



# The Guide Star



Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

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

Website: [3ap.org](http://3ap.org)



Mingo Creek Park Observatory

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Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

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## January Meeting: Enlightening Talk on Visual Star Colors

At the January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, at the Carnegie Science Center, our very own Truman Kohman will give a talk on "Visual Star Colors from Instrumental Photometry." He submitted this summary:

*I will explain how colors can be displayed on a triangular-shaped diagram in which the three corners are r, g, and b (visual red, green, and blue).*

*The three color detectors of the eye grab different parts of the spectrum than the three detectors of instrumental photometry. For this reason, the astronomical instrumental photometry colors R, V, and B (red, "visual" or green, and blue) must be transposed into visual r, g, and b. A number of adjustments are necessary. The principle task is to make the Sun's color the same as that of a blackbody at 5800 degrees K (the Sun's surface temperature).*

*I will present the visual colors of blackbodies at various temperatures (computed from the Planck formula), and I will show the visual colors of stars of various spectral types, the rising and setting Sun, planets, and some familiar double stars (all computed from instrumental photometry).*

## January Highlights from Al Paslow's 2006 AstroEvents. . .

### Occultation of the Pleiades.

The waxing moon will enter the Pleiades (M45) in Taurus, passing beneath Merope and Alcyone, skimming along an area that faces towards southeast and will occultate a portion of the cluster. On Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, look for 3.6 magnitude Atlas (27 Tau ) to disappear on the dark limb of the moon at 9:53.6 p.m. EST and re-emerge on the bright limb at approximately 11:03.2 p.m. EST. A few minutes after Atlas disappears, look for the immersion of 5.2 magnitude Pleione ( 28 Tau ) at approximately 10:11.2 p.m. EST, also by the dark limb, and its return to view on the moons bright side at 10:55.6 p.m. EST. This should be very nice to watch in binoculars or a small wide field telescope, as the event will happen high in the sky, nearly 70° from the horizon!! Don't miss this one!

### Opposition of Saturn

Always beautiful when at opposition and rings are well exposed, the planet will again be magnificent all month, heading higher in the sky each evening, and visible just after dark rising in the east on the 27th. The close approach of the planet will help us on the evening of January 10<sup>th</sup> find the tiny strange world of Iapetus. This moon has such a large orbit it is often far outside the telescopes field of view. Strangely, it is 5 times brighter, at western elongation (magnitude 10.1) than during eastern elongation (magnitude 11.9), as one side of the planet is much darker than the other.

Since Iapetus (sometimes called Japetus) at it's brightest will be about 12 ring diameters away from Saturn, you may try to look for it on January 10<sup>th</sup> when it will be perhaps within a ring diameter south of Saturn. At time 9:00 p.m. EST Saturn won't be too high in the heavens, but this is a good time to identify what you can. The moons will shift a bit as the night goes on, but it's worth a look later too, if you can.

### Delta Cancrid Meteor Shower:

On the evenings of January 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>, the shower will radiate from Cancer and near the "Beehive Cluster". This stream produces less than 6 meteors per hour, and will probably be washed out by the full Moon this year, which rises at 6:30 p.m.

**Editor's Note:** Because the Guide Star was not completed in time for January 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, I've omitted Al's section on the Quantarid Meteor Shower. Sorry for any inconvenience.

## New Members in the New Year

What better way to enter the New Year than with greetings to new friends? We begin 2006 with a sizeable group of new AAAP members.

Welcome to these new members who were voted in on December 9<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Bash, and thanks to John Holtz for doing such a marvelous job of introducing them.

- MIGUEL ACEVEDO
- ROY O. BACKER
- KEVIN CONNOLLY
- EDUARDO DE CASTRO
- MAURICE DE CASTRO
- JOE KANN
- ERIC RAMOS
- BOB THIBADEAU
- ROBERT YAKULIS
- JUAN ENRIQUE URENA MINIER
- NELSON ERIC PICHARDO ROJAS
- ROBERTO ANTONIO GUERRERO MIESES

## The New Streetlight By Rodney Horner

In March of 2003, I was the unfortunate victim of a new street light installation. I'd purchased the house from another club member just several months before, and it was in a fairly dark area (for a housing development). This is in Plum Borough.

While I was meeting a neighbor a couple of doors up, I found the answer to the situation. They had a streetlight in their yard that had not worked for many months because the wire went bad under their driveway. They figured that Duquesne Light had just stuck another streetlight somewhere nearby. That turned out to be the truth, even though it violated Duquesne Light's own policy.

Both my neighbor and myself were amazed at the amount of light this one was showing. Most of the streetlights in the neighborhood were not too bad, and were at least a little bit shielded, but this one was three times brighter and showed much more to the sides all around than onto the street. Neither of us needed any nightlights anymore. Looking out of the front of the houses was like looking into a light bulb, and demonstrated the glare effect to the max. Someone could have been stealing the street and we probably could not have seen it past the glare! Even our backyards, which normally would have been completely dark, were bright enough to read by, and could easily become inviting targets to vandalism. The lamp had to go, we both agreed.

(It turned out, according to Duquesne Light, that the regular streetlights were 70 watts, and this one was 100 watts. I think I could have used dozens of 100-watt bulbs and not had this brightness.)

My first step was to send a nice letter to Mayor John Schmeck. After over a month, no response at all.

Next was a call to the Borough. It was tricky, but I was eventually connected with the administrator at the Plum Planning Commission. She was at least accidentally helpful by supplying this bit of information: no street lights are installed unless they are requested. About this specific streetlight, she indicated that another light could not be replaced up the street, so I must have gotten it instead. When I told her about how bright it was, she said it must have been intended to shine up a couple of houses to where the old one was. Silly, considering all the trees in the way, in front of my neighbor's house. Anyway, it was there now and it would be really expensive to remove, so I was stuck with it. She did, however, give me the name of her contact person at Duquesne Light.

I called Duquesne Light to ask who had requested the new street light installation at my address. The representative was quite helpful. It took a few follow-up calls while she tracked things down. As it turns out, *nobody* had requested it. She was in touch with Penn Hills (the local Duquesne Light district) maintenance. She even had them call me. Yes, they had moved the due the trouble it would take to replace it at its original location. It would be removed the next day.

A couple of weeks later it was still there, so I made another call to the contact person. It turns out, according to Penn Hills

maintenance, that the light had not been removed because it was not a new installation. It had always been there! Well, how would I prove otherwise? It was a nice new fiberglass pole with a different light head than the other light posts in the neighborhood. Even if I had lived at the house long enough to take pictures, I would have avoided the light post in the pictures.

My answer turned out to be in the county real estate Website. They had taken an assessment picture back in 2001. It was not the picture of my house, but the neighbor's. Because of the trees in front of my neighbor's home, they had taken the picture from the street, directly in front of my house. The new street post would have been in the middle of the picture.

Still, even knowing now that it was a new installation, there were problems. There were conversations between Duquesne Light and the Plum Planning Commission Administrator. The planning commission wanted to keep a light there to stay legal with the spacing requirements.

I had quite a few conversations with the Duquesne Light contact. Most were largely off subject and interesting. We both had nice vacations. I called ten times between May and August. I kept a detailed log. I tried to call every two weeks. Not too often, but persistent. These conversations stayed pleasant and were the key to moving forward. Maybe she did not want to hear from me every couple or few weeks, but I never made it difficult either. Her research eventually led to the spacing requirements. It turns out that there were many more lights than were actually required, and all would be legal with the light removed. On August 3, 2004, the light was gone. The hole was filled, and crabgrass grew where the post had previously existed.

## Bad Astronomy in Commercials

Noted by Mary DeVaughn

Dad and little daughter are outside, wishing upon a star—which is moving, so Dad tells her that it's a satellite.

So far, so good.

Next scene: the pony the kid wished for is being delivered, to the Dad's utter confusion. OK, it's Commercial World; weird stuff happens.

The ad is for DirecTV. (*Somebody up there loves you...DirecTV!*)

But, surely DirecTV satellites are **GEOSTATIONARY?!?**

LOL! Maybe she wished on the International Space Station or an Iridium. ;-)



## Party Recipies Revealed

By Ann Norman

By popular demand, we bring you a selection of recipes from the feast at the Holiday Party. The first one even has an astronomical theme!



### Kozmic Kolbasi (*Don Shepherd*)

The quantities are for a three-pound package of kolbasi, so scale up or down as necessary.

One three-pound package of kolbasi, cut into 1/2" chunks  
 One package cherry Kool-Aid, unsweetened  
 One cup sugar  
 One cup water  
 Three ounces yellow mustard

Mix the last four ingredients in a big pot. Add kolbasi and put on high heat. Stir often. The syrup will draw water out of the kolbasi, thinning it. Keep boiling it. As syrup thickens again, it will want to burn if you don't keep stirring, so turn the heat down and stir frequently.

Cook until the sauce thickens. Serve warm.

### Pretzels & Hershey Kisses with M&Ms on Top (*Bill & Maureen*)

Preheat oven to 275 degrees. Spray Pam on cookie sheets. Place one layer of mini pretzels, on cookie sheet. On top of each one lace one Hershey Kiss. Place in oven for 3 min. Remove from oven and immediately put one M&M on top of each kiss pressing down to insure the chocolate adheres to the pretzel. Cool in refrigerator.

### Apricot Horns (*Linda Bailey*)

1 sm. cake yeast  
 6 c. flour  
 1 lb. original margarine  
 1 sm. can evaporated milk (I used a 12 oz. can)  
 2 egg yolks  
 1 whole egg  
 Pinch of salt  
 Grated rind from one orange  
 2-3 jars apricot pastry filling (Baker's)

Combine yeast into flour; blend in margarine (like pie dough). Add eggs, milk, salt and orange. Mix together thoroughly until dough comes off hands. Roll into balls the size of walnuts and place on trays to chill overnight. Roll out balls in powdered sugar. Spread filling; roll up and turn ends like crescents. Bake on ungreased baking sheets at 375 degrees. Baking time: 15-18 minutes. Makes 10-12 dozen, depending on size of balls.

### Pilaf with Chanterelles and Toasted Pecans (*Charlotte Tunney*)



1 cup Basmati rice, 1 3/4 cup water,  
 1/2 teaspoon salt,  
 cooked by package directions.  
 2/3 cup pecan halves, broken  
 1/4 - 1/2 teas. crushed or ground rosemary (more or less as you prefer.)  
 1 cup sliced chanterelle mushrooms (or any kind you like.)  
 2/3 cup diced onions  
 1 10 oz. package frozen peas (thawed)  
 \*butter (to cook and to finish)  
 olive oil wine (any kind or you could use fruit juice)  
 salt and pepper

Cook the rice. Break up the pecan halves & put into a large skillet with 2 tablespoons butter. Toast stirring constantly until hot and fragrant. Pour out onto a plate, sprinkle with the Rosemary and set aside. Add 1 tablespoon butter and 1 Tablespoon olive oil to the skillet and put in the onions and a half teaspoon of salt, stir. Add the chanterelles to the onions, add 1 tablespoon wine. Sauté, stirring frequently about 5 minutes or until most of the juice has evaporated. Add the peas and cook for another minute or two. Add the mushroom mixture to the rice mixing well. Stir in the pecans and 1 or 2 tablespoons of butter, some salt and a generous sprinkling of pepper. Mix well, taste for salt & pepper. Enjoy!

### No Bake Fudge (*Mary DeVaughn*)



Makes one 13x9 pan:

2 cups sugar  
 1/2 cup milk  
 1/2 cup (one stick) butter or margarine (do not use soft margarine; use the stick variety or it doesn't set right)  
 1/4 to 1/3 cup unsweetened baker's cocoa powder (depending on how chocolaty you like it)

Mix above in large heavy saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly, till it comes to a full boil. Remove from heat and let cool for one minute.

Add: Pinch of salt  
 1 tsp vanilla extract  
 1/2 cup peanut butter (smooth or crunchy, depending on your taste) Stir till peanut butter is completely melted.

Add: 3 cups quick-cooking oatmeal

Spread in 13x9 pan & refrigerate several hours or overnight. Cut into squares. Tastes better (to me, anyhow) when kept at room temperature, but you can keep in fridge if you prefer. Enjoy :-)

## Eric Fischer Shares His Observations On 30 Years With the AAAP

**The Guide Star editors requested that Eric share this story on the occasion of his 30-year anniversary with the AAAP!**

**Where would we all be without you?**

**Thanks and congratulations!**



Before I joined the AAAP in 1976, I was convinced I had become a pretty good amateur astronomer and space scientist. My astronomical pilot light was first lit with observations such as the Echo balloon satellite and the Orion Nebula (through a wobbly 2-inch refractor). But in the late '50s I was more interested in trains and battleships.

In the early '60s I bought a paperback version of the "Golden Book of Astronomy" with its beautiful renderings of the constellations (still the best to this day). My first cosmic shock-and-awe moment came when I read that some stars are much larger and hotter than the Sun. Looking for more such mind-bogglers, I thumbed through better books and began to build a "baseball card" knowledge of astronomy. I could recite the distances and diameters of all the planets, the names of all first magnitude stars, etc. I even memorized teaching lines such as "Oh Be A Fine Girl Kiss Me" and "My Very Educated Mother..." After awhile I figured I knew as much about astronomy as trains and battleships.

In early 1976, I visited the new Astro-Marts store in the North Hills and was invited by clerk Tom Reiland to attend an upcoming AAAP meeting. On February 10, 1976, I strutted into my first club session at the old Buhl Planetarium, confidently expecting to show off my astronomical stuff. Midway through the meeting, George Lindbloom stood up and gave a variable star report. Variable star? What's that? Julian date? Who is Julian? As the meeting wore on, I slumped in my seat, realizing I was still in the astronomical minor leagues.

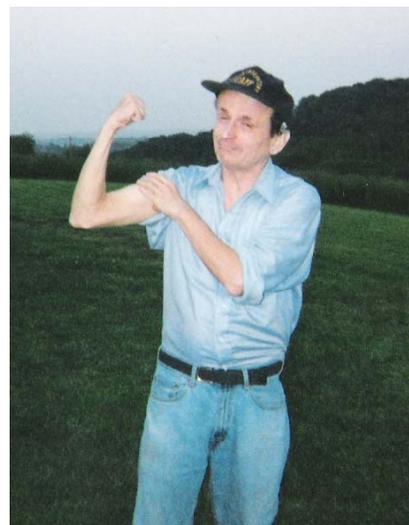
The only way out of this funk was to ask questions and risk getting that "*don't you know anything?*" look. I was surprised to find most members almost bursting to help me learn the sky and how to observe it. It all made sense when I attended my first star party in North Park. As I listened to club members interact with the public, I noticed how they shifted mental gears from the technical jargon of the meetings to simple explanations and analogies. I finally figured out that the AAAP was not a Think Tank, but evangelists for popular astronomy.

I also learned that the AAAP was desperate for help. As a recently graduated (and unemployed) journalism major, I figured I could assist with the club newsletter The Guide Star. When I offered to help write and edit copy, I was quickly voted Editor and a relieved Dick Dickinson gladly stepped aside from that post. The Guide Star had good content, but looked like it had been rolled through a typewriter. I was determined it would have a true newsletter layout style when I rolled it through my typewriter.

Remembering my long-ago Echo observations, I took the Guide Star opportunity to promote artificial satellite observing as a bona-fide branch of backyard astronomy (they're not just annoying streaks on astrophotos). Thus was borne the "Satellite Sentinel" column, and later a canned presentation on satellite observing that I still run from time to time.

As Editor, you attend many soon-forgotten Executive Committee meetings. But I vividly remember one EC meeting in the late 70s when Tom Reiland proposed building a club observatory. I was instantly captivated by the idea. As fate would have it, Tom was hired as a "night watchman" (☺) at Allegheny Observatory and had to invert his sleeping schedule as a result. I gladly offered to take his job as Project Manager, and let George Lindbloom and Wade Barbin take on the skill positions, preparing design drawings/calculations, bills-of-material, etc.

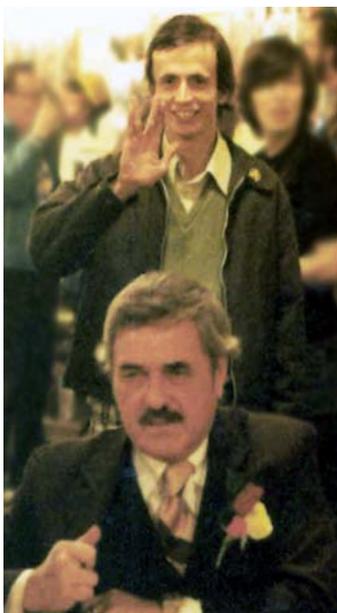
As it turned out, the skilled work was the easy part. Just finding a site for Wagman was Herculean effort. On one occasion, I embarrassed myself by dragging four club members to a tree-covered hilltop in Harmar township, never bothering to check if it was private property. When we found the Deer Lakes Park hilltop in January, 1979, frustration was temporarily replaced with hope for the new facility. Then came five years of food fights with Allegheny County lawyers, Frazer Township inspectors, insurance agents, utility company reps, site surveyors and prospective contractors. I never imagined going through so much grief to raise a windowless, unheated, garage-sized concrete block building. Years later, as I helped herd 1200 visitors at a Comet Hyacutake star party, I wished all those public and private-sector bureaucrats could be there to see public enthusiasm at its best. My most memorable Wagman night: counting 49 satellites from dusk to dawn. Of course, John Holtz counted 51.



## Eric Fischer Shares His Observations Con't.

In 1990, I decided to try my hand at being AAAP President . . . not bad for someone who felt like a preschooler at his first club meeting. But my timing was lousy. For example, we lost our regular meeting place in the defunct Buhl Planetarium, and I was consumed trying to find a new meeting site. My first choice of Duquesne University turned out to be a dud, and we bounced between four different venues for several years. Worse, I got caught in the middle of a controversy about what to do with the recently donated 11-inch Brashear Refractor (fix or sell?) Happily, the Brashear debate was settled and led to the scope's restoration and the construction of the second Wagman wing. In retrospect, my Herbert Hoover presidency gave me a new appreciation for skilled peacemakers and negotiators such as George Guzik.

Throughout the 1980s and '90s my astronomical learning curve climbed higher by what I learned at meetings and star parties. I didn't read all that many books or Sky & Telescope magazines cover to cover, and I forgot most of tidbit data I had memorized years before. In fact, to this day I can only identify a handful of Messier objects and fewer still of the minor constellations. Doesn't matter a bit. At star parties, I find it pointless to say Antares is "X" light years away or "X" miles in diameter. That Antares could swallow our Solar System out to the orbit of Mars *does* matter to my star party guests.



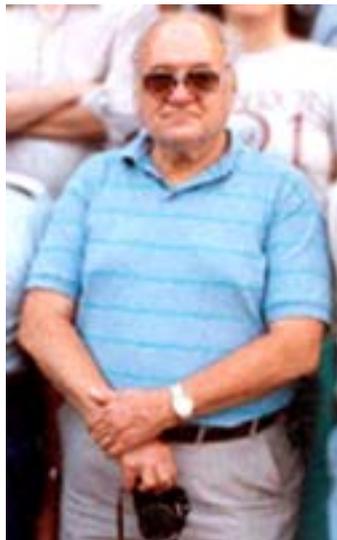
In 1996 I decided to re-enlist as Guide Star Editor, feeling it needed to look once again like a monthly journal. Back in 1976, I was pressed to fill both sides of a 8.5 x 11 sheet. By the late 90's I was pressed to keep it under 12 pages as our hyper-active club soared past 500 members. I planned to stay 10 years as Editor, until I was hospitalized for a major operation last year. What I thought was a near-perfect newsletter has been much improved by Kelly Fletcher.

Believing every AAAP member should contribute something to the club, no

matter how small, I took over the "Upcoming Events" section of the monthly meetings, and continue to manage the Wagman brochures. I also have some "why-don't-we" improvements in mind for Wagman, and I'm working on astronomy-related project that will hopefully garner a Guinness World Record in the next few years. In the mean time, I'll be on the lookout for any new members who think they are astronomical minor-leaguers.

## Farewell to a Friend: In Memory of John Schwartz

By Kelly Fletcher



On Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, we got the sad news that friend and long-time AAAP member John Schwartz had passed away at the age of 82. As a knowledgeable astronomer and past president of the AAAP, over the years he generously shared his expertise and time with many younger club members.

It's difficult, in a way, to write this—to come up with a fitting memorial for a man I've never met. I only know John Schwartz through what other members have told me. For instance, Tom Reiland remembers John for his kindness; in Tom's early years in the club, he took Tom "under his wing," inviting him to visit his home observatory and talking with him for hours about astronomy and telescopes. Dave Smith remembers his invaluable contributions in the restoration of the Brashear telescope—he fabricated many of the screws and small parts—and as an individual with a broad and varied range of interests; he was building a miniature railroad engine, he drew cartoons and comics for The Guide Star; he freely shared his love of cameras and photography, and was an active member of the Academy of Science and Art of Pittsburgh. John Close cites John as "a great person, as well an accomplished amateur astronomer and faithful AAAP member." I am sure that many other members have similar good memories of him, and that there are far too many to list here.

One thing is certain: All who knew him will miss him. It is probably safe to say, as well, that those of us who *didn't* know him, will miss having had that opportunity. One of Tom Reiland's posts on the listserv expressed it very well:

*It's really hard watching all the great "old time members" leave us. They can never be replaced or repaid for all that they've done for the club.*

*They took me under their wings when I joined the club and taught me and many other current members how to observe and make the club what it is today. I was blessed to know the likes of John, Leo Scanlon, Leo Schoenig, George Lindbloom, Dr. Nicholas Wagman, Catherine Delaney, Chuck LeRoy, Dick Dickinson, George Sommerman and so many others who were there in the early days of the AAAP.*

*We'll never see the likes of them again.*



## January AstroEvents By Al Paslow

**Mercury:** You may glimpse this tiny world very low in early morning skies only rising about an hour before the sun in Sagittarius making it difficult to see unless the transparency is very good. Towards the month's end, Mercury will return to the sun, reaching superior conjunction on January 26<sup>th</sup> and the fast moving planet will reappear in the western evening skies next month

**Venus** begins the year as "evening star" at brilliant -4.4 magnitude low in the south west but rapidly is heading towards the sun, fading and setting by 6:30 p.m. and should completely disappear by midmonth as it moves into inferior conjunction. The planet will return to the morning sky before the end of the month steadily increasing in brightness. Venus is very large telescopically, having a diameter of approximately 60 arc-seconds a good part of January. It is also in the constellation Sagittarius.

**Mars**, The Red Planet, well past November' opposition, while high in the sky, will continue to fade as the grand show is over. The planet's disk is rapidly shrinking in size from 12 arcseconds to 9 arcseconds at month's end. The planet's apparent magnitude drops from -0.6 to only +0.2 during this time and is rapidly moving towards the Pleiades. Mars is currently in Aries.

**Jupiter:** An early morning object at magnitude -1.8 rises at about 3:00 a.m. in the beginning of the month, and about 1:30 a.m. by the 31<sup>st</sup>. During this time Jupiter increases in brightness to magnitude -2.0. Still a beautiful sight low in the sky just before sunrise. Due to the late rising of the planet in Libra it is not in a very favorable position for convenient observations.

**Saturn** (approximately magnitude 0.5) in Cancer, rises in the northeast around 7 p.m. in early January, and reaches opposition on 27<sup>th</sup> and will then be visible all night long. The ring appearance is somewhat flatter and more narrow than in previous oppositions as our planetary orbits move towards the upcoming edge-on presentation that will occur on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. This year Saturn will still put on a fine display. Watch the shadow of Saturn's disk be perfectly aligned within the rings around opposition!

\*\* Saturn will be just west of the stars of M-44, the Beehive Cluster in Cancer, and will remain a beautiful sight this month—take a look with binoculars! A view in a even small telescope will reveal the strong dark shadow of Saturn's disk projected against the rings behind it. During January if conditions are good you may try to observe six of the planet's moons with a 10-inch telescope. Elusive Iapetus, whose journey takes a whopping 79 days to orbit the planet, will be fairly close and somewhat below (south) of the disk of Saturn on the evening of Jan 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006 around 9:00 p.m. EST, making it easier to locate.

**Uranus and Neptune:** Both planets are in unfavorable positions for good telescopic views. Uranus sets by 9:30 in early January and Neptune is set before 7:45 p.m. Of course the situation gets worse by month's end, reducing these times more than an hour and a half, rendering observations best for later in the year.

**Pluto** is currently lost in the glare of the sun located in Serpens /southern Ophiuchus area. Be advised that when observable, it is extremely dim at magnitude 14 and must be observed with large instruments and star charts to be located.

**Comet McNaught C/2005 E2** is moving northeast through Aquarius this month and into Pices early in February. It should hit 10<sup>th</sup> magnitude this month, but is quite low in the western skies. Discovered in March 2005. For all comets, use finder charts as published on the Web or at the AAAP site as posted.

## Selected Dates

**January 1:** Happy New Year!! Moon at Perigee: 361750 km  
Giuseppe Piazzi discovered the first asteroid, Ceres in 1801.

**January 3-4:** Quadrantid Meteor show; the crescent Moon will set early ensuring a dark sky for an optimal performance!

**January 4:** Earth at Perihelion (Closest approach to the sun.) Sun reaches largest apparent diameter of 32'32".

**January 6:** FIRST QUARTER Moon; rises at noon and sets at midnight.

**January 8:** Mars 1.4°S of Moon.

**January 9:** Occultation of Atlas and Pleione in the Pleiades, begins just before 10:00 p.m. EST.

**January 10:** Saturn's Moons. At around 9:00 p.m. EST. Saturn's elusive moon Iapetus, at magnitude 10.9, will be visible just south of the planet; do not confuse it with Rhea, at magnitude 9.7, to the planets north/east. You may see Tethys, magnitude 10.2, just above (north) and close to Dione, magnitude 10.3, in a line together on the west side of the rings while fainter Enceladus magnitude 11.7, is on the east of the planet, and will be the most difficult to see. All moons maybe within a ring diameter or two of the planet at about this time, with the exception of Titan, which is further outward to the east but brighter magnitude 8.3.

**January 14:** Full Moon tonight!! Venus at Inferior Conjunction and cannot be seen.

**January 15:** Saturn 3.8°S of Moon. Look for the Praesepe 2°S of the moon tonight. Phase 98 %. Tonight look for two Iridium Flares. First one at 7:28:51 P.M. EST magnitude -1.5, looks towards Eridani. Second one at 7:35:31 Magnitude -2.3 in Perseus.

**January 20:** Iridium Flare at 7:07:41 p.m. EST.

**January 22:** Last Quarter Moon; Moon rises at midnight and sets at noon.

**January 23:** Jupiter 4.7°N of Moon.

**January 25:** Venus at Perihelion.

**January 26:** Mercury at Superior Conjunction with the sun and cannot be seen.

**January 27:** Saturn at Opposition in Cancer. Distance=8.127AU.

**January 29:** NEW MOON; Moon rises at sunrise and sets at sunset.

**January 30:** Moon at Perigee: 357781 km.

**January 31:** Apollo 14 Launch on this date in 1971—35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**January 31:** Saturn is 5° south of the crescent Moon. Saturn within 2° of M44, the Beehive Cluster.

**February 5:** FIRST QUARTER Moon rises at noon and sets at midnight. Mars 2.2°S of Moon. Neptune-Sun Conjunction.

**February 11:** Saturn 3.9°S of Moon.

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

# We're Observing (That it's pretty cold out)

By Ann Norman

## A Cold Still Night *by John Cheng*

I've noticed how observing the sky encourages an appreciation of my surroundings.

This evening's frigid calm was paired with steady, clear air and the moon's cold whiteness seemed in tune with standing ankle deep in undisturbed snow.

The profound isolation of the objects above seems to deepen both the stillness of the night around us and the solitude of an observer working quietly at the telescope.

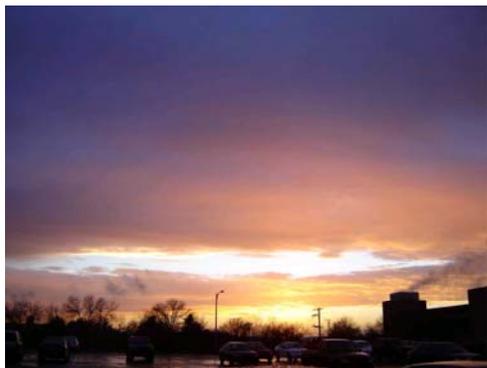
The seeing and the position of the lunar terminator yielded favorable views of both the wonderfully mysterious crater Wargentín, filled to the brim with lava—which seemingly left its neighbors unaffected—and the normally difficult Sirsalis Rille system which, we're told, requires eight inches of aperture but on this night chose to reveal itself to a three-inch refractor.

Mars, withdrawing from us with each day, is now retreating into the trees to my south and west, but is still showing sketchable detail—tonight. Cimmerium, stretched across a pearly orange globe, is noticeably smaller and more subdued than a couple of months ago.

It's humbling to think that the best views of this planet to be afforded me in my lifetime have already passed.

## BRRRRR *by Fred Klein*

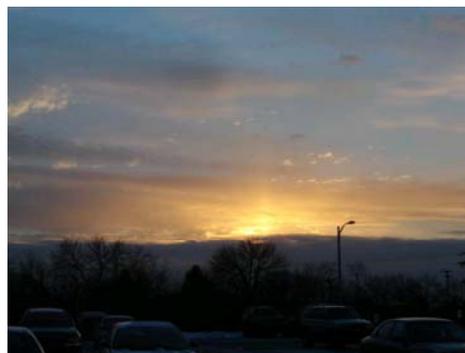
Coming out of work tonight, I looked east and saw a nice pink glow on the top of the exhaust cloud from the Springdale power plant. Just to its upper right was the nearly full moon. I tuned around and watched a very bright very orange glowing sunset. Not quite like this one from a couple weeks ago.



A little later I walked out and BRILLIANT Venus hit me in the face! Magnitude -4.7, just past maximum brightness, if I remember correctly. Turned around and the Moon and Mars entertained me. Dash back inside.

## Naked-Eye Astronomy *by Mary DeVaughn*

Brrrrr is right! Leah brought Pat over (he's finally home from Basic Training) and together they put up the tree and finished hanging the Christmas lights. So we stepped out front to see how they looked, and I looked up and saw Mars, the nearly full Moon, and Orion peeking over the house. Just as I called to the kids to look up, a brrriiggghht meteor went right through Orion! Geminid, I guess.



Nice to see one from my heavily light-polluted neighborhood. Just a few minutes ago, I walked them out the car—as I turned to go back to the house, there was another bright meteor! If it weren't so darn cold, I'd have stayed out longer, but two meteors in 20 minutes is two more than I've seen in the past two months.

## Atmospheric Phenomenon *by Daniel Fundo*

An hour before sunset tonight, we had the brightest sun dog I have ever seen! It was to the left of the setting sun...couldn't see one to the right. There was quite a bit of color in it to boot. Everyone was wondering what it was, so I took the opportunity to explain. I got to tell you...I got a LOT of blank stares and open mouths!!

## Very Important Address Change

AAAP Treasurer John Holtz has had a change of address and telephone number.

**John Holtz, Treasurer AAAP**  
**310 Barnes St**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15221-3301**  
**JWHoltz@aol.com**  
**412-243-1545**

Congratulations on the new accommodations, John!

## Appreciation, Applause, & Awards

In 2005, the AAAP has grown, flourished, and accomplished a great deal. We've made stunning progress on the new Mingo Creek Park Observatory, and introduced it to the public. We've begun to develop various programs to make astronomy more accessible and informative to our visitors. We've ushered almost every kind of scout imaginable (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, etc.) and even a few college and university classes around both observatories. And, in spite of the weather this year, managed to pull off quite a few successful star parties!

None of this could have happened without the dedication, perseverance—and yes, at times, good humor—of our membership. For working together and always offering a hand when needed, *all* of the members who pitched in deserve thanks. As is traditional, at the Holiday Party the AAAP showed its appreciation by offering rounds of applause and awards for members who have made especially outstanding contributions in the last year. The following members received recognition for their assistance in all things AAAP:

### Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory Star Party Volunteers

#### HATS

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Larry Sneider   | Bill Hayeslip   |
| Tom Reiland     | Bob Kalan       |
| Rowen Poole     | Bob Novak       |
| Bill Moutz      | Flac Stifel     |
| Mary DeVaughn   | Eric Heckathorn |
| Joyce O-Fischer | Bill Yorkshire  |

#### PATCHES

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Tim Colbert    | Eric Fischer |
| Kelly Fletcher | George Guzik |
| Don Hoecker    | Frank Pastin |
| Brent Samay    | John Diller  |
| Joanne Diller  | Bill Roemer  |
| Wade Barbin    | John Cheng   |
| Chris Genovese | John Holtz   |
| Steve Kalan    | Mike Petro   |
| Glen Rockhill  | Pete Zapadka |

### Mingo Creek Park Observatory Construction Volunteers

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| Larry Sneider | Flacc Stifel |
| Wade Barbin   | Denny Leach  |
| Joe Kline     | Kevin Still  |
| Gary Morrow   | Brad Kusman  |

### Mingo Creek Park Observatory Star Party Volunteers

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Gene Kulakowski | Ed Moss            |
| Al Paslow       | Kathy Desantis     |
| Larry McHenry   | Dan McKeel         |
| Mike Meteney    | Dick Hadad         |
| George Guzik    | John Diller        |
| Joan Diller     | Gerard Schuster    |
| Craig Lange     | Chrissie Chojnicki |
| Dave Smith      | Fred Klein         |
| Barb Lafon      | Laura Rhodes       |

#### The Nova Award

Gene Kulakowski Kelly Fletcher

#### The Lois Harrison Award

Kelly Fletcher

#### The George Lindbloom Award

George Guzik

## That's "Wiki," NOT "Wookie"

Posted on the AAAP listserver  
by IT Committee Chairman Craig Lang

On behalf of the IT Committee, I would like to introduce the AAAP's new Website:

[www.3ap.org](http://www.3ap.org)

Ok, so it really is not new. But there is something new about it: a new hosting company is handling it for us. Before I discuss all of the new things that will be happening at 3ap.org, I want to thank several people: Kenn Lippert, Joe Armata, John Close, Pete Zapadka, and Don Hoecker. These folks have put a lot of time and hard work into the 3ap.org Website over the last several years. Be sure to buy them a drink, give them a pat on the back, or a big ole hug next time you see them!

What is the IT Committee up to with the website?

First, the Website. The content at 3ap.org will be expanded upon and maybe even redesigned graphically. Many content ideas are being generated and keeping the IT Committee very busy. Expect to see more over the next few weeks.

Next we have some new features rolling out. A set of members-only forums with topics that include Telescope Construction, Solar Observing, Observation Logs, Astronomical Items for Sale, and plenty more.

The AAAP Wiki will be moving to its new home at 3ap.org. Look for some exciting news about that collaboration tool and how we can use it to the organization's benefit.

Other projects in the works are: centralized membership database; special interest group mailing lists; enhanced collaboration with the Night Sky Network and area schools/universities; and computer infrastructure at both of our observatories.

If this sounds exciting, we think you're right. More information will be available soon. And if you're interested in being a part of the IT Committee, we'll be happy to have you along for the ride!

# January 2006

| Sunday  | Monday   | Tuesday   | Wednesday   | Thursday | Friday   | Saturday  |
|---|--|---|---|----------|--|---|
| 1<br>New Year's Day   | 2<br>   | 3   | 4   | 5        | 6<br> | 7   |
| 8   | 9  | 10  | 11<br>                      | 12       | 13<br>AAAP Meeting<br>7:30 PM<br>Carnegie Science Center                                 | 14<br> |
| 15  | 16   | 17<br> | 18  | 19       | 20   | 21  |
| 22<br>   | 23<br> | 24  | 25  | 26       | 27   | 28  |
| 29<br> | 30   | 31  | The aging process has you firmly in its grasp if you never get the urge to throw a snowball.<br>--Doug Larson |          |  |      |

## Looking ahead: Winterfest is MARCH 4, 2006!!!

**Editor's Note on 2006 Star Party Schedule:** It has been brought my attention that there is a potential scheduling conflict on April 7<sup>th</sup>—both a business meeting and a star party are scheduled for that date. I will publish further information on this in the next issue, along with the star party schedules for both Observatories.

## AAAP Long-Range Meeting Schedule

Feb. 10, 2006  
Mar. 10, 2006  
Apr. 7, 2006  
May 12, 2006

## Classifieds

### FOR SALE:

Meade LX200 GPS with MANY extras including; 64,000 object data base wedge, solar filter, color filter set, 5 eye pieces, auto focus, 2X, nebula filter. \$3500.00 invested, must sell—moving to much smaller home.

Contact John Savine: 412-374-9122  
JROW 200@msn.com

### FOR SALE:

(posted in *The Butler Eagle*, December 5<sup>th</sup>; possibly worth a call)  
TELESCOPE 8" Dobsonian Celestron star hopper, many extras.  
Like new, great for Christmas, \$195 or best offer.

724-265-4727  
412-310-4970

### FOR SALE:

\*\*Celestron CR150 HD 6-inch refractor with case \$400. \*\*Sirius MV1-1 minus violet filter \$50. I paid \$75.

\*\*Discovery 90mm Short tube Richfield EQ with case \$125.  
I paid \$329.

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

\*\*Orion dual beam astro flashlight \$20. I paid \$26.

\*\*Nikon Lookout IV 10X50 binoculars with tripod adapter.

I'm willing to make a package deal.

Asking \$600 for the total package.

Contact Lloyd: 724 228 3684  
obie1@pulsenet.com

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

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

#### 2006-2006 Executive Officers:

|                    |   |              |
|--------------------|---|--------------|
| President:         | <b>Richard Bailey</b><br>richbailey@att.net           | 412-766-3527 |
| Vice President:    | <b>Ann Norman</b><br>redmarsmom@aol.com               | 412-242-6806 |
| Treasurer:         | <b>John Holtz</b><br>jwholtz@aol.com                  | 412-243-1545 |
| Corresponding Sec: | <b>Charlotte Tunney</b><br>tunney@carnegielibrary.org | 412-441-3958 |
| Recording Sec:     | <b>Dennis Derda</b><br>derdad@capa.net                | 724-224-4688 |
| Membership Sec:    | <b>Mark Schomer</b><br>mark9@zoominternet.net         |              |
| Guide Star Editor: | <b>Kelly Fletcher</b><br>aaap@lexilena.com            | 724-316-8480 |

#### **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 \$34.00 |
| <u>Night Sky Magazine:</u>           | Add \$18.00 |

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

1. Make check payable to "AAAP Inc."
2. Send check to John Holtz, Treasurer,  
310 Barnes Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15221-3301

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

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