

### MAY 2005 (VOLUME 13, NO. 5) Visit our website at www.ccas.us

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### Important May 2005 Dates

- 1 Last Quarter Moon
- Introductory Astronomy class meets at West Chester University. Class starts at 7:00 p.m.
  EDT. Class meets in the Planetarium tonight! See page 3 for more details.
- **5/6** Eta Aquarid meteor shower peaks on these days.
  - 8 New Moon
- **10** CCAS Meeting 7:30 p.m. EDT Constellation of the Month: Leo Topic: Astrophotography with digital cameras

More details on page 3.

- **13/** CCAS Observing session at Myrick
- **14** Conservation Center (BVA) starts at sunset. Map with directions is on page 10.
- **15** In the early morning hours of the 15<sup>th</sup>, the planets Mars and Uranus will be a mere 1.1° apart. Using a wide-angle eyepiece you may be able to both at once in a telescope.
- 16 First Quarter Moon
- 17 Introductory Astronomy class meets at West Chester University. Class starts at 7:00 p.m. EDT. Topic: *Telescopes, Binoculars, and Mounts.*
- 23 Full Moon
- 24 See the Moon occult (pass in front of) firstmagnitude Antares in Scorpius at 4:19 a.m. EDT.
- 30 Last Quarter Moon



#### The Planets

**Mercury** is in the morning sky in early May. Look about 30 minutes before sunrise, very low in the east.

**Venus** is in the evening sky this month, setting only about 30 minutes after the Sun on May 1. By May 30 it sets 80 minutes after the Sun, so in later May it will be easier to spot Venus.

Mars is in the morning sky, high in the southeast at sunrise.

**Jupiter** is the very bright "star" in Virgo, not far from Spica. Jupiter is always a fascinating sight in any size telescope.

**Saturn** is visible in the evening sky, in Gemini. It appears to form a crooked line with Castor and Pollux. Don't miss seeing this ringed beauty in a telescope.

**Uranus** is low in the morning sky at sunrise. On May 15 Uranus is only 1.1° away from much brighter Mars. You can probably see both worlds at once with a wide-field eyepiece in your telescope on this morning.

Neptune is in Capricornus, in our morning sky.

**Pluto** is rising before the Sun this month, but it is best to wait until later in the spring or summer to look for it.

The Eta Aquarid meteor shower peaks around May 6 this year. The Eta Aquarids can offer up to 10 meteors per hour.

### **CCAS Election News**

The offices of president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary are up for election this year. The term of office is two years.

The official ballots have been mailed to all Society members who are eligible to vote. A family membership receives one ballot. Ballots can be returned by mail, or returned in person at the May meeting. The Election Committee collects all ballots and counts them at the May meeting. The Election Committee then announces the results at the meeting, and results are published in the June Observations.

★

★ ★ **CCAS** 

	May	Meeting	
>	ivia	weeting	

Tuesday May 10, 2005
7:30 p.m. EDT
Department of Geology and
Astronomy Lecture Room
(Room 113 – Boucher Building)
West Chester University
South Church Street
West Chester, PA

A map of the campus showing the location is on page 10.

Special Note: Final exams will be over at WCU before our May 10 meeting, so it will be much easier to find close parking this month!

The Constellation of the Month for May will be Leo, presented by Kathy Buczynski. The Constellation of the Month (COM) presentation will include information on objects within the constellation needed for the various Astronomical League Observing Club Awards. After this presentation and your own field observation of the constellation, you will be able to complete the log entry needed to apply for the AL awards. Blank log entry sheets you can use are included in the handouts for the COM.

The April presentation was postponed to this month because the Single family was busy welcoming a healthy baby into the world. Congratulations to the Singles! Craig will talk to us about astrophotography using common digital cameras. Craig said: "While astrophotography can be complex and yield high quality results, it can also be very expensive. Astrophotography can be as easy as using a simple or advanced digital camera and using image graphics programs such as Adobe Photoshop to enhance and edit the images. The workshop will review the basics of capturing the images and using a graphics program to enhance the images." We featured some of Craig's work in the January Observations, so you know he knows what he's doing. Come to the May meeting and find out how to do similar work yourself!

