



OBSERVATIONS



A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

★President: Edwin Lurcott
★Treasurer: Pete LaFrance

FEBRUARY 1997
(VOLUME 5, NO. 2)

★Vice President: Emil Volcheck
★Secretary: William O'Hara

CCAS February Meeting

DATE: **Tuesday February 11, 1997**
TIME: 7:30 p.m. EST
PLACE: **Health & Physical Educ. Bldg.**
South Campus
Room 325
See Special Note below!!!!
West Chester University
LOCATION: South New Street
West Chester, PA (see maps)

Special Note: Due to scheduling problems this month we cannot meet in the usual places. Chuck Shorten has arranged for us to meet in Room 325 in the Health and Physical Education Center. This large building is on the South Campus, between the tennis courts and the football field. If you can, park in the lot on the South New Street side of the building, which is the front of the building. Then go in the front door, and there is a stairwell off to the left. Go up one flight of stairs, and Room 325 is right there. Look for directional signs in the building. A map is included.

We will be meeting here in February, April and May. Room 325 will be in use on the date of our March meeting, but Chuck is working on getting us another room in the same building, possibly Room 326. Check next month's newsletter for the latest news on the location of our meeting.

Our program for February will be somewhat less structured than usual. We will discuss several items of unfinished Society business, and hope to reach decisions on them. One of these items is the purchase of a rental telescope by the Society. The idea is that we would buy a telescope, which would then be available for rent (by members only?) for a nominal fee. Another discussion point is whether the Society should join the Astronomical League, a nationwide association of astronomy clubs. Please bring any other items of unfinished business with

you to the meeting. Ideas on ways to make our Society even better are also welcome and encouraged. After the business session, we may have a question & answer session. Or we may see slides from the Hubble Space Telescope. Possibly a surprise or two. Don't miss it.

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Astronomy Day 1997

Astronomy Day 1997 is on Saturday April 12. Members are encouraged to think creatively about how we can promote astronomy in general, and the CCAS in particular. Submit all ideas to Ed Lurcott; bring them up at the February meeting. Remember, no idea is too crazy for consideration! We expect to have space available again in Exton Square Mall on Astronomy Day.

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February CCAS Observing Session

The next observing session will be held on Friday February 7, with a cloud date of Saturday February 8. It will be held at the Brandywine Valley Association (a map is included). At the observing sessions, there will be help available to set up and use your telescopes. All members are invited whether they have a telescope or not. Telescope owners are always glad to share the view through their 'scope. Remember to dress warmly, because you don't move around a lot when stargazing, so you can get cold real fast. Dress like you're going to see a football game at the Vet.

Future Observing Sessions (all at the BVA)

March 7, 1997 (or Mar. 8)
April 4, 1997 (or Apr. 5)
May 2, 1997 (or May 3)

February's Skies

Moon Phases

New Moon	2/07
First Quarter	2/14
Full Moon	2/22

The Planets

Mercury will be part of a planetary traffic jam in the morning sky this month. Five planets will be in the morning sky (Jupiter, Venus, Uranus and Neptune are the other four.) Using binoculars will make it easier to find Mercury; the best mornings are those around Feb. 5 through Feb. 12. On Feb. 12 Jupiter is but 1° degree away; look at about 6:15-6:30 low in the east-southeast on the 12th.

Venus is in the morning sky again this month, rising before the Sun. It's in the east-southeast sky as morning twilight begins, but is lower in the sky each morning when the Sun rises.

Mars is in Virgo, rising by 9:30 p.m. on Feb. 1, and will rise around 7:30 p.m. by month's end. It's very close to the celestial equator, which means it rises due east, very bright and red; you can't miss it.

Jupiter is in the morning sky this month, rising earlier each day.

Saturn is visible after sunset, looking like a bright star in the west-southwest. It's the brightest star in that part of the sky, lined up with the eastern side of the Great Square of Pegasus. It is setting earlier each evening this month, though, and will disappear into the Sun's glare next month.

Uranus is in the morning sky. On Feb. 12, it will be part of the tightest conjunction of three planets in many years as it joins Jupiter and Mercury in a patch of sky 1.05° across! But will Uranus be visible, even in a telescope?? There's only one way to find out! Get out of bed early and take a look!

Neptune is also in the morning sky, and is further west than the rest of the gang of five, but is most likely too dim to see in the morning twilight.

