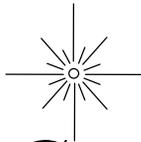




**AAAP 75th Anniversary  
1929 to 2004**



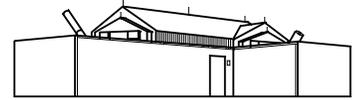
# The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.

A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh

May, 2004

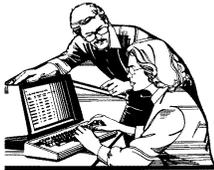
Vol. 38, No. 2



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

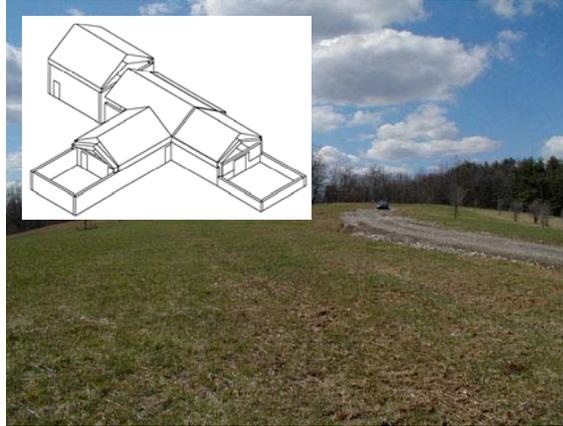
## May Meeting Takes A Fresh Look At Astro-Ed

The May program looks at the often-neglected topic of astronomy education, a subject of interest to many AAAP members who are either teachers or students of the subject at local schools. At our *May 7* meeting (*CSC, 7:30 pm*), we feature a superb speaker on this and related topics: **Tim Spuck** of the Oil Region Astronomical Society (ORAS). (Tim is well regarded by many for an especially



*(continued on page 2, column 2)*

## From the Soil to the Stars, Mingo Observatory Project Gets Down to Business



**Faster than a comet at perihelion**, the Mingo Creek Park Observatory project is moving from the planning/paperwork phase to actual turnover of dirt. On **May 8, 2:00 pm** officials from Washington County, the State, various local corporations and foundations, and officers of the AAAP will break ground for the club's second major observatory. The event marks the culmination of several years of funding searches, meetings, letter-writing, design work,

surveying, equipment acquisitions, field trips, permit applications and the multitude of other details that must be managed for a project of this size.

The MPCO committee recommends that attendees arrive around **1:00 pm**. If you would like to help with set-up, please report to the nearby pavillion at **Noon**. Since ground conditions will not be known until that day, you will be directed where to park. The event will proceed in spite of rain, but check with any MCPO committee member or the AAAP website (3ap.org) if in doubt. Note: See page 3 for the committee members' names, and for additional news on the observatory project.

### Wagman and Mingo

## May 21-22 Star Parties: Goodbye Winter....Hello Spring Objects

**Have we been spoiled or what?** The late Winter Sky has been filled with an open cluster's-worth of 1-2 mag. stars and as many as five naked-eye planets. A few of these objects will still be visible at the **May 21** and **22** public star parties at **Wagman** Observatory and the **Mingo** Observatory site (Mingo party moved to nearby ballfield). Both sites have low western horizons to show guests last glimpses of the planets, and some Orion area stragglers. Of course, Jupiter remains for awhile longer as a showcase object for visitors, and the fine selection of early Summer objects rise later on.

Keep in mind that the general public has been suffering from Cabin Fever just as much as we, and may turn out in large numbers for these star parties. Thus, we repeat our monthly plea for a strong turnout of members, scopes and help with star party activities (parking cars, helping set up guest's scopes, etc.). Your help, in any form, will be conspicuously noted at the end of the year.

### June 14 to 20

## Ready, Set, Go to LHSC

*by Larry McHenry (from AAAP Listserver)*

A final reminder to all that registration for the sixth annual, week-long (6-14 to 6-20) Laurel Highlands Star Cruise (LHSC) is now open. The final four days are filled with guest speakers, children's activities, beginner's classes, vendors and amateur astronomy workshops:

-  Rodger Blake of Taurus Technologies: Astrophotography Workshop
-  NASA Aerospace Bus
-  John Holtz: Beginners Observing Workshops.
-  Flacc Stifel and Wade Barbin: Scope Clinic
-  Bob Novack: Homebuilt Telescope Tour.
-  Mel Bartels: ATM Mirror Making
-  Art Glaser: History of Allegheny Observatory
-  Bill Roemer: Religion & Astronomy
-  Tom Crowley: Amateur Radio Astronomy
-  Kerry Smith: Demonstrating A 1-M Amateur Radio Tel.