#### ★ $\star$ ★ ★ **CCAS May Observing Session**

The next CCAS Observing Session will be at the Brandywine Valley Association's Myrick Conservancy Center (see map on page 10) on Friday May 13, 2005 starting at sunset; or earlier, if you can get there earlier. If it's too cloudy on Friday, then the Observing Session will be on Saturday May 14, 2005. At the observing sessions, there will be 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 telescope. CCAS Observing Sessions are free of charge.

#### + CCAS Introductory Astronomy Class

The Education Committee of the CCAS is offering a class intended to introduce people to basic astronomy. This series of eight classes is held on the first and third Tuesdays of each month, starting at 7:00 p.m. and ending at 8:00 p.m. The remaining classes will be held on these dates:

May 3 Planetarium Field Trip (WCU)

May 17 Telescopes, Binoculars and Mounts

The May 3 class will meet in the Planetarium at West Chester University. The Planetarium is in the Schmucker Science Center, which is next to the Boucher Building where the other classes have been held. The excerpt below (from the overall map of West Chester University on page 10) shows the planetarium's location. Please make every effort to arrive at the planetarium by the scheduled starting time of 7:00 p.m. Thanks.



The May 17 class will be held in Room 216 on the second floor of the Boucher Building at West Chester University. The Boucher Building is the same building where our monthly CCAS meetings are held.



### **CCAS Polo Shirts Available**

You can purchase a classy polo shirt with the CCAS logo embroidered on the left breast. Price is \$30.00 per shirt. Adult sizes S, M, L, XL only. Contact our Treasurer Bob Popovich to purchase yours!



### **Calendar Notes**

May 3, 2005 (Tuesday)	Introductory Astronomy class Location: West Chester University 7:30 p.m. EDT
May 10, 2005 (Tuesday)	CCAS Meeting Location: West Chester University 7:30 p.m. EDT
May 13/14, 2005 (Friday/Saturday)	CCAS Observing Session Location: BVA sunset
May 17, 2005 (Tuesday)	Introductory Astronomy class Location: West Chester University 7:30 p.m. EDT
June 10/11, 2005 (Friday/Saturday)	CCAS Observing Session & Meeting Location: BVA sunset
July 8/9, 2005 (Friday/Saturday)	CCAS Observing Session & Meeting Location: BVA sunset
August 12/13, 2005 (Friday/Saturday)	CCAS Observing Session & Meeting Location: BVA sunset
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# Treasurer's Report by Bob Popovich

Membership	Renewals Due
05/2005:	Brownback
	Darlington
	Grillo
	Long, Jr.
	Pioch family
	Schultz
	Turco
06/2005	Taylor
07/2005	O'Hara
	Quirk
	* * 7

### **Membership Renewals**

You can renew your CCAS membership by writing a check payable to "Chester County Astronomical Society" and sending it to our Treasurer:

> Bob Popovich 416 Fairfax Drive Exton, PA 19341-1814

The current dues amounts are listed in the *CCAS Information Directory* on a later page in this newsletter.

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### **Teflon Available**

You can get pieces of Teflon plastic (often used in the bearings of astronomical telescopes and mounts, particularly in the Dobsonian style mount) from Pete LaFrance. Notes Pete: "I have assorted sizes and thicknesses from 8"x8" to 12"x24" free of charge." If you have a need for some Teflon, contact Pete at 610-268-2616 or by email at plafrance@verizon.net.



# Astroimages

By Pete LaFrance



NGC 4631 with companion NGC 4727 Located in Canes Venatici

Celestron CGE11 telescope operating at f/6.3 ST-7me CCD camera Luminance exposures: 3 x 30 minutes A dark subtract was done, and it was all combined and processed with Maxim DL.

