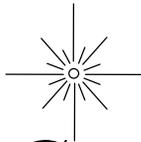




**AAAP 75th Anniversary
1929 to 2004**



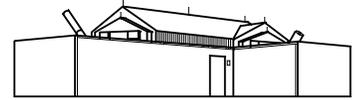
The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.

A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh

December, 2004

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Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

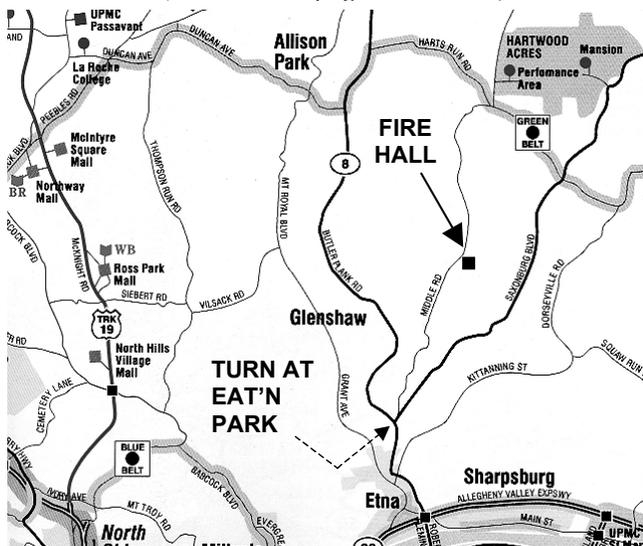
Dec. 10 or 17 At Middle Road Fire Hall **Holiday Party Salutes 75 Years of the Amazing AAAP**

Go figure! Our club is situated in a kind of an astronomer's "Devil's Triangle" of mostly cloudy weather, few flat horizons and ample light pollution. We're based in a town that has lost major industries and hundreds of thousands of residents. Yet, we have one of the largest and most active astronomy clubs and will soon be running two major observatories. At the **December 10, 2004 AAAP Holiday Party**, long-time member (and past President) Tom Reiland will review the AAAP's amazing ascendancy from a 7-member fledgling club in 1929 to a 530-member powerhouse, especially over the past 30 years. As such, Tom's talk marks the end of our 75th-year celebrations.



Once again, we hold the Holiday Party, **7:30 pm** at the **Middle Road Firehall** in Pittsburgh's North Hills (see map below), a great venue picked by Tom and Jean Reiland several years ago. If history is any lesson, there will be plenty of left-over foods and refreshments generously prepared by club members. But if you would like to bring any edible/drinkable treats, please do so. We always find a home for everything at the end of the evening. Our interim Refreshments Coordinator for this year's party will be **George Guzik**. Please contact him if you would like to donate food and drink, or perhaps order ready-made party trays.

(continued on page 2, column 1)



Arelt, Weilgus, Pane Are First-Placers **Plenty of Fine Entries In First "All-Digital" Photo Contest**

Several years ago some were wondering if the annual Brunelle Astrophotography Contest would survive much longer because of the low number of entries. Those fears were put to rest this year with 40 superb images shown at the November 19 meeting. The rise in entries may be due to digital image revolution, which makes it so easy to capture, process and deliver pictures to our meetings. In fact, this year we had the first "all-digital" contest format. Congratulations to the 2004 1st place winners, and a well-deserved "well-done" to all the contest entrants (it was really tough picking the best this time!):

Images taken at less than or at 150mm focal length:

- 1st Place: Mark Arelt ("Summer Milky Way")
- 2nd Place: Mark Arelt ("M8, M20, Milky Way & Meteor")
- 3rd Place: Mark Arelt ("M31")

Images taken at 150mm or greater focal length:

- 1st Place: Frank Weilgus ("Saturn")
- 2nd Place: Jerry Zhu ("Venus Transit")
- 3rd Place: Mark Arelt ("M20")

Images of Atmospheric Phenomena:

- 1st Place: John Pane ("Aurora Borealis")
- 2nd Place: Jerry Zhu ("Lightning")
- 3rd Place: Nancy Kancel ("Sunset")

Historical note: **Mark Arelt** has been one of our most consistent Brunelle Contest winners over the years, both in the emulsion and digital eras.

Apologies to our contest winners. "Digital difficulties" prevented us from including contest images in the Guide Star.

