



# The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh Inc.  
A Section of the Academy of Science & Art of Pittsburgh  
Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon  
Web Site: 3ap.org



Mingo Creek Park  
Observatory

January, 2005

Vol. 39, No. 10



Nickolas E. Wagman  
Observatory

## "Star Words" At Jan. Meeting

### What's Acne Got to Do with Astronomy?

**Apart from both words** starting with the letter "A", you can only find out by attending the club's first meeting of 2005, **January 28, 2005, 7:30 pm** at the **Carnegie Science Center**. Eric Fischer will review how astronomical terminology is interlocked with our general language and vocabulary in a presentation called "*Star Words*". You'd be surprised as to the number of terms and concepts that have an astronomical link: Punctuation, wheat, major destruction, muscle pains, church services, moods, riots, breakfast, lipstick, flowers, and many more. Hopefully, this presentation will pack your brains with a different insight on astronomy compared to scientific concepts, and allow you to spice up your discussions with visitors to your star party telescope. Your presenter promises this will not be a dry, classroom exercise in etymology. Guaranteed there are some words you never knew had an astronomical heritage.



## Holiday Party Follow-Up

Because everyone was so generous with door prizes at the Holiday Party, some items remained on the door prize table at the end of the night. These will be given out at the January 28 business meeting. Also, Dave Smith will be handing out the \$50 Sukolsky-Brunelle gift certificates to the winners of the Brunelle Astrophotography Contest. Our thanks to Dave for maintaining this relationship with S-B over the years.

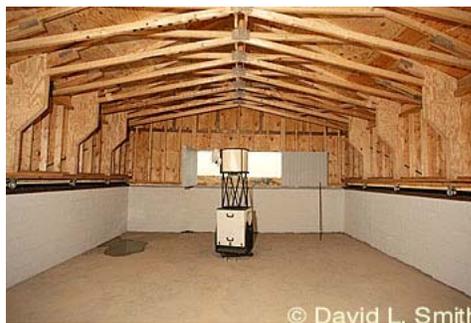
## Concern for Tsunami Victims

The AAAP expresses its concerns and hopes for any club members' relatives or friends that were affected by the December 26 Earthquake and Tsunami in Southeast Asia. In particular, we hope all is well for Sri-Lankan native **Dr. Kavan Ratnatunga** (University of Pittsburgh) who gave us a fascinating lecture on gravitational lensing several years ago.

As many member may know, science fiction great Sir Arthur C. Clarke also lives in Sri-Lanka, but was not harmed by the disaster. Of scientific interest is speculation that the Earth's rotation may have been speeded up a tiny amount because of the mass contraction resulting from the Indian Ocean tektonic plate shift. Also, the event may have induced an miniscule secondary wobble in the Earth's polar spin. Interesting!

## \$100K for MCPO Reflector

### Trib Critique of State Grant Stirs Controversy



*Funding the permanent 24' reflector that will go in this MCPO room is the source of the Trib controversy.*

**Ordinarily, we would be running** an all-smiles article about the recent \$100,000 grant from the state towards the purchase of a 24" reflector for Mingo Creek Park Observatory. Alas, a reporter at the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review got wind of the grant and attacked the state for this (and others supposedly frivolous gifts to other organizations) in a December 17 front-page article. As you might imagine, AAAP members raised a cosmic uproar on the AAAP listserv about the Trib's accusations. Following are two responses from President George Guzik on the situation, including an initial e-mail response to the Trib reporter, and a more formal Letter-To-The-Editor explaining the club's position. As of Guide Star press time, the Trib article has not changed anything; the grant money is now in safely our account and the state has not taken any additional action with us or the Trib:

## December 17, 2004 Listserv Posting by George Guzik:

*"This morning, the Tribune-Review published front-page article critical of our efforts to secure the DCED grant for the 24" RC telescope at MCPO. I'll be responding to the TR within the next day. We have other responses under way. Here is a synopsis of events leading to the article:*

*Yesterday afternoon, I received a phone call from a reporter regarding our DCED grant. Rich Gazarik of the Tribune-Review contacted Tom Reiland and Tom appropriately referred the reporter to me. Gazarik is involved in investigating and reporting on grant programs run by Pennsylvania. Over the last few years, the Trib published several articles on the WAM grants and on similar programs.*

*Gazarik indicated that news organizations, including the Tribune-Review, filed a suit to force the state to fully open its records related to the programs. The news organizations lost the suit and, therefore, certain information related to the grants is not made public.*

*(continued on page 2, column 1)*

## George Guzik Responds to Trib Reporter's Accusations

(continued from front page)

I opened the conversation by asking him what he knew about the AAAP. Gazarik indicated that he visited our web site. The reporter's basic interests were 1) how we obtained the grant and 2) what we were doing with the grant money. He noted that DCED grants are usually obtained only with the assistance of an individual in government, i.e. by "knowing someone." He wanted to know who our government contact was.

All of this "contact" information related to our DCED grant is already public, having been made public at the MCPO groundbreaking ceremony and elsewhere. I informed Gazarik that Rep. John Maher arranged for our grant. He was then interested in knowing how we made the contact with Rep. Maher and I indicated that it was through an AAAP member's involvement in fundraising. I did not name the member, nor did I go into details.

Rep. Maher (right)  
at MCPO  
Groundbreaking



I then explained to Gazarik that we were using the funds to purchase a telescope for MCPO and I described the telescope. I discussed Wagman Observatory, the public programs there, and the fact that over 40,000 people have visited this facility. I then described MCPO and our desire to repeat NEWO's success in a second location. Gazarik wasn't aware of Mingo Creek Park's location so I provided general directions. He indicated that his wife and child are interested in astronomy so I invited him and encouraged him to visit our facilities.

I'm very disappointed at Gazarik's insinuation that we're picking the pockets of the taxpayers. We've been open and public about our intentions for MCPO. He does a disservice to the many AAAP members who give so freely of their time to provide astronomy education to the taxpayers."

### December 18, 2004 Letter-to-the-Editor from George Guzik

"Thomas J. Stewart, Editor  
Tribune-Review Publishing Company  
Cabin Hill Drive  
Greensburg, PA 15601

I'm writing on behalf of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh to respond to Richard Gazarik's article, "Pet projects snag \$11M in CRP grants." The article was published in the 12/17/2004 edition of the Tribune-Review. Mr. Gazarik's article expresses a very misleading opinion of our organization. Far from being "on the take" as he implies, the AAAP gives generously to the community.

The AAAP was founded in 1929 to promote the science of astronomy. It is an all-volunteer organization. In 1987, after much hard work by its members, the AAAP opened the Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory in Deer Lakes Park. Wagman Observatory has hosted over 40,000 visitors since that time.

(continued at right)

## Proposed Amendment to New By-Laws

As noted in last month's Guide Star, we have been considering a change to the newly minted AAAP By-Laws which will revise the formula for setting the dates for the monthly meetings. Basically, the proposed revision would eliminate the Moon Phase-based formula and simply have the Executive Committee set these dates. Following is the actual change of wording (see items A and B):

Article IX: Meetings

Section 1 - Regular Meetings. Regular meetings shall be held monthly, from September through May (meeting year), unless cancelled due to special circumstances or other local conditions.

- A. Meeting Dates and Locations: Meeting dates and locations shall be selected by the President, with advice from the Executive Committee.
- B. When possible each Guide Star shall publish the meeting dates and locations of the issue's month and all succeeding months of the current meeting year. The dates of the next meeting year will be determined and published beginning in the current year's May issue of the Guide Star.
- C. Quorum: At least ten percent (10%) of the total AAAP membership in good standing must be present at each Regular or properly called Special meeting to constitute a quorum for the transaction of general business. Questions or motions under consideration shall be decided by a simple majority of the members present, except as otherwise stated in these By-Laws.

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The public education events the AAAP conducts at Wagman Observatory are free of charge. Our activities there have been reported in the Tribune-Review and in other media.

Our members also conduct free astronomy education events at schools, in parks, and in their own neighborhoods. Some have even traveled to central Pennsylvania to provide free educational opportunities for the public.

Mingo Creek Park Observatory is our latest project for public education. AAAP members and members of the community have reached willingly and deeply into their own pockets to fund construction. AAAP members are donating large quantities of their time and talent to complete the project. The DCED grant mentioned in the article will be used to purchase a high-quality telescope for this facility. This telescope will be used extensively in our public education programs.

The members of the AAAP have donated thousands of hours of their time to public education. They give their knowledge of astronomy generously to the members of the community who attend AAAP public education events. I am very proud of the AAAP's contribution to the community.

Mr. Gazarik indicated to me that his family is interested in astronomy. I extend to the readers of the Tribune-Review the same invitation I extended to him. Seek us out. Attend our public education events and form your own opinion of our service and generosity to the community. I believe that you will enjoy the experience."

Well-Deserved Service Awards Presented

# Large, Joyous Throng at AAAP Holiday Party

by George Guzik (from AAAP Listserver)

“Thank you” to everyone who attended our Holiday Party and helped make it a great event! Middle Road Fire Hall is spacious, and we needed that space! We had a good turnout of members for the party. **Emily Bell**, our Party Princess went above and beyond the call. She did a great job coordinating the food and refreshments buffet. Lots of members contributed their favorite dishes to the buffet, too. Speaking of contributions, we had such a generous outpouring of door prize contributions that we drew every ticket and still had a supply of prizes. We’ll hold a second drawing at January’s Business Meeting.

**Tom Reiland**, our speaker for the event, gave a very interesting talk on the history of the AAAP. He included a slide presentation showing meetings, people, and events from a few decades ago with lots of NEWO construction photos. One of the most important parts of the party is the presentation of AAAP Service Awards. We presented Nova Awards to three new members who gave freely of their time and talents:

- **Chris Genovese** for his assistance at NEWO and for his leadership role with the LP Committee
- **Larry Sneider** for his considerable help with the electrical distribution jobs at LHSC and at MCPO
- **Gerard Schuster** for his great support of public events at MCPO

**Chrissie Chojnicki** received our Lois Harrison Award for her outstanding support of the construction of MCPO. Chrissie contributed countless hours researching paint systems, painting contractors, security systems, and other necessities that made the work go smoothly.

**Ed Moss** received our George Lindbloom Award for his major role in the design and construction of Mingo Creek Park Observatory and for his other contributions to AAAP activities. At this time last year we were discussing the MCPO site preparations that were under way. Thanks to Ed’s work, this year we’re showing pictures of the finished building. I hope that you enjoyed this year’s Holiday Party and that it provided a good start to your holiday celebrations!



Photo by Josh Barto



Photo by Josh Barto



Lindbloom Award Winner Ed Moss (face-painted at last year’s CSC Astronomy Weekend). Sorry Ed! Only pix we had of you!



Nova Award Winner Larry Sneider



Nova Award Winner Gerard Shuster

Photos not available as of Guide Star press time:

**Chris Genovese**

**Chrissie Chojnicki**

### So What Else Is New? Excellent Help Again at 2004 NEWO Star Parties



by Tom Reiland

The weather didn't cooperate for our star parties this year and there was a lack of spectacular celestial events, but the participation of the members was excellent. We had 108 (counting four unconfirmed signers) help a total of 446 times. Yinz giys was great! Thirty-four members qualified for hats or patches. Ten members can chose either a hat or a patch and 24 qualify for patches. Here's the list:

#### Hats or Patches

- Bill Hayeslip ..... 19
- Larry Sneider ..... 18
- Bob Kalan ..... 17
- Flac Stifel ..... 15
- Tom Reiland ..... 14
- Frank Pastin ..... 13
- Joyce Osborne-Fischer ..... 11
- Eric Heckathorn ..... 11
- Brent Samay ..... 11
- Bob Novak ..... 10

#### Patches

- Don Hoecker ..... 9
- John Holtz ..... 9
- Jeff Kearns ..... 9
- Tim Manka ..... 9
- Mike Petro ..... 9
- Bill Roemer ..... 9

#### Patches (cont'd)

- Eric Fischer ..... 8
- George Guzik ..... 8
- Rowen Poole ..... 8
- Pete Zapadka ..... 8
- Mary DeV Vaughn ..... 7
- John Diller ..... 7
- Kevin Van Horn ..... 7
- Bill Yorkshire ..... 7
- Tim Colbert ..... 6
- Shirley Ann Caseman ..... 6
- Bill Moutz ..... 6
- Allen Tracht ..... 6
- Terry Trees ..... 6
- John Cheng ..... 5
- Kelly Fletcher ..... 5
- Fred Klein ..... 5
- Joseph Kline ..... 5
- Frank Wielgus ..... 5

They accounted for 308 times out of 446 volunteered. The other 74 had 138.

### About Our "New Look" Guide Star

After nearly 10 years of the same format, your Guide Star staff decided to upgrade the newsletter's appearance a bit at the start of the new year. The most conspicuous change is the inclusion of photos of our two observatories here on the front page. (Note to all you pit-nickers: Yes, the Mingo image shows no telescopes and the Wagman photo pre-dates the 21" Manka Reflector installation). Both photos are courtesy of **Dave Smith**. We're also pleased to announce the addition of **Dan McKeel** and **Al Paslow** to the Guide Star staff. Both Dan and Al will cover activities at Mingo Creek Park Observatory. Al will also be providing a monthly astronomical events listing (see page 5), something we haven't had in the Guide Star in quite awhile. Thanks to both gents for offering their jouranlist services.

### The People Behind the Walls of Mingo Creek Observatory

by Dan McKeel and Al Paslow

Well it took a pile of money, concrete block, wood, big trucks, small trucks, dirt, wires, and lots of sweat for the builders to put this finished observatory up. From a hilltop the building over looks a valley in a good dark spot in Mingo Creek Park. A review of the site stated that the viewing is a compliment to the marvel that is Wagman Observatory. On a good dark night the sky to the South shows many of astronomy's treasures as does the East, West, while not perfect the North, and when one looks back up the hill from the telescope field there looms the newest addition to the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh's treasures - Mingo Creek Park Observatory.

The building now is home to a 10 inch f-12 refracting telescope and before the year is out a 24 inch Ritchey-Chretien will grace the skies at Mingo. A planetarium projector, and dome are also in place, and nothing short of awe inspiring can be said of all these instruments.

Everyone should be proud of this club, and its drive to do! We all should thank our mentors who have been driven to not only raise money to make this incredible event come to fruition, but invested in it themselves.. The piece you are reading, and follow-ups will attempt to list the people who have been involved in not only the very important funding drives, but also the people who invested time, energy, and their direct sweat and toil to see it done. A partial list of the participants in no particular order follows:

- |          |        |                 |
|----------|--------|-----------------|
| Mike     | Becky  | Dave            |
| Chrissy  | George | Flacc           |
| Ed       | Dick   | The Architect   |
| Larry    | Dan    | The Park Police |
| Al       | Jeff   | Joe             |
| Larry S. | Lisa   | Wade            |
| Gerry    |        |                 |

There were the members with shovels filling the electric trench after the inspection.

There were people who came to the public star parties, executive committee meetings, Mingo committee meetings, and meetings at government offices from the start to now. There where building planners, and people who had been there, and done that before with some success from Wagman, and the Mingo committee members getting the t's crossed, and the I's dotted.

There was the Star Party group come rain, cloud, or dark clear skies plugging in, and setting up along with the folks from the Washington County Parks.

(continued on page 5, column 2)



## \*\*\* January 2005 Astro Events \*\*\*

by Al Paslow

*(Editor's note: We welcome Al to the Guide Star staff, and his new "Astro-Events" report for each month. Because of production delays for the January issue, we're only listing events from mid-month onward, about the time you would receive your newsletter. But be advised that Al did a lot of work to compile all the events for this month, and has included some Feb. events to assure complete coverage next month.)*

All 5 major Planets are visible in the morning sky. Venus and elusive Mercury are quite close together for the first half of January and afterwards they head for the sun. Unimpressive first magnitude Mars is near Antares in Scorpius then moves into Ophiuchus. The god of war will achieve a blazing -2.3 magnitude in November for its next opposition - a 30x increase in brilliance. Majestic Jupiter rises after 12:30 am in the beginning of the month & seen all night long. Beautiful Saturn is at opposition the 13th rising at sunset and at its best. Uranus is in Aquarius visible in the early evening. Neptune is low in Capricornus poorly suited for observation in the evening sky.

Comet Machholtz continues to put on a nice show at about 4th magnitude in early January and climbs from Taurus into Perseus.

### Selected dates:

Jan 13 - Saturn at opposition magnitude -0.4. Venus & Mercury only about 1/3 degree apart low in the SE this morning.

Jan 14 - Asteroid Flora at opposition in Gemini. A degree or so N of Saturn.

Jan 16 - Asteroid Herculina at opposition also in Gemini

Jan 17 - Mercury is 1 degree below Venus 45 minutes before sunrise. Very difficult to see only a few degrees above the horizon. The moon is first quarter.

Jan 24 - Pretty pair the moon and Saturn.

Jan 27 - Saturn passes by open cluster NGC 2420 in Gemini.

Jan 30 - Transit of Great Red Spot on Jupiter at 2:33 am EST.

Jan 31 - The Moon within one degree of Jupiter but look after 11:30 pm.

Feb 1 - Asteroid Herculina visible one degree S of Pollux in Gemini, can use binocs. On this date all 5 of Saturn's brighter moons will form a nice equilateral triangle at 11:00PM EST with Titan at the top, Saturn in the middle and 4 other satellites in a line below him - as it appears in Schmidt Cass and refractor telescopes. The same sight will be inverted in Newtonian scopes with Titan on the bottom and the 4 others moons above the ringed planet. Watch the moons change positions!

Feb 3 - Neptune in conjunction with sun and can not be seen.

Feb 5 - Look for the moon and above it Mars 5 degrees away.

Feb 14 - Mercury is at superior conjunction and is not visible.

Moon Libration Dates - Observations of Mare Orientale on January 29, 30, 31, and February 1, 2 around the quarter moon. Mare Orientale; a large plain, is normally on the far side of the moon and only visible from earth during favorable librations (tilts.)

That's it for now, see you next month!!

## "Aloha" to These New Members

What's wrong with saying "Aloha" to our newest members in the dead of Winter? Welcome to all:

James E. Dorisio, III  
Edward M. Fiedler  
Michelle Fiedler

Nancy K. Fiedler  
Vincent J. Piccoli  
John O. Stolfer II

## "Doc" Keely Leads List of Membership Anniversaries

Congrats to all of the following members upon reaching their various AAAP membership milestones:

### 30 Years

Allen P. Keeley (1/75)

### 15 Years

Eric Mamajek (3/90)

### 10 Years

Gary Kalmeyer (3/95)

ohn Kmetz (1/95)

### 5 Years

Noreen Browne (3/00)

Fred Capasso (3/00)

Cory Glasgow (1/00)

Steve Glasgow (1/00)

Michael Meteney (1/00)

Curtis Toperzer (2/00)

Judith Urban (1/00)

Michael Zuber (3/00)

## Follow-Up Report On Last Nov. Moon/Jupiter Event

by Tony Parker

On a cloudy November 9, 2004, I felt fortunate to observe the Jupiter-Moon occultation from my back yard in Cheswick. Once I spotted the sliver of the Moon with 15x50 IS binoculars, Jupiter was surprisingly easy to see (no Jupiter moons in sight, although the 4 largest moons are easily visible with the same glasses at night). Jupiter disappeared at 11:03AM. Unfortunately, cloud cover prevented me from viewing its reappearance some 70 minutes later. I also missed dark sky repeat performance in the early morning of December 7; the sky was much too overcast.



Photo by Phil Hughes

## MCPO Helpers Praised

(continued from page 4, column 2)

There are others, many more to count, and while it is impossible to acknowledge all in such short space we give a special thank you to those individuals - as their efforts too, live on!

It is important that the work in the trenches and behind the scenes be recorded. Club people made this happen. The walls had a foundation even before they poured the concrete!

The month of January 2005 shall also see the election of director and associate directors to the Mingo Observatory. Many programs hope to be established including those concerning education and the planetarium. This is your chance as a AAAP member to become involved. Hope to see you in 2005

## Reflections and Thanks on the AAAP 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*By Rowen S. Poole (from the listserver)*

I was most interested in Tom Reiland's talk about the club history at the Holiday Party. I remember a lot of what he was talking about, being that I, too, joined the club in 1974 and for pretty much the same reasons (Comet Kohoutek).

I was only 12 when I joined. I *think* I remember someone saying a few times back then that I was the youngest person to have joined the club at that point. I was, at that age, somewhere between really starting to understand astronomy as a "science" and thinking it would be cool to be in a club that had secret handshakes and passwords to get into the meetings. ☺

For a long time, I was THE youngest active person in the club-- or at least the youngest one I ever saw around all the meetings and activities. But a lot of the older members were always around helping me learn things and just being cool. Tom taught me a lot about observing and how to use a telescope. Glen Winterhalter helped me a lot when I was cutting the mirror to my first telescope - an 8" Newtonian. I had found the mirror kit for sale at Astromart in North Hills Village - which was run by Jim Mullaney and, if I am not mistaken, Tom Reiland. Wade Barbin allowed me to check out his observatory when I was thinking of building one in my backyard. Leo Scanlon was sitting next to me at a club meeting when Tom presented me with my Leo Scanlon certificate. He signed it for me and I still have it.

I remember when Tom first proposed the idea for Wagman and some of the resistance it met with from a few of the older members at that time. I couldn't quite figure that out, to be honest. I mean, really, what a brilliant idea! An observatory for us amateurs with decent-sized, permanent telescopes that we could all use! Why would anyone have a problem with this? I still have all the old Guide Stars from the early 1980's, with details of the various designs for the building. I was just looking through them the other day (whereupon I also found observing notes for 39 Herschel objects I never made note of in my permanent logbooks! Geezz...)

Back then I didn't realize that "star parties" were a new thing. I just thought they were a part of the club. There are quite a few star parties I was at with Tom and others in the mid to late 70s in North Park. My old logbooks have all kinds of funny notes in them. You guys were GODS to me back then! (I'm laughing out loud.) I'd go out observing at these star parties and see all kinds of cool things: planetaries, galaxies, globulars, etc. in the big scopes everyone had - then when I'd get back home and try to find this stuff in my little 2.4" Tasco refractor, I'd be lost. I was convinced you guys all knew something I didn't!

As we all know now, one has to LEARN how to be an astronomer; not only learn how to find things in the sky but also recognize what it is you are looking at. No one sees what the nice color pictures tell you that you are looking at. I suppose this might be even more true for a young kid like I was, expecting to see what all the books showed me. There were times when I couldn't find these things that I'd get very frustrated and think about giving up.

But, I didn't - because I had friends in the club that helped me out. AAAP might be a group of people who all share a passion for things astronomical, but it is also a great resource for those seeking knowledge about the subject itself. There will always be "The Public", but a few of those people will be like me...someone with more than a passing interest, who could become a club member. Some of them will help carry the club into the future with their vision-- like Tom, Wade, Glen, Leo, etc. have done over the years. As Tom said, we have to look for these younger members and keep the club going. Now that we will have two observatories, we'll reach even more people on public nights. What a great thing to be a part of, eh?

And by the way, thanks guys for all the help over the years!!!

### What You Missed by Skipping the Holiday Party (from the Internet)



# Books, Software, and More

## Astronomers Report their Discoveries

### John Cheng Reviews

*Archives of the Universe, A Treasury of Astronomy's Historic Works of Discovery* edited by Marcia Bartusiak

This unique book covers more than two thousand years of astronomical history by anthologizing one hundred primary sources along with Bartusiak's explanation of their importance and context.



While it includes passages from the astronomers, physicists and cosmologists that one would expect - Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Einstein, Hoyle, Hubble, Alan Guth -- it also contains material not so readily available, like Halley's prediction paper for the comet which would assure his fame; early papers by Jansky and Reber on radio astronomy; and Fraunhofer's announcement of the dark lines that would eventually bear his name:

*".... I have convinced myself...that these lines and bands are due to the nature of sunlight..."*

Like Fred Whipple's paper describing a cometary nucleus as a "dirty snowball" and Henrietta Leavitt's quiet, but monumental line on Cepheids:

*"...their periods are apparently associated with their actual emission of light..."*

While most or all of the primary material could be considered dry going, it's somehow reassuring to hear discovery and revolution presented in modulated tones.

(© 2004) \$35.00

## Star Trek Fans Should Check out Firefly

by Ann Norman

It doesn't have much to do with astronomy, so I'll keep it short. If you like Star Trek you may be interested in a little-known series called Firefly. The show ran on Fox, was cancelled before one season, and is now available on DVD, including never-aired episodes.



This series is unique—it's a cross between a space show and a Western. (During the opening credits the spaceship swoops down over a herd of stampeding horses.)

It's set in a post-apocalyptic future, where, oddly, everyone can speak both English and Chinese. It's darker and less ethical than Star Trek. The starship captain and hero of this story is a smuggler with his own private, firefly-class ship. This captain is capable of throwing a member of his crew out an air lock if he feels the situation calls for it. Great characters, great drama. Scary, funny. Takes you to another world—metaphorically speaking. Actually all the terraformed planets and moons they land on—which are supposed to be in our own solar system--look exactly like a Earth—specifically the Wild West. However, the lonely, empty, vacuum of space right outside the ship is pretty convincing. Dedicated Firefly fans convinced me I needed it for Christmas. \$42.48 on DVD.

## Phase of the Moon Program

Recommended by Terry Trees

Here's a handy little applet that I found poking around on the [Sky and Telescope](http://www.skyandtelescope.com) website. (Resources/AstroSoftware/Links to Public Domain.../Freeware Astronomy Downloads/MoonIcon) It displays the phase of the moon in your PC's System Tray.

<http://www.dewshields.com/programs.html#Moonicon>

## Happy New Year from Savannah, GA by John Mozer (from the AAAP listserv)

Well, all good things must come to an end. This is our last day visiting our son in Savannah and tomorrow we drive back to the 'Burgh. Our son's house is across the street from a boardwalk that extends a few hundred feet over a beautiful saltwater marsh. It is about 8 miles west from the Atlantic Ocean. There is a wide spot in the boardwalk away from the street and house lights that is a great place to set up a telescope. My wife gave me an Orion StarMax 102 for Christmas, but unfortunately it has a faulty mount so most of my observing has been with my 7x50 binocs.

It is great to observe the January night sky without freezing my fanny off. Last night it was very mild and clear and I was able to get some great views of M42, M43, M45, and M34, the double open star cluster in Cassiopeia, Saturn, and Comet Machholtz.

The comet was about 7 degrees below the head of Taurus.

This morning, I got up early to observe Venus, Mercury (which was only about 1 degree above Venus), Mars, Jupiter and the Moon. Unfortunately, there were clouds in the west, so I couldn't see Saturn. When I told my son I was only able to see 4 planets plus the Moon, he replied -- "But dad, you also were able to see Earth." Of course, he's right, and Earth was beautiful. An early morning fog moved in over the marsh as the sun was rising. A small group of large water birds swooped over the marsh just above the fog -- a great sight.

Wishing all of you AAAP folks a happy and prosperous New Year.

## Jan. Photo Gallery Features Atmospheric Phenomena



*Election Day Sunrise – by Al Paslow*



*The Golden Glow - by Vern Cox*



*MCPO Sunset – by Al Paslow*



*Iridescent Clouds – by Jerry Zhu*



*A Firey Sunset - by John Pane*

### \* Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc. \*

A section of the Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburgh  
 Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon

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#### AAAP Member Dues\*:

AAAP Dues:	\$18.00
Junior Member (under 18):	\$13.00
<u>Sky &amp; Telescope Magazine:</u>	Add \$33.00
<u>Astronomy Magazine:</u>	Add \$29.00

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

1. Make check payable to "AAAP Inc."
2. Send check to John Holtz, Treasurer, 176 Hidden Hill Rd, Sarver, PA 16055-8907

### \* The Guide Star \*

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Named by George G. Lindbloom and First Published June, 1966

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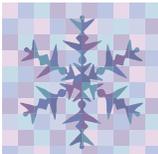
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# January 2005

Fridge Calendar by Cathy Rivi

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p><b>Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful, never the same for two months together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost Divine in its infinity.</b> Author: <u>Bayard Ruskin</u> Source: <i>The True and Beautiful--The Sky</i></p>					<p>1 New Year's Day</p>
2	<p>3 </p>	4	5	6	<p>7 Mars near Moon</p>	<p>8 Mercury near Moon</p>
<p>9 Venus near Moon</p>	<p>10 </p>	11	<p>12 <b>The sky is that beautiful old parchment in which the sun and the moon...</b></p>	<p>13 <b>...keep their diary.</b> Author: <u>Alfred Kreymborg</u> Source: <i>Old Manuscript</i></p>	<p>14 </p>	15
<p>16 </p>	<p>17 </p>	18	19	20	21	<p>22 </p>
23	24	<p>25 </p>	26	27	<p>28 <b>AAAP Meeting 7:30 PM Carnegie Science Center</b></p>	29
30	<p>31 Jupiter near Moon</p>					

<p><b>Looking ahead: Winterfest!!! Saturday, Feb. 12, 2005.</b> Winterfest 2005 will start at 4 p.m. with solar observing. First Wagman Star Parties of the New Year: <b>April 15 and 16, 2005</b></p>	<p><u>AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule</u> Feb. 25, 2005 Summer Break Mar. 25, 2005 Apr. 22, 2005 May 20, 2005</p>
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**Classifieds**

**FOR SALE:** Celestron CR150 HD 6" refractor w/case. \$400. Sirius MV1-1 minus violet filter. \$50, paid \$75.

Discovery 90mm Short tube richfield EQ w/case. \$125, paid \$329.

Orion variable polarizer 1.25". \$20, paid 29.95.

Orion dual-beam astro flashlight. \$20, paid \$26.

Willing to make a package deal. Also, pair of 10X50 Nikon lookoutIV binoculars for \$75.

Contact Lloyd at 724 228 3684 e-mail [obie1@pulsenet.com](mailto:obie1@pulsenet.com)

**FOR SALE:** JMI NGF-S motorized focuser for SCTs. Achieves very fine focus without moving mirror. Lock down your mirror and just use this to focus. Includes 1.25" and 2" barrels, hand controller with two velcro strips, small packet of allen wrenches needed to secure unit to back of your SCT, and motorized focuser unit. Image of unit with 2" William Optics diagonal:  
<http://www.IsThereAnybodyOutThere.org/equipment/images/1024x768.wodiag-ngfs.jpg>

More images available. Asking price is \$180. Contact [howie@hmspgh.com](mailto:howie@hmspgh.com).

**FOR SALE:** Meade 10" LX50 Telescope. Scope is great, just doesn't get used enough due to work/family obligations. Includes tripod, wedge, diagonal and usual Meade accessories. Also have foam and soft case along with custom made trunk style hard case. Several other accessories included in package. Asking \$1100.00 but open to offers. Contact Bob Mickey directly at 412 373-3462 or at [micfam@comcast.net](mailto:micfam@comcast.net).

**FOR SALE:** 8" Celestron Star Hopper (Dobsonian). Like new with all manuals. 25 mm wide angle eye piece, 12.5 mm Plossl eye piece, 2x barlow, and Moon filter. Also includes Telerad finder mounted on scope. \$350 or best offer. Contact Greg Pietrone, 724-265-4727 or 412-310-4970 or [gregory1@connecttime.net](mailto:gregory1@connecttime.net)

**FOR SALE:** Explorer Astronomical Refractor Telescope. Excellent Condition. Construction: Hand built, 6-inch aluminum main tube, cast iron Edmund scientific Equatorial Mount with counter weights, hard wood tripod. Optics: 6-inch diameter Edmund scientific objective lens cell, f/10. 60-inch focal length, cast iron Edmund scientific end piece with focusing knob and star diagonal eye piece. Accessories: 40mm fixed eyepiece; 8.4 to 21mm zoom eyepiece and a Barlow lens. Finder Scope: 40 mm 12-inch focal length 12X eye piece. Total Weight: 92 pounds. ASKING PRICE: \$300.00 minimum. Contact: [patrickkopnick@comcast.net](mailto:patrickkopnick@comcast.net)  
Patrick Kopnick  
8110 Ridge Road  
Natrona Heights, PA 15065  
(724)-224-4102

**FOR SALE:** Orion 8" Dobsonian. Scope listed on Pittsburgh edition of "craigslist". Link to photos and description: <http://pittsburgh.craigslist.org/ele/51437426.html>  
[christopher.russell.b@bayer.com](mailto:christopher.russell.b@bayer.com) (Christopher Russell)

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