



# 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](http://3ap.org)



Nicholas E. Wagman  
Observatory

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## FIRST SUMMERFEST By Ann Norman

I want to thank all those who worked so hard for a successful Summerfest—though with almost total cloud cover for both nights, it did not turn out as successfully as hoped. The observing was a gamble and we lost. Our First Light Party succeeded even without starlight (seems Mingo Observatory is a great party venue as well as a great observatory). Our speakers were excellent and delivered their talks to a packed room. The camping and children's activities were wonderful, but attendance was low. Summerfest was brought to you (mainly) by Kathy DeSantis, Ed Moss, and me—in that order. It wouldn't have happened at all without Ed Moss. The Star Cruise committee was totally prepared to give up and disband after two nearby dark-sky star parties announced themselves for the same new-moon weekend. Ed Moss saved the day by proposing we keep our reservations with the park and throw a scaled-down event, something on par with Winterfest. His vision: We don't spend much money; we don't charge money; whoever comes, comes; whoever doesn't, doesn't! Summerfest was born with Ed as its chair. Kathy is responsible for much of the organizing that followed. Through her many contacts in the Monongahela area, she arranged for food vendors, planned and helped cater the First Light Ceremony, got the details and disseminated information on side trips (including Medowcroft Rock shelter), and worked with me on flyers. Perhaps most importantly, she did the publicity that brought in the public. By coordinating with the National Wildlife Federation's Great American Backyard Campout and talking with the Post Gazette, she got us a newspaper story "Backyard Campout

promotes Bonding Under the Stars", which brought in a crowd of about a hundred-fifty public on the second night. Ed found some of our speakers, coordinated with Boy Scouts, and, most importantly, put in long, long nights at Mingo for several weeks prior to Summerfest, working with the rest of the Mingo Observatory Committee, making sure our brand new monster telescope would be up and running. Me? I found two speakers, brought the club merchandise to sell, helped with publicity, and worried like crazy for a few weeks. Next in line for thanks would be Larry McHenry, who was too busy to plan the event but provided crucial support and worked tirelessly through the two nights of the event. He gave multiple presentations, planetarium shows, and was our AV-guy. I want to acknowledge the impressive children's presentation put on by the Night Sky Network of Chrissie Chonicki, John Mozer, Rich Bailey, Barbara Lafon, Eric Fischer who gave an excellent lecture on satellite observing, Art Glaser who was on standby—he would have given a lecture on the Astronomical Knowledge of American Indians if we had people Friday night (hopefully, he will agree to present this at one of our general meetings), Jim Tunney who led a very successful and well attended mushroom walk, Joe Klein who manned the front desk, Bill Moutz and my son, Chris Norman, who parked cars and sold items at the front door. Barbara Lafon, John Moser, and Chris Norman did merchandise sales, Al Paslow and Gene Kulakowski who were telescope and planetarium operators, and Dave Smith and Al Paslow took our photographs, Judy Schomer who helped with food service. Charlotte Tunney was one of the last people out of the observatory each night after clean up. She was also the last out of the park on Sunday, as she waited for a tow truck with one camper whose car would not start that morning. I am afraid I don't remember everyone's job, but below is the (nearly) complete list of volunteers, at least the ones who signed in. You know these people. You know what they do! June 23 – Kathy Desantis, Ed Moss, Ann Norman, Larry McHenry, Bill Moutz, Gene Kulakowski, Shirley Caseman, Chrissie Chojnicki, Richard Frye, Judy and Mark Schomer, Charlotte and Jim Tunney, Al Paslow, Rich and Linda Bailey, George Guzik & Mark Orsatti. June 24 – Eric Fischer, Judy Manicevic, Barb Lafon, John Mozer, Joe Kline, Jeff Lewis, Andy Melzer, George Shuster, Fred Klien, Michael Skawvron, Jon Johnson, John and Joanne Diller, Larry Snider, Sheri and Glen Rockhill, Michael Digan, Les Johnson, Dave Smith, Richard Frye, Chrissie Chojnicki and Mark Orsatti.

