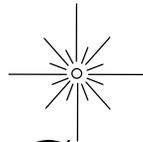




**AAAP 75th Anniversary  
1929 to 2004**



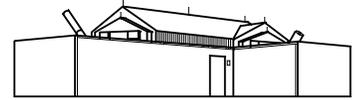
# The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.

A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh

June, 2004

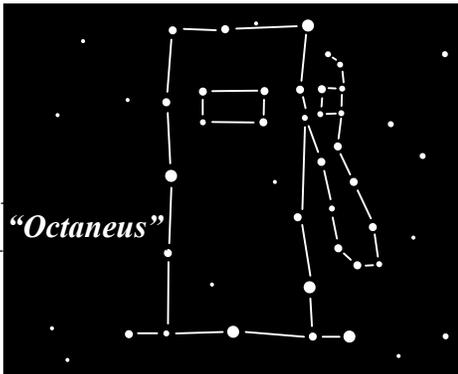
Vol. 38, No. 3



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

## NEWO and Mingo June 25/26

### Will High Gas Prices Bring High S.P. Attendance?



Among the popular news media stories about the current gasoline price jump is families taking fewer vacation driving trips and visiting local places of interest. Perhaps we will benefit from this situation with larger-than-usual crowds at the Wagman and Mingo Observatory sites during this Summer's star party season. Regardless, we need you to help make the **June 25** and **26** events pleasant and informative ones for our guests (all star parties start at **sunset**). In addition to setting up telescopes, members can make a big contribution by helping park cars, steer crowds, answer questions, help set up guests' scopes, etc. We're a 500+ member club and should have plenty of person-power to staff both sites. Note: During construction at the Mingo site, we may be setting up scopes slightly away from the construction site. MCPO Committee members will be there to advise you. (See also article at right.)



## June 14-20 In Hazellton WV **Big Time LHSC Crowds Mean We Need Big Time Help!!!!**

Laurel Highlands Star Cruise has become such a popular event that publicity is almost unnecessary. We're certain to draw hundreds of guests. **What we're short on is AAAP helpers.** If you can contribute any time watching merchandise, setting up/tearing down tables, performing clean-up, etc. contact Terry Trees ASAP or simply show up at the event. It will be muchly appreciated!!! Thank you.

## \$100,000 State Grant Presented **Mingo Groundbreaking A Remarkable Milestone**



Dick Haddad (left) and J. Bracken Burns turn the first dirt at the Mingo site (photo by David L. Smith)

by Larry McHenry (from AAAP Listserver)

May 8 was the AAAP's groundbreaking ceremony for the new Mingo Creek Park Observatory (MCPO). The Weather Gods smiled on us with a partly sunny, warm, dry day. Even the hillside dried out from yesterday's rains, and allowed us to access the site.

At 2:00 pm, MCPO Committee Chairman Ed Moss, serving as Master of Ceremonies, began the pavilion program by welcoming the approximate 85 AAAP members and guests in attendance, and gave a brief history of the 'South Hills Observatory' project. Ed introduced the Reverend Bill Roemer, who gave an

(continued on page 2, column 1)

## Happy Anniversary!

**Seventy-five years ago June 9, Leo Scanlon, Chester Roe and a handful of fellow astronomers and telescope makers met in the basement of the Calvary Community House on Pittsburgh's North Side, forming what would become the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh. Fortunately, Leo lived long enough to see the club grow almost 100 times larger and build a major amateur observatory. See page 3 for a review of the AAAP's remarkable history. Having prospered for 75 years, there's no doubt we will be celebrating the club's Centennial in 2029.**

## MCPO Construction Underway

by Larry McHenry (adapted from AAAP Listserver)

On May 17 the AAAP received final approval from Nottingham Township zoning supervisor of our building permit. Immediately following the approval, the contractor (Waller Corporation), arrived on site with their equipment and have begun preliminary groundwork. They will probably be done with the leveling of the area by the end of the week. The

(continued on page 2, column 2)

## URGENT: Wagman Security System User Problems

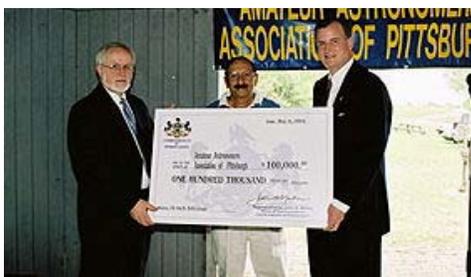
Several members are failing to properly disarm/arm the Wagman security system, causing false alarms to be reported to the security center. The club will be fined for too many of these alarms (we will pass on the fines to the involved member(s)). If you have any questions about security system operation, please contact **Flacc Stifel** or **Tom Reiland**. Thank you.

## Groundbreaking Means "Full Steam Ahead" for MCPO

(continued from front page)



Louis Waller Jr. of Washington Federal presenting a check for \$10,000.00 to the club (photo by David L. Smith)



Ed Moss, Dick Haddad and John Maher, PA House of Rep. with the \$100,000.00 check (photo by David L. Smith)

invocation for the event. AAAP President George Guzik then reviewed the AAAP's club history. Then AAAP MCPO Committee member Dick Haddad made a few inspiring statements, followed by various remarks from Washington County Commissioners Lawrence Maggi, and J. Bracken Burns, and the Director of Washington County Parks, Lisa Cessna.

The pavilion program ended with two special presentations. First was Lou Waller Jr., representing the Washington Federal Foundation, who presented the AAAP with a check for \$10,000. Then the Honorable State Representative John Maher announced that the AAAP has been awarded a \$100,000 grant from the State of Pennsylvania for purchasing a 24" RC telescope! (The audience expressed their appreciation via applause at both announcements).

The MCPO Committee members, invited guests, and AAAP members in attendance, then proceeded up the road to the top of the hill for the actual 'Digging of Dirt'. The ground was broken with the use of two special shovels for the occasion: The original shovel used in the Nicholas E Wagman Observatory groundbreaking in 1987, (spruced up for the event), and a new gold MCPO shovel. MCPO Chairman ED Moss and AAAP President George Guzik paired with the government dignitaries present and broke ground for the new observatory. Afterwards, members of the MCPO Committee and other AAAP members there took turns at the shoveling work.

Once the dirty work was complete, the attendees enjoyed the scenic view from the hill top, then everyone proceeded back down to the pavilion, where cookies and punch awaited. Additionally, schematic drawings of the new observatory were on display, along with photos of the existing Wagman Observatory, and starparty handouts and a club AV slideshow.

By the Time You Read This.....

## Progress Accelerates On New Manka Telescope Mirror



For the past year or so, we've been negligent in reporting progress on the 21" replacement primary mirror and diagonal for the Manka Telescope at Wagman Observatory. The new optics have been generously donated by Brashear L.P.; the company's donation includes a considerable grinding/configuring effort at their local plant. **Phil Breidenbach** has been a major driver on the work at the plant. Late last year the completed mirrors were delivered to us for final coating, which was recently applied by Clausung. The optics are made of "Zerodur", a professional-grade material that deforms very little in the presence of temperature changes.

