

The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

May - June 2001

Too High Tech?...A Member Viewpoint

There have been a lot of comments lately that the MAS is getting too high tech. That too much money is being spent for only a handful of individuals. If you really think about it, I'd say the answer is somewhat true. Yes, we have brought 3 CCD cameras and a new Meade LX200. There are computers in all the domes now. A group of us are enjoying imaging, as we turn those faint almost non-existent visual fuzzy's into bright detailed objects. Accurate data is being accumulated to the fullest. The CCD cameras are making our light polluted sky usable again.

On the other hand the new Wiesen scope building gives you access to one of the most, easiest to use telescopes we have. It may be 'low tech' to some degree, but it has some great optics and smoothness that can't be beat. This scope requires no set up and can be in use in less than 2 minutes. If you feel there is a need for another nice dob or some other type of visual telescope, let a board member know or come out to a meeting.

The bottom line is the club is doing what it has to, to attract members and make the site as usable as possible. We have the best of both worlds up on the hill. Come out and try imaging, it's easier than you think. But don't forget to try out that great 'low tech' 18" scope.

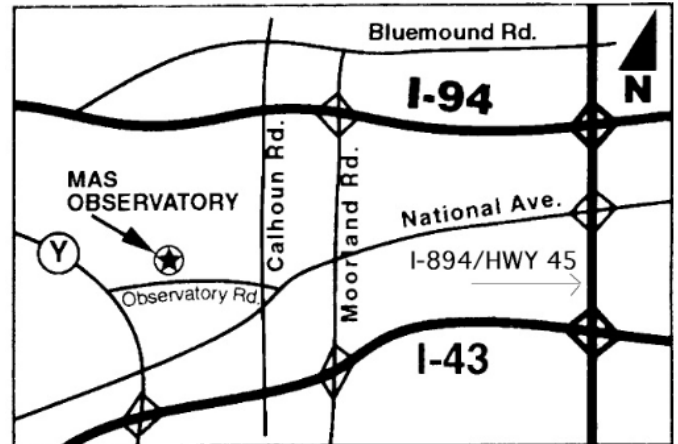
Vern Hoag, Member MAS

Editors Note:

Vern didn't mention the year old "C" Roll-off roof observatory with its Meade 10" F5, equatorial mount, clock driven, with digital readouts. It's an accurately aligned scope that will get you to any object in the night sky quickly..Both this and the Weisen 18" observatory are there for visual use and are highly accessible for all members.

Both of these scopes, while donated, are fairly costly. Further, they are housed in excellent roll-off roof buildings whose costs were held down by member "Sweat" equity. The point of this is that, the MAS site renovation is really a balanced approach to both "high" and "low" tech facilities. When you add the nine 10" portable scopes on site, you have a lot of visual observing capability.

Lastly, MAS has had a charter to pursue the "science" of astronomy stemming back to the gift of land that the observatory is on. This aspect has been vigorously pursued in past decades and is experiencing a resurgence.



We meet at the MAS observatory on May 18, at

8:00 PM. Program Chairman, Tom Pelnar has lined up a stellar talk by **Ron Ondrejka and Brian Huberty on "Imaging the Earth from Space- -Yesterday and Tomorrow"**. The speakers will look at the technological challenges and accomplishments of the early, top secret, military satellites of the 1960's...and ...A review of commercial and international earth imaging systems and applications of 2000 and beyond. Ron was the project programmetrist for Projects Corona and Lanyard in the 1960's - 70's. Brian Huberty (Madison) is the Geographic Information systems coordinator for USDA/Natural Resources Conservation service, Midwest Region. This talk should be another one of interest to all. Last November, Ron had the members all ears with his talk on Apollo 17 imaging of the moon and the Viking mission to Mars.

The Election of the board members and officers will precede the talks to afford these excellent speakers adequate time.

Lastly, the MAS Board will meet briefly at 7:45 PM. to address any pressing business. They meet again after the election of Board members to select officers from the candidate slate.

