



OBSERVATIONS



A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CHESTER COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

★President: Mike Turco
★Treasurer: Pete LaFrance

NOVEMBER 1998
(VOLUME 6, NO. 11)

★Vice President: Kathy Buczynski
★Secretary: Frank Angelini

http://members.tripod.com/~ccas_2/ccas.html

CCAS November Meeting

DATE: **Tuesday November 10, 1998**
TIME: 7:30 p.m. EDST
PLACE: Department of Geology and
Astronomy Lecture Room
(Room 113 – Boucher Building)
West Chester University
LOCATION: South Church Street
West Chester, PA (see map)

Parking is available behind Sykes Student Center on the south side of Rosedale Avenue, and behind the Bull Center at the corner of Rosedale Avenue and South High Street.

For the CCAS November Meeting, our guest speaker will be Dr. Robert Mentzer. His presentation will be "Jupiter's Satellites and the Longitude Problem." Although latitude is relatively easy to measure, determining longitude was a problem until almost 1850. With Dr. Mentzer as our guide, we will follow the story of the use of Jupiter's satellites as a heavenly clock to find longitude. The story begins with a suggestion by Galileo that was reduced to practice by Cassini, and leads to famous American explorers like Lewis & Clark and Charles Fremont.

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CCAS BIG Telescope Project

The quorum of Society members present at the October meeting voted to establish a special telescope fund to cover the expenses of building a telescope around the 20" f/4.5 mirror entrusted to us by the University of Pennsylvania. We further resolved to transfer \$500.00 from the general fund to the Telescope Fund, to get us started. For those who weren't there, that leaves us with about \$835.00 in the general fund. After some discussion of the available options, we voted to purchase a "Telekit" from Astro-Systems, Inc. A "Telekit" has

all the necessary parts, pre-cut wood and metal, to build a telescope. Astro-Systems does all the difficult design work, and we assemble the kit to complete the telescope. A "Telekit" for a 20" telescope costs about \$1650.00. Later in October, Mike Turco contacted Astro-Systems, who said they would accept \$500.00 as a down payment on the kit (their usual policy is 50% down payment, with the other 50% when the kit is ready to ship.) Now we need \$1150.00 more.

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November Observing Session

The next CCAS Observing Session will be on Friday November 20, 1998 starting at sundown. If it's too cloudy on Friday, then the Observing Session will be on Saturday November 21, 1998. 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 scopes. CCAS Observing Sessions are free of charge. Children are always welcome as long as an adult accompanies them. Dress warmly, because it gets cold quickly when you're standing around a telescope in a meadow in late November!

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CCAS December Meeting

We are glad to announce that Dr. Rex Saffer is back in town and he has agreed to make his presentation on Blue Stragglers in Globular Clusters at our December 8th meeting. Mark your calendars now so you don't forget it in the Holiday Rush! Bring your friends!

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President's Message October 31, 1998

"Be Prepared" was not the chief lesson to be learned from last month's meeting. While we will strive always to have a "Plan B" in place from now on, I was subsequently reminded of a much more important lesson.

I should have known that Dr. Saffer wasn't going to make our October session but I was away from home for two days prior and could not read his e-mail message to me. His mother passed away suddenly and he left in a rush for Florida the day before. I was in a rush to get home the night of our meeting and didn't have time to check for messages on my computer. He sent me notice of the sad event but I didn't see it until it was too late.

What I was rudely reminded of is that, in spite of winning the Cold War and living in the greatest economy in the world, etc., etc., many of us are killing ourselves trying to make money in this country like never before. We continually forget to focus on the more important things in our lives like family, friends, and even our own well being while we continue to pursue the buck. I recently did it myself by taking a job whereby I needed to commute to north Jersey and be expected to put in 50-hour workweeks. I had given up on the most important things in life again, blinded by the need to make a living, but at the expense of more important considerations. I saw little of my family during the week, and I had no time for recreation, exercise, or healthful meals. And forget astronomy. On the weekends, I was so tired from the pace of the workweek, I couldn't even stay awake in the early evening to do any observing. What the hell was I thinking?

