



OBSERVATIONS



A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
Chester County Astronomical Society

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

AUGUST 2000

(VOLUME 8, NO. 8)

★*Vice President:* Steve Limeburner
★*Secretary:* Doug Liberati

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

Observations Wins National Award!

President's Message August 2000

Early this year I was glancing through my latest copy of the Astronomical League periodical *The Reflector* and I happened to read some of the fine print. I read the notice about nominations for different awards including the Mabel Sterns Award for outstanding newsletter editor.

Our newsletter, *Observations*, is a quality publication that reflects the dedicated effort of its editor, Jim Anderson. I've seen newsletters of similar organizations and *Observations* tops the list for content, readability and error-free text. So when I read of the award I decided to nominate Jim.

The nomination requires a formal letter to the vice president of the Astronomical League and a copy of a newsletter. Here are excerpts from the nominating letter:

"Jim has held the Editor's position for many years now and he does an outstanding job. You have asked for a copy of a recent newsletter...I am sending you three. This is because our newsletter varies in size and content from month to month and seeing just one month's copy would not give you a true understanding of the scope of the work Jim does on each issue. I think you will agree that the effort is outstanding."

The effort is outstanding, but as I composed the nomination, I realized that Jim does more for the CCAS than just edit the newsletter and I wanted to be sure that the AL VP got the message:

"...the reason for my recommendation doesn't stop there. Jim not only does the newsletter editing, he also contributes articles and makes frequent presentations at our monthly meetings. He is one of the few out there at every event to give his time and energy to the school kids, scout groups and the general public who attend our observing sessions. He has recently attained his AL Double Star Club certificate to go along with his Lunar and Messier certificates. He also was a key part of our Astronomy

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Day festivities last year when our club won an

A. L. Press Release: 2000 Sterns Award

July 6, 2000

From: Bob Gent, Astronomical League Vice President
To: Chuck Allen, A. L. President
Cc: Nominated NL Editors, Selected Club and Regional Officers

Our 2000 Mabel Sterns Award is complete (see press release below). Please join us in congratulating all of the following newsletter editors for their superb achievements. Never before have so many excellent newsletters been submitted for this award. It's too bad we can't make them all winners!

Clear skies and bright stars,

Bob Gent

Outstanding Newsletter Editors of 2000

One of the most difficult jobs in any club is that of newsletter editor, and the Astronomical League's Mabel Sterns Award honors those dedicated volunteer newsletter editors. This award is named in honor of the first newsletter editor of the League. Now in its third year, there were dozens of excellent nominations, and the competition was very intense. The judges complained that this year was very difficult work because all of the submitted newsletters were of only the highest quality.

Our first place winner is Glendon L. Howell, editor of the *Back Bay Observer*, newsletter of the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers in Chesapeake, Virginia. In the words of the BBAA president, Kent Blackwell, "Glen has been doing an outstanding job as our newsletter editor for about 20 years." Recently, Glen has become very active in efforts to protect the beauty of our night skies. Last fall, he and other BBAA members held a very successful joint meeting of the International Dark-Sky Association and the Virginia Association of Astronomical Societies. Based upon Glen's encouragement, a major Norfolk area newspaper ran a front page article about this meeting including a beautiful front page photo of a starry night. Glen's enthusiasm led the paper to

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be very supportive, and this brought the subject of light pollution

Honorable Mention award from the AL, and he serves as the club's ALCor. There is no doubt that Jim is a major contributor to the success of our club."

Jim is a major reason for the success of our club and he does an outstanding job with the newsletter.

"I cannot think of a more deserving individual than Jim for this honor. He exemplifies the true meaning of the award, for he does give much of his time to promote the science of astronomy. The League could be proud having him as the award recipient."

After reviewing my nomination and a separate nominating letter sent by Steve Limeburner, the AL thought so too: Jim Anderson received the second place award for Outstanding AL Newsletter Editor for 2000.

Congratulations, Jim!

