



The Guide Star



**Mingo Creek Park
Observatory**

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

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

Website: 3ap.org



**Nicholas E. Wagman
Observatory**

April 2006

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Hubble Update at April 7th Meeting

by Ann Norman

Don't miss James Jeletic,
Hubble Space Telescope
Science Operations
Manager at the Goddard
Space Flight Center, who



will be presenting our annual Hubble Update at the April 7th meeting.

JOHN DOBSON VISITS THE AAAP

The AAAP will be hosting
John Dobson
over the April 1st and 2nd
(New Moon) weekend.

Turn to page 2 for more
information about Mr.
Dobson and this exciting
opportunity for AAAP
members.



Enjoy the eye candy as we survey the best and most recent Hubble images.

You'll also get the scoop on the fate of the beloved telescope. As always, there will be plenty of souvenirs, including 8x10's of Hubble's greatest hits.

Come and bring a friend! You don't have to be an amateur astronomer to enjoy the Hubble Update.

John Dobson Visits the AAAP

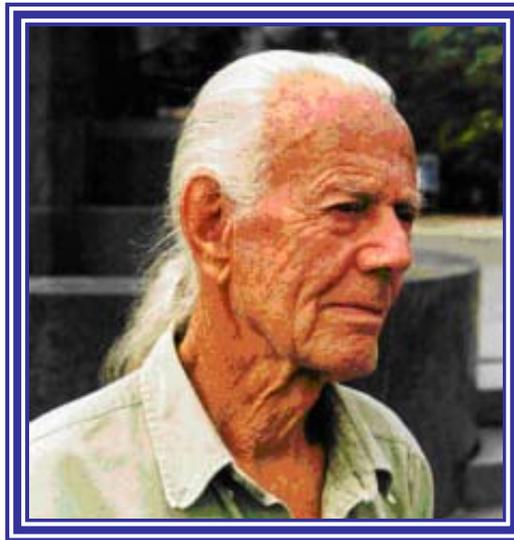
John Dobson will be visiting the AAAP in the first week of April. We will be able to hear him talk at **Astronomy Weekend** at the Carnegie Science Center on Saturday, April 1st. He will also be speaking at the Mingo Creek Park Observatory that evening at 7:30 p.m., so don't miss this special opportunity!

Many thanks to Bill and Maureen Moutz for hosting Mr. Dobson during his stay!

John Dobson: A Brief Biography

(Excerpted from his official website)

After completing a degree in Chemistry at the University of California at Berkeley in 1943, John took defense-related jobs which he held until he joined the Vedanta Monastery in San Francisco in 1944, becoming a monk of the Ramakrishna Order. He spent the next 23 years in the Monastery.



Naturally, when people started to look through John's telescopes some of the neighbors and their kids wanted John to help them make their own telescopes. He realized that this would cause his AWOL hours from the monastery to increase. Nevertheless, he continued and

Having graduated from the university as a chemist, he wanted to see for himself what the Universe looked like, so John built his first telescope in 1956. His telescopes were made from discarded hose reels, lumber core cut-outs from school house doors, and scrap wood. This was the humble origin of what has come to be known as the "Dobsonian" mount.

The desire that drove John to make more and larger telescopes, and to put himself in increasing peril of expulsion by monastic authorities, was to give everybody the opportunity to see the Universe first-hand. He put discarded wagon wheels on his telescopes to facilitate wheeling them around the residential neighborhood surrounding the monastery - delighting kids and adults with the views of the night sky.

expanded his activities, till he was thrown out of the monastery in the Spring of 1967, after 23 years as a monk.

John decided to dedicate the rest of his life to public service and hitchhiked to San Francisco. Then as now, John had many friends, and they helped to keep him fed, clothed, and sheltered. He retrieved some of his telescopes from Sacramento and set them up at the corner of Broderick and Jackson streets, in San Francisco, every clear night. Thousands of people looked through the telescopes while John talked to them in detail about what they were seeing.

In 1968, some of the kids who had made telescopes under John's guidance, and who joined him in setting up scopes at Jackson and Broderick, started a public-

John Dobson Bio, *cont.*

service organization named the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers.

The "Dobsonian" mount has made large, "user friendly" telescopes affordable and accessible to the general public. Thousands of people have made their own sturdy, low-cost telescopes under John's direction or on their own by using his simple design. Telescopes with light-weight mirrors previously considered unusable, long focal ratios previously considered unmanageable, and apertures previously considered unthinkable are now in the hands of lovers of astronomy around the globe.

John Dobson's life has been a tremendous inspiration to a great many people. John and the *Sidewalk Astronomers* continue to serve the public with large telescopes, providing free "star parties" and slide shows under dark skies and city lights, encouraging the citizens of this planet to think and wonder about the Universe and give them a chance to see its beauty with their own eyes.

The Messier Marathon: Ready, Set, Go!

by Tom Reiland

The best week for the Messier Marathon for 2006 will be March 25th to March 31st. The prime nights will be from two days before to two after New Moon, which is March 29th.

The Marathon is an all night observing session during which time participants try to observe as many of the 110 objects on the list as possible. One-hundred and nine is the most that can be seen from our location. That occurs from March 12th to March 18th or 19th near New Moon. This year 106 to 107 will be possible at the end of March. M30, M74 and M77 will not be visible. M33 will be difficult. A dark observing location with good horizons is recommended. Good luck to all who attempt it. I might try it on Monday, March 27th.