Election of Officers and four board members will be held at our regular MAS meeting (at the Observatory) on May 18, 2001. Anyone interested in running for office should let the nominating committee

A Successful Messier Hunt

By 5:30 p.m. the sky cleared out after being cloudy all day. It was cold, but this was the first clear messier hunt night in years. About a dozen or so member's started showing up right after the skies cleared. All the domes were open, along with the 2 new roll-off's (if you haven't tried the 18" Wiesen scope out in the new building, your missing some great views). Many members also brought out their own equipment. Some of the difficult objects in Leo and Virgo were hunted down. To verify a find, some members had Scott Jamieson star hop to the messier object in question. Scott sure is getting good and fast star hoping with his new LX200. Seems like he puts it in the center of the field in a matter of seconds. Some color images were also taken with one of the ST9's. Among them were the Orion, Horsehead and Rosette nebula's (some of us did stray from the traditional M objects). All in all everybody had a good time until the clouds rolled back in around 11:00 p.m. Hope to see you all out at next year's messier hunt. Although you don't have to wait until next year. Saturday member's nights are picking up nicely. Stop out, see and use some of the equipment the MAS has to offer. Isn't that the reason we all became members?

Vern Hoag

Library News

The following are new book acquisitions for the MAS Library.

1. Bubbles, voids, and bumps in time: the new cosmology— edited by James Cornell- 1993. Though I have made some minor contributions in astronomic and variable star observations, my initial interest is "where are we and why are we here?". Science may answer "where (and how)"; the "how" is still a question. This book is one of my personal favorites. It has discrepancies between contributing writers' ideas, but that is the strength of science; to "roll with the punches", so to speak.

Cosmology is the study of the origin and structure of our universe. "Bubbles..." is of historical insight, the evolution of understanding of our universe through time. Several Astronomers and Astrophysicists contribute chapters from their perspectives. As the universe evolves, so do we, and that part of our perception of reality and existence. Our universe is a big place; our part...?

2. A Man on the Moon: the Voyages of the Apollo Astronauts- By Andrew Chaikin- 1998. At our general meeting last November we had a most interesting speaker. Mr. Ron Ondrejka spoke of recently declassified information about spy satellite surveillance. Some of the same technology was used by his team for imaging the moon and Mars for later Apollo and Viking missions. Mr. Ondrejka called "A Man on the Moon the best book about Mankind's lunar landings.

It is still with amazement, that maybe our greatest achievement was that mankind made its first footfall on another world, the Earth's moon.

I'm open to member suggestions on future book purchases...Let me know.

Scott Laskowski, MAS Librarian

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In Memoriam - Anne Albrecht

We are sad to announce the recent death of Anne Albrecht, wife of Founder member Bill Albrecht who has been a member from the 1930's. While Bill was the astronomer, Anne served the club in many capacities including Treasurer, Fund Raiser in the club's leaner days, and open house organizer. Both Bill and Anne had been retired in Pahala, Hawaii for many years. Bill has returned to our area and now resides in Oconomowoc.

The Officers and Board extend their sincere sympathy to the Albrecht Family on their loss.

Bits and Pieces

The following information and actions were discussed at the April 20th Board and membership meetings.

*The newly acquired 10", LX-200 is on site and ready for installation in the new remote observatory (currently under construction. The new remote site, dubbed "E" scope has a snug enclosure with a counterbalanced roof cap that was salvaged from the now defunct Satellite shed. The shed is located between the B and Z scope buildings. Piping has already been trenched from E to the lower levels of the Zemlock (Z) building for carrying digital and power cables to the new LX-200. A separate "operations room has been set aside for the remote imaging with the LX-200.

* Paul Borchardt has built a wedge assembly for the permanent equatorial mounting on the existing steel post that was in the original corrugated E shed.

*The Z scope building, both upper and lower levels, has undergone a major cleanup and reorganization of the library facilities with new shelving etc. The Operations room for the E scope is replete with counters, thermal housed PC with monitor etc. About the only thing missing is a cozy fireplace and rocking chair to make the remote imaging operations for gentlemanly observing! Similarly, the upper (25" scope area) has been cleaned and reworked for more efficient scope use. The drive belts on the scope have been re-tensioned for better tracking.

*Paul Borchardt recommended the purchase of 3 eyepieces for the Weisen 18" (50 mm, 25mm, 10mm) and 3 for the C scope (32mm, 17mm, 7.5mm). all of the eyepieces would be purchased from Orion for \$485. The 50mm and the 32 mm are 2" dia. Optiluxes and the remainder are 1 1/4" Sirius Plossls. The purchase was approved.

* Observatory Director, Gerry Samolyk, gave a slide presentation on recent improvements at the club, including the new remote LX-200 site. Also shown were photos of recent increase in sunspot activity which cause aurora phenomena to be observed as far south as Arizona.

*MAS will have a tour for AAVSO members attending the 90th Spring meeting in Madison. The site will be open from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Sunday May 6th. (See AAVSO writeup.

New Member Welcome

MAS welcomes new member **Gary Parson from Wind Lake, WI.** to our club. Gary is the owner of a 10" LX-200 and will hopefully join in on our observing activities. Members, please make Gary welcome!

Carlos Garces, New Member Chairman

90th Spring Meeting of the AAVSO, Madison,

(Special Workshop Topic: Eclipsing Binaries)

Announcement

We are delighted to invite our members, observers, and friends to join us for the 90th Spring Meeting of the American Association of Variable Star Observers. This meeting will be held May 3-6, 2001, at the Crown Plaza Hotel, 4402 E. Washington Ave. Madison, Wisconsin. Our hosts are longtime AAVSO members Gerry Samolyk and Bob Manske, along with Bob's wife Sue Manske.

We have many interesting events planned for this meeting, as follows

SPECIAL EVENTS

Eclipsing Binary Workshop: We are very excited to be holding a special Eclipsing Binary Workshop on Friday, May 4th from 9:00am to 3:00pm. The session will be lead by Dr. Dirk Terrell of the Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, Colorado. Dr. Terrell's work has involved the modeling of gas flows in Algol-type variables, the analysis of observations made by amateur astronomers, modeling asteroid light curves, modeling the disk of Epsilon Aurigae, analysis of X-ray pulses from binaries, and the development of scientific and educational software.

The day will begin with a general discussion of the morphology and evolution of close binary systems followed by a discussion of the nature of light and velocity curves of eclipsing binaries. The workshop will conclude with a hands-on session where participants will learn to use the Wilson-Devinney program to analyze light and velocity curves of real binaries. Attendees are encouraged to bring along their laptop computers for this session. DOS/Windows and Linux executables will be provided. Users of other operating systems should have a working Fortran compiler installed. A plotting package such as the freely available GNUPlot should be installed on the laptop.

Tour of Yerkes Observatory and Cookout: Following the Eclipsing Binary Workshop we will head to Williams Bay, Wisconsin, to the University of Chicago's Yerkes Observatory for a tour and a cookout. .

Membership Meeting: All attendees are invited to this gathering, which will be held at the Madison Crowne Plaza from 9:00am to 12:00pm on Saturday, May 5th. The purpose of this meeting is to inform attendees of the activities of the Association, and will include reports from the Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Chairpersons, and the Director. Meeting attendees may order the lunch buffet (see registration form) to be held immediately following the group photograph.

Scientific Paper Session: Members and friends are invited to present papers on variable stars and related topics. Papers will be presented Saturday afternoon, May 5th. Realizing that some results require more than 10 minutes for effective presentation, we will try to be flexible with the allocation of time for paper presentations. Timeslots will range from 10 to

20 minutes as time permits. **Banquet:** The Banquet will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on the evening of Saturday, May 5th. Preceded by a cash bar, the banquet menu includes a choice of prime rib, Chilean sea bass, or vegetarian pasta.

Presentation of Observer Awards and the Director's Award: Following the banquet we will be recognizing the efforts of our visual, photoelectric photometry, and charge-coupled device observers by presenting Observer Awards to those observers who have reached certain milestones in their observation totals. Dr. Janet Mattei, AAVSO Director, will also be presenting the 2001 Director's Award.

After-Banquet Program: Following the banquet Dr. Christopher M. Anderson, professor and department chairman at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will be presenting a guest lecture titled, "The Southern African Large Telescope (SALT)". SALT, presently under construction, is a joint project of the government of the Republic of South Africa and a consortium involving US, UK, and German universities plus the governments of Poland and New Zealand; the University of Wisconsin-Madison is the largest non-African partner. The largest telescope in the southern hemisphere with an effective aperture of 11 meters, SALT has a unique design that allows it to be described as an optical equivalent of the Arecibo radio telescope, but with a twist - literally - since it can be rotated, which will give it access to 70% of the southern sky. SALT is envisioned primarily as a spectrographic instrument. Dr. Anderson's lecture will describe scientific programs - from solar system magneto-hydrodynamics to the kinematics and evolution of distant galaxies and quasars - that have served to define the characteristics of the system.

Eds note: This edited notice is too late to save you money by registering early but if you've ever contemplated doing variable star observing, this is a great place to start. Registration can be done by web link to AAVSO via www.milwaukeeastro.org (under special events). You can register on site as well but the meals and side trips may not be available.

MAS 2001 Open House Schedule

April 27	See the Moon
May 11	Constellation Stories
May 25	Planet Mercury
August 10	Perseid Meteors
Sept. 7	See the Red Planet
Oct. 5	The Summer Triangle

The above open houses are a fun , "educate the public" outreach activity. All MAS members are encouraged to participate by:

- *Bring your own scope
- *Man the club's scopes
- *Help with parking and crowd flow

MAS Officers/ Staff

President	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
Vice President	Lee Keith	414-425-2331
Treasurer	Dan Yanko	414-453-3382
Secretary	Margaret Warner	414-327-7427
Observatory Director	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
Assistant Observatory Director	Paul Borchardt	262-781-0169
Focal Point	Rudy Poklar, Editor	262-786-8931

Future MAS Events

May 18, - Regular MAS monthly meeting at MAS Observatory
Sept. 21, 22 MAS Campout at Greenbush

Saturday Keyholders

May

5	Dan Koehler	262-662-2987
12	Scott Laskowski	414-421-3517
19	Rudy Poklar	262-786-8931
26	Terry Ross	262-784-2093

June

2	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
9	Tom Schmidtkunz	414-352-1674
16	Neil Simmons	262-889-2039
23	Chris Weber	262-789-7128
30	Dan Yanko	414-453-3382

July

7	Wanda Burner	262-646-8229
14	Paul Borchardt	262-781-0169
21	Tim Burrus	262-783-6572
28	Brian Ganiere	414-961-8745

Loaner Telescopes (available to members for local use)
 Lee Keith (Franklin) 414-425-2331 8" Dob reflector
 Scott Jamieson (Waukesha) 262-896-0119 8" Dob reflector
 Paul Borchardt (MAS site) 262-781-0169 6" Dob reflector

MAS Membership is open to all with an interest in Astronomy and expanding their knowledge of the Universe. Yearly Membership Dues are: Individual \$28/yr.; Family \$32; Non-resident (individual \$18, Family \$22); Student (under 18) \$12.
 For more information, contact Membership Chairman, Carlos Garces,

Focal Point Publishing Guidelines

Focal Point Newsletter is published bi-monthly (Sep Nov Jan Mar May) with a Mid-summer issue in July. Articles, Announcements, Graphics, Photos, Swap/Sale Ads etc. should be submitted at least 10 days prior to the first of the month (of the desired issue). Article inputs are preferred via E-Mail, or diskette in a text or Word compatible format, if possible. Submit FP inputs to:

MAS Focal Point c/o Rudy Poklar
 12905 W. Crawford Drive

MAS Observatory 262-542-9071

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**May 3-6, AAVSO 90th Spring Meeting, Madison, WI*
**May 18, MAS meeting 8:00 PM; Ron Ondrejka and Brian Huberty talk on "Imaging the Earth from Space - Yesterday and Tomorrow"*
**May 18th, Election of Board and Officers*