In the mean time, **Wade Barbin**, **Flacc Stifel** and others spent a great deal of time making mechanical attachments and supports for the optics so that they could be readily transported and installed in the Manka instrument.

We've decided to expedite the installation of the new optics so that the telescope will be ready for the Transit of Venus on June 8. In fact, the optics should be installed and aligned by the time you receive this Guide Star.

In appreciation of Brashear's extraordinary donation, we will hold a brief "First Light" ceremony for the company's executives and club members who helped with the project. Look for a complete wrap-up of the Manka Telescope upgrade in next month's G.S. The new mirror will be a vast improvement over the existing one, which has not been recoated in a long time and has some minor deformities. Our thanks again to B-L.P., Phil, Flacc, Wade and all the others who made this major upgrade possible.

## "Nice Dirt" Says MCPO Subcontractor

(continued from front page)

subcontractor doing the block work stopped by to check out the site. He said it looked like a good area, nice dirt, etc. During construction, star parties will be held in the general area of observatory site, but not on top of the hill. The scout camping field on the right-hand side of the observatory road will be the field location for the telescopes. The pavilion will continue to be the location of the astronomy displays, AV shows, and member presentations.

Remember, now that construction has finally started, the top of the hill should be avoided. We don't want any club members having an accident.

## News from the Cosmic Courier

➤ “Bravo” to **Bob Kepple** for becoming our latest member to have an asteroid named for him (official designation 63305). This comes only a month or so after Tom Reiland’s similar honor. Bob says “it is quite an honor to have a hunk of space rock named after you.” For many years, Bob hunted stars from Western PA and was active in both the AAAP and Kiski clubs. He now does the same from his own observatory under the jet black skies of the Arizona desert.

➤ AO Historical Research by Art Glaser: “I am looking for members who may have worked at AO during the Wagman years. I am interested in almost any stories or research projects from the 50’s and 60’s. Responses can be sent via e-mail to [aglaser@pitt.edu](mailto:aglaser@pitt.edu) or by post to the same at 1666 Hillsdale Ave, Dormont, Pa 15216.”



➤ Note #1 from Terry Trees: “Many thanks to all who took the time to speak to or operate a telescope for the 16 or 18 Girl Scouts from Troop 1278 of Shaler April 24 at Wagman. They really enjoyed it and it was appreciated. They were full of questions and enthusiasm...and NOT ONE ran or threw anything! Thanks again.”

➤ Note #2 from Terry Trees: Terry Trees regrets to report that construction continues at several sites that will affect Wagman Observatory: “The Pgh Mills Mall in Fraser looks like it will have both a Kaufmann’s and a Sears SuperStore....It appears the shopping center in Harmar will be going on as planned, moving Rt 910, the wetlands and Deer Creek...Rt. 28 / Rt. 8 area work will begin on 4/23. It will reduce traffic to one lane in each direction from the Shaler Water Works to past the big intersection.”

➤ Another Wagman “Thank-you” from Flacc Stifel: “We had a great evening at Wagman May 9th. A big THANK YOU to the many AAAP members who helped host 20 or so Girl Scouts and their families. Terry gave a scope talk and all were treated to a nice planet show and Comet NEAT. Almost ideal conditions.”

➤ New AAAP member **Simon Sloan** has returned to his native Ireland to help with family matters. “I would like to thank all the people in the AAAP and am also privileged to be a member of your club (I should remain a member if John Holtz will take foreign checks!) I would like to give big thanks to **Dave Smith** for giving me rides up to Wagman and also thank **Mary DeV Vaughn** for bringing me to both observing sites during last summer. Those are nights I will never forget.”

➤ AAAP member **Jack Dull**, who has been forced to retire early because of serious injuries, is inviting any interested club member to visit his backyard observatory. His friends helped construct a 11-1/2 foot fiberglass dome observatory and equipped it with a 10” LX200 and a 6” refractor. The dome is on a 1330 foot peak in a dark sky area of Allegheny Twp near Freeport. He would like to share his lifetime interest in astronomy with other AAAP members. Jack can be reached at 724-845-7754.

➤ Now that elections are over, President George Guzik is preparing to form a new Executive Committee for the 2004-2005 term. Give him a call or e-mail if you are interested in serving as an at-large member of the E.C.

➤ We’re ever so pleased to welcome the following people as new members of the AAAP: **John Hartman, Ronald Still, AND Susan Turner**.

➤ Late-posted classified ad: Larry McHenry is selling a Celestron Super C8+ SCT. Asking \$499. Contact Larry for details.

## From 7 to 500+ In 75 Years: AAAP’s Amazing History

**June, 1929** - Leo Scanlon reads in Scientific American that a Chester Roe of Pittsburgh is trying to organize an amateur astronomers association. The two combine lists of potential members, then invite them as members in the newly conceived Amateur Astronomer’s Association of Pittsburgh. Seven people accept and four attend the first meeting on June 9, 1929, at the Calvary Community House in Old Allegheny at 2: 30 PM on a Sunday.

**December, 1929** - Eleven people attend the monthly meeting. One project was studying an astronomy text chapter-by-chapter. On December 10, Scanlon and Roe write to Pittsburgh Academy of Science & Art to suggest a committee be formed to plan a Planetarium in Pittsburgh.

**January, 1930** - AAAP receives wide publicity in local papers with photos and feature stories. Members also visit J. W.

Fecker telescope facilities and learn first-hand how large telescopes (including a 69” Cassegrain) are constructed.

**April, 1930** - The AAAP becomes a section of the Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburgh.

**May, 1930** - An AAAP committee visits Alder Planetarium in Chicago as part of investigative work for the proposed planetarium in Pittsburgh.

**June, 1930** - AAAP members go to Warren PA. to see the 16” telescope built by amateur John Steiber.

**July, 1930** - The first AAAP astrophotos are taken, including a close conjunction of the Moon and Venus. Also, Leo Scanlon completes a solar telescope for club use.

**August, 1930** - Roe and Scanlon visit Springfield, Vermont for the Stellafane convention. They meet Russell Porter, John Pierce, Albert Ingalls, Governor James Hartness and others.

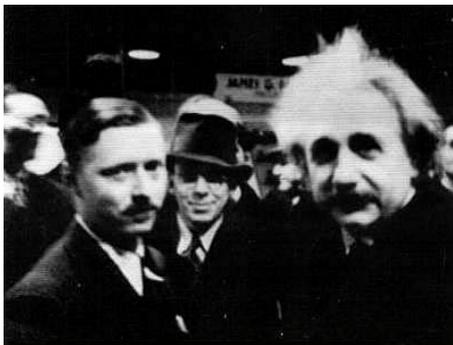


AAAP Co-Founders Leo Scanlon (right) and Chester Roe (left.)

