

# ❖ **GUIDE STAR ON-LINE FEATURES (AND FOTOS)** ❖

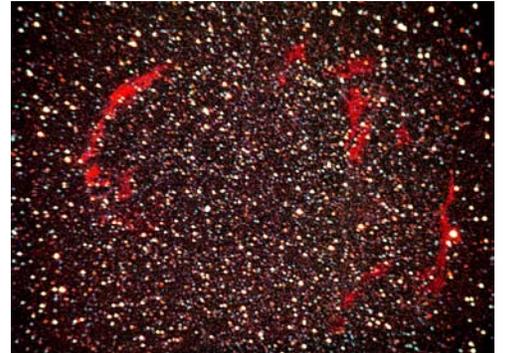
## Brunelle Contest Runners-Up (a.k.a. Runner-Ups)



*Optics <150mm: 2nd Place – “Antares” by Mark Arelt*



*Optics <150mm: 3rd Place – “California Nebula” by Mark Arelt*



*Optics >150mm: 2nd Place – “Veil Nebula from Greene County” by Mark Arelt*



*Atmospheric Phenomena: 2nd Place – “Sunset Rainbow” by Jerry Zhu*



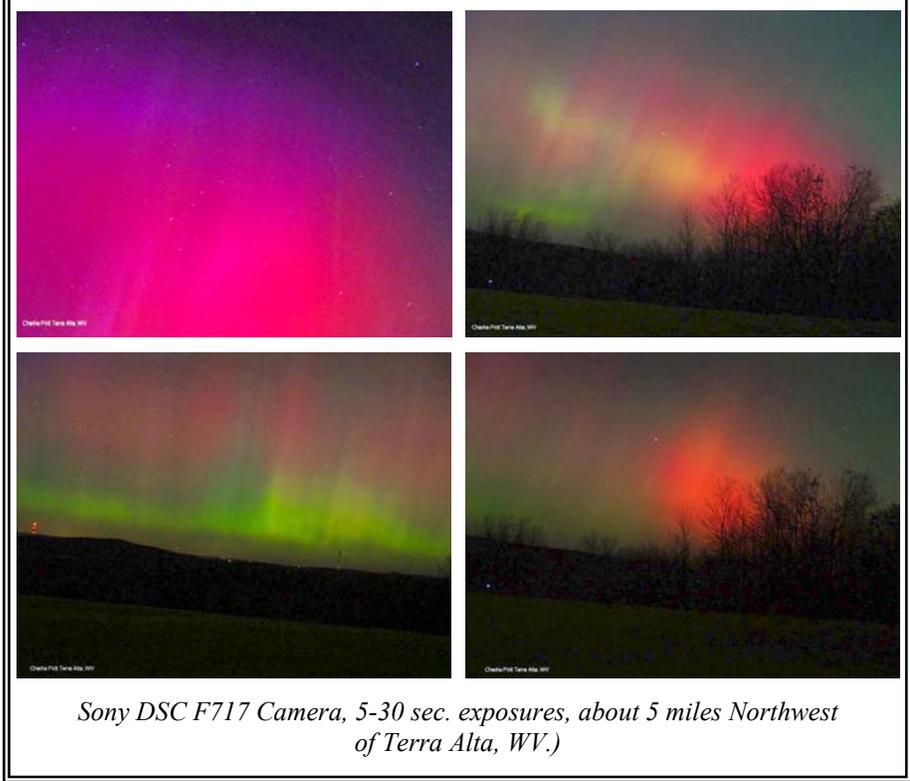
*Optics >150mm: 3rd Place – “Antares and M4 Region” by Frank Weilgus*



*Atmospheric Phenomena: 3rd Place – “Circum-Zenith Arc” by Jerry Zhu*

# More Great Aurora Pix from Late Oct./Early November Displays

*Photos by Charlie Pritt from West Virginia*



*Sony DSC F717 Camera, 5-30 sec. exposures, about 5 miles Northwest of Terra Alta, WV.)*

*Photos by Dave Arlotti from Wagman Site*



*Photos by Jerry Zhu from Pittsburgh*



*Nikon Coolpix 995 camera, 8 second exposure, ISO 800.*



*24mm lens, Fuji Superia X-Tra 800 print film, 20 sec exposure, f2.8., from Wagman Observatory. Images digitally scanned, had aircraft light streaks removed on some.*

## Post Script (and Post Images) On Lunar Eclipse

*Eclipse Collage by Shwan Van Mastrigt*



### 40 Members Make the Difference At Huge NEWO Eclipse Star Party

*by Tom Reiland (from AAAP Listserver)*

The 2003 Star Party Season may have started out poorly and continued that way for a while, but at least we had a spectacular finish. The cloud conditions didn't look good early on, but it started to clear up by around 7 PM. Though it was cold, we had an extremely large and enthusiastic crowd. We even had some very colorful Moondogs to point out to them. Many of them got a chance to observe Mars through the scopes in the Observatory, as well as some on the field. By the time the eclipse was nearing totally, the sky had cleared and we could see the Milky Way and the Andromeda Galaxy with ease.

