

NOVAC

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA ASTRONOMY CLUB

Issue Number 73

Volume 17

September/October 1997

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Savage Park (Paul McCray) 703 729-0596
Arlington Planetarium 703 358-6070

NOVAC's Web Page

<http://astro.gmu.edu/~novac>

President's Column

Brenda Clements Jones

Another summer almost at an end! And with it another Stellafane come and gone. Bill, Kevin, and I went to our first Stellafane star party in 1988. For those of you who are new to astronomy, Stellafane is an amateur telescope maker's convention and star party held in Springfield, Vermont each summer around New Moon at the very end of July or beginning of August. Bill has enjoyed the many trips to southern Vermont to take in the beautiful New England countryside and check out the antique shops in the area. Kevin and I have gotten much from the atmosphere of excitement and wonder surrounding the Breezy Hill night sky and the folks who come to share the views at the many telescopes.

This year was the first year that we've attended when both Friday and Saturday nights were clouded out. But the talks still went on, the telescopes were still there to be admired during daylight, and the many friends were there to share our love of astronomy. The only things that I really missed were the "ooooh"s and "ahhhh"s as the Perseids streamed overhead, and oh, how I wanted to look through those

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An Observing Session for the Visually Impaired

Harold Geller

That's right, I'm going to describe briefly for you, an astronomy observing session conducted specifically for the visually impaired. The blind and visually impaired often have some vision. The legal definition of "blind" is someone with less than 20/200 vision while using corrective lenses, or a greatly restricted field of view. Other forms of visual impairment include color blindness and poor dark adaptation. According to the most recent studies, there are about 17.9 million people in the US with some uncorrectable visual impairment, and about 1.2 million people fit the definition of legally blind.

Astronomers of all types usually take for granted that people they deal with can see the lovely objects of the universe like the deep blue of the Pleiades and the majesty of M31. Unfortunately, there are those who are not able to see such natural wonders. But how do you conduct an observing session for the visually impaired? Teaching astronomy to the visually

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An Observing Session for the Visually Impaired

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impaired has been written about only sparsely. I discovered an article in the American Journal of Physics over 5 years old, and one in *Sky and Telescope* from the same time frame. But that didn't stop John Wallin (a George Mason University professor and NOVAC member himself) and his wife Katharine Bond from venturing out with a group of visually impaired individuals. While those more fortunate may savor a dark site away from urban

sprawl, visually impaired individuals need to rely on public transportation or arranged transportation. With this in mind, John chose the Van Dyke park in Fairfax City. While certainly not a very dark sky area, it was convenient for those using Metrorail with a personal shuttle.

Dobson would have been proud, because as soon as we set up John's homemade 6" Dobsonian, people already in the park came over to take a look. We received additional attention as we set up the GMU 12" Meade Schmidt-Cassegrain. Unfortunately, a city park lends itself to chaos, as others using the park will drift over and join the group for which the park had been reserved that night (July 13). Once things settled down a bit, John took the group to the covered picnic area and spoke about astronomy. I didn't hear much myself, because I was standing guard by the telescopes, dealing with the passersby who were interested in astronomy or just curious about the telescopes. Since John had expressed an interest in giving those with enough vision to see Venus in the telescope, the opportunity, I interrupted his lecture noting that Venus would soon be below the local horizon, being blocked by the neighboring trees.

The group soon moved to the area where we had set up the telescopes. The first object that we observed was the Moon (one day past First Quarter). Most of the people in the group were able to see (to some degree) the Moon through the Dobsonian and the Meade. My personal favorite moment was when I helped a father get his daughter, who was both visually and physically handicapped, out of the wheelchair and support her to look through the Dobsonian. We were actually able to use the light of the Moon through the eyepiece to see when it was lined up with her pupil. I don't know how much she was really able to see, but her face lit up when we finally got the image centered on her eye. Whatever she was able to see was sufficient to thrill her, and that was enough to make my night. We next adjusted the telescopes so that those who could, could view Venus before it was blocked by the surrounding trees.

Then we pointed the telescopes at Arcturus.

While fewer people were able to really see anything through the telescopes, John provided a running lecture as this was happening. He and Katharine had also prepared some aids to help get certain points across. For example, there was a poster of the relative sizes of the planets, which could be felt, and was annotated in Braille. There was also a demonstration of

planetary distances that included the pacing-off of the relative distances from the sun, within the park boundaries. People often are at a loss to understand the vast distances dealt with in astronomy.

