

Focal Point



The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

January-February 2003

Presidents Corner

By Scott Jamieson - MAS President

This fall has been a very busy period for most of us and the building activity on the hill has slowed down considerably. Unless something unusual happens, there will probably not be any new building projects on the hill this winter. As a matter of fact, we have started investigating what will be required to start removing some of the non-usable structures in anticipation of the necessity of removing everything from the hill should we have the opportunity to move to a dark sky site. If you have been to the hill lately, you may have noticed that the 3 foot diameter pipe that was sticking about 10 feet into the air near the tree line is now on its side and partially busted up. This is the direct result of Gerry Samolyk and his trusty sledge hammer going at it this month. This winter and spring we will finish this off and move to the satellite shed pier and the large concrete structure near the tree line that was an aborted attempt to make a massive mount for a large telescope.

Our search for a new dark-sky site is continuing but will become the major project early this spring. We hope to be able to locate and commit to a new site this summer. Obviously, one of the questions we need to answer is how much money we can raise for this effort and I am delighted to say that our fundraising effort is off to a good start, as reported elsewhere, and I sincerely appreciate the generosity of those that have seen fit to back this effort. We have a very long way to go, but each winter when the trees drop their leaves, it becomes obvious how many lights have gone up around us and how bad it will be in a few years.

On another note, there have been some sincere discussions about the fact that we are not doing a good enough job of greeting and supplying important information about the club's activities, equipment and capabilities to new members. Last year we had some similar discussions and decided to make a new -member package to give to each member when they join. Unfortunately, in the rush

of other activities, this effort fell behind. I am glad to say that this winter, we will be finishing this project and distributing the package to all members this spring. This package will emphasize the specific club capabilities and activities in addition to helping the new member find additional resources on astronomy.

Finally, I wish to thank all that helped with the Christmas party last week, these activities do not occur without the work of a few dedicated individuals. This is the first time since I have been in the club (10 years) that the party was held on the hill and, based on all the comments I received, everyone had a great time! The hut was decorated with lights and a Christmas tree harvested from the hill. Even the hill was illuminated with a powerful light to show all of the domes. (This is the only time I will light up the sky!). The pizza was great and there was plenty to eat and drink. The overwhelming opinion expressed was that we should do the same thing next year!



Lots of fun, laughter and food was had by all who attended The MAS annual Christmas Party.

I don't know about you but it looks like everyone enjoyed having the party in the hut. Too bad the weather didn't cooperate so we could not go out and view for awhile.

More photos on page 2





Move Opinion update!!!

By Vern Hoag - MAS Vice President

To all the members that replied to the opinion poll, thank you for your time. If you haven't yet, please take a few moments and send me your opinion and concerns. This is a very important decision for the MAS. Here are the results so far, 31 in favor and 1 against the move. Some of the concerns are as follows with a brief answer for each concern. If you feel you would like or need more information, please feel free to contact me:

vernhoag@bradleycorp.com

1). **One of the biggest concerns even among those that want to move is the amount of work to get it done.** I think the number of projects that have been done in the last 3 years is a good indication of what can be done. Yes this is a far bigger project, we will need more help, but the result will be well worth it. Many members have expressed that they will be interested in helping.

2). **Can we handle it financially?** We will need

help that's for sure. We are off to a good start. One members concern is we will use up the Zemlock fund or raise dues. We do not plan on using the Zemlock fund at this time. Dues will not be raised to fund the move. When dues are raised (and they will have to be eventually) it will be because of the operating costs, mainly the insurance that has gone up considerably.

3). **Will we lose most of the open house public from the Milwaukee area?** True we might lose some of the Milwaukee public, but pick some up from the surrounding area. Darker skies will give that first timer a bigger wow effect, hopefully getting them to join.

4). **Will parking and travel time be a problem.** Until we get the lots in, parking could be a small problem. After that we should have more room than we have now. Travel time will be more for some less for others, just as it is now. Many members' express that they would rather drive farther to have darker skies and make the night of it.

5). **The move will only be temporary, light pollution will make a future site unusable.** This could eventually be true. But currently we are in the light bubble. Our years are very limited at the current site. If we can get land in the state forest, the club could last a very long time. The members that responded are willing to drive further to make it worth their time. Here are a couple of examples I have received:

“YES, I am in favor of finding a new site and YES I would use the site a lot more.

It's true that a longer drive would make it more 'inconvenient' for some, but aren't dark skies more important? After all, we are an astronomy club, aren't we?

I would be embarrassed to call myself a member of this club if I didn't support a darker sky site.

One other response that was right to the point:

“DO IT.”

Note from the Editor

Please keep me updated with any email address changes. Drop me an email at gparson@wi.rr.com

Welcome New Members

By Carlos Garces
MAS membership chairman

We would like to welcome the following members to our club.

Mr. W. Ted Klumb and family
Menomonee Fall's WI

Ms. C. Valerie Conley
Shorewood, WI

Mr. Mark Skarich and family
Milwaukee, WI

We hope to see all of you out at the hill very soon. Feel free to ask questions. There are a lot of very knowledgeable people in our club that are willing to help you.