There is no such thing as a mini-marathon. That's an oxymoron. It will take about ten hours to complete the marathon from about 7:30 PM to 5:30 a.m. or earlier. You may not get 106 or 107, but as long as you get at least 70 or more you've accomplished something.

The Suit Sat Puzzle

posed by Eric Fischer

Greetings & Felicitations to New Members

Welcome to the new members who were voted in at the last two business meetings!

RENEE FERA

DAVE MUELLER (rejoining)

CECILIA Q. CLARE

RICHARD F. CLARE

CHERYL FARNER

HERB GODLEWSKI



When an untethered astronaut is orbiting the Earth, is he/she considered a "Natural Satellite" or an "Artificial Satellite"? Not a Natural Satellite of the Earth in the same sense as the Moon. Not Artificial...not a man-made machine. (Leaving my parents' basement now to get some dinner!)

Astronomy Weekend: A Stellar Event

by George Guzik

Plans are shaping up for this year's Astronomy Weekend event, which will be held at the Carnegie Science Center on April 1st and 2nd. Our theme for this year's event is "Moon, Mars, and Beyond."

- Our Special Guest at Astronomy Weekend 2006 will be John Dobson of the Sidewalk Astronomers (SATURDAY)
- Tim Spuck of the Oil Region Astronomical Society will present the history and science of the Spitzer Space Telescope
- NASA JPL will be represented by Elizabeth Warner who will discuss the very successful Deep Impact mission
- Dan Malerbo of the CSC will describe Stardust@home and how you can contribute to the analysis of data from the recently returned space probe

Most "AW" activities will be held in the lobby of the CSC, which is free admission. On Saturday, members and their families can get in free to hear John Dobson speak (and get into all the Saturday events and areas of the Science Center), by going to the volunteer room and getting name tags. Because the AAAP is helping bring in the speaker SATURDAY YOU DO NOT HAVE TO ACTUALLY VOLUNTEER; ADMISSION WILL BE FREE TO AAAP MEMBERS. For Sunday's speakers you will still need a general admission ticket unless you actually volunteer!

Last year, Astronomy magazine generously provided a telescope which we raffled during the event. They will support us again this year by providing another telescope for raffle.

AAAPers are bringing their expertise with exhibits on telescopes, astrophotography, binoculars, telescope making, solar observing, and the Night Sky Network.

Children's activities will include making Mars soil, comets, a moon phase demonstrator, and making art for a "Space Wall" at the CSC. In addition, the Yorkshire family will perform their ever popular Cosmic Face Painting activity on Saturday. We'll also have meteorites and Moon rocks on hand.

Pittsburgh Space Command and the Tripoli Rocketry Association will bring their assortments of great rockets to Astronomy Weekend. In fact, Tripoli is considering bringing a rocket that might not fit in the lobby of the CSC! After all, the ceiling is only 16 feet high. Be sure to check the Omnimax theater lobby for something large...

Astronomy Weekend is an important event for us because it affords us an opportunity to "repay" the CSC for the support they provide to us during the year. The CSC provides a meeting facility to us for our business meetings. They provide the use of their audio visual equipment at those meetings and they even hold special planetarium shows for us. Let's show the CSC that we appreciate their support by supporting Astronomy Weekend!

If you plan to bring a scope or display, please report to the CSC's lower security/employee entrance (parking lot level, on the west end of the building) between 9:00 and 10:00 am. That will give you time to set up before the crowds build in the late morning.

Classifieds

WANTED:

0.9-inch eyepiece(s). Am refurbishing an old Simmons 2 1/2-inch refractor for my grandson and need any type of 0.9 inch eyepiece. Call Dave Pensenstadler: 412.673.6797

FREE TO GOOD HOME: REFLECTOR OTA

OTA handmade years ago by another member. Mirror is stainless steel, wood optical tube, two secondary mirrors that can be used either as a Newtonian or as a Casselgrain telescope (F-5, I believe). Needs assembled and mount. Free, just pick up. Call Jack 724.845.7754

FOR SALE:

Orion 9x50 Finder Scope. Fully coated, 50-mm achromatic objective lens, which provides 9X magnification and a standard (inverted) 5.5 degree field of view. The aluminum tube is blackened and baffled to enhance contrast. It comes with an aluminum bracket with a dovetail foot that fits most Orion telescopes.

If you don't have an Orion telescope, you can purchase a standard base from Orion for \$10 to install on your scope to accommodate the dovetail foot. This finder scope came with my Orion 8 Dob, but I had to replace it with a right-angle finder scope to save my aching back. It is basically new and has been covered in plastic and stored in a box to keep out the dust.

The Orion catalog lists this finder scope for \$59.95 (Product #7200), but I would be willing to sell it for \$30. If anyone is interested, please send an email directly to my email address. John Mozer, jdmozer@aol.com

* Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc. *

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AAAP Member Dues*:

AAAP Dues:	\$18.00
Junior Member (under 18):	\$13.00
<u>Sky & 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

COMING UP IN THE MAY ISSUE:

Election Ballots for AAAP 2006 Elections
Member Feature Article: Dave Smith
2006 Star Party Schedule

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