*(continued on page 2, columns 1 and 2)*

**2004-2005 Officers****Vote Like Your Astronomical Life Depends On It**

If nominated they will run, if elected they will serve. We're speaking of our roster of officer candidates for the 2004-2005 term. The names\* may sound familiar:

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 continues in his current 5-year term and is not on the ballot.

Yes, all of our currently serving candidates have agreed to serve for another year and there are no contested positions. If you are satisfied with their performance thus far, simply check their names in the enclosed ballot. If you prefer someone else, write-in spaces are provided on the ballot. If you cannot attend the **May 7** meeting, please make sure to mail your ballot in time to reach John Holtz's rural Butler County mailbox by May 6. Otherwise you can bring your ballot to the May meeting.

Our thanks again to the Nominating Committee for lining up the above candidates: **Bill Roemer** (Chair), **Terry Trees**, **Rose Chavez** and **Jeff Kearns**.

**LHSC Awaits You**

*(continued from front page)*

-  Amateur Astronomer/Ham Radio Operators: Setting up radios and contacting other star parties going on around the country at the same time.
-  Terry Trees: Using Astronomy Software
-  David Lane: Developing Astronomical Software (ECU)
-  Ron Ravneberg: Pre Computer-age Telescopes and Amateur Astronomy
-  Larry McHenry: Solar Observing and Video Astronomy
-  Professional Speakers:
  - Dr. Steele Hill: SOHO Solar Astronomy
  - Dr Noam Izenberg: "Messenger" Mission to Mercury
  - Dr Karen Jensen: Radio Astronomy
  - Mark Kotche: Hubble Update & Exoplanet Research
-  Observing Contests: Messier, 40 Decl, & Sketching.
-  Children activities (JoAnne Trees and Joe McCafferty):
  - Bottle Rockets
  - Model Rockets
  - Telescope Making
  - Scale Model of the Solar System
  - Various other misc crafts

Saturday June 19 includes the very popular model rocket launches and the many great door prizes in the Saturday night give-away:

-  Meade 90mm ETX with Autostar and deluxe field tripod.  
*(continued at right)*

**Willard MaCalla****Last AAAP Member from 1930's Passed Away In December**

We regret to report that the AAAP's eldest member, **Willard MaCalla**, passed away last December 6 at the age of 94. Our records indicate he joined the club in October, 1936, thus making him the longest-serving member (67 years) after the late Leo Scanlon who co-founded the club in 1929. Willard was a past President of the AAAP, active in the club before many of us were born, and was well remembered for his kindly personality. After his retirement from the engineering profession, he moved to Greensburg. The AAAP expresses its sympathies and fond memories of Willard to the MaCalla family.



*Photo from Pittsburgh Post-Gazette web site.*

-  Discovery 8" Dob. from Helix (Tim Hagan) and AAAP.
-  Oberwerk 20 x 80 binoculars from Helix and AAAP.
-  Orion 4.5" Starblast Dob. (kid's doorprize) from AAAP
-  Astrocard lighter and three sets of cards from Astrocards (Bob Kepple) and AAAP
-  Celestron eyepiece kit from AAAP
-  Orion filter set

There are also many non-astronomy activities in the area such as tours of the scenic Coopers Rocks and Cheat River. **Dave Smith** is leading a tour.

Finally, the biggest attraction is the beautiful, dark skies.

Star Cruise is held at the Pinehill Campground just off I-68 near Hazelton, West Virginia. Additional information is available at <http://www.LHStarCruise.org>

**What's Your Sign? Help Wanted!**

In order to make LHSC a successful event, we need volunteers to help out, (from setup to takedown, helping with registration, running the StarCruise FM radio station, to just watching over the AV equipment in between speaker presentations). Please consider donating a few hours of your time. **Charlotte Tunney** is handling our volunteer scheduling, so please contact her (412-441-3958 [tunneyc@carnegielibrary.org](mailto:tunneyc@carnegielibrary.org);) and let her know you would like to help.