SSP \$5K Donation Will Fund Mingo Spectroscope

We are most pleased to report (several months belatedly for the Guide Star) that the Spectroscopy Society of Pittsburgh (SSP) has given the AAAP a \$5000 grant towards the purchase of an astronomical spectroscope (appropriately!) for the permanent reflector at Mingo Creek Park Observatory. This marks the largest single SSP contribution to the club to date. The device we will likely purchase is a SBIG Model SGS Self-Guiding Spectrograph.



(continued on page 2, column 1)

Trek to the Last AAAP Bash of '04: Holiday Party

(continued from front page)

In addition to person-to-person gab, another popular event at the Holiday Party is the Door Prize giveaway, where winners can sift through a broad-band selection of books, calendars, posters, DVDs, CDs, star charts, observing accessories and misc. astronomy knick-knacks donated by members. Members are encouraged to add to the Door Prize spread. (Please, no magazine back issues or massive telescope components such as counterweights.) If you have any questions about door prize ideas, please contact George Guzik. (Late note: See item on page 6, column 1 about advance ordering merchandize at the Holiday party from Rowen Poole.)

December 17 Back-Up Date



Anyone remember last year's Holiday Party? We we're pounded with a 7-inch snow storm that cut party attendance by 2/3, and wound up replaying some of the party at the January meeting. To prevent such problems this time around, we're designating

December 17 as the snow make-up date for the Holiday Party at the same time and locale. Of course, we could have one of those "iffy" snow storms that could or could not postpone the event. Nolo problemo: If a weather problem arises, simply call George Guzik's home phone (724-863-8008) for a voice-mail message about the party. Of course, AAAP Listserv members need only check their e-mails.

MCPO Will House Club's First Spectroscope

(continued from front page)

Previous SSP donations have gone to the purchase of a binocular viewer for the Brashear Refractor at Wagman Observatory, and for yearly acquisitions of the ever-popular "Star & Planet Finders" handed out at public star parties. Belated or otherwise, we again extend deepest thanks to the SSP for helping the AAAP thrive as an educational and scientifically active club.

More Info. About AAAP Archives

by Art Glaser

Following up the brief news note in the October Guide Star about the club's archives, here's some additional information to help you best access and utilize this resource:

Name: Archive Service Center
Location: 7500 Thomas Blvd. (off Braddock Ave), Point Breeze section of Pittsburgh
Phone: 412-244 7091
On-line address: Archives@library.pitt.edu
AAAP account number: AIS 2000:12

(continued at right)

High Hopes for 2006 Return

2005 Laurel Highland Star Cruise Cancelled

by Terry Trees (from AAAP Listserv)

I'm sorry to report that the 2005 Laurel Highlands Star Cruise event has been cancelled. We found it impossible to continue at this time because of the loss of several Star Cruise Committee members whose schedules could no longer accommodate their involvement, frustrations caused by our battles with the weather, financial strains and the resources demanded by the AAAP's newest project, the construction and staffing of its second observatory, Mingo Creek Park Observatory.



However, we do expect Star Cruise to return in 2006. During the next year, a variety of options will be explored that should allow that to happen. For future information, visit <http://www.LHStarCruise.org>, stay subscribed to this ListServer or search for the link to Star Cruise at <http://www.3ap.org>.

Our sincere appreciation is extended to everyone who participated in past Star Cruises. We enjoyed meeting and making friends with fellow astronomers from both the U.S. and a number of other countries and hope to continue our friendship by seeing you back at future Star Cruise events.

Update On Scope Loaner Program

by Trevor Lewis – AAAP Telescope Loan Coordinator (from AAAP Listserv)

This is to announce that I have assumed responsibility the AAAP scope loan program from Joe McCafferty, and the service is now open for business. The primary purpose of the program is to give members a chance to try out a telescope to help in making a purchase selection. The normal loan term is three months.

To arrange a loan, contact me at tjlewis6@yahoo.com or (724)744-7710. You need to have been a member in good standing for at least three months. Generally you will need to pick up and return equipment at my residence in Harrison City (about halfway between Murrysville and Irwin). If I am going to a meeting or star party, we can make arrangements to meet there.



Hours of operation are normally 9 to 5. Always check around major holidays for changes or closings. The facility is closed on Saturday and Sunday.

I also have some good news about our collection. I recently used some of our material; it was easily accessed. Our documents and files have been very well cared for. The archive file follows very closely the descriptions that I gave them. Anyone can use the archives and there is no charge except for copy work. As shown above, they have an on line address, but I have never used it.

If you still have any questions about the archives, don't hesitate to contact me (412-341-5862).

