

# NOVAC

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB

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## President's Column PROJECT ORION: Summary and Update

by Bob L'Hommedieu

Summer is drawing to a close quickly and fall is almost here. I hope everyone has enjoyed themselves and had a lot of fun. Summer is so busy it seems to pass in a flash.

September 30 is the date for this year's Northern Virginia Telescope Meet, which will be held at Crockett Park. This year's Meet will be dedicated to John Dobson who celebrates his 80th birthday on September 14.

We have been asked by the San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers to dedicate a public viewing event to John Dobson and send him a letter telling him about the event. I can't think of a better way to celebrate the birthday of a man who has spent his life showing others the sky. With help from the weather, we should have a good turn out for this year's event.

NOVAC is now going to participate in the discount book sales program offered by Kalmbach Publishing. They will sell our members any astronomy related book for 20% off the list price if we send in a group order. Nicole Mastej has offered to coordinate the sales.

If you are interested, please see her at a meeting or call her at home, (703) 476-1207, to place an order. You will need to make a check out to NOVAC for the price of the book minus the discount when you place the order.

Nicole will send in our order at the end of October so that we will receive the books in time for Christmas. We anticipate doing this 3-4 times a year if demand warrants. □

by William C. Burton

Project Orion was a study of light pollution jointly conducted this spring by the Washington Post Horizon section and NOVAC. Post readers counted the number of stars they could see in the constellation Orion, using a star chart published in Horizon; the idea being that the number of stars visible in a certain area would be an index of the degree of light pollution in that area. The concept of reader participation in research was developed by the editor of Horizon, Boyce Rensberger, and successfully used in an earlier Horizon experiment to measure local variations in temperature. Project Orion was carefully set up so that lay people could contribute meaningful results, and the nightly sky conditions over the 12-night observing period (Feb. 18-Mar. 1) were carefully monitored so that we could select data from only those nights in which the sky was clear over the whole region. Three nights were selected.

NOVAC members also sent me duplicates of the data they submitted to Horizon, so that I might later be able to compare their results with those from the general public.

An important step in reducing the data from Project Orion came with the conversion to latitude and longitude of the addresses at which readers of the Post made their star counts -- a \$500 contract job funded by the Post. Of about 1200 reports submitted to Horizon by the dead-

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line, 782 had convertible addresses, and of these, 529 came from the three good nights. Computer graphics expert Richard Furno plotted the star counts on a map he developed at the Post that is digitized with respect to latitude and longitude. After the observation period was over, I met with Rensberger and Furno at their offices downtown to decide on the best way to display the data. We binned the counts, ranging from 0 to 41, into four groups based on natural gaps in the star count vs. magnitude distribution and in consideration of newspaper color-printing limitations. The counts were represented by four colors of circles on the final map published in the April 12 Horizon. The map predictably shows higher counts recorded 30 or more miles from downtown Washington, plus a "plume" of lower counts extending up the I-95 and I-270 corridors. It also shows, surprisingly, a large range of counts close to D.C. In a summary article I attributed this variability partly to uncontrollable factors such as observer age (smaller diameter of eye pupil) and observing experience, but also speculated that sharp local variations in light pollution exist. A similar conclusion was presented in a summary of Project Orion by Bob Bunge in his excellent article on light pollution in the September issue of Astronomy magazine.

The Washington Post has generously allowed us to use all the data from Project Orion for further research, including a computerized (Postscript) version of the star count map, which they gave me on diskette. Since April I have been upgrading the map by manually adding results from the three clear nights that did not convert to latitude and longitude, raising the total amount of usable data to 719 counts. With the program Adobe Illustrator, I have employed a more graduated color scheme that shows 14 shades of blue to depict the range in star counts. The resulting plot shows more subtle variations in the counts and lends credence to the notion of real, local sharp variations in light pollution. I also did a transect from the Mall southwest to Culpeper County, projecting star counts from a 12-mile wide zone onto a center line and graphing the results. The plot shows a jump in counted stars from Manassas outward and tremendous scatter in the data closer to D.C. Counts

from NOVAC members reflect the general trend with only a slightly narrower scatter of values, suggesting that light pollution variations exist on a scale much smaller than the width of the transect. I presented these updated results at the amateur telescope-making convention at Stellafane.

The editors of Sky and Telescope magazine have agreed to publish an article on Project Orion, probably in late 1995 or early 1996. A better statistical analysis of the data is needed, and Pete Gural has pitched in by converting the star counts to limiting magnitude and conducting a distance-weighted averaging of the data at every point on a grid covering the whole map area. This process smooths the data somewhat and possibly eliminates some of the "noise" mentioned above, resulting in a fairly realistic contour map of limiting magnitude. A preliminary plot shows "oases" of low light pollution around D.C., supporting our previous speculation about local variations in sky glow. These oases include residences near Rock Creek Park in Bethesda, a regional park in southern Arlington County, Reston and Great Falls, VA, with their relative paucity of street lamps and use of shielded light fixtures. A logical next step in this study would be to go to these areas and confirm their relative darkness by additional star counts – perhaps next winter? For the Sky and Telescope article I hope to superimpose the color-coded NOVAC data onto Pete's contour plot and show at a glance the quantitative difference, if any, between more and less experienced observers.

My thanks to all NOVAC members who have contributed to Project Orion – may it be a template for similar studies in other metropolitan areas. □

## What's Up

by Al & Lynn Schumann

### The Big Move

In mid July we went on a house hunting expedition to Williamsburg, Virginia. We found a lovely house in a beautiful neighborhood, and by the time you read this we will have moved to the Tidewater area. Why? Well, we're both in our 60's and we're retired, so we figured it was time to cash in our over-priced, traffic-bound house in northern Virginia in favor of a real neat all brick Dutch colonial in the Queens Lake area of Williamsburg. Not coincidentally, the house is just down the road from our son and his wife. They are expecting twin girls shortly. We have been long distance grandparents to our first three grandchildren, and this time we don't want to miss the chance to dote on...and spoil the twins.

### Skywatchers

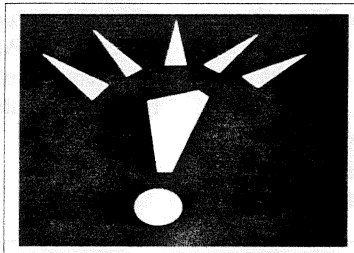
As soon as we found the house, we started looking for a local club. For Williamsburg, the Sky & Telescope directory listed the Skywatchers Astronomy Club. It is a 20 member organization, and as luck would have it, the point of contact for the club lives right around the corner from our new house. We sent off a quick letter asking for a membership application and information on when and where they meet. We're psyched.

### Observing Possibilities

There is a big county and national park complex (about six square miles) located a mile or so from home. Surrounding the park on the north, east, and south are three large but sparsely populated US Navy installations.

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# Telescope



# Meet

Northern Virginia Telescope Meet

Crockett Park. September 30 Dusk

To provide a public viewing event. Bring your telescopes or your interest in amateur astronomy  
Dedicated to John Dobson in celebration of his 80th birthday  
Be there!

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Beyond them to the east are the Chesapeake Bay and Europe. So, there should be nice dark skies in most of the eastern hemisphere. Colonial Williamsburg lies about four miles to the west, and if you have been there at night you know it is not a very big light producer. The only local glow should come from the main part of Williamsburg to the southwest. Further away to the south (about 15 miles) we would expect to see a fair amount of sky glow from Hampton and Newport News. However, at first blush it would seem that we'll have decent observing conditions without having to drive more than a few miles from home. Hopefully, we'll be able to use the park at night. If not, the Colonial Parkway towards Yorktown offers great promise. There are numerous overlook areas along the York River which should provide splendid horizons. Can't wait to see where the Skywatchers go. Gotta say it again, we're psyched.