We helped several visitors with their scopes and probably picked up many new members. Some crowd estimates ranged from well over 500 to 1,000 and we settled at 750 as the best guess on the total number of visitors. The TV coverage was good for the club and they did a good job of promoting us on WTAE-TV. They made one mistake by saying that Wagman Observatory was in West Deer instead of Frazer Township.

*(continued on page 14, column 2)*

### Wagman Eclipse Star Party Memorable for AAAP "Dude"

*by Jim Moody (adapter from AAAP Listserver Posting)*

I entertained visitors, but in much more humble way. I kept my 8" Dob pretty much pointing to the moon for the duration at about 50x magnification. I had a steady stream of visitors, even some repeats. I showed one fellow, about 12 I think, how to reposition the Dob and invited him to take a hands-on approach. I guess that encouraged him as he came back several times throughout the evening.

Almost every viewer gave me an 'ooh' or an 'aah' -- even those few who took a peek and moved on before I realized the moon had drifted almost out of the telescope's field of view. One or two kids liked the finder scope as much as the main view.

My favorite were the two gentlemen (in their early 20's perhaps), one of whom asked to take a look. As he walked up to it he commented on how ugly "these telescopes" were. By that I'm assuming he meant the Dobsonian style. (Hey, I couldn't argue - compared to the elegant equipment around me my Dob is a rather squat, ugly brute. But I like it.) But then he looked through it at the fully-eclipsed

moon, got quiet for a moment then said "Dude! ... DUDE!!!!". While his buddy was taking a turn he asked me how much these cost. I wasn't sure if he mean mine or the telescopes in general. I told him that most of those around me were pretty expensive, but mine was only about \$300. OK, mine wasn't \*\*\*that\*\*\* cheap, but I was going for effect... Sure enough: "Dude? No Way!! Dude!!!!". (Lest anyone chastise me for misinforming a visitor, at the time I bought my Dob Hardin Optical was selling a complete 8" Dob package -- a Guan Sheng telescope like mine - - for \$299 + shipping.)

What amazed me most was that I was parked pretty close to the east side of the building (next to Tom Reiland), and these guys came toward me from the weather station end so they \*had\* to have passed many a telescope to get out to the weather station then back to me, but they acted like mine was the first they actually tried.

After the media truck left and the crowd started to thin (i.e. when you \*real\* astronomers were starting to get serious) I was forced to pack up and leave. By this time my wife and daughter were ready to go, both because they were cold and because the porta-john was most definitely NOT an option.

OK, Michael and I were pretty cold, too. But what a satisfying event.



## RASC: Amateur Astronomy On A Massive Scale

by Terry Trees (from AAAP Listserver)

While in Toronto on business on October 22, I attended an RASC-Toronto Centre meeting (Royal Astronomical Society of Canada). This, coincidentally is the centre of which I am a member. When I joined the RASC some years ago I chose the Toronto Centre simply because Toronto is my favorite large city to visit. One of my PEI friends later suggested I should have joined his centre because the Toronto Centre has too much power. They have more than 1,000 members. The main benefits I've enjoyed are a free RASC Handbook, various monthly publications, the RASC ListServer which is a wealth of knowledge (600+ subscribers from around the world) and the constant Aurora Watch/Warnings that I try to quickly pass along to you. This is the first meeting I've had the opportunity to attend.

Like the AAAP, they hold their meetings in a science center, of course it is the Ontario Science Centre and it's changed quite a bit since I used to take my science classes there on field trips from New Kensington Junior High School in the early 1970s. The neighborhood was quite upscale then. It's not a bad neighborhood now but it is an area where "new Canadians" reside. I grabbed a couple of hamburgers at a McDonalds across the street from the Science Center before the meeting and then strolled around the local shopping center to kill some time. One of the store fronts boasted a large sign, "Afghan Women's Centre". Others definitely catered to ethnic interests we wouldn't see in Pittsburgh.