**Astro Education In the May Spotlight**

*(continued from front page)*

interesting program given to the club several years ago on remote access to large, computer-guided telescopes.) His May 7 talk, "*A More Authentic Approach to Astronomy Education*" will focus on the current state of Astronomy Education and the direction it appears to be taking in the future. The Internet has blown open the field of astronomy for both amateurs and students alike. He will explore the use of these resources in an effort to bring about more authentic astronomical experiences.

**Bidding Contractors Visit Wagman**

**Mingo Creek Park Observatory Progress Report**

by Larry McHenry (from AAAP Listserver)



Mingo Observatory Committee (L-to-R): Mike Metaney, Chrissie Chojnicki, Dave Smith, Becky Nichols, Joe Begandy, Al Paslow, George Guzik and Ed Moss (Chair). Not shown/present for this photo: Larry McHenry, Dan McKeel, Shawn Van Mastright

The Mingo Creek Park Observatory project recently took several steps forward. In late March, Requests for Quotation for construction of the facility were sent to two construction firms. Each RFQ package included a Bid Specification prepared by Flacc Stifel and Ed Moss and included a set of drawings for the MCPO facility. Representatives from the construction firms visited Wagman Observatory on April 12 to participate in a “walk-down” of the facility. MCPO utilizes many of the design features of NEWO. The walk-down afforded the prospective bidders the opportunity to review in-person the design of NEWO and the details of its construction. It also gave them an opportunity to ask questions related to the RFQ packages. Sealed bids for construction of MCPO are due back to the AAAP by April 26. The bids will be opened at the Executive Committee meeting planned for May 2.

**Lots of Ways You Can Help At Mingo**

by Larry McHenry (from AAAP Listserver)

The next several months we’ll be needing lots of extra help both at the Mingo Creek star parties, and with the actual construction of the building. Then there’s the work on the telescopes and all the little indoor things that will need done to get the whole facility up and running. Additionally, we could use help in planning activities such as amateur speaker presentations and displays, and working with the planetarium projector and canned star programs that we have. Any and all help in these areas is most welcome.

**Mingo Research Projects Under Study**

by Larry McHenry (from AAAP Listserver)

The MCPO Committee has identified several amateur research projects for our new Observatory. These include:

- ◇ Solar research - tracking sunspots and imaging active regions (AAVSO and ALPO)
- ◇ Variable Star Photometry (AAVSO)

(continued at right)

**Updates On Locally-Named Asteroids**

by Tom Reiland (adapted from AAAP Listserver)

I have conducted additional research through the list of named asteroids. As a result, we show an increased number of known local names. Here’s the updated list:

Alleghenia	Hartmann	Sanner
Brashear	Keeler	Scanlon
Carnegia	Kohman	Schlesinger**
Cassidy	Misterrogers	Wagman
Curtis*	Pittsburghia	
Hapke	Reiland	

\*Heber Curtis of A.O., \*\*Also of AO

In addition, there are three other possible local names (unconfirmed):

- Daniel (Zaccheus Daniel of AO and other fame)
- Burns (Kevin of AO, this one is doubtful)
- Caligiuri (Richard, Mayor of Pgh., ?? doubtful ??)

Hopefully, we’ll have more to add to the list, including Langley, Lindbloom, Trumpler, etc. Regarding these names, I received a reply from Brian Marsden concerning the naming of asteroids for Samuel Pierpont Langley and George Lindbloom. He’s going to give it a try and he’s “shortened” the citations I sent him for each of them. He said he has two picked out that might be suitable. I hope we get both. Langley should be no problem, but I really want one for George. I’ll keep yinz informed.

If anyone has info on Trumpler that would fit about a paragraph or two, please forward it to me. I know he catalogued open star clusters and he worked at A.O. I just need some detailed info of birth date, time he worked at various observatories, his list of clusters and date of death.

Finally, To Truman Kohman: The naming of an asteroid for me was the greatest gift I ever received. It’s hard imagining a better one. Thanks again.