### Myron Hits The Big Time

The September issue of *Sky & Telescope* ran a test report on a corrective lens arrangement for astigmatism. The inventor of the device is none other than former NOVAC president, Myron Wasiuta. We remember hearing Myron talk about this during a Crockett Park observing session at least a couple years ago, and now he has figured out a way for astigmatism to observe through the telescope without having to wear eyeglasses. *Sky & Tel* gave Myron's device a rave review. Check out the article to find out what is involved, and if you are troubled by astigmatism and want an easy fix, you might give Myron a call. We dropped him a congratulatory note, and he answered with news that he and his wife, Terry are expecting a baby girl soon. Also, Myron is now president of the local astronomy club in Fredericksburg. Sounds like he's having a good year.

### Thanks For The Memories

Because of the move, this will be our last regular column. Over the years, we have written scores of articles, and we always learned something new in the process. We hope you found them both informative and entertaining. Perhaps from time to time Elliott will let us make a guest appearance so we can tell you about observing in the Billysburg area. Meanwhile, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to NOVAC and all members past and present for all you have done for us. It has been a great ride. We could not possibly have learned all we did about practical astronomy without such willing, knowledgeable, and patient teachers. At length, when we were able to find our way around the sky, we tried to pass along to other beginners what we had learned. You can rest assured that in Williamsburg we will continue to follow the NOVAC motto, "To observe and to help others observe." □

## Tales of Woe and Intrigue: Acquiring a Coulter 10" Dobsonian.

by Jon Stewart-Taylor

After much pondering, calculating and measuring, and counting pennies, I decided to take the plunge and order a 10" dobsonian telescope from Coulter Optical. I was fed up with my Tasco 4.5" reflector. Even after converting it to a Dobsonian and replacing the useless finder with a Telrad, it simply didn't have enough aperture for the objects I wanted to look at. I decided on an 8-10" Dobsonian for several reasons. I'm primarily a Recreational Astronomer (tm), so I don't expect to be doing photography any time soon. I do mostly deep-sky observing, so I wanted a larger aperture. And, I'm on a very tight budget, so the entire scope including shipping and eyepieces had to be under \$400.

Building my own scope was an attractive idea. But, in a three-bedroom townhouse containing two adults and three children, both space and time are at a premium, and I didn't expect to be able to set up a "permanent" mirror grinding station. My 45 free minutes a night would be 15 minutes each of setting up and taking down, and 15 minutes of grinding. Since this would be my first mirror, I'd expect to take about 10 to 20 hours, which meant it would be about 10-12 weeks before the mirror was done, and then I would still have to build the mount.

So, I decided to go for a ready-made Dobsonian. Of the three major suppliers, Meade was the most expensive, and was eliminated on that basis. With my price constraint, I was left to choose between Orion's 6" or 8", or the Coulter 8" f/7, 8" f/4.5, or 10". The 6" really didn't have the aperture I wanted. The Coulter 8" f/7 was the cheapest. With its longer focal length, its optics had a higher chance of being good, and collimation would be easier. However, all the things that made it attractive to me made it attractive to many others, and people on sci.astro.amateur said the scopes were back-ordered as much as 8-10 months. That was longer than I was willing to wait, so it came down to the Orion 8", or the Coulter 10".

I knew that Orion scopes had nicer fittings, eyepieces, focusers, and mirror mounts. However, several of the people in NOVAC had let me use their Coulter 10"s, and the scopes seemed adequate. Mirror mounts and focusers can be replaced as time and money allow. The other consideration was delivery time. Orion was said to have a reasonably short backlog, and to ship when they claimed they would ship. sci.astro.amateur wisdom said that Coulter 10"s had the shortest backlogs of any Coulter scopes, but that one should expect them to ship

2 to 3 times later than Coulter claimed they would.

The attraction of getting a 10" for less than the cost of an 8" was too great, and we placed an order with Coulter January 4th, using a credit card for the deposit of 1/3 of the total cost. They claimed delivery in 4-6 weeks, which corresponded reasonably well with the sci.astro.amateur scuttlebutt. When the invoice arrived, it said "4-6 weeks, or even longer". So, we could reasonably expect it to arrive sometime between March 1st and May 10th. Around February 1st we were surprised and pleased to receive a notice that the scope was "nearing completion", and would be finished in about 2 weeks. I mailed a personal check for the balance on the 8th.

On February 15th, we called Coulter. They claimed the check had just arrived, and that they had to wait a week for it to clear. The scope would be shipped when the check cleared, and it would take about a week to arrive in Virginia from California. When we called again on March 1st, they claimed it would be shipped "on Friday".

Apparently we forgot to ask which Friday. For the next 5 weeks, we were told that the scope would go out "on Friday". They claimed that the California flooding made it impossible to get trucks to the factory (which may even have been true) but would inevitably promise that the scope would be shipped "on Friday". My wife believes that Coulter is actually located in one of those third-world countries where time is reckoned only in "now" and "not-now", and "on Friday" was forever "not-now".

On April 10th, we were told that the scope HAD BEEN SHIPPED ("on Friday"). Since that was the 7th, we were expecting it the 14th. However, on the advice of Coulter, we contacted the shipping company, and were told that it would be arriving in Virginia the 16th, and would be delivered on the 17th. And it was, at 6:15 PM EDT, 16 weeks after we'd placed the order.

So, what's my overall impression of our dealings with Coulter? Obviously, the 4-6 week delivery time they claim is a joke. Even if it really does take 2 weeks for a check to get from Virginia to California and clear, and even if they really did have their roads washed out for 3 weeks, their delivery time would have been double what they claimed it would be.

On the other hand, the scope did arrive within

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# STELLAFANE 95

by William C. Burton

Stellafane is the venerable amateur astronomy convention held annually near Springfield, Vermont. The focus of the meeting, held outdoors on Breezy Hill in the Green Mountains, is homemade telescopes, and each year people from all over the East (and farther) come to exhibit their handcrafted scopes, look at those of others, stargaze, attend talks, swap equipment, go camping, and socialize. This was the 60th year of the convention. It also happened to be the 30th year since the invention of the dobsonian telescope mount, and the 80th year in the life of John Dobson.

It had been four years since I had last gone, when we celebrated my wife Laurel's 31st birthday with a stellar-motif cake under the NOVAC banner at the campground at Stellafane East. This year there was to be no banner, since Brenda Jones, her family, and several other early-arriving regulars could not attend and set up camp in the usual NOVAC spot overlooking the outdoor amphitheater. Gerry Wolcanski was the only other club member to go, and he opted for a state park with running water, several miles from Breezy Hill. My motive for attending was to give a presentation on Project Orion at the Friday night talks, since I knew this would be an effective way to reach a lot of people about our light-pollution experiment.

Leaving Reston at 3:30 Friday morning, I zoomed up I-95 and I-91 and pulled into Springfield at 1:30 in the afternoon. Like many old New England towns, Springfield shows a striking contrast between its serene, tree-covered hillsides with spacious homes, and the gritty downtown with its decaying industrial buildings along the banks of the river. The former is exemplified by the Hartness House, a Victorian mansion once owned by the governor of Vermont, and now a fancy inn and astronomical museum. Here Hartness befriended Russell Porter, future co-founder of Stellafane, and inspired him to pursue a life making innovative telescopes. Porter came from the "other" Springfield, down by the river, where he worked at one of the precision machine shops for which Springfield was known. This conjunction of wealthy benefactor up on the hill and industrial craftsman down by the river led to the birth of Stellafane and modern amateur telescope making.

After briefly visiting Hartness House I grabbed some supplies and drove out to Breezy Hill, which is only about 10 minutes outside of Springfield. The convention is held on two separate patches of land, about 10 acres each, connected by about a quarter mile of road. The original site, on the top of Breezy Hill and the slope to the north, is where the telescope mak-

ing competition is held. It holds the famous pink clubhouse and the Russell Turret telescope, both built in the late 1920's, and has recently been designated a National Historic Landmark. The other parcel, on a south-facing slope, was purchased several years ago and is the site for camping and all the other activities; it is now called Stellafane East. I registered at the entrance, received my camping permit, and headed to the camping area, which by mid-afternoon was mostly full. I finally found a spot with only a slight slope to it nestled against some fir trees in the back of the camping area. After parking my car (which wouldn't move again until my departure) and setting up my tent, I started to wander around.

I haven't been to any of the other big national astronomy gatherings, like the Texas Star Party, Mid-Winter Star Party in Florida, and Riverside in California, but the ambiance of Stellafane has got to be hard to beat. There is a closeness and intimacy about the forested New England hillside with its clearings and glaciated outcrops, the spring-like air and dappled sunlight, the venerable clubhouse surrounded by a panoply of homemade instruments, and the gregariousness of like-minded Easterners that makes Stellafane a unique experience. Other clubs were there with their banners, and tents were sharing ground with telescopes. People were striking up conversations and making acquaintances all over Breezy Hill. I talked with a large group from Virginia Beach and a BMW owner who pulled in and camped next to me, who said that astronomy conventions were just like biker conventions! Families with kids were there too; the children seeming to be mostly pre-adolescents with that wondrous gleam in their eye. What would we be like now if we had gone to Stellafane at their age?

One of the many traditions at Stellafane is the weather. For about the last eight years it has rained on Friday night and cleared on Saturday. It looked like Friday was keeping its part of the bargain: the warm air was becoming heavy and still, the clouds were building, and thunder was beginning to rumble in the distance. In late afternoon I retreated to my tent just before a series of terrific thunderstorms struck Breezy Hill. Lightning struck close by several times and the rain came pouring down, things would let up for about 15 minutes, and then another storm would move in with more terrifyingly close lightning and loud claps of thunder. After about an hour and a half of this it was finally over, and those lucky folks who had found a level place to camp now found their tents in a swamp. The damage to my sleeping spot was minimal, and after some mopping up and a

light dinner I ran into Gerry and we headed over to the talks.

The Friday night talks are held under a large striped tent at Stellafane East. I noticed that the tent was much larger than last time, thanks no doubt to the legacy of Friday night weather. Last time I remember squeezing in under a tent flap in the downpour. This time everyone was comfortably protected from the light rain that fell. The talks are limited to 10 minutes and 20 slides each. Anyone who preregisters can give a presentation. As usual the topics were wide ranging, from the solar eclipse in South America, to a new method of collimating a telescope, to an education outreach program in Rhode Island. One guy showed stunning pictures of Stellafane at night, taken last year, that were reminiscent of Kevin Jones'. As speaker no. 7, I cheated and gave a formal talk, since I had a lot of information to impart in a short amount of time, discussing the background of Project Orion, the conditions of the experiment, the published results, and our most recent analysis of the data. Several hundred people attended and the talk seemed to be well received. Afterwards, it was still overcast, so I had a beer and went to bed early.

As anyone who has been to Stellafane knows, Saturday morning starts early. The swap tables (dubbed "swamp tables" by one Friday night speaker) were moved this year to a new location, not far from my tent. As usual they were scheduled to start at 7 A.M. but the place was a bustling bazaar by 6:30. It had rained early that morning, but mercifully the rains had stopped by dawn. The swap tables are a great place to unload unwanted stuff. It took me three minutes after placing my goods on the table to sell a manual right-ascension drive corrector and twenty minutes to sell a 6-inch mirror-making kit. Astronomy is no longer in our family budget, but I was free to use this money to buy what I liked, which usually is handmade crafts with an astronomy theme. This year it was a night light with a stained-glass crescent moon, and a spectacular hand-painted T-shirt showing Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 crashing into Jupiter. Gerry also ignored the telescopic equipment; he bought a microscope.

Beginning Saturday afternoon, tradition runs deepest at Stellafane. I made the short pilgrimage over to the clubhouse to inspect this year's crop of homemade telescopes. The number of entries was, disturbingly, down about 50 percent this year, and entries by Gerry and Bob l'Hommedieu were conspicuously absent. There was no shortage of ingenuity, however. My

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## Stellafane 95

favorites included an Astroscan-style 6-inch with twin polar-aligned roller bearings, a slitless solar spectrograph that could fit in a shoe box, and a unique binocular 6-inch f/4 reflecting telescope with vertically stacked tubes. The display of restored or recreated antique instruments is also a tradition at Stellafane, and this year included a brass sextant modeled after the one used by the explorer Champlain, an orrery and several antique refractors, and a restored Porter Garden Telescope, one of only a few known surviving specimens. This instrument, a 6-inch tubeless reflector and the only mass-produced telescope designed by Russell Porter, features lovely art work in the tarnished brass mount and, virtually hidden in all the filigree, the famous horseshoe design that would later appear, on a much larger scale, on the 200-inch Hale telescope.

By noon the sun had appeared through the clouds, and as the afternoon wore on the portion of blue sky steadily increased, so that it was rumored around the hill that, once again, the skies would clear at Stellafane! I went back to S. East to partake in the sumptuous chicken buffet dinner and take a tent break before the main evening events. These take place in a natural amphitheater with a cleared slope facing a backdrop of forest. Starting at 7:30 there were, as usual, announcements, a raffle with a complete set of Nagler eyepieces as one of the prizes, awards (T-shirts and mugs) given to the oldest, the youngest, and the people who travelled the greatest distance to attend Stellafane, and of course awards in the telescope-making competition. (Bob and Gerry again being conspicuously absent.) The featured speaker for the evening was Phil Harrington, writer of several books on amateur astronomy and a frequent contributor to *Sky and Telescope*. As the dusk deepened and the skies cleared he gave a slide show summary of the history of Stellafane and some of its notable observing instruments, including the twin binocular-viewing swivel chair (first seen at NVTM at Burke Lake) and the infamous watermelon telescope. Since it always clears on Saturday night, and the late Walter Scott Houston had usually preceded the main speaker with his own rather lengthy presentation, I never had made it through the main speaker without the telescopes beckoning me away, but this year I did. And then, as the applause faded away and the crowd began folding up lawn chairs, I made a beeline for the top of the hill at Stellafane East, site of MacGregor Observatory and the just-completed Schupmann Telescope.

The observatory is a large freshly-painted white cinder-block building with a roll-off

aluminum-siding roof. The telescope, in keeping with tradition at Stellafane, has an innovative design that employs a 13-inch, f/10 mirror/lens system and an off-axis, folded light path with no central obstruction. The 7-foot high concrete pier seems overly massive for the telescope and its German equatorial mount, until one learns that another, larger scope is planned for the opposite side of the polar axis, with the two scopes acting as counterweights for each other.

When I got there the line extended out the back through the adjacent "antechamber" of the observatory, but was only 20 people long. It still took a half hour to reach the eyepiece, for people were taking long, long views of Jupiter, then near meridian and blazing above the thorax of Scorpius. My first glance showed that the seeing wasn't great, but the cells of turbulence were large and slow-moving. At 150x the belts of Jupiter stood out as sharply as I've ever seen, including the ruddy Equatorial Zone, the pale brown, turbulent South Equatorial Belt, and the much darker and thinner North Equatorial Belt. In the far southern latitudes I thought I could see the hint of a thin dark streak, marking the smeared-out remnants of the cometary impacts.

Finally I got off the ladder and walked out the front door, and a line of people now stretched past me down the hill. In front of the observatory at Stellafane East an inviting array of different telescopes awaited me, and for the first time on a clear Stellafane night I would never make it back to the telescopes at the clubhouse. Miraculously, the humid air had given way to clear transparent skies, there was no dew, and it was still T-shirt weather. A spectacular Milky Way stretched down to a low southern horizon. I first looked at the Lagoon Nebula through Al Nagler's latest prototype refractor, and then made my way over to a 7-inch Astrophysics refractor trained on Jupiter, to compare its view with that of the Schupmann (sharp but not nearly the same contrast). Then on to the Dobs: 18-inch, 20-inch, 24-inch; for views of the Veil, the Ring, Andromeda, M13, Trifid, and a failed attempt at Comet Hale-Bopp. Early Perseids streaked across the sky.

