



OBSERVATIONS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
Chester County Astronomical Society



★ *President:* Mike Turco
★ *Treasurer:* Pete LaFrance

SEPTEMBER 1999
(VOLUME 7, NO. 9)

★ *Vice President:* Steve Limeburner
★ *Secretary:* Frank Angelini

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

CCAS September Meeting

DATE: Tuesday September 14, 1999
TIME: 7:30 p.m. EDT
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. If you arrive early enough, you may be able to get an on-street parking space.

The first presentation of the fall season will be by our own Jeff Goldader. The topic will be "Building and Using the Hubble Space Telescope." Jeff will discuss the design and construction challenges of the HST and will tell us how astronomers, including Jeff himself, actually get to use it. This should be a great program; don't miss it! Mark your calendars now!



CCAS September Observing Session

The next CCAS Observing Session will be on Friday September 17, 1999 starting at about 8:00 p.m. If it's too cloudy on Friday, then the Observing Session will be on Saturday September 18, 1999. 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. CCAS Observing Sessions are free of charge. Children are always welcome as long as an adult accompanies them. You may want to bring a jacket and/or cap, as it can get pretty chilly standing around in a meadow in September.

To get to the observing site at the BVA, from the main parking lot by the office, go up the farm lane to the left, about 800 feet or so to the top of the hill. If you arrive after dark, please turn off your headlights and just use parking lights as you come up the hill.



Circular No. 99999

Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams
INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL UNION
Mailstop 18, Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory,
Cambridge, MA 02138, U.S.A.
IAUSUBS@CFA.HARVARD.EDU or FAX 617-495-7231
(subscriptions)
BMARSDEN@CFA.HARVARD.EDU or
DGREEN@CFA.HARVARD.EDU (science)
URL <http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/iau/cbat.html>
ISSN 0081-0304
Phone 617-495-72244/7440/7444 (for emergency use only)
NOVA TURCO 1999

Crozer-Chester Hospital in Pennsylvania reports the discovery by Michael & Sharon Turco of Thornton, PA, U.S.A., of an apparent nova in the constellation Turco. The nova was first observed on Friday August 27, 1999 at 16:27 (UT). Early measurements indicate that the nova's mass is about 8 pounds, 1 ounce, with a wavelength of 20.5 inches. The discoverers have named the nova Lauren Michelle Turco. Coordinates indicate that the nova is right smack dab in the middle of daddy's heart.



Public Open House: F & C Observatory

There will be a **FREE** public open house program at the University of Pennsylvania's Flower & Cook Observatory in Malvern, PA on Friday September 24, 1999. The program starts at 8:00 p.m. EDT with a talk by Nick Sarbu entitled "Totality in Romania." If the skies are clear, there will be observing with the Observatory's telescopes. Children are of course welcome as long as they are accompanied by an adult. The Observatory is located on Providence Road, just west of the intersection with Warren Avenue. A map is included below. Also see the Calendar Notes for a listing of upcoming open house programs at the F & C Observatory.



CCAS 20" Telescope News

AstroSystems said that our Telekit would be shipped the last week in August. Now it looks like we might get it sometime in September...



Calendar Notes

- September 23, 1999: Autumnal Equinox
(Thursday)
- October 8/9, 1999: CCAS Observing Session
(Friday) Brandywine Valley Association
- October 12, 1999: CCAS Monthly Meeting,
(Tuesday) West Chester University
7:30 p.m. EDT
- October 29, 1999: Free Public Open House at Flower &
(Friday) Cook Observatory in Malvern, PA
Topic: "Mars!" by Jeff Goldader
8:00 p.m. EDT
- November 5/6, 1999: CCAS Observing Session
(Friday) Brandywine Valley Association
- November 9, 1999: CCAS Monthly Meeting,
(Tuesday) West Chester University
7:30 p.m. EST
- November 19, 1999: Free Public Open House at Flower &
(Friday) Cook Observatory in Malvern, PA
Topic: "Brown Dwarfs" by Neill Reid
8:00 p.m. EST
- December 14, 1999: **Last CCAS Monthly Meeting of the**
(Tuesday) **Millenium!** Location: TBA
7:30 p.m. EST
- December 17, 1999: **Last Free Public Open House of the**
(Friday) **Millenium at Flower & Cook**
Observatory! Malvern, PA
Topic: "Photo of the Millenium"
by Jeff Goldader 7:00 p.m. EST
- December 17, 1999: **Last CCAS Observing Session of the**
(Friday) **Millenium!**
Brandywine Valley Association
Also: BVA Winter Solstice Celebration
- June 23-25, 2000 Mason-Dixon Star Party
York, PA

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MASP: October 7-12, 1999

The Mid-Atlantic Star Party is held in North Carolina about 8 miles south of Robbins, NC at a Scout camp. Camping is encouraged. Registration for adults is \$15.00 until September 25; \$20.00 after that. There will be dark sky observing, vendors, a swap meet, speakers, and an "Astro Show & Tell". This year, both *Astronomy* and *Sky & Telescope* have agreed to participate. For more information, call 919-362-5194, or use e-mail at john@bsa.net, or check their Web site at <http://www.masp.org/>

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

President's Message September, 1999

The Poem

On August 27, 1999, the *New York Times* reported: "Largest Telescope Sends First Image." The new Chandra X-Ray observatory, which a NASA shuttle placed in Earth orbit last month, has transmitted its first image, confirming that the telescope, larger and more sensitive than any before it, is in excellent health and performing up to expectations. Its first X-ray image shows Cassiopeia A, the 320-year-old remnant of an exploding star.

