



# OBSERVATIONS



A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE  
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

★President: Edwin Lurcott  
★Treasurer: Pete LaFrance

**MAY 1997**  
(VOLUME 5, NO. 5)

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

## CCAS May Meeting

DATE: **Tuesday May 13, 1997**  
TIME: 7:30 p.m. EDT  
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:** This month our meeting will be on the South Campus. The Health & Physical Education Building is the large building between the tennis courts and the football field. There is ample parking around the sides and rear of the building. Go in the front door of the building, and turn left after crossing the lobby. At the next corner of the hallway is a stairwell. Go up one floor, and turn left. Room 325 is the first room on the left. Look for directional signs inside the building. A map is included.

At the May meeting, we will elect Society officers for the coming year. Ballots were mailed out to members a few weeks ago. If you can't make the May meeting, remember to fill out your ballot and mail it back to Chuck Shorten before the meeting. Any ballots received in the mail after Tuesday May 13 (the meeting day) will not be counted.

Dr. Emil Volcheck of the Mt. Cuba Observatory will be our featured speaker at the May meeting. Dr. Volcheck will give us "A Cosmology Update." Matt Patzek, a student at St. Joseph's School in Coatesville, will also talk to us about the constellation Centaurus. This presentation was rescheduled from our April meeting due to illness.



## Next CCAS Observing Session

The next observing session will be held on Friday June 13, with a cloud date of Saturday June 14. The observing session 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 and the public are invited whether they have a telescope or not. Telescope owners are always glad to share the view through their 'scope.



## Telescopes and Astronomers Needed!

On Friday May 16 CCAS and West Goshen Township will hold a public star party at West Goshen Township Park. Telescopes and members are needed to help with the anticipated crowd. There is a large projection screen there in an amphitheater, so we will probably start out by showing some slides of pictures taken by the Hubble Space Telescope. Then we'll have some stargazing for one and all.



## East Bradford Student Interests Night

Several members of the CCAS attended the annual Student Interest Night at East Bradford Elementary School on April 9. At this event, many displays made by students about their interests or hobbies are in the gymnasium/auditorium for viewing by the public. The Science and Math Committee at the school invited us to bring telescopes and display items about astronomy, and showcase astronomy as an interesting hobby. Telescopes were set up in the school yard to offer views of the heavens to the attendees. Thanks to Chuck Shorten, Ed Lurcott, and Kathy Buczinski, who made this event a success.



## April CCAS Meeting

The Election Committee presented the slate of candidates running for Society offices this year. Ballots were mailed out to all members about a week after the meeting.

Frank Angelini, a member of the telescope committee, reported that he was working on several good leads to get the Society a loaner telescope at "less than retail cost."

Frank Angelini gave us a good introduction to the use of CCD cameras (digital cameras) with telescopes to take pictures. We also got to see a number of the images he has captured so far. Emil Volcheck showed us slides that he had taken of Comet Hale-Bopp. Pete LaFrance also had many good print pictures he had taken of the comet, and other objects, for us to enjoy over snacks. Thanks to all these people who helped make our April meeting fun and educational.

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## Astronomy Day 1997

Our Astronomy Day display on Saturday April 12 at the Exton Square Mall was a big hit again this year. Frank Angelini brought his laptop computer to show his CCD images of Comet Hale-Bopp. Ed Lurcott, Kathy Buczynski, and Jim Anderson brought telescopes and binoculars to display. Connie Shapiro brought us some easy-to-make constellation viewers, with instructions on making your own (also published in the April 1997 *Observations*.) Bill O'Hara was on hand to greet people and talk with them about astronomy for a couple of hours. We also had lots of books, pictures, and magazines on display. Sadly though, the combo TV/VCR Kathy brought malfunctioned, and we were not able to run videos as we had hoped. Besides the cloudy weather that prevented solar observing, the broken TV was our only disappointment. On the whole, we all had fun talking to lots of people about astronomy. Ed even got his picture in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*!

