Bell - 9/93
Louis W. Coban - 7/93
Bernard P. Kriger - 7/93

10 Years (cont'd)

Kyle McHenry - 7/98
Paul J. Och, Jr. - 9/93
Beth Stifel - 8/93
Flaccus Stifel - 8/93
Michael E. Yeager - 8/93

5 Years

Daniel A. Fundo - 8/98
Eric J. Heckathorn - 9/98
Trevor Lewis - 8/98
Paula Meddings - 7/98
Bakhti J. Sinor - 7/98
Barbara Tocker Ross - 8/98
Rich Yanke - 9/98
James A. Zoll - 7/98
Robert C. Zoll Jr - 7/98

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
Vice President:	Bill Yorkshire	412-793-9552
Treasurer:	John Holtz	724-352-7596
Corresponding Sec:	Charlotte Tunney	412-441-3958
Recording Sec:	Dennis Derda	724-224-4688
Membership Sec:	Brent Hudock	724-437-5990
Guide Star Editors:	Eric Fischer (news)	412-487-7011

AAAP Homepage: 3ap.org

AAAP Webmaster: Kenn Lippert (lippert@nauticom.net)

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

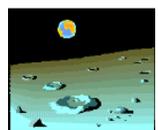
AAAP Member Dues***:

AAAP Dues:	\$18.00
Junior Member (under 18):	\$13.00
<u>Sky & 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

July 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Steep thyself in a bowl of summertime. virgil 		1	2	3 	4 Independence Day Mars Pathfinder lands on Mars, 1997	5 Star Party at Wagman Observatory
6 	7	8 	9 Voyager 2 flyby of Jupiter, 1979 Active volcanoes on Io	10 	11	12 
13 	14 Mariner 4 satellite transmits first close- up images of Mars, 1965	15 	16 Shoemaker-Levy crashes into Jupiter July 16 – 22, 1994	17	18 Star Party at Mingo Park	19 Star Parties at Wagman and Mingo Park
20 MAN ON MOON Apollo 11 mission 1969	21 	22 The tail light of a firefly contains the chemicals luciferin and luciferase...	23 ...contact w/ a body chemical (ATP) produces high energy, causing the mixture to light up...	24 ...these chemicals might be useful for finding extraterrestrial life...	25 	26 ...mixed with Martian soil, they might be used to test for ATP, present in all living cells.
27 	28	29 	30 	31	The firefly technique is used to study heart disease, muscular dystrophy, urology, antibiotic testing, waste water treatment, and environmental protection.	

<p>July 18. Lecture: Life in the Universe. Allegheny Observatory. Free but registration required. 7 p.m. Sponsored by University of Pittsburgh</p> <p>Looking ahead: August 1, 2 Star Party (Wagman and Mingo Park) August 16 Dark Sky/Moon Rise Star Party (Wagman)</p> <p>Answer to last month's quiz: Roger Bacon, who described the principles of reflection and refraction, is credited with the first recorded reference to the magnifying properties of lenses in 1262.</p>	<p><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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Tornado Misses Wagman: Zhu Gets Picture



by Ann Norman

Our club has seen bad weather, but June 12th our observatory lay in the path of a possible tornado. Members nervously scanned the skies and listened to news reports of a funnel cloud heading through downtown Pittsburgh and up route 28 towards Russellton.

Afterwards we learned that F0 tornado with 75 mph winds had in fact touched down in Greentree. As for Wagman, it still stands.

AAAPer and astrophotographer Jerry Zhu took this amazing picture of the funnel cloud passing through Pittsburgh. (For more check out his web site--www-2.cs.cmu.edu/~zhuxj/astro/html/index.html) He is to be congratulated for taking pictures better than those featured in the Post Gazette. (Page 1 just showed us a few downed trees.) But Jerry was scolded by his online friends for snapping pictures during the storm rather than heading for the basement.

Jerry feels he was reasonably safe, but asks us not to follow his example. Remember! He's an artist, not a role model!



Welcome to the Club and Feel the Love!

Compiled from the AAAP Listserv



Simon Sloan: Hello all! As you may or may not have noticed, I have just joined your fabulous club. I was wondering how long I have to wait for my membership card etc, as I don't want to be turning up at any events with just my word of mouth.

Kenn Lippert: Welcome! Don't worry about the membership card. Hardly anybody carries that around. We all rely on our mandatory "I have loved the stars too dearly..." tattoos to recognize each other. Of course having to expose the tattoo in a public place to verify a new member can sometimes be embarrassing.

Dave Smith: Hi Simon and any other new members. I would also like to welcome you to our club. I am sure John Holtz will be getting your membership card to you soon. Have you received a Guide Star, which is now on line at our site 3ap.org, or you can receive it by "snail" mail. The on line version has color pictures and a little more in depth coverage.

If any of you should come to the picnic, Wagman, or Mingo, please introduce yourself to some of us as a new member, so we

can show you around. We can't always tell our members from the general public during star parties, at night and at meetings. There are over 550 members "give or take 15 or 20."

One of the better ways to get aquatinted is to attend star parties. If you don't have a way out there please give me a call and I will try to arrange transportation, or just ask on the list.