The best time on these nights comes after about 1 A.M., when the crowds dwindle and you can develop a personal relationship with a large telescope. A guy from upstate New York had homemade 12- and 15-inch Dobsonians, and let me take over the 12, a beautiful smooth f/5.2 telescope. I surprised myself by finding Stephan's Quintet without a star chart—it was that clear and the optics were that good. The scope fit into a box 18 inches on a side, and was for sale (I was tempted).

Finally around 2 A.M. I went back to the Schupmann for a look at Saturn. The wait was

again a half-hour, and I fell asleep on my feet in line. But the view was one I'd never seen: invisible edge-on rings and four moons in a line, as clear as can be. I also saw a very faint and extremely close pair of objects inside the orbit of the innermost moon: was this two more moons or part of Saturn's ring? Without getting an answer, I went back out the front door again and stumbled down the hill to my tent. There was a long drive back the next morning. □

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## Tales of Woe and Intrigue: Acquiring a Coulter 10" Dobsonian.

the time I originally expected it to. My frustration and repeated disappointment were caused by Coulter's weekly promise of delivery "on Friday". If they'd given an honest estimate, or even said "our roads are trashed, and we have no idea when we'll ship", I'd have been happy and satisfied when the scope finally did arrive. Instead, I'm left with a bad taste, and a real hesitation about the company.

If I had known what I know now, would I still order from Coulter? Yes, because their value-per-dollar is still very high, and I was willing to make the time-for-money tradeoff. Would I recommend that someone else order from Coulter? Only with strong warnings about the integrity of the company, and emphasis that there will be a long delay between ordering and arrival. A review of the scope and its performance will appear in the next issue. □

The **Recreational Astronomer and Sky Sweep** will resume next issue.



Support the IDA

OUCH!

Join the International Dark-Sky Association 3545 N. Stewart Tucson AZ 85716

# Sky Calendar for September/October 1995

Compiled by Luke Ward

Times are EDT. Sources include *Astronomy Observer's Guide*, *Sky And Telescope*, and *World Almanac 1995*.

## September

- 3 Moon 3° N of Jupiter
- 9 Mercury at best evening (east) elongation, 27°
- 14 Saturn at opposition
- 15/16 *Observing weekend (Savage/Crockett)*
- 20 **Meeting at Arlington Planetarium**
- 20 Jupiter 5° N of Antares
- 22/23 *Observing weekend (Savage/Crockett)*
- 23 **Equinox- Fall begins in northern hemisphere 8 a.m.**
- 24 Jupiter- conjunction with Omega Ophiuchi, mag 4.4
- 29 Mars- 1 degree south of Alpha Librae, mag 3.3

## Hale-Bopp Comet Data

This data on this comet is from IAU Circular 6202, which was circulated over the Novac E-mail Mailing List.

Date	R.A.	Dec	Mag
Sept. 10, 1995	18° 18.77"	-30 dg 16.9 "	10.3
Sept. 30, 1995	18° 16.17"	-29 dg 20.6"	10.2
Mar 3, 1997	21° 32.05"	+34 dg 34.1"	-0.9(?)
Mar 13, 1997	22° 42.51"	+41 dg 40.2"	-1.4(?)
Mar 23, 1997	0° 16.14"	+45 dg 41.3"	-1.7(?)

## Planet Positions

Positions are for September. Paraphrased from *Sky And Telescope* magazine, "Stars And Planets" column, page 60.

**Jupiter**- The brightest planet is in the south at sunset, just north of Antares. Its path against the stars brings it near psi Ophiuchi on September 9 and omega Ophiuchi on September 24.

**Mars**-is less prominent, entering twilight. Visible in early evening. Conjunction with Zubenelgenubi (alpha Librae) on September 29.

**Saturn**-is rising closer to sunset. Rings still phasing in and out of being edge-on. Saturn's moons will become easier to see.

**Venus**-is slowly entering the night sky and is near the horizon at dusk.

**Mercury**-is highest in dusk on September 8.

## For Your Information...

There are LOTS of places where you can get up-to-date information about observing and local events! Here are some of the ones that I find most useful:

The Smithsonian Sky-watcher's Report, a recorded message updated each Tuesday, contains information on constellations, satellite passes. It is a free service. Call (202)-357-2000.

Subscribe to the NOVAC E-mail mailing list to receive regular mail concerning club events and observing news. Send mail to Jon Stewart-Taylor at [jstewart@telenet.com](mailto:jstewart@telenet.com) and he will add your address.

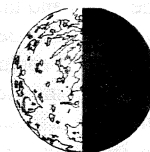
## October

- 4 Venus 3° N of Spica (evening)
- 6 Moon 6° N of Saturn
- 9 Ceres (large asteroid) in conjunction with sun
- 10 *Special Observing Night at Crockett for meteors*
- 18 **Meeting at Arlington Planetarium**
- 20/21 *Observing weekend (Savage/Crockett)*
- 20 Mercury at 18° western elongation (best morning appearance for northern areas)
- 22 **Orionid Meteor Shower** moon-waning crescent
- 24 Total solar eclipse over Asia, 1 p.m.
- 22-25 Jupiter, Mars, Moon, and Venus aligned in evening sky

## Lunar Phases

**Last Quarter**

September 16  
October 16



**New Moon**

September 24  
October 24



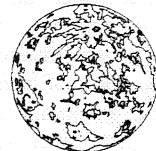
**First Quarter**

September 2  
October 1



**Full Moon**

September 8  
October 8



Observing is best between Last Quarter and New Moon, when the moon is never up between sunset and midnight.

## Meeting Programs

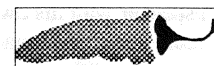
**SEPTEMBER 10.** Dr. David Thomsan from NASA will discuss Gamma Ray Astronomy.

**OCTOBER 18.** Brent Archinal presents "Deep Sky Observing Techniques".



## Pre-meeting Dinners...

Some NOVAC members have been meeting at the *Santa Fe Cafe* before meetings for the past several months. All members are welcome to come. The cafe is located at 1500 Wilson Blvd in Rosslyn and get-togethers will begin 5:45-6:00. If you are interested in coming, and/or would like some more info, please contact Brent Archinal at 703-448-7446 (evenings) or [baa@casa.usno.navy.mil](mailto:baa@casa.usno.navy.mil).



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(W) 703-689-6726

Bob Summerfield  
6233 Castor Avenue  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19149  
(H) 215-831-0485

Paul Supan  
823 S King St Suite #A  
Leesburg VA 22075  
(H) 703-771-1222  
(W) 703-771-1220

Gilbert Swift  
5911 Dinwiddie St  
Springfield VA 22150  
(H) 703-451-4610

Tibor Szentendrei  
6011 Henning St  
Bethesda MD 20817  
(H) 301-530-4572  
(W) 202-576-2233

Wayne X. & Belinda Taylor  
712 Mentor Ave  
Capital Heights MD 20743  
(H) 301-967-2190  
(W) 301-948-4991

Jim Taylor  
Route #1, Box 112-E  
Falling Water, West Va. 25416

Richard Tepel  
3432 S Stafford St  
Arlington VA 22206-1906  
(H) 703-578-9711  
(W) 703-824-2257

Linda Thomas  
2289 Hunters Run Dr  
Reston VA 22091  
(H) 703-620-2791  
(W) 703-758-2720

Dane J. Toler  
916 Cottage Street, S.W.  
Vienna, Virginia 22180  
(H) 703-281-2118

P Chewning Toulmin  
418 Summers Dr  
Alexandria VA 22301  
(H) or  
(W) voice/tty 703-549-2375 or  
1-800-828-1140

Craig Tupper  
2332 Belleview Ave  
Cheverly MD 20785  
(H) 301-773-4386  
(W) 202-385-0847

Wesley John Turk  
2001 Columbia Pike #809  
Arlington VA 22204  
(H) 703-920-3694  
(W) 703-841-7768