Astronomical League NCRAL

Awards

By Lee Keith

Do you know someone who has dedicated their time and energy in pursuit of our hobby, Astronomy? Wouldn't you like to let them know they are appreciated for their hard work? This is your chance! It's time to make nominations for the NCRAL's Region Award. This award recognizes exceptional individual effort and meritorious service to amateur astronomy through their local astronomy club, public outreach, the NCRAL or the Astronomical League.

Using the guidelines outlined below, we have made it easier that ever to nominate someone you feel deserves this award. This award will be presented in a special ceremony at the dinner banquet concluding the NCRAL regional convention in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin on Saturday, May 4th, 2003. **Nominations must be received by March 31, 2003.**

The rules for nomination are as follows:

1. The individual must be a member on good standing either through an A.L. member

organization or as a current member-at-large in the North Central Region.

2. The three current regional officers and the regional representative are NOT eligible for this award. Past winners are also ineligible for this award.
3. The regional officers and the regional representative are the voters and will base their decision on the information provided. Each member votes independently and will use their best judgment. All decisions are final.
4. The winner will not be revealed until the banquet at the end of the convention. Those not chosen will not be revealed.
5. All non-winning nominations will be kept on file for two years after submission. After such time, a new nomination will need to be completed.

Please contact Lee Keith at leekeith1@juno.com or 414-425-2331 for a nomination form. Ty Westbrook can be contacted at 920-733-7264 or ell-west4@aol.com for more information. Please note that a nomination requires the following:

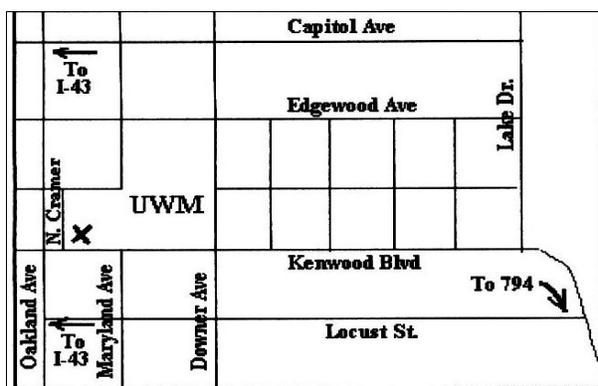
1. A statement of the nominee's accomplishments in one or more of the areas listed under criteria. This statement should not exceed 3 double spaced pages (1,000 words). Length does not necessarily equal strength. The statement should include:
 - a. Number of years in office or committee membership and dates of such membership.
 - b. Length of time of participation in public education, number of presentations, etc.
2. Supporting data. Please include any relevant newspaper clippings, photos and other articles supporting the nomination. For service to groups such as schools, scouts, etc., it would help the nominating committee if you could obtain a brief statement from the teacher, leader chair, etc. on the usefulness of the presentation.

4 **Why bother to wish upon a star.....it might take 200 million light years to get your wish granted.**

Author unknown

General Meetings

The January, February, March and April meeting will be at the UWM physics building
On the corner of Kenwood and Cramer see map below.



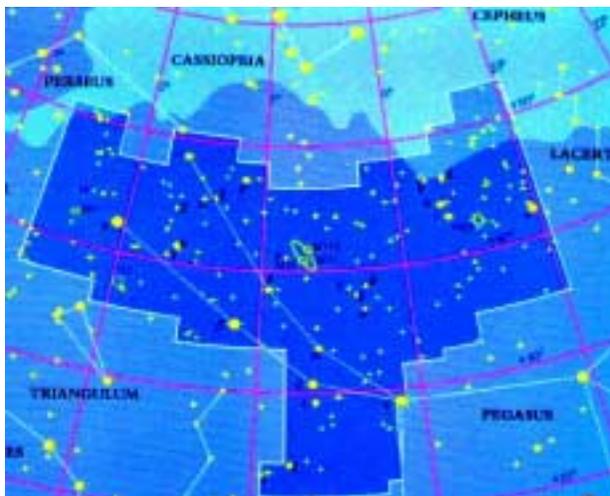
The Albrecht Fund Update!!!

By Gary Parson

The Albrecht fund was established several months ago when long time member **Bill Albrecht** donated a very generous \$1000.00 for our club to start looking for new property to build MAS's future. It has long been known that a move is inevitable to help keep our club alive and well. The future of this club is not only in CCD imaging, it's main focus should be the ability to observe under dark skies. Since Bill has donated the first amount other members have stepped forward to help build the fund, they are **Virgil Tangney, Tom Schmidtkunz** and **President Scott Jamieson** and the total amount to date is **\$2600.00**. We would like to thank these members for their generosity and encourage any and everyone else to help out if possible with the moving fund.

Happy New Year!!!!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our members a Happy and prosperous New Year.



How to find it

By Gary Parson

Star chart and all research is from the book **Sky-watching** written by David H. Levy. This is a book I would recommend for any beginner.

This month's target is the Constellation Andromeda (an-DROH-me-duh) The chained Princess. Andromeda is one of the earliest constellation to be named. The mythology is a lush and diversified one.

Including the stories behind several other constellations.

