



The Guide Star



Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.
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Mingo Creek Park
Observatory

September 2005

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Nicholas E. Wagman
Observatory

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Geology of Lewis & Clark: Next on the AAAP Lecture Schedule

by Ann Norman

At our next AAAP meeting September 16, 7:30 at the Carnegie Science Center, we will be hearing about everybody's favorite planet—Earth! Yes, Earth is a planet too, a fact we sometimes forget in our enthusiasm for more exotic locales—like Mars and Titan. Many of us have been pondering mysterious images gathered by the Mars Global Surveyor, the Huygens probe, and the Cassini Satellite, hoping to decipher alien landscapes.

Geologist Albert D. Kollar of the Carnegie Museum will help us do the same for Earth. He will present a slide show of his trip down the Lewis and Clark trail, explaining how the varied scenery from Pittsburgh to California was created by geological processes. (As a bonus, we will also hear about the Lewis and Clark expedition.) Chances are you'll learn something you didn't know about your home planet! Weird fact: The path of the Lewis and Clark expedition follows the southern border of the glacier from the

Astronomy Magazine Cost Increase

Members who receive *Astronomy Magazine* at a discount rate through the club should be aware that the cost has gone up from its original price of \$29 per year. Effective immediately, the new cost is \$34 for one year, or \$60 for two years.

On the brighter side, we have a new publication offering now, as well: *Night Sky Magazine: Backyard Astronomy for Everyone* will be available to members for a cost of \$18 per year. This is the same price for ordering the magazine online, but is still less expensive than purchasing the magazine at the newsstand.

Thus far, the discount rate for *Sky & Telescope Magazine* is holding steady at \$33 for a one-year subscription.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Mingo Creek Park Observatory Dedication August 27th, 2005



Photo by Dave Smith
Article on Page 3

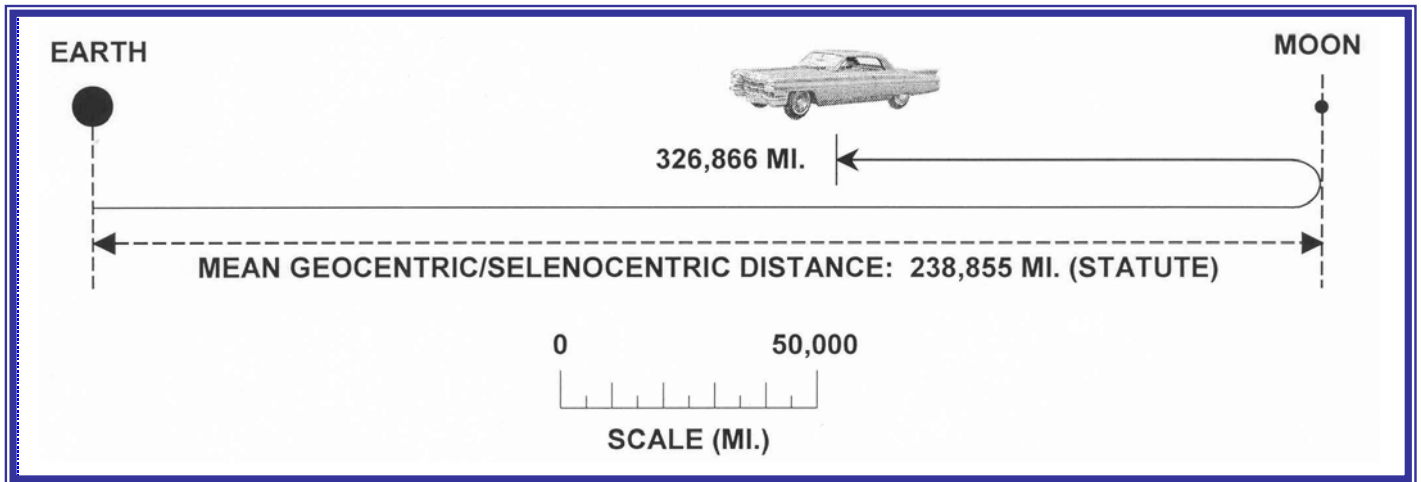
Saturn V Retired: Driving Round the Solar System

by Eric Fischer

Back on June 19 I had the sad duty of retiring my 1963 Cadillac after 27 years. The final odometer reading was 326,866 (statute) miles. This is not really a remarkable number. The Guinness world record is about 1.2 million miles (on a '63 VW of all things). Many commercial drivers and folks living in remote areas of the West regularly put 400,000, 500,000, or even more miles on their vehicles. (Of course, car odometer readings are just an estimate because of the effects of wheel slip, tire size variations, etc.) From an astronomical perspective, my fondest memory was passing the Earth-Moon mean distance of 238,855 miles

(geocentric/selenocentric) back in the early 90's. My next targets were two ring crossings of Saturn (about 338,000 miles) and, if by some miracle, a lunar round trip (about 478,000 miles). But it was not to be.