Pluto is in Ophiuchus, and high in the south around dawn. You need at least an 8" telescope and good star charts (and patience) to find Pluto.

Comet Hale-Bopp

Good news! Comet Hale-Bopp seems to be living up to the brightness predictions made last autumn. Today (2/7), the weekly bulletin on Sky Publishing's Web page (<http://www.skypub.com/>) says that it's about magnitude 1.5, which should make it visible to the naked eye. This month H-B cruises through the morning sky, passing through the constellations of Aquila, Sagitta, Vulpecula, and into Cygnus. Early February will be best for seeing the comet this month, for the Moon will be out of the picture until about the 20th. From Feb. 6 through 9, rising at about 3:30 a.m., Hale-Bopp will be very close to globular cluster M71. From Feb. 10 through 13 it will be near the Dumbbell Nebula, M27.

Space Exploration Notes

Historical Notes for February

In 1962, John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit the Earth, completing three orbits in his Mercury spacecraft named *Friendship 7*.

In 1966, the Soviets' Luna 9 spacecraft makes the first soft landing on the Moon.

In 1969, the U.S. launches the Mariner 6 spacecraft to Mars.

In 1970, Japan launches its first satellite.

In 1971, Apollo 14 lands on the Moon. On this flight, Alan Shepard, the first American in space, becomes the first human to play golf on the Moon. Apollo 14 was also the last Moon mission to undergo a post-flight quarantine.

In 1974, the last Skylab crew returns to Earth after 84 days, ending the Skylab 3 mission.

In 1984, the first untethered spacewalk is made by Bruce McCandless and Robert Stewart. They fly up to 300 feet (the length of a football field) away from the space shuttle *Challenger*.

In 1986, the Soviets launch the first module of the space station *Mir*. It's still up there, and still in use by both Russian and American crews!

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"...Torrent of light and river of the air,
Along whose bed the glimmering stars are seen,
Like gold and silver sands in some ravine..."

William Wadsworth Longfellow, on the Milky Way

Space Exploration News

The big story in February will be the mission of the space shuttle *Discovery*. It will start on February 13 with a spectacular nighttime launch; the launch window "opens" at about 2:30 a.m. EST. Then they chase and catch the Hubble Space Telescope for the second maintenance mission. New and improved instruments will be installed during four spacewalks. If all goes according to schedule, the spacewalks will occur during "prime time" for U.S. television viewers on the evenings of February 16-19. See the article in the February 1997 issue of *Sky & Telescope* for more details on the mission. Watch the newspapers for word about possible broadcast of the repairs on TV.



Telescopes and Marriage by Frank Angelini

Are you married to a non-astronomer spouse? Do you have a significant other who could care less whether or not it is New Moon, that the sky is transparent or that a bright new comet has reached perihelion? If you can answer affirmative to either of these questions, you are not alone.

I met my wife of almost 28 years while she and I were attending local Philadelphia colleges. Hers was known for owls and Bill Cosby, mine for wildcats and Rollie Massamino. Neither college had a serious astronomy program then but at least one is doing some interesting work now.

A good time back then was a weekend at the shore or a day in the Poconos. Now that the child rearing years are over, she spends her free time at needlework while I enjoy my time at the eyepiece. My, how things have changed!

Actually my interest in astronomy, although hidden and somewhat suppressed for at least 20 years, is new found. Kind of like her interest in needlepoint, except that she comes from a long line of sewing enthusiasts, while I come from a long line ofwell, let's just say that I am not exactly a descendent of Galileo.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not artistic, but she is a very bright and talented person. She has even shown her needlepoint at local exhibitions, unlike my astro-photos. I have no right to expect her to embrace astronomy and she doesn't expect me to take up crochet. However, we do try to meet each other half way. There have been nights when she wanted to take in a movie, but instead came along to the BVA in sub freezing weather. She knew that those clear cold winter nights were few and far in between (the clearness, not the cold). On the other hand there have been perfectly clear, moonless nights when I insisted that we go out for dinner or see a show.

Remember, everything in moderation!

Little things can ruin a marriage for an amateur astronomer.