John, Katharine and I agreed that it was a fun experience, in spite of the oppressive heat and humidity, and we hope to do it again. So the

next time you complain about poor seeing conditions, or the interference of the Moon, think of those less fortunate and maybe even give them an opportunity to "see" things you usually ignore when you don't get such clear skies.

— We were actually able to use the light of the Moon through the eyepiece to see when it was lined up with her pupil.

President's Column

(Continued from page 1)

ten-inch binoculars! My memory of looking through the same maker's six-inch binoculars in 1992 brings fond memories of feeling as though I were falling into space!

Sky & Telescope and *Astronomy* Magazines list star parties that come up throughout the year. I strongly suggest that you check out some of these star parties as they come along. They're great fun!

And on the local front, don't miss our Northern Virginia Telescope Meet. It's coming up Saturday, September 6, at Crockett Park. We'll begin with a swap meet at 4 p.m. and then plan to set up your telescopes and binoculars for observing as the sky begins to get dark!

See you there!

—Brenda

Desert Storm Shield — A Review

Robert Bunge

The Desert Storm Shield (DSS) is a silver colored Mylar bag that is placed over a telescope. The bag protects the telescope from exposure to sun, rain, dust, and other environmental elements. The bags come in different sizes depending on the size of your telescope. I had noticed these bags at some of the national star parties in recent years. They have proven popular with telescope owners who go to star parties — specially during the week-long events, like the Texas Star Party and the Winter Star Party — and want to avoid having to tear down or move a scope whenever rain threatens. The DSS also protects a telescope from exposure to the heat and ultraviolet rays of the Sun. Apparently, these bags got started when the military used similar bags to cover hardware in the heat of the desert during the Desert Storm war.

This year, with the approach of Comet Hale-Bopp, I broke down and bought one from Pocono Mountain Optics. I figured that I could use the DSS to cover a 10-inch Dobsonian telescope that I would keep set up in my backyard while the comet was around. That way, I'd be more likely to observe the Comet, knowing that it would only take a second to uncover the telescope and I'd be looking at the comet for just a couple of minutes. This proved especially useful while the comet was up in the morning sky and set-up and tear-down time was important.

Unlike a plastic sheet or tarp that you might

find at a hardware store, the DSS is a bag. This means instead of wrapping the telescope, you just pull the bag over the scope and secure the bottom opening of the bag. The Mylar material is thick; I don't know the mil thickness, but it's thicker than the five mil plastic paint drop-clothes that I've bought at hardware stores. In the three months that I've had mine, I've kept both the 10-inch Dob and a 4-inch reflector (on an equatorial mount) under it. The equatorial

mount has a number of sharp knobs and parts that I feared might tear the Mylar, but even in 35+ mph winds there have been no problems! The bag comes with tape to make field repairs and a square of

— the silver reflects the heat of the sun and the telescope stays cool

Mylar and directions to make more permanent repairs using a household iron. I considered an elastic band that came with the bag to hold the bag on the scope to be too flimsy and instead used a bungee cord.

The silver color is important. During the day, the silver reflects the heat of the sun and the telescope stays cool inside the bag. This not only helps to protect the physical parts of the telescope, but greatly reduces the time it takes the scope to cool down to air temperature once it gets dark. Warm telescopes in cool air are a primary cause of bad seeing. This really works!

Prices range from about \$20 for a bag to cover a 6-inch Dobsonian or SCT to about \$60 to cover a 25-inch Dobsonian.

Astronomical League Update

Lee Polikoff

It's been about two months since NOVAC decided to remain a part of the Astronomical League. The challenge was put forth to the general membership and NOVAC has risen to the occasion. I have had the pleasure of awarding three certificates to NOVAC members.

Peter Gruber and Steven Blake were awarded Messier Observing Certificates. Peter has observed all 110 objects and Steve has observed 70. Kevin Jones has accomplished something that most of us will never have an opportunity to do. He has completed all the requirements for the Southern Skies Binocular Club. This puts him in special company since the AL has awarded this certificate only thirteen previous times. Congratulations to all on your accomplishments! I am hoping that I will be flooded with more requests for awards as the months pass.

On another front, I have ordered the following publications from the AL:

- 5 each - Guides to the Messier Objects
- 5 each - Observe the Herschel Objects
- 3 each - ALPO Guides to watching Meteors
- 2 each - Observe and Understand the Sun

I anticipate having these by the time this newsletter arrives. I will bring them to the meetings; however, if you are *really* interested in obtaining one, please call. Let me close by again saying, well done to Peter Gruber, Steven Blake, and Kevin Jones.