**November, 1930** - Valley View Observatory is completed by Leo Scanlon, with assistance from other AAAP members.

**August, 1931** - The first amateur telescope makers convention is held in Pittsburgh, with 100 people from eight states. Members view the 69” reflector being made for Perkins Observatory.

**1932** - Leo Scanlon is invited to Corning, New York to witness the pouring of the 200" Hale Telescope mirror for Palomar Observatory. He is also nominated for membership in the American Astronomical Society by Dr Frank Jordan, Director of Allegheny Observatory. The society is a branch of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which happens to be planning their yearly convention for Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh during the week between Christmas and New Years. The club is able to secure two free booth spaces at the convention for an AAAP exhibit. Leo writes to Dr. Albert Einstein, inviting him to visit the AAAP display so that others can be encouraged in their pursuits. Einstein makes a special effort to visit the AAAP exhibit and spends a delightful 20 minutes in discussions.



Interest in telescope making is at an all-time high in the Pittsburgh, area. At least 63 members have completed their first instrument (typically 6" aperture reflectors) and 66 telescopes are under construction in homes and optical workshops. In addition, 18 refractors from 2" to 4" aperture are purchased.

It is announced that \$750,000 has been set aside by the Buhl Foundation for the construction of a Planetarium on Pittsburgh's North Side. To help promote the project, the AAAP sets up a huge exhibit on the top floor of the Boggs & Buhl Department Store (where Allegheny Center now stands), opposite the proposed Planetarium site. While the Planetarium is being built, the AAAP is invited to help plan for an optical workshop (for the club's use) in the basement of the building. On October 23, the Buhl Planetarium is opened to the public.

**1938** - Russell Porter, who is working on the 200" Hale telescope, comes to Pittsburgh to give a talk on the progress of the telescope.

**1943** - Although World War II has cut back many activities, the AAAP is still able to hold its annual picnic on the lawn in front of Allegheny Observatory. Nick Wagman attends.

**October, 1946** - The club newsletter The Star Gazer is first published.

**May, 1949** - Glenn Winterhalter gives a talk entitled "*Astrophotography at Allegheny Observatory*". Glenn is using the 30" Thaw refractor as a part-time observer.

**December, 1948** - The AAAP hears a lecture by an official from the U.S. Weather Bureau on long range weather forecasting for bombing missions.

**June, 1949** - The AAAP celebrates its 20th Anniversary at Buhl Planetarium.

**August, 1949** - Over 2500 people attend the AAAP public star party held at Schenley Park. This was the first star party ever held by the club - a smashing success!

**November, 1949** - Allegheny Observatory Director Nicholas Wagman gives a talk to the AAAP on Jupiter.

**September, 1950** - AAAP member and Allegheny Observatory staffer Zaccheus Daniel is given a party at the observatory in recognition of 40 years service.

**October, 1950** - The AAAP Treasurer regrets to announce that dues (including Sky & Telescope subscription) must be raised to \$4.00!

**December, 1950** - Lyric amateur astronomer George Lindbloom publishes a 16-line poem entitled "Berenice's Hair" in The Star Gazer.

**March, 1951** - The Star Gazer reports on a new type of telescope - "*Radio telescopes pick up a hissing sound from the stars. No one knows the cause.*"

**May, 1951** - An article in The Star Gazer ("*The New 200*") notes that the Hale Telescope has made it possible to measure Pluto accurately. It is the second smallest planet.



AAAP helps with A.O. open house in 1935.

**February, 1952** - An official tally shows the AAAP with 123 members!

**March, 1952** - An article in The Star Gazer points out that the year 1866 was remarkable in that it had no Full Moon (?) Also, January of this year had two full Moons, as does March. This won't happen again for another 2,500,000 years.

**November, 1953** - AAAP Co-Founder Chester Roe gives a talk entitled "*How Do We Know?*" It explains the basics of determining fundamental astronomical quantities.

**May, 1954** - The club holds its Silver Anniversary Dinner at Tomlinson Hall, 811 Ridge Ave. The cost is \$4.00 a plate and more than 70 people attend. Toastmaster is Leo Scanlon, while the main speaker is Chester Roe. Afterwards, an Open House is held at Allegheny Observatory, with AAAP members operating the 13", 30" and 31" until 2:00 A.M.

**January, 1955** - The AAAP hosts the annual convention of the AAVSO. Dr. Wagman offers A.O. as the meeting site for the convention.

**March, 1956** - Last issue of The Star Gazer is succeeded by The AAAP Bulletin.

**August, 1957** - AAAP President Chuck Leroy holds a corn roast (at his home) for club members. This is followed by a star party. The Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph covered this event as a feature story. Corn roasts become an annual event for many years.

**October, 1957** - Leo Scanlon gives talk to the AAAP on "*Celestial Coordinates*", explaining such essentials as Line of Apsides, Aberration of Zenith, Retrogression of Nodes, Saros Cycles and the familiar SYZYGy.

**January, 1958** - After the AAAP joins the worldwide "*Moonwatch*" satellite observing program, Cliff Raible is the first official observer of Sputnik II.

**April, 1959** - At the club's monthly meeting, Dr. J. Allen Hynek (then Deputy Director of Harvard Observatory) presents certificates and lapel pins to 77 AAAP'ers who helped in the Moonwatch program

**March, 1960** - After 22 years, the AAAP's telescope-making shop is moved from Buhl Planetarium to new rooms at Allegheny Observatory. Leo Schoenig has been director of the shop during this period. To this point, over 300 telescopes had been built.

**April, 1960** - Otto Struve gives a talk at Buhl to the AAS and AAAP on "*The National Radio Astronomy Observatory*".



AAAP Picnic in Schenley Park - 1947

**May, 1961** - The AAAP Bulletin publishes Jim Mullaney's and Wallace McCall's preliminary list of the "Finest Deep Sky Objects". This becomes a reference used by observers world-wide.

**November, 1961** - AAAP members are greatly saddened by the passing of co-founder Chester Roe.

**April, 1962** - WDUQ-FM presents a series called "You and the Universe" by AAAP members Leo Scanlon, Jim Mullaney, Cathy Delaney and others.

**February, 1965** - AAAP members start a vigorous campaign to save Allegheny Observatory from closing, as publicly announced by the University of Pittsburgh. With the help of public officials such as County Commissioner Tom Foerster, Pitt changes its mind and keeps A.O. open.

**June, 1965** - AAAP members take a trip to Loomis Observatory in Hudson, Ohio (the observatory was built in 1834, with its 3" refractor brought in by ox cart.)