Like saying:

- "Can I sell the family thimble collection to get that new wide-angle eyepiece?"
- "Why don't we cut down those 100 year-old oaks? Think of the leaves we won't have to rake and, by the way, they get in the way during my observing sessions."
- "When we're on vacation in Arizona, do you mind if we drive 300 miles out of the way to see Meteor Crater?"
- "Do you mind sitting in the back seat of the car? My telescope only fits safely in the passenger seat, and would you mind holding on to it until we arrive at the observing site?"

Big things can be just as devastating, such as:

- Selling the family car to buy that CCD camera.
- Replacing her photo on your desk with that great shot of M42.
- Whispering the name of your telescope in your sleep.

- Deciding to begin a life of crime to finance that 24 inch refractor.

All kidding aside, marital friction can arise from eating, drinking and sleeping astronomy or for that matter any other serious avocation. It can also jeopardize your social life if you happen to be single, or even your job if you regularly arrive late because of those all night Messier marathons.

Budget your time and money and be gentle and understanding to those who don't care what the difference is between a star diagonal and a dew zapper.

Spend quality time ,and more of it, with your family and friends than with your telescope.

Remember, not only astronomers can have fun in the dark!

Clear skies.



For Sale

One (1) University Optics primary mirror cell for a 10" or 10.1" mirror. Slightly used. Half-price at \$20.00.

One (1) Orion 0.965" star diagonal, mirror type, rarely used, 1/3-price, \$10.00

One (1) Orion hybrid 0.965" to 1.25" star diagonal, mirror type, used, 1/4-price, \$10.00.

Four (4) 0.965" Orion multi-coated eyepieces, rarely used, all half-price: 25mm Kellner, 18mm Kellner, each \$20.00; 9mm Orthoscopic, 7mm Orthoscopic, each \$25.00. The first \$80.00 takes all four eyepieces.

Contact Jim Anderson at 610-993-0261, or by e-mail at skywalkr@voicenet.com



Join the Fight for Darker Skies

Consider joining the International Dark-Sky Association. Run by volunteers, this 10 year old organization is dedicated to promoting better outside lighting everywhere—lighting that will reduce energy wastage, truly enhance security, and restore the stars to our sky. The membership dues go to producing a quarterly newsletter, and to the costs of maintaining a library of information that can be used by members in light control efforts. For more info, you can check out their Web page at <http://www.darksky.org>

Annual dues are \$20.00 for an individual (more if you can afford an additional contribution). The IDA is an IRS-registered non-profit organization, so donations (but not dues) are tax-deductible. Checks can be made out to IDA, Inc., and sent to:

International Dark-Sky Association
3545 North Stewart
Tucson, AZ 85716



Contributing to Observations

Contributions of articles relating to astronomy and space exploration are always welcome. If you have a computer, and an Internet connection, you can attach the file to an email message and send it to the editor at skywalkr@voicenet.com

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:
Jim Anderson
1086 W. King Road Apt. I312
Malvern, PA 19355

The deadline for receiving contributions is the 27th of the preceding month.



"Behold, directly overhead, a certain strange star was suddenly seen...Amazed, and as if astonished and stupefied, I stood still."
Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), Danish astronomer, on the supernova of 1572 in Cassiopeia (now called Tycho's Star)

Membership Renewals

Check the date printed on the address label of this issue of *Observations*; "exp." appears in front of it, just after your name. If you are due to renew, you may send your renewal check made out to our Treasurer, Pete LaFrance. Mail to:

Pete LaFrance
413 Church Rd.
Avondale, PA 19311

Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates

Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at \$27 per year, about half the newsstand price, and also cheaper than individual subscriptions! Make out a check to the Chester County Astronomical Society, note that it's for *Sky & Telescope*, and mail to Pete LaFrance. Or you can bring it to the next Society meeting and give it to Pete there. Buying a subscription this way also gets you a 10% discount on other Sky Publishing merchandise.

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CCAS 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

FAMILY MEMBER

(husband, wife & children)\$ 30/year

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

President:	Edwin Lurcott	(610) 436-0387
Vice Pres:	Emil Volcheck	(610) 388-1581
Treasurer:	Pete LaFrance	(610) 268-2616
Secretary:	William O'Hara	(610) 696-1422
Program:	Kathy Buczynski	(610) 436-0821
Public Rel:	Kathy Cseke	(610) 644-9543
Obs Chm:	Mike Tucker	(610) 584-8236
Newsletter:	Jim Anderson	(610) 993-0261

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