Michael Halyak: Hello Simon, as you have seen, and I have seen when I joined, you will get bombarded with helpful and insightful information. Just wait until you ask about what kind of telescope you should get. (if you don't have one yet.) I GOT AT LEAST ONE EMAIL FROM EVERYONE ON THE LIST. That's the kinda love that flows in the group. Complete strangers are willing to help you.

Thanks everyone. Welcome to the greatest astronomy club in the country!

Mary DeVaughn: Yes, do introduce yourself if you come to the picnic-- just remember, many of us don't recognize one another in the light! Welcome!

Memories of Mr. Rogers

by Ann Norman

I really did live in Mr. Rogers's neighborhood. When Mr. Rogers' TV friends visited the fire station, it was my Squirrel Hill fire station. His TV audience toured the nearby Nabisco Factory; I could smell the baking. Sometimes we would pass by Mr. Rogers in a grocery store or see him in a parking lot. Our family eye doctor gave Mr. Rogers a TV eye exam. As the

doctor shone his light into the eye of the television host, Mr. Rogers asked, "Can you see what I'm thinking?"

When I was in kindergarten, Mr. Rogers came on twice a day. I preferred watching the morning program rather than the afternoon rerun. I believed that during the first showing of the day Mr. Rogers was completely real, talking directly to us about whatever came to mind. In the afternoon show, I worried that he was just acting as he repeated exactly what he had said and done in the morning show. Imagine my confusion when I learned that

(continued on page 7, column 1)

Memories of Mr. Rogers

(continued from page 6)

Mr. Rogers did the voices of all puppets in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe. He had been fooling me! But it was O.K. I soon understood that Mr. Rogers was always sincere—even while pretending.

My sisters and I memorized all the Mr. Rogers songs of our era and can still sing them today. (I am forty). This is because one of my best friends had a severely retarded sister, Rachel, who never spoke or looked at you, but laughed and rocked happily if you sang “You are My Friend, You are Special,” or anything else from Mr. Rogers’ musical repertoire. As recently as my last birthday, my mom called first thing in the morning to sing, “Today is a Very Special Day.” (A family birthday tradition).

I had only crossed paths with Mr. Rogers until the opening ceremonies for the new Kids Kingdom at the Zoo. Mr. Rogers was scheduled to give a speech before opening the new section for the first time and I was determined to meet him. That Saturday morning I was up bright and early with my three boys and we got a spot at the front of the crowd. Mr. Rogers must not have been feeling well that day. He gave a one-sentence long speech--“It’s a beautiful day in the neighborhood”-- he cut the ribbon, the crowd of kids surged to the new play equipment, and a handler grabbed Mr. Rogers by the elbow and gently, but quickly, steered him off in the opposite direction. I feared it would be another near miss with the celebrity, so I chased him down. Coming up behind him, I was surprised he looked so old and tired. Maybe I should have left him alone, but I called out “Mr. Rogers, I enjoyed your show when I was little and now my kids watch your show!” Mr. Rogers, stopped, turned around, and gave me his undivided attention.

“I’m glad you told me that,” he answered in his slow, gentle cadence.

Wow! When Mr. Rogers says “Thank you for sharing” its not a put down. He sounded completely sincere.

I want to thank Mr. Rogers for making my neighborhood, and everyone else’s, someplace special.

Believe It or Not, Misterogers Asteroid is in Ripley’s



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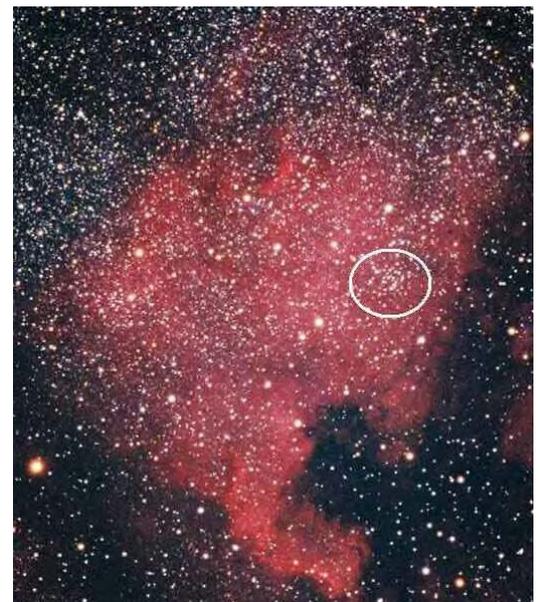
Yunz Should Check Out This Asterism

(from AAAP Listserver)

Barry Simon recently noticed a circle of bright stars in the North American nebula at about the spot on the continent where Pittsburgh should be. He proposes we call it the “Pittsburgh Circle.” John Cheng remembers Tom Reiland mentioning the Pittsburgh-like location of the small open cluster, much earlier. Tom confirms that he has been pointing it out to his classes and the club for about twenty years. Tom also notes that the nebula’s “California” has already fallen into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared.

Renaming NGC6997 the “Pittsburgh Circle” shouldn’t be that hard. We’ve had such luck with asteroids!

Where the “Pittsburgh
Circle” is at.



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