- ◇ Supernovae hunting in galaxies (AAVSO)
- ◇ Lunar Occultations (ALPO)
- ◇ Surveillance patrols of Jupiter and Saturn’s cloud bands (ALPO)
- ◇ Search for NEO’s (Earth crossing asteroids)
- ◇ Search for Extrasolar planets (seriously!).

We will continue to build a list of possible projects and what equipment might be needed. After we get the observatory up and running we will look for volunteers to head up a ‘research’ subcommittee. If you would like to volunteer to help work on the observatory, please contact MCPO Committee Chair Ed Moss (412-734-0255, edward.moss@verizon.net;).



# Spreading "Thanks" To All The Astronomy Weekend Volunteers

by George Guzik (from AAAP Listserv)

Thanks to everyone who gave so much of their time to our Astronomy Weekend event at the Carnegie Science Center! We had two very full days at the CSC and the weather cooperated just enough on Saturday that we actually had some outdoor activities. **Tim Manka** and **John Close** made "first contact" with our visitors at the AAAP Information Desk located by the front doors of the CSC. As in years past, they distributed information on star parties, gave away gently used astronomy magazines, and encouraged visitors to join our organization. Their efforts paid off - we received membership applications from two visitors and several others expressed interest.

**Fred Klein** had his scope aimed through the CSC windows at the Hilton Hotel sign and also had an assortment of his beautiful astro photos. **Larry McHenry** brought his usual huge display of astronomy information and video presentations. **Bob Kalan** set up his telescope, computer, and web cam to give visitors a view of captured astronomical images and live images of downtown landmarks. **Ed Moss** gave demonstrations of computer-assisted tracking with scope.

During Saturday's events, **Mark and Judy Schomer** became telescope makers to the delight of almost 100 young astronomers. The CSC furnished small telescope kits and Mark and Judy did the assembly honors. **Jim, Elizabeth, and Michael Moody** took over this task on Sunday and completed many more scopes.

The Amateur Telescope Makers contingent was well represented by **Larry Sneider**, who brought his new Dob to the CSC, and by **Bob Novack** who brought his small, "travel Dob." I brought my own Dob and the 4.25" mirror that I started grinding at last year's Astronomy Weekend.

**Richard McLaughlin** set up displays on Project Moonwatch and the solar system. **Ed Potosky** shared the duties on these displays when Richard had to tend to other business. **Ann Norman** and **Jeff Kearns** each brought astronomy exhibits for the visitors.

**Dave Smith** and **Bill Moutz** brought their scopes and gave tours of earthly objects. Dave took advantage of the marginal weather on Saturday and carried his scope outside, set up near the CSC's Cafe' and even managed a few minutes of solar observing.

The **Yorkshire family** performed their popular Cosmic Face Painting activity to the CSC on Saturday and they were busy with the crowd of children that gathered at their tables. **Phil Hughes** helped document the activities of the weekend using his digital camera. **Wayne Meyers, Les Johnson, Carl Stetar, Susan Michael, Eric Fischer, and Joyce Osborne-Fischer** helped in many other ways.

We, the AAAP, had assistance from our neighbors in the **Kiski Astronomers**. **Bob Novack** and **Gary and Donna Shannon** represented that group. Word has it Kiski's membership also increased as a result of their participation in the event. The folks from Pittsburgh Space Command attended on Saturday and brought some great rockets for display.

**Dan Malerbo** and the CSC provided a number of speakers including Dr. Sharon Montgomery portraying Galileo's daughter and Ed Reis portraying George Westinghouse. The keynote event was a teleconference with Ed Sweetnam of NASA JPL in which he described the Genesis mission, which should be making headlines late this summer. Dan also arranged several activities, such as making "Mars soil," that were specifically directed at the youngest visitors.

Putting on an event like Astronomy Weekend takes a good deal of planning and a lot of work. Astronomy Weekend is a great opportunity for us to provide information to a lot of people in a short time - several thousand in just two days. Again, I thank the AAAP members who gave so generously of their time to make this event possible!