THANK YOU ALL! And it wasn't all work. There was great camaraderie as we muddled through this event. As the Post Gazette advertised, our campout lead to "bonding under the stars" even if those stars were behind the clouds.

## Wagman Picnic By Tom Reiland

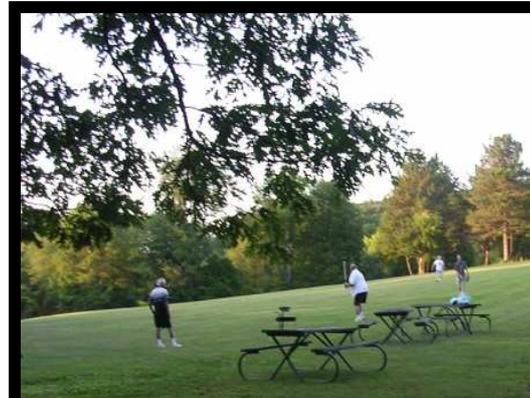


Mushroom talk

Tasty desert

We had a nearly perfect day for the AAAP picnic at Deer Lakes Park. It was mostly sunny with a nice breeze and thirty to thirty-five members turned out for the picnic and/or star party. It was clear when we arrived at Wagman Observatory to watch the sunset at 8:48 p.m. EDT. We observed Jupiter and its double (a weather balloon) about ten degrees west of it. While we were waiting for the sky to darken, Eric Fischer spotted the return of the meteor shower that several of us observed a few years ago at Wagman. Eric was the first to notice it both times. They both occurred around the middle of July and were active between approximately 9:45 and 10:15 to 10:20 p.m.

In that half hour period we observed from 60 to 75, maybe coming from the NW. Nobody believed us the last time we reported it. They better believe it now! We observed at least a dozen satellites; many deep sky objects; some doubles and the variable star, Chi Cygni, was an easy nude-eye object at 4.5 magnitude. This may be one of its brightest maximums ever. The peak date is listed as August 18. I stayed long enough to watch the moon rise just before 11:50. Flac operated the Brashear scope and I setup the Manka. The objects in Sagittarius were the best I've seen them from Wagman for quite some time. M22, M11, M27 and M31 were spectacular. A fun time was had by all. Hope to see yinz at the Wagman Star Parties on July 28 and 29.



Play Ball



Let's Eat





A great time was had by all in spite of the clouds.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The Nature of Light and Colour in the Open Air* by M.Minnaert.

The inexpensive Dover paperback had been stocked by Barnes and Noble, but they disappeared off their shelves and about the same time Amazon was only listing the hardback Springer edition, which lists for 80.00 U.S. I didn't forget the promise. I still have not seen one at B&N, but.....Bottom line - Amazon has the Dover editions back in stock and also lists quite a few used - some less than a dollar. For anyone wondering what this is all about, Jerry Zhu would post shots and descriptions of atmospheric phenomena a couple years ago. Some were definitely not commonplace. This book is a classic reference on some of the things Jerry was capturing and sharing.

### *Celestial Harvest* by James Mullaney

Allow me to recommend ex-AAAP member James Mullaney's *Celestial Harvest*. While it contains all types of objects, it is top heavy with doubles suited to small to moderate amateur scopes. The two advantages of Mullaney's book are that for every object he quotes the impressions of classic visual observers. It is a blast measuring your thoughts against theirs. Herschel saw it as "gold" but I see it as "orange". Immediately you feel as if you are part of a visual observing tradition. The second is price. It's \$11.95 but can be found on sale. Two more advanced books on doubles are (if you can find them) *The Webb Society's Deep-Sky Observer's Handbook, Volume 1, Double Stars* and Bob Argyle's more recent *Observing and Measuring Visual Double Stars*. Both are heavy going and aimed at very experienced observers.

