



## The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society- Jan-Feb 2002

### **Presidents Corner**

By Scott Jamieson

First I would like to welcome Gary Parson as our new editor of the Focal Point. With the change, we have had some discussions on what changes to the FP would make sense. Probably the biggest problem for the editor in the past has not been compiling the paper itself, but in trying to get it printed and distributed to all members. We have considered the possibility of printing it ourselves on a standard printer but 200 copies is a lot of work to print, fold, and address and would be quite expensive in supplies. Then there is the continuing costs of bulk mail.

One thing that has changed in the last few years is the fact that the large majority of our members are now on the internet. This brings up the possibility of electronic distribution of the FP, by posting the newsletter on the website for downloading and sending a message to all members on the net that it is available. The other possibility is sending the files directly to each member as an e-mail attached file. This would involve considerably more time. The logistics of each approach are still being worked out, but I think the first would be the best.

We don't intend to leave out the rest of our members who would rather receive a hard copy in the mail. If this number is low enough it would make the job of printing and processing the mailed version easier and cheaper than the current process.

Why do this? Primarily to cut down on the amount of volunteer work involved providing a newsletter, but far more important is the improved quality that is possible. Currently, we are very limited in the amount of material that can be included in the FP due to the costs of printing and mailing. In addition, images and drawings could be in every issue and be in either color or black and white. We could even provide links to other members websites for related materials. Special articles from other clubs on topics of common interest could be included. I

believe that the FP could be made a far more interesting and informative paper and the latest version would always be available on the website.

This would not be worth the work if relatively few want the FP in electronic form. Our information is that three quarters of our members are on the web. This would make it necessary to print only about 50 copies (Black and white only), which would still be much better quality than the current process allows. Let me know your opinion! My address is Jamiem16@aol.com.

Some people have commented that I have not been out on the hill as much in the last two months. This is true because I have been building a new observatory in my back yard. It is now complete and I expect to be spending a lot more time on the hill with all my member friends.

By the way, if you hear any rumors of two members driving across the hill in separate cars dragging our safe, it's true. As strange as it looked all I can say is it worked! It is now out of the way in the back of the lot. Thanks Vern, I think.

### **Leonids visible from MAS Hill**

By Scott Jamieson

MAS President

Like most people, I almost gave up on seeing this meteor shower because of the fog. However, one thing I have learned by experience is that frequently the extra altitude of the hill makes a big difference. At 1 AM I drove out through the fog to the hill and found the partly cloudy skies that the satellite pictures showed above the fog. I saw a number of meteors between the clouds and decided to open B-scope to view both Saturn and Jupiter. The views were great in the calm air. Over the next 4 hours several club members and 18 members of the public arrived. All got to see the planets and lots of very fast moving Leonids.  
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I stopped counting at 100 but saw at least 50 more while showing the people the planets. I estimate I was only looking up half the time and the rate was still increasing as the clouds closed in about 4:30AM. I was amazed at how many couples were there enjoying the sights together. Several said they had seen over 200 meteors and a good time was had by all.

## **Observatory Summary 2001**

By Gerry Samolyk

MAS Observatory Director

As soon as the snow melted last spring, construction was started on a new flip top observatory. To keep the cost down we reused the cover from the old satellite shed. We purchased a 10" f/6.3 LX 200 and a CCD imager and set them up for remote operation. Concurrent with this project, the office and library in the big dome were remodeled to accommodate the control for this scope. We can now do imaging from a heated room.

In May, the spring meeting of the AAVSO was held in Madison. One of the events was a Sunday afternoon open house at the observatory. Our guests included many amateur astronomers and a number of professionals (including one who uses the Hubble regularly). Everyone was impressed with the quality and quantity of equipment we have at our observatory, particularly because most of the equipment was design and built by the members.

At our picnic in July we had a very special ceremony honoring some of our long time members. The new C shed roll off observatory was renamed the Albrecht observatory dedicated to Bill and Anne Albrecht for their many years of service to the MAS (Bill has been a member since 1933). The new flip top observatory was named the Tangney observatory dedicated to Virgil and Maryann Tangney who have been active members since the early 1960's making constant contributions throughout the past four decades.