*Astronomy Weekend photos below by Larry McHenry and Phil Hughes*



## May the May News Be With You

- We extend not only "thanks" but "well done" to **Dr. Ryan Scranton** for his courageous effort, at the April meeting, to explain the newly discovered phenomena of cosmic Dark Energy. Like quantum physics, the phenomena is almost impossible to explain in conversational language.  Dark Energy is a mysterious "force" that seems to be driving the Universe apart faster than allowed by gravitational attraction. Hints of its existence come from observations of the Cosmic Microwave Background and distant supernovae. When asked what causes Dark Energy, Dr. Scranton simply put up a Powerpoint slide with the word "Dunno".
- We regret to report that several long-standing AAAP members are moving out of town because of job situations. **Ed and Vicky Honkus** will be departing to the gulf coast of Florida, while **Erik Bauer** and **Lana Zalakar** are off to Ithaca, New York. We hope both families will be able to revisit the "Burgh" from time to time (Note: Remember not to say "yinz" in your new towns!☺)
- George Guzik notes that the "Westsylvania Adventures" event will be on **May 8**, not May 6 as George had stated at the April meeting, and as noted in the March Guide Star. See that issue for other details of the event.
- Our friends in the Kiski Astronomers are planning a special star party for a cub scout group on **May 15** (rain date is **May 22**). The event will be held at the home of member **Gary Shannon**. Cookies, coffee and pop will be served. Starting time is between **7:00 and 8:00 PM**. Contact Gary to offer help; he can be reached at 724-865-1112 or gar@isp.com.
- Congratulations to **Tim Manka** for receiving the "Volunteer of the Month" Award at CSC. Tim was granted this award in part for his efforts back on Dec. 5, the night of the big snow storm. On that date, he helped run the "Rube Goldberg Contest" for 19 high schoolers. After being at the CSC from 5:30 AM to 4:30 PM that day, he planned to attend the AAAP Christmas party. But when he found out that only 10 people were available to staff the CSC "Overnighter", he decided to skip the party and help out with the Overnighter. All 422 Cub Scouts came that night. Tim started volunteering in 1997 and has accumulated over 1,750 hours of service.

## Science Fair Judging Very Rewarding

by George Guzik

The 65th Pittsburgh Regional Science and Engineering Fair was held recently at Heinz Field. The Fair provides students with the opportunity to perform scientific investigations and to present the results of those investigations to teams of volunteer judges drawn from local industrial and academic institutions. This year's PRSEF hosted over 700 students from 90 schools in 12 counties competing for over \$300,000 in cash prizes and scholarships. My role in the PRSEF is as a member of the Steering Council for judges and as Chair of the Junior Division judges. I give special thanks to Richard Urban for volunteering his time as a Category Co-Chair for the judging in this event. I'd bet that there were a few other AAAPers there, too.

## Generous Donation Received In Memory of Bob Florida

The "Discovery Classes for Kids" program recently made a \$200 donation to the AAAP in memory of the late **Bob Florida**. In a letter from the group's Co-Chair, Phyllis Pigan stated "*Mr. Florida taught the "Summer Star Party" class for Discovery. For years he shared his excitement of astronomy with many of the area's families. Bob was an extraordinary man in many ways, but even many of the members of our own committee were unaware that each year he donated his salary to your organization. We will miss Bob greatly and could think of no better way to honor him than to donate to an organization he obviously loved.*"



## "Happelia" and "Princetonia" Added to May's Occultations

by John Holtz

Other than the two at the beginning of the month (see last month's newsletter), there two other favorable occultations to mention. The asteroidal occultation (asteroid covers a star) paths are predicted to be visible from this area; updates on these events could move the occultation path closer or farther away. If the updates are favorable, I will post finder charts on my website (<http://members.aol.com/jwholtz>).

- May 23: Asteroid 578 Happelia will occult a 9.4 magnitude star (R.A. 14h 39m 57.21s Dec -19° 38' 24.5") at 1:23 am EDT (5:23 UT). Just a few hours after the star parties! Pittsburgh is on the centerline if the predictions hold true.
- June 5: Asteroid 508 Princetonia will occult an 11.6 magnitude star (R.A. 12h 41m 11.15s Dec +1° 6' 29.3") at 10:53 pm EDT (2:53 UT on Jun 6). Pittsburgh is close to the predicted centerline!