Wagman Observatory News Nodes

Gate and Door Lock Combinations A 'Changin

From Tom Reiland: "I will be changing the Gate Lock and Door Combinations in before the end of the year. Contact me before you go up to use the grounds and or the Wagman scopes for observing. I will NOT send out any combinations via email



because of the plague of Adware and spyware viruses infesting 85% of the computers in this country. Once I change the combinations, I will send out an email via the list and notify, Flacc, Wade, the Fish (Eric), George Guzik and John "Bull Moose" Holtz. Your key fees will need to be paid up to get the door combination. Eric will publish it in the Guide Star. When you call John H., Flacc or myself, please have proof of membership ready, your club card with the date renewed and expiration date. John will need to verify that you paid your key fees. I will give the new numbers to members who bring their AAAP cards to the Holiday Party meeting on December 10. The combination should be changed by then."

Manka Telescope Repairs

From Flacc Stifel: In response to recent problems with the RA drive on the Manka Reflector at Wagman Observatory, the following has been completed:

- 1) New drive motor and spare ordered to tide us through until we re-design the drives for stepper motors.
- 2) New drive motor installed.
- 3) All gearing adjusted. Scope carefully re-balanced. Worm and wheel lubricated.



(continued at upper right)

Measurements have been taken to help solve problem with worm wheel or shaft moving: this is what causes the drive to lock up and ruins the motors. Think we know what's happening and can fix it. The scope is ready to use and should perform normally. Please let me know if you have any problems with the scope (412-486-8067, flaccs@nauticom.net).

Star Party Help Appreciated

From Flacc Stifel: A big THANK YOU to *Larry Sneider* and *Rowen Poole* who showed up at Wagman recently to help with a scout troop visit. A few of the scouts (total of 15 with another couple of walk-ins) and parents showed up. We saw a "red" rainbow at sunset; faint but fun! Much too overcast for any observing. They had a thorough tour of the facility and listened patiently to me holding forth for quite a while, asked good questions, etc.

Disposing Pop, Other Stuff Before Winter

From Tom Reiland: All food and pop must be removed by December to eliminate rodent problems and exploding cans and bottles. Also, if you left cans Thank you.

Valley-View Observatory Restoration

From Tom Reiland: Now that we're doing initial research on the restoration of Leo Scanlon's aluminum Valley View Observatory dome, we're in search of a company or location where such sheet metal work can be done. Please contact me if you have any recommendations. As always, additional volunteers for dome and telescope work are needed and welcomed.

Mills Mall Interchange Lighting

From George Guzik: I have received additional information on the lighting situation at Pittsburgh Mills. The Engineer for Frazer Township sent me specifications for the interchange lighting. The good news is that the "cobra" style fixtures illuminating the interchange will have full cutoff reflectors. The product literature for the Cooper Lighting fixtures notes that "The OVF Flat Glass roadway luminaire is ideal for roadways where cutoff is preferred or light trespass is an issue."

All-AAAP, All the Time

- **Bye-bye to the old By-Laws:** Members at the November meeting unanimously passed our new, streamlined AAAP By-Laws. We no longer have a "Constitution" per se; narrative from this was merged into the new By-laws. Once again, thanks to *Flacc Stifel* and his team for handling the major re-write of the document.
- **Proposed Change to Meeting Dates:** And now that we have the new By-Laws in effect, an amendment has been proposed to change the formula by which we select meeting dates (currently based on Moon Phases). If you have a suggestion in this regard, contact George Guzik. A possible amendment will be considered and voted upon in January.
- **Help Request From Bill Moutz:** Kathy Mauer, a Plum school teacher is requesting some of us to show grades 1 to 6 the night sky on Jan. 28. They are having a science fair on that date. Her phone number is 412-793-7782. I have committed to be there. Hopefully a few more members will do likewise. Thanks in advance for your help.

- The Nov. 12 Beaver County Times reported that Coraopolis has passed a Lighting and Glare ordinance. It prohibits any exterior lighting, including spotlights, that are a nuisance to neighbors. It was passed unanimously by Coraopolis Council on Nov. 10. *(Editor's note: I extracted this report from the AAAP Listserver, but accidentally deleted the author's name. I'd be glad to give proper credit in the next Guide Star).*
- As featured on pages 7 and 8, we were treated to several great Aurora in early November. However, not everyone was informed in time to get out and see the phenomena. We have been discussing ways of spreading the word quickly to as many members as possible (phone "trees", e-mail alerts, etc.). The problem is especially frustrating for those who are not on-line all the time, do not have the proper cell phone setups. We'll have more about an official AAAP Aurora Alert system in upcoming Guide Stars.

