

# FOCAL POINT



Newsletter for the

Milwaukee Astronomical Society

December 1990

## Seasons Greetings

Another year draws to a close and another will soon begin. The officers and directors of MAS wish everyone of all faiths a pleasant holiday season and happiness and good health in 1991.

## From The Editors

May we embellish the sentiment from above and add our best wishes to you during this Holiday Season. We extend this thought with a special thanks - not just for your contributions to the Focal Point - but to your assisting in expanding on astronomical horizons and perspective. By sharing in the many Society sponsored events you have become good friends.

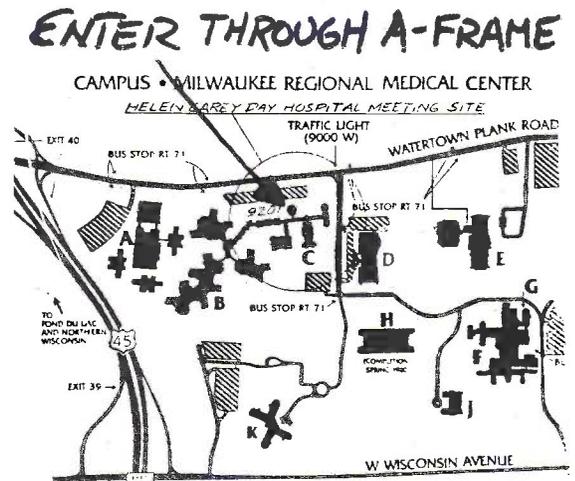
For this - and especially during this season of joy and thanksgiving - we are truly grateful.

- Matthew McNeeley & Tom Gill

## Program/Meeting

Did you think the Hubble Space Telescope was a failure? The MAS now has a set of NASA photographs that will quickly change your mind. These slides, which will be shown at our December meeting demonstrate HST's surprising capabilities in high resolution photography for planetary as well as deep sky objects.

In addition, we will view an excellent videotape exploring the mysteries and beauty of Stonehenge, located on Salisbury Plain in England. This program will provide an interesting contrast in the very old vs. the very latest astronomical observatories. Do join us.



**Note: The meeting is one week earlier because of the Holidays.**

- Tom Renner

## Inside!

Library News .....	2
From the Past .....	2
Letters .....	3
Night (de) Light .....	3
For Sale .....	3
Keyholder Info .....	3
Review: Star Hill Inn .....	4
Observing Challenge .....	4

## Calendar of Events

December 14, Friday .....	8:00 pm Program-Meeting MAS Board Meeting 7:30pm
December 16, Sunday .....	New Moon
December 28, Friday .....	Deadline for Dec. <u>Focal Point</u>
December 31, Monday .....	Full Blue Moon
January 2, Wednesday .....	First Wednesday Meeting 7:30 at the Observatory
January 14, Monday .....	MAS Board Meeting 7:30pm at Matthew McNeeley's House
Saturday Nights—Member night at Observatory—Call key holder	

## Library News

---

Anyone with an appetite for astronomical history will enjoy the feast which a friend of Nolan Zadra has donated to our library:

Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo - trans. Stillman Drake, 1957. Four selections from the works of Galileo, including the "Starry Messenger", give us the observations and philosophies which so inspired thoughtful laypersons and aroused the ire of the religious establishment. Historical perspective is brilliantly provided in the introductions to each essay.

Galileo Galilei: Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems - trans. Stillman Drake, 1953. Galileo's great work is presented in this unabridged translation which includes his own margin notes. In the foreword, Albert Einstein reflects on Galileo's refusal to accept as truth that which was merely dogma.

Theories of the Universe - ed. Milton Munitz, 1957. This anthology speculates about the beginning and end of things which range from Babylonian mythology to the mid 20th century debate between expanding universe and steady-state cosmology.

A History of Astronomy From Thales to Kepler, 2nd ed. - J.L.E. Dreyer, 1953. First published in 1905, this book provides an interesting history of astronomy (up to the 17th century) with information not covered as fully as in other historical volumes. Begins with the earliest astronomy practice of the Babylonians and the mythological cosmology of the Greeks. Following chapters cover Pythagoras, Plato, Eudoxus, Aristotle, Herakleides, Aristarchus, Ptolemy, medieval cosmology, oriental and early European astronomers, Copernicus, Brahe and Kepler. A supplementary bibliography is a brief listing of materials in English, Polish, French and German published 1890 - 1952 and is valuable for locating other historical materials. (J.R.)

Four Lectures on Relativity and Space - Charles P. Steinmetz, 1923, is an attempt to bring Einstein's theories within the understanding of the layperson.



The Origin of Continents and Oceans - Alfred Wegener, 1966. This is the fourth revised edition of a German book originally published in 1929 and primarily aimed at professionals. It deals with the drift theory that Wegener first began formulating in 1910. Five chapters deal with the geodetic, geophysical, geological paleontological, biological and paleoclimatic arguments. Much of the book is technical and the theories may or may not be accepted as accurate today. It is an interesting book when viewed in the historical context. (J.R.)

