



THE NOVAC CORONA

to observe and to
help others observe

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB

Issue No. 12

Volume 7

January 1987

President, Nils Thomas 703-362-2785

Treasurer, John Huggins 703-644-4331

Secretary, Blaine Korcel 703-256-4777

CALENDAR

for more information about activities call 703-644-4331

January 21....	NOVAC Meeting at George Mason Regional Library	7:30pm
January 24.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
January 30	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
February 20.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
February 28.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
March 21.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
March 27.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
April 25.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
May 29.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
June 27.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
July 24.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
August 22.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
September 25.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
October 24.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
November 20.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm
December 19.....	Manassas Observation at the Picnic Area	8:00pm

PRESIDENTS COLUMN

Nils Thomas

This article was originally written at the beginning of November. However, I packed it in my mad dash to move. For those who haven't heard, I am moving to Roanoke. I resigned effective December 1, 1986. This is no great loss as I had not planned to be President long. I have appointed Blaine Korcel as acting President. I will still be a member. When I buy my country house you will be invited to come down for an observing session.

Yes, I am still (ugh) working on elections. Dane Toler and Lynn Gilliland please call Blaine about being Treasurer. The list and ballot for the Board of Directors should be attached to this newsletter. See you folks sometime.

EDITORIAL

Blaine Korcel

I must apologize for the extreme delay in getting this newsletter out. Final exams at school crept up in mid December and by the time they were over, the holidays had taken everyone by surprise.

A new data base program has been implemented to keep track of members and their status. Unfortunately, it is not very forgiving! If you don't take care of your financial obligations, the system dumps you from the newsletter mailing list and the roster. It then puts you on a canned members list. Those members then receive a card in the mail asking them to renew their membership. The previous six month grace period has been reduced to 90 DAYS! The old six month rule was so difficult to keep track of, that some were extended longer. The bottom line is that if you don't pay within 90 days of your membership expiration, you get moved to the delinquent listing. As a result of this revision, we are now down to sixty members. Everyone will receive their newsletter this time. Those who owe will also receive a card in the mail. For those, this will be your last newsletter until you pay.

The first thing you may have noticed is the fact that in January, February, and March there are two observations scheduled for each month. These are planned around last quarter and new moon. Several members have expressed their opinions on the observing schedule. This being that some have to work nights on Fridays and therefore can only make the observations every other month, and that Saturday observations can not be postponed due to clouds. I hope my solution to the problem will be overwhelming; hold more observations! Since the Instructional Observing Sessions that were held last year were a flop, I decided to make them full fledged observations. Last quarter moons set early on those corresponding nights so observing should not be too cumbersome.

Secondly, our President, Nils Thomas, has moved to Roanoke and as such, has resigned from the position. Nils has appointed me as acting President until elections are held this month. Until then, direct all inquiries to me.

Many people are sending in articles for publication. This is fantastic! Club members are finally speaking out. PLEASE!!!! Keep them rolling in. Good article topics include your experiences observing, building your own telescope, book and software reviews, and equipment modifications. I can not express how happy I am that people are actively getting involved.

Our next meeting is scheduled for January 21, 1987. At George Mason Regional Library on Little River Turnpike. Topics will include elections. A brief movie of last October's solar eclipse will also be shown. It starts at 7:30pm. See you then.

WINTER WEAR FOR THE OBSERVER

Joe Macrie

Winter is upon us, and the nights are clearer, but cold. To make stargazing more enjoyable, let's discuss how to keep warm on these nights.

HEAD

The old saying, "keep your head warm, and your hands and feet will stay warm," is true.

If your brain gets cold, it begins to send messages to other body functions to slow down and save heat energy for the brain.

A ski cap, preferably with a built in mask will do the trick. The mask stops the cap from slipping off or over your eyes and keeps your ears warm.

UPPER BODY

To keep the upper body warm, a long, three quarter length, "puffy" ski jacket is fine. When looking for a jacket, compare the fluff in the arms, shoulders, and waist. Look for something with a high collar, large pockets, a waist cord, etc. The thicker it feels and looks, the better. Down-fill is the best, but costs more, again "The thicker the better."

HANDS

Wool gloves worn under mittens keep hands much warmer by trapping warm air between the fingers. The mittens can be momentarily removed to make adjustments to the scope.

LOWER BODY

For the lower body, ski pants, "bibs" as they are called are great. It's better to buy them a size larger so you can wear long underwear and heavy pants underneath and still move freely.

Usually the more expensive are cut smaller to "look good" on the slopes. Go for those that have the most fill. Again, the thicker the better.

FEET

Everybody's feet get cold! However, how cold will partly depend on the type of boot. The best we've found are called "Moon Boots." You've seen them. They're insulated and make you look six inches taller--because of the sole.

The sole insulates by putting more distance between you and the ground. Also, buy boots large enough to get several layers of socks inside.