## "Benvenuto!" to These New AAAP Inductees

The following folks were happily voted into the AAAP at the April meeting:

Tugrul Galatali	Ed Lopez	Kevin P. Prykull
Kenneth R. Hallows	Ronald Mahinske	John L. Sokol Jr.
Joseph F. Kline, III	Robin Plavecsky	John P. Traugot
Mark Kuehner	Cory Prykull	

## Our Sympathies To Erik Bauer and Lana Zalakar

The AAAP's condolences go out to club members Erik Bauer and Lana Zalakar upon the recent death of Erik's mother. Erik has been an active AAAP member since 1970 and provided considerable help with the development of the Phase I Wagman Observatory and its first star parties. In recent years, both Erik and Lana have been familiar faces at meetings and picnics as well.

## Messier Marathon 2004

By Ann Norman

The Messier Marathon actually happened. Three of us were there at Wagman BEFORE sunset: Jeff Kearns, Larry Sneider, and myself. I can't remember the last time I made it to a star party while it was still light. I hardly recognized the place. We had official Messier Marathon checklists, thanks to Jeff, who photocopied some to hand out. I even had my AstroCards in Messier-Marathon order. And we were off!

I've been there two other times with Jeff and Larry, but it's never been so quiet. This time, we were too busy to chat. Working straight through the list, only skipping the impossible ones (M74, M77, M33), I got as far as Leo before my mind gave out around 1:30. That's when I found it impossible to pronounce "Clear Sky Clock," as in "The Clear Sky Clock says its will be clear until 1:00." Jeff had already

passed me up by then and had completed the Virgo Cluster. My total is 34. It's 37 if I count the group of three galaxies I found in Leo that I was too tired to differentiate.

So I might have lost the Marathon except that Tom Reiland stopped by, late at night after we had been going for hours, and counted up 29 Messier objects in about 20 minutes using binoculars. Then left. I hope he didn't look up and find a few more after he got home. I want to believe that in 2004 I beat the inventor of the Messier Marathon in the Messier Marathon!

Frank Pastin joined us soon after the Marathon started. So there were four of us there, plus three visitors from the Executive Committee who stopped by after their meeting--Tom, Flacc Stifel, and George Guzik.

Did I mention it was cold?



Galaxy M-74

## Messier Marathon Rerun

By Jeff Kearns

Larry Sneider and I decided to give the Spring Messier Marathon another shot last night. Larry arrived early to see Mercury and to try again for M74, 77, 110 and 33. I came later in order to pick-up where I left off due to clouds on Friday (actually 1:30 AM Sat.).

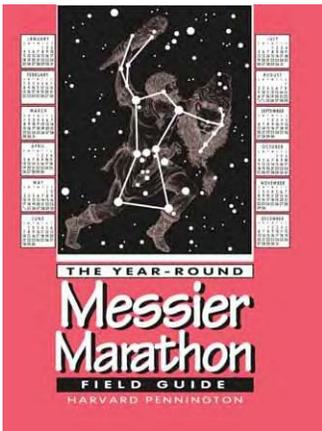
Larry was distracted during the initial Marathon sprint by two groups of visitors that wanted to know where they could go to see the alignment of the Moon and planets. The crescent Moon, Venus, Mars, and Saturn, spread across Taurus to the feet of Castor, was quite a sight.

I warmed up by galaxy hopping in Virgo, then continued down the spring Marathon list. The pace of the Marathon slows while Hercules rises but by the time Ophiuchus is high you have to sprint til dawn. But I had to slow down to hop between M16 and 17 (Omega and Eagle nebulae) till 3:30 AM. This cost me later as clouds rolled into the southeast. I was worried about the finish because earlier I had to pass over M83, a relatively big, bright 8.5 magnitude galaxy. Though it rose as high as 15 degrees above the southern horizon at about midnight, it was lost to me in the light pollution. My concerns about the finish were justified because the clusters along and below the bottom of the teapot (M75, 54, 55, 69 and 70) were hidden in the glow and haze. M6 and M7 in the tail of Scorpius should have been easy but, because of bad timing, clouds moved in before I could. A little before 5:00 AM I gave up on the south saying, "Enuf is Enuf," and turned to catch M15 in the eastern twilight. By that time there were no visible signs of Aquarius or Capricorn.