George Uhl  
5413 Kerger Rd  
Ellicott City MD 21043  
(H) 410-203-0011  
(W) 703-883-7305

Bill Walderman  
8635 Victoria Rd  
Springfield VA 22151  
(H) 703-978-0390  
(W) 202-383-0243

Edmund Walendowski  
8018 Revenna Ln  
Springfield VA 22153  
(H) 703-866-4408  
(W) 202-479-1925

Michael S. Walker  
7855 Bressingham Dr  
Fairfax Station VA 22039-3155  
(H) 703-425-2846  
(W) 703-756-5787

Keith & Luke Ward  
4509 Dartmoor Ln  
Alexandria VA 22310  
(H) 703-922-6545  
(W) 202-767-2735

James Wasel  
1204 Tanley Rd  
Silver Spring MD 20904  
(H) 301-622-3873

D & K Watson  
900 N Taylor St #1712  
Arlington VA 22203  
(H) 703-524-1062

Jerry Wilcoxen  
3653 Malibu Circle  
Falls Church VA 22041  
(H) 703-820-7920

Sam Wilds  
706 Old Hunt Way  
Herndon VA 22070  
(H) 703-435-4515  
(W) 703-620-7127

Henry Williams  
2349 Southgate Sq  
Reston VA 22091  
(H) 703-860-1991  
(W) 703-661-6226

Ann Wimmers  
P O Box 1827  
Vienna VA 22183-1827

Gerald Wolczanski  
Route 6 Box 69  
Warrenton, Virginia 22186  
(H) 703-349-1582  
(W) 703-255-3489

Barry B. Wolfe  
6203 Stratford Road  
Chevy Chase MD 20815

Greg Wuestenhagen  
6534 Lee Valley Dr  
Springfield VA 22150  
(H) 703-866-4727

Diane Temple &  
Paul Ziegenfelder  
2805 Jefferson Dr  
Alexandria VA 22303  
(H) 703-329-9270  
(W) 301-763-8364

# Antique Telescope Society Meeting

Fellow NOVAC'ers:

The Antique Telescope Society is meeting this October 27-30 at Swarthmore college. Since this is close enough for relatively easy attendance by NOVAC members, a copy of their convention announcement is appended below.

More info on the ATS is available at:  
<http://www1.tecs.com/OldScope/>.

- Brent

1995 Antique Telescope Society Annual Meeting UPDATE: 7-19-95

"Looking Back In Old Philadelphia!"

The Fourth Annual Convention of the Antique Telescope Society  
Swarthmore College,  
Philadelphia  
October 27-30, 1995

Dear ATS members and guests,  
Another truly memorable weekend is in store for our annual convention! As you can see from the enclosed material, our convention includes five historic astronomical sites, a world-renown keynote speaker, Dr. Elizabeth Griffin of Cambridge University, and as always, plenty of knowledgeable talks on a wide variety of historical astronomy topics. Our host, Swarthmore College, is located on a beautifully landscaped campus minutes from Philadelphia International Airport and the Radnor Hotel on the prestigious Main Line. All this within 30 minute's drive of historic Center City Philadelphia and of course, historic Valley Forge! For those who have never attended our conventions, please note that they are open to anyone interested in historical astronomy and instrumentation. As we expect an even larger turnout than before, please be sure to register as early as possible. We look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia!

Yours truly,  
Ron Maddison, President / Walt Breyer,  
Secretary / Bart Fried, Chairman

## Agenda

### Friday, 10/27

3:00-5:00 - Check-in and registration in lobby, Radnor Hotel, St. Davids, PA.  
Gala evening at the Wild Onion Restaurant  
6:30-7:30 - Cocktail hour (cash bar) and complimentary hors d'oeuvres  
7:30-9:30 - ATS gala banquet and keynote speaker, Dr. Elizabeth Griffin, Research Astronomer, Cambridge University, will speak about "Today's Astronomy with Yesterday's Instruments" Dr. Griffin has worked extensively with the 100" Hooker reflector Mt.

Wilson Observatory and has a deep interest in preserving the heritage of historic telescopes.  
9:30-10:30 - ATS social (cash bar) in banquet hall

### Saturday, 10/28

8:00-8:45 - Travel from hotel to host site - Swarthmore College  
9:00-10:30 - Conference welcome and paper session  
10:30-10:45 - Break with refreshments  
10:45-12:00 - Paper sessions  
12:00-1:00 - Lunch at Swarthmore College  
1:00-2:15 - Paper session  
2:15-2:30 - Break  
2:30-4:00 - "History of the Sproul Observatory at Swarthmore" - Presentation by Dr. Wulff Heinz, Sproul Research Astronomer, and tour of Sproul Observatory - 24" John A. Brashear Refractor, 6" Clark Refractor.  
4:00-5:30 - Exhibit set-up  
5:30-6:30 - Dinner at Swarthmore College  
6:30-10:00 - Exhibits and judging - best of show, best show display categories, prizes given.  
10:00-? - Observing/breakdown, ATS social, observing at Sproul Observatory -24" Brashear Refractor and 6" Clark Refractor  
Return to hotel

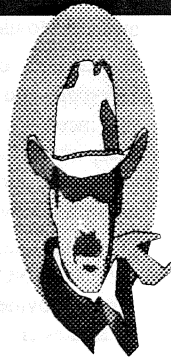
### Sunday, 10/29

8:30-10:00 - ATS Business Meeting-members only. Free time at Radnor Hotel  
10:00-10:15 - Break for refreshments  
10:15-12:00 - Paper session  
12:00-1:00 - Lunch Radnor Hotel  
1:00-3:00 - Paper session  
3:00-3:30 - Travel to Flower and Cook Observatory, University of Pennsylvania.  
3:30-5:30 - History and tour of Flower and Cook Observatory, University of Pennsylvania.  
5:30-6:00 - Travel to dinner site - restaurant  
6:00-7:00 - Dinner  
7:00-7:30 - Travel to Haverford College and Observatory  
7:30-10:00 - History and tour of observatory  
10:00-? - Observing, weather permitting.  
Return to Radnor Hotel

### Monday, 10/30

8:30-9:00 - Travel from hotel to Villanova University  
9:00-11:00 - History and tour of Villanova University Observatory  
11:00-11:30 - Travel to luncheon site  
11:30-12:30 - Lunch  
12:30-1:00 - Continue on to Franklin Institute  
1:00-2:00 - Stearns Auditorium: Institute Vice-president Derrick Pitts- "History of the Franklin Institute Telescopes, Observatory, and

## 17th Annual Astronomy Jamboree



October 20, 21, 22.

The 17th Annual Astronomy Jamboree, sponsored by the Custer Institute, is planned for October 20, 21, and 22 in Southold, New York. Keynote speaker on October 21 will be Richard Berry, author and past editor of *Astronomy* magazine, who will speak about CCD astronomy. Other activities will include additional guest speakers, workshops, equipment displays, solar observing, vendors, raffles, music, late-night observing, and more. Registration fees of \$10 per adult and \$5 per child 12 and under must be received by October 7 at Astronomy Jamboree, Charles Cardona, 11610 Main Bayview Road, Southold, NY 11971. Several hotels, motels, inns and B&Bs in Greenport, Southold, and Mattituck, NY are available within a few miles of the Custer Institute. For information, call Warren Hamburger at (516) 893-7000 or Barbara Lebkeucher at (516) 722-3850.