Sincerely

Lee Polikoff

impopeye@erols.com

(703) 250-2355

Perseid Observations from Wyoming

Bill Burton

I observed the Perseid meteor shower this morning from the crest of the Laramie Range, just north of Laramie, Wyo., at an elevation of 8000 feet. Skies were clear and the limiting magnitude was about 6.5. I saw at least 150 Perseids between 12:38 and 4:45 AM (Mountain Daylight Time), and recorded observations of time, magnitude, and direction from radiant, for each meteor, on cassette.

The peak of activity ("new" or "90's" peak) appeared to occur between 1:15 and 3:00 AM MDT. I saw 10 Perseids in one minute at 2:40. Bursts of 3-4 meteors per minute were common during the peak period. A few meteors were as bright as magnitude -3 to -4. The meteor path directions were strongly skewed towards a counter-rotational (westward) direction.

At 3:15 AM the Zodiacal Light appeared in the east and eventually extended over 50 degrees along the ecliptic. Dawn's first light arrived at 4:25, and at 5:00 the coyotes started to howl. Yippee kiyo kiyay!

NOVAC Members Invited to West Virginia Observing Site

Brent A. Archinal

Mark your calendars for Friday and Saturday October 24th and 25th!

NOVAC members have been invited by fellow member Joe Macrie out to his dark-sky observing site in West Virginia. Joe has a small undeveloped mountain-top plot of land with very dark skies - but with a small observatory and 11-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope. He has offered to let NOVAC members come out and observe. Members are welcome to contact Joe concerning other dates, but in particular the October dates above have been chosen expressly to have members out. The Moon will be a few days past last quarter, so it should be dark most of the night. Daylight savings time ends on Saturday night, so there will even be an extra hour to observe (or sleep in!). Saturday night will probably be the preferred night in any case as it should be an easier drive out on Saturday afternoon.

Joe's site is near Moorefield, WV, out VA/WV Route 55 on the other side of Front Royal, Virginia. This is a pretty good dark-sky site. It is not perfect, as there are some houses visible in the distance and the town of Moorefield causes some sky glow to the northwest. However, it's a good 3000-foot-plus altitude site, with a relatively low horizon all around and an excellent southern horizon. While observing there under not quite ideal conditions in July, I had one of the best views of the Milky Way I've ever seen from the Eastern U.S. There are some other amateurs with observing sites there and lots are still available for persons or clubs (hint, hint!) who would like to buy a good observing site. Being a dark site, this is, of course, a good drive out from the Washington, D.C. area. The

total distance is about 130 miles from the beltway, with travel time being about 2 and half hours.

— The Moon will be a few
— days past last quarter, so it
— should be dark most of the
— night.

Directions:

- 1) Take I-66 west from the beltway until it ends (63 miles).
- 2) Take I-81 south to VA 55 west (2.7 miles)
- 3) Take VA/WV 55 west into West Virginia to WV 259 south (32 miles).
- 4.) Take WV 259 south 13.2 miles to Mathias, WV. Turn right just before "See's Auto Body Shop" (on left) toward Lost River State Park.
- 5.) Continue on this road (passing through the park) for 9.5 miles. Note that the last several miles are on a good gravel road.
- 6.) On the right will be an entrance with a metal gate and a sign saying "Mountain Meadows - Ronald Turner Properties".
- 7.) If you have the combination (see below) go through the gate and lock it behind you. Otherwise park there and walk in (for now) to the site.
- 8.) Make the first right turn, and follow this road to "lot no. 8", Joe's site, on the left. His

telescope dome should be obvious. Park anywhere on the grass.

The site is fairly easy to find, although arriving in daylight is certainly to be recommended on your first visit there.

- If you know you're coming for sure or want to arrange a visit at another time, please give Joe a call at 301-868-5322. He can answer any questions and provide the gate combination. You can also contact Joe if you have any doubts about the weather, as there is no point in going if weather conditions are bad.

Some cautions are in order. Although there are a few houses nearby (so far with essentially no outdoor lighting) Joe's site is completely undeveloped, with no restrooms, water, or electricity. Observers should bring water and food as desired. Restrooms are available at Lost River State Park. This is a mountain top site, so dress warmly - it can get quite cold by late October. There is plenty of room for camping, so bring a tent, etc. if you wish. And certainly all are welcome to bring any telescopes or other observing equipment they may wish to use. Of course, from such a dark site, scanning the Milky Way with binoculars or looking for meteors may easily fill up your night's observing, so a telescope is not really necessary.