Image is copyrighted by Pete LaFrance, 2005, and is published here with Pete's permission.

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### National Astronomy Day

Our National Astronomy Day display at the Exton Square Mall on April 16 went well. A big thank-you goes to all the members who turned out to help. Thanks to the Mall Management for their assistance, and for letting us talk to the public about astronomy at the Mall. John Imburgia sent us some pictures he took that day. Thanks, John.



Here Keith Padgett explains just how big the universe really is. Note those classy looking CCAS polo shirts!

### Important Late-Breaking News!

Make sure you use **www.ccas.us** to reach our website! Check bookmarks and "favorites" lists and be sure they are correct. Our old URL has been acquired by someone else.

## **Music for Stargazing**

#### by Don Knabb

If you are as lucky as I am to have stereo speakers mounted on the outside of your house, you might choose to have some music playing while you sit looking at the night sky. Along with my interest in astronomy I also am a fan of "space music" and the two interests go hand in hand. In this article I'll list a few CDs that I often listen to or associate with stargazing and give you a brief description of each.

What is "space music"? My definition is that space music is music that has an "other worldly" quality to it or that would set a mood that is consistent with contemplating the great beyond. Most space music is electronically created. Although space music could be created with acoustic instruments, that would be the exception. If you have been to a planetarium show (and I'm SURE you have been) you have almost certainly heard space music even if you were not aware of it at the time.

The most classic producer of space music is Jonn Serrie:



He has several CDs out, but the three that are most commonly associated with astronomy are *And the Stars Go with You*, *Planetary Chronicles Vol 1*, and *Planetary Chronicles Vol 2*. This music is used for planetarium shows throughout the world. Serrie has a long history producing music for planetarium shows, and several pieces on *And the Stars Go with You* were commissioned by the Fels Planetarium at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. He has worked on projects with NASA and the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. Any of these CDs are great to have playing while stargazing or if you want to stargaze in your mind on a cloudy night.

A bit further out in electronic land is a CD called *All the Stars Burning Bright* by a musician named eM. This CD is pure electronic music but has sounds generated by various astronomical phenomena. One track includes the signal from the Voyager spacecraft. The CD has a hydrogen alpha photo of the sun on its cover. Titles of some tracks are interesting, including "A Dream of Summer Stars," "Parsecs," and "Starswarm".

My personal favorites for stargazing are several CDs by an artist named Steve Roach from Tucson Arizona. His classic *Structures from Silence* is incredibly beautiful and a great fit with stargazing. Other of Steve's CDs can be a bit deeper and dark, such as *The Magnificent Void* which really does feel like a voyage in the deep spaces between galaxies. His very recent *Mystic Chords and Sacred Spaces* is my current favorite. It's a 4-CD set that can cover many hours under the stars with soft, enjoyable but very interesting music. His CD *Midnight Moon* would be a good one for lunar observing:



If you'd like to have very restful and soothing music to set the star gazing mood, I'd recommend James Johnson's *Entering Twilight*. It's drifty and soft, just like those moments after sunset when the stars are just coming out.

A couple CDs I'll mention have astronomy titles that speak to the music on the disk. I greatly enjoy them both. They are space music in its most pure form. One is Mike Griffin and Dave Fulton's *The Most Distant Point Known*. This CD has a real science fiction feel and can take you quite deep into the void. The other one I'll mention is *Celestial Mechanics* by Chuck Van Zyl. Chuck is best known for his work as the disk jockey of the radio show "Star's End" that plays Saturday nights on the University of Pennsylvania radio station WXPN. This show is 5 hours of excellent space music that you could play during a late night/early morning stargazing marathon. But Chuck is also quite a musician and has put out several CDs with a strong astronomy connection. *Celestial Mechanics* has liner notes that discuss Jupiter's moon Callisto and the cosmic coincidence that results in a solar eclipse.