Well I came back to my senses. That job is no more. I will find employment closer to home and at a pace to keep the important things in this life my highest priority. I strongly recommend for anyone of you who may be caught up in the rat race to the exclusion of your family or your own health to step back, take a measure of the situation, and make sure that a sudden life event, like what happened last week to our speaker, doesn't leave you saying you

wish you had spent more time with your loved ones. If you need a quick test to measure your condition, ask yourself who will be at your funeral and are they the people you are spending most of your time and attention on.

If the answer is "no", re-evaluate before it's too late.

Mike Turco

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Star Nights: Nov. 6 and Nov. 20

Observing Chair Ed Lurcott is asking all available members to turn out for these two educational star nights scheduled as listed below. Members should attend whether they have a telescope or not, as these youngsters are glad to have someone to point out the brighter constellations, stars, and planets to them; there is something for everyone to do. And it's a lot of fun, too.

Friday November 6, 1998, sunset:

New Garden Elementary School

New Garden, PA

(between Kennett Square and Avondale)

see attached map

40+ Fifth Grade Students

Rain Date: Nov. 12

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Nov. 13: CCAS Night at Flower & Cook

Friday November 13 will be a CCAS Members Only (members and their families) Night at the University of Pennsylvania's Flower and Cook Observatory, located just south of Malvern. See the attached map for the location. The 15" refractor and the 28.5" reflector will be available for our use, with help from the staff, and members can also bring their own telescopes to observe on the grounds.

We have the option of making this event a pot-luck dinner "food'n'fun" night with our families. We need to decide ASAP and notify the Observatory of our decision, so come to the November meeting with ideas, and be prepared to vote on it.

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Upcoming CCAS Events:

Meetings:

All in Room 113, Boucher Building, WCU:
December 8, 1998 at 7:30 p.m. EST

Observing Sessions:

All at the BVA:

December 18 (19), 1998 at sunset:

December session is in conjunction with the
Winter Solstice Party at the Brandywine
Valley Association.

Field Trip for CCAS Members:

March 1999 (date not picked yet):

Eastern College Observatory
*Special thanks to Steve Limeburner for
contacting Dr. Bradstreet and setting this up!*

Star Nights:

May 1999 (date not picked yet):

Coatesville Girl Scouts
Hibernia Park (tentative)

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November's Skies

Nov. 17-18: Leonid Meteor Shower

This is the big one, the one that *may* turn out to be a meteor storm (meaning hundreds, or even thousands, of meteors per hour). This happens roughly every 33 years, and it looks like the chances are good that a storm will happen in 1998 or 1999. It's not a sure thing, because the characteristics of the "debris tube" are not fully understood yet. BUT if it happens, you WILL be sorry you missed it!!! So start making plans now, and start praying for clear weather that night. The Moon will be nearing New Moon, so the observing conditions will be excellent for seeing meteors, IF it is clear. Getting up early on the morning of Nov. 17 may be a good idea, as well as staying out the night of Nov.17 into the morning of Nov.18. Dress warmly!

Moon Phases

Full Moon	11/03
Last Quarter	11/10
New Moon	11/18
First Quarter	11/26

The Planets

Mercury is visible in the evening sky during the first two weeks of November. Look with binoculars, low in the sky, about 30 minutes after sunset. It won't be easy to find.

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

Mars is rising in the morning sky at about 2:00. It's still too far away (and thus too small) for good telescopic viewing. Wait until next March for Mars.

Jupiter is the brightest "star" in the southeast in the early evening, climbing higher as the night progresses. Jupiter is a fine sight in any size telescope (in binoculars too!)

Saturn is in the east as darkness falls, east of much brighter Jupiter (to the left and down from Jupiter). Saturn's apparent size is now about 20", the largest it has been in two decades.

Uranus and Neptune are in Capricornus, well placed in the south-southwest as darkness falls. The May 1997 issue of *Sky & Telescope* has a finder chart for these two planets.

Pluto is behind the Sun this month.

Comet Giacobini-Zinner

This faint telescopic comet will be visible in the southwestern evening sky during November. Latest reports (10/31) say it is about magnitude 9.

Coordinates:

Date	R.A.	Dec.
11/01	18h 58.0m	-03° 42'
11/11	19h 40.8m	-08° 49'
11/21	20h 29.3m	-13° 52'
12/01	21h 22.4m	-18° 20'
12/11	22h 17.8m	-21° 40'
12/21	23h 12.7m	-23° 32'
12/31	00h 04.5m	-23° 59'

Other Observing Notes

Thursday Nov. 5: 7:30-7:45 p.m. EST, the Moon occults (passes in front of) the first magnitude star Aldebaran, on the eastern horizon.

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Astronomical League Regional News

[Editor's Note]: The CCAS is part of a nationwide federation of astronomical societies, called the Astronomical League. Within the League, we are also part of the Mid-Eastern Astronomical League (MERAL.) The following items are from an e-mail received recently from the Regional Chair, E.E. "Sandy" Sanders.

MERAL has a Regional Chair, a Regional Representative, a Treasurer (who wants to resign), but no Secretary or Vice Chair. There should also be several regional committees. The AL has money available for Regional Awards: let's establish an awards committee, set criteria for an award and give it out! MERAL should have Regional Conventions every other year to elect officers and transact business (like giving out the regional award). We could possibly have the meeting in conjunction with one of the many fine Star Parties in our region; we need one or more persons to step forward and help get this organized. Help MERAL in its revival to become the #1 region in the AL! (We are already #2 in number of members!) To offer your assistance, contact Sandy via e-mail at either ninasandy@aol.com or at sandyspdc@aol.com, or Tom Traub at stargaze@penn.com

MERAL is organizing a unique fundraiser for BOTH the societies AND the Region: the Messier Marathon Fundraiser. It works like this: society members agree to do the March Messier Marathon when it is theoretically possible to see all 110 Messier objects in one night. Notify Sandy that you are participating, and he will send you a spreadsheet with the objects on it, and a sheet to use in signing up sponsors - say at a nickel or dime or dollar an object. This has tremendous potential: if 100 members were to get a total of just \$1.00 per object, find just 100 objects, we could earn a total of \$10,000.00! MERAL will split the money 50/50 between the members' society and the Region. This could turn into an interesting way to promote astronomy in your area: maybe you could even arrange for a radio station to do a remote broadcast from the observing sight. Sandy will consider appropriate recognition for both societies and individuals that participate.

High School Astronomy! This is not a bad joke: there are a number of high school astronomy clubs joining the Astronomical League; there were 3 at last count. If you know of a high school club, either recruit them for AL membership yourself, or contact Sandy or Tom Traub. Perhaps your society might consider sponsoring the club's dues for the first year. This is not a ploy for more members, but an attempt to recruit and encourage the next generation of astronomers (both amateur and professional): the graying of astronomy is a demographic reality.

MERAL Chair's Letter to the Members:

Thank you, each and every one of you, for all that you do - not just for the League but for the promotion and continuance of amateur astronomy. If I can be of help to you or your society, let me know. I hope to be considered as a speaker for one of your meetings. I cannot make any firm promises due to wife/baby concerns. But I will try.

I am recruiting the non-League societies within our regional boundaries, and am seeing a glimmer of success. I am hopeful of a MERAL convention in 1999 (the note in the *Reflector* about Charlottesville was a mistake), and I hope MERAL can host the national convention in 2001. If your society is interested in helping with either event, let me know. And we will need a new Regional Chair in 2001 since I will be "term-limited out" after two terms (four years total).

I am glad to serve as your Regional Chair. But I need help! Thanks.

Sandy

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CCAS Lending Telescope

You can make arrangements to borrow the telescope for a month by contacting Steve Leiden (296-3793). The 6" f/8 reflector can be borrowed by club members for a month at a time.

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News from Neighboring Societies

[Editor's Note]: All that is required to have notices published here is to include Jim Anderson on the mailing list of your society's newsletter. See below for Jim's address.

From *Focus*, the newsletter of the Delaware Astronomical Society:

Upcoming Meeting Topics

Nov. 17	Astrophotography with Film and Your Camera	Pete LaFrance
Dec. 15	"Christmas Star" video (Jack Horkheimer) Swap Table, Silent Auction, Party	
Jan.	Starlight - Photographic and Telescopic Filters	
Feb.	White Dwarfs	Judy Provancal, Bartol
Mar.	CCD Astronomy	Dave Groski
Apr.	Spectrometry at Mount Cuba Astronomical Observatory	Jack Fisher
May	Dinner Meeting Black Holes	Dr. Harry Shipman
June	Sundials	Dr. Emil Volcheck

All DAS meetings are held at the Mount Cuba Observatory in Greenville, Delaware (just north and west of Wilmington). For more information contact CCAS members Emil Volcheck (610-388-1581) or Pete LaFrance (610-268-2616), both of whom are also members of DAS. DAS President Warren Jacobs could also help (610-566-0510). Or check the DAS Website at:

<http://www.physics.udel.edu/>

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CCAS Lending Library

Our Librarian, Bill O'Hara, has the books in our library all ready for members to borrow. You can drop by Bill's place (call first, of course) to borrow a book. Or you can call Bill before a meeting and ask him to bring a book to the meeting for you. Copies of the catalog will be available at CCAS meetings. Bill's phone number is 696-1422.

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Contributing to *Observations*

Contributions of articles relating to astronomy and space exploration are always welcome. Material must be submitted by the 25th of the month in order to be included in the following month's newsletter. 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 SNY114@aol.com

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:

Jim Anderson
19 Bluff Road
Thorndale, PA 19372-1104

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CCAS Website

Pete LaFrance has set up a Web page for the Society on the World Wide Web (Internet). He has included some pictures taken by CCAS members. Check it out at:

http://members.tripod.com/~ccas_2/ccas.html

Pete welcomes any additions to the site by Society members. The contributions can be of any astronomy subject or object, or can be related to space exploration. The only requirement is that it is your own work; no copying copyrighted material!! Give your contributions to Pete LaFrance (610-268-2616).

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AL Observing Programs

One of the benefits of joining the CCAS is that you also become a member of the Astronomical League, a national federation of astronomy clubs. The AL has a series of Observing Awards, and 4 observing clubs based on these awards have been started in the CCAS. These are the Messier Club, the Binocular Messier Club, the Lunar Club, and the Double Star Club. Working on these awards also gives you a plan of observing: "What will I look at tonight?" becomes "Which Messier objects are visible tonight that I haven't seen yet?" Each club has a volunteer coordinator:

Messier Clubs (both): Ed Lurcott (610-436-0387)

Lunar Club: Ed Lurcott (610-436-0387)

Double Star Club: Jim Anderson (610-380-4512)

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CCAS Membership Information

The present membership rates are as follows:

REGULAR MEMBER.....\$20/year
SENIOR MEMBER.....\$10/year
STUDENT MEMBER..... \$ 5/year
JUNIOR MEMBER.....\$ 5/year
FAMILY MEMBER.....\$ 30/year

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

President: Mike Turco (610) 399-3423
Vice Pres: Kathy Buczynski (610) 436-0821
Treasurer: Pete LaFrance (610) 268-2616
Secretary: Frank Angelini (610) 873-7929
ALCor and
Newsletter: **Jim Anderson (610) 380-4512**
Librarian: **William O'Hara (610) 696-1422**
Observing: **Ed Lurcott (610) 436-0387**

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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 19311-9785

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Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates

Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at a reduced price of \$27.00, which is about half the newsstand price (\$48.00), and also cheaper than individual subscriptions (\$37.95)! 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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