Fels Planetarium (10" Zeiss, 24" Fecker, 5" Brashear, 6" Merz and Mahler, 6" Vertical Telescope/Coelostat)  
2:00-3:00 - Tour of Franklin Institute's Astronomy Section  
3:00-4:00 - Fels Planetarium, Special planetarium show "The Other Side of the Universe", Val Gonzalez, Director  
4:00-4:10 - Closing remarks - Ron Maddison  
4:10 Special items available  
**General notes:**  
Wear comfortable walking shoes! A shuttle is available for Radnor Hotel guests arriving at the Philadelphia International Airport, cost \$30.00 r/t. There will be no formal transportation supplied between sites; renting a car and car pooling is easily the preferred manner. If you need assistance arranging car pooling, we will provide names of other registrants. The hotel was selected for its wonderful amenities and beautiful central location. Housing: you must make your own housing arrangements. The ATS is holding a block of rooms at the Radnor Hotel, St. Davids, PA. The hotel is conveniently located near all the convention venues. The ATS has arranged the following special prices: rooms: single \$89/night + tax, double \$89/night + tax. Reservations at these rates will be accepted until October 6th. You may reach the Radnor Hotel at 1-800-537-3000, 1-610-341-3500, fax 1-610-341-3299.

For more information contact Glenn Oclassen at 415-258-4554 or 76011.2146  
@compuserve.com or Walt Breyer at 610-566-2227 or fax:610-521-8111 □

# Highlights of the July/August General Membership Meetings

by Marta Krause, Secretary

## NOVAC General Meeting Minutes for July 19, 1995

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Bob L'Hommedieu. At least 47 members and guests were present at Arlington Planetarium.

### Announcements

1. Brent Archinal reminded members that the annual Stellafane convention will be held in Vermont on July 29 and 30. Also, Starfest '95 will be held August 25, 26, and 27 in Ontario, Canada. For more information about these conventions, contact Brent.
2. The 13th Annual Northern Virginia Telescope Meet is scheduled for Saturday, September 30. Plan now to be at Crockett Park along with your telescope!
3. The NOVAC BBS may be suspended if sysop Blaine Korcel moves to a new residence, as he is considering. Members may continue to use the BBS until further notice.
4. Volunteers are needed to assist Brent Archinal with the planetarium show in the monthly observing report. Anyone interested should contact Brent or Bob L'Hommedieu.
5. Bill Burton thanked members who participated in Project Orion, the light pollution experiment designed by Bill and run in *The Washington Post's* monthly Horizon educational section. Bill will be speaking about Project Orion at the Stellafane convention in August, and may present the results at a future NOVAC meeting. He is also working on an article about Project Orion for *Sky & Telescope*.
6. Sandy Sanders reported that the next Outdoor Lab work day is set for Saturday, August 5 at noon, with a rain date of August 12. On this occasion, the goal is to clean and collimate the mirrors on the lab's telescopes, and if the sky is clear, to do some observing in the evening. Anyone interested in working on the lab's equipment is welcome; bring lens cleaner and lens paper and Allen wrenches. Call Sandy for directions or if it is raining on August 5. Telephone number is work (703) 690-7000 or home (703) 590-8982.

Work at the lab will probably be a continuing project and may result in an annual workday to keep the equipment and lab maintained.

Work at the lab will probably be a continuing project and may result in an annual workday to keep the equipment and lab maintained.

### Officers' Reports:

Brenda Jones reported that the club's lock on the gate at Crockett Park was broken by a boater during the July 4th weekend. A new lock has been put on the gate with the same combination. Also, there is a new portable toilet at Crockett on the other side of the boat

launch that is available for NOVAC members to use.

Brenda also reported that both *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazine have had rate increases recently. *S&T* is now \$24 per year, while *Astronomy* is \$18. The procedures for subscribing to either magazine are in the newsletter each issue.

The next issue of the newsletter will include the annual NOVAC member directory. Please provide Brenda with any changes in addresses or telephone numbers that have occurred during the last year.

Marta Krause mentioned that NOVAC has received information about two new astronomy books published recently. *Sky Atlas 2000.0 Companion*, by Robert Strong, is a series of indexes designed to help amateur astronomers use Wil Tirion's *Sky Atlas 2000.0* effectively, and as such contains references, cross-references, locator information, and interesting facts about all the information in Tirion's book. *Companion* is priced at \$24.95. Also available for \$19.95 is *Bad Astronomy*, a "brief history of bizarre misconceptions, totally wrong conclusions, and incredibly stupid theories", a "light-hearted work examining astronomical blunders" from Aristotle to the Hubble disaster. Contact Marta for ordering information.

Ron Ferris reported that the August program is still being confirmed, but may be Bill Burton's Project Orion report.

There was no old business or new business.

### Observing Report

Jeff Stetekluh and Brent Archinal presented the monthly observing report and sky watch with the use of the planetarium projector.

### Member Presentations

Sandy Sanders modeled his necktie, marketed by Save the Children, with an astronomy motif. Sandy also reports that he has quite a collection of information about solar eclipses; anyone interested in such information should contact Sandy.

Brenda Jones recommends the movie "Apollo 13."

Nicole Mastej reported that Project Hello to signal the space shuttle has been delayed, as has the space shuttle launch.

Jeff Stetekluh recommended using a transparent circular template that corresponds to your finder scope's field on star charts to determine fields of view.

Brent Archinal presented slides and discussed his travels earlier in July to Mt.

Evans in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado to an observatory run by the University of Denver. Mt. Evans' 14,250' altitude means, among other things, that the road to the observatory is only open 3 or 4 months out of the year. Brent commented that the potential of high-altitude observing sites was reflected in the naked eye visibility of M81, a spiral galaxy in Ursa Major that is 7 or 8 million light years away.

### July Program

Ron Ferris introduced NOVAC member Gerry Wolczanski, who discussed the evolution of his observational record-keeping practices over the past several years.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marta Krause

Secretary

## NOVAC General Meeting Minutes for August 16, 1995

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Bob L'Hommedieu. At least 33 members and guests were present at Arlington Planetarium.

### Announcements

1. September 30 is the date of the 13th Annual Northern Virginia Telescope Meet. Sidewalk Astronomers recently contacted amateur astronomy clubs to remind them that September 14 is John Dobson's 80th birthday, and to ask if clubs could hold an observing session for the public to honor Mr. Dobson's birthday. Thus, NOVAC is dedicating the upcoming Telescope Meet to John Dobson, and will also have an observing session after the next NOVAC meeting on September 20. NOVAC members are encouraged to bring their telescopes to both the next meeting and to the Telescope Meet. An article by David Levy about John Dobson and his contributions to amateur astronomy appears in the September issue of *Sky & Telescope*.
2. NOVAC member Nicole Mastej has offered to coordinate purchases of astronomy books through Kalmbach Publishing, publisher of *Astronomy* magazine, to provide NOVAC members with a 20% discount for any astronomy-related book ordered. Nicole will place orders 3 or 4 times a year, with the first order to be sent by the end of October. Checks

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

for the discounted price of any book should be made payable to NOVAC; Nicole will collect the orders and send them and a check from NOVAC to Kalmbach, and distribute the books when the order is received. Call Nicole for further information at (703) 476-1207.

3. Brent Archinal reminded members that Starfest '95 will be held August 25, 26 and 27 in Ontario, Canada; speakers at the event will include David Levy and Wendy Green.

Also, Brent reported that the International Dark-Sky Association needs only a few hundred more members before it will be able to hire a staff person to work full-time on light pollution issues.

Brent continues to coordinate dinners at the Santa Fe Cafe in Rosslyn before NOVAC monthly meetings. Information is in each issue of the newsletter. The next dinner and meeting are September 20. Call Brent if you plan to come to dinner.

Brent has a few copies of his book "The Non-Existent Star Clusters of the RNGC" available for purchase for \$15. Proceeds from the book go to its publisher, The Webb Society, in England.

4. NOVAC member Bob Bunge's article about light pollution appears in the September issue of *Astronomy* magazine.

5. Bob Bolster presented slides and discussed the movements of Comet Hale-Bopp, the recently discovered comet currently in Sagittarius, approximately 20 degrees above the horizon. The comet will be most visible between February 1996 and April 1997, with a steadily increasing magnitude. In 1996, it will be seen in the morning during February and around midnight in the summer; Earth's orbit will cross the tail of the comet in early July. In 1997, the comet will be visible in the morning in the middle of January, and observable both morning (in the northeast) and the evening (in the northwest) in March, when it may be at -1.7 magnitude. It will cross Taurus in May and then be unobservable. For additional information, contact Bob.

6. Al and Lynn Schumann are moving to Williamsburg, VA in early September to be grandparents to soon-to-arrive twin granddaughters. All NOVAC members will miss the Schumanns and their many memorable video productions and their volunteer service to NOVAC (Al was club secretary for a number of years).

NOVAC thanks Al and Lynn for their years of support and wishes them well. After September 1, the Schumanns can be reached at 115 National Lane, Williamsburg, VA 23185.

#### Officers' Reports:

Ron Ferris reports that programs for upcoming NOVAC meetings are as follows:

September 20: Dr. David Thompson, NASA/Goddard, will speak about gamma rays.

October 18: Dr. Brent Archinal, US Naval Observatory, will discuss deep-sky observing techniques.

November 15: to be announced

December 20: NOVAC member Kevin Jones will talk about his summer trip to Australia and observing Down Under.

Marta Krause reported that NOVAC has received Celestial Computing software, for amateur astronomers with PCs who are interested in predicting orbits and celestial events, spacecraft trajectory, apparent positions of celestial objects, and other applications of celestial mechanics. The software was designed by NOVAC member David Eagle of Reston, who can be reached on the Internet at [daveida@haven.ios.com](mailto:daveida@haven.ios.com), on Compuserve at 74561,606, or at Voice and Science Software BBS at (703) 815-8834. Anyone interested in borrowing the software should contact Marta.

Brenda Jones has observing passes for recent new and renewing members. Also, Brenda mentioned that work continues to be done on the Arlington Planetarium; please bear with the

construction, and be careful.

Bob L'Hommedieu and Brent Archinal gave the observing report for the month with the use of the planetarium projector.

#### Member Presentations

Jack Resch displayed and discussed two of his recent discoveries in used book stores. *Your Guide to the Sky* by Rick Shaeffer is a good observing guide for beginning amateur astronomers and includes black-on-white sky maps for \$19. *Celestial Objects for Common Telescopes*, by Rev. T. Webb, is also a good beginner's guide. It is out of print but possibly available from Dover Books.

#### August Program

Ron Ferris introduced NOVAC member Bill Burton for the evening's program. Bill presented the results of Project Orion, the light pollution experiment he designed and published in *The Washington Post*. Bill also talked about and showed slides from his recent trip to the annual Stellafane convention in Vermont.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

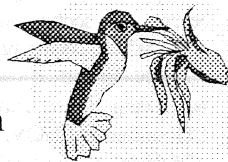
Respectfully submitted,

Marta Krause

Secretary

## Books At Discount

NOVAC is now going to participate in the discount book sales program offered by Kalmbach Publishing. They will sell our members any astronomy related book for 20% off the list price if we send in a group order. Nicole Mastej has offered to coordinate the sales. If you are interested, please see her at a meeting or call her at home



(703) 476-1207 to place an order. You will need to make a check out to NOVAC for the price of the book minus the discount when you place the order. Nicole will send in our order at the end of October so that we will receive the books in time for Christmas. We anticipate doing this 3-4 times a year if demand warrants.

## From: Brent Archinal

### Free Chips and Salsa Before NOVAC Meetings!

But only if you come to dinner at the *Santa Fe Cafe!* As we have throughout this year, we're continuing the tradition of meeting for dinner before the regular NOVAC meetings. Suggested at the Annual meeting in January, this has proven a great way for NOVAC members to meet one another. Some months we've had pretty good turnout on this, with 10 or a dozen members, and other months only a few. However, in every case we've had a great dinner and gotten to know each other a little better. We'll certainly miss Lynn and Al Schumann who have been some of the regulars at dinner, and for that matter at the meetings and in the club in general! But now's your chance to keep the "tradition" going and meet a few NOVAC members, without trying to do it

at a hurried meeting or unrecognized in the dark while observing.

So before the September 20

and October 18 meetings, please come on by. As usual, dinner will be at the *Santa Fe Cafe* in Rosslyn, at 5:45-6 PM. This is a nice Mexican restaurant with reasonable prices, although credit cards are not accepted. Smoking is apparently allowed in one part of this (large) one room restaurant, but so far NOVAC members and the few others dining at that time have not been smoking. But there's always plenty of space, so don't worry about not finding room with us.

Directions: The *Santa Fe Cafe* is located at 1500 Wilson Blvd, in Rosslyn, with entrances off of both Wilson Blvd. and Clarendon Blvd. This restaurant is easily found, just west of "downtown Rosslyn", on the southwest corner of Wilson Blvd. and N. Oak Street, where

Wilson splits becoming Wilson one-way west and Clarendon one-way east. From I-66 east, take the Rosslyn exit to Lee Highway, and turn right at the second light onto Fort Myer Dr. Go two blocks and turn right onto Wilson, and the restaurant will be one block ahead on your left (on the corner across Oak/Clarendon from a big outdoor sculpture). On street parking should be available and it is also close to the Rosslyn metro station.

As before, reservations are probably not necessary. However if you need a ride to the meeting and back to the metro, or for more information or directions please give me a call (evenings) at 703-448-7466 or e-mail me at [baa@casa.usno.navy.mil](mailto:baa@casa.usno.navy.mil).

See you at dinner - and don't forget those free chips! And Lynn and Al, we certainly hope you'll make it back occasionally for a visit.

- Brent Archinal □

## Notices Notices Notices

## Notices Notices Notices

### NOVAC Notices and Benefits

#### Discounts on Sky & Telescope

As a member of NOVAC you can get a subscription to Sky & Telescope for \$24.00 instead of the regular \$33.00 rate. To start a new subscription or renew an established subscription, make your check out to SKY & TELESCOPE for \$24. Note on the check if this is a new subscription or a renewal. Send your check to Brenda Jones, 883 N. Kentucky St., Arlington, Va. 22205.

You can also order any publication directly from Sky Publishing at a 10% discount. Just mention the Club Discount Plan and that you are a member of NOVAC.

#### Discounts on Astronomy

Your NOVAC membership entitles you to subscribe to Astronomy Magazine at the annual rate of \$18.00 (note increase from \$16.00). This is a significant discount over the usual \$24.00 rate. A two-year subscription costs \$36.00. To start a new subscription or renew an established subscription, make your check payable to Kalmbach Publishing Company for \$18.00 (one-year subscription) or \$36.00 (two-year subscription). Note on the check if this is a new subscription or a renewal. Send your check to Brenda Jones, 883 N. Kentucky St., Arlington, VA 22205. NOTE: There are no special 10% discounts offered on publications through Kalmbach Publishing.

#### Club Telescopes Available for Use

NOVAC makes available two six-inch (f/5) Newtonian reflectors for club members to

check out free of charge and use for a limited time.

The first scope is a Celestron model SP-C6 on a Super Polaris German equatorial mount and wood tripod. It will readily fit disassembled in any car and is easily transported and can be set up quickly at remote observing sites. The scope comes with an Orion Ultrascopic 10mm and Meade MA 25mm eyepieces with 1.25-inch barrel sizes. To borrow this scope you will need to show your NOVAC observing pass and leave a \$500.00 security deposit.

The second scope is a home-made six-inch reflector on a dobsonian mount and comes with a 25mm Kellner eyepiece. It is easy to transport to dark sky sites and easy to use. To borrow this scope you will need to show your NOVAC observing pass and leave a \$250.00 security deposit. If you are interested in borrowing either of these scopes, contact Bob L'Hommedieu, NOVAC President, at (703) 978-0946. He will schedule a time for you to pick the scope up at his home. Bob resides at 4415 Eastwood, Fairfax, VA 22032.

Note: Checks must be made payable to NOVAC. Checks used as security deposits on telescopes are not deposited and will be returned to the originator when the scope is returned in the same condition it was checked out. The scopes may be checked out for two to four weeks at a time, depending on demand.

#### NOVAC Library

NOVAC has established a library at the Arlington Planetarium for use by NOVAC members. Books may be checked out and returned only at the monthly meetings.

Members may check out books for one month at a time. To check out books, see NOVAC librarian Linda Thomas at the monthly meeting. The NOVAC library seeks book donations to the library. If you have any astronomy books or materials you are thinking of discarding, please consider a donation to the NOVAC library. A complete list of all library holdings is available upon request.

#### NOVAC Observing Schedule for 1995 Observing at C. M. Crockett Park and Savage Farm

September 15, 16, 22, 23.

October 20, 21, 27, 28.

November 17, 18, 24, 25.

December 15, 16, 22, 23.

#### Observing at Parsells Field

September 1, 15, 29.

October 13, 27.

November 17.

December 1, 15, 29.

#### General Membership Meetings

General Membership Meetings are held at the Arlington Planetarium on the third Wednesday of every month. Meetings will be held May 17 and June 21 at 7:30 P.M. The Arlington Planetarium is located at 1426 N. Quincy Street, Arlington. Trustee Meetings are held the Tuesday before the week of the General Membership Meeting. Non-Trustees interested in attending should contact a Club Officer or Board Member for further information.

#### NOVAC On-line:

NOVAC maintains an e-mail mailing list.

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Messages sent to the list include reminders about scheduled observing sessions, announcements for unscheduled sessions, requests for quick observing session summaries, MIR observability predictions, etc.. For more information, send a message to [jestewart@telenet.com](mailto:jestewart@telenet.com).

#### **NOVAC Observing Site Rules**

**C. M. Crockett Park:** NOVAC members may use Crockett Park for observing on nights other than those scheduled for club observing; However, YOU MUST HAVE PRIOR APPROVAL FROM THE PARK MANAGER. Call (703)-788-4867 early in the day on which you wish to observe. If you reach the answering machine, leave a message saying that you are a NOVAC member and you wish to observe that night. Also, leave a telephone number where someone can reach you. If you do not receive a return call, you MAY NOT use the park. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS! Use of the park is limited to NOVAC members only. Park management locks the entrance gate at sunset and you may use the combination shown on your Observing Pass to gain access. Do not reveal it to anyone. You must lock the gate behind you after entering and please remember to lock it after you leave. During EDT, you must set up on the large field to the left. During EST, you must set up on the paved cul-de-sac 200 yds. past the gate. No loud radios, alcoholic beverages or loose pets. Do not leave trash or debris behind. We are guests of the park and park management may revoke our observing privileges at any time due to the carelessness of one person.

#### **Parsells Field:**

In addition to scheduled nights, NOVAC members may observe at Parsells field ANY evening, with no prior notice. You must park and set up only in the parking area: do not go onto the field itself. Please park to the left near the entrance and set up to the right away from the entrance. The usual NOVAC observing site rules apply: no loud noises, alcohol, or loose dogs, and pick up after yourself. We are guests of the Dulles Little League, and could have our access to this site revoked at any time if it is abused.

**Savage Farm Site:** The Savage Farm site is reserved for NOVAC use on the same nights as Crockett Park plus all the major meteor showers. For non-scheduled observing sessions, call the park manager, Paul McCray, at (703) 729-0596 at least 24 hours in advance and leave a message with a number where you can be reached. You MAY use the site for that session UNLESS you receive a call from Mr. McCray stating otherwise. No loud radios, alcoholic beverages or loose pets. Pick up after yourself and do not leave any trash behind. In

addition, please make sure the gate is locked whenever you are in the park, and especially when you leave. We are guests of the NVRP and could have our access to this site revoked at any time if it is abused.

#### **Directions to NOVAC Observing Sites**

**C. M. Crockett Park:** From the Washington DC/Northern Virginia area, go west on I-66 to the 47-a exit. This is 234 South to Manassas. Continue on 234 for 2.8 miles then turn right on Godwin Drive at what was previously the "Po Folks" restaurant. Follow Godwin Dr. for 1.8 miles to where it merges with Rt. 28 West. Once on Route 28, continue driving for another 13.7 miles through the towns of Nokesville, Catlett and Calverton until you turn right on Rt. 643 toward Warrenton. There is a small country store (Mayhugh's) on the corner of the intersection. Go on about a mile up Rt. 643 to the Park Entrance road. Look for a small sign for C.M. Crockett Park on your right directing you to turn left. Once on the park entrance road, go one-half mile to the park gate.

**Parsells Field:** From the Northern Virginia area go West on the Dulles Toll Road until you reach Route 28. Go North on Rt. 28 for 2.8 miles to Route 625, Waxpool Rd. (You may also take Route 7 West to 28, then go South to Waxpool). Turn West on Waxpool, and go 1.8 miles to the Waxpool/Farmwell intersection. Turn left on Route 625, Waxpool Rd. (!), and go 1.6 miles to the Waxpool/Ryan/Shellhome intersection. Continue on Waxpool for about another 1.6 miles (road construction may change the exact distance) to the field. Turn left and follow the blue parking signs to the parking area.

**Savage Site:** Use some combination of Routes 7, 267 (Dulles toll road), and 28 to get to the Route 7 Leesburg bypass. Go around Leesburg on the bypass until you reach "regular" Route 7 again. From the intersection of the bypass and "regular" Route 7, continue on Route 7 west 18.5 miles to Route 601, at the top of Snicker's Gap. Turn left onto Route 601 south and go 2.4 miles to the park entrance. The park entrance is past the driveway whose gatepost reads *Ben Lomand*. The park entrance is the next driveway on your left. There will be a sign on a tree saying *Wildlife Sanctuary*. If you come to gateposts on the left that say *Belle Allee* and *Ball Alley 1875*, you have gone too far. You may also take I-66 west to Route 17 North. Stay on Route 17 North until it intersects with Route 50 at Ashby Gap. Turn left onto Route 50 and go one (1.0) mile and turn right on Route 601. Continue on Route 601 (Blue Ridge Mountain Road) and go two miles past the main gate of the FEMA installation. Turn right at the park entrance, after passing the gateposts with *Belle Allee* and *Ball Alley 1875* on your right.

The park entrance on Route 601 is marked by a

small brown and white NOVAC sign. Note that the neighbors periodically pull up the sign, so it may not be there. As you turn into the park, go straight ahead until you reach the gate, which is secured by both a keyed padlock and a combination lock. These locks are located to your left behind the gate, as you face it. The combination is on your NOVAC observing pass. ALWAYS lock the gate behind you. The NOVAC lock MUST be locked to the keyed lock, not to the chain, to allow emergency access by the fire department. Drive to the observing area (the stone patio next to the house). There is very limited parking at the observing area itself, so please park in the parking area on the right (as you face the patio). □

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Membership in the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club is \$18.00 per year and is open to anyone interested in astronomy or the sciences. Contact Brenda Jones, Treasurer, 883 North Kentucky Street, Arlington, Virginia 22205, telephone (703) 527-7963. All notices of change of address should be sent to Brenda Jones. Please include both old and new addresses.

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NOVAC members are invited to contribute materials of interest for publication consideration in the NOVAC Newsletter. The editor reserves the right to edit all materials submitted.

Article submissions may be posted to the NOVAC Computer Bulletin Board (BBS) to Elliott Fein or to [edfein@cpcug.org](mailto:edfein@cpcug.org) on the Internet. Diskettes (3.5" or 5") or typewritten copies may be sent to Elliott's residence at 5 Carter Court, Rockville, MD 20852-1005 (Home phone 301-762-6261).

Deadline for submissions is three weeks in advance of publication, e.g., June 10 for the July/Aug. Newsletter

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**C. M. Crockett Park & Savage Farm**

September 15, 16, 22, 23.  
October 20, 21, 27, 28.  
November 17, 18, 24, 25.  
December 15, 16, 22, 23.

**Parsells Field**

September 1, 15, 29.  
October 13, 27.  
November 17.  
December 1, 15, 29.

**The Northern Virginia Astronomy Club**  
c/o Brenda Clements Jones  
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Arlington, Virginia 22205

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