Campers use a dense rubber padding under their sleeping bags. It can be used under your feet or bottom when sitting.

The larger ski clothing allows space for layered clothing and air pockets to form. If you get too warm, just remove some clothing.

The investment in the proper clothing will pay many times over in enjoyable winter observing.

We would be interested in hearing from anyone who has further information and ideas for keeping warm.

PLEASE WRITE: Joseph Macrie - NOVAC
6641 Wakefield, Drive #320
Alexandria, VA 22307

DRESSING FOR WINTER OBSERVING

Nils Thomas

As many of you know, I am notorious for standing around at our winter observing sessions without a coat. Joe Macrie says I never get cold. Well Joe, despite the looks, I am dressed right and yes I do get cold once in a while by not dressing for the occasion. I learned my lessons out hunting for which I am a fanatic. When your out in the woods, you had better be dressed right since it wouldn't do you any good to go to the car to warm up! Freezing in the woods is no fun.

So what's the secret? First, and you have heard it before, wear layers and layers of clothes. Three layers is good down to 30 degrees and four down to 10, assuming your not moving. Thin layers are better that thick ones. This is why many layers are needed. I will describe these layers as I discuss materials.

The first layer that goes on is a cheap pair of woven knit cotton thermals, the \$4.00 K-mart kind. Both the pants and shirt are oversized so that they overiap at the waist. A pair of cotton socks is then put on. The long tube socks that go up to the knees should go on over the thermals. The first layer is to soak up body fluid and

cotton seems the best. The next layer is where the trick comes in. The thermals should be flannel or light wool also bought large enough to cover the first layer. The socks, 100% wool, bought two sizes large, washed in hot water and machined dried will make a dense wool sock to keep the footies warm.

If a third layer is required, the same pattern is repeated except for the socks. I always make the last (third) layer of socks regular unshrunk wool socks.

The final layer consists of a wool shirt, blue jeans, and over sized boots. The blue jeans will not keep you warm but will break the wind. The boot should not be the rubber type. the boot must breath or your feet will freeze from your sweat. Do not lace them too tight or you will only have half the insulating effect and cramped sore feet.

Now, the odds and ends. Your hands need layering also. Gloves, preferably shrunk wool, is good for the first layer, but gloves by themselves are not very good. I put mittens over the gloves. If one pair is to be worn, wear the mittens. To work around your telescope, I recommend shooting mitts. These have a slot in one mitt so that you can stick your fingers out and work the controls. And finally, thanks to Al Boldt, wear a ski mask. It keeps you very warm. The type with the nose covering causes your glasses to frost over. Finally, if you're male, grow a beard. When covered by



Grow a beard and stay warm!

the ski mask, a furry face will keep you ultra warm.

On a related subject, I am asked about materials. I favor wool and cotton. Cotton absorbs water and the wool keeps you warm. Very warm. It is probably the warmest material and if you get it wet, heaven forbid, it will still keep you warm. Down is next. There are only two problems with down. The first is well known. If it gets wet, even from sweat or spilled coffee, down loses its insulating properties. The other problem drives us nuts! If it gets torn, you have feathers all over the place. I own a down coat and never wear it. The report I get on Gortex or Thinsulate from the ski crowd is to forget them. The several ski freaks that I know have said a few expletives when commenting on how cold they keep their bodies. I have yet to hear a good word on gloves and coats made with these materials. So bundle up with wool and cotton and keep warm.

COMPARING EQUIPMENT

There are astronomy magazines on the market today packed with merchandise for the amature, each promising to be the "best".

I remember as a novice, starting with a very limited investment wich became substantial. Along the way, I made a few mistakes \$\$\$. We all seem to get the "I've got to have that," bug. Well, after a while, we either get smart or go broke!

The best place to get information is your local astronomy club. More than likely, you'll find someone who has purchased the accessory you're looking for and will be willing to give you their opinion.

I've found one dealership in the Washington area, Redlich Optical in Arlington Virginia. He carries most of the popular telescopes and accessories. One advantage in purchasing locally is that you can compare a product side by side and perhaps avoid a costly mistake.

The article I've been looking for (and have yet to see a trace of) is one that compares different products.

What I would like to do, with your cooperation, is to compile information (good or bad) first hand from amatures across the country, things like: quality, performance, delivery time, repair service, warranty, and any ideas/improvements you have made on these products.

If there's enough interest generated, we can compare notes and publish the "good news" or the "bad news". I believe this would help all amatuers in upgrading or selecting new equipment for their particular projects.

PLEASE WRITE:

Joseph Macrie - NOVAC
6641 Wakefield Dr. #320
Alexandria, VA 22307

West Virginia Observing
by Chris Adler

What's past Skyline Drive, near Blackwater Falls, and an hour away from the Green Bank National Radio Observatory? Why, Canaan Valley of course!

