



From The Editor

Autumn and the Adler. With a seasonal switch, the MAS now sponsors a Fall Field trip with the Annual Banquet moving to the Spring. By popular acclaim, the Adler Planetarium, Field Museum, Museum of Science and Industry and Shedd Aquarium highlight

**Chicago Field Trip
Deadline Extended.**

this year's visit to the Windy City—Chicago. For details consult last month's special flyer, or call Tom Renner, Program Director, at 524-0932. Tom has extended the deadline for sign-up so if you still want to go, call him soon!

With one more Open House remaining, why not come out Friday, October 23, for a great opportunity to share photons with other members of the MAS while helping fulfill the public's curiosity and interest in astronomy.

Other opportunities to experience camaraderie are First Wednesday's and Saturday Nights (call Keyholder first).

—Matthew McNeely & Tom Gill

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We'd Know Our Hobby Had Arrived If...

Clubs and organizations devote a great deal of effort to popularizing the hobby of astronomy. But how will we know when amateur astronomy has been truly accepted as a legitimate and mainstream hobby? What would be the indicators? Here are a few thoughts:

We'd know the hobby had arrived if...

...dark sky preserves, sky viewing sites, and even public observatories were commonplace in parks and natural areas.

As it is, we are now made to feel like criminals if we're caught observing at night. And yet parks, places devoted to conserving an interpreting natural resources, seldom realize that the night sky is one of those resources.

...light pollution was recognized as a legitimate concern.

It's a big issue in our minds, but it's still a non-issue in the minds of conservationists. I cringe when I see glaring street lamps and security lights invading parks, let alone anywhere else.

...major hobby shows and fairs were held around the country.

For decades, amateur meetings have been styled after professional conferences, with amateurs presenting "papers." In the last few years, the outdoor star party has boomed in popularity but many require a masochistic desire to "rough it" in the woods, something the aging population is less attracted to.

And yet, in other hobbies we see trade and equipment shows, giant swap

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Calendar of Events

- October 12, Monday MAS Board Meeting
7:30pm at the Observatory
 - October 17, Saturday **Fall Field Trip**
Adler Planetarium & Chicago Sights
 - October 23, Friday **Last Open House, 8:00pm**
Also Deadline for next **Focal Point**
 - November 4, Wednesday **First Wednesday Meeting**
7:30 at the Observatory
 - November 9, Monday **MAS Board Meeting**
7:30pm at the Observatory
- Saturday Nights—Member night at Observatory—Call key holder

Library News

PLEASE LOOK AGAIN! We are still missing 3 books: "Scientific Instruments You Can Make," "Introduction to Observing and Photographing the Solar System," and "The Grand Tour."

BE SURE TO SIGN OUT ALL BOOKS so the librarian can gently remind you if you forget to return something.

Recent purchases are:

Interstellar Matters: Essays on Curiosity and Astronomical Discovery-Gerrit Verschuur, 1989 - engaging look over the shoulder of astronomers as they contemplate the apparent dark voids between the stars and come to understand the vital role of dust and gas in the cosmic story.

Astrophysical Techniques, 2nd edition - C.R. Kitchin, 1991 - an in-depth discussion of detecting devices from the eye to those designed for high energy particles; imaging techniques (including CCD) ; photometry, spectroscopy and more.

An unsolicited mailing:

The Eternal Universe - Harold W.G. Allen, 1990 - a somewhat unorthodox cosmogony. See what you think.

Donations:

Thanks to **Jim Mayer**: 2nd copy of Thursday's Universe.

Thanks to **Tim Burrus**: Space Places - Roger Ressmeyer, 1990 - spectacular photograhic essay about space exploration, terrestrial observatories, and selected deep-sky wonders and Orbiting the Sun: Planets and Satellites of the Solar System - Fred Whipple, 1981.

Thanks to **anonymous**: 2nd copy of Space, Time, Infinity: The Study of Comets - a 2-volume proceedings of the IAU colloquium 1974; Catalog of Cometary Orbits; Tables of Minor Planets; Photographic Giants of Palomar - the telescope as rendered in sketches by Russell Porter.

-Sally Waraczynski

Phone Tree Sign-up

Leaves are falling but our tree is just starting to grow. The MAS Phone Tree is for those of you who are interested in getting a call about: Aurora Alert, Impromptu Observing Sessions (at the MAS Observatory or other location) or Solar Activity (sun spots). Your responsibility would be to call the next person on the list (even if you cannot act on the information yourself). If you want to be included on our Phone Tree List, please send the following information to **Wanda Berner**, 1307 Devonshire Rd., Delafield, WI 53018. Deadline for the first edition of the list is October 24th, 1992.

I'm interested in the following:

___ Aurora Alert. But don't call after _____ (specify latest time)

___ Impromptu Observing Sessions

___ Solar Activity (good sun spots)

Member Proposal Advances

Harald Schenk's proposal has advanced and he is now a finalist in the Hubble Space Telescope Competition. Good luck Harald!

New Members

The MAS Board recently announced the following new members. A big WELCOME to one and all.

Tim Hoff, Sally, Brendan & Amanda
-Big Bend

William F. Kralj-Wauwatosa

Mary Ann Mullahy,
John & Maureen-Milwaukee

(Variable) Star Man

You haven't seen anything until you've seen **Gerry Samolyk** conducting a "variable star symphony" by using EIGHT telescopes at the same time (All three domes and several Porta-Scopes) to gather variable star data for the A.A.V.S.O. I hear eight is not even close to his personal record. To find out more about variable stars and other observing projects, come to the First Wednesday meetings!

Mystery Guest

It's true, several sightings have been made on the Observatory grounds of the divine Big "M". Guess who? The MILKY WAY. So if your backyard suffers from light trespass, plan to come out to the MAS Observatory for some decent dark skies. The shorter days mean you can observe for a few hours and still get home at a decent hour.

A "Dollar Key" (now \$1.50) will get you onto the grounds and also allow access to 120v power. Contact Observatory Director **Gerry Samolyk** for a key @ 529-9051.

MAS Equipment Session

Paul Borchardt will conduct a session on using the Observatory's equipment on October 10th at 1pm. This is a good opportunity for members to get some hands-on experience during the light of day.

Speaker Request

After attending a talk by Lee Keith on Teaching Astronomy to Kids, Tom Wiedenhoft, who works with handicapped adults, inquired if someone would be willing to give a talk about astronomy at Irving School, near 102nd and Lincoln.

If you are able and willing to give a presentation during the day on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday between 9:30 am to 2 pm, please contact Tom directly at 543-7532

In our Mail...

A letter of thanks and a check for \$50 from the Girl Scouts in appreciation of a star party put on by Matthew McNeely and Tom Gill. The letter also stated that the inspiring night under the stars has the girls looking to the heavens with new vision.

Wanted

Reasonably priced (up to \$25) 1.25" eyepieces, preferably 20-30 mm f.l. I'm working on another beginner's 6-inch scope and want to include a decent eyepiece with it. Contact Tom Gill @ 476-6986.

For Sale

Celestron 22mm Plossl and 30mm Plossl multi-coated eyepieces. \$40 ea. Celestron 1A Skylight Dust Seal filter for C-8 and a Tele-extender, \$15.00. Call Tim Burrus 783-6572.

Gieseler AccuTrack Drive Speed Control (for 12 vdc), \$100; Rack and pinion 1.25" focuser, \$25; Elliptical flat diagonal 1" x 1.4", \$15; Please contact Harald Schenk, 2330 S. 11th St., Sheboygan, WI 53081.

Meade 8" LX6 (f/6.3) complete with many accessories. Also Edmund 4-1/4" Astroscan RFT. Contact Wanda Berner 691-2360.

Saturday Nite Keyholders

Oct. 10	Greg Cieslak	529-0548
Oct. 17	Brian Ganiere	961-8745
Oct. 24	Chris Hasseltine	482-4515
Oct. 31	Lee Keith	425-2331
Nov. 7	Dan Koehler	662-2987
Nov. 14	Jim Kube	453-8858

Have You Been Pinned Yet?

The MAS pins are still available. Maybe you've seen a few members proudly wearing theirs on shirt collars, hats, lapels—just about anywhere! The classy 1-inch diameter pins sport the MAS logo in gold, white and dark blue. Get yours for just \$5 at program/meetings, or by contacting Sally Waraczynski at 321-0918.



As stated in the last Focal Point, the Member Packets are now available for \$2.50 ea or \$4.00 if mailed (free to new members). The packet is a useful collection of information about our society and member benefits.

You can get a copy at our general meetings or by contacting Sally Waraczynski at 321-0918. To show you the type of information it contains, here is a listing of the Table of Contents.

Member Packet Table of Contents

Enclosures

- Annual Brochure
- Bylaws
- History of MAS
- Library Information
- Phone Tree Form
- Roster
- Special Directory
- Skill Sharing Directory

Introduction

The Organization

- Bylaws
- Board of Directors
- Officers
- Capsule History
- General Meetings
- Public Open Houses

Committees

- Publicity • Observatory
- Membership • Light Poll.
- Program • Outreach

The Observatory

- Intro/Grounds Diagram
- First Wednesdays
- Members' Night—Obs. Access
- Tours
- Observing Projects

Benefits and Services

- Apollo "Loaner" Telescopes
- Astr. League Affiliation
- Astronomy Classes
- Campouts and Star Parties
- The Focal Point
- History
- Library
- Family Picnic
- Skill Sharing
- Telephone Tree

We'll Know Astronomy Has Arrived When... (cont. from pg. 1)

meets, craft fairs, and other kinds of hobby shows. Events like these attract lots of local people off the streets. The events don't require that you belong to an organization or that you pre-register. Just show up at the door, pay your few dollars admission and walk in. If shows like this become popular we'll know the hobby has a broad public appeal and not just an appeal to an "in-crowd" of convention goers.

...you could walk into any hobby shop or nature store and buy a good-quality telescope.

The network of dealers today is far wider than it was 20 years ago. (in fact, such a network didn't exist 20 years ago!). But even today, the availability of quality telescopes is restricted to a small number of outlets, often requiring prospective buyers to shop via mail order, which in turn requires that you know exactly what you want to buy, rarely the case for newcomers.

It would be great if the hobby were recognized as popular enough and understandable enough that existing networks of hobby shops (there are hundreds of them) and nature stores carried good-quality telescopes, with a staff educated in the basics of telescope use. There has been a lot of movement toward this goal, but even today, you cannot buy a telescope in a hobby shop. Why? Isn't backyard astronomy a hobby?

...we found that the buying public finally knew that the most important specification on a telescope was not its magnification.

I know—"dream on!"

...the hobby got regular attention in the national media.

It could be through major feature stories about amateur astronomy in general interest magazines or a TV show or series devoted to the hobby. There are hobby "how-to" shows on sewing, cooking, painting, fishing, you name it. Why not astronomy? Because the audience isn't large enough. But the audience isn't large enough because the hobby doesn't get mass-media attention. A catch-22.

...astronomy columns in newspapers were as common as astrology columns.

I know—"dream on!"

...amateur astronomy was featured in a NOVA science program on PBS,

or better yet, an episode of Nature. I think one of the things that holds the hobby back is the public perception that we backyard astronomers are out there "studying" the stars and doing esoteric research.. (Remember the lady in *The Astronomers* episode who asked John Dobson as he was looking at the Sun if "this is some kind of research you're doing?" His reply—"No, this is some kind of research you're doing." and invited her to look through the telescope!)

Of course, few of us do research or collect data. Most of us are content to enjoy the wonders of the night for their own sake. We are "naturalists of the night." We aren't "astronomers" any more than birders are ornithologists, or people enjoying a view of the mountains are geologists.

...some amateur astronomer became a major media celebrity.

Or major celebrities and public figures who are amateur astronomers came out of the closed and admitted they like to look at the stars! There's still a stigma attached to liking astronomy or science, a stigma that perhaps comes from the fact that most people are turned off by science in school. If you liked science in school you were a little weird, a nerd!

...astronomy became a major part of the school curricula.

With all the demands placed on teachers and school curricula these days, this may be a little unfair, but as all of us night sky enthusiasts know, astronomy is one of the most fascinating and all-encompassing sciences. Its study can lead to all kinds of other sciences.

I hope you enjoyed this compilation of ideas. You'll come up with a few of your own I'm sure. If you do, I'd like to hear from you. I think it might make for a good feature article one day.

Clear skies to all!—

—Alan Dyer

c/o Astronomy Magazine, 21027 Crossroads Cr. Waukesha, WI 53187



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