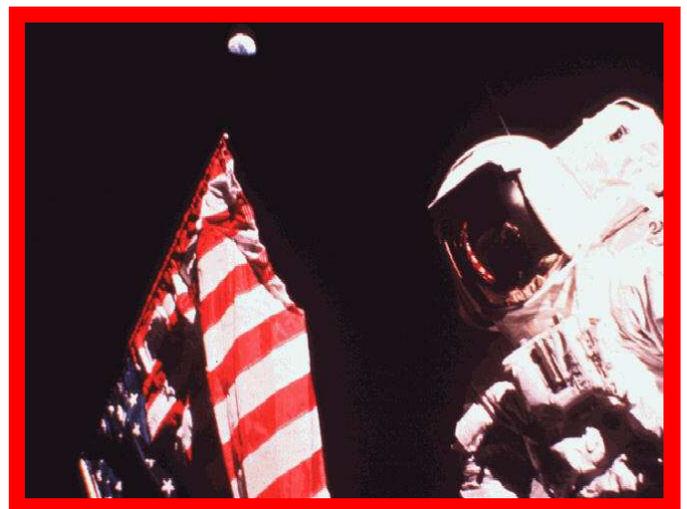
## MOON DAY MEMORIES

Happy Moon Day July 20, 2006 at 10:56. Oh well, for now I will be thinking where I was in 1969 and the great events of yesterday. At 4:17 p.m. Neil Armstrong brought the Eagle to rest on the surface. I KNOW where I was. I was on a one-year, all-expense-paid government sponsored trip to beautiful Southeast Asia. Fortunately, I was in base camp and got the word just a bit later than you did. We did not see it live. We had to wait for the "movie". [Dan Fundo](#)

Today makes 37 years since man first stepped out of LEM to walk upon the surface of the moon, at 10:56 p.m. EDT. It is hard to believe it has been so long! I guess it is even harder for me to imagine we have not returned to the lunar surface since Apollo 17! Perhaps that will change soon. With the announcement of China putting a man in space, the desire to return to Luna has increased. The Chinese have announced recently that they want to explore the moon again by sending someone there within the next 20 years. Bush has weakly responded by saying America will do the same and push onward with manned exploration to Mars. Well gee, isn't it ironic that to get back to the moon we needed to hear from Chinese competition?!! Looks like the Russian competition was the drive that got us there in the first place. History repeats itself once again. Oh well, for

now I will be thinking where I was in 1969 and the great events of yesterday. At 4:17 p.m. Neil Armstrong brought the Eagle to rest on the surface. Then, the original NASA plan was for Armstrong & Aldrin to spend the day looking out the window of the spacecraft and proceed to get a good night's sleep. On the morning of July 21, 1969 both were to rise early and venture out upon the surface. What were they—nuts?!! You are the first humans on the moon; landing at 4:17 p.m. and it is time to fall asleep till tomorrow before you can take a lunar stroll? Who could sleep with that much excitement!! Finally, after quite a bit of discussion, Armstrong was permitted to take the first steps at 10:56 that evening! Those first steps must have been the most amazing things I have ever witnessed. Little did I know that many years later that time 10:56 would also hold some additional significance personally to me. Both my son, Josh, and daughter, Stormie, were born at 10:56. Josh on January 14, 1990 and Stormie on January 15, 2001. That 10:56 is the official time listed for Josh and Stormie of their births according to Magee Hospital records. In a very odd way history repeats itself. [Al Paslow](#)

I was working in the cockpit of a DC-9 listening to a local radio station. [Frank Pastin](#)



## OBSERVATIONS

I went out in my backyard this morning to checkout Chi Cygni and the moon occult, M45. I had to wait for the moon to rise above the trees to my east and find a spot away from lights to see the event. I used my 10 x 50's to observe it, but the haze cut down on the visibility of the Pleiades. By 3:30 a.m. I was able to pick out the brighter stars just off the north and west edges of the Moon. The stars on the southeast portion of the cluster, such as Merope, were behind the moon. It would have been a spectacular sight was it not for the haze, but it was nice to be able to see it.

Chi Cygni is at least 4.0 mag, maybe 3.9, just slightly brighter than Eta Cygni. I could barely see them both naked eye even though they were near the zenith. Transparency was somewhere between 25 and 30%. That is why I did not waste time and gas to drive up to Wagman Observatory. The two stars appeared to be identical to my eye, but through my binoculars Chi Cygni was slightly brighter both in focus and out of focus. There is about four weeks to predicted maximum and I am hoping we get to see Chi at its brightest by that time. [Tom Reiland](#)

I discovered Reiland's object using my homemade 8" f/5.3 Newtonian from my backyard before the light pollution became a problem. There was a hint of nebula with my scope and younger eyes. The fuzzy blob resolved into about eight stars at high magnification. You need a near perfect sky to see the nebula and a filter would help. It is about 12' south of the nebula I.C. 1470. I just realized that yesterday at this time it was 21 years ago that I discovered my object. I looked at it tonight before I packed up. Conditions were not good enough to see the nebula. Transparency was fair to good, or about average at Wagman Observatory. Not as good as Saturday night, which was probably the best of the last three nights. I watched Ganymede disappear behind Jupiter (occulted by it) and its reappearance two hours later. Chi Cygni is still hanging in at 4.5 mag. I hope it gets close to the record max. I sent an email to S&T about its current brightness, hoping they will let other amateurs know about it on the S&T web page. I observed a small cluster of galaxies in Canes Venatici, NGC 5350, 5354, 5355, 5355, 5358 and 5371. The first five were in the same field of view, even at high power. I did some observing in Sagittarius and I was even able to see M55 through the haze and light pollution. I got three hours of observing in and quit about 1:10 a.m. I thought the moon would rise after 1:00 a.m., but Chris Genovese said that it was closer to 12:36. It did not come out of the haze and thin clouds in the east until 12:45 a.m. I think I must have jumped a day ahead when I was looking for the time of moonrise. I was hoping for good weather this weekend. If I do not go up to Wagman, I might look for a dark sky location. Maybe I will see some of yinz at Wagman if I stay close to home. There were no meteors left from the "Viagrids" tonight. John Holtz went up Sunday night and did not see any either. I said that he saw that last year, but I am not sure what the date was. I do know that the first time we saw them was July 17, 1998. [Tom Reiland](#). P.S. I was using my 16" Dob tonight and my 10 x 50 binoculars.

viewing and even took a few images with the CCD camera. Anyway, back to tonight. As the night got darker, a little breeze came in and blew the haze away and it was a great night. I mostly used the 20 mm eyepiece, a real hand grenade. Had some great views of the dumbbell, swan, ring, lagoon, M-13, and M-92 among others. It turned out to be a spectacular evening. I even set up my Meade 8" Schmidt for comparison. Needless to say, the 24" blew away my 8". I used to think it was good. But I do think Jupiter was better in my 8". We need some filters for the 24". Jupiter is just too bright once the sky darkens. The 24" performed well. I was able to get everything in the field of view with the 20 mm eyepiece using the GOTO and only needed a little tweaking to get things centered. I got tired around midnight and closed up shop. [Mike Meteney](#)

Just a quick note to say images are up of the Friday and Saturday evening star parties at Mingo Observatory and Planetarium. The skies were terrible on Friday with very limited telescope use. The same bad conditions for a portion of Saturday evening too but things did clear up and many enjoyed some of the grandest sights in the summer sky. At times even the Milky Way was faintly visible within Sagittarius as well as the major stars of the constellation. Also, we could see a number of stars of the Scorpion and with visibility like this it was a great night! So, the 24" toured the sky bouncing from object to object and dodging passing clouds. It was fabulous! Larry McHenry invited members of the Wireless Association of South Hills (who are advanced ham radio operators) to setup. Ken Smith of the group brought along two large antennas and equipment powerful enough to contact the ISS and space shuttle. Funny, after taking a shot of one of the antennas adjacent to the refractor room, I picked up an eerie glow on my image! I really did not see it until I reviewed the images this morning. Take a look at it and you decide what it is! All images are at: <http://al-ugmug.com/gallery/1696003/1/83375056>. [Al Paslow](#)

On my way home tonight from visiting my father-in-law at the assisted living home, my wife and I drive through Mingo to get to our house. At the last minute my car took a right turn and headed up the hill to the observatory, totally unplanned. It was about 8:30 p.m. and still very hot and hazy. I did not expect much but we opened up the reflector roof and set up the 24". We checked out Jupiter until the stars came out. It was not as nice as Sunday night. On Sunday night Ed and I worked out fine-tuning the 24" and got some nice views of Jupiter with one of its moons casting a very prominent shadow on Jupiter. We had a good night

On July 21 despite the weather, Mingo entertained about 44 guests last night. The public enjoyed a number of planetarium shows by Eugene Kulakowski with some help by me (very good job by Eugene indeed!). Dan McKeel ran the desk job. Larry, Mike, and Kathy helped by answering questions and other details. Even though the sky was clouded over, guests were still able to see Jupiter and its moons with the 24-inch manned by Ed. The instruments GOTO computer was able to find the planet, while visually we were not. The 10-inch D & G refractor was open during

## OBSERVATIONS (continued)

this time, but unfortunately, since we could not locate the planet Jupiter with the unaided eye, it was not used (there are no setting circles on the 10-inch at this time). Thanks to all who attended. [Al Paslow](#)

## NIGHT SKY NETWORK By Chrissie Chojnicki

What's the Night Sky Network all about? To understand the Night Sky Network program a little better, see the "About the Network" page and watch a short video all about the NSN: <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/about.cfm>. Really cool is the Night Sky Planner. It is your one-stop planning resource for astronomy events: Look up sunset and moonrise times for today or the whole year; find out what's up on the Celestial Calendar; download a current sky map; what's the weather forecast; are there any satellites going over and NASA Amateur Resources. Check out other NSN clubs in the USA. It is a great feature for vacationers and travelers. On Clear Sky Clock there is a link to 2,816 clocks in the Bahamas, Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.! Yes, even Al Paslow's clock is there too! Have a look at the Night Sky Network's new features! <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov>

## TELECON By Chrissie Chojnicki (Your friendly Night Sky coordinator for AAAP)

July 27<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 p.m. Eastern "Searching for Habitable New Worlds and for Life in the Universe". Join the Night Sky Network and award winning scientist Dr. Geoff Marcy for a toll-free teleconference sure to open up a world of possibilities. Dr. Geoff Marcy is one of the "heavy-hitter" scientists of the astronomy community with several awards to his name: The Shaw Prize (2005), Discover Magazine: Space Scientist of the Year (2003), NASA Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement (2003), California Scientist of the Year (2000) to name only a few. Perhaps his greatest distinction is the fact that he and his team have discovered more than half of all the extrasolar planets discovered so far! This is your opportunity to participate in a teleconference with one of the most knowledgeable and accomplished scientists in the field of astronomy and physics today. Teleconference: "Searching for Habitable New Worlds and for Life in the Universe" by Dr. Geoff Marcy, Thursday, July 27<sup>th</sup> 9:00 pm Eastern. Toll-free conference call line: 1-877-917-1549. Call anytime after 8:45 p.m. the evening of the telecon. An operator will answer and you will be asked for the pass code: NIGHT SKY NETWORK. You might be asked for the call leader, MICHAEL GREENE. You will be asked to give your NAME and the CLUB you belong to, and number of people listening with you.

## The Globe at Night By Kathy DeSantis

Hello to all. It has been difficult to find time and ability to do all there is to do in recent times. Glad Summerfest was such a success and since I have been little much on the list for need to be elsewhere. Time does fly. Want to remind you all about GLOBE at Night. The 2006 report is out and you can subscribe your family for the 2007 campaign, March 8 - 21, 2007! MCPO may be host to an upcoming teaching training session for the GLOBE Program.

From the GLOBE website:

Students, families and citizen-scientists from around the world participated in this international campaign on March 22-31, 2006 to observe and record the magnitude of visible stars as a means of measuring light pollution in a given location. Over 18,000 people from 96 countries on all continents (except Antarctica) reported 4,591 nighttime observations! One may download the 2006 GLOBE at Night Family Activity Packet:

(<http://www.globe.gov/GaN/observe.html>)

(English or Spanish).

<http://www.globe.gov/GaN/subscribe.html>)

Subscribe to the GLOBE at Night mailing list to receive updates and results of this campaign!

## BURSTING WEATHER BALLOONS By Harry Godlewski

Typical "burst termination altitude" for a weather balloon is approximately 80,000 feet, an altitude well into the stratosphere and possibly even at the edge of the ionosphere.

## COMMANDMENTS FOR AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

1. Thou shalt have no white lights before thee, behind thee, or to the side of thee whilst sharing the night with thy fellow stargazers.
2. Thou shalt not love thy telescope more than thy spouse or thy children, as much as, maybe, but not more.
3. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's telescope, unless it exceeds in aperture or electronics twice that of thy wildest dreams.
4. Thou shalt not read *Astronomy* or *Sky & Telescope* on company time, for thine employer makes it possible to continue thine astronomy hobby.
5. Thou shalt have at least two telescopes so as to keep thy spouse interested when the same accompanies thee under the night sky or on eclipse where exotic wild animals doth roam freely.
6. Thou shalt not allow either thy son or thy daughters to get married during the Holy Days of Starfest.
7. Thou shalt not reveal to thy spouse the true cost of thy telescope collection; only the individual components, and that shall be done with great infrequency.

## COMMANDMENTS (continued)

8. Thou shalt not buy thy spouse any lenses, filters, dew shields, maps, charts, or any other necessities for Christmas, anniversaries, or birthdays unless thy spouse needs them for their own telescope.
9. Thou shalt not deceive thy spouse into thinking that ye are taking them for a romantic Saturday night drive when indeed thou art heading for a dark sky site.
10. Thou shalt not store thy telescope in thy living room, dining room, or bedroom, lest thou be sleeping with it full time.
11. Verily, observe not through thy neighbor's AP or Tak, lest thee be utterly consumed by the lust of apo-fever, and thy brain and thy bank account shall shrivel and wither like branches in a flame.
12. Verily, observe not through thy neighbors Dob of Goliath, lest thee be lain bare to the fires of aperture-fever, and thy sanity, thy sacroiliac and thy life savings be crushed as ye grapes of wrath....  
[Gary Shannon](#)
13. Nor shalt thou allow thy sons or daughters to get married during the Holy Dark Nights between last quarter and first quarter moon. [Rowen](#)

## NEAT WEBSITES

Site for Mars hoax:

[http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2005/07jul\\_marshoax.htm](http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2005/07jul_marshoax.htm)

Girl Scouts:

<http://al-paslow.smugmug.com/gallery/1615805>

Morning Sun image:

<http://al-paslow.smugmug.com/photos/82631337-L.jpg>

Size of the World:

<http://www.rense.com/general72/size.htm>

New Moon crater:

[http://www.moondaily.com/reports/NASA\\_Spies\\_Lunar\\_Meteoroid\\_Impact.html](http://www.moondaily.com/reports/NASA_Spies_Lunar_Meteoroid_Impact.html)

## Classifieds

For sale:

10" Meade LX50 Schmitt Cassegrain Telescope (Same tube and optics as the LX200)

Includes: 8x50 finder scope, hand control and cable, wedge, heavy duty tripod, 1-1/4 visual back and diagonal, additional Meade 1-1/4 diagonal piggyback camera mount, soft case and foam custom built hard case, Meade 25 mm SMA eyepiece, original shipping box, manual, could possibly add second eyepiece

Asking \$1,200.00 but open

Contact Info: Bob Mickey [Micfam@comcast.net](mailto:Micfam@comcast.net)

412-373-3462



### Scheduled away Star Parties

July 29, Keystone State Park

August 19, Mammoth Park

September 2, Moraine State Park





For a copy of the August calendar go to [www.3ap.org/calendar](http://www.3ap.org/calendar)



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

*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  
Sky & Telescope Magazine: Add \$33.00  
Astronomy Magazine: Add \$34.00  
Night Sky Magazine: Add \$18.00

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

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