We went up for the three-day weekend in hopes to see some fall foilage. The sky was transparent at night, and even though there was a gibbous moon in the south sky, I estimated seventh magnitude naked eye visibility at the zenith. The Milky Way was clearly visible and many bright objects could be found at 28X, and at 58X, objects like M27, M31, M39 and the double cluster were very nice.

During the day, available activities include hiking, skiing, and tennis. Deer and other wild animals roam freely around the area day and night. Truly a spectacle to see 20 glowing eyes watching while you are observing! Large fields provide dark, stars-to-the-horizon observation sites. For avid hikers you can take a telescope with you up a ski lift and on a one hour hike to Bald Knob, a mountain peak that proves an excellent site for Astronomy. There is also a snack bar open until midnight that has hot chocolate(phew!). One thing nice about this, and other organizations in West Virginia, is that they are large, and very well kept. Much better than anything on Skyline Drive, in my opinion. The properties ar huge, containing mountains, lakes, fields, rivers, and excellent lodging. The entire thing works with so little light, it's wonderful. The only problem, other than the Moon, is that the winds are often strong and gusty, creating bad seeing.

An hour away from Canaan Valley is the Green Bank National Radio Observatory, a large radio facility high atop a mountain. Daytime tours of the equipment are offered and are an interesting postlude to some excellent observing.



Robert E. Ridgley	1316 S. Buchanan Street Arlington VA 22204	287-3355	671-0286
Ken Roberts	3328 Highland Lane Fairfax VA 22031		573-1885
Pamela Roch	2824 Church Walk Falls Church VA 22042	556-1337	241-8441
Ann & John Rossmann	5719 Burke Towne Court Burke VA 22015		250-0602
Al & Lynn Schumann	6121 Rivanna Drive Springfield VA 22150		971-3257

Bob Scott	13748 Mapledale Avenue Woodbridge VA 22193		
Marlene Seely	2242 Cartwright Place Reston VA 22091		860-1287
Charles Sherwood	8601 Lancia Court Mclean VA 22102	227-1621	734-2867
Michael Sloane	705 S. Florida Street Arlington VA 22204		379-7953
Bruce Smoller	9712 Hall Road Potomac MD 20845		301 951-4466
Katherine Sprague	1316 S. Buchanan Street Arlington VA 22204		671-0286
David Springer	7200 Trappers Place Springfield VA 22153		455-3424
Gary Sutherland	844 Outer Bridge Quay Virginia Beach VA 23464		703 479-0646

Gilbert Swift	5911 Dinwiddie Street Springfield VA 22150		451-4610
Nils Thomas	3001C Ordway Drive Roanoke VA 24017		703-362-2785
Dane Toler	10214 Bushman Drive #10101 Oakton VA 22124		281-2118
Laurel Wanrow	3804 Carolyn Avenue Fairfax VA 22031		273-7165
Mary Ward	12904 Kentland Court Dale City VA 22193		703 590-2409

Robert Welsh	3003 N. Charles Street Apt2N Baltimore MD 21218		301 889-5772
Matthew L. Will	8715 First Avenue Apt.1429C Silver Spring MD 20910		n/a

**Ballot for the Board of Directors of
The Northern Virginia Astronomy Club
January, 1987**

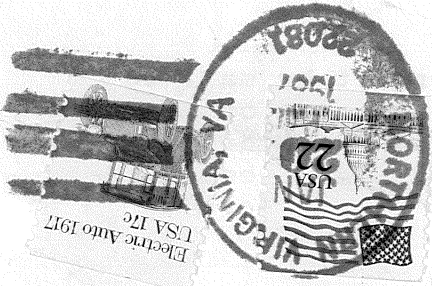
These people are currently running for the Board of Directors of the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club. Please vote for five people. Notification of the five Board of Directors will be sent by mail to all members in February.

- Gerald Perman
- Al Boldt
- Gilbert Swift
- Al Schumann
- Lynn Schumann
- Bruce Smoller
- Robert Ridgely

Please bring your Ballot to the next meeting or return it by mail to Blaine Korcel, 5401 Danville Street, Springfield, VA 22151. Ballots must be returned no later than January 31, 1987. All ballots returned after that date can not be accepted. In the event that 2/3 response is not received, another vote will be cast in February. This means we will have to spend more money in postage! So don't wait, send it now!

At the January 21st meeting, we will announce the people running for official positions. If you are interested in running for President, Secretary, or Treasurer, there is still time to notify me. Since we have had a delay in elections, we have delayed the deadline for official notification. Please call Blaine Korcel if you are interested or would like more information about the positions.

Bill Burton
3061 Sugar Lane
Vienna, VA 22180



N.O.V.A.C.
TO OBSERVE AND TO HELP OTHERS OBSERVE
5401 DANVILLE STREET
SPRINGFIELD, VA 22151
THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB

