

# Focal Point



The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

September-October 2002



## **Bill Albrecht Receives AAVSO Directors Award**

By Gerry Samolyk  
MAS observatory Director

In July, the AAVSO held its spring meeting in Hawaii. At that meeting our member, Bill Albrecht, received the AAVSO directors award.

A few years ago, while Bill was living in Hawaii, there was a campaign to obtain multi-wavelength observations of the cataclysmic variable SS Cyg during an outburst using several satellites. The problem was, these outbursts can't be predicted, so the AAVSO was asked to monitor the star and report any unusual activity.

One night, observers on the east coast saw that SS Cyg was a few tenths brighter than normal but there was no clear indication that an outburst was starting. As the star was setting for the west coast, there was still no confirmation that an outburst was underway. The AAVSO director called Bill in Hawaii and asked him to monitor SS Cyg. Over the next few hours Bill saw the star brighten by over a half a magnitude and promptly reported that the star was

going into outburst. Because of this dedication, three satellites were targeted on SS Cyg and observations of the outburst were obtained in the UV, EUV, and X-ray bands.

This is an outstanding example of how amateur observers can make a contribution to the astronomical community. Great job Bill!!!!



Seen above with the newly donated Zit scope is member Vern Hoag at the time of fit tests.

## **Telescope Donation**

By Gerry Samolyk  
MAS observatory Director

In June, the MAS received a donation of a new telescope. It is a 14.5" f/5 Newtonian on a fork mount. The mount is very well built and has drives and setting circles on both the R.A. and Dec. axis. A chart box (similar to the ones on A and B scopes) is located next to the eyepiece.

This scope was donated by one of our former members, Ray Zit. Ray joined the MAS in the 1950's. He was an active observer of lunar occultations (including grazes) and variable stars. He also participated in project Moon watch,

a satellite tracking project in the late 50's and 60's. He is a past member of the MAS board and served as observatory director from 1977 until 1980, when his work took him away from the Milwaukee area. This scope will be called the Ray Zit telescope. Since we already have a 'Z' scope, Vern has coined the name Z2 (pronounced zee two).

As of this writing, a roll off shed to house this scope is being completed. The primary labor for this project has been provided by Vern, Scott, Steve and myself; along with a new member, Thisath Kularatna (Thisath is learning about astronomy from the "ground" up.). Our unsung hero for the project was Angie Manske. On the morning we were to pour the concrete, we were caught in a massive downpour of rain. When I called the Manske's, Angie told me that the front had passed Waunakee at 7:30. So we scheduled the concrete truck for 9:30. It stopped raining at the observatory just after 9:00. The walls and roof were framed before that weekend was out. Rudy has helped out with the finish carpentry.

One may wonder why we are building another rolloff while we're talking about moving the observatory. We decided that: It will probably be a few years until we move and this is too nice of scope to leave mothballed; These rolloffs can be built for about \$1500 so it's not a huge investment; We will probably be able to move the rolloffs to the new site. Besides, although we have more scopes mounted than ever before, on most clear night they are all in use. Observing at the hill has been more active that I've ever seen.

We plan to dedicate the new observatory at our Oct 18 meeting. I understand that Ray plans to attend.

### **Note from the Editor**

By Gary Parson

I would like to thank all the contributors to this issue of the MAS Focal Point. Club participation is essential for the news letter to stay fresh and enjoyable for all of us. Also it is of utmost importance for all members to keep me up to date with

changed email addresses.

### **Picnic Wrap-up**

By Vern Hoag

The annual picnic was held under warm weather and clear skies. A good number of people came out to be with fellow members enjoying what I hope was good food and drink. As always it was nice to see some of the members that don't get a chance to come out very often. There were also a few newer members, whom I think we all enjoyed seeing their enthusiasm.

After the food was cooked, cake eaten, and the door prizes given out, a number of people stayed. Some just sat around enjoying the weather and visiting, while others play a few games with the kids. It was nice to see people staying out.

At night the grounds under the clear skies had a campout atmosphere. A number of people just laid back in lawn chairs looking at the sky with binoculars and taking in the night sky. But there was also a lot of astronomy going on. Messier objects were getting checked off the Messier club list, plus 4 CCD cameras running. All the domes were open, both roll-offs were in use, and a number of members brought they're own telescopes out. There were at least 15 people that stayed past midnight and a few past 3:00 a.m., which brought us to the end of another picnic.

I'd like to thank the following companies for their gracious donations, "**Astronomy Magazine**", "**Jim's Mobile Inc**", "**Orion Telescope & Binoculars**", "**Sky & Telescope Magazine**", "**Stellarvue**", and "**Yerkes Observatory**". I would also like to thank the following people for all their help, Scott Jamieson, Henry Gerner, Ryan Gerner (great job cooking Ryan), Gerry Samolyk, and a special thanks to my wife Diane. These people helped make the picnic a success. For those that came out, I hope you enjoyed yourselves and I thank you for coming out and supporting your club.

See picnic pictures on the next page 3.



Pictured above picnic organizer Vern Hoag. Nice Job Vern , Diane and all others that helped



Vern and Club President Scott Jamieson talking things over.



Members enjoying some good food.

### Welcome New Members

By Carlos Garces  
MAS membership chairman

The past couple of months new membership has been outstanding. We would like to welcome the following new members to our club

Robert, Shawn and Alixandra Wagner from Waukesha, WI.

Erik, Dan, Danielle and Mary Ackerman of New Berlin, WI

Steven Erenz of Greenfield, WI

Stephen Postma and family of New Berlin, WI

Maggie Mckee of Milwaukee, WI

Randy Hudzinski and family of New Berlin, WI

Bruce Forcica of Wauwatosa, WI

Richard Evans and family of Milwaukee WI

Paul Gruener of Bayside, WI

### MAS Fall Campout, Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>

By Paul Borchardt  
MAS assistant observatory director

Yes folks, that campout time of year is almost here once again! So mark your calendar for the first weekend in October.

The MAS fall campout will be held in the Northern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest, Greenbush Group Campground, sites #3 & #4. The club has paid the site camping fee, so all you need is a state park vehicle sticker, which can be purchased at the daily or annual rate in the park. Remember you don't have to "campout" to be part of the fun, Milwaukee is just an hour or so drive away, so you could drive up for the evening, return home that night. Being early October the fall colors should be well under way and the nights not real cold, but hopefully clear.

What? You say that you don't own a telescope. That's no problem either, there will be several scopes bought up for every one to use including the MAS 18" Dobsonian and my own 12" ballscope. Firewood is something that any one coming up can bring along, we never seem to have too much, right Vern? Family and friends are also great to bring along, you don't need to be a member of the club to participate in this weekend, and I've yet to see the two sites not have enough room for a few more tents.

If you have any questions, please contact me, at 262-781-0169 or [pjb924@yahoo.com](mailto:pjb924@yahoo.com); hope to see you there under clear skies!

## CCD Ramblings

By Tom Schmidtkunz

I have read three excellent books on CCD image taking and processing recently:

- CCD Soft V5, by SBIG
- The New CCD Astronomy by Ron Wodaski
- Astronomical Image Processing (AIP) by Richard Berry and James Burnell.

All are excellent, tell you everything you need to know, and explain it all in easy to follow examples.

CCD Soft has many advantages over CCDOPS. One of the main ones is the ability to do side by side image comparisons of images, a weakness of CCDOPS. Another is deep sky color processing. The best deep sky color images are LRGB (Luminance images + Red + Green + Blue). Because the Luminance image has all the detail, a LRGB image will almost always be better than a RGB image. The LRGB combine process is fairly easy to accomplish in CCD Soft. You can monitor the end result as you make adjustments to the color components, and before you do the actual combine. This is a major plus, as you can see what effect each change will have upon the end result. Saves a lot of time.

Ron's book is excellent too, covering CCD Soft, plus AIP and MaxIm DL, a popular image processing software. If you're willing to spend the time, anyone can figure this out. There are many examples, which are easy to follow.

The AIP book came out first, and does a lot of explaining, so you can understand why tools in CCD Soft are such advances over the old days of image processing.

Some folks still favor AIP tools. Nearly all packages come with a deconvolution tool. This brings out sharp detail and reduces bloated star images to a tighter size. It can be overused, resulting in a noisy image. This tool won't make a bad image a good one, but can make a decent one a good one.

If you'd like to see some examples of very high quality color deep-sky work, go to [www.astromart.com](http://www.astromart.com), and click on the astrophotography link. The works by Chris Shurr and Robert Gendler are absolutely first rate. Many other people have done fine work. I have seen excellent images taken with an 8" SCT's in urban environments. I am convinced that excellent deep sky images can be obtained at our current observatory, with careful processing applied.

Note that with the best images, very long exposures are generally required to maximize image quality. What you want to do here is maximize the signal to noise ratio. There are good images and fast images but probably no good fast images, at least for deep sky. Take good notes of what you do. You will learn from your mistakes, and avoid having to repeat them.

With longer nights approaching, and some excellent targets available in the late Summer/early fall sky, there should be some fine imaging opportunities at hand. M8, 16, and 17, for example, can be easily imaged with relatively short exposures.

There are also many fine galaxies to image in the fall sky.

There are many people at the observatory now with CCD skills. I have learned a great deal from Paul, Ger, Scott, and Chris. The members should take advantage of this knowledge base, to learn the best techniques, based upon your interests. Planetary imaging, for example, has it's own guidelines, that are quite different from those of deep sky imaging.

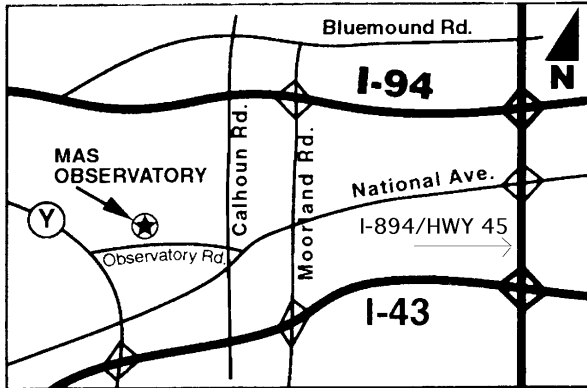
One of the best parts of being a member of MAS is that you can learn so much from others.

Kudos to Scott for fixing the LX200 drive.

Good observing, and good imaging!!

## General Meetings Start again

Just a reminder that General meetings will start again on September 20th at 8:00pm. The board meetings will be at 7:00pm. The speakers will be Gerry Samolyk and several other members talking on variable stars.



## Library News

By Scott Laskowski  
MAS Librarian and Historian

The 2003 Astronomy Calendars from Kalmbach Publishings Astronomy Magazines are \$11.99 but for MAS members they can be purchased for \$6.00. We have only eight left. Contact me if interested.

New additions to our library include;

### Extreme Stars:

At the edge of creation by James Kaler-2001. Kaler, a popular astrophysics writer, discusses various types of stars and their different evolutionary dimensions, compositions and mass, factors that determine the result of a star's life and its influence in a galaxy.

### Bad Astronomy

Misconceptions and misuses revealed, from astrology to the moon landing hoax. - by Phillip Plait-2002. The author maintains the web site badastronomy.com and here are the written es-

says debunking some favorite astronomical and space science myths. If you like to argue or want ammunition against your informed friends or merely want to educate by example. Bad astronomy is "Just plain good".

## Scopes for Sale!!

**Six inch F8 newtonian** w/dobsonian mount. Home built. Includes finder and counterweight. Rocker box has handles and in good condition. **Asking \$175.00.** Also I have a **10in f4.5 Coultter newtonian** on a dobsonian mount. It has a red tube and there is a 8x50 finder, handles, black cloth glued to the interior of the tube and a rack and pinion focuser. **Asking \$450.00.** If interested contact:

Jack Jorgensen  
Tel. 414-281-0137

**Meade 8" LX200 classic.** The scope is only 1-1/2 years old. Must sell wife had a baby, need the money. **Asking \$1500.00.** Please contact me my email address is:

[Andy@spe-wi.com](mailto:Andy@spe-wi.com) or my home phone is 920-446-3640

## 6 MAS Officers/ Staff

<b>President</b>	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
<b>Vice President</b>	Vern Hoag	262-548-9130
<b>Treasurer</b>	Chris Weber	262-789-7128
<b>Secretary</b>	Henry Gerner	414-362-4441
<b>Observatory Director</b>	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
<b>Assistant Observatory Director</b>	Paul Borchardt	262-781-0169
<b>Focal Point</b>	Gary Parson	262-895-3015

### Future MAS. Events

**General meetings will be on Sept 20, October 18 and November 15. These meetings will be held at the observatory**

**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](mailto: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 Mail, or diskette in a text or Word compatible format, if possible. Submit FP inputs to:

**MAS Focal Point c/o Gary Parson**  
7521 E Wind Lake Rd  
Wind Lake, WI 53185-1513 –  
Email [gparson@wi.rr.com](mailto:gparson@wi.rr.com)

## Keyholders list

### September

7	Brian Ganiere	414-961-8745
14	Carlos Garces	262-786-2623
21	Brian Garness	262-538-3888
28	Chris Hesseltine	414-482-4515

### October

5	Vern Hoag	262-548-9130
12	Tim Hoff	262-662-2212
19	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119
26	Lee Keith	414-425-2331

### November

2	Dan Koehler	262-662-2987
9	Scott Laskowski	414-421-3517
16	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
23	Terry Ross	262-784-2093

### MAS Open House's

September 6...The Milky Way

September 27...Planets around other stars????????????

#### Loaner Telescopes (available to members for local use)

Lee Keith (Franklin)	414-425-2331	8" Dob reflector
Scott Jamieson (Waukesha)	262-896-0119	8" Dob reflector
Paul Borchardt (MAS site)	262-781-0169	6" Dob reflector

**MAS Observatory 262-542-9071**

**MAS Web Page: [www.milwaukeeastro.org](http://www.milwaukeeastro.org)**

## **The Milwaukee Astronomical Society**

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

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

*\*The Next general meeting will be held on September 20th at 8:00pm at the observatory!!*