I realize it's cheating to do the Marathon on two nights, but given the weather... So, in summary, I missed M74, 77, 110, 33, 26, 6, 7, 69, 70, 54, 55, 75, 2, 72, 73 and 30. That makes 61 on Friday plus 33 on Tuesday for a total of 94 out of the 110 on the Spring Messier Marathon list. That's all, 'til the next new Moon!

## Win the Messier Marathon!

Jeff Kearns Reviews *The Year-Round Messier Marathon Field Guide* by Harvard Pennington



One book I recommend to anyone who wants to find 1 or 110 Messier objects is *The Year-Round Messier Marathon Field Guide* by Harvard Pennington, published by Willman-Bell, Inc for about \$25. It has great Telrad-charts, realistic eyepiece drawings, and is formatted for easy use while observing.

Pennington has improved on popular Telrad charts, like AstroCards, in five ways:

- (1) Each finder chart is based on just one "finder" constellation (48 total).
- (2) The finder charts are put in order according to the best sequence for observing on March marathon night.
- (3) Telrad-circles are located on each chart relative to one, two, or three bright stars connected with lines and triangles. The lengths of the lines and triangles are drawn in multiples or fractions of the distances between two bright stars. These simple geometric patterns on the charts really work!
- (4) Realistic eyepiece drawings are presented on each page facing a finder chart. The drawings are in a consistent wide field of view (45 arc seconds, and occasionally 120 arc seconds) and are much more useful than long-exposure astrophotography or embellished portraits (like those of Stephen O'Meara) made under near-perfect skies. Drawings of the appropriated field through an 8 x 50 finder are also provided.
- (5) Drawings of the horizons at twilight and eyepiece star hops supplement the finder charts for the first and last objects in the March marathon.

(continued on page 7, column 1)

# My New Arizona Observatory *By Bob Kepple*



Since I came back to Arizona in January, nearly every day has been devoted to working on my new observatory. It is a Santa Fee style, somewhat matching the house. The roof has a ten-inch slope but looks like it is flat because of the parapets that hide the roof. Last week Barb and I painted the outside and I put down some nice but inexpensive outdoor carpeting on the inside.

March 14th was the first night that I actually used the observatory but I had no desks or carpeting in it yet. The observatory wiring has been completed but the underground line has not been installed yet. Except for the concrete and the wiring, I did all the other construction myself with help from my buddy Glen who was a big help with all the heavy construction. A guy that works with Glen also helped the day we had to lift the framework that the rollers are mounted on up onto the track.

Down here all the amateur astronomers put in what they affectionately call an Omega Centauri window, allowing a view of the southern horizon. I have a true horizon down to declination minus 58 degrees. From my house I have a mountain range to the east and another to the west but nothing to the south. I've been having a ball with the extra part of the sky that I could not see from PA. I have made nearly a hundred sketches for Vol. 3 of my *Night Sky Observer's Guide*. Right now Puppis and Vela are in the south in early evening. Last fall I observed Indus, Grus, Phoenix, Horologium, Dorado, and Pictor. In the next couple months I will catch Norma, Ara, and Telescopium.

We plan on being back in PA in August and September and attending the Black Forest Star Party. I'm also looking forward to seeing Bob Novack, Ed Moss, and Dan Reed, who are flying down for the Texas Star Party in May. Still, I'm really going to miss being at Star Cruise this year.



## Win the Messier Marathon!

*(continued from page 6)*

Other than finding objects in twilight, the most daunting task is dealing with the Virgo cluster. Sure you can shake your scope between Denebola and Vindemiatrix and say "Yeah! I just got 13 galaxies." But, try using the 4 finder charts for the Virgo cluster in the Field Guide. Each galaxy is presented in a series of eyepiece star-hops with corresponding drawings and tips. With a little patience, good transparency, and the drawings in the book you will be able to distinguish one faint fuzzy from another.