Observationally things have been very active. Many of our members have become proficient at CCD imaging and visual scopes are in use on most clear nights. Three members contributed CCD observations of variable stars to the AAVSO. Both Bob Manske and Dave Weier have increased their visual observations of EB stars. On a Monday night last Dec, there were four members using the observatory on a work night (or in one case a school night). It's become common to find many people using the observatory on any given night, even on a

weeknight when it's well below freezing.

A number of members have participated in our Z Uma project. Two of the youngest are Angie Manske and Chris Limbach. Their data was a great fit with the more experienced observers. Henry Gerner has become the most active of the new observers on this project.

A number of people contributed to the construction and maintenance projects in the past year. Among them, I'd like to mention four people who put in a significant effort; Paul Borchardt, Scott Jamieson, Vern Hoag, and Chris Weber. Their effort made my job a lot easier and a lot more fun.

## **Library News-**

By Scott Laskowski

MAS Librarian

1. **Red Shift 3-1998.** CD-Rom and instructions booklet, capable of displaying over 1,000,000 objects on your PC planetarium, information on objects and future events can be accessed. (Donated by Lee Keith).

2. **The Case for Mars:** The plans to settle the Red Planet and why we must– by Robert Zubrin – 1996. At the MAS. general meeting in October we were stimulated by the prospects for mars exploration in our future. Both by humans and by probes. The mars society people, some of them that are MAS. Members, made the point that creating new interest in space exploration will create greater interest in science for our young people so that our future in space exploration will be insured.

## **3. Comic Catastrophes:**

Supernovae, Gamma Ray Bursts and Adventures in Hyper space – by J. Craig Wheeler – 2000. Cataclysmic variables, their detection, Magnitude estimates and light curves can be important contributions by amateur astronomers to real science. This relates to the topic of Neil Simmons lecture at the MAS. general meeting at U.W.M. in January of 2001. This book is recommended by David Weier.

## **Welcome New Members**

We would like to welcome Jeffrey Eckrich to our club. Please help him to feel at home.

## **Upcoming Speakers:**

**By Tom Pelnar**  
**Speaker Coordinator**

The speaker for the January 18th meeting will be Mr. Peter Kokh of the Lunar Reclamation Society.  
Continued He will speak on the Society and its works.  
The February meeting speaker has not been determined yet.

## **Things to watch for:** By Gary Parson

**January 5** – Last quarter moon 9:55PM CST  
**January 9** – Mercury shows greatest illuminated extent. 22 square arcseconds and passes 1.25 degree's from Neptune.  
**January 11** – Mercury reaches greatest elongation . 19 degree's east of the sun.  
**January 13** – New Moon at 7:29AM CST  
**January 21** – First quarter moon at 11:46PM CST  
**January 28** – Full Moon at 4:50PM CST  
  
**February 4** – Last quarter moon at 7:33AM CST  
**February 8** – Saturn is stationary at 4:00AM CST  
**February 9** – The moon passes 5 degree's south of Mercury at 11:00PM CST  
**February 10** – Asteroid Juno is at its opposition at 7:00PM CST  
**February 12** – New Moon at 1:41AM CST  
**February 14** – The moon is at its apogee 252,502 miles from earth at 4:21PM CST  
**February 20** – First quarter moon at 6:02AM CST  
**February 27** – Full moon at 3:17AM CST  
Research from S&T January and Astronomy February Issues

## **Arizona Trip** – By Scott Jamieson **MAS President**

Two interesting astronomy events -

This edition of the FP includes an announcement of the Arizona Astronomy trip conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Alumni Association. The call from Jim Lattis of UWM Space Place telling me of this trip brought back memories of another unforgettable trip. Before I moved back to Milwaukee I lived in El Paso, Texas and owned a fabric covered light plane called a Tripacer. I

was not particularly into astronomy while I lived there but decided to fly from El Paso to the Grand Canyon with a friend of mine. On the way there we flew over Barringer meteor crater and Lowell observatory in Flagstaff. I would have loved to stop both places but the friend I was with was not into astronomy so we didn't. Every since then I have wished that I could have taken the time before we moved away to see these places with someone that enjoyed astronomy as much as I do.

The trip coming up in April is a fantastic opportunity to see Kitt Peak, the Arizona Mirror Lab, the Grand Canyon, Barringer Meteor Crater from the ground with two very knowledgeable astronomers. This trip was put together by the UW Alumni association but is open to all with an interest in astronomy. A late call from Dr. Lattis informs me that the group will have the opportunity to spend an evening on Kitt peak doing imaging with the 0.9-meter telescope. While DR. Lattis is hesitant to guarantee good weather, the probability of clear skies is very high. All transportation is by motor coach. I realize that \$1625 plus airfare (~\$300) is a lot of money, but I believe this is a once in a lifetime chance to see all of these sights with the experts. In addition, those of you that have never spent anytime in the southwest desert environment will be surprised at the incredible beauty of this area. The website for more info is shown below, but don't delay, space is available for only about 35 people.

Am I going? Unfortunately, no. My daughter is getting married the following week and if I want to stay married for our 33rd year, I think I must stay in town and write checks for the wedding. I just hope that I will get another chance eventually. If you can do it, don't miss this opportunity!

Another significant opportunity for us is the fact that David Levy, the famous comet hunter and science writer will be lecturing at McHenry County College in Crystal Lake, Ill on March 19 at 7 PM. I have met David on several occasions, including a book signing in Los Cruces, New Mexico where he and Clyde Tombaugh signed David's biography of Clyde. He is a very gracious person and an excellent speaker. The university is only a couple of hours drive away.

## How to find it –

by Gary Parson

I often thought when I was first starting out in astronomy that I wish someone could help me with finding all the objects in the night sky. Well I had no one to show me so I went out like most of us did and purchased a lot of books to help me with my nightly adventures. So when I had this opportunity to take over the Focal Point one of my first thoughts was to write an article for the beginners helping them to find the objects in the night sky. Lets start out with **Polaris**.

Finding Polaris is relatively easy, you start out by looking for the Big Dipper. Which is one of the easiest constellations to recognize. When you have located it look for the two highest stars in the end of dippers bowl. Now draw a line through those two stars going north and it will point to Polaris. By finding Polaris you will always know when you are facing due north. Higher in the northern sky and to the west you will find five stars in the shape of a W. This is the constellation **Cassiopeia**. Setting almost due west of Cassiopeia are the four stars of the **Great Square**. This time of year they almost look more like a diamond than a square. South of the great square you will find my favorite constellation **Orion** the hunter. The first thing you will probably recognize are the three stars in a row on an angle this is Orion's belt. These three stars also point down to the dog star **Sirius** Which is in the constellation **Canis Major**. Now back to Orion above are his shoulders. The bright red star is **Betelgeuse**. Then below are his legs the very bright blue star is **Rigel**. Looking above Orion you will see a bright orange star named **Aldebaran**. It's the brightest star in the constellation **Taurus** the bull. Above Taurus to the north and east of Aldebaran is a kind of lopsided 5 star pentagon. The brightest of these stars is **Capella**. These stars locate the constellation **Auriga**. East of Auriga you will be able to see two bright stars kind of close to each other. Their names are **Pollux** and **Castor**. Down and to the west of **Castor** and **Pollux** are the star formations of **Gemini the twins**. To the southeast and of Gemini and back towards Sirius is the very bright star called. Actually if you look all the stars mentioned make a circle around **Betelgeuse**. All the above mentioned pretty much make up your winter skies.

I hope some will find this attempt useful. Please let me know your if you like it at [gpar1951@prodigy.net](mailto:gpar1951@prodigy.net)

## Announcements -

1) Arizona Astronomy - April 13-20 Trip to Kitt Peak Observatory, University of Arizona Mirror Making Lab, Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, The Grand Canyon, Sunset Crater National Monument, Barringer Meteor Crater and a ride on the Verde Canyon Railroad. \$1625 plus airfare website:

<http://www.uwalumni.com/travel/2002/arizastro.html>

2) March 19 -David Levy lecture at McHenry College in Crystal Lake, IL at 7 PM  
For information call Molly Walsh at 1-815-455-8697

## Letter from the Editor – by Gary Parson

First of all I would like to start out by thanking Rudy Poklar, Scott Jamieson and Gerry Samolyk for all the help they've given me. I have big shoes to fill taking over for Rudy. I think we can all acknowledge what a wonderful job Rudy has done for this club over the many years. We would like to thank him for being a great editor, member and Friend.

All the best of luck down there in Arizona Rudy and we look forward to seeing you in the spring. All of us as members should realize that the Focal Point is all of ours, and all of us at one time or another should provide an article. All I'm asking is if you go on a vacation or attend some kind of meeting or have a great observational or CCD session that has to do with our great hobby don't be afraid to sit down and write up a piece about it. Its not as hard as you think and you will be helping to make this newsletter better.

## Astronomical Equipment for Sale

I will always save space for our members or there friends to sell astronomical equipment. If you have something you want to sell or trade just email me a complete description and a picture (optional) to [gpar1951@prodigy.net](mailto:gpar1951@prodigy.net) or mail me at Gary Parson 7521 E Wind Lake Rd Wind Lake WI 53185

### For Sale:

18in Galaxy F/4.5 Newtonian. The scope has a Galaxy primary and secondary, NGF 2" focuser, a Novak spider and secondary holder, astrosystems wood blocks, Obsession primary mounting and Obsession tube clamps. It also has Teflon/Formica bearings. The scope was built in 1996. The upper cage is from Astrosystems.

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The selling price is \$3000.00  
I can be contacted in the day time at 815-232-  
4533 Thank you  
John Mitchell,  
PO Box 74, 402 S Hickory,  
Shannon, IL 61078



**The Milwaukee Astronomical Society**  
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**MAS Officers/ Staff**

**President** - Scott Jamieson-----262-896-0119  
**Vice President** - Lee Keith-----414-425-2331  
**Treasurer** - Dan Yanko-----414-453-3382  
**Secretary** - Henry Gerner-----414-362-4441  
**Observatory Director** - Gerry Samolyk-----414-529-9051  
**Assistant Observatory Director** - Paul Borchardt---262-781-0169  
**Focal Point Editor** - Gary Parson-----262-895-3015

**Future MAS. Events**

**January 18th MAS meeting at UWM**  
**February 15th MAS meeting at UWM**

**Saturday Keyholders**

**January**

5	Chris Hesseltine	414-482-4515
12	Vern Hoag	262-548-9130
19	Tim Hoff	262-662-2212
26	Scott Jamieson	262-896-0119

**February**

2	Lee Keith	414-425-2331
9	Dan Koehler	262-662-2987
16	Scott Laskowski	414-421-3517
23	Terry Ross	262-784-2093

**March**

2	Gerry Samolyk	414-529-9051
9	Tom Schmidtakunz	414-352-1674
16	Neil Simmons	262-889-2039
23	Chris Weber	262-789-7128
30	Dan Yanko	414-453-3382

**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

**Focal Point Publishing Guidelines**

Focal Point Newsletter is published bi-monthly (Sep Nov Jan Mar 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 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 [gpar1951@prodigy.net](mailto:gpar1951@prodigy.net)

**MAS Observatory            262-542-9071**

**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 : [carlosg@execpc.com](mailto:carlosg@execpc.com)

**\*The MAS January Monthly meeting will be held at the U.W.M. Physics building on January 18th. The board meeting will be at 7:30 and the general meeting will be at 8:00pm.**

**MAS Web Page:**  
[www.milwaukeastro.org](http://www.milwaukeastro.org)  
New and timely, Check it out