Mike Turco

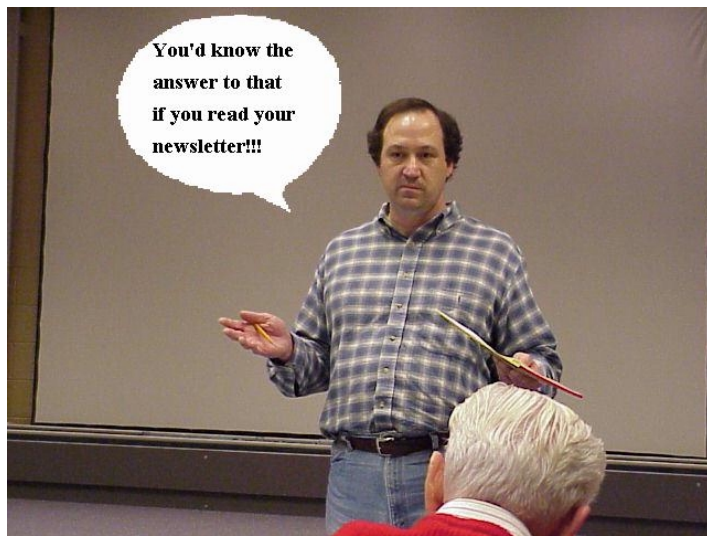


Photo of Jim (and quote) by Frank Angelini

From the Editor's Desk

I would like to thank Mike Turco and Steve Limeburner for nominating me for this award. I would also like to thank all the members who over the years have provided such good articles, pictures, drawings, ideas and encouragement for the newsletter. The quality of the newsletter is really a result of all the input and support I receive every month. Two members stand out in that regard. The first is my wife Donna, who proofreads many issues and also often lends technical assistance with MS Word. The second member is Ed Lurcott, who has assisted almost every single month in the past 5 years with finishing up the content and arrangement, double-checking the dates and other data for accuracy, and then makes the copies, stuffs the envelopes, and mails it out to the members. Without all this help there would not be a newsletter, let alone one this good. Again, my thanks to all.

Jim Anderson

to local officials and the general public. For his many years of dedicated service as astronomer and newsletter editor, the Astronomical League proudly presents the 2000 Mabel Sterns Award to Glendon Howell.

Our second place award winner is Jim Anderson, editor of *Observations*, newsletter of the Chester County Astronomical Society in Chester County, Pennsylvania. In addition to producing the club's outstanding newsletter, Jim serves his club as Astronomical League correspondent, as an observing awards coordinator, and he has established a new e-mail service for the newsletter. The judges received letters from not only the club president, but the vice president as well, both describing Jim's dedication to astronomy. He has not only produced an award winning newsletter for many years, but is always active with club meetings and public outreach programs. Jim is a remarkable astronomer, and is well deserving of this award.

Michael Cissell, editor of *Via Stellaris*, the newsletter of the Van Braun Astronomical Society in Huntsville, Alabama, wins third place in the 2000 Mabel Sterns competition. Michael produces a very classy, professional looking newsletter. Michael includes excellent graphics, formatting, and astronomically interesting side bars. This newsletter is a work of art, and our judges were impressed with Michael's talents.

Our fourth place winner is Tom Klekamp, from Mandeville, Louisiana. He is the editor of the Pontchartrain Astronomical Society newsletter, *PAS Times*. According to Barry Simon, president of the PAS, "Tom has been doing a really great job with our newsletter." In addition to other achievements, Tom is a leader in the community. Thanks to Tom's tireless efforts, Mandeville, Louisiana now has a very comprehensive outdoor lighting ordinance that will preserve the night skies, conserve energy, and improve visibility through reduced glare.

Fifth place is awarded to Frank Baratta, editor of the RVAS newsletter in Roanoke, Virginia. Frank has been providing outstanding service to the Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society for nearly a decade. Club president John Goss put it best by stating "Our newsletter is the cornerstone of our club, it binds our members together, and in fact many members stated that the RVAS Newsletter is their favorite benefit of membership."

The following editors received impressive letters of recommendation from their organizational presidents. All of them deserve special awards for their dedication to astronomy and outstanding achievements. Arranged in alphabetical order, they are:

- Cincinnati [OH] Astronomical Society, Editor Bill Gwynne
 - Eastbay [CA] Astronomical Society, Editor Ellis Myers
 - Kalamazoo [MI] Astronomical Society, Editor Richard Bell
 - Longmont [CO] Astronomical Society, Editor Jim Sapp
 - Louisville [KY] Amateur Astronomers, Editor Pat Peak
 - Peoria [IL] Astronomical Society, Editors John Barra, Michael & Jessica Frasca, and Calene Fleming
 - Southwest Montana Astronomical Society, Editor Mel McCarver
 - Spokane [WA] Astronomical Society, Retired Editor R.L. Dietz
 - Springfield [VT] Telescope Makers, Editor Wayne Zuhl
- [end of press release]



CCAS Observing Session and Meeting: Aug. 25

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday August 25 (cloud date is Saturday August 26). In June, July, and August we combine our meetings with the Observing Session at the Brandywine Valley Association. Before darkness falls, we tend to whatever business needs to be taken care of. There may or may not be a informal presentation of some kind. The Observing Sessions then start at about 8:30 p.m., when it becomes fully dark. At the observing sessions, there is help available to set up and use your telescopes. If you're having trouble using your telescope, or finding your way around the sky, come on out and get some assistance. 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 always free of charge. Children are always welcome.

To get to the observing site at the BVA, turn off Route 842 into the parking lot by the office: look for the signs to the office along Route 842. From that parking lot, go up the farm lane to the left; it's 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.



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 August 11, 2000, starting at **8:00** p.m. EDT. The program that night will be on meteor showers, and Dr. Goldader will bring along a bunch of "samples" from the University of Pennsylvania's meteorite collection. If any CCAS members have meteorites, or good shower stories (or tips!) to share, they would be most welcome. Maybe we will even get lucky and have good weather that night! The Perseid meteor shower is predicted to peak the next night, Saturday August 12, so Friday night should be a good night for meteors too. If the skies are clear, there will also 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 on a later page.



Black Forest Star Party: Sept. 1-4, 2000

Please Note: If you are going to the BFSP, please contact either Jim Anderson (610-380-4512) or Ed Lurcott (610-436-0387) to let us know by August 20. We'd like to coordinate with everyone going from the CCAS so we can camp together at the park, and also possibly share the cooking and camp chores. To do that we will have to get together sometime in August to plan everything. So call us by August 20, and let us know what days would be good for a meeting (probably 1-2 hours, once you include time for tall stargazing tales...), and

we'll call everybody to let you know when and where we'll meet to get things sorted out.

This great star party, organized by the Central Pennsylvania Observers, will be held on Labor Day weekend at Cherry Springs State Park, at an altitude of 2300 feet above sea level. Ed Lurcott, as well as Jim & Donna Anderson, are already registered for this star party. 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. There is a good field for observing at the Park. Cherry Springs State Park has just recently been designated as Pennsylvania's first "Dark Sky Park," under a new program by Pennsylvania's Department for the Conservation of Natural Resources. Registration for the Star Party is \$25.00, which includes a camping fee. Pre-registration deadline is August 5; 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

Or visit the Web site at:

http://members.xoom.com/_XMCM/black_forest/bfsp.html



New Committee Chairs: Part II

We have a correction to last month's article about the new committee chairs. Donna Anderson had said she would serve as Program Chair. It turns out that Steve Limeburner had already started working on the program for our 2000-2001 season, as part of his Vice Presidential duties. So if you have any ideas or leads for our meetings in the 2000-2001 season, starting with September 2000, contact Steve Limeburner (610-353-3986 or via e-mail at sboy_44@hotmail.com). Steve has several good leads already, but we really need something for the September meeting!



Observations of Comet LINEAR (C/1999 S4)

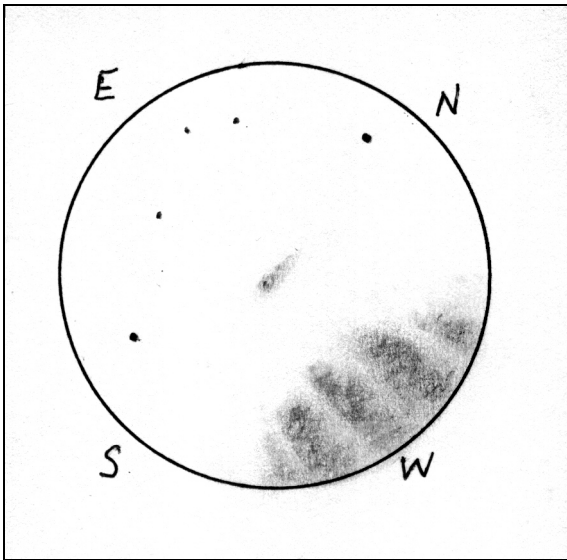
e-mail from Steve Limeburner on July 21:

"I just observed Comet LINEAR in my backyard (10:00 p.m. – 10:40 p.m. EDT, 7/20). I used *Sky & Telescope's* coordinates for 0h UT July 21. At about 9:45, I located the star I UMa (mag 3.4) at 8h 30m +60 degrees. The comet's expected position was a short star hop away. Using *Uranometria 2000*, I identified a faint fuzzy intruder at 35x. At first, it appeared as a star out of focus, but by increasing magnification, and waiting for astronomical twilight to end, the comet showed hints of a faint tail pointing due north. The comet's nucleus appeared like a magnitude 8.5 star at 163x.

THE COOLEST OBSERVATION WAS YET TO COME. Although this comet is not visually impressive, it is moving so fast across our sky that I could detect this motion within a

matter of minutes. At first I thought it was my imagination, but careful comparison with background stars showed it had moved almost 15 arc minutes in 2/3 of an hour. Staring at the comet for several minutes at 163x, I could see it drift among two background stars. (Aperture and luck play an important role in this type of observation).

Although not in the same league as the big comets (Hale-Bopp, etc.), LINEAR provides a decent challenge for backyard astronomers for the rest of the month. The comet never gets high in the sky. My biggest concern was where to set up the telescope so as to avoid obstruction from trees!”



Comet LINEAR (C/1999 S4) drawing by Jim Anderson
21-07-2000 02:00 UT (20-07-2000 20:00 EDT)

Observation made using “Lucy,” an Orion 120mm f/8.3 refractor with a 26mm Plossl eyepiece (Meade) giving 39x with a 1.3° field-of-view.

“Brighter stellar core, definite fuzzy coma surrounding it, faint tail stretching out northward. Brightness guesstimate for coma is 6.0 – 6.5. Getting awfully close to the tree line (tree branches intruding in western edge of field).”

I had already moved the telescope twice that night because of the trees...

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Quote of the Month

“I got clouded out of any observations, including Vesta and Comet LINEAR. It can stop raining now.”

Doug Liberati,
in an e-mail message to Jim Anderson on July 28, 2000

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August Skies

Moon Phases

First Quarter	08/06
Full Moon	08/15
Last Quarter	08/22
New Moon	08/29

The Planets

Mercury is low in the morning sky in early August, making its best appearance around July 27 when it rises almost an hour before the Sun, and then sinking lower each day (but also getting brighter each day) until around August 13th, when it will disappear into the Sun’s glare again.

Venus is low in the evening sky in August, visible about 20 minutes after sunset. By the end of the month it will be visible as late as about 30 or 40 minutes after sunset.

Mars is very low in the morning sky throughout August.

Jupiter rises at about 1 a.m. EDT in early August, and rises at around 11:00 p.m. by August 31. It’s a great sight in a telescope of any size.

Saturn is near brighter Jupiter all month, making it easier to find. The two planets remain close to the Pleiades and Hyades star clusters this month. Saturn’s rings are now tilted “open” the most they have been since 1990: 24°.

Uranus and Neptune are well placed for evening observing all month; they are both in Capricornus. Neptune passed opposition (closest position to Earth) on July 27, and Uranus is at opposition on August 11.

Pluto is high in the south about the time it gets fully dark in August, near the star 20 Ophiuchi. Finding Pluto, however, requires at least an 8" telescope, dark skies, good charts, and lots of patience.

The Perseid Meteor Shower

This meteor shower peaks on August 12, but the nearly full Moon will drown out many of the fainter meteors this year.

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CCAS 20” Telescope Update

At the York Star Party, a laser collimator was purchased for aligning the mirrors in the 20” telescope. Ed Lurcott has used this tool on the `scope, and reports that it made a big improvement in the clarity of the images seen through the telescope. Also, Ed found an old military surplus gunsight in his garage that will work as a fine alignment finderscope on the 20” to supplement the Telrad finder. Ed is working on fabricating a mount for the new finderscope.

Ed’s been having a lot of fun using the 20” in his backyard. Now I’m beginning to understand why he volunteered his garage for the assembly work...

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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).



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



CCAS Lending Library

Contact our Librarian, Bill O'Hara, to make arrangements to borrow one of the books in the CCAS lending library. Copies of the catalog are available at CCAS meetings. Bill's phone number is 610-696-1422.



CCAS Lending Telescope

Contact Kathy Buczynski to make arrangements to borrow the Society's lending telescope. The lending telescope can be borrowed by CCAS members for a month at a time; longer if no one else wants to borrow it after you. Kathy's phone number is 610-436-0821.



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:	Doug Liberati	(610) 827-2149
ALCor and Newsletter:	Jim Anderson	(610) 380-4512
Librarian:	William O'Hara	(610) 696-1422
Observing:	Ed Lurcott	(610) 436-0387



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 four 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)



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

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 **\$29.95 (note that this has just increased, as of October 1999)**, which is much less than the newsstand price of \$54.00, and also cheaper than individual subscriptions (\$39.95)! 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.