The book is more than just finder charts and drawings for experienced observers doing the Marathon. The first half of the book presents the author's rather comprehensive approach to learning and viewing the sky with a telescope. There are many clear illustrations, tables, and practical tips for solving common observing problems. With this one book, and a few practice-observing sessions, a beginner can acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to find 90 or more objects in a March marathon. A brief history of the marathon is presented. It begins in 1774 with the publication of Messier's original list of objects that were not comets and continues through the mid 1970s when Tom Reiland discovered that all the 110 objects in the reviewed list might be seen from 40 degrees north during an all-nighter in late March. There is a good photo of Tom (he took it himself) with his Dob at the spot he usually observes from at Wagman.

Consider that at least 89 Messier objects are visible every night of the year from Wagman Observatory. Pennington emphasizes that a Messier marathon can be done every month during the new (or even crescent) moon. Each finder chart contains a small table listing the best sequence for observing the objects each month. Based on recent personal experience, you are not likely to find more than 101 of the 110 objects from Wagman in late March. (Good luck finding M74, 77, 33, 83, 55, 75, 72, 73 and 30 in March.) So next new moon try running a Messier Marathon. Even if you can't finish in one night, it's a great way to learn the sky and train your eye.

## May Photo Gallery



*Jerry Zhu's individual planet images taken March 24*



*Jerry's March 28 photo of Jovian multi-moon transits/shadows.*



*Phil Hughes multi-transit photo from April 6 (1:21:20 AM, Io TS, Europa TS)*



*Jerry's fabulous lightning photo taken April 17.*

# MAY 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4  Planting Moon (Cherokee)	5	6	7 AAAP Meeting 7:30 PM Carnegie Science Center	8 Mingo Ground- breaking, 2:00 PM Westsylvania Adventures (see p. 5)
9 Mother's Day	10	11 	12	13	14 Mercury at greatest W. elongation (26°) 	15 Kiski Club Star Party for Scouts (see p. 5)
16	17 	18	19 	20 	21 Star Party Wagman & Mingo Creek	22 Star Party Wagman & Mingo Creek
23	24	25 	26	27 	28 	29
30	31 Memorial Day (observed)					

**Also this month:** May 21 AO Public Lecture Quasar-Black Hole Connection 7:30 PM Free  
- Must RSVP at (412) 321-2400

**Looking Ahead: June 14 – 20 (Star Cruise)**  
June 25, 26 Star Parties at Wagman and Mingo Creek

### AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule

<b>Picnic July 17, 2004</b>	Dec. 17, 2004
Sep. 24, 2004	Jan. 28, 2005
Oct. 29, 2004	Feb. 25, 2005
Nov. 19, 2004	Mar. 25, 2005

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## Classifieds

For Sale: 8" LX200 Classic - not the newer GPS model. Adjustable field tripod, equatorial wedge with home made elevation adjuster, hand controller, 120 VAC and 12 VDC power supplies, 1-1/4 visual back, 1-1/4 inch prism diagonal, basic 20 mm eyepiece, Losmandy 2-d balance adjuster, piggyback camera mount, Thousand Oaks solar filter, compass, Bob's Knobs, Pelican 1650 case, 8 x 50 straight-through diagonal and mount (believed to be Celestron; not one shown in photo, flexible dew shield, focus mask. \$1200 for the package. Contact Fred Klein at ffk@nb.net or 412-963-4518.

For Sale: Excellent MN61 F/6 6" Maksutov Newtonian. Shows Jupiter's moon's as distinct spheres and has Achromat-like contrast. A few flecks on corrector coating - no effect on performance. Includes 10 x 50 finder, piggy-back camera bracket, tube rings and saddle plate. Original metal cover missing; close replacement provided. Asking \$800.00. Contact Vern Cox at nitavern@comcast.net or 724-228-9602.

For Sale: Astronomy Magazine binders, still in the original shipping box. Make offer. Contact Mary Kelly at 412-421-7509.

Giving Away: Vintage home-made telescopes and optics:

- 16" scope with stainless steel mirror, f/7 (approx.)
- 10" scope with aluminized mirror, 48" focal length (approx.)
- 10" scope with aluminized mirror, 60" focal length (approx.), very low tech, only glass is probably usable.
- 6" mirror, 120" focal length (approx.)

All items free. Contact Robert Hauer (412-364-4701)

### Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

A section of the Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburgh

*Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon*

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#### \*\*\*Basic Procedure for Paying Dues:

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