Finding andromeda is pretty simple. Cassiopeia is directly north and Pegasus to its south. Find polaris (North star) then move east until you see the large W of cassiopeia then head directly south. The first star of the constellation is the star **Alpheratz** it is the northeast star in square of **Pegasus**. It is rich with many telescopic targets which include **M31 the andromeda galaxy**. It is the closest major galaxy to earth. It's a spiral galaxy like our own Milky Way. It has over 200 billion stars, clouds, dust and gas. It can be seen with binoculars from most cities and with the naked eye in a dark sky setting. In the field of view of a small telescope you can see it's two neighbor spiral galaxies **M32** and **M110**.

The star **Gamma Andromedae** is a gorgeous double star. The brightest of the two is a golden yellow and the other is greenish blue.

Continued on page 5



Photo above: The Andromeda galaxy **M31** and neighboring galaxies **M32** and **M110**. Photo of the Andromeda galaxy borrowed from the book *Skywatching* by David H. Levy.

Other targets that can be found in Andromeda are **NGC 752** which is a open star cluster that lies 5 degree's south of Gamma Andromedae. **NGC 752** is best seen with binoculars or at very low power in your telescope.

NGC 891 is spiral galaxy that is actually viewed on edge. It will take a pretty good sized telescope, probably a 10 or 12in and a dark sky site to see it.

NGC7662 is one of the brighter planetary nebulae. In smaller scopes it lacks clarity, it's looks like a greenish star but a larger scope will resolve it to be a doughnut shaped disk with a central star about 30arc seconds across.

NGC 7686 is a open star cluster located in the northwest corner of the constellation Andromeda.

I hope this helps you to find and enjoy the Constellation Andromeda.

Library News

By Scott Laskowski
MAS Librarian and Historian

We have several additions to the library this time which include:

NASA 25 years: The greatest show in space-1995

Ten VHS tapes (approximately 10 hours) show the history of U.S. manned spaceflight. Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab and the space shuttle. All the pride of triumph to the despair of disaster are documented with actual footage from NASA. Entertaining, but what mankind has done is miraculous. (Donated by member Neil Simmons; Thank you .)

The Universe in a Nutshell by Stephen Hawking-2001

The title implies "A theory of everything" **GUT** (grand unified theory) and Stephen Hawking a theoretical physicist is considered to be on the forefront of its understanding and cosmological consequences. **The companion volume A Brief History of Time-1998** was influential giving a perspective of the evolution of our universe on a popular level. In a nutshell it shows we live in a strange place, actually stranger than fiction the book is "far out", mind boggling, thought provoking and a cosmological thriller.

Seeing in the Dark - How backyard stargazers are probing deep space and guarding Earth from inter-planetary Peril by Timothy Ferris-2002

The subtitle is sort of deceptive. This book encompasses many facets of amateur astronomy. With Ferris's literary style, featuring a poetic domain, what can we do, Photography, science? Many of the chapters feature guest experts in all kinds of concerns to amateurs astronomers and their contributions. (Recommended by member David Weier)

I would like to thank all our members for any donations or suggestions. If you have a suggestion please call me or write me with the Title, Author, publisher, date and the cost. I can be reached at:

Telephone:414-421-3517

Scott Laskowski
4015 W Grange Ave.
Greenfield, WI 53221

6 MAS Officers/ Staff

President	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
Vice President	Vern Hoag	262-548-9130
Treasurer	Chris Weber	262-789-7128
Secretary	Henry Gerner	414-774-9194
Observatory Director		
	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
Assistant Observatory Director		
	Paul Borchardt	262-781-0169
Focal Point	Gary Parson	262-895-3015

Future MAS. Events

The January, February, March and April meetings will be held at the UWM Physics building. Board meeting 7:00 General 8:00

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, 16430 Melody Drive, New Berlin, WI. 53151. Phone: **262-786-2623**. Email : **cgarces@wi.rr.com**

Focal Point Publishing Guidelines

Focal Point Newsletter is published bi-monthly(Sep,Nov,Jan,Mar, May and 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 email, Mail, or diskette in a text or Word compatible format. Submit FP inputs to:

MAS Focal Point c/o Gary Parson
7521 E Wind Lake Rd
Wind Lake, WI 53185-1513

Keyholders list

January

4	Wanda Berner	262-392-9469
11	Paul Borchardt	262-781-0169
18	Tim Burris	262-548-6372
25	Brian Ganiere	414-961-8745

February

1	Carlos Garces	262-786-2623
8	Brian Garness	262-538-3888
15	Chris Hesseltine	414-482-4515
22	Vern Hoag	262-548-9130

March

1	Tim Hoff	262-662-2212
8	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
15	Lee Keith	414-425-2331
22	Dan Koehler	262-662-2987
29	Scott Laskowski	414-421-3517

MAS Open House's

Open houses will resume in spring of 2003

MAS Observatory 262-542-9071

MAS Web Page: www.milwaukeeastro.org

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society

C/O Gary Parson
7521 E Wind Lake Rd
Wind Lake, WI 53185

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

**The Next MAS General and board meetings will be held on January 17th and February 21st. The board will meet at 7:00pm and the general meeting will be at 8:00pm at the UWM Physics building!!*