There are many more artists out there making music perfect for stargazing. I've tried to hit a few of my personal favorites above. Although the sounds of silence are perfectly fine for stargazing, the music above also complements the experience.



### Almost Heaven Star Party: June 2-5, 2005

The Northern Virginia Astronomy Club, in partnership with the Virginia Outdoor Lighting Taskforce, will host the first annual Almost Heaven Star Party on June 2 through 5 at The Mountain Institute in Spruce Knob West Virginia. For those of you who haven't been there, Spruce Knob is one of the premier dark sites in the eastern United States. Plus, The Mountain Institute offers amenities not often found at star parties. In addition to camping, all registrants will have access to hot showers, rest rooms, and meal service. This event is dedicated to those who seek the darkest conditions available for their observing or astrophotography sessions.

Space is limited, so registration is capped at 250. Visit the website and register online today:

#### http://www.novac.com/AHSP/register.php

There will be no on-site registration! You must register in advance. If you have any questions, please contact

ahsp@novac.com



# Asian Tsunami Seen from Space

By Patrick L. Barry

When JPL research scientist Michael Garay first heard the news that a tsunami had struck southern Asia, he felt the same shock and sadness over the tremendous loss of human life that most people certainly felt. Later, though, he began to wonder: were these waves big enough to see from space?

So he decided to check. At JPL, Garay analyzes data from MISR—the Multi-angle Imaging SpectroRadiometer instrument aboard NASA's *Terra* satellite. He scoured MISR images from the day of the tsunami, looking for signs of the waves near the coasts of India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Looking at an image of the southern tip of Sri Lanka taken by one of MISR's angled cameras, he spotted the distinct shape of waves made visible by the glint of reflected sunlight. They look a bit like normal waves, except for their scale: These waves were more than a kilometer wide!

Most satellites have cameras that point straight down. From that angle, waves are hard to see. But MISR is unique in having nine cameras, each viewing Earth at a different angle. "We could see the waves because MISR's forward-looking camera caught the reflected sunlight just right," Garay explains.

In another set of images, MISR's cameras caught the white foam of tsunami waves breaking off the coast of India. By looking at various angles as the Terra satellite passed over the area, MISR's cameras snapped seven shots of the breaking waves, each about a minute apart. This gave scientists a unique time-lapse view of the motion of the waves, providing valuable data such as the location, speed, and direction of the breaking waves.



#### This December 26, 2004, MISR image of the southern tip of Sri Lanka was taken several hours after the first tsunami wave hit the island. It was taken with MISR's 46° forward-looking camera.

Realizing the importance of the find, Garay contacted Vasily Titov at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory in Seattle, Washington. Titov is a tsunami expert who had made a computer simulation of the Asian tsunami.

"Because the Indian Ocean doesn't have a tsunami warning system, hardly any scientific measurements of the tsunami's propagation exist, making it hard for Dr. Titov to check his simulations against reality," Garay explains. "Our images provide some important data points to help make his simulations more accurate. By predicting where a tsunami will hit hardest, those simulations may someday help authorities issue more effective warnings next time a tsunami strikes."

Find out more about MISR and see the latest images at wwwmisr.jpl.nasa.gov/. Kids can read their own version of the MISR tsunami story at

http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/misr\_tsunami .

The preceding article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

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### Astronomus

"May Day!"

#### By Bob Popovich

The choice of an exclamatory title for this month's article was simply to get your attention—I'm neither a pilot nor a communist. Rather, the time is upon us to come together as a society. To come together to recollect and renew. To refresh and set a clear course for our future. I am calling on all of my fellow CCAS members to mark your ballots and bring them, along with your ideas, to our May meeting.

"Ideas? Who said anything about ideas?" Well, no one. Not yet at least. But I am taking the opportunity this podium provides to set forth some of my own ideas regarding the Society's future. I do this not to gain support for my ideas, per se, but rather to encourage you to consider your own and come forward at our May meeting to make them known. Being as we are a Society of peers, no topic of Society business should be considered out of bounds so long as we discuss it in a respectful, honest manner.