**June, 1966** - The club holds a contest to rename its club newsletter. George Lindbloom wins the contest with the name *The Guide Star* (which was actually dreamed up by his wife Pat) and is given a Plossl eyepiece.

**December, 1966** - Dick Dickinson gives a talk on "Color Astrophotography", using examples of his own work.

**May, 1967** - Dr. Nicholas Wagman explains the newly discovered phenomena of Quasars.

**June, 1968** - The AAAP hosts the convention of the Astronomical League's Middle East Region. Included are tours of Allegheny Observatory and Roddy Clutter's home observatory, which has a 21" Cassegrain telescope. About 85 out-of-state conventioners attend.

**November, 1968** - Cathy Delaney is awarded Messier Certificate Number One from the Astronomical League.

**April, 1969** - Allegheny Observatory's Wallace Beardsley gives a talk on "20 Years at Dominion, Yerkes, Mt. Wilson, McDonald and Allegheny Observatories"

**June, 1970** - Leo Scanlon gives a talk "40 Years An Amateur", a colorful recounting of the development of amateur astronomy.

**July, 1970** - Dr. Nicholas E Wagman, great friend of the AAAP, retires as Director of the Allegheny Observatory with many good wishes from the membership.

**February, 1971** - The AAVSO lists AAAP member George Lindbloom as the Number One Variable Star Observer in Pennsylvania.

**April, 1971** - Clifford D. Raible dies, ending a long career of service to amateur astronomy and friendships with amateurs throughout the country. He was famed as a telescope maker, but achieved even greater prominence with his detailed scale model of the 200" Hale Telescope.

**October, 1972** - Refurbishment of the 13" Fitz-Clark refractor at Allegheny Observatory is begun by AAAP members Dick Dickinson, George Lindbloom, Roy Sarver, Robert Franklin, Al Paslow and Grant Siverd. (Work was completed in April, 1973. A similar project was undertaken in 1949 when Glenn Winterhalter refurbished the original 31" Keeler Telescope at A.O.)

**September, 1973** - The club holds a raffle for a 6" reflector. The winner is George Lindbloom, again.

**November, 1973** - The AAAP holds a comet party to look for Comet Kahoutek (expected at the time to be a bright one). Like many others around the country, they are disappointed.

**December, 1973** - Member Wilma Cherup gives a talk called "Safari", her recollections and films of a solar eclipse trip to East Africa.

**February, 1975** - Instead of a guest speaker, the monthly meeting consists of a "Workshop for Astronomers" given by various members with expertise in different fields. Also, a new column appears in *The Guide Star*; "Heavenly Body of the Month", by Tom Reiland.

**October, 1975** - Another new column appears in *The Guide Star*, called "Constellation Close-Up" by Wade Barbin.

**June, 1976** - After eight superb years as editor of *The Guide Star*, Dick Dickinson turns over the typewriter to Eric Fischer. By February 1977, members Bob Schmidt, George Lindbloom and Eric Canali add cartoons to the newsletter to keep the members chuckling). Also, AAAP members continue to observe the beautiful Comet West

**October, 1976** - Tom Reiland officially suggests the club explore the possibility of building its own observatory.

**March, 1977** - Wade Barbin's persistence pays off when his home township of Richland passes a unique light pollution ordinance. The ordinance is a model for others to follow.

**April, 1977** - Wade Barbin, Bob Schmidt and Bob Scherer put the finishing touches on a 10" Schiefsspiegel tilted-component reflector, one of the largest of its kind in the world.

**May, 1977** - Wilma Cherup is given the AAAP's Brashear Award for outstanding service to amateur astronomy as an AAAP officer and Astronomical League Secretary.

**February, 1978** - An AAAP "skeleton" crew sets up a club exhibit in the Dinosaur Hall of Carnegie Museum.

**May, 1978** - Guest speaker is Dr. William Cassidy, who has the unique distinction of discovering meteorites which were sitting on top of the Antarctic ice for millions of years.

**October, 1978** - The club helps out with yet another highly successful Open House at Allegheny Observatory, as 700 visitors go through the doors and peer through club telescopes set up on the observatory's front lawn.

**February, 1979** - Tom Reiland discovers an excellent potential site for the Wagman Observatory in Deer Lakes Park in northeast Allegheny County. To this point, the search has been disappointing.

**March, 1979** - Eric Canali, Truman Kohman and Millard Underwood recount their total solar eclipse expeditions to the Pacific Northwest.

**April, 1979** - AAAP member Gus Johnson attains world-wide fame by visually discovering a supernova in the face-on galaxy M100. This is only the third such discovery in history.

**June, 1979** - The club marks its 50th Anniversary with a big banquet at Mt Alvernia High School. In addition, six star parties are held simultaneously around the district to commemorate the event, which maintains the AAAP's standing as one of the nation's oldest and most established amateur astronomy groups.

**September, 1979** - 300 public visitors unexpectedly show up for an AAAP star party in North Park, nearly overwhelming the ten AAAP members who set up scopes.

**December, 1979** - Among the eating delights at the annual AAAP Christmas Party is a Jupiter cake with cloud bands and the Great Red Spot.

**January, 1980** - Dues must be raised to \$14 to keep the club's books balanced.

**April, 1980** - The new AAAP Light Pollution Committee suggests the themes of energy conservation and prevention of glare hazards to improve public interest in the light pollution problem.

**July, 1980** - The "Uncharted Celestial Events Call List" is formed so that members can be informed of unexpected celestial happenings such as the Aurora.

**September, 1980** - Dr. Nicholas E. Wagman, one of the club's most beloved members, a world leader in astronomy, and namesake of the hoped-for Wagman Observatory, passes away. A large contingent of AAAP members attends his funeral.

**January, 1981** - AAAP members are introduced to the unique Multi-channel Astrometric Photometer being developed at Allegheny Observatory; Dr. George Gatewood gives the talk for this month.

**April, 1981** - The club participates in the "Nature '81" display at North Park, setting up telescopes and astrophotos alongside other nature-oriented groups.

**May, 1981** - The Allegheny County Commissioners vote 3 to 0 to allow the club to build the Wagman Observatory on Deer Lakes Park property! Jerry Santoro takes over Tom Reiland's "Heavenly Body of the Month" column in the Guide Star. (Now called "Deep Sky Wonders", the column continues in 1989.)

**August, 1981** - An AAAP contingent attends a highly successful Astronomical League convention in Kutztown, PA. Members attending include Erik Bauer, Erik Canali, Wilma Cherup, Ron Herbster, Barbara Hester, Tom and Jean Reiland, George and Stephanie Silverman.

**February, 1982** - Many AAAP members are offering astronomy classes for the general public and adult education programs. Among them are Tom Reiland, Eric Canali and Jim Mullaney.

**May, 1982** - The club announces a new observing certificate in honor of co-founder Leo J Scanlon (in addition to other certificates such as the Messier). To obtain the certificate, one must observe all constellations visible from our latitude, as well as the 20 brightest stars.