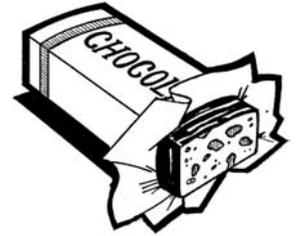
The Toronto Centre has an interesting meeting schedule, but it's not one I recommend. They meet every other week. One meeting is professional-astronomer, guest-speaker night. No other activities are conducted. The alternate meeting is business meeting, amateur-presentations night. Ralph Chou, a friend who is organizing an expedition to Egypt for the Venus transit next June said that some members only ever attend one type of meeting or the other. Only a handful attend both. By the way, if you're interested, there are still openings on the transit trip and it costs less than \$2500 US.

Finally, they has a "Mars Mania" night in late August where they set-up scopes in the Science Centre parking lot and showed Mars to the public. I guess you could call it a success even though only 6,000 people showed-up to look at Mars! WOW!

## Elusive Candy Bars and Asteroids

by John Holtz (from AAAP Listserver)

On Aug 28, I got the bright idea -- if not last minute idea -- that I should give the students of my Astronomy Class a Mars candy bar. After all, it was just one day after the much anticipated close approach of the planet Mars to Earth. So during my lunch hour, I went to two grocery stores looking for Mars bars. My search came up empty. It turns out that Mars candy bars are not produced in the U.S. under the name Mars; they are now Snickers Almonds. So much for a great idea.



I also watched the aurora on October 30 AND searched for the asteroid Hermes. I spent about an hour searching the approximate location and memorizing the star field, hoping to find one object that was moving. At 11 o'clock, I was starting to get worried because none of the objects I was monitoring were moving. Not knowing exactly where it would be, I started to expand my search area. Around 11:15, I looked back at my expanded area and thought there had been a pair of stars before but not a pair now. Was my memory faulty, exhausted from the hour long sleep and late (for me) hour of the night? Or had I located the long lost Hermes? A few minutes later, I had confirmed that my memory had been correct: Hermes was seen. I was using a 10" scope at 150 power, and it was fairly easy from my back yard (southern Butler County).

## Director's Eclipse Star Party Report

(continued on page 13, column 1)

All in all, it turned out to be one of our best nights ever for a Star Party, except for the cold. By the time the Moon begin to come out of the Umbra, the people started to leave. I left about 9:20 for another commitment and came back after 3 AM to pick up my equipment. Looks like everyone was out of there before midnight.

I'd like to thank the 40 members who helped out last night. We were swamped. I wish we could have had more, but we did well enough. That was the only minor disappointment of the night. Usually for an event like this we get 50 to 60 members volunteering, but it was cold and cloudy early on and many of you had other commitments. Those of you who couldn't make it missed a great time. There's nothing like sharing our wonderful fascination of the sky with 750 people. Special thanks go out to Bob Kalan for helping WTAE with the video of the eclipse and John Holtz and his parking crew. Thanks to all 40 members who gave their valuable time to make this an extremely successful event. Thanks to the Sky Gods for removing the clouds. Our next event is WinterFest on February 28, 2004. Enjoy the break.

## George Lindbloom's Inspiration Carries Me to 100,000+ Observations

by Tom Reiland (excerpts from AAAP Listserver)

October was the 360th month in a row (30 years) in which I've recorded at least one night's worth of observations in my log books. I got the idea of keeping notes of my observations from George Lindbloom. It was 30 years ago Sunday, October 12 when I met George at the first AAAP meeting I attended. He gave a report on his observations of Comet Kohoutek and he was one of a handful of members who were doing any observing at that time. I talked to him about his notes and techniques and he helped me out a great deal.

Unfortunately for AAAP, George passed away 15 years ago this coming February. I still miss talking to him about observing and astronomy in general. He showed me the advantages of star-hopping and how to estimate star and comet magnitudes. He would have enjoyed all the wonderful astronomical events we've had over the last fifteen years.

I hope to keep my streak going through April of next year, which is when I celebrate thirty years in the club. Since November of 1973, I've logged over 1140 nights, over 3,600 hours, more than 5,000 objects and 104,000 plus observations. I just started my twelfth logbook this April. It's nice to have these observations on paper to go back to when I need information on a night, an event or an object. I recommend to anyone who enjoys a good night under the stars 'n'at.

## Logbook Techniques Multi-Faceted But Easy

by Tom Reiland (from AAAP Listserver)

Joe McCafferty sent an e-mail to me asking about my log books and how I record observations. Those of us who keep notes probably have different methods of doing it. There are many guide books for observing that feature a place for log entries in the back or describe how to record your observations. I'll just give an example of my log book style.