Ho-hum. Another "routine" launch of a payload by the Space Shuttle.

I would love to see one of the Shuttle launches. The one time I traveled down to Canaveral, the mission was scrubbed with nine seconds left in the countdown. That was 1983 and I haven't gotten back since so I have no memory of any live take-offs. My memory of watching rocket launches from home, however, I won't soon forget.

I was nervous during the launch of the first Shuttle, more so than most. Being a veteran of watching American space vehicle launches from Day One made me that way.

That morning in April, 1981, I sat focused on the TV screen during the countdown of what promised to be a new era in space science and exploration. STS-1. This baby has wings. It's going up and coming back.. Reusable. I hope those heat-resistant tiles stay on. I was nervous alright. In spite of the fantastic success of programs like Apollo/Saturn, I could never shake off the impressions of the early failures I witnessed as a youth. I couldn't help flashing back to that day late in 1957....

* * *

I sensed something very significant had taken place when Sputnik surprised the world. Newspaper headlines. Eisenhower making speeches assuring the public that No, there was no missile gap, and Yes, the US has a viable missile program. No need to dive into those bomb shelters just yet. But in spite of all those words, people were reading between the lines. And they were scrambling like hell in Washington.

To a kid 11 years old, most of this was beyond comprehension. A little metal ball with antennae pointing backward going beep...beep...beep. Big deal. But the *rocket* launch, that *was* a big deal. You mean the Russians sent a rocket into space? The bad guys whose conversion from godless communism we pray for every Sunday, they launched the rocket? The Reds, the evil guys on the other side of the planet, *they* launched the rocket?!? What would Flash Gordon, Buzz Corry, or Tom Corbett think of that?!!

Okay, they went first, but surely we were going to launch one too, right? You bet!! Just wait, you commies, you ain't seen nothin' yet! (Boy, I didn't know how prophetic that thought was!)

Days went by, then weeks. More headlines. More consternation. More news reports. When you're a kid a day seems like forever. What the hell is taking so long?

Vanguard. US Navy. Yea! It's about time!! Why not the Air Force? Oh, well, no problem. The Navy wins. The Navy was coming to the rescue! I grew up watching *Victory At Sea*. You could just hear the introductory strains of Richard Rodger's award winning sound track. *Dah dah, da-da-dah dah dah, da-da-da-da-dah!!*

I had no idea of the history of the Vanguard program, that it was a separate one from the military, that it was to put a satellite in orbit for the International Geophysical Year, that it wasn't ready, that the Russians were ahead in rocket booster development and, although ostensibly part of the IGY team, they pulled off a well-planned political coup. All I wanted was the US to put a rocket up. Period. End of story.

It was going to be televised live. *Live* television. We didn't see the Sputnik launch, but we were going to see the Vanguard launch. The American Way. Nothing to hide. A lot rode on this one. Liberty. Freedom. PRIDE. My life as I knew it. And for all the world to see.

Ten... nine... eight... fingers crossed... seven... six... five... toes crossed, legs crossed, I'd have crossed my head if there was something to cross it with... four... three... two... holding breath, heart stops, I almost can't look but I have to... one... ZERO!!

The emotional stretch of the next ten seconds was almost unbearable. Excitement, astonishment, bewilderment, shock, shattered dreams, despair. The rocket got up about three or four feet, then tipped slightly and collapsed backwards upon itself, erupting in a spectacular ball of flame as the fuel ignited and exploded. For all the world to see.

The sound I made was worse than Charlie Brown makes when the tree eats his kite. Oh, the agony! Stick a knife in my heart and end it all!!

I was so miserable, I remember going up to my room and just sitting there by myself with my head in my hands. Where are your parents when you really need them?! They didn't even watch!!

It hurt so badly I started writing a poem for the guys at the Cape. Move over, Emily Dickinson, you've got nothing on me. Over forty years later, the words are still etched in my brain.

*“Go up, O Missile from your Launch,
Take to the Air so Brave and Staunch.
And, please, O Missile, don't blow up,
Go up, O Missile, go up, go, up!”*

I never got past the first stanza. What's the use I thought, kids don't write poems anyway. I never finished it, never told anyone about it, never sent it to Cape Canaveral. The whole episode was too much to talk about. A real childhood disaster.

* * *

Now I was hoping against hope that this wouldn't be another one. Hell, it's been years since a failed launch. What, me worry? What keeps those tiles on anyway? Suppose they come off during reentry!