**July, 1982** - An AAAP public star party at the South Park Wave Pool was a tremendous success, with 250 visitors showing up.

**May, 1983** - AAAP members lead the way with local observations of comet IRAS-Araki-Alcock. A lucky string of clear nights permits regular observations of the comet, which shows a high proper motion.

**July, 1983** - Members Dave Smith and Frank Usouski represent the AAAP at the Ohio Turnpike Amateur Astronomers Convention.

**September, 1983** - "Ursa and Major" cartoons by Steve Piskor, a recent addition to The Guide Star, are featured in a display at the U.S. Naval Observatory called "Humor and Astronomy".

**March, 1984** - Catherine Delaney, one of the club's most diligent observers and contributing members, dies on March 19. Among the many fond memories will be her regular appearances at the club Christmas parties at Allegheny Observatory.

**November, 1984** - AAAP Chief Salesman Art Glaser still has some AAAP baseball caps and windbreakers in stock. Because of Art's efforts, AAAP members are beginning to look like a team with these popular items.

**June, 1985** - Donations continue to flow into the Wagman Observatory Fund, but a mountain of paperwork is slowing progress. Undeterred, the AAAP confidently conducts Groundbreaking ceremonies on June 22. The entire Wagman clan, along with scores of AAAP members are in attendance. Leo Scanlon and Maria-Louise Wagman turn over the first scoops of dirt.

**August, 1985** - Jim Stanis and Art Glaser achieve the first local recovery of the approaching Halley's Comet, using Jim's 17-1/2" Dobsonian. Local television reports the event.

**December, 1985** - The Guide Star continues to grow with the addition of Gus Johnson's column "The Little Lens", which focuses on deep sky objects in a particular region of the sky.

**February, 1986** - Leo Scanlon appears on ABC-TV as a "Halley's Comet Two-Timer", having seen the comet in both 1910 and this year. Some AAAP members plans for observing the comet - Frank Byrnes going to Greene/Fayette Counties, Dave Hileman to a site north of Brookville Pa, Bob Florida from the top of his 300 year-old oak tree, Jerry Mours to New Zealand, Mark Dischinger to Florida, and Leo Scanlon to the Yucatan Peninsula.

**April, 1986** - Tom and Jean Reiland, Erik Bauer, Vivienne Shaffer, Frank Carr and Lois Harrison travel to South America to get the best possible view of Halley's Comet, which is not nearly as well placed as the 1910 apparition. The comet is overshadowed by the visits to the stunning Machu-Picchu ruins and the Galapagos islands.

**May, 1986** - AAAP members vote to withdraw from the Astronomical League for several years so that more monies can be channeled into the observatory project.

**July, 1986** - The AAAP is a major participant in "Space Day" at Buhl Science Center. Scores of visitors check out AAAP photos, telescopes, and a slide show.

**November, 1986** - After more than a decade of planning, false starts, paperwork and delays, construction begins on the Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory at Deer lakes Park. The first scoop of dirt for the foundation is dug at 7:58 AM on the 15th. At this month's meeting, Bob Schmidt talks about high resolution telescopes.

**March, 1987** - Art Glaser puts on another one of his superb multi-media shows (dissolve slides, music, etc.), this time on comets as an inspiration for various types of artwork.

**June, 1987** - The AAAP's crowning achievement, Wagman Observatory, is dedicated. Leo Scanlon and Maria Louise Wagman cut the ribbon and George Lindbloom rolls back the roof to the theme from the movie "2001". Refreshments are served under a huge tent, while background music is provided from a rock concert-size sound system. Curiously, neither Allegheny County or the news media sent representatives to the event. That evening, "First light" is received from 70-0phiuchi, a star revealed by Dr. Wagman to have an unseen companion.



*Maria-Louise Wagman and Leo Scanlon cut the ribbon for Wagman Observatory Phase I.*

**August, 1987** - AAAP sets up exhibit at Carnegie Museum in connection with the museum's program on meteorites. Truman Kohman provides one of the public lectures for the program. (later, a busload of program attendees visits Wagman Observatory to view the Perseid meteors).

**October, 1987** - Rich Hansen describes his 1973 trip to West Africa to view a total eclipse.

**February, 1988** - George Lindbloom provides a fascinating talk on eyesight, a subject of prime concern to amateurs.

**March, 1988** - Joe Laemmle describes how he gets a 17.5" Dobsonian into a car not much bigger than the telescope, and how he was almost arrested for stealing household hot-water heaters.

**May, 1988** - AAAP members start a major drive to eliminate a horrible, mile-high column of light from the new 5th Avenue Place office building. (The drive is ultimately successful).

**September, 1988** - The best apparition of Mars since the early 1970's is now in full swing. Features such as Sertis Major are clearly visible, especially through instruments such as the 10" AAAP Schiefspeigler. Several AAAP members also go to Florida to view the launch of the Space Shuttle Discovery, the first flight since the Challenger accident. The club receives a rare, \$4000 apochromat refractor as a memorial gift from the late Dr Ben Cook, an avid amateur observer.

**October, 1988** - AAAP members view a video tape of a lecture given by comet-chaser David Levy. Unfortunately, cobwebs begin to form around the attending members as the tape runs on and on and on.

**November, 1988** - Tom Reiland's discovery of a nebulous object near IC 1470 is recognized in "*Sky & Telescope*" by Walter Scott Houston. Because of the 5th Avenue Place problem, Al Paslow reignites interest in a coordinated effort to control local light pollution. Under the leadership of John Holtz, the club forms a Video Committee that will produce "*Skywatcher's Updates*" programs on Pittsburgh's city public access cable television.

**February, 1989** - AAAP members are saddened by the death of 41-year member George Lindbloom, who contributed much to virtually every aspect of the club's projects and activities.

**March, 1989** - Spawned by one of the largest sunspot groups ever seen, area skies are drenched with intense red Auroras. AAAP members are awestruck by the sight.

**April, 1989** - Another AAAP committee is now active: the Education Committee, started by Rick Maué.

**September, 1989** - WTAE news does a news story from Wagman Observatory on observing meteors. Wade Barbin, Tom McLaughlin and Eric Fischer are interviewed.

**October, 1989** - AAAP members write letters to oppose the lighting of downtown Pittsburgh's bridges.

**April, 1990** - The George G. Lindbloom Award is established to honor the member who has contributed the most to the club over the past year.

**February, 1991** - AAAP members view the last "*Sky Show*" at Buhl Planetarium before the facility is closed. The club must also come up with a site for meetings starting in the fall.

**September, 1991** - The first of several alternate meeting sites is tried, a large classroom at Duquesne University.

**December, 1991** - Kevin J. Brunelle, a popular member and promoter of astrophotography suddenly passes away. The Brunelle Memorial Astrophotography contest is eventually established in Kevin's honor.