Many NOVAC members in the past have expressed their wish to observe at a good dark-sky site. Well, you're all now invited to one. So hope for good weather and come on out to wild, wonderful, and dark - West Virginia! - Brent A. Archinal (and Joe Macrie)

THE PARSELLS PAGE

Jon Stewart-Taylor

An evening in Astro-hell.

A telescope. A solitary observer. A sky, almost completely covered by clouds. What keeps him at his lonely vigil? Why isn't he exhibiting the common sense God gave a gnat? ... I give you:

Doubling Up at Parsells

Ever notice how the weather forecasters never give forecasts for the same country we live in? The forecast for Friday, August 1st was "clear". They had been saying "clear" for three days, and they were still saying it at 8 PM on the evening of the 1st as I looked up at plentiful patches of cirrus mares' tails sprinkled with cumulus. Perhaps after sunset the cumulus would go away.

As darkness approached and I loaded the 10" Coulter into the car for the trip to Parsells, things didn't look much better. In fact, if anything, the cumulus had thickened a bit. Still, Parsells is only 15 minutes away if I'm willing to drop 35 cents on the toll road, and I had a list of 50-some objects I'd planned to observe this month. If I didn't get started on the list, I'd have to wait 6-8 months for another chance at some of them.

Surprise! When I arrived, the clouds were even thicker, now covering about 75% of the sky. But there were "sucker holes", and I was a sucker. I parked on the new parking lot (which opens directly off of Waxpool road), and unloaded the car. Within 5 minutes (thank goodness Dobsonians don't have to be polar aligned)

the observing chair, chart table, and telescope were set up next to second base, and I started on my observing list.

Even at zenith, the limiting magnitude was cut by the cirrus haze to around 3. Still, some stars were visible, and I had a secret weapon against hazy skies: over half the objects on my list were double stars for the Astronomical League (AL) double-star observing certificate. Since the majority of the doubles on the list are brighter than 6th magnitude, they can be observed in conditions when most deep-sky objects can't. And for the next two hours, that's exactly what I did, until a solid bank of clouds moved in around 11:30.

Some of the doubles on the list were old friends, like Mizar and Alcor (*zeta* UMA) or Cor Caroli (*alpha* CVN). Others which had never been more than a dot on the chart before, proved well worth the visit. My favorite of the night was *xi* BOO, a beautiful pair I perceived as yellow and gold, although *Burnham's* describes them as yellow and reddish-violet. The clouds may have filtered the colors — I'll certainly be back for another look.

Then there was *epsilon* BOO, which I couldn't split at all. When I got home and checked the list, the reason was obvious: the two components are separated by less than 3" of arc, and require magnification of about 200X to split. Even combined with my 2.5X Barlow, my 17mm eyepiece only gives about 165X. Time to start saving my pennies for that 10mm Plossl I've been coveting.

If you haven't observed doubles before, or if you'd like to expand your observing range,

Ron Cook

Date: Sat, 23 Aug 97 11:12:08 EDT

From: cook@scubed.com (Ronald W. Cook)

To: novac@his.com

Parsell's again tonight?

Parsell's was quite good last night. Clear skies, Jupiter, Saturn, M4, 7, 6, 11, 12, 22, 28, 8, 20, 21, 27, 31, the Double Cluster, one meteor, and about 23:30 — the Moon. There were also three satellites and those pesky airplanes - no swatting permitted, but they are tolerable. It seems every night I look toward Scorpius or Sagittarius, a satellite goes through the field. Pete Johnson found one and pointed it out in that area last night. The meteor was near the ecliptic heading west so might have been space debris - not very big.

Ron Cook

look into the AL double-star list. It's available on-line at the AL web site (there's a link on the NOVAC homepage), or you can contact Lee Polikoff (NOVAC's AL Coordinator) at a meeting. If you observe two doubles a week, you can finish the list in less than a year.

J.

— Jon.C.Stewart-Taylor@adn.alcatel.com

P.S. I later found out that I could split that double at less than 200X, but I needed steadier air than I had that night. Using an off-axis aperture mask helps too.

How Do I get to Parsells? Steve Blake and Ron Cook

From: SCBlake@aol.com

Date: Sun, 3 Aug 1997 08:47:01 -0400 (EDT)

To: novac@his.com

Subject: Parsells and the newsletter

I went out to Parsells Friday evening to do some observing but left around 9:15 when it became clear, so to speak, that the sky would only go from bad to worse.

I had not been to Parsells in a year so I went early, taking along the July/August newsletter. Well, the directions in the newsletter are wrong, which might explain in part why I was the only person there. A couple of sentences seem to be missing. It is much farther than 1.4 miles from Route 28 to Parsells field. Had I not been there before, there would have been no way to find it.

Here are my suggested directions, taken from two newsletters. I think these are right but someone should look them over.

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 Road.

(You may also take Route 7 West to 28, then go South to Waxpool.)

Turn left (West) on Waxpool Road (Route 28), and go 1.8 miles to the Waxpool/Farmwell intersection. (The intersection has a small sign pointing the way to the Broadlands development.)

Turn left on Route 625, Waxpool Road (!), heading towards Broadlands and go 1.6 miles to the Waxpool/Ryan/Shelhome intersection. Continue straight on Waxpool, through the Broadlands development, for about 1.4 miles watching for a left turn on to Waxpool Road(!!!) which is a gravel road.

Once on gravel go only about 200 yards straight ahead. You will pass a sign showing kids on a seesaw. Parsells field is right where the road turns right. Note that there are no signs marking the field now, but there is a new, gravel parking area where you can get out to see if you have found the right place.

I am not sure where people set up these days. There seem to be a couple options: near the new gravel parking area or on the field, just off the drivewayish road. To find the drivewayish road, do NOT turn right when Waxpool turns.

Comments/changes on these directions are more than welcome!

Steve Blake

From: cook@scubed.com (Ronald W. Cook)

Date: Tue, 5 Aug 1997 17:07:47 -0400

To: novac@his.com

Subject: Re: Parsells and the newsletter

Thank you Steve Blake. I've been up and down Shelhorn Road (a gravel road to which the directions led me) about seven times over two days and went down to the end of the development once.

Ron Cook

From: SCBlake@aol.com

Date: Tue, 5 Aug 1997 21:54:11 -0400 (EDT)

To: novac@his.com

Subject: Re: Parsells and the newsletter

Ron:

Thanks for the thanks. One more thing I might add: when you finally get to Parsells, not only is there no sign giving its name, but there now is nothing — no stands or backstop — that identify it from the road as a baseball field. Your best tip is the gravel driveway, and the fact that the field has new, but unfortunately very dry and dead, turf.

Steve

Upcoming Occultation of Saturn

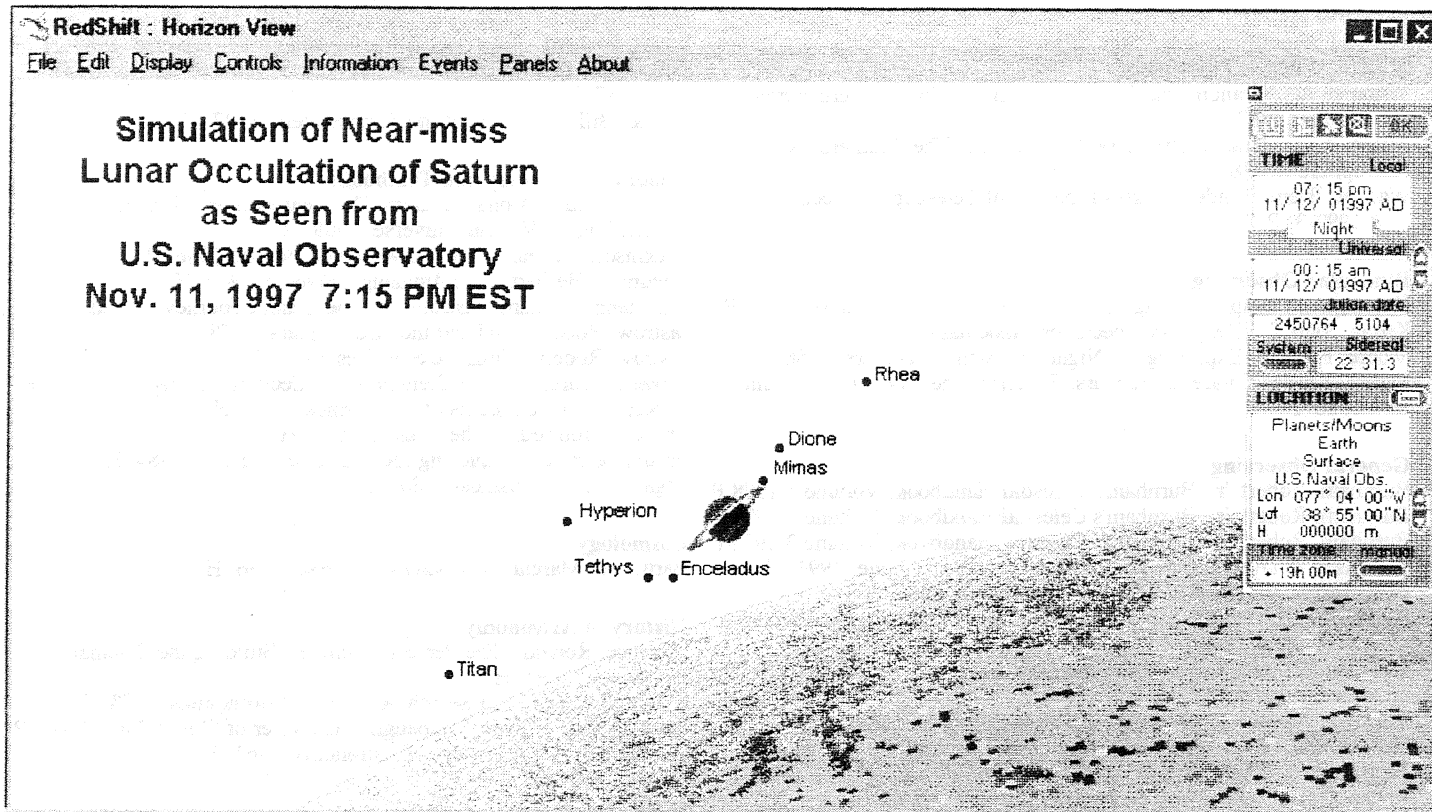
Ralph Kantrowitz

On the night of Tuesday, November 11, amateur astronomers in the Washington, DC area will be treated to a near occultation of Saturn under early evening skies. The accompanying Redshift 2.0 simulation was made for the U.S.

Naval Observatory in Washington, DC, but similar views will be available throughout the area. Even if one has no intention of recording the event photographically, the sight of Saturn and the moon speeding past one another will

make this near miss worth watching. Mark your calendar now!

P.S. Maris Multimedia Ltd. asked me to mention their web site: www.maris.com



Simulation made using Redshift 2.0, © Copyright 1997, Maris Multimedia, Ltd.

Overheard

on the Meade Advanced Products Users Group on the Internet:

First: "Did you know that Saturn is less dense than water? Given a suitably sized bath tub, it would float! But it would leave a ring..."

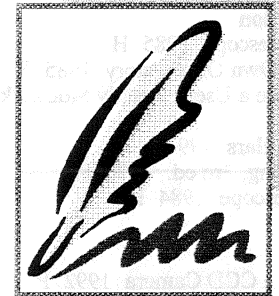
Second: "That's Ok... You can just scrub it off with a little Comet!"

Help Wanted!

An expert in MS-Access and Visual Basic is desperately needed

to assist the Treasurer and Newsletter Editor in a one-time programming project. If you would like to learn more about this project, please contact Elliott Fein at edfein@cpcug.org or 301 762-6261





Free Offer

If you can spell your name, you can write! This publication is looking for budding authors to write about their astronomical experiences.

Contact the Editor at edfein@cpcug.org or 301-762-6261

Northern Virginia Astronomy Club Library Books

Craig Tupper

Author Title Date Published H(ardbound) or P(aper)

Star Charts

- Cragin et. al. The Deep Sky Field Guide to Uranometria 2000.0
1993 H
Edmund Scientific Mag 5 Star Atlas
Miller 5" Miller Planisphere
Tirion et. al. Uranometria 2000.0, Volume 1, The Northern Hemisphere 1987 H
Tirion et. al. Uranometria 2000.0, Volume 2, The Southern Hemisphere 1988 H
Watson, Brent Finder Charts of the Bright Telescopic Objects
1992/3 P

Binocular Observing

- Harrington, Philip Touring the Universe through Binoculars 1990 P
Kozac, John T. Deep-Sky Objects for Binoculars 1988 P
Moore, Patrick Exploring the Night Sky with Binoculars 1986 H
Peltier, Leslie Guide to the Stars: Exploring the Sky with Binoculars
1986 P

General Observing

- Burnham, Robert Jr. Burnham's Celestial Handbook, Volume 1 1978 P
Burnham, Robert Jr. