

SIDEREAL TIMES

The Official Publication of the
Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton

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Treasurer

Michael Mitrano

Program Chairman

Ludy D'Angelo

Assistant Director

John Church

Secretary

Larry Kane

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From the Director

Greetings 2009. Good riddance 2008 (you party pooper).

Hope all you astronomers found your dream gift next to the tree, menorah, or backyard observatory. I'm trying to decide what to do with this lump of coal (*careful* good readers—I can see those nasty smirks).

One of the nicest gifts (and most useful) was given to me by member Brian Van Liew. I own a Meade LXD55 5 inch refractor, on which is mounted a standard 50mm finder scope. Yuk. I hate the finder. However, I found that Meade's mounting shoe on the scope would not accommodate any red dot finder with which I planned to replace the current optical finder. Santa Van Liew had a custom mount made by a vendor used at his workplace, and *voila!* perfect fit and perfect solution. It really pays to know the right people.

As I write this (and for the past couple of evenings), brilliant Venus and the crescent Moon have been maneuvering in the West, putting on one spectacular show. Winter Earthshine certainly helped to make this duo all the more magnificent to enjoy. Jupiter and Mercury made it clear they didn't want to be left out of this dance – the ecliptic was certainly bejeweled to celebrate the end of infamous 2008.



Many of you know 2009 has been deemed The International Year of Astronomy. The International Year of Astronomy 2009 “is a global effort initiated by the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO to help the citizens of the world rediscover their place in the Universe through the day and night-time sky, and thereby engage a personal sense of wonder and discovery.” The Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton consistently promotes public astronomy outreach and education. Perhaps we can take advantage of this international awareness program to redouble efforts in the greater Princeton area. One idea is to

present another “Downtown Princeton Astronomy” night. The inaugural observing session was a terrific success.

The deadline for the February issue is:

Friday January 30, 2009

Send your submissions to:

editors@princetonastronomy.org

Bad Science Department: while at member Ludy D'Angelo's family New Year's open house, a guest asked if I had seen the recent cable show about UFOs, and how the commentator said Bucks County,



Pennsylvania had the largest number of reported UFO sightings in the United States for 2008. She seemed somewhat concerned; I shared same, but for different reasons. I just love this stuff. Although I admit the conversation seemed relevant to me, having just seen the remake of my

second favorite movie of all time: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Parenthetically, I was very skeptical that this remake could come anywhere near the perfection of the 1951 Robert Wise classic, and, sure enough.... Keanu Reeves as Klaatu. Yeah. Right. (This should be renamed *The Day the Box Office Stood Still*).

As far as AAAP observing and field activities are concerned—I hope we don't stand still in 2009. I very much hope we can get more members out under the night sky, either at the Simpson Observatory, or with their own scopes at local observing. Don't know where to tote the Dob? Send an email, I'll give you a number of great local sites.

Gort! Klaatu barada nikto!

Cheers—John Miller, Director

Membership Meeting Minutes December 9, 2008

Director John Miller called the meeting to order

Treasurer's Report: Michael Mitrano stated that all the money for StarQuest is in, and the accounts are reconciled. He provided a more detailed report that will be listed in the December issue of *Sidereal Times*. John Miller restated the importance of all members submitting their dues for this year. He suggested that dues be paid by check, if possible. Michael reported that as of this meeting, the AAAP has sixty seven paid members plus a few that turned in their dues at this meeting. He stated that after the holidays, he will send out a letter to past (lapsed) members. This has been successful in the past. John Church asked if the financial crisis has affected any of our investments. Michael said no!

Secretary/Archivist/Library report Kane discussed the recent activity of the Library collection. He will update the collection list for the website. A question was raised concerning the books that were donated at StarQuest. It was noted that most were given away at the auction due to a great interest in them. One was donated to the Library collection. Kane reported that six email addresses still came back as undeliverable. After the New Year, if these members have not renewed their memberships, the web master will remove their email addresses. The Web master, John Miller, stated that while the renewals "dribble in" over the course of the first several months, it is a lot of work to delete members' information and then have to re-enter it if they renew. Ludy D'Angelo pointed out that it was the policy that dues were due in October and if they had not been paid, the delinquent members should be removed from the roster. Rex Parker questioned whether a lenient approach might be more beneficial to the club

Outreach Report Jeff Bernardis reported that the first star party at the Riverside Elementary School in Princeton was cancelled on three different dates due to weather. It is now postponed until the Spring. Next Wednesday, December 17, one is scheduled for the Millstone River School in Plainsboro. We have four or five volunteers for that event. On February 26, the Stuart Country Day School is scheduled. Jeff said that he is not yet asking for volunteers for this one. John Miller raised the issue of Millstone providing funds to the club and Jeff stated that he will raise the issue with them. He stated that every organization is different concerning how they can issue payments.

Observatory Report John Church reported that he and Gene Ramsey winterized the observatory. Gene reported that he purchased five 9-volt batteries for the Telrads and installed two of them. A discussion was held on whether the Telrad on the C-14 was used. Some use it and others did not. A short report was given on the night the observatory was opened for a Girl Scout troop. A new member asked about how a member can use the observatory during the winter. It was pointed out that any member can train to become a key-holder.

Sidereal Times The next deadline is January 2. John Miller asked if everyone at the meeting knew about, and was getting the ST.

Program Chair Program Chair Ludy D'Angelo reported that next month's featured speaker is member Ken Kremer. 3-D glasses will be provided. February's speaker will be Geno Segre from the University of Pennsylvania. He may be autographing his new book

on Quantum physics. March is still open. April's speaker will be Carles Badenas, a post-doc from Princeton. May is still open.

Membership Chair The position is open due to the tragic and unexpected death of Linda Pappetti. New member Dee Bosch has taken up some of the responsibilities by bringing in refreshments for the meetings. John Miller asked that anyone interested in the position or knowing of someone who may be, should email him.

New Business Rex Parker discussed his new "gizmo," a device that can measure ambient light pollution. He wants to make these measurements around the township surrounding the Simpson Observatory. He also stated that these measurements could be included in the Environmental Resources Inventory to keep track of these data as are water and air pollution. Objective data could be logged by our group to establish a base line for future comparisons. Mike Mitrano asked if the device could be permanently mounted at the observatory to make continued measurements. Member Dee Bosch asked about getting several of the devices and giving them to interested members to make measurements. Rex stated that the device costs about \$120. Members Gene Ramsey and Larry Kane expressed interest in helping Rex make these measurements. Dee then asked a question concerning trying to obtain a grant to purchase the devices and make the measurements in conjunction with other groups. Rex thought that the better way was to utilize the expertise of the AAAP to approach township boards. Rex pointed out that he worked on a light pollution committee of the Hopewell Township Board to write a light pollution ordinance. Treasurer Mitrano pointed out that the treasury could afford to buy a couple of the devices. He also stated that one should be at the Simpson Observatory and a measurement taken and recorded in the log, every time a key holder opens the observatory. John Miller suggested that it would be good to be able to measure and quantify the light pollution at the various locations where AAAP observers go to view the sky.

The next AAAP Board meeting will be held in the second floor conference room of Peyton Hall, sometime in January.

Director Miller called for a motion to adjourn.

Larry Kane, Secretary

Treasurer's Report

At the half-way point in our fiscal year, member dues are continuing to come in. \$3,107 (representing 79 members) has been received to date, compared with our budget for the fiscal year of \$4,300.

Recent expenses have been modest. On a year-to-date basis, we are well within budget.

For the first half of this fiscal year, the AAAP shows a surplus of \$3,586. Cumulative reserves are \$18,609.

Michael Mitrano, Treasurer

From the Program Chair

On January 13th, our guest speaker will be Dr. Ken Kremer, NASA JPL Solar System Ambassador, The Planetary Society, and AAAP member.



The title of his talk is “Daring Flight of the Phoenix & 5 Years of Mars Rovers (in 3-D)”. Ken is a research scientist and journalist whose feature articles and space exploration images have appeared in magazines, books and on websites, including Astronomy Picture of the Day and the covers of Aviation Week & Space Technology and Spaceflight magazines. His presentations at educational institutions, civic organizations, museums and astronomy clubs aim to educate and excite kids and adults about science and space exploration.

His research has resulted in more than two dozen scientific publications and patents.

Experience the sights and discoveries of the daring NASA Phoenix mission to the icy Martian Arctic tundra. Phoenix is humanity’s first mission to dig, touch and sample life giving water and search for a habitable zone on a world beyond earth. See the custom Martian photo mosaics specially co-created by Ken just days after the landing for the cover of Aviation Week & Space Technology magazine and continuing throughout the mission also for Spaceflight magazine. Celebrate 5 years on Mars with the twin Rovers; Spirit & Opportunity. Lecture includes spectacular 3-D images placing you “On Mars”.

Please join us in Peyton Hall on January 13th. Prior to the meeting, as always, there will be a pre-meeting dinner. Please contact me to reserve a spot and as always send any comments and suggestions to me at

Ludovico D’Angelo, Program Chair

Community Outreach

We’ve not had a very good start to our year for community outreach. Our first two events - at Riverside School and at Millstone River School were both clouded out. Both will be rescheduled – Millstone River for an upcoming Wednesday in January, and Riverside, as of now, unknown—probably in the Spring.

In the meantime, we have some upcoming events that are more definite in terms of their dates:

- January 30—Lawrenceville Elementary School – this is their annual Science and Discovery night. This has become one of our regular events. There is no rain date for this; in the event of inclement weather (or merely clouds) we will set up indoors.
- February 26 (rain date March 3)—Stuart Country Day School. No more definite information yet.
- March 28, 2009—Plainsboro Township will be participating in the WWF’s International Earth Hour. No details about this one either yet, but I’m willing to start putting down some names. The time will pass faster than you know.

If you want to sign up for any of these events, or if you are interested in the Millstone River School event whenever it gets rescheduled (it should be soon), please contact me at

On a totally different note, Theresa Moody, who heads up the Project ASTRO effort from Raritan Valley Community College is looking for volunteers. Theresa has presented to our club in past years. Basically Project ASTRO pairs up volunteer amateur astronomers with a specific classroom/Teacher. I believe some members of the club have volunteered in the past.

Specifically, Theresa is looking for volunteers in the Pennington area for grade 2. She is also looking for volunteers in the following areas:

- 2 teachers at the same school in Paramus (Grade 6)
- 1 teacher at a middle school in Waldwick (Grade 3-8 enrichment), and
- 1 teacher at a middle school in Prospect Park.

If you are able to help out here, or even if you can’t help out with these specific needs but are interested in the program, please let me know and I will put you together with Theresa.

Jeff Bernardis

Picture This—Earthshine

This month I decided to go with a target most anyone with a camera can attempt. During the early phases of the moon earth-shine can be seen as most of the moon is still shadowed and isn’t washed out from its typical glare. This type of picture should be taken soon after sunset just as it is getting dark as the moon will quickly set since it is low in the evening sky. The trick is to experiment with different exposures to get the desired results. I ended up taking multiple exposures and sorting them out once inside. I did do some stretching of the image to bring out more of the shadowed region and even pulled out a nearby star in the process using Photoshop. This image was a single exposure taken through an Orion ED80mm refractor using a Canon 350D DSLR camera, right out of my garage door.



Brian Van Liew

Interested in keyholder training?

Contact: or by
cell phone

20 Years Ago In Sidereal Times...

SIDEREAL TIMES

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton, Inc.

Director: Jay Albert

Editor: Chip Yuill

January, 1989

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The big item in this issue of sidereal Times is the July, 1991 solar eclipse expedition in Baja, California. With almost no publicity, the organizers of the trip have already received deposits from over 475 people. Sky & Tel will feature an article on the trip in their February issue after which, a flood of applications should be expected. I therefore urge those of you who are interested to send your \$100 per person deposit to the address indicated in the flyer reprinted in this Sidereal Times. Remember to include a letter indicating that you are part of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton going to the Baja. Details of the group discount have not been worked out yet but I have been assured that there will be one. The organizers have also promised to keep all AAAP members in the same resort.

Please let me know when you have sent in your deposit so that I can keep track of our group size. Many of you may remember that our last solar eclipse expedition included a rain storm during totality. The odds of that happening in the Baja are astronomically less than they were on the Delmar Peninsula.

I hope you all enjoy the holiday season and that 1989 brings you good health and clear skies.

NEW AAAP FUND DRIVE

For each of the past few years we have held a fund drive to raise an extra \$1000 to pay off our debt from the purchase of the 12.5" Simpson reflector. Although that scope has been paid for, we never the less find ourselves in need of some extra funds. The purchase of the new observing ladder and other observatory equipment has reduced our bank balance at a time when some jamor bills are due including roof repairs. We therefore need to fall back on the generosity of our members to tide us over this financial hump. Please send your tax deductible donations in whatever amount to our Treasurer, Larry Smith. Thanks again.

AAAP CALENDAR

Tues. 1/10/89 - Meeting at 8:00 pm in Peyton Hall. Noah Levy has arranged a special treat that you should not miss. Postponed from last meeting, Anthony Cannello of G.E. Astro will present a program titled "Return to the Red Planet" which will provide details of the forthcoming Mars Probe.

Sat. 1/21 & Sun. 1/22 - Super Science Weekend at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton. Officially, the hours are 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sunday. Unofficially, it shouldn't be necessary for anyone to show up

(Cont.)

Newsletter of the
Amateur Astronomers
Association of Princeton

The Sidereal Times is published
monthly. Articles written by the
members of AAAP is encouraged
and should be sent to:

AAAP, Inc.
c/o Chip Yuill, Editor
P.O. Box 2017
Princeton, NJ 08543

AAAP CALENDAR (Cont.)

before 10:00 Saturday. As we
have for the past few years, the
AAAP will participate. We'll
need volunteers to provide and
tend our exhibits. Please
contact Jay Albert for more
information and to volunteer for
all, or a portion, of either (or
both) days. In the past, this
has proved to be an enjoyable
opportunity for the AAAP to meet
an interested public. To be
sure that there wont be a
repetition of lost exhibits, Jay
Albert will take all material
not reclaimed by their owners
home on Saturday night and bring
it back to the museum Sunday.
Participants who submitted
exhibits can reclaim them at the
museum at the conclusion of this
event between 4 & 5 pm, Sunday.
Jay will bring any remaining
material to the February meeting
or make other arrangements to
return them to the owners as
necessary. Nothing will be left
in the Planetarium.

AAAP OFFICERS

- Jay Albert.....Director
- Dave Brown...Assistant Director
- Larry Smith.....Treasurer
- Dick Sivel.....Secretary
- Noah Levy.....Program Chairman
- Wm. Murray..Observatory Chairman
- Chip Yuill.....Editor

REMINDER!

Don't let your Sky & Tel
subscription lapse; renew early!

Note: Pre-meeting dinners will
be held at 5:45 pm at the
Tigers' Tale Restaurant on Rt.
206 just north of the Rt. 518
intersection.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Dues: Family, \$36.50; Single, \$31.50; Senior Citizen & Student, \$22.50
Annual Dues includes subscription to SKY & TELESCOPE magazine.

NAME _____

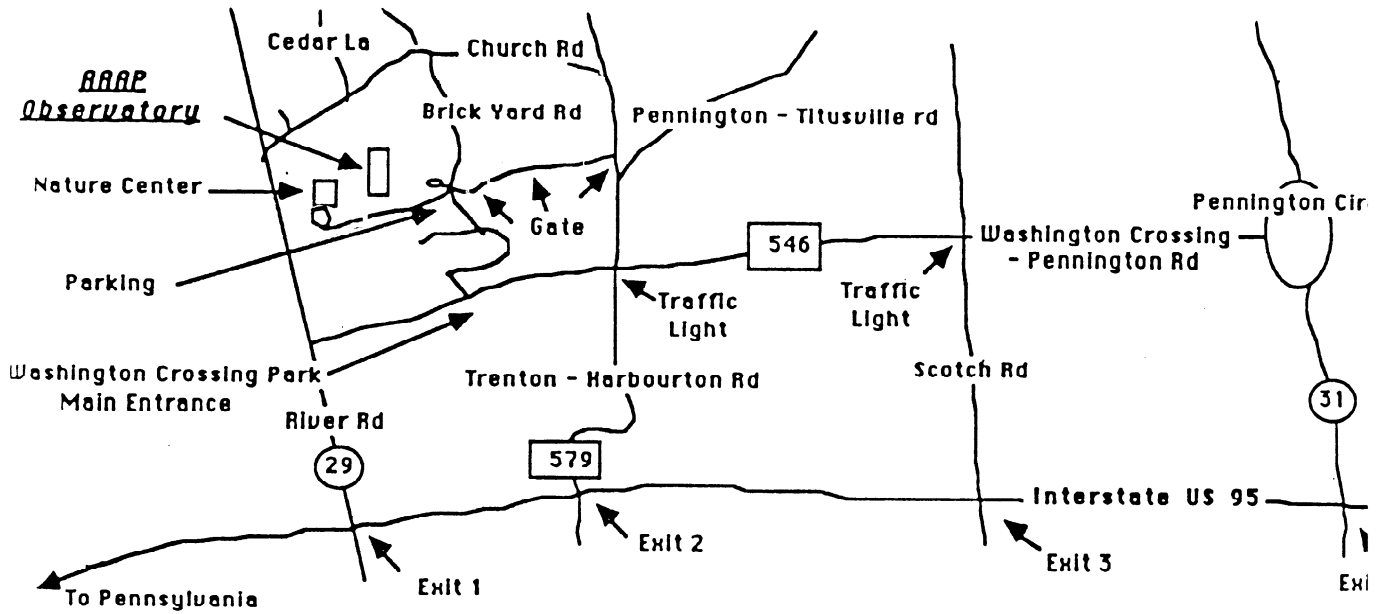
ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

Do you own a telescope? If so, what kind? _____

Make check payable to Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton, I



The best way to get to the observatory is to take Interstate 95 South towards Pennsylvania. Then take Scotch road at Exit 3 and proceed north (this amounts to right). Then, at the third traffic light take a left onto the Washington Crossing-Pennington road (County Route 546). Take this road to the first traffic light and take a right onto Trenton-Harbourton road (County Route 579). Take this road to the first driveway on the left, this is the Phillips Farm/Soccer Field entrance to the park. There is a series of three gates with club combination locks. If the gates are not open, you will need the lock combination to open the gate or be accompanied by a Keyholder member. The Simpson (AAAP) Observatory's phone number is (609) 737-2575.

See us on the Web: www.princetonastronomy.org

Amateur Astronomers
 Association of Princeton
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