**February, 1992** - AAAP members begin discussions on the fate of the disassembled Brashear 11 inch refractor, which was donated to the club in 1986.

**May, 1992** - The club stages its first "*Astronomy Day*" at Beechwood Farms Nature Center in the North Hills. But light rain puts a damper on the event. In support of the event, the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* runs features in all of its local editions on notable amateur astronomers.

**June, 1992** - AAAP members celebrate the 5th anniversary of Wagman Observatory. Star party attendance continues to grow.

**April, 1993** - Another venue is tried for club meetings: The Frick Nature Center on Pittsburgh's East End.

**February, 1993** - Restoration begins on the Brashear 11 inch telescope, following a decision to install the telescope in a new wing of Wagman Observatory. Members such as Ken Kobus, Wade Barbin and Bob Schmidt provide considerable technical skills and plain old "elbow grease" to repair and replace the telescope's parts. Dave Smith provides his Oakland garage for the restoration work.

**August, 1993** - Huge crowds and KDKA TV visit Wagman Observatory for the Perseid Meteor Shower, but are greeted with a violent thunderstorm.

**November, 1993** - The beloved Lois Harrison, passes away. She was Editor of *The Guide Star* and active for many years. In time, the Lois Harrison Award is established to honor the female AAAP member making the best contribution over the past year.

**February, 1994** - After intense debate, the "*Brashear 11-Inch Refractor*" is selected as the name for the Wagman telescope. Meanwhile, restoration work and planning/paperwork continues for the new wing that will house the mighty refractor.

**April, 1994** - Leo Scanlon gives his last lecture to an AAAP meeting, covering his life's many events; he receives a standing-O from the attending members.

**May, 1994** - Famed local weather forecaster Joe Denardo gives a talk to the AAAP on the impact of sunspots on Earth's weather.

**July, 1994** - 500 guests visit Wagman site on night of Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet impact with Jupiter.

**September, 1994** - AAAP member Lawrence Cole is among the victims of the Flight 427 plane crash near Hopewell.

**July, 1995** - Construction begins on the new wing to house the Brashear Refractor at Wagman Observatory. Members take turns "baby-sitting" the construction site to prevent theft of materials.

**August, 1995** - With restoration complete, the Brashear Refractor is moved to the Wagman site for installation. Member's devise a rig to lift the telescope onto its pier.

**October, 1995** - Leo Scanlon observes "First Light" through the Brashear Refractor. Clouds almost prevent his observation until a small hole opens overhead, revealing the star Vega. Leo is the center of attention at the events and meets many of his old colleagues from the early days of the AAAP. Meanwhile, Pete Zapadka arranges the club's first Internet mailing list for e-mails. About 75 members sign up for the initial list. The list enables members to quickly and conveniently exchange observations and other astronomical information.

**February, 1996** - The club tries yet another meeting site, Mt. Pisgah Church in Greentree, thanks to the generosity of Pastor and AAAP member Bill Roemer.

**March, 1996** - Comet Hyakutake draws unexpected thousands to Wagman star parties.

**April, 1996** - Leo Scanlon helps cut the ribbon at the dedication of the Wagman Observatory's new wing housing the restored Brashear 11-Inch Refractor.



*Leo Scanlon (center) and Bob Schmidt (right) help cut the ribbon for the Wagman Observatory's new wing.*

**June, 1996** – Member Tim Manka donates \$7,000 towards the purchase of a new reflector for Wagman Observatory.

**August, 1996** – Club conducts its first ever “No Moon” star party at Wagman. SSP donates money for binocular viewer for Brashear scope.

**October, 1996** – Asteroid 3110 named for Dr. Nicholas E. Wagman.

**November, 1996** – 300 guests attend club’s first Lunar Eclipse star party at Wagman.

**February, 1997** – AAAP holds another in its new series of “Wagman Winterfest” star parties.

**April 1997** – Comet Hale-Bopp dazzles thousands of guests at Wagman Observatory and other AAAP star party sites. Co-discoverer Thomas Bopp visits us the following month.

**August, 1997** – Leo Scanlon’s famed Valley View Observatory is dismantled following Leo’s departure from his North Hills home (after 57 years). The dome is salvaged for possible future use and trucked to the Butler County home of member John Holtz in October.

**October, 1997** – Leo Scanlon’s original 10” Springfield telescope, given to the U.S. Navy in W.W.II, is located at Bethany College in West Virginia. Plans brew to reunite the scope with a resurrected Valley View Observatory.

**February, 1998** – Club learns of a prospective replacement for the old 12.5” reflector at Wagman: A 20” scope in Tonawanda, New York. The following month AAAP members trek north to examine and then purchase the scope for \$10,000.

**May, 1998** - Club stages the first of its “Astronomy Day” events at the Carnegie Science Center. Rehab of the new 20” reflector proceeds at Wagman Observatory.

**June, 1998** – The 20” reflector is installed at Wagman Observatory and the trusty 12.5” is retired after 11 years of service. The new scope is named for Daniel Paul and Louise Anna Manka, the parents of benefactor Tim Manka.

**August, 1998** – AAAP Co-Founder Leo Scanlon receives a double honor: Dedication of a PA Historic marker commemorating Valley-View as the world’s first aluminum-domed observatory, and naming of asteroid 8131 as minor planet Scanlon. Member Barry Mitnick works many hard months to gain approval and construction of the marker.

**August, 1998** – Club welcomes its 500th member (Trevor Lewis), easily making it one of the largest in the U.S. When the club started, it had only seven members.

**September, 1998** – 20” Manka Telescope is dedicated at Wagman Observatory.

**December, 1998** – New industrial park (“Rockport”) just south of the Wagman site threatens the observatory as a new source of light pollution. The news gets worse in the following months with plans announced for a nearby shopping mall.

**May, 1999** – Algor Inc. donates \$1000 towards educational programs at Wagman. The company’s CEO is club member Mike Bussler.

**June, 1999** – The club’s highly successful series of public star parties for South Hills folks continues at the South Park Wave Pool. These parties are preceded by astronomy lectures at Borders Books & Music in Bethel Park. Mark Arelt, Jack Greenberg and Janet Greenberg help make these events very successful.

**July, 1999** – Club members travel to the Greenbank Radio Astronomy Observatory to check out the latest developments there, including progress on the new 300 meter receiver.

**October, 1999** – Another successful joint meeting is held with the Spectroscopy Society of Pittsburgh (SSP) at Duquesne University. Thanks to the efforts of Dave Pensenstadler, AAAP members enjoy lectures from nationally renowned scientists, and the SSP makes generous annual donations to the club for astronomy education materials.

**November, 1999** - Leo J. Scanlon, beloved patriarch of AAAP, dies at 96.

**June, 2000** – Club’s first regional star party, “Laurel Highlands Star Cruise” is held at the Tall Oaks campground near Nemacolim Woodlands. Fears mount again that A.O. may be closed or its research programs greatly curtailed; club members write letters of support.

**July, 2000** – Another AAAP member, Dr. Truman Kohman, is honored with an asteroid naming announcement (4177 Kohman). Locally-named asteroids are increasing.

**February, 2001** – Club meetings return to the Buhl Planetarium realm after 11 years, following various changes of venue.

**May, 2001** – Club holds its first-ever benefit star party for a member (Wayne Meyers, who is in need of a heart transplant). Almost \$4,000 is raised.

**June, 2001** – Eva Hamilton, first cousin of Dr. Nicholas E. Wagman, makes a \$20,000 donation towards the restoration of Leo Scanlon’s Valley View Observatory and its original 10” scope. LHSC moves to the Pine Hill camp grounds in West Virginia as attendance grows.

**September, 2001** – Amateur Telescope Makers Society hold convention in Pittsburgh and are delighted with tour of Wagman Observatory. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, members are amazed to star gaze with no aircraft in the sky.

**November, 2001** – Members lucky enough to escape bad local weather see fantastic display of Leonid meteors.

**December, 2001** – Club purchases a planetarium system for a local high school.

**April, 2002** – Brashear L.P. (formerly Contraves) announces donation of 21” Zerodur mirror to replace the original mirror on the Manka Telescope at Wagman Observatory. Member Phil Breidenbach helps with the mirror configuration grinding/polishing work.

**June, 2002** – *The Guide Star* joins the computer age with the first publication via the Internet.

**July, 2002** – Members begin research on a site and design for a second club observatory (like Wagman) to be located in the South Hills area. Within months, an excellent site in located in Mingo Creek Park in Washington County. One of the key players in the project is member Dick Haddad, who works to secure major funding and other community support for the new observatory.

**May, 2003** – Club holds first star parties at Mingo site. A “Y” shaped building design considered while funding and permit work continues.

**August, 2003** – Members and star party guests enjoy extreme close-ups of Mars and rare views of its moons. Club’s LHSC trailer is vandalized (burned) while in storage at Wagman site. Long time, well-respected member Bob Florida dies in home accident.

**February, 2004** – Long-time member Tom Reiland is honored with an asteroid naming announcement (minor planet 10320 Reiland).

**May, 2004** – Ground is broken for the club’s Mingo Creek Park observatory, which will be “T” shaped and have the same basic design features as Wagman.



## Still Gazing after All These Years: 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Observations

(From the AAAP Listserver)

**Reed Hand:** As I was putting out the trash Tuesday night in Harrison City, I looked up as I usually do. Unexpectedly, I saw a large white fireball traveling towards the southwestern horizon from the direction of Ursa Major. I only saw it for about 3 or 4 seconds before it disappeared. The meteor was by far the brightest I've ever seen. Did anyone else observe it? It always pays to look up!

**Joseph Kline:** I was in the yard stargazing and saw it come down too. It flared green and white as it crumbled for a few seconds. On 45th Street, where I live, it looked like it would hit somewhere in the Strip District but I didn't hear any BANG or any fire trucks afterwards. It must have burned out before it hit the ground.

**John Cheng:** In variable but satisfactory seeing, I watched Io begin its transit. The satellite remained a conspicuous pearl white globe against the southern portion of the NEB for about ten minutes after starting across the disk. Those who watched the March 27th/28th transits will remember that, in contrast, Callisto showed as a dark disk as it crossed the globe. Io's shadow made its appearance a bit after midnight.

**Jerry Zhu:** I located comet c/2001Q4 NEAT. It looks just like M31 with binoculars. No tail. I then set up my 8" Dob. Still no tail. Looks like a globular cluster.

**Tom Reiland:** I arrived at Wagman Observatory just after Sunset. Seeing was good and the Milky Way was prominent. I started off the evening with the beautiful crescent Venus, moving up to the blah Mars and the always pleasing Saturn. Jupiter showed some fine detail as I watched the disc of Callisto transit it. Comet Bradfield was easy to find just above the Beehive Cluster, but it's fading down to 3.8 magnitude. I found Comet Tabur about an hour and a half later in Andromeda. It's 9.5 mag., smaller, with a slightly diffuse disc shape to it. I observed three passes of the International Space Station, three other satellites, and three meteors. I had no trouble finding Neptune and Uranus and they were both very greenish-blue. Must have been the good seeing and humid conditions. I finished an impromptu Messier Marathon with 91 objects. It was a fun, successful night of observing. I viewed about 270 objects in 7 1/2 hours--an all-nighter. As I've always said, Sunday is the best night of the week to observe.

Hope yinz had a good one wherever you were.

## Still Sharing the Stars

by John Cheng (from AAAP Listserver)

Aside from the moderately good seeing, nice detail on Jupiter, and dynamite earthshine on the Moon, there are two things I'll take away from last evening's Star Party.

A family, mother, father, daughter and son stopped by. The dad was clearly distraught because he believed his Orion refractor was broken and the dealer seemed unable or unwilling to help. He mentioned that the scope seemed fine on the moon, but when pointed at stars, no matter what magnification he employed, the result was about the same as what you'd see naked eye. Further, when he looked at galaxies and nebulae, he saw smudges with no color. Lastly, this summer, during the height of Mars mania, his scope showed Mars to be about the size of a pencil eraser, while his father-in-law assured him that, with binoculars, Mars should be about the size of a half-dollar.

I appear to have made a friend for life when I let him see that my refractor was just as broken as his. Plus, I think mom was relieved that Naglers, Barlows and binoviewers weren't going to be necessary to fix the "problem".



While the father made me smile, his son made me shake my head. Coming up to about my elbow, this child peppered me with some great questions. Examples: Have you ever seen any surface detail on Uranus? How do we know where meteorites originate? What's the difference between the Kuiper Belt and the Ort cloud? Why are some comets periodic, while others aren't? What was the deal with Comet Shoemaker-Levy and Jupiter?

If this is an indication of where this child's starting, imagine where he'll end up. Sometimes, it's not just the sky that's impressive.

# BOOKS AND SOFTWARE

**Jeff Kearns** reviews *Planetarium* (Software for Palm Computers) (*From AAAP Listserv*)

I noticed Flacc Stifel tapping a Palm PDA while setting up the Brashear telescope for a star party last summer. He told me about a \$30.00 software package that I have subsequently found to be the most useful observing accessory next to Starbucks coffee and warm boots. There are too many features to describe here so go to <http://www.aho.ch/pilotplanets/release.htm> to learn more and download the free trial version.



At the touch of a pointer you can locate any deep sky object in the Messier, Caldwell, or Herschel 400 catalogs--as well as hundreds of notable double stars, asteroids, comets, 8 planets, and the moon. By "locate" I mean tap the "Find" icon in the Sky mode, make a selection, and instantly, a star map will appear with a Telrad circle on the object. You can then zoom in or out to find guide stars down to 8th magnitude. Conversely, tap on

any object appearing in a star chart and it will be identified in the trough.. If that's not enough then create personal databases by entering RA and DEC. All the numerical and graphic info appears in red light to preserve your dark-adaptation. No more wasting valuable observing time squinting at dew-covered star charts with a red flashlight in your mouth. Instead of going back and forth to a star chart you can easily hold the Planetarium/PDA in one hand while Telrading or "mowing" with the other. Once you find an object just slip the PDA in your pocket: it powers-down automatically.

Plan your observing sessions using an auxiliary program called **AstroPlanner**. Write comments into a database, using Palm's handwriting translation software, and later upload it onto your PC. It's a great teaching tool for kids at star parties or for adults standing in line at Giant Eagle. If you want to know the phase of the moon and where Jupiter will be next Tuesday at 11:35 PM just call-up the calendar and enter the time. Another great thing is that a growing community of users is posting data files on the Planetarium web site. For instance, someone recently posted the entire Mullaney "Celestial Harvest" 300+ object list on the Planetarium website—download it for free. Finally, GoTo users can leave their laptops at home. They can connect a PDA to the serial port of a scope and control it with Planetarium.

**Fred Klein** reviews *Interstellar Matters*, by Gerrit L. Verschuur (1989) (*From AAAP Listserv*)

This book is all about the stuff between the stars in our galaxy. It starts with a long section on E. E. Barnard and his pioneering observations and photos of the dark nebula. It progresses through early spectroscopic observations and on to the extensive radio telescope observations. It is a fascinating read with lots of information that I either had not seen before or had seen in such an abbreviated form that I could not appreciate it.

One million solar mass gas clouds, giant molecular clouds, masers, and more are described. Why don't these huge clouds immediately collapse and form stars? (I won't tell.) ☺

**Ann Norman** reviews *Faster than the Speed of Light: The Story of a Scientific Speculation*, by João Magueijo (2003)

João Magueijo, a cosmologist, provides a personal account of what it was like developing variable-speed-of-light theory (VSL theory), in collaboration with other colleagues, as well as his trials and tribulations in convincing journal editors to publish his theory. He explains aspects of VSL and competing theories to the layman--enough to provide a vague, general impression of what it would be like to be a cosmologist and what issues the different camps (string theory, inflation, VSL) are fighting about. Don't expect this book to provide an actual understanding of the theories themselves. I take it these theories are so complex that not even those working on them can actually understand them—they just plug different assumptions into their equations and see what comes out.

Magueijo does a pretty good job communicating with the layman and I appreciate his efforts. It's hard to find a genius on the cutting edge of science who is ready and able to write for the layman—so why criticize the few who make the attempt? Still, I was really put off by his frequent use of the "F"-word and at least one shocking sexual metaphor.

The author is prone to emotional highs and lows and likes to rant against the science bureaucracy while recounting his depressive episodes. His complaining may be justified, but it's boring. He also describes his manic episodes, during which he pursues promising leads in his VSL theory. This is fun!

So I give this book 3 out of 5 stars. It's only a 'ite (alright), as music judge Randy Jackson likes to say on American Idol. Still, the next time I hear an inflation theorist dis all string theorists, I'll smile knowingly.



# June 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3 	4	5
6	7	8 Transit of Venus	9  AAAP Founded 1929	10	11 	12
13	14 June 14 – 20 Laurel Highlands Star Cruise Hazelton, WV	15 (Star Cruise)	16 (Star Cruise)	17  (Star Cruise)	18 (Star Cruise)	19 (Star Cruise)
20 (Star Cruise)  Summer Solstice 8:57 PM EDT	21	22 	23 ...	24	25  Star Party Wagman & Mingo Creek	26 Star Party Wagman & Mingo Creek
27	28	29	30	Transit of Venus is on June 8. Don't miss it!		

<p><b>Also this month:</b> June 18 Lecture: General Theory of Relativity, Allegheny Observatory. Free but RSVP required. 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by University of Pittsburgh (412)-321-2400.</p> <p><b>Looking ahead:</b> Star Parties: July 9, Mingo Creek July 10, Mingo Creek and Wagman; July 23, 24, Mingo Creek and Wagman.</p>	<p><u>AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule</u></p> <p><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</p>
---	--

### After Dry Spell, Multiple Comets for Your Viewing Pleasure

The Oort Cloud (or is it the Kuiper Belt?) have been good to us lately, sending in several fine comets since the beginning of the year. Here are several member's accounts of Comets Bradfield and NEAT:

#### Comet Bradfield

Tom Reiland (4-28): ".....used my 5" f/5 Refractor at 31X and 75X with and without my new Swan Band (Comet) filter and the filter definitely helped. The tail widened very slightly from the head as it stretched from the coma, with an almost starlike nucleus.....This makes 112 Comets for me in thirty years."

#### Comet NEAT

Pete Zapadka (May 7): "I got my first look at Comet NEAT.....while near Morgantown.....using my 10 x 50 binoculars, I picked up the comet easily.....could not make out a tail since the sky still was bright."

Vern Cox (May 9): "I observed Comet NEAT.....First in my 40mm Swift Birder monocular and then through my 12.5" Dob. No tail in either optic but I was able to get a very nice view of the nucleus with the reflector. The biggest kick I got was how pleased with himself that my 13 year old son was when he was able to find the comet on his own."

Terry Trees (May 9): ".....its nucleus/coma was very apparent but a tail was not. I agree with Tom, there was some elongation to one side, but no formalized tail structure..... Wayne Meyers, Bob Kalan and I observed it naked-eye, but it's borderline for me best I've seen since Hale-Bopp."

John Cheng (May 9): ".....has a conspicuous, almost stellar center which remained observable across magnifications from 20 to a bit over 100 in a 5" refractor..... with care a larger aperture and better seeing might have yielded some internal detail."

Fred Klein (May 9): "...Basically just saw central condensation and fairly large coma. The coma seemed to be condensed on the sun side, no hint of at tail."

Mark Schomer (May 10): ".....Could not make out a tail, however I think I saw the nucleus. It appeared to be a tiny dot in the center of the fuzz."

Truman Kohman (May 13): ".....I located the comet between clouds with 10X50 binoculars....It was surprisingly bright, a fuzzy ball about a degree in diameter. The predicted magnitude was 3.6."



John Pane's image of Comet NEAT. Canon 300D on a fixed tripod; 50mm lens at aperture f/1.8; ISO 800 five 20-second exposures.

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PITTSBURGH, PA  
PERMIT NO. 394

RETURN ADDRESS:  
Amateur Astronomers Association  
of Pittsburgh  
176 Hidden Hill Rd.  
Saver, PA 16055-8907