



Mingo Creek Park
Observatory

The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

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Nicholas E. Wagman
Observatory

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Where would we be without John Holtz's home-made ice cream? If you don't do homemade, Giant Eagle or take-out is fine! As for door prizes, consider donating used astronomy-, space-, or science-fiction-related books and DVDs that are still in good condition; or purchase a book, mug, poster, red-light flashlight or other observing aid; or surprise us! And if you cannot bring something this time, there's always the next. In any case, this party is all about getting members under one roof to celebrate the season and our AAAP activities in 2006. The most important contribution you can make is to join us. We want to see **YOU** there!

Friends and spouses are welcome, but you must be a member to win a door prize. Dressy or casual is fine, but expect to see a lot of green, red, blue, gold, and sparkles!

Our party planners this year are Tom Reiland (who rented the hall), Ann Norman (bringing door prizes), Kathy DeSantis (doing decorations and punch), Charlotte and Jim Tunney (brining the sandwich trays), Judy Schomer (doing shrimp), and Ed Moss (doing coffee? and being President!)

Here is the address for the Shaler Villa Volunteer Fire Hall:

960 Saxonburg Blvd
Glenshaw, Pa. 15116

If you are coming from the North, get onto Route 8 and follow it until you hit the beginning of construction for the Mae West Bend in Etna. This will be just beyond the Shop 'n Save. Get in the left lane at the light and turn onto Saxonburg Boulevard. Stay on it and go about a quarter of a mile and it is on the left. Coming from the South on Route 8 the turn will be at the light mentioned above, but it will be a right turn. There is an Eat 'n Park at that intersection and a Burger (Barf) King on the west side of the road across from the Eat 'n Park. If you are coming from the east



HOLIDAY PARTY DECEMBER 8!

Our Holiday Bash/December General Meeting will be held at a **NEW VENUE**, the Shaler Villa Volunteer Fire Hall at 7:30 p.m. First comes a lecture by Tom Reiland on "Observing Planetary Nebulae," followed by annual awards; then its time to **PAR-TAY!**

The holiday party features a delicious spread of foods and desserts and (usually) door prizes for every club member! The club purchases a limited amount of food and door prizes to get us started (less this year than last) and the members bring the rest! We are counting on you to make this work!

or taking Route 910 or Harts Run Road, they will take you to Saxonburg Boulevard. Just turn west onto Saxonburg and follow it until you reach the Fire Hall. It will be on your right. For those coming from Route 8, it will be on your left. [See yinz there.](#)



A Holiday Poem

By Ann Norman (apologies to Dr. Seuss)

Pittsburgh astronomers liked stargazing a lot. The clouds that formed just north of Pittsburgh did NOT!

Clouds plagued the astronomers each star party season. Now, please don't ask why. No one quite knows the reason.

Some said it's the moisture drawn up from the lake. Some blamed the new scopes! (Now give me a break!)

But whatever the reason, scientific or not. The clouds got the astronomers very distraught! Hanging grey in the sky all over their town, Whenever a promising weekend came round.

But these people kept hoping for skies that were clear. If they couldn't go out, why they'd grind a new mirror!

And they'd chat with their friends all over the net. "Have you seen it? Fred took the best moon photo yet!" And they'd print out some star charts or buy a new filter. Recheck columniation; fix what's out of kilter.

They'd meet up at Max's right after each meeting; Discuss NASA and Star Trek; List targets worth seeking.

On some of the weekdays the clouds would just part --Just enough to convince them all not to loose heart.

And that's why they planned a really big Fest! A camp-out/star party where no one would rest. They planned for a weekend when no moon would loom in an area known to be dark as a tomb! "We'll stay up till midnight, just roaming the sky,

See galaxies, nebula—some by nude eye! We'll keep right on going till quarter to three! Come out to our sky-object/star-finding spree"!

But clouds must be jealous of stars out in space cause they rolled in quite quickly all over the place. The few lonely photons that cut through this haze were static-y cos-o-mic radio waves.

The clouds hung triumphant. "There's nothing to see! The Star Party's canceled!" they rumbled with glee!

Then the clouds heard a sound rising out of the park growing louder and louder, way out in the dark

But the sound wasn't sad! The noise sounded grateful! What *can* they do? It sounds educational!

Every Triple-A-P'er the tall and the small, Had pitched in to help. They'd heeded the call!

"We can't stop this party!" the clouds groused in dismay, and if this is the case, we should just blow away!

But the clouds soon heard some cheering and had to think twice. Maybe they'd try being a little more nice.

Next morning the clouds rained the dust from the air. So night 2 was transparent (though seeing was fair).

Happy campers at last crawled back to their beds, as the sun rose behind a few clouds overhead. When the clouds broke apart and then drifted away, there shot out a golden crepuscular ray!



Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest Winners

Those AAAP members that attended the November 10 meeting were treated to a gallery of beautiful astronomical images, and voted for their favorites in the 2006 Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest. The quality of these images and the technical skill behind them has advanced every year. Any images taken from November 1 onward will be eligible for next year's contest, so start planning your astrophotography sessions now. Here are the winning images in the 2006 Kevin Brunelle Astrophotography Contest as voted on by the club members. They will be posted on our website too.

A. Astronomical images taken with optics of focal length no greater than 150mm:

- First:** Fred Klein for Cygnus Milky Way
- Second:** Mark Arelt for Milky Way Panorama
- Third:** Mark Arelt for Orion

B. Astronomical images taken with optics of focal length greater than 150mm:

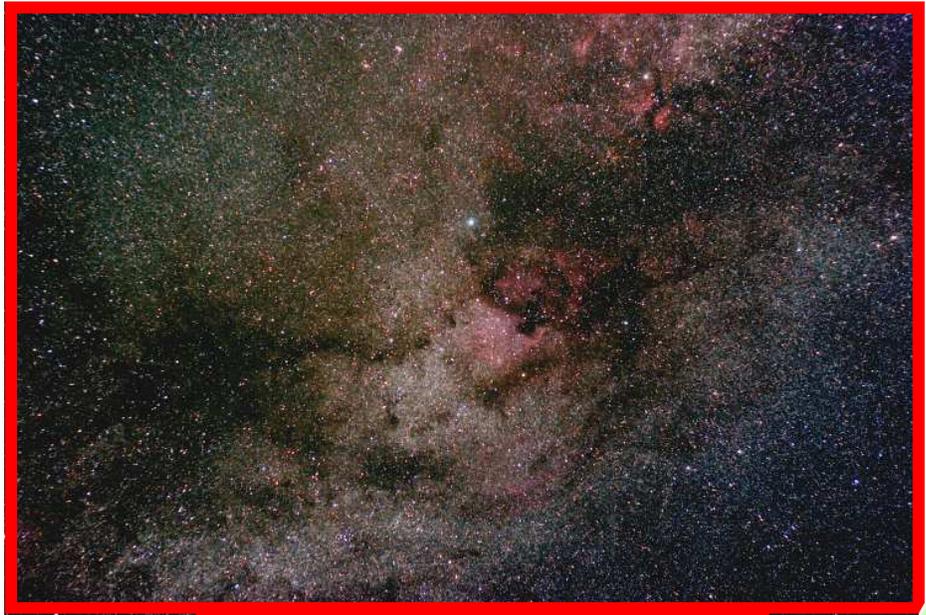
- First:** Fred Klein for Markarian's Chain
- Second:** Frank Wielgus for NGC 6781
- Third:** Fred Klein for Sombrero Galaxy

C. Images of atmospheric phenomena:

- First:** Mark Arelt for Foggy Sunrise with Tree
- Second:** Gene Kulakowski for Winter Sunset - red
- Third:** Gene Kulakowski for Winter Sun Pillar

Congratulations to our winners and special thanks to all who entered.