Moon, Venus and Jupiter Put On Great Early Nov. Show

Perhaps you are one of those observers who wakes up at 4-5 am when you don't want to, but decides (like your GS News Editor) to take advantage of the moment and check the Eastern sky. What a great series of groupings in early November involving Jupiter, Venus and the Earthshone-Moon! In addition to these fine conjunctions, the Moon performed a daylight occultation of the Moon on November 9. Here's a summary of various members' observations of the events:

- Terry Trees (11-5): *"Observed Venus and Jupiter naked-eye this morning through a hole in the clouds. With one "star" brighter and whiter than the other and the other looking dark-bluer, they reminded me of observing the double-star Rigel through a scope..."*
- Glen Rockhill (11-5): *"My wife Sheri and I observed the two from our driveway this morning at 6AM and blessed our good fortune.....Using my 25mm EP (36x) I was able to capture Venus and Jupiter along with one of Jupiter's moons, (probably Ganymede) all within the field of view. It was awesome and I'm glad I was able to see it."*
- Larry Curcio (11-6): *"....impressed at how bright they both were. Venus, that low in the sky, actually appeared slightly orange. It had that overflowing blaze look to it. Jupiter contrasted in color, but I was surprised that it was as bright as it was next to Venus...."*
- Jerry Zhu (11-9): *"....just saw the pair with a 8" dob through a cloud gap....lovely sight..."*
- Al Paslow (11-9): *"I Observed the disappearance of Jupiter at what I estimate was 11:03am EST. Apparently, in reading the posts from others I was fortunate. The cloud banks were playing games with us for this event!"*



Images by John Pane (left) and Jerry Zhu (Right)
(Cropped for Guide Star layout)

- Tom Reiland (11-9): *"....One fluffy ball of water vapor had to spend five minutes of it's short life in front of the Moon occulting Jupiter. Rats a fratzits ###%&*(!!!....Watching the Moon, Jupiter and Venus through my 10 X 50's about an hour before the event provided a spectacular three dimensional affect as thin clouds passed in front of them. It was far more pronounced this morning than I've ever seen it at night through any optics. The deep blue sky certainly added to the stunning nature of this observation."*

Proper Identification for "Reiland's Object or Nebulous Cluster"

by Tom Reiland (from AAAP Listserver)

There's an article on "Unsung Star Clusters" in Cassiopeia/Cepheus in the December S&T on page 88. There's a couple on paragraphs about my object in Cepheus. It was nice to see it mentioned, though I was surprised that someone who did not do his research, claimed it for himself. The nebula was discovered by Blitz, Fich and Stark in 1982 while studying various chemical compositions in nebulae. They made no mention of the cluster of stars embedded in the nebula. I came across it 1985 and reported it to Dennis di Cicco shortly after that. He found the paper about the nebula that listed it as BFS 15. Walter Scott Houston wrote the article calling it Reiland's Object or Nebulous Cluster for the November, 1988 S&T.

Names for celestial objects are approved by the IAU and I don't think that they ever gave the object a name, not even BFS 15 for the nebula. I will try to contact Brian Marsden about it and probably write a letter to S&T and pass it on to the publishers of the Uranometria. We don't even know if it is a cluster. The stars need their proper motion measured and spectral measurements to confirm that the stars that appear to be in the nebula are all members of a true cluster.

(continued at right)

Updating List of "Local" Asteroids

Tom Reiland is doing some follow-up research on locally-named asteroids for a book. Here is his current list:

Alleghenia - 457	Kepple - 63305
Pittsburghia - 484	Kohman - 4177
Carnegia - 671	Langley - 3866
Brashear - 5502	Lindbloom - 3865
(Burns ?) - 2708	MisterRogers - 26858
(Caliguir?) - 42365	Reiland - 10320
Cassidy - 3382	Sanner - 38203
(Curtis?) - 3621	Scanlon - 8131
Hapke - 3549	Schlesinger - 1770
Hartmann - 3341	Wagman - 3110
Keeler - 2261	

Of these 21, Tom is certain of 18 and believes Heber Curtis of Allegheny Observatory should be included. "Caliguir?" may not be named for Pittsburgh's former mayor and Tom doubt that Burns belongs on the list. Member with any additional names or corrections are urged to contact Tom.

Anyone else who wants to support me on this is welcome to send your two cents in to all concerned parties. I'll show yinz Reiland's Object the next time I'm up at Wagman Observatory if you're interested. It's small, just like me.

