

# OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

**MARCH 1994**

(VOLUME 2, NO. 3)

♠ acting president, edwin lurcott ♠ acting vice president tim ryan ♠ acting treasurer steven lurcott

## Meeting Notes

The next meeting of the Chester County Astronomical Society will be on March 8, 1994 from 7:30 to 9:00 PM at the planetarium room of the Schmucker Science Center at West Chester University. Schmucker Science Center is located at the corner of Church Street and Rosedale Avenue in West Chester, PA. The following meeting will be held on April 12, 1994.

## Old Business

The February meeting of the Society was cancelled due to bad weather and hazardous road conditions. We hope that all members got the word before attempting the trip to West Chester, and apologize for any inconvenience that the cancellation may have caused. As previously announced, Mr. Guy McCann will speak on Sir John Herschel. Guy has agreed to give this presentation at the March meeting.

A copy of the proposed constitution was distributed to all the Society members with a return approval notice included. We want to thank all of you for your prompt reply. If you have not returned your approval notice, bring it to the March meeting. If you can't make the meeting, please mail the notice as soon as possible to Ed Lurcott.

## New Business

Astronomy day (April 16, 1994), will give the Society an opportunity to become better known in the area. The management of the Exton Square Mall has agreed to set up a table for our promotion on that day. Volunteers are needed to man the table. See Ed Lurcott for more information if you are interested.

On Saturday evening, March 19, Ed Lurcott is inviting all members to his home for an evening observing session. It has come to our attention that some of our members would like to get some experience setting up and observing with their telescopes. Remember, those without a 'scope are not excluded, come and enjoy the viewing with us. Assuming that Mother Nature will not cooperate (and this winter that seems likely), the rain date for the event will be Sunday March 20, and Saturday, March 26. Contact Ed Lurcott for directions.

This issue of **OBSERVATIONS** will be the last complimentary issue for those who have not joined the Society. We would like to see all of you join, so let's hear from you before you are purged into mailing list limbo.

## In The News

**Hubble Update Part III** - Although mission specialist remain optimistic about the full recovery of the space telescope, back on Earth a congressional committee has been formed to investigate allegations that NASA's prime contractor for the telescope not only knew the main reflecting mirror was defective, but that NASA was also aware of the fault, but covered up the error because of existing delays and cost over-runs. It was feared that further delays would have a substantial impact on the agencies future budget. Stay tuned for further adventures. This concludes this months prerequisite NASA-bashing.

## Worth Seeing

Double stars offer an opportunity to test your optics and visual resolution. There are a number of double stars visible in the evening sky in March. The most prominent is **ZETA Ursa Major**, Mizar and Alcor. Alcor is separated from Mizar by 11.8 arc minutes which can be resolved with the naked eye. Mizar is itself a double star with a separation of 14 arc seconds, easily resolved by the smallest telescopes. **ZETA** is located in the big

Dipper's handle. All three of these stars are reported to be spectroscopic binaries, making this at least a six star system.

Another famous double is GAMMA Leo, located about  $8^{\circ}$  NNE of the bright star REGULUS. GAMMA's components are separated by 4.4 arc seconds and should be easily resolved by most telescopes. The stars possess a distinct color difference, the brighter star is yellow while the fainter partner is slightly green. This true binary is reported to have a period of 600 to 700 years, and is about 90 light years distant.

A third pair is ALPHA GEMINI, or "Castor". This pair is a bit more difficult to see, only separated by about 3 arc seconds. This is a well studied binary with a period of 467 years. Castor is the more northerly of the two bright stars which represent the heads of the Twins. They should be just about overhead by 9:00 PM on March 1. Both components of Castor are also spectroscopic binaries.

#### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Chester County Astronomical Society was formed to provide a local organization dedicated to promote an interest in Astronomy through meetings, discussions, and speaker programs. Observations are made with a variety of telescopes. All individuals with an interest are encouraged to join. There are a variety of membership plans available. Please note that these initial membership rates do not include a subscription in Sky and Telescope. As membership grows, we hope to incorporate a subscription to this publication with each membership. If anyone is interested in membership, contact Edwin Lurcott at (610) 436-0387. and active

- Regular \$20/year
- Student \$15/year
- Junior \$10/year (18 years or younger)
- Family \$30/year

#### Contacts:

Edwin Lurcott  
1384 Station Rd  
West Chester PA 19380  
(610) 436-0387

Steven Lurcott  
P.O. Box 891  
Avondale PA 19311  
(610) 268-3426

#### CONTRIBUTIONS TO OBSERVATIONS

Members are welcome and encouraged to contribute articles to OBSERVATIONS. The deadline for the April edition is March 22, 1994. Contributions should be sent to:

Timothy Ryan  
1864 Brackenville Road  
Hockessin DE 19707

Every effort will be made for the timely inclusion of submitted articles.