Dave Conte
Mark Arelt
Dave Smith

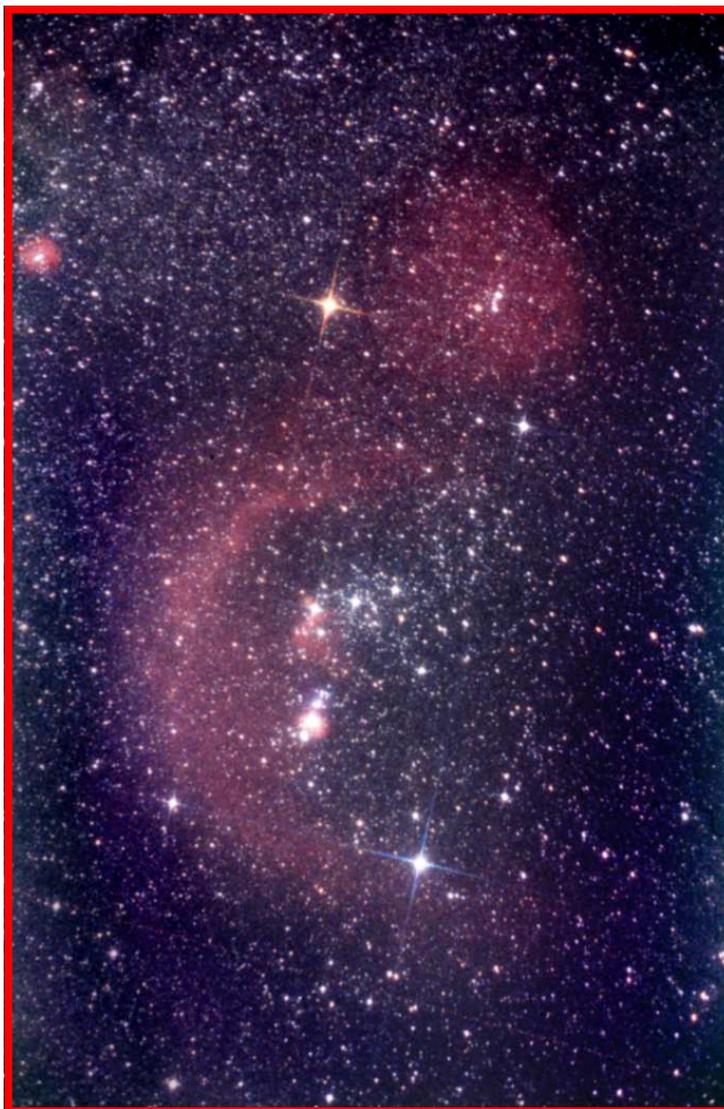


First Place no greater than 150 mm:
Cygnus Milky Way by Fred Klein





Second Place no greater than 150 mm:
Milky Way Panorama by Mark Arelt



Third Place no greater than 150 mm:
Orion by Mark Arelt





Greater than 150 mm: First Place Markarian's Chain by Fred Klein



Greater than 150 mm: Second Place NGC 6781 by Frank Wielgus

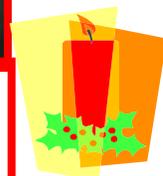




Greater than 150 mm: Third Place Sombrero Galaxy by Fred Klein



Atmospheric phenomena: First Place Foggy Sunrise with Tree by Mark Arelt





Atmospheric phenomena: Second Place Winter Sunset-Red
by Gene Kulakowski



Atmospheric phenomena: Third Place Winter Sun Pillar
by Gene Kulakowski



OBSERVATIONS

John Gardner: All friends of 3AP, another clouded under Beaver County skies cosmic event. I had quick view of Pegasus's square in a small dome of clearing early evening. There have been many unseen skies this year, but it gives me pause to thank each person from the club for sharing the information, events, viewing sessions, pictures, and web sites. These things, and most important, the people, (the members) and staff of 3AP.

The reason to mention by name some of these people seems proper and fitting; Tom Reiland is at the top of the list. His Director of Wagman duties have been taken on with energy and faithfulness. For general reasons and to keep this from being too long, thanks to John C. (always thought provoking), Flacc (giving ALL the details), Fred K. (not always agreeing with Flacc—just kidding really!). (Wonderful posting about non-Leonid meteors).

Hey! there is always hope for clear skies!. Rowen for answering newbie questions, very able guidance of reflector at Wagman), Pete Z. (for being Pete), Bill (11" Brashear operator)—my first ever view of Neptune at the last attended Wagman star party, Glen & Sheri (Great binocs!), my first ever televiews of Sagittarius's deep sky Messier objects.

Thanks to ALL those not mentioned by name, who faithfully posted, (keeping an idle mind busy) on the e-mail list. The many volunteer hours posted at Wagman & Mingo is very impressive!! A field trip to Mingo will be on my, "to do list" in 2007. Just to let you all know, this has been a very good year for my first as a "newbie!". Clear, dark skies to all!

Tom Reiland: It has been awhile since I saw the Sun or any celestial objects. Friday was the last night for any observations. I did not just see the Sun today, but last night, just when I was getting ready for bed, I looked out and saw Sirius and Orion. It was sometime after 1 a.m. EST, so I grabbed my binoculars and put on my

warm clothes and ran out to do some observing. Saturn was breaking through the clouds and most of the winter constellations were visible. I decided to look for Iris and I was able to see it with ease at 6.8 magnitude. I also viewed several Messier objects including; M31, M35 through M38, M41 through M45, and M81. It was good to see the sky again. Who knows when the next clearing will come.

Mary Hall: Well folks, it was a clear and beautiful day here in The Villages, Florida. We had a great spot for viewing the transit with one exception; IT WAS BLOWING LIKE HECK!! Winds up to 35 miles per hour. We almost got blown off the boardwalk. (Inland on a lake). But despite that, we were able to hold and stabilize the scopes for people to look through. We saw the transit until sunset around 5:15 p.m. and the little ETX did fine, especially with the TeleVue Radian 12 MM that I picked up last week, used. The homemade filter for the view finder worked great. I used the front of a little flashlight, filled it with two layers of Mylar and slid it on the viewfinder. It was so easy to zero in on the sun. The huge sunspot really gave people a starting point when viewing and then they were able to locate and see Mercury much easier. All in all, we had a great day viewing and we could only have asked for less wind.

Phil M. Breidenbach: I took off to the wilds of West Virginia with a couple friends Friday morning for an overnight backpacking trip. We started "at the top", (could be a problem here) of Spruce Knob, the highest peak in this beautiful state. We hiked about a one-third of the way down the mountain and set up our camp. The leaves were off the trees and they provided a soft blanket to lay my sleeping bag on. They also, opened up our view to the heavens. The moon didn't come up until we were ready to fall asleep, so we spent a few hours watching our small fire, talking about all the things in life that are important, and lying back and trying to figure out which constellation was which as they passed overhead through the trees. We watched for, and were treated to, a nice Iridium flare before we ate our meal. Three or four meteors streaked overhead; one, a nice, long, bright flash from overhead towards the east. It disappeared just before it went behind our horizon and was the highpoint of the evening. The Pleiades were on our horizon as I snuggled into my bag. They were like a spotlight in the dark sky. As I woke five or six times during the night, I would watch them and the moon and Orion as they slowly crossed above me. The next morning, the sky was clear and we hiked the rest of the way

into the valley and then back up again to the van. (What is wrong with our thinking here?) The rain started about 15 minutes into our trip back down the mountain. WOW...what a trip! (Sorry about any over exuberance this early in the morning!)

←—————→

THANKS

Thanks friends of 3AP for the cards, thoughts and prayers on the passing of my Dad. Frank Pastin and Family

←—————→

FOR SALE

1/30/01, 8", f/6 Discovery DHQ Dob, parabolic std. mirror 1.25" metal rack & pinion focuser 7 x 50 mm viewfinder ep: 6.5mm, 10mm, 15mm, 25mm Plossl Moon Filter Dob base with glued joints 1999 Orion 2x Shorty Barlow. Best reasonable Offer. Contact: Nelson J. Merrick
Work VMX: 724-337-5314
Home: 724-935-6497

←—————→

ALUMINUM CAN COLLECTION

Please bring your aluminum cans to Winterfest on February 24, 2007 at Wagman to the attention of Ray Lahet. Wagman will receive 60 cents per pound! Thanks for your help!

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COOL WEBSITES

http://home.comcast.net/~mjkancel01/Mercury_Transit.html

<http://astro.christone.net/mtransit>

<http://www.astronomie.be/dodi/mooncolor.jpg>

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5058529870025933880&q=star&hl=en>

<http://www.spaceflightnow.com/news/n0611/21mgsend/>

<http://www.spaceflightnow.com/news/n0611/21mgsend/>

BOOK REVIEW

By Bob Crelin

As you may know, I've been very involved in dark sky efforts for the past twelve years. I've dedicated most of my efforts to dreaming up the best tools that help bring light pollution awareness/action into mainstream society. Here's some news on one of those tools...

After selling out of a short paperback run, my children's book *'There Once Was a Sky Full of Stars'* (Sky Publ.), has been re-introduced as a beautiful, large format hardcover. This book is the first, lyrical children's book that teaches kids about the stars AND fixing light pollution. The story's environmental message is simple, educational and unforgettable for young readers (listeners and parents, too!)

This hardcover release now has expanded distribution, which means that *There Once Was a Sky Full of Stars* is available at Barnes & Noble, Borders, and any other national book chain or local book store. However, because Sky is a smaller publisher, many stores have not heard of the book. This book cannot deliver it's important message if it is sitting in boxes in a warehouse.

YOU CAN HELP GREATLY to get this book on the store shelves, into libraries, into schools, etc. Please encourage your club members, friends and family members to ask for it at your local book stores, libraries (the more places that stock it, the more LP awareness gets spread!) Consider it as a gift to children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, great grandchildren, etc. for the holidays.

We might just change the world!

<http://bobcrelin.com/author.html>

ISBN# 1931559376

"Bob Crelin's enchanting, educational tale explains how light pollution steals the stars and how children can lead the way to restore the nighttime sky for the enrichment of future generations."

-Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., President, Waterkeeper Alliance



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

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

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AAAP Member Dues*:

AAAP Dues:	\$18.00
Junior Member (under 18):	\$13.00
<u>Sky & Telescope Magazine:</u>	Add \$33.00
<u>Astronomy Magazine:</u>	Add \$34.00
<u>Night Sky Magazine:</u>	Add \$18.00

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