Just for the fun of it, years ago I made up the tabulation below just to give readers some idea how far their cars have traveled with respect to various solar system bodies. If you are really crazy, try to keep your car or truck going until you reach 865,000 miles - the approximate equatorial diameter of the Sun!



MILES	SOLAR SYSTEM DISTANCE*	MILES	SOLAR SYSTEM DISTANCE*	MILES	SOLAR SYSTEM DISTANCE*
1423	Diameter of Pluto	7921	Diameter of Earth	111,846	Mean Dist. of Amalthea from Jupiter
1951	Diameter of Europa	9368	Circumference of Callisto	116,196	Mean Dist. of Mimas from Saturn
2088	Diameter of Io	9519	Circumference of Mercury	119,303	Mean Dist. of Ariel from Uranus
2160	Diameter of Luna	10,053	Circumference of Titan	137,944	Mean Dist. of Thebe from Jupiter
2174	Diameter of Triton	10,267	Circumference of Ganymede	147,886	Mean Dist. of Enceladus from Saturn
2982	Diameter of Callisto	12,427	Mean Dist. of Charon from Pluto	165,906	Mean Dist. of Umbriel from Uranus
3030	Diameter of Mercury	13,242	Circumference of Mars	169,269	Outer Diameter of Saturn's Rings
3200	Diameter of Titan	14,602	Mean Dist. of Deimos from Mars	183,304	Mean Dist. of Tethys and Telesto from Saturn
3268	Diameter of Ganymede	23,616	Circumference of Venus	186,000	Outer Diameter of Jupiter's Rings
4215	Diameter of Mars	24,885	Circumference of Earth	219,965	Mean Dist. of Triton from Neptune
4471	Circumference of Pluto	30,739	Diameter of Neptune	234,116	Circumference of Saturn
5841	Mean Distance of Phobos from Mars	30,900	Outside Diameter of Uranus' Rings	234,878	Mean Dist. of Dione from Saturn
6129	Circumference of Europa	32,168	Diameter of Uranus	238,855	Mean Dist. of Luna from Earth
6560	Circumference of Io.	74,520	Diameter of Saturn	262,219	Mean Dist. of Io from Jupiter
6786	Circumference of Moon	80,778	Mean Dist. of Miranda from Uranus	272,160	Mean Dist. of Titania from Uranus
6830	Circumference of Triton	88,803	Diameter of Jupiter	278,989	Circumference of Jupiter
7517	Diameter of Venus	96,571	Circumference of Neptune		
		101,061	Circumference of Uranus		

*Diameters and circumferences are equatorial.

Mingo Dedication

by Dan McKeel & Al Paslow

The MCPO Dedication was held on Saturday, August 27, 2005. There in the pavilion, where things first got off the ground, a group of people paused to celebrate the culmination of over two years of work. Beneath the rolling clouds and misty rain, the crowd of folks took stock of what had been accomplished, and the damp did nothing to diminish the result. After the invocation prayer by the Reverend William Roemer, a number of speakers took the podium at the pavilion. With George Guzik as an excellent master of ceremonies, the following club members and honored guests shared their thoughts about Mingo and the events leading up to it:



Photo by Dave Smith

President Richard Bailey lead listeners through a history of the AAAP from its beginnings in 1929 to the present.

Mr. Richard Hadad took the opportunity to stress how it took many people all pulling in the same direction to accomplish this wonderful achievement and day.



Photo by Al Paslow

MCPO Director Larry McHenry, related the timeline of an idea—an idea with a purpose that was sparked and driven with dedication, perseverance, and the eloquence of Dick Hadad.

Co-director Ed Moss spoke of the trials and tribulations that were overcome when he joined the Observatory Committee in December of 2002 and began working with Mike Meteney and Richard Hadad. Co-director Mike Menteney spoke about his beginnings with the group and the help that he and the group received from the many people involved in the local government agencies and at the park.

The Honorable John Maher, who helped us obtain the state grant for the 24" telescope, gave a wonderful talk about the vision that AAAP members have concerning Mingo Creek Park Observatory.

Mr. Lawrence Magi and Mr. J Bracken Burns represented Washington County, spoke of the impressive new establishment, and noted our place in seeking insight among such a vast universe.

Ms. Lisa Cessna, the Washington County Planning Commission's Executive Director, bid us welcome as we opened our new observatory in Washington County.

During the ceremonies, the AAAP presented gifts of appreciation and plaques to the foundations, organizations, and individuals that were so instrumental in Mingo's completion.

Certificates of Appreciation went to the members of the MCPO Committee. Lastly, Richard Hadad received a standing ovation for his leadership and vision in this undertaking.



Photo by Dave Smith

The rain had at last given up when the crowd moved up the hill for the ribbon cutting ceremony, which was held in front of the doors at the building. Your writers Al Paslow and Dan McKeel had the honor of holding the shovels that supported the ribbon. These shovels represented the successes at the Wagman Observatory as well as at the new Mingo site. Dick Hadad and John Maher, along with Director, co-directors, George Guzik, Mr Burns, Mr.Magi, and Ms. Cessna, after a prayer by William Roemer cut the ribbon, officially opening the building to the public.

After the ribbon cutting, the roofs were rolled back as everyone enjoyed food and refreshments most bountifully prepared by Ann Norman, Kathy DeSantis, Charlotte Tunney, Chrissie Chojnicki, Jim Tunney , Laura Rhodes, Barb Lafan and Beth Stifel. Setup was



Photo by Al Paslow

attended by Gerry Schuster, Laura Rhodes, Ben from CMU, Bill Sheers, W&J, and his friend. Everyone mentioned above also participated in the after party-cleanup, with Kathy reappearing on Sunday for the finishing touches. Thank you all for the great food!

In the midst of a large boisterous crowd of people eating and talking, there was a tiny young lady—no more than five years old, I would say—running between people to get a glimpse into the room housing the planetarium with its softly



Photo by Al Paslow

glowing red lights and the stars on the dome very visible. Her mom chased after her, following the sound of an excited little girl voice saying, "Come look, come look!" Who knows, perhaps this was the day and thing that will start her on the path to visit Mars someday.



Photo by Al Paslow

It's amazing how the seed planted years ago has grown and prospered, and marvelous to see how much impact it has already had on people. Who knows what impact Mingo might have in the future, for all the people who have yet to pass thru the door?

The events of Saturday mark a transition in saga of the Mingo Creek Park Observatory. We have gone from *planning* to *building* to finally *operating* an incredible resource for not only the club and the local region, but in the end for everyone in the area that walks thru our doors. To all of you out there who helped to shape this special day, the seed you help plant may have already influenced the future in significant and meaningful ways. You are to be congratulated for the insight, the dedication, and sheer perseverance that brought this fruit to harvest.

September Snippets

Don't Forget...

Yes, summer is coming to an end...but this also means that the first of our fall business meetings are coming up! Come join us at the Carnegie Science Center on Friday, September 16th at 7:00 p.m. to enjoy a lecture on the "Geology of Lewis & Clark," address new club issues, and revisit friends you might not have seen over the summer. We'll see you there!

2006 Observer's Handbook Increase

from AAAP Merchandiser Rowen Poole

Unfortunately, the price the club pays for Observer's Handbooks has increased a bit this year. The price for each copy of the 2006 Observer's Handbook will be \$18.00.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy, just contact me either at aaap@starglider.com or at 412-527-0074. You can either pick up your copies at the meetings or I can snail-mail them to you for an additional \$1.67 (to cover the postage from my house to yours).

Raystown Lake Star Party Report

Posted by George Guzik on AAAP Listerver Digest V0 #814

My thanks to Bill and Maureen Moutz and to Jim and Charlotte Tunney for making our 3rd attempt at a Raystown Lake star party. As Bill noted, the weather "got" us again (third time in row), with the previously pleasant skies clouding over just an hour before the 8:30 PM event. The clouds soon turned on the rain, thunder, and lightning...

Sounds like the recipe for a disappointment, doesn't it?

Fortunately, we came prepared. Raystown has a beautiful visitor center with a well equipped classroom facility. It is outfitted with a rear projection screen, PC, Internet connection, and wireless keyboard and mouse. Given the inclement weather, we brought our telescopes and equipment into the classroom, loaded a PowerPoint presentation into the PC for the projection screen, and gave a general presentation on amateur astronomy. We even used the presentation system to display an Intellicast weather radar summary showing thunderstorm watch boxes, mesocyclones, rain, and hail passing by.

This year's PowerPoint had a distinct improvement over the previous lackluster version. I reviewed two years' worth of Business Meeting presentations and Brunelle astroimaging contests to select member photographs to illustrate astronomical and atmospheric phenomena. Instead of just seeing bulleted lists and a few stock photos, the guests at our presentation got to see YOUR work. They were impressed! Bill, Maureen, Charlotte, and Jim augmented the presentation by giving equipment demonstrations and discussions of astronomical topics. Although most of the 25 attendees were from outside the Pittsburgh area, several expressed an interest in the AAAP and took membership forms with them.

I decided to camp overnight and drive home early on Sunday morning. The clouds were just breaking and the views of the moon and sunrise over the farmlands of central Pennsylvania were spectacular.

We'll keep trying at Raystown. One of these days we're going to have clear skies!

AAAP Member Publishes in *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

In response to an article entitled, "Lab Science in Schools a Low Priority," member Dave Smith wrote a letter to the Editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. It was published in the Sunday, August 14th edition. In case you missed it, here is the text of Dave's letter:

Lab equipment

Those of us in the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh are well aware of the lack of equipment in science labs and the lack of hands-on learning critical to education. ("Lab Science in Schools a Low Priority," Aug. 9).

We continue to be amazed at some of the public's lack of basic knowledge of astronomy. Our members enjoy seeing how thrilled kids and adults are when we show them the craters on the moon, Jupiter and its moons, Saturn's rings, nebulae, star clusters, galaxies and other celestial objects. AAAP has done this free to the public for years at our Wagman Observatory in Deer Lakes Park and now also at a new observatory in Washington County in Mingo Creek Park. (The Mingo Creek Park Observatory also has a planetarium.)

AAAP has scheduled public star parties through the year. On a clear night we have more than 300 people view the sky through telescopes in the buildings and members' telescopes on the grounds. We have seen interest in science and careers started just by looking at the moon or Saturn through a good telescope.

Astronomy is only a small part of science education but is one of the oldest sciences. I think most of the 540-plus members of AAAP would like to see a lot more funding for science education with more labs.

DAVE SMITH
South Side

On the Horizon

A Parting Shot from Jerry Zhu

Upcoming dates for Wagman Observatory Star Parties:

Friday, September 9th and **Saturday, September 10th** will be Public Star Parties.

Saturday, September 24th will be a Public *Dark Sky Special* Star Party.

Saturday, October 8th will be a Public Star Party.

Saturday, October 22nd will be a Public *Moonrise Special* Star Party.

Upcoming Dates for Mingo Observatory Star Parties:

Friday, September 9th and **Saturday, September 10th** will be Public Star Parties.

Saturday, October 1st will be a Public Star Party.

Saturday, October 22nd will be a Public *Moonrise Special* Star Party.



Upcoming dates for *Members Only New Moon Star Parties* at NEWO and MCPO:

Friday, September 30th
and
Saturday, October 1st

Still Need Volunteers

The Regional Environmental Education Center in Upper St. Clair has asked the AAAP to give a presentation at their facility. At present, a date in October is being considered, but if anyone would be able to assist them sooner, please contact Kostoula Vallianos at (412) 838-0064. For additional information about their organization and site, visit: <http://www.regionaleec.org/>

If there is an event or activity that you think AAAP members might be interested in, contact Kelly at aaap@lexilena.com or 724-316-8480.

Thanks to all the members who have submitted info about coming events!

By Ann Norman (Photos by Jerry Zhu)

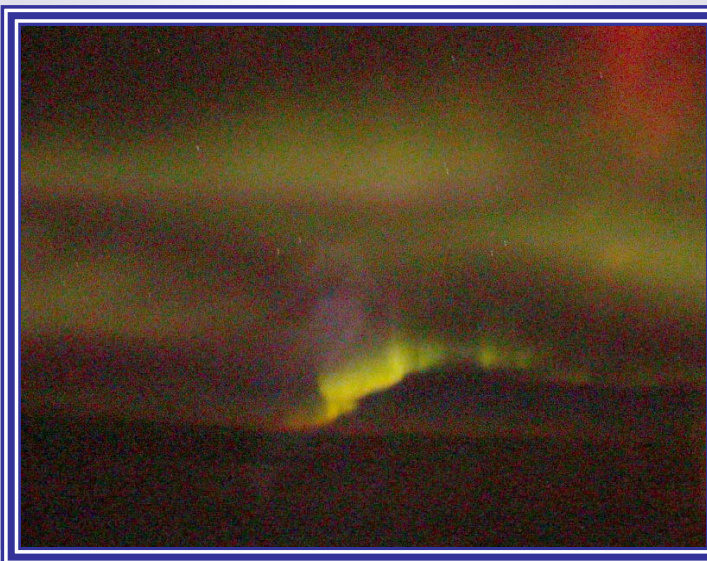
Congratulations and farewell to Jerry Zhu. Jerry has been delighting the AAAP online community with his stunning photography over the past five years (for example, this picture taken last spring of a red rainbow in Greentree).



Now he's completed his PhD at CMU and has secured a position on the faculty at University of Wisconsin, Madison.

We discovered Jerry's absence from Pittsburgh when a strange green or yellow glow appeared in the sky, but no pictures from Jerry appeared online.

Jerry remains an AAAPer, recently posting pictures of an aurora, which he shot from a plane on August 6. It seems appropriate that Jerry would be followed by an aurora as he left Pittsburgh heading to Wisconsin. (O.K., a little too appropriate—this picture was taken over Canada during a flight from Chicago to Germany) Anyway, enjoy!



September AstroEvents By Al Paslow

Mercury is a difficult object this month, with the best times perhaps in early September. Look for Mercury and a very thin waxing crescent MOON early, about 45 minutes before sunrise, on the morning of September 2nd, very close to the horizon—binoculars a must for this!

Venus, an “evening star,” is brilliant at magnitude -3.9 early in the month, and is very low to the western horizon at dusk. There is a spectacular grouping of Venus, Jupiter, the thin waxing crescent moon and the bright star Spica on September 6th. Venus and Jupiter are closest paired on September 1st, when they are less than 1.5° apart in the sky. Within a week, the two planets will have drifted apart dramatically.

Mars rises this month by 10:45 p.m. local time on September 1st, but at 10:00 p.m. EDT by midmonth. The Red Planet will increase its brightness two-fold this month to blaze at magnitude -1.7 as the diameter increases to a dramatic 18 arc seconds by month's end. Mars at this time is rising about one to two minutes earlier EACH night. This is the time to observe MARS!!! Note that this year's opposition on Nov 7th will be much more favorable than the highly touted one of 2003 for northern hemisphere observers, since the Red Planet will be over 30° higher in the skies as compared to the close approach two years ago. Even a 3-inch telescope will reveal features on the surface now. Larger instruments can look for cloud formations and dust storms! This is our last chance to see Mars this large and bright until the year 2018. Enjoy it!!

Jupiter, at magnitude -1.7, sets about an hour or so after sunset in early September. By month's end the Giant Planet will be in conjunction with the Sun and not visible until early 2006 for favorable viewing. It can be spotted in winter months of 2005 as it emerges from solar glare nearly due east for mid-northern latitudes. Look for a spectacular grouping of Jupiter and Venus and the thin crescent Moon on September 6th!

Saturn, at magnitude +0.3, rises late in dawn skies. Use binoculars on the mornings of the first week of September to show the yellow planet embedded in the “The Beehive Cluster” in the constellation of Cancer. Saturn will be a beautiful binocular object within 2° of M-44 the entire month. The planet rises at 3:12 a.m. EDT by the mid-month but is always worth waiting for. Also note that Saturn's elusive moon Iapetus, at magnitude +11, will be easier to see on the 14th as it lies fairly close to the planet. Often it is unobserved, being many ring diameters away from Saturn and lost within the stars substantially outside your telescope's field of view.

Uranus rises at about 7:00 p.m. EDT by the 15th and is visible virtually all night long in Aquarius, being just past opposition on September 1st. This distant planet is observable in moderate sized telescope as a very distinct disk-like bluish object, shining at magnitude 5.8—bright enough to spot in even small telescopes.

Neptune is faint at magnitude +7.9 and was at opposition just last month. The distant Neptune is high in our skies around midnight and is located in Capricornus.

Pluto sets by 12:20 a.m. midmonth and is visible in the constellation of Serpens. It is extremely dim, between magnitudes +13.9 and 14, and must be observed with large instruments and star charts to be located.

Special Events of the Month:

First is the **Venus, Jupiter & Spica** grouping as mentioned in early September. Remember Saturn and the Beehive all this month!

Next, **Mars** is here!! For the next several months, observations of this high-in-the-sky favorite will be the Astro-cat's meow. If you're new to Mars, start your observations as soon as you can to observe changes to this tiny world. Don't miss this one!!

Iridium Flares are spectacular bursts of star-like appearing light that can attain a brilliance of up to -8 magnitude—30 times brighter than the planet Venus! The flares are from satellites launched by Iridium Satellite LLC, and are caused by sunlight reflecting off the satellites' highly reflective rectangular antennae. The flares can occur with great predictability. Times for flares on the weekends of September 10th, 17th and 24th are listed.

Selected Dates

Sept. 1: The Moon is at apogee. Look for the Jupiter and Venus encounter this evening and the next.

Sept. 2: Venus is only 82 arc minutes south of Jupiter—take a look! Jupiter 1.4° north of the Moon.

Sept. 3: New Moon. Pluto appears to be motionless in the sky as it goes from retrograde to direct motion.

Sept. 4: Mercury is 1° 1' north of Regulus.

Sept. 5: Venus is 1° 8' north of Spica.

Sept. 6: Waxing Crescent Moon joins the Venus, Jupiter, and Spica grouping.

Sept. 7: Jupiter is 1° 8' north of the Moon, Spica is 1° 3' south of the Moon, and Venus is 0° 6' north of the Moon.

Sept. 8: TV show *Star Trek* made its grand appearance on this date in 1966. (I saw the very first episode!)

Sept. 10: Antares is 0° 4' south of the Moon. Iridium Flare at 9:06:13 p.m. EDT, magnitude -2.3. Look in direction of Sagittarius.

Sept. 11: First Quarter Moon rises at noon and sets at midnight.

Sept. 14: Saturn's moon Iapetus, at magnitude +11.0, is in inferior conjunction with the planet and easy to find in moderate-sized amateur telescopes. Look for it about one ring span north of the planet's center. Also on this date: telescope maker John Dobson was born (1915) and now celebrates his 90th birthday.

Sept. 15: The Moon passes 5° south of Neptune.

Sept. 17: The Full Harvest Moon sets at sunrise and is visible all night. Mercury at superior conjunction with the Sun and cannot be seen. Iridium Flare at 20h 25m 31s EDT in Cepheus at magnitude -1.8.

Sept. 18: Mercury is in superior conjunction, passes behind the Sun, and is lost in the Sun's glare.

Sept. 21: Jupiter and Spica 3° apart.

Sept. 22: Autumnal Equinox occurs at 6:23 p.m. EDT and marks the first day of Autumn. (The sun stands directly above the Earth's equator at a point in the Pacific Ocean just south of Christmas Island.) Darkness lengthens at its fastest annual rate, by three minutes nightly in most locations.

Sept. 23: Mars enters Taurus.

Sept. 24: Iridium Flare tonight at 5h 28m 02s EDT in Taurus at magnitude -1.4.

Sept. 25: The Moon at Last Quarter reaches GREATEST northern declination this year at +28° 36' (7h U.T.).

Sept. 27-Oct. 2: *Astroblast Star Party*. Two Mile Run County Park, Franklin, PA by the Oil Region Astronomical Society.

Sept. 28: Moon 5° north of Saturn.

Oct. 1: Mars stationary, begins retrograde motion among the stars.

Oct. 3: New Moon rises at sunrise and sets at sunset.

Oct. 4: The Moon passes 2° south of Jupiter.

Oct. 8: The Moon passes 0.2° north of Antares.

Oct. 9: Mars enters Aries, where it stays for opposition on November 7th.

Oct. 10: First Quarter Moon rises at noon and sets at midnight.

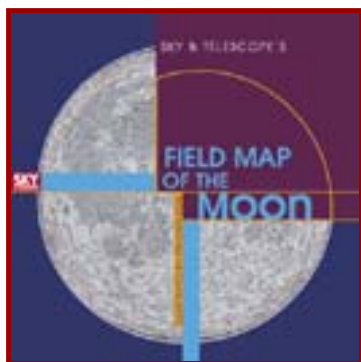
Oct. 13: The Moon passes 3° south of Uranus.

Oct. 16: Venus and Antares 1.6° apart.

That's all for now, see you next month! Clear skies!

Reviews & Resources

Member Fiction



John Cheng Recommends "Field Map of the Moon"

Sky and Telescope recently issued their "Field Map of the Moon". To get right to

the point, it's a keeper. It's drawn by Antonin Rukl, whose "Atlas of The Moon" is the best paper atlas currently available.

The "Field Map" however avoids some of the issues affecting the "Atlas". For portability and usefulness at the eyepiece, the "Field Map" consists of laminated 12-inch quadrants, with generous overlap and libration fields tacked on (someone at Sky Publishing must have spoken to a few observers). Two of the back panels contain an alphabetized index to about a thousand lunar features, with chart coordinates and their size in kilometers (a very nice touch). The "Field Map" was obviously meant to be used, folded, fastened to a clipboard, tossed in the grass.

The "Atlas", while it has more discernible detail in its 76 maps, and has a lot of information in text form for a lunar observer, is akin to a coffee table book and overlap between its individual maps is practically non-existent (This has been a perpetual "knock" on the Atlas). In the "Atlas", the libration zones are given a separate treatment.

Rough-handling a \$45.00 "Atlas" (or an almost priceless one when they were out of print) in a dew-laden environment is uncomfortable. My reaction is to get a bit too conscious and protective of the book, so the observing suffers.

The "Field Map" is just about the perfect compromise between detail and size, and it comes in at \$10.95, which hardly hurts at all...especially if the moon's your mistress, harsh or otherwise.

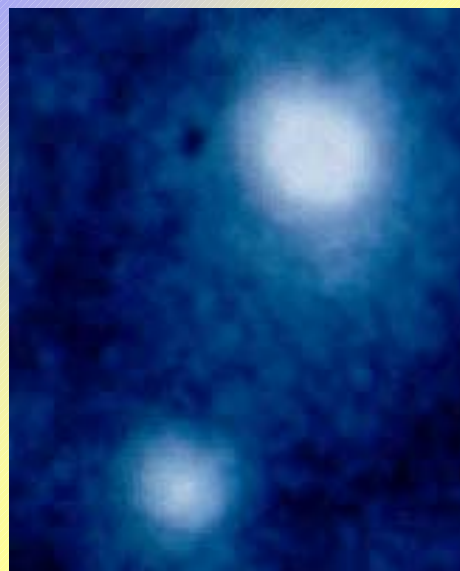
Bill Hayeslip Recommends Mars Previewer II

For those who may be new to astronomy and missed the last Mars viewing season, there is a free program that will allow you to preview Mars and better understand the surface features visible on Mars. It can be downloaded from Sky & Telescope and is called *Mars Previewer II*.

http://skyandtelescope.com/resources/software/article_328_2.asp

Sci-Fi by Joe Klein

Hi, this is Julie Granger of W123 News reporting from from Pluto Base 1 on this wonderful outer system day of August 27th, 2205. As most of you know, this base is the last stop for mankind before we take the next step into galactic exploration and colonization.



Pluto and Charon
Photo credit HST

Besides the usual base shopping malls, apartments, and the like, this base also boasts a galactic/tri-dimensional OBSERVATORY that is rumored to have been built by amateur astronomers from somewhere in the system called Pittsburgh, and it's supposed to be free to the public to use. The astronomers claimed in earlier reports that their newest piece of equipment is an event horizon/omega particle pumped/zero mass triangulated beam-projecting Telescope which can supposedly view the edges of our universe and 11 dimensions. This is quite a claim and this reporter is eager to see it for herself.

As I enter the observatory, there's a prominent picture behind the reception desk. From here, it looks like a picture of a shed at Earth sunset, barely bigger than the door to enter it. Attached to it are three concrete block walls that looks like they're enclosing some kind of large pipe sticking out just above the walls—I wonder what that picture means?

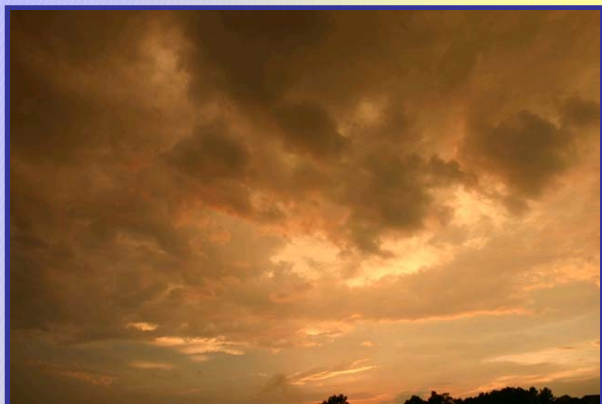
Observations

Weird Yellow Glow over Pittsburgh

by Ann Norman

When the AAAP online community requested pictures of the weird greenish-yellow glow enveloping our neighborhoods on Saturday, August 20th following a thunderstorm, we learned two things: Jerry Zhu is gone; and Rowen Poole and Steve Schafer can also take killer pictures! They submitted these photos for our approval. WE

by Steve Shafer



by Rowen Poole



by Rowen Poole



Early Morning...

A Particularly Poetic Posting

Posted by John Cheng on AAAP Listserv Digest V0 #820

There's lots to love about morning: the profound quiet, the reappearance of old friends in the east, the pleasure of still being above ground....

Making this morning even more memorable was the striking line of three bright red "stars" strung south to east: Mars, Aldebaran and Betelgeuse. Hanging above a tree line that breaks my view, the forty five degree arc they traced was strikingly beautiful.

A more elusive alignment, about eighteen degrees, north to south, of interest to a telescopic observer was the twenty-day -old moon, showing great detail in the washed-out area southeast of the Apennines. Just below the moon was old friend, variable T Arietis, which seems to have dropped to around magnitude 9 since I last saw him, then Mars, which observed through a binoviewer for the first time, showed Cimmerium, Tyrrhenum, Syrtis Major, Hellas and a hint of the Southern Polar Cap.

Below all of these was the pentagon that represents the head of Cetus, the monster that emerged from the deep to live among the stars.

Star Party in the Dominican Republic

Excerpted from posting by Al Paslow
on AAAP Listserv Digest 00 #816

Last week I returned from a great adventure. I made a trip to the Caribbean and attended a star party on the beach. The whole idea started in June, when I received an e-mail by friend Eric Ramos, and was invited to be a guest and speaker at an Astronomical event in the Dominican Republic on August 5th and 6th. Eric told me of the gorgeous beaches and beautiful clear skies that were at this location at approximately 18 degrees north latitude. The trip included a stay at a resort hotel and observations from the beach at night.

The highlight of the event was observing from the private beach. The skies were amazing. Very rich detail in the structure star clouds of Sagittarius at 18 degrees north latitude! In an area of zero light pollution, every night is dark and wonderful.

We could easily see Venus and Jupiter early in the twilight. Regions within Scorpius were very apparent. M-6 and M-7 in the tail were outstanding binocular and telescopic objects. Too many observations to mention within a short time. Sagittarius rises so much higher. Objects like M-8, M-17, M-20, M-22 are all surrealistic, and rendered incredible telescopic appearances. It is strange to see the sky with the Big Dipper below the horizon!!

Next year the D.A.S. should hold the event again at the Portillo Resort. It's very beautiful, and I would recommend AAAP members to attend. With beautiful beaches, relatively clear skies, zero light pollution, and an all-inclusive bar and restaurant, there is something for all.

EDITOR'S NOTE:








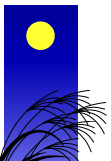
This account is *highly* abbreviated, and does not do Al's story justice. For his full text, check out his posting on the AAAP Listserv.

To view the pictures, visit:

<http://al-paslow.smugmug.com/gallery/722950/1> (vacation pics)

<http://al-paslow.smugmug.com/gallery/724331> (submitted by DAS)

September 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>There is precious little hope to be got out of whatever keeps us industrious, but there is a chance for us whenever we cease work and become stargazers. ~H.M. Tomlinson</p>				1	2 Members Only Star Party NEWO & MCPO	3  Members Only Star Party NEWO & MCPO
4	5 Labor Day	6	7	8	9 Star Party NEWO and MCPO	10 Star Party NEWO and MCPO
11 	12 	13	14 Happy 90 th Birthday to John Dobson, Creator of the Dobsonian Telescope!	15	16 AAAP Meeting 7:30 PM Carnegie Science Center	17  Harvest Moon
18	19	20	21 	22 Autumnal Equinox 6:23 PM	23	24 Star Party NEWO Dark Sky Special
25 	26	27	28	29	30	

Fridge Calendar by Cathy Rivi

<p>Also this month: Sept. 16 - Lecture: Solar Neutrinos - Allegheny Observatory. Free. RSVP required. 7:30 PM. Univ. of Pittsburgh (412)-321-2400.</p> <p>Looking ahead: Star Parties: Oct. 8 & 22 – NEWO. Oct. 1 & Oct. 22 – MCPO.</p> <p>Dates and times are based on Eastern Time.</p>	<p><u>AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule</u></p> <table> <tr> <td>Oct. 14, 2005</td> <td>Feb. 10, 2006</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nov. 18, 2005</td> <td>Mar. 10, 2006</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dec. 9, 2005</td> <td>Apr. 7, 2006</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jan. 13, 2006</td> <td>May 12, 2006</td> </tr> </table>	Oct. 14, 2005	Feb. 10, 2006	Nov. 18, 2005	Mar. 10, 2006	Dec. 9, 2005	Apr. 7, 2006	Jan. 13, 2006	May 12, 2006
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Editor's Endnotes

In order to cover the Mingo Dedication in this issue, our publication schedule was pushed back a bit this month. I apologize for any inconveniences this may cause.

Special thanks to the *Guide Star* staff—Ann Norman, Cathy Rivi, Al Paslow, and Dan McKeel—for all their hard work and dedication, and also to all the members who contribute observation reports, pictures, reviews, and articles to the newsletter.

* Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc. *

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

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