Here we go. *Ten... nine... eight...* damn dramatic device, this countdown... *seven... six... five...* the world is watching... *four... three... two...* fingers crossed, etc... *one... ZERO!!*

Liftoff! Alright!! Hand clapping! Tears of joy!! But wait, the damn thing is rolling over! *It's ROLLING OVER for God's sake! OH, NO!!*

Just as I was about to have a heart attack and relive one of the worst experiences of my life, the commentator calmly announced that the rolling maneuver went according to plan.

Rolling maneuver? Rolling maneuver?!? Nobody told me about any rolling maneuver!! Damn, where are your parents when you really need them?! They didn't even watch!!

* * *

Needless to say, STS-1 was a success. I had a few extra white hairs but the Space Shuttle program was on its way. In spite of the sad but eminently preventable Challenger disaster, the program continues to push the envelope of technology and space science.

Regarding the Vanguard launches and the Russkis, all turned out well. Sputnik 1 lost orbit six months after it went up, while Vanguard 1, after it was finally launched, became the longest continuous orbiting satellite in history. It will orbit for about 2000 years.

Our prayers were answered. Soviet communism died of its own weaknesses. The Domino Theory was much ado about nothing. The Berlin Wall crumbled. The American taxpayer, not the Navy or the Air Force, beat the Red Menace.

The Poem remains unfinished. Maybe if some of the CCAS gang decides to trip down to Fla. I could tag along. I might even get inspired to give The Poem a happy ending.

And I won't get too nervous. Promise.

Mike Turco

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Autumnal Equinox: September 23

If it seems a little cooler as you head out to work on the morning of Thursday September 23, it may be because the Sun has already slipped south of the equator. Old Sol crosses the equator that day at 7:31 a.m. EDT, starting autumn in the Northern Hemisphere, and spring in the Southern Hemisphere.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

September Skies

Moon Phases

Last Quarter	9/02
New Moon	9/09
First Quarter	9/17
Full Moon	9/25 (Harvest Moon)

The Planets

Mercury is in the morning sky in August. It will be visible for as much as 90 minutes before sunrise in the second week of August, so that will be a good opportunity to see Mercury (Aug. 11-17). After that it sinks rapidly closer to the Sun.

Venus is lost in the Sun's glare for most of August, emerging into the morning sky by month's end.

Mars is in the south-southwest after sunset, looking like a bright reddish-orange "star" in Libra. It's moving away from us now, so it's getting hard to see any details on the planet.

Jupiter rises in late evening in August, but it will be well after midnight before it's high enough in the east for good telescopic viewing.

Saturn is rising about 30 minutes after Jupiter in August.

Uranus and Neptune are in the constellation Capricornus. By the late evening hours when Jupiter and Saturn are rising this month, these two planets are near the meridian.

Pluto is in the constellation Ophiuchus, near Zeta (ζ) Ophiuchus in the evening sky during August. Determined hunters will need dark skies, at least an 8" telescope, and a good finder chart in order to bag Pluto (14th magnitude).



Black Forest Star Party: Sept. 10-12, 1999

This new star party, organized by the Central Pennsylvania Observers, will be held at Cherry Springs State Park at an altitude of 2300 feet. You can camp in the park; there are some electrical hookups. There will be door prizes, speakers, demonstrations, and dark dark skies. The State Park is located on PA State Route 44 in Potter County. State Forest Land surrounds it: the nearest clearing (yes that's clearing, not town) is at least 5 miles away! There is a good field for observing at the Park. Registration is \$25.00, including camping fee. Pre-registration deadline is August 20; after that registration is \$30.00 including camping. Park closes at 10:00 each night; after that you can't go in or out. For more information contact Michael J. Coslo at 814-238-7690 or via e-mail at black_forest@pop.psu.edu



Position Available

Jim Anderson has been our newsletter editor for almost 4 years (since October 1995) and wouldn't mind "retiring". If anyone would like to be editor, call Mike Turco.



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 The Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomer, the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers :

Upcoming Meeting & star party dates

September 10, 1999 (Friday) 8:00 p.m. EDT	Meeting. Topic: TBA
October 8, 1999 (Friday) 8:00 p.m. EDT	Meeting. Topic: TBA
November 12, 1999 (Friday) 8:00 p.m. EST	Meeting. Topic: TBA
December 10, 1999 (Friday) 8:00 p.m. EST	Meeting. Topic: TBA

All DVAA meetings are held at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education on Hagys Mill Road in Philadelphia, PA. For more information contact CCAS members Mike Turco (610-399-3423) who is also a member of DVAA. DVAA President Mike Tucker could also help (610-584-8236). Or check the DVAA Website at:

<http://www.libertynet.org/~dvaa/>



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 are available at CCAS meetings. Bill's phone number is 610-696-1422.



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).



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): Frank Angelini (610-873-7929)

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

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

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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 SNY114@aol.com

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:

Jim Anderson

19 Bluff Road

Thorndale, PA 19372-1104

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates

Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at a reduced price of \$27.00, which is much less the newsstand price of \$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.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CCAS Officers

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

President:	Mike Turco	(610) 399-3423
Vice Pres:	Steve Limeburner	(610) 353-3986
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

★ ★ ★ ★ ★