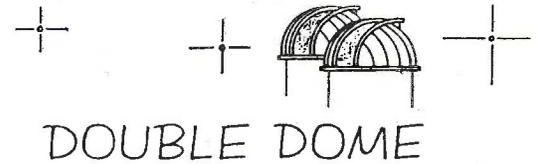
Ottow Struve's 1959 book The Universe discusses the then current state of astronomy with regard to the solar system, galaxies, stellar evolution, binary and variable stars, radio astronomy, and finally addresses the question of life on other planets.

The Moon by H.P. Wilkins and Patrick Moore, 1955 begins with a brief history of selenography and a general introduction to lunar features. Craters are described alphabetically by region with a note about their namesakes. The hand-drawn lunar map and observers' sketches are particularly interesting.

Stars and Galaxies - ed. Thornton Page, 1962. Several noted astronomers present, in very simple terms, discoveries in their field of expertise and their assessment of where further work must be done.

## From The Past

---



- 20 years ago

The December meeting subject is "Navigation", discussing the space navigation employed in the Apollo program and a detailed discussion of inertial navigation for earth-bound vehicles. The speaker, Dr. E. D. Wilmoth, has been associated with the Titan III Space Program and Apollo Program at the Delco Electronics Division of G.M.

*Ed. note: 20 years ago Apollo captured the attention and imagination of many people. I wonder how many people today know or think about the fact that on Monday, December 3, 1990 there were a record 12 earthlings currently orbiting the earth. (Info from Milwaukee Sentinel 12/3/90). - Tom Gill*

- 10 years ago

For some reason, the Wednesday "Staff" meetings are not well attended. Don't let the name "Staff" deter you. These meetings are for everyone, especially our new or younger members. The primary purpose is an opportunity to acquaint members with our equipment, answer questions, do some observing, etc. Come out and see for yourself! (Now called "First Wednesdays" and the invitation is still extended!)

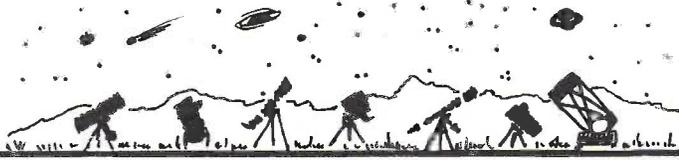
## More Library News

---

At the suggestion of Carolyn Petersen, our banquet speaker, we wrote to the Space Telescope Science Institute and received 20 slides which will be shown at the December Meeting. This Hubble Space Telescope Early Science Observation Kit contains images of Pluto and Charon, the gravitational lens "Einstein's Cross" and much more.

- Sally Waracznski

## Night (de) Light



In a cosmos as vast as our imaginations, there are as many ways to satisfy cosmic curiosity as there are individuals. Some people are content to view the stars with naked eyes alone and others consider themselves "astronomers", taking a more technical approach to the how, what and why of the night sky. I've always thought of myself as somewhere inbetween - a "Stargazer". To me, the most satisfying aspect of astronomy is the wonder and sense of discovery I feel when exploring the sky.



### Two Views:

I never want to lose the giddy enthusiasm I felt the first time I turned my 'new' second hand 6" Newtonian toward the skies with one thing in mind: Galaxies. At the time, I considered seeing a distant collection of stars, indeed suns of other worlds, the ultimate reward of cosmic exploration.

## Dear MAS . . .

The following are excerpts from letters sent to the Society:

From Carolyn Petersen, banquet speaker:

"Dear MAS members, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful welcome you gave me at your recent banquet. I really enjoyed the dinner of Friday, and the observatory visit on Saturday night. It was a privilege to share some of my research and experiences with you.

You have a great group there, and an observatory facility to be proud of—and I'm pleased to have been invited to meet all of you and be your dinner guest."

I quickly learned that to see individual objects I had to learn the sky, get comfortable with charts, finders, star hopping, equipment, etc. Considering what's 'out there', my Stargazing adventures have just begun, but the joy of looking skyward has never changed.

-Tom Gill

Stargazing. It all seems so easy now. Five Decembers ago the night sky was a totally unknown realm to me. But with a media blitz - I like so many others - looked skyward to hopefully catch a glimpse of Comet Halley. I didn't see it then but what I did focus on that December night were a group of stars my chart identified as the constellation Aries.

How was I to ascertain this? A clue - was there a reddish star to the East within reasonable proximity? Yes. Aldebaran? OK. As they say, "the rest is history". Today I recognize the night sky as a mosaic of Messier and NGC objects sprinkled throughout the constellations. But once again this December as I gaze upward to Aries, I renew the sense of awe I felt then and hope that my accumulated knowledge never extinguishes that sense of discovery that warms me on cold frosty nights.

-Matthew McNeeley

From Rich Johnson, Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 156 (letter sent prior to the tour):

"Dear Matthew, I'm pleased that you, on behalf of the MAS, have arranged for the Troop to visit the MAS Observatory. I know the scouts (and adult leaders) will find this very interesting.

In appreciation to the MAS, I am enclosing a donation in the amount of \$50.00 to the society from Boy Scout Troop 156."

*A special thank-you to Lee Keith and Karen Wesener for their tour and talk to the Boy Scouts on November 27th.*

-Matthew McNeeley

## Saturday Nite Keyholders

Dec. 8	Dan Koehler	662-2987
Dec. 15	John Pfannerstill	475-6494
Dec. 22	F.Roldan	608-787-1730
Dec. 29	Terry Ross	784-2093
Jan. 5	Gerry Samolyk	529-9051
Jan. 12	Tom Schmidtkunz	784-0253
Jan. 19	Peter Smitka	785-0926
Jan. 26	Virgil Tangney	327-7976

## MAS Members Newsworthy

Special congratulations to Sally and Ken Waracznski for the article "Seeing Stars" published in the Milwaukee Sentinel's Good Morning Section (11/17/90).

The article chronicled and highlighted Sally and Ken's beginning and continued interest in "looking up" and "seeing stars", be it a winter sky, or other seasons too. Keep up the good work, Sally and Ken!

## For Sale

Edmund 6 inch f/5 Newtonian and equatorial mount. Includes: Eyepieces - Edmund 28mm RKE, Celestron 18mm & 40mm; camera body mount; camera adapter for Minolta; and Edmund Star Atlas. Excellent condition, asking \$500. Call Harry at 392-2236 (in Wales, WI) after 5pm.

5" f3.6 reflector. Modified (with ho-made focuser) Celestron Comet Catcher Jr. gives nice rich-field images. Hand holdable at lowest powers and small enough to always fit in the car. See the Veil, (the whole Veil) in one field of view. \$100 for scope only or \$215 with equatorial mount. Call Tom Gill @ 476-6986

## Star Hill Inn - Revisited

I visited the Star Hill Inn for the second time this September and would like to share my impressions.

Most have seen the ads in astronomical periodicals. Star Hill is run by Phil and Blair Makon, and is located about 60 miles northeast of Sante Fe, New Mexico. The site is in the Sangre de Christo range at an elevation of 7200' and is 9 miles northwest of Las Vegas, New Mexico, population, 16,000. The 200 acre site provides very dark skies in all directions. Lights of Las Vegas are apparent only when cloudy.

You can bring your own equipment or rent theirs. 8", 10", 14" and 24" Schmidt Cassegrains, a 13" dobsonian and other equipment is available for rental and include all accessories-eyepieces, off axis guides, etc.

Accommodations are currently \$65-75 per night for a single. All units have fully equipped kitchens and porches with nice views. There are currently 3 cabins with room for 5 groups of people. Reservations are required and should be made well in advance. A refundable deposit is required.

The observation deck is located a few hundred feet from the cabins. It's a large redwood deck with room for several piers and other equipment. A nice rest area and library is adjacent, with atlases, reference materials and hot coffee available. Phil provides all needed auxiliary equipment, such as electric hair dryers for dew. A fully equipped dark room is also available.

Phil said that July and August statistically tend to be the rainiest months, with other months containing 20 clear nights. In my late August and September visits, I have averaged 50% useful skies.

There is no question about the quality of the sky. I recall seeing M81-82, M51 & 101 very easily in 7X50 Binoculars, though Ursa Major was setting.

By day, there is a lot to do. State parks, National Monuments and magnificent scenery are all close by. Sante Fe and Albuquerque have lots to offer. In Albuquerque, a tramway to the top of Sardia Crest is excellent, especially for sunsets.

The Star Hill Inn is 1500 miles from Milwaukee, or a 120 mile drive in a rented car from the airport at Albuquerque.

My general response is very favorable. It is well equipped, dark sky site, run by friendly people, only 3 or 4 hours away by air. I met new friends and shared experiences there. The best endorsement I can give for Star Hill Inn is that I plan to go again soon. If you vacation there, it will be one you won't soon forget.

- Thomas Schmidtkunz

## An Observing Challenge

The Saguaro Astronomical Society of Tuscon, AZ has proposed a project for interested societies. After the Palomar Sky Survey was completed many NGC objects were omitted or called in question as to their existence as seen and recorded by earlier historic observers. Examples: NGC 2026 in Taurus, 2063 in Orion, etc. Do these objects exist? You be the judge by observing, recording and sharing your findings with other members of our Society. For more information about the project and a list of objects, contact President Dick Wiesen at 781-4757.



## MAS INFORMATION

### MAS OFFICERS

President Dr. Richard Wiesen  
781-4786

Vice President Matthew McNeeley  
354-5347

Secretary Dorothy Kube  
453-8858

Treasurer Dan Koehler  
662-2987

Obs. Director Gerry Samolyk  
529-9051

Ast. Obs. Director Paul Borchardt  
781-0169

Librarian Mrs. Sally Waraczynski  
321-0918

Assist. Librarian Mrs. June Regis  
962-0896

Program Dir. Tom Renner  
392-2799

### FOCAL POINT Staff

Matthew McNeeley (Editor)  
8200 N. Cedarburg Road  
Brown Deer, WI 53209  
354-5347

Tom Gill (editor/publisher)  
1391 N. 72nd Street  
Wauwatosa, WI 53213  
476-6986

**MAS Observatory**  
18850 W. Observatory Rd.  
New Berlin, WI  
542-9071