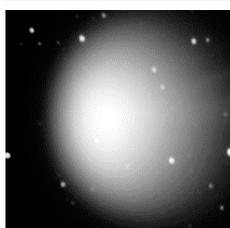
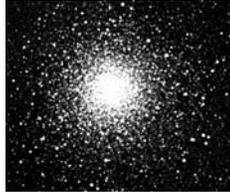
**Date:** Oct. 17-18, 2003, **Location:** Wagman Observatory, **Start Time:** 8:00 PM EDT

**8:00 M13, NGC 6207, Hercules.**

**\*\*8:03 Struve 2936, (D), Aquarius, Drawing of Double star listing the color of each star, NEW (first time object), 170X.**

I make sketches of double stars showing their positions as viewed through my scope. I make drawings of planets and the positions of any moons that are visible or bright, nearby stars. I make sketches of extra-galactic supernovae to show their position in each galaxy.

(continued at upper right)



For variable stars I list color and my estimated magnitude. I'll make some drawings of comets, especially the coma and nucleus. I'll list color, location and estimated magnitude of any bright meteors. I'll do the same for aurora.

For Deep Sky objects I'll list size (very small, small, medium, extra medium, large and very large), brightness (very faint, faint, dim, medium, bright, very bright), shape, concentration (compact/dense, medium, diffuse, etc...), color and number of stars if it's an Open Cluster.

I always put a check mark before (left) of any recording of a new object. I underline the word NEW and the magnification(s) I use to observe the objects. After I'm done observing, I estimate the seeing and steadiness on a scale of 1 to 5. Example: (3 seeing/ 2+ steadiness). I list the transparency the same way, adding a comment such as: Bad, Poor, Fair, Average, Good, Very Good or Excellent. I list the optics I use, amount of time observed, number of observations, wind, humidity and temperature. I usually have at least one thermometer with me and the Radio Shack Weather/Time Radio. I always have binoculars with me because some observations are best made with them rather than a scope or nude-eye. I always make a note of anything unusual that I observe. It could be something on the Moon or a planet that is not always visible. A satellite going through the field of view near a galaxy or cluster. I might list that an object is easier or harder to see on a particular night.

I think it's up to each observer to choose his or her way to record their observations. Pick a method that you're comfortable with. Here are the things I list that I think are important to me:

Date, Location, Time (Start, Objects observed and finish), Optics and magnification, drawings and or descriptions of objects, emphasize NEW objects, temperature, wind, any clouds, transparency, seeing and steadiness, objects observed, the type of object and the constellation they are in and anything unusual.

Before I go out each night, I check the very web pages for anything new in the sky and try to locate positions and charts for the objects. I have my list of galaxies for my supernova search program and I have a few things I want to see each night that I check off in different catalogues or handbooks. Sometimes I just wing it and do whatever catches my fancy during the night. I try to observe at least one solar system object (Moon, planet, asteroid or comet), a double star, a variable star, three to five different types of nebulae, galaxies, globular and open clusters, a meteor and a satellite. Anything beyond this, like nova, supernova, asteroids or comets, is a bonus.

Good luck and clear skies.

**Editor's note: See page 16 for John Cheng's computer-based method of logging observations.**

## How I Use A Digital Observer's Logbook

*by John Cheng (from AAAP Listserv)*

Tom Reiland mentioned that: "...Those of us who keep notes probably have different methods of doing it..."

Tom hit on pretty much all the things that should be recorded but let me put in a plug for technology here. While I made paper-based log entries and routinely sketched planets even as a teenager, I felt very little guilt in switching to the electronic logging features of a product like SkyMap Pro.

Information on time, place, object type, object location, instrument and magnification are automatically captured by the software. Weather conditions, seeing scale (Antoniadi), and miscellaneous accessories are prompted for by the logging screen.

Five things that made the switch to a digital log so attractive were that the software can generate target lists for a given night and then keep track of your progress, that any and all observations for an object can be retrieved by simply clicking on the object on the map, any observation can be electronically tied to an image, that once in a database the observations may be sorted, manipulated and reproduced in any number of reporting formats and that backing up the log is as simple as dumping it to a floppy or a CD.

One thing that I did continue from the paper-based logs is the addition of lots of commentary...who I might have observed with that evening, quirks about gear and optical performance, what I might think or feel about the object...anything that might make the log interesting reading a few years down the line.