We are blessed with a common interest in astronomy that gives us all much pleasure. We are equally blessed by our mutual fellowship and company. It seems natural that we should honor these blessings by taking the time to come to the May meeting ready to contribute. OK? OK.

Take a few moments to ponder my ideas and then create your own. Then we can all sit down on the second Tuesday in May at WCU and chat. But first, let's remove from contention some of the reasons "not to attend":

- I can't find parking—WCU finals end the week before our meeting.
- It's dark outside—Daylight savings time has begun, and it won't get dark until 8:30-9:00 p.m.
- I get hungry about 7:30 p.m. every night—there will be snacks and drinks provided.
- The dog ate the ideas I wrote down—come and speak from the heart.

#### Remember, the following are my own personal thoughts, meant not to push an agenda but merely to spur conversation.

To make our meetings more satisfying, consider changing both their site and their format. With respect to the site, the WCU location is often awkward due to the traffic. In addition, the fixed seating arrangement of the room lends itself better to a college lecture than it does to collegial discussion. And if we were desirous of observing a bit after a meeting, the intense security lighting of the campus makes that all but impossible.

Meeting once a month is good. An idea that has recently emerged is for each of us to take a turn at presenting a constellation. I think this is a really good thing. The presentations we've had thus far have been informative and very beneficial in helping the rest of us maximize our observing opportunities. By presenting a constellation of your own choosing, you'll find, I believe, that following an orderly method (a template of the rubric of our *Backyard Observing* classes is available) for organizing the presentation helps you not only to teach your peers more effectively, but also provides you with the valuable discipline of preparing yourself for observing. Those of us who have fumbled for planispheres, atlases and flashlights in the dark understand all too well the value of this discipline.

Don't want to present a constellation? Well, perhaps you have an interest in a particular area of astronomical study or find yourself *confused* by a particular area (like me!). By searching the web you can almost assuredly come across an article that we could all read in advance of a meeting. Then coming together to discuss it, we'd all learn something new. Like a book club, only easier!

And speaking of books, remember book reports in elementary school? Well, we have a library full of fine books. Why not take one, read it and give us a synopsis? This doesn't have to be a laser light spectacular—just speak about what speaks to you and it's bound to be of interest to us all.

Wish you could observe more often? While it's nice to get everyone together in one location, the dispersion of our Society's members seems to be making our scheduled BVA outings increasingly difficult. Perhaps, as a supplement to BVA, we could organize ourselves into observing clusters (sorry about the pun) based on either geography or interests.

Our holiday gathering in December is always most enjoyable. The topics of discussion are varied and we have an opportunity to get to know each other better. I heartily encourage you to join us in the future. How about a midsummer BBQ coupled with observing? (If the liquid refreshment flows a bit too freely, any new astronomical discoveries made at such an event will have to be considered of dubious credibility.)



This painting depicts Copernicus observing. We don't have to be quite so dramatic during our observing...

So, there you have it. I'm priming the pump with the ideas I presented above. Embracing the principle of renewal we can all work out the details together...

Don't miss it! Tuesday May 10, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on the nearly-deserted campus of West Chester University!

Next time: Straining for the Heavens.



Cartoon by Nicholas La Para

# **CCAS Information Directory**

### **CCAS Lending Telescopes**

Contact Kathy Buczynski to make arrangements to borrow one of the Society's lending telescopes. CCAS members can borrow a lending telescope 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 Lending Library**

Contact our Librarian, Linda Lurcott Fragale, to make arrangements to borrow one of the books in the CCAS lending library. Copies of the catalog are available at CCAS meetings, and on the CCAS website. Linda's phone number is 610-269-1737.

### 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 e-mail message and send it to

#### stargazer1956@comcast.net

Or mail the contribution, typed or handwritten, to:

#### Jim Anderson 1249 West Kings Highway Coatesville, PA 19320-1133

### Get CCAS Newsletters via E-mail

You can receive the monthly newsletter (in full color!) via e-mail. All you need is a PC or Mac with an Internet e-mail connection. To get more information about how this works, send an e-mail request to Jim Anderson, the newsletter editor, at:

#### stargazer1956@comcast.net

### CCAS A.L. Award Coordinators

These are the members to contact when you have completed your observing log for the Messier, Binocular Messier, Lunar, or Double Star Awards:

Messier (both): Jim Anderson (610-857-4751)

Lunar: Ed Lurcott (610-436-0387)

Double Star: Jim Anderson (610-857-4751) Constellation Hunters: Jim Anderson (610-857-4751)

### **CCAS** Purpose

The Chester County Astronomical Society was formed in September 1993, with the cooperation of West Chester University, as a non-profit organization dedicated to the education and enjoyment of astronomy for the general public. The Society holds meetings (with speakers) and observing sessions once a month. Anyone who is interested in astronomy or would like to learn about astronomy is welcome to attend meetings and become a member of the Society. The Society also provides telescopes and expertise for "star nights" for school, scout, and other civic groups.

### **CCAS Executive Committee**

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

**President**: Mike Turco (610) 399-3423

- Vice Pres: Steve Limeburner (610) 353-3986
- ALCor and Treasurer: Bob Popovich (610) 363-8242
- Secretary: Caitlin Grey (610) 918-9049
- Newsletter: Jim Anderson (610) 857-4751
- Librarian: Linda Lurcott Fragale (610) 269-1737
- **Observing:** Ed Lurcott (610) 436-0387
- Education: Kathy Buczynski (610) 436-0821

Public Relations: Vic Carlucci (610) 458-7457



#### **CCAS Membership Information**

The present membership rates are as follows:

REGULAR MEMBER	\$25	j/year
SENIOR MEMBER	\$10	)/year
STUDENT MEMBER	\$ 5	j/year
JUNIOR MEMBER	\$ 5	j/year
FAMILY MEMBER	\$35	j/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 "Chester County Astronomical Society." Mail to:

#### Bob Popovich 416 Fairfax Drive Exton, PA 19341-1814

#### Sky & Telescope Magazine Group Rates

Subscriptions to this excellent periodical are available through the CCAS at a reduced price of \$32.95 which is much less than the newsstand price of \$66.00, and also cheaper than individual subscriptions (\$42.95)! Make sure you make out the the Chester check to County Astronomical Society (do not make the check out to Sky Publishing, this messes things all up big time), note that it's for Sky & Telescope, and mail to Bob Popovich. Or you can bring it to the next Society meeting and give it to Bob there. If you have any questions by all means call Bob first (610-363-8242). Buying a subscription this way also gets you a 10% discount on other Sky Publishing merchandise.

### CCAS Website

John Hepler is the Society's Webmaster. You can check our Website at:

### http://www.ccas.us/

John 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 John Hepler (610-363-0811) or e-mail to JohnHepler@comcast.net



To get to the Myrick Conservation Center of the Brandywine Valley Association from West Chester, go south on High Street in West Chester past the Courthouse. At the next traffic light, turn right on Miner Street, which is also PA Rt. 842. Follow Rt. 842 for about 6 miles. To get to the observing site at the BVA property, 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 (so you don't ruin other observers' night vision).



Parking is available behind Sykes Student Center on the south side of Rosedale Avenue (Parking Lot K), and behind the Bull Center at the corner of Rosedale Avenue and South High Street (Parking Lot M). If you arrive early enough, you may be able to get an on-street parking space along South Church Street, or along Rosedale Avenue. You can take the Matlack Street exit from Rt. 202 South; Matlack Street is shown on the map at the lower right corner with Rt. 202 off the map. If approaching West Chester from the south, using Rt. 202 North, you would continue straight on South High Street where Rt. 202 branches off to the right. This would bring you onto the map on South High Street near Parking Lot M, also in the lower right corner.