



The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

December 1997

**Lookin' to 98**

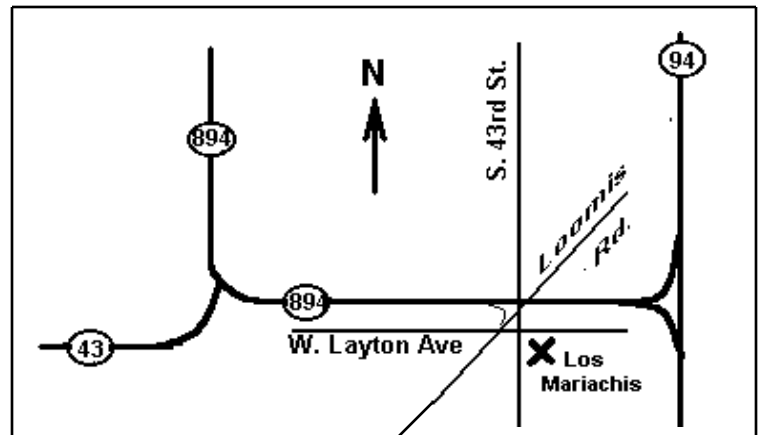
It's been a fascinating astronomical year in 1997. The "passing thru" of comet Hale- Bopp, on the heels of previous years comets Hyakutake, and Shoemaker-Levy has tugged the the average layman to a more cosmic perspective of our Earth and its environs. Then the Mars Pathfinder with Sojourner coziing up to martian rocks followed by the Mars Global Surveyor arriving on the scene to try a comprehensive mapping job. The deluge of new data and discoveries coming from the Hubble Space Scope and other recently launched space scopes. ...the new family of giant mirror earth bound telescopes....all makes it a wonderous time to be around. New estimates of astronomical distances, ...new giant stars...new giant planets...more head-scratching Black Holes and associated phenomena. The avalanche of new astro data and new imponderables can be likened to the electronic revolution and how its picking up speed, exponentially!

Having Astronomy as a hobby in this era is great. We get to watch this revolution unfold with good people like Robert Naeye filling us in on the above details. New tools such as as CCD's are filtering down to the amateur ranks letting us do serious imaging ,even in some light pollution. Oppurtunities exist for us to add data to the pile as well. You couldn't have picked a better time to have your eye on the night sky. ....things are looking up!

**Neither Rain Nor Sleet.....**

The US Postal Service motto starts something like that, but it apparently doesn't always apply to 3rd class bulk mailing. The October issue of FP took 8 days to reach me. Apparently anyone in the 53151 zip code (New Berlin) experienced similar delays. I'm not sure about other zip areas. It is one of the reasons for early cut-off (1 to 1&1/2 weeks before the end of the month) for inputs to the FP. Fortunately, Non-Profit bulk mailing costs about 1/3 of first class mail. Putting it more succinctly, "It ain't fast but it's cheap".

Speaking of delays, enclosed is the October issue of Northern Lights. The delays have been corrected and should be more timely in the future. -Ed



**MAS Holiday Salute, Wed. Dec. 17**

At Los Mariachis, 4305 W. Layton Avenue (see above Map) starting at 6:00 PM. For a little astronomical Gemutlichkeit with a Mexican flare, join your MAS compadres for a year end Holiday salute as well as a gastronomical treat. The Mexican food has been highly rated by Dennis Getto (Milwaukee Journal) in the past. The good food was recently reconfirmed by a couple of different MAS sources. The manager has assured our "El Presidente", Lee Kieth, that a room will be set aside for us , to share a little fellowship as well as the good food. A very brief board meeting will be held during the proceedings. There is also a short American style food list on the menu for those who prefer less seasoned fare. Los Mariachis is a classy but reasonable cost place...casual (but neat) dress is suggested.

This Wednesday gathering is in lieu of our regular 3rd Friday meeting.

**Other December Events**

As always, the First Wednesday Meeting is scheduled for December 3rd, barring inclement weather making the Observatory site inaccessible. Gerry Samolyk will host the open forum...ie.... bring your questions on any related Amateur Astronomy aspect along. If weather permits, some observing with club scopes will be encouraged .



## Board Doings

Some of the items of significance at the Nov. 21st Board meeting are as follows:

\* **Gerry Samolyk** reports that rework of Z scope is well into Phase 3 with on screen RA & DEC angle readouts done and a first cut at the scope control software pointing the scope at target areas defined by Project Pluto Star map/ Catalogue. However, **Brian Garness** needs more time for thorough checkout of the command/ control software.

\* Expenditure of up to \$500 was approved to upgrade the Z scope computer with 32 MB of Ram, 2.6 GB added hard disc and a cable for remoting the resident computer box to the downstairs area (heated) of the Z building. This would leave only the Monitor, keyboard and mouse in the unheated Z dome area for operations after Phase 3 is completed. Some where in the future (but not currently scheduled ...Phase X?), the dome drive could be slaved to the scope pointing, a CCD imager/tracker acquired and the entire observing operation run from the relative comfort of a downstairs heated room.

\* A MAS Annual Banquet will be held in March 1998. Margaret Warner to make arrangements. This will be in lieu of the March meeting at UWM.

\* Julie Frey reports 182 renewals (over 300 people, including family members), to date.

\* **The Board reminds Keyholders that if their appointed night is a clear sky nite, they should make a genuine effort to be on site, at the observatory during the early hours of the evening for member walk-ons.** Yes, ...members are encouraged to pre-arrange their outings (it gives them priority on the use of selected observatories), ...and no its not mandatory for the keyholder to be there, without prescheduling ...but try anyway.

## New Library Inputs

1. **Venus Revealed : A New Look Below the Clouds of Our Mysterious Twin Planet, David Harry Grinspoon-1997.** Grinspoon relates our perspective of Venusian history through the latest data gained from the Magellan spacecraft.

2. **Black Holes & Time Warps: Einstein's Outrageous Legacy, Kip S. Thorne-1994.** This may sound like science fiction, but the author and references are some of the most respected astrophysical theorists and mathematicians past and alive. The Universe is far stranger than fiction, and far more interesting.

3. **Clyde Tombaugh: Discoverer of Planet Pluto, David Levy-1991.** Levy was the guest speaker at the 1987 MAS Banquet discussing comet searching techniques. With the Shoemakers, he found many comets using the same method as the "search For Planet 'X' ". Personally inspired, he writes the biography of the legend, Clyde Tombaugh, his unlikely discovery of Pluto and his rise to fame (recommended by Scott Jamieson).

4. **Apollo 13 (previously titled Lost Moon), Jim Lovell And Jeffrey Kluger-1994.** A modern adventure in courage, Jim Lovell is from the Milwaukee area, has been in lunar orbit twice, never landing, but once living a real nightmare, not knowing whether he will ever set foot on Earth again. Fact can be stranger than fiction and more terrifying.

Scott Laskowski, Librarian

## Focal Point Mail

10/27/97

To the MAS Board of Directors and Membership:

I was extremely pleased to receive the news that the Milwaukee Astronomical Society had decided to remain a member of the Astronomical League. I know that this excellent decision will benefit both organizations. I believe that Lee Keith's article very well covered both sides of the issue. I invite the MAS members to become more involved with the affairs of A. L. It has been some time now since one of our members has held a position in the North central Region Council.

How about in 1998?

Sincerely,

**Frank Roldan**

*Ed's Note: Frank Roldan is a long standing member (1975), Past President, Board member et al of MAS who currently resides in the LaCrosse area. He has been very active in the A. L. & currently acts as their Historian., Trustee.*

## The Messier Club Challenge

Earn your Messier, Herschel or Double Star Certificates and be famous! The Messier Club is a set of 107 of the best deep sky objects in the sky, which is the most popular way for amateur astronomers to learn the sky. The Herschel Club requires you to observe 400 much more challenging objects and the Double Star Club consists of 100 of the very best double and multiple stars that can be seen with the smallest telescope. Since these observing clubs are designed to help observers learn the sky and how to use their telescopes, **no digital setting circles or computer locating devices are allowed!** To help you in this quest for fame, The MAS has observing club booklets which are available for both the Messier and Double Star clubs. To obtain these booklets or for more info, **contact the MAS Observing Clubs coordinator, Lee Keith at 425-2331.** There are also Binocular Messier certificates and a Lunar Certificate. Lee can provide info on these as well.

## Canis Major Club, where are you?

A couple of years ago, some MAS members were seeking to get the State of Wisconsin to allocate a small part of the Southern Kettle Moraine (with basic facilities) as a dark sky remote observing site. Trying to deal with the state on a formal basis was a lost cause. Then someone (Wanda?, Peter?) came up with a stroke of genius. They all applied to train dogs at a Kettle Moraine field site already allocated for that purpose complete with privy and a padlocked gate. Five dollars got you a permit to use the site and the gate combination. The parking lot was a great dark site for observing and since no dogs were trained at night, there was no conflict. To have some semblance of compliance, they dubbed themselves "The Canis Major Club". Fine minds like this are always in demand. But Alas, we have't heard of any activity lately. Admittedly, the weather is getting more severe but there undoubtedly may be new candidates for the Canis club.

The nice thing about this operation was that two or more used the site at one time (a safety factor at a remote site) and shared the night sky as well. Where ever did you go?

## Membership News

As of November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1997, 87% of the current membership have renewed. The official "drop date" is November 30th.

Please welcome these new members:

**Vernon Berry with Sandra, Lydia and Alycia** of Waukesha

**David Felton with Mary, Jessica and Andrea** of New Berlin

The RASC books will be available for pickup at our December event (Los Mariachis, Dec 17). The Ottewell Calendars have not arrived as of this date; however, last year they came early in December. If you requested mail delivery: You can expect to receive your books before the end of December.

### **Special Holiday Membership Promotion**

To help "perk up" new memberships during this usually slow period, I have decided to offer a special MAS Holiday Membership Kit. At \$10, the kit includes a 1998 RASC wall calendar (see last issue) and an MAS membership application. The gift giver reviews the application, selects desired membership options, and provides dues payment. The recipient fills out the application, as usual. Promotional assistance would be great. Please contact me if you have any ideas. There are places on the Web where anyone can advertise for FREE!- *Julie Frey, Membership*

## Looking for a Program Chairman

MAS is still in need of a Program chairman to line up the monthly meeting and Annual Banquet speakers. The task requires dealing with academic, astronomy, and related industry types for lecturing on various astro related subjects. If interested, **contact President Lee Keith.**

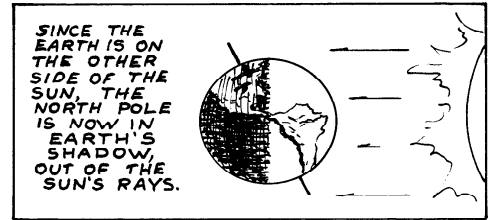
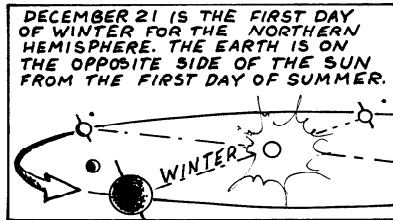
**Wanted to Borrow, 800mm or longer lens** for Solar Eclipse trip in February -for Canon EOS or Olympus mounts. Lens would be insured and handcarried. For use in capturing shots of the solar Prominence. Solar filter purchased for lens and Photo copies to Lender (if successful). If interested or have suggestions, call Nolan Zadra at 375-1290, evenings

## Preliminary Notice of new 1998 MAS Meeting Site

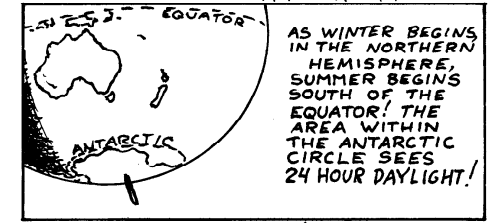
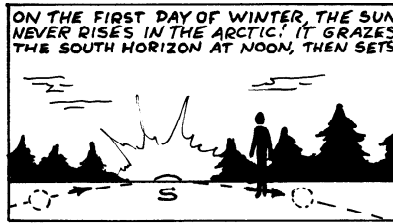
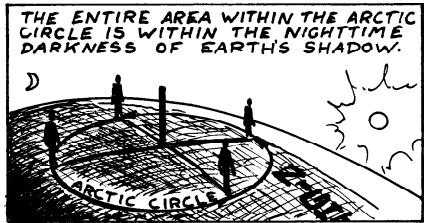
The Milwaukee Astronomical society will be meeting on the 3rd friday of January thru April 1998 in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Physics Building in either Room 133 or 135 adjacent to the UWM Planetarium site. Date, Time, and Room number will be confirmed in the January issue of Focal Point along with a detailed map to the campus and building location on the Kenwood campus. Please mark your calendars accordingly.



Belated Photo (May 1997) of the MAS Task Team whose proposal to use Scott Jamieson's homemade CCD imager on the Yerkes 40 inch Refractor to image remote Planets got them a time slot with the big Scope. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate. a solid overcast aborted the project before it got off the ground. Fortunately, John Briggs (rightmost in the striped Sweater) the Engineer for the Yerkes facility, gave the group an in depth tour of the Yerkes Observatory innards which more than rewarded the group for their early morning trip.



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Thanks! Jay

**MAS Officers/ Staff**

President	Lee Keith	425-2331
Vice President	Scott Jamieson	896-0119
Treasurer	Dan Yanko	453-3382
Secretary	Margaret Warner	327-7427
Observatory Director	Gerry Samolyk	529-9051
Assistant Observatory Director	Paul Borchardt	781-0169

**Focal Point**

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**Keyholders**

**December**

6	Paul Borchardt	781-0169
13	Greg Cieslak	529-0548
20	Brian Ganiere	961-8745
27	Chris Hesseltine	482-4515

**January**

3	Vern Hoag	548-9130
10	Tim Hoff	662-2212
17	Scott Jamieson	896-0119
24	Lee Keith	425-2331
31	Dan Koehler	662-2987

**The Milwaukee Astronomical Society**  
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