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## CCAS Membership Survey

Enclosed with this month's newsletter you will find a survey form. We are taking one of our periodic surveys of members' areas of interest. The information will be used to guide the scheduling of speakers for Society meetings, possible field trips, and also the content of future issues of *Observations*. Please take a few minutes to fill it out and return it by May 31, 1997. The results will be published in a future edition of *Observations* (the June issue if the number-crunchers can tabulate the results quickly enough; if not, they will be in the July issue.) Return the survey at the May meeting, or mail to:

Ed Lurcott  
1384 Station Place  
West Chester, PA 19380-1334

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## Report on Park Ridge School Star Party

The star party at Park Ridge Elementary School, in Plymouth Meeting on April 23 was clouded out. But the indoor part of the program went on as scheduled. The displays and enthusiastic knowledge of the students was most impressive, especially the "Planet Song." Their teachers are to be commended for their outstanding work.

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## Thanks from the Society!

To Rafael Gonzalez, who recently donated a very nice light pointer, that can be used when doing slide shows, etc.

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## Coming Attractions

June 6-8, 1997: Mason-Dixon Star Party, outside York PA. Copies of the brochure and registration form will be available at the CCAS May meeting.

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## Welcome New Members!

We'd like to welcome the new members who have joined the Society recently. Hello and clear skies to Robert and Charles Smith, and Larry Jaffe.

## CCAS Membership List

We are in the process of updating the Society mailing list, and printing copies of it for distribution to Society members only. If you do **not** want your address and/or phone number printed in the Society directory, please contact Ed Lurcott at 436-0387.

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## May's Skies

### Moon Phases

New Moon	5/06
First Quarter	5/14
Full Moon	5/22
Last Quarter	5/29

### The Planets

Mercury reappears in the morning sky in late May, but will be tough to spot.

Venus is low in our evening sky this month, and will not get high enough above the horizon for telescopic viewing.

Mars is getting farther away from Earth this month. It's easy to spot in the evening sky, a bright orange/red "star" high in the south.

Jupiter is in the morning sky this month. It is high in the sky just before dawn, and easy to find because it's so bright.

Saturn is lost in the Sun's glare this month.

Uranus is in the morning sky, in Capricornus, a bit west of Jupiter.

Neptune is in the morning sky, in Capricornus, near Uranus.

Pluto is in Ophiuchus, and high in the south by dawn. It reaches opposition on May 25. Opposition is when an outer planet is closest to us. It will be 29 times further away from us than Mars is. You need a 8" or 10" telescope, good detailed star charts, and patience to find it.

### Meteor Shower: May 5

The Eta Aquarids meteor shower reaches its peak early on the morning of May 5. Early risers or insomniacs can see up to 20 meteors per hour. Getting away from bright lights is a big help in spotting meteors. The best instrument to use is your own eyes. The Moon will be a weak crescent, so it won't interfere with the show. Meteor

showers are the "debris" blown off a comet, that used to be the tail of the comet. If Earth passes through that "debris train", it falls into the atmosphere and burns up. The source of this meteor shower is Halley's Comet.

### Comet Hale-Bopp

You can still find Comet Hale-Bopp in the evening sky, but it is getting lower in the sky and dimmer as it moves away from us. By the end of the month we won't be able to see it at all. When is the last time you can find it without optical aid? with binoculars?

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### 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

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### 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](mailto:skywalkr@voicenet.com)

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:

Jim Anderson  
1086 W. King Road Apt. I312  
Malvern, PA 19355

## 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:

- |                              |                 |                |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>President:</b>            | Edwin Lurcott   | (610) 436-0387 |
| <b>Vice Pres:</b>            | Emil Volcheck   | (610) 388-1581 |
| <b>Treasurer:</b>            | Pete LaFrance   | (610) 268-2616 |
| <b>Secretary:</b>            | William O'Hara  | (610) 696-1422 |
| <b>Program:</b>              | Kathy Buczynski | (610) 436-0821 |
| <b>Obs Chm:</b>              | Mike Tucker     | (610) 584-8236 |
| <b>ALCor and Newsletter:</b> | Jim Anderson    | (610) 993-0261 |

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