



MAS Annual Family Picnic, July 18

The MAS annual picnic for family and friends is alive and well thanks to Dan Yanko (our hard working Treasurer). Dan was instrumental in reviving the Fall campout last year and has taken on this task as well. The Board responded to Dan's pitch with a preliminary \$300 for free food and refreshments for all in attendance. The picnic will start at 3:00PM. There will be Volleyball, Croquet, Pinada, and Card Games There will also be some nice door prizes for those in attendance. Also, bonfires for roasting marshmallows ,or just plain sitting around will be fired up in the early evening. Experts in making "some-mores" should have a field day. If people are so inclined, some casual observing can be done later in the evening.

This should be an easy way to get your feet wet in MAS activities...by getting to know your fellow members.

To help the planning for this picnic, Please **RSVP if possible to Dan & Helen Yanko at 453-3382 by July 11, 1998...**Mark your calendars now!

May Events

First Saturday Meeting, May 2nd run by Vice President Scott Jamieson.....Primarily a familiarization with the observatory scopes etal. Six people showed up in April plus three others doing observing. ...a unfamiliar but veritable beehive of activity. ..try it...you'll like it! Starts shortly after sundown and occurs , rain or shine.

First Wednesday meeting May 6th Chaired by Observatory Director Gerry Samolyk.....an open forum on any related amateur astronomy activity. Bring your questions.If good observing conditions, hands on training is an option.....7:30 PM at the Observatory.

MAS Open Houses 8:00PM

- May 1st** What Do Astronomers Do?
- May 8th** Big Dipper Stories
- May 29th** Can You See Pluto?

This is a fun public education activity. Help is needed from running th the parking to manning the scopes...the club's or your own.

MAS Meeting at 8:00 PM, May 15, 1998

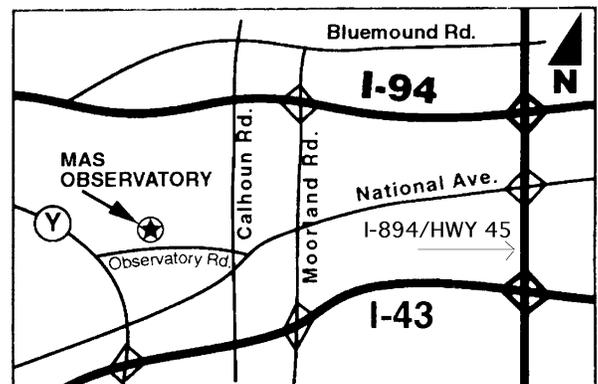
The next monthly meeting will be held at the **MAS Observatory site** (see map below) in New Berlin. The **primary focus will be the Election of Officers for the 1998/99 time frame.** Because of the Elections, no Speaker is scheduled. The offices of President , Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer are up for election as well as the positions of four directors (of a total of eleven board members). Anyone with an interest in any of these offices can advise the existing president or Secretary of their desire prior to the election , or by nomination from the floor at the May meeting. The MAS By-Laws require the election of the four director positons first. After the Board positions are filled, the entire board holds a separate meeting to review all office candidates (Pres., VP, Sec., Treas.) and elect a the new office holders. Additionally, the Board selects and/or confirms the Observatory Director for a three year term. This is your clubcome down and participate in selecting your Officers.

Since a meeting of the Board is held as part of the election process, no Board meeting prior to the membership meeting is planned.

Next Focal Point

The Focal Point is the newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society and is issued monthly from September to May with a midsummer issue around the first of July. **Please be aware there will be no June or August issue.**

*Next MAS meeting, Friday
May 15, 1998 @ 8:00PM
At the MAS Observatory
(See map, this Page)
For
Annual Election of Officers*



Board Doings

The following items were addressed at the April 17 Board meeting:

*The Board approved an expenditure of \$300 for soda ,beer, Brats etc in support of Dan Yanko's July 18 Picnic efforts (see Page 1 Article). Considerable discussion was expended on the format of the picnic to assist Dan in this effort.

*Gerry Samolyk and Scott Jamieson reported that the computerizing of Z scope has come a long way. A test case was run by pointing and clicking at the Beehive cluster in Cancer (on the Computer star map)...the Zscope did an acceptable job of automatically slewing to and lining up on the cluster. However, the next layer of corrections will now be addressed. There is some play in the train to the angle pickoffs causing some hysteresis effects. Additionally, Scope misalignment and periodic positional error will be addressed in the future. The progress, however, has been significant, aided by the on-going efforts of Brian Garness and Tim Huff.

*Gerry Samolyk also reported that a graze lunar occultation is contemplated for May 2, 3 in the Sussex area. Unfortunately this Focal Point issue may not reach members in time for this event. These events are usually coordinated via the First Wednesday meeting. In an effort to draw more participation, Gerry has said he will post these events in FP with a longer lead time. To this end , a detailed description of a grazing occultation event involving Aldebaran will be described in the summer issue of FP the graze will be conducted in the Southern Kentucky or Tennessee areas in September. Watch for details.

* Vice President ,Scott Jamieson, expressed a willingness to run for President in the May elections.

* Julie Frey submitted , and the Board approved the applications of the following new members.

Donald & Sandra Buchholz
Herbert Schoknecht

Welcome to Society and please do join in the meetings and club activities.

Telescope building course at UW ,Waukesha

A four day telescope building Course will be taught by President Lee Keith. The end result will be a quality 4 1/4" Newtonian .

Ever thought of buying yourself or your child a telescope? Didn't know what to buy? Afraid of the high cost? Well, here's your chance to build a real telescope! Students will be instructed on how to use, assemble and take care of a small telescope. The telescope is a 4 1/4" diameter Dobsonian reflecting telescope, including a 10mm (109x) eyepiece. It is 50" tall, weighs only 16 lbs., has Teflon bearings and is made of high quality birch plywood. It has received excellent reviews in Astronomy magazine and a Canadian astronomical magazine.

The telescope is suitable for a beginning older child or adult. While of modest size, it is easily capable of showing nearly every crater on the Moon, phases of Venus, polar caps of Mars, 4 moons and cloud bands of Jupiter, the rings of Saturn, hundreds of star clusters and nebulae, comets, asteroids and many other celestial sights.

Continued next column

telescope class continued

Students should bring a check or money order for \$238.00 to the first class. An extra low power eyepiece (43x, highly recommended) is an additional \$40. Since I will be ordering the telescopes after the first class, anyone missing the first class will not get a telescope! On the last two dates only, students will be assembling the telescope. Simple hand tools required . It is recommended that younger students be accompanied by another middle school age or older child or adult to assist in telescope assembly.

Dates: June 13, 27 at UWW
July 11, 18 at MAS Observatory

For more information contact Don Bracco at the UW-Waukesha Office of Continuing Education at 521-5460.

Eclipsers...Start your engines!....

....Well maybe not the engines, but you should start your thinking and planning for the August 11, 1999 Solar Eclipse. The path of totality will progress easterly across Europe and the Mideast through some of the most scenic areas of our western civilization roots. The totality hits the southwestern-most tip of England (Lands End) across the Channel, the Normandy beaches, north of Paris, at or near Munich, Vienna, Bucharest, and Budapest...then on across the Black Sea, across Turkey , Iraq , Iran etal. The greatest period of totality occurs over Romania just west of Bucharest (2minutes and 23 seconds), but any of the European sites are over 2 minutes. Unlike past solo treks to some Mongolian desert where the whole thrust of the trip focuses on two minutes plus of totality, you can share this trip with family and friends, take a short time out for the Eclipse..... and then on with the sight seeing, testing Munich beers, Romanian wines etc. Should the unthinkable happen and the Eclipse is clouded over, the trip won't have an effective cost of \$1500 per minute because you can still soak up the culture and share the fun for %98 percent of the rest of the trip time.

Attached are a map of the Eclipse track and a chart giving probabilities of catching the Eclipse at various locations. You can trade off a somewhat lesser probability of seeing the eclipse with a Munich beer in your hand against a slightly higher chance of success of viewing the eclipse in Bucharest while sipping good Romanian wine! Both Sky & Telescope and Astronomy magazines already have Cruise ads for the Black Sea with Eclipse time landfalls in Turkey where the probability of seeing the Eclipse is much higher. One of these cruises precedes the Aug.11 event with stops inBarcelona, Monte Carlo, Florence/Pisa, Naples/Capri/Rome Venice, Athens, Ephesus, and Istanbul...not bad! Seriously though, it sounds like more of a win-win situation, especially if friends or family are along. By the way, The map and chart shown here are readily available from the NASA website (plus a lot more) but is reproduced here for those members without ready internet access.

Some Local Website Developments

Julie Frey has significantly expanded the MAS web site .Check it out! See back page for address.

MAS Member Pat (Shields) Baker is making a Web Page that acts as a compendium of Internet Astronomy info with links to these sites. Pat is the early stages of putting this Website together and would appreciate any comments, suggestions etc. Pat Baker's Astronomy Central can be reached at: <http://www.execpc.com/patbaker/>

From the President:

Where is the MAS Going?

Since I am stepping down as your President this May after three years at the helm of the MAS, I wanted to give some of my views of your Society from the inside and after I am gone, so to speak.

I was a member of the MAS in the early 70's as a starstruck child who slaved all summer with a paper route to save up \$100 for an Edmund 4.25" telescope. I got the MAS newsletter, called "The Double Dome" at the time since we had only 2 domes at the Observatory. How I wanted to go to meetings, but alas, I could not drive and would not get my license until I was 21 (partly by choice). How I wanted to talk with other astronomers and see their scopes and observe with them!! Ironically, meetings then were at the UWM Physics building like the recent meetings this spring. And I was not alone. At that time, the MAS was a little larger than now, but with many more activities and active members. Observing and building at the Observatory was active, as the "old timers" can attest.

My how the world has changed! We no longer have almost daily space mission reports on TV, but we do have couch potatoes, 24 hr cable and the Internet. Now we have "soccer moms", mini-vans and day care for the multitudes of working moms. "Quality time" has become the mantra of many over scheduled parents that try to squeeze more and more activities into a day. Recently, Congress tried to have Lake Champlain declared one of the Great Lakes, maybe soon they will try to legislate a 36 hour day!

I don't mean to be overly pessimistic or negative, but to just put all this in perspective with what I see happening to the MAS and myself. I recently added a daughter to our family and she seem to absorb all my "spare" time and then some as all you parents out there know very well. I want to allow myself the time to play with Celeste since she really is fun! My life change is also a reflection of the wider society which has a greater demand on its time with all the things mentioned above and more! Especially the Internet. Beware of the Internet! It is the biggest time sucker since cable TV.

Such is the plight of most people. More choices of how to spend your time. Not just at work, but out of work. Which brings me to the MAS. I believe that most members would agree that the MAS is not what it was even 5 years ago as I outlined in last month's letter. The reasons are many and complicated. Whatever the reasons, the MAS is floundering as an organization. If I were a 14 year old again and came to a meeting, what could I look forward to? What about the adult who just bought a telescope and wants to take pictures with it "just like in the magazines"? What about a family with kids or a scout group? How about a serious deep sky or planetary observer? What Please think about this carefully! What do we offer these diverse groups? Some of these groups would find some things to do, some not. Unfortunately, all would require more time that many would be willing (or able) to give. We all live in "Internet Time" to varying degrees where leisure time is defined by how many things one can juggle at once.

National Space Society ISDC Conference
will be held at the Hyatt Regency, Milwaukee, May22-25.

The conference was written up in the March Newsletter. It is being hosted by the SE Wisconsin chapter of the National Space Society. The ISDE is a popular space interest that

The MAS is just another activity in a busy life.

The MAS in competition with all those other things out there one could be doing. Even a popular activity such as the MAS campouts have become lonely places despite the fact that there are many recreational activities to do and the observing under dark skies. One bright spot, I believe, are the Open Houses which have actually flourished despite the fact that their success is largely determined by the weather. The Open Houses have actually become major money makers for the MAS and have been well marketed to scout groups who come in packs (and dens) to hear our programs and see our (and your) telescopes. My undying gratitude to all those who have contributed through the years! Your reward is all the memories you have had sharing the universe with those who appreciate it most!

The status quo is not going to cut it much longer. I used to be worried about the low meeting turnout, but I realize that there probably are other ways members would rather spend a Friday night. I believe the MAS needs to reevaluate its mission going into a era where space missions, finding planets around other stars and soon, life on Europa or Mars or one of those other planets is commonplace. Read the last sentence again! Did you ever believe that such a thing may actually be true??

Such is the task of my successors. The MAS can continue to merely exist or flourish.

While this address seems to have a negative tone, I don't mean it that way. It is just a realization that society has changed and the competition for peoples time is fierce. The MAS needs to be more deliberate and focused on its activities. We can't just drift along and expect people to come clamoring to our dilapidated Quonset hut. We need to more aggressively market ourselves with a smaller number of well thought out activities. And that takes time -- and people to do it. Are we up to it?

P.S. Ironically, I don't believe that interest in astronomy is waning, but urban sprawl and light pollution are winning. Potential observers are discouraged early because they cannot see anything. Very few people have the time to drive hours out of town. I hear this lament all the time from people I talk to on the phone or in my classes. "Backyard astronomy" is becoming an oxymoron. My apologies to all us observers. We may be the last generation that was able to see the universe with our own eyes!

The MAS web site has had 807 "hits" (inquiries). The site has been undergoing frequent upgrades and features membership info, Photos and descriptions of the club, directions to the observatory, links to member and vendor sites and much more (also see next column). You can even download membership applications for MAS. Membership applications are also available at the observatory site. For potential members, the following rates are our current rates for membership.

Regular individual	\$28
Regular Family	\$32
Non-resident Individual	\$18
Non-resident family	\$22
Student (under 18)	\$12

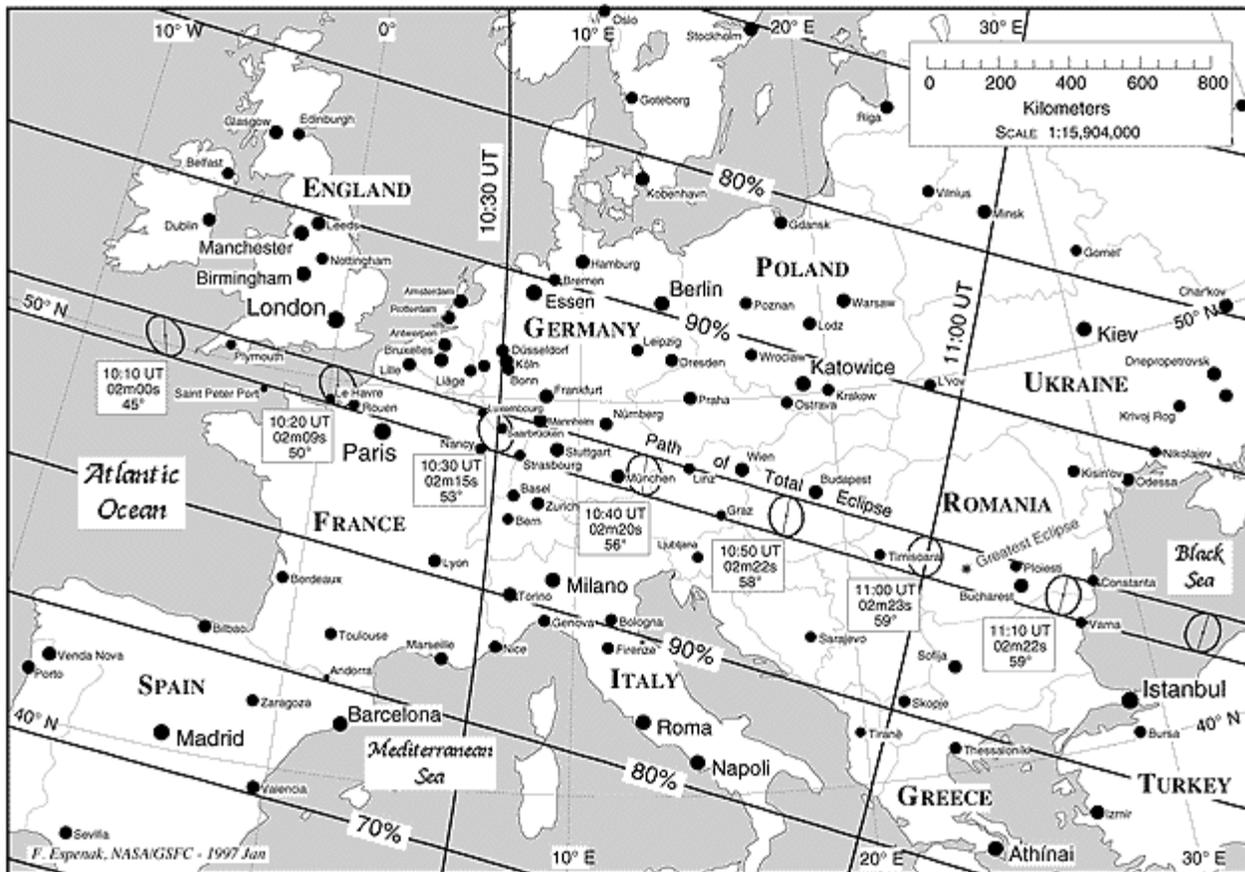
Additionally, members can subscribe at reduced rates to:

Astronomy	\$24/year
Sky & Telescope	\$27/year

Julie Frey, MAS Membership Chairperson 456-0864

Total Solar Eclipse of 1999 August 11

FIGURE 3: THE ECLIPSE PATH THROUGH EUROPE



Total Solar Eclipse of 1999 August 11

FIGURE 23: PROBABILITY OF SEEING THE ECLIPSE ALONG THE PATH

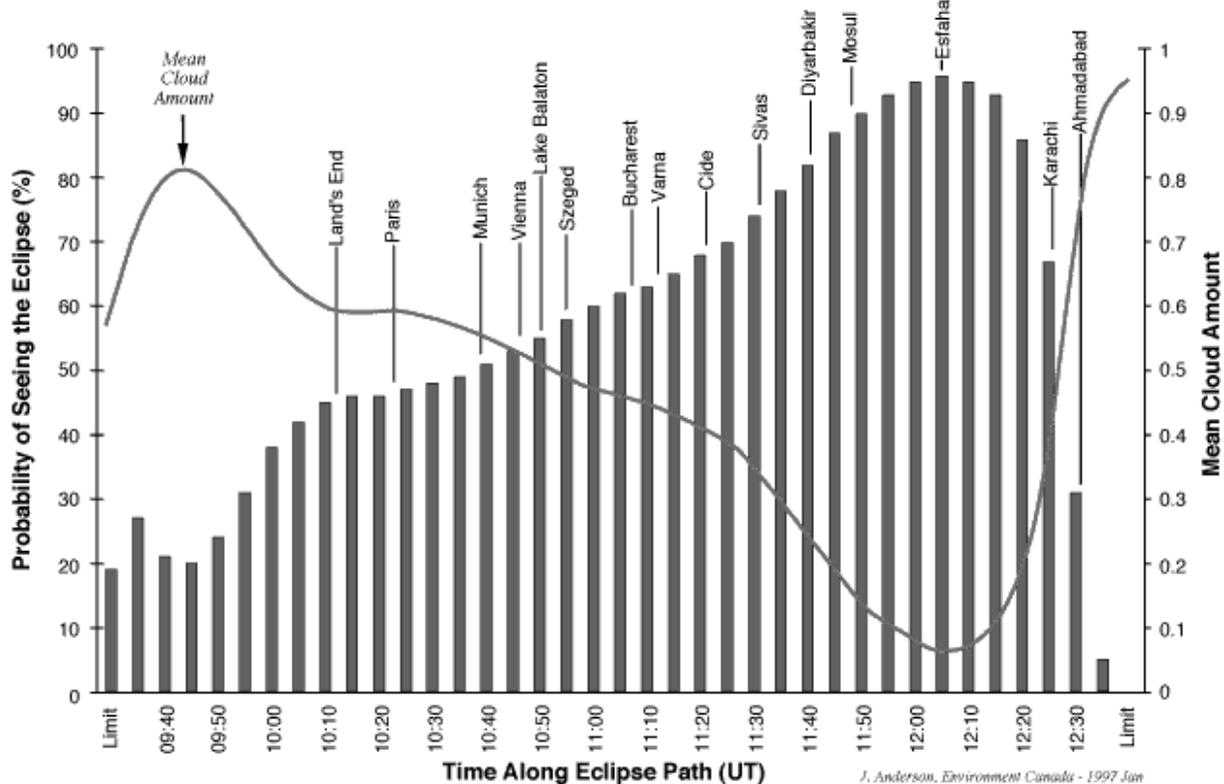


Figure 23: Probability of seeing the eclipse, adjusted for Sun altitude, time of day, and the actual date of the eclipse. Values are smoothed by the computer modeling so that fine details of the cloud cover are lost. Also included is a graph of the mean cloud cover along the track. The data are presented at 5 minute intervals along the eclipse track, with the locations of important cities and landmarks.

Some Local Website Developments

Membership Chairperson Julie Frey has been adding features to the MAS website page increasing its timeliness and usefulness. If you haven't looked recently, give it another try. You'll find features like our schedule of Open Houses, banners announcing speakers at the next meeting, and a host of cross-linking to regional and national amateur astronomy organizations, and activities. Nice job Julie! The MAS Web page address will be permanently displayed on the mailer page of Focal Point (It's there now!).

MAS Member Pat (Shields) Baker has undertaken the task of trying to come up with a Web Page that acts as a compendium of Internet Astronomy info and to provide linking to these other sites such as NASA, Hubble. Amateur Astronomy etc. Pat is the early stages of putting this Website together and would appreciate any comments, suggestions etc. Pat Baker's Astronomy Central can be reached at:

<http://www.execpc.com/patbaker/>

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

Editor	Rudy Poklar	786-8931
Distribution	Margaret Warner	

Future MAS Events

May 15 Election of Officers , Meet at MAS Observatory

May 1, 8, 29; Aug 7; Sept 11, 25; Oct. 9 are our open house (Public Star Parties) dates.

Focal Point Publishing Guidelines

Focal Point Newsletter is published monthly from Sept through 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 Word compatible format, if possible. Submit FP inputs to:

MAS Focal Point c/o Rudy Poklar
12905 W. Crawford Dive
New Berlin, WI. 53151

Saturday Keyholders

May

2*	Chris Hesseltine	482-4515
9	Vern Hoag	548-9130
16	Tim Hoff	662-2987
23	Scott Jamieson	896-0119
30	Lee Keith	425-2331

June

6*	Dan Koehler	662-2987
13	Jim Kube	453-8858
20	Scott Laskowski	421-3517
27	Rudy Poklar	786-8931

July

4*	Terry Ross	784-2093
11	Gerry Samolyk	529-9051
18	Tom Schmidtkunz	352-1674
25	Ken Waraczynski	321-0918

**First Saturday Observatory nite meetings will be held in parallel with standard Observatory operations*

Loaner Telescopes (available to members for local use)

Scott Jamieson (Waukesha)	896-0119	4"	f / 1 5 refractor
Lee Keith (Franklin)	425-2331	8"	Dob reflector
Rich Stearle (Greenfield)	543-7479	8"	Dob reflector

MAS Observatory 542-9071

Visit our MAS Website:

<http://members.aol.com/masmemb/home/memhome.htm>

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society

2933 N.68th Street
Milwaukee, WI. 53210-1208

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S.Postage
PAID
Permit # 4775
Milwaukee, WI.

***MEET AT OBSERVATORY, MAY 15TH
-ELECTION OF OFFICERS
* STAR PARTIES ON FRI. MAY 1, 8, 29**