Mingo Observatory Construction Wrap-Up for 2004

In this issue of the Guide Star, we're making the final reports on the construction of our new Mingo Creek Park Observatory in Washington County. The work has gone exceedingly well, a tribute to all the AAAP members who managed the project and its financing. A key figure, of course, has been **Dick Haddad** who received a well-deserved "standing-O" at the October meeting for his efforts in making the observatory possible in the first place. As of November 15, the construction contractor (Waller Co.) had officially completed their work and departed the site. Here's a quick summary of what has happened til now since early October:

- * Reflector room movable roof "Barn Doors" installed, more secure metal latching bar installed.
- * Roof shingles, aluminum soffets, gutters and downspouts installed
- * Foundation waterproofing and French drain work complete
- * Electric service panel and the warm-up room wired.
- * All interior drywall hung and ready for seam taping and plastering.
- * Storage attic built over warmup room.
- * Tops telescope piers finished off.
- * Grounds leveled, topsoil re-spread around building.
- * Parking area extended and new connection to road created.
- * Rubber gaskets installed around moveable roof sections.
- * Door jams filled, door threshold sweeps installed, door locks adjusted.
- * Block filler work completed
- * Building exterior painting completed: PPG "April Sky" for the exterior blocks, PPG "Gray Frost" for the wood surfaces, PPG "Chalky Blue" for the door trim.
- * Corner beads installed on hallway corners.
- * Observatory power transformer installed by Allegheny Power



Images by Larry McHenry

And here are some special "thank-you" notes for work performed by our members:

- * **Chrissie Chojnicki** for working closely with the painters on choosing the right quality of paint for our project.
- * **Larry Sneider** for high-quality electrical work to provide power inside the building.
- * **Mike Meteney** and **Dave Smith** for applying drywall tape and mud to the seams running along the walls of the members room. The guys also cleared and leveled the area for the observatory transformer and re-excavated the area down at the pavilion (dirt and leaves had washed into the excavated pit during the fall)
- * **Ed Moss** and **Mike Meteney** for weatherizing the refractor room by attaching a rubber seal gasket and treated lumber planks to the end of the refractor room.
- * **Flacc Stifel** and **Wade Barbin** for beginning design work on the hand crank and pulley systems for opening the telescope roofs.
- * **Dave Smith** for moving the planetarium dome gores to the building; Dave will soon assemble and install the dome inside the planetarium classroom section.
- * **Mike Meteney** for working with a local school district to obtain furnishings from a school building that is being closed..

Now That Major Construction Is Done....

by Larry McHenry (from AAAP Listserver)

With the observatory complete, this will conclude my 'officially' reporting of the construction status. I, along with the other MCPO Committee members will from time to time post images of all the work that still needs done to make the observatory 'operational' for spring 2005. Over the winter, I will be assembling a photo CD from various MCPO Committee members. Also, I will be creating a DVD from video recordings of the MCPO groundbreaking and construction throughout the summer. Copies will be available upon completion to interested club members, and for the AAAP archive.

Additionally, I hope to bring up-to-date the online webpage of all the construction reports for future reference. Finally, I plan on starting work on a number of presentations that will incorporate the old planetarium projector and computer powerpoint slides. I have several new astronomy exhibits in mind, and I am really looking forward to working in the planetarium / classroom wing of the MCPO.



Keep Your Eyes On Our Merchandise

AAAP Listserver Notes from Coordinator Rowen Poole

As I am sure some of you are aware, when one moves, it's a sure bet not everything will end up where it's supposed to be in your new residence. One such loss I encountered in my move a couple years ago was my copy of "The Finest Deep-Sky Objects" by James Mullaney and Wallace McCall. This 105 object catalog is a great observing program in addition to the Messier catalog. In any case, I was surprised to find that this booklet is very hard to come by these days. Sky Publishing does not sell it anymore (maybe because Jim has a new book out?). I looked all over the place and finally found a place that sells copies of this book!

If anyone is interested in obtaining a copy of this cool booklet, you can contact Anttlers Optics (yes, that IS the correct spelling) at 231-409-6965. They are located in Michigan. You can also find them on the web at:

http://www.geckooptical.com/anttlers_optics/

The cost is \$3.95 plus \$7.00 shipping and handling. Ouch!

Reminder: If anyone wants me to mail them a copy of the new 2005 Observer's Handbook, postage is \$2.67 (first class). The book itself is \$17.00.

Note for Holiday Party

If you would like to purchase T-shirts at the Dec. 10 Holiday Party, please contact me at aaap@starglider.com, or call 724-443-0632 so that I can bring the proper quantity.

2005 Wagman and Mingo Star Party Dates Firmed Up

The first snow flake has yet to fall (at least as of GS press time), but we've settled on the full public star party schedule for 2005 at both Wagman and Mingo Observatories. This will be Mingo's first year of operation as a complete observatory:

Star Party Dates at Wagman Observatory:

February 12 – "Wagman WinterFest"
 April 15/16
 May 13/14
 June 10/11 & 25
 July 15/16 & 23
 August 12/13 – Perseids
 September 9/10 & 24
 October 8 & 22



Star Party Dates at Mingo Creek Park Observatory:

May 13/14
 June 10/11
 July 29/30
 August 26/27
 September 9/10
 October 1
 October 22



Image by Al Paslow

Of course, additional dates may be added for unexpected celestial events such as a bright comet or local nova/supernova (wow!). New star party schedules for both sites will be printed and available at upcoming meetings. Also check the club web site (3ap.org) for schedule updates.

Moving Moments...

Best wishes to 15-year member **Rich Hansen** who is moving to Alexandria, VA in January. Rich is well known in the club as a super kind-hearted guy and highly component astronomer. We also bid farewell and **Mary Jean** and **Nancy Kancel** who are soon moving to central Florida. Mary Jean has been a tremendous helper at star parties and LHSC. All of our out-of-town members promise to remain AAAP members and keep in touch.

2004 Service Award Nominations Welcomed

It's that time of year again when we consider candidates for the three major AAAP Service Awards:

- George G. Lindbloom Award – Best overall service to the club by an AAAP member.
- Lois Harrison Award – Best service to the club by a female member.
- Nova Award – Best overall service to the club by a new member (less than 1.5 years membership)

If you would like to nominate a member for one of these awards, please contact President George Guzik.

New Members Always Get The Nod

A hearty welcome is extended to these latest inductees into the AAAP:

Ray Budd	Jessica M. Schwartz
Bernice Gutowski-Budd	Katie Hammond
Daniel Kleppner	Donna Tabrosky

Check Your Membership Directory for Corrections, Updates

Membership Secretary **Brent Hudock** is hip-deep getting the 2005 AAAP Membership Directory ready. Our directory is rather unique in that it lists individual members' roster of astronomical equipment and personal interests in the subject. If you want your directory entry "just right", contact Brent at:

23 Oak Hill Drive	HOOTY@charter.net;
Uniontown, PA 15401-2331	724-437-5990

Guide Star "Job" Opening

Now that we will be managing a second major observatory (Mingo Creek) starting next year, your Guide Star staff needs help giving proper coverage to star parties and special events/programs there. Toward that end, we are inviting an AAAP member to serve as "Associate Editor for MCPO Programs". This person would write Mingo-related articles for each month's Guide Star and would have his or her own regular by-line. Much of material for these articles would involve sifting through AAAP Listserver postings, as well as original reporting/writing. If interested, please contact Eric Fischer at 412-487-7011 or emfischer@switch.com.





(Aurora photo by Jerry Zhu)

THOUGHTS ON AURORA RANGE ACROSS A SPECTRUM

Excerpted from an essay by Chris Genovese

The Aurora has been explained in many ways over the span of human history. Omens of war. Souls of departed Virgins. Supernatural beings called "merry dancers" fighting for the love of a beautiful woman. Flames emitted from frost and glaciers. Reflections off icebergs or schools of herring. Spirits playing soccer in the sky with a walrus skull.

The winner is this: the aurora is the prismatic flashing of sunlight through ice dust that shattered off the wings of flying swans. (They traveled too far north and must flap desperately to keep their wings free of ice.) Well I say: flap on, birds, flap on. You put on quite a show!

* * *

At nearly 2:30, the main event begins. It's hard to imagine that auroras like this have showed up very often in Pittsburgh, or someone's keeping a good secret. The brightening this time happens quickly and more intensely. The rays and sheets show more color: blue, green, pink, purple; a hint (no more) of red in peripheral vision. The sky begins to flash like a lightning storm on a clear night. Giant arcs of light expand upward from the horizon to near zenith, just like those monster-movie generators that John Holtz mentioned. At one point, a slow, bright meteor streaks across Cassiopeia and disappears with a flash into one of the bright columns. Bright patches appear and disappear all over the sky, and one thin, bright ray touches the Pleiades. Eventually, we can see aurora all the way into Orion and in every other direction. Jeff and I are whooping and hollering with excitement. It goes on and on until we've lost track of time.

Shortly before moonrise, with frost beginning to form, we decided to pack it in. It's always hard to quit when the sky is clear, but after a brief view of Jupiter, we leave around 4:30 AM. Up high on the Boulevard of the Allies on my way home, I can see a beautiful arc made by the moon, Venus, and Jupiter, a fitting end to the night.

* * *

We can smile now at those fanciful myths and explanations for the aurora, but there's something charming in imagining the world to be large enough for that many swans. For us, the world has shrunk, yet we know ourselves to be an even smaller part of a far vaster universe. Night after night we seek beauty in the skies rather than fear. We don't need to bring the children inside when aurora appears, or cover our heads to keep our hair from singeing, or avoid whistling or white clothing. Instead, we can sit with friends on a cold hilltop and watch ... sipping hot chocolate. And that's the way it should be.

Chestnuts Roasting: The Remix

New words by Ann Norman

3APers joking round the warm-up-room radiator.
Jack Frost has frozen all their toes.
New Age music drifts from a CD player
and we're all dressed like Eskimos.

Everybody knows
Shrimp, ice cream, and, our new space calendars
Helped to make the season right.
Amateur astronomers, once their eye dark-adapt,
will find it hard to sleep tonight!

They know Orion's on its way!
Bringing a swordful of goodies for our gaze.
And every hobbyist can't wait to see
if those nebulae look better with their new OIII
(OH-three)

And so I'm offering this simple plan:
Find Messiers 1 to 102!
Although it's been said many times many ways
Happy Holidays . . .
And some clear skies . . .
Until the sunrise, . . .
FOR . . . YOU!





(Photo by Martin Ratcliffe)

LIGHT UP NIGHTS

Aurora reports from the AAAP listserver
Compiled by Ann Norman

Elaine Horner: It was bright green then red. There were dark bands then it looked like someone turned on Hollywood spotlights all over the northeast.

Pete Zapadka: The aurora is picking up. Very bright near beneath Polaris!!

Terry Trees: Many BRIGHT greens all over the sky ...some aqua blues low in the north, many spikes and a few large red areas from time to time.

Joe McCafferty: This was the best Aurora that I have seen in years. There were reds and greens; Jess said she saw some blues. There were spikes, veils and dancing waves.

Gary Shannon: The Aurora is starting again mixed in with a few clouds. Lots of streaks going clear to the zenith.

Elaine Horner: Wow! Have to update. There were flashes of light, lots of them. It was so bright it lit up the side of the house. Then it came in waves starting near the horizon and ending over my head. I have only seen 4 or 5 of these but I've never seen anything so amazing as tonight.

Bob and Maryanne Mickey: Level Green . . . interesting flashes, curtains along with a beautiful arc at the zenith. . .

Tom Reiland: . . .astronomical eye candy; green and red rays, bands, arcs, patches, glows slowly moving and changing. I almost left about 11 PM, but it started to pick up then, so I stayed and watched it grow larger, brighter and begin to pulsate and shimmer. It cast shadows, lit up the clouds and it formed a zenith coronal arc around 11:30. It was glorious. I finally left at 12:30 when it became mostly cloudy and the aurora died down, but did not fade away. It ranks among the top displays that I've ever witnessed.

Dan Peden: At the County 911 Emergency Operations Center we experienced unusual and severe distortion of our primary radio frequencies in the 400 MHZ band, which includes all EMS dispatch. We had to route all EMS units to another frequency then, when that one became poor minutes later, moved them back again. Now I realize the interference was probably related to the magnetosphere disruption that caused the aurora. I guess I "heard" the aurora in a closed room with no windows.

Joe McCafferty: I dressed and went downstairs and out the front door just in time to see the entire north sky lit up, this time it looked as if there were some yellows mixed in with the greens and reds. Then it was gone, but what a way to start the day.

Gary Shannon: I was back up at 4:45 AM and guess what! There it was again the sky was completely clear and the curtains of red and green were very bright from the northern horizon to the zenith. It must be the longest period of continuous Aurora activity in this area in recent times.

Ed Moss: I was coming back from North Carolina Sunday night. I could see the aurora from the North Carolina--Virginia border until we reached Fairmont, West Virginia. The aurora was just spectacular when we got near Fairmont, West Virginia.

Martin Ratcliffe (Wichita, KS): The green auroral arc suddenly lit up with red rays in a symphony of color and activity. A

fast motion of rays led to the expression of awe caught in this photo [top left]. I was stunned with the activity this far south. I threw my hands up in the air and yelled, "yes"! Then I thought this would make a great picture. The local newspaper ran the picture across the entire front page.

Pete Swallows: I stumbled out of bed (2:40--3:00 AM) to see rays/veils, a couple reaching zenith. Many rapid light-green undulations from the North horizon, moving upward, sometimes reaching past zenith. Red hues seem to come and go, but at the moment sweep the entire horizon up to about 40 degrees.

Rowen Poole: Between 2:00 AM and 3:30 AM, the aurora was awesome! At one point one arc stretched from the western horizon all the way across the northern sky to the eastern horizon. There were two very distinct horizontal bands that undulated side to side for nearly an hour, along with some great fast pulses and scintillations. At 2:55 AM we saw a rainbow effect in these horizontal bands - the bottom edge of each was a deep red, the middle green and the top edge blue. Very cool...

Erik Bauer (Horseheads, NY): At about 2:30 am I looked out the window into a full-on aurora with dancing rays up to 50+ degrees. Horizontal ripples were rushing up through the band and the rays. Unfortunately, no obvious color. A very impressive display.

Tom Reiland: My eyes have started to cross after spending 4 out of 5 nights at Wagman and seeing so much beauty in such a "short" period.

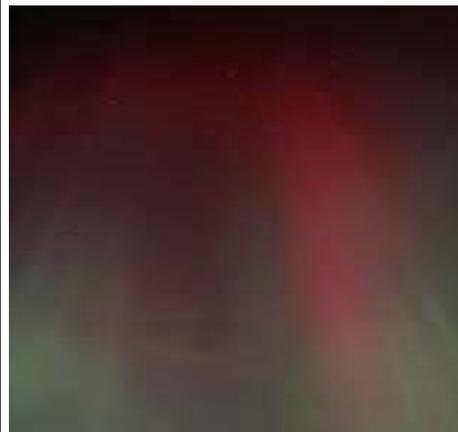


Photo by John Pane

DECEMBER, 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
5 	6	7	1	2	3	4
12 	13	14	15 	16	10 Holiday Party, Middle Rd. Fire Hall, 7:30 pm (see also front page).	11
19	20	21	22	23	17 Weather Make-Up date for Holiday Party (same location/date)	18 
26 	27	28	29 	30	31	25 Christmas Day
						1 2005 - Happy New Year!

Fridge Calendar by Cathy Rhvi

“The Universe is not only stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we can imagine.” (J. S. B. Haldane)

Looking ahead: Winterfest!!! Saturday, Feb. 12, 2005. Winterfest 2005 will start at 4 p.m. with solar observing.

AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule

Jan. 28, 2005	Apr. 22, 2005
Feb. 25, 2005	May 20, 2005
Mar. 25, 2005	Summer break

Classifieds

For Sale – Telescope Accessories

- 1) Celestron Ultima Barlow 2x 1.25 inch. Paid \$79.50 Asking \$40.00
- 2) Orion Ultrablock Narrowband Nebula Filter, 1.25 inch. Paid \$79.95 Asking \$40.00
- 3) Orion Skyglow Wideband Light Pollution Filter, 1.25 inch. Paid \$59.95 Asking \$30.00
- 4) Celestron Neutral Density Filter (ND6) 1.25 inch. Paid \$15.95 Asking \$8.00
- 5) Celestron 80A Blue Filter 1.25 inch. Paid \$15.95 Asking \$8.00
- 6) Celestron 21 Orange Filter 1.25 inch. Paid \$15.95 Asking \$8.00

All in excellent or like new condition. All in original boxes/crystal cases. All half-off. Barlow probably used a half dozen times. Last three filters may never have been used. Contact John Cheng: john_a_cheng@hotmail.com 412-421-5135

For Sale:

- Meade 14" LX200, GPS, UHTC. \$4,695.00
- Meade 12" LX200, UHTC. \$2,350.00
- Setllacam Video, Camera Ex. \$525.00

Contact Bernie Kriger. 412-787-1171

For Sale - Celestron C-8

8" SC Telescope in Excellent Condition. \$800

Heavy Duty Tripod, 8X50 Finder Scope, Telrad Finder, 26mm Plossl 1 1/4" Eyepiece, JMI Motor Focus, Celestron Motor Drive

Call Jeff at 724-935-7423 or e-mail reichel@nauticom.net

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