

OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

★President: Edwin Lurcott
★Treasurer: Steven Lurcott

JANUARY 1995

(VOLUME 3, NO. 1)

★ Vice President: Mike Tucker
★ Secretary: Nancy Armstrong

CCAS MEETING

JANUARY

DATE: **Tuesday, January 10, 1995**

TIME: 7:30 PM EST

PLACE: Planetarium (room 186)

Schmucker Science Center

West Chester University

LOCATION: South Church St. & Rosedale Ave.

West Chester, PA (see maps)

NOTE: Since classes are not in session, only the doors to the circular portion of the building facing Church Street will be open for CCAS. All other doors will be locked.

CCAS Vice President, Mike Tucker, will discuss and demonstrate a selection of astronomical computer programs for PCs. It was evident at last month's meeting that CCAS members have PCs and know how to use them. This program will introduce some more popular astronomical programs available on the market.

All members are invited and may bring friends. Socializing over coffee will follow the presentation.

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DECEMBER CCAS MEETING

Associate professor of Physics, Dr. Michael Martens, presented an outline of how to use the Internet system with personal computers and receive astronomical information and even download pictures. While on line he obtained images from NASA and Space Telescope Science Institute. It was very impressive to see what quantities of information are available from all over the world.

Some CCAS members were well versed in this use of computers and advised us on what they had learned when using Internet.

There were many conversations with Dr. Martens and others long after the completion of his program. A well received program indeed. CCAS

would like to thank Dr. Martens for his time and a stimulating program.

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CCAS OBSERVING SESSION

DATE: **Friday, January 6, 1995**

RAIN DATE: **Saturday, Jan. 7, 1995**

TIME: 7:00 PM - ? EST

PLACE: Brandywine Valley Association

(location of our summer meetings)

1760 Unionville-Wawaset Road

West Chester, PA (see map)

The December observing sessions was completely rained out and no session was held. Let's hope for better sky conditions in 1995. Members and friends are invited to the January 6th (or 7th) observing session at the Brandywine Valley Association (BVA) property on route 842 about 6 miles west of West Chester.

Again Saturn and the moon will be easily visible in the west. Mars rises a little later but shows only a small disc, still near Regulus. Minor Planet Vesta is easily visible with just binoculars.

A limited number of electrical outlets are available. Those bringing 'scopes may drive up the farm road to the left of the parking lot. Members not owning 'scopes are encouraged to come and enjoy the views through the 'scopes. 'Scope owners are always pleased to have others look through them. Plus, binoculars will enable you to see many objects in the sky, bring a pair!

The BVA is allowing us to use their facilities and CCAS members are reminded that we should leave the area as clean as we found it. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

DRESS WARMLY !!!

For further information call:

Connie Shapiro (296-0512) or

Ed Lurcott (436-0387)

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"OH! RYAN"

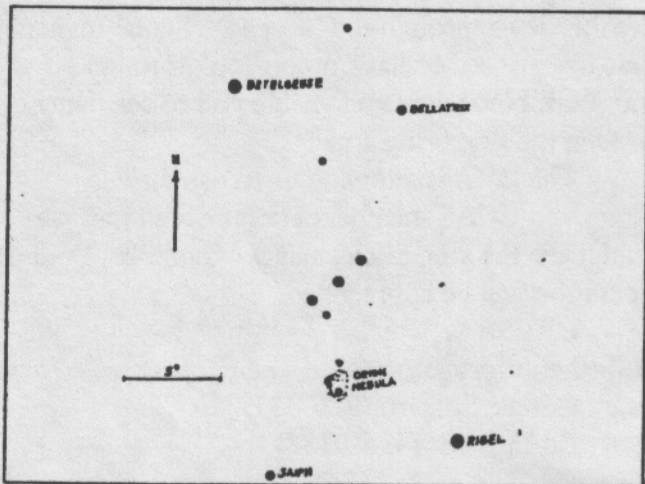
Now rising in the east at sunset, Orion is probably the most recognizable of the major constellations. The four corner stars, Betelgeuse, Bellatrix, Saiph and Rigel box in the three belt stars. All of these stars are second magnitude or brighter and appear to be in the plane of the celestial sphere. Actually they are at different distances from us. As described in Robert Burnham's Handbook (Volume 2) Bellatrix (the northwestern corner) is the closest of these stars at 470 light years. Betelgeuse at the northeast corner us next at 520 light years, and Rigel (southwest corner) at 900 light years. There is a lot of space before reaching the belt stars at about 1500 to 1600 light years and more. This illustrates that what appears to us as a grouping of stars is really an illusion created by the fact that these stars happen to appear in the same direction to us.

Betelgeuse (a red giant) is reported to be so large that if it were placed at the sun's position, the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars would still be in orbit inside the surface of Betelgeuse. It is one of the few stars other than the sun that is large enough to detect the actual surface with large modern telescopes.

Rigel is a white hot super giant one of the brightest stars known shining at over 50,000 times brighter than our sun. Rigel has a 6.7 magnitude companion star about 9 arc seconds to the southwest and is a challenge to viewers with any 'scopes less than six inches in diameter. See how many of you can see it.

Next month we'll talk about the great Orion nebula just 4 degrees south of the eastern belt star. But why not get familiar with it before that. Viewed easily with binoculars at 7 or 8 power, it becomes spectacular with just about any size telescope.

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SPRING OBSERVING SESSIONS

Dates have been set and agreed to by the BVA for all Spring observing sessions and their rain dates. They are as follows:

Feb. 3; rain date, Feb. 4

Mar. 10; rain date, Mar.11

Apr. 7; rain date, Apr. 8

May 5; rain date, May 6

June 2; rain date, June 3

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SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

CCAS members like to hear what other members are doing. Whether you are an observer with a pair of binoculars or a sophisticated telescope, we like to hear about it. Perhaps you had to modify a piece of equipment to improve the comfort of observing, or maybe you visited a place of astronomical interest. Others would probably enjoy learning about it.

Members are encouraged to submit a write up of their experiences to "Observations," so that all may share in it. A lot of enjoyment of astronomy comes from sharing your experiences and comparing it with others. You may find there are other CCAS members interested in doing the same things in which you are interested in doing. Let us hear from you. It may be any length from a paragraph to a page. Send your write up to:

Edwin Lurcott
1384 Station Place
West Chester, 19380-1334

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WINTER STAR PARTY

It was learned at the December meeting that the Winter Star Party in West Summerland Key, Florida, may already be filled up and they are not taking anymore reservations. If this turns out to be so, there will be some disappointed CCAS members. But perhaps we can plan to go next year with even more members.

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MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

The date below your address is the date at which time you should be renewing your CCAS membership. While there is a grace period provided by our constitution why not insure your uninterrupted membership by renewing it today.

Send checks payable to "Steve Lurcott"
P.O. Box 891
Avondale, PA 19311

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CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY'S PURPOSES

The Chester County Astronomical Society was formed in September, 1993, with the cooperation of West Chester University, as a non-profit organization dedicated to the education and enjoyment of astronomy for the general public. The society holds meetings with speakers and observing sessions once a month. Anyone who is interested in astronomy or would like to learn about astronomy is welcome to attend meetings and become a member of the society.

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The present membership rates are as follows:

REGULAR MEMBER

(18 years or older)\$20/year

SENIOR MEMBER

(65 years or older)\$10/year

STUDENT MEMBER

(full-time college student) \$ 5/year

JUNIOR MEMBER

(under 18 years old)\$ 5/year

For further information on membership or society activities you may call:

President:	Edwin Lurcott	(610) 436-0387
Vice Pres:	Mike Tucker	(610) 584-8236
Treasurer:	Steve Lurcott	(610) 268-6943
Secretary:	Nancy Armstrong	(610) 873-7531
Obs Chrm:	Roger Taylor	(610) 430-7768
Pubic Rel:	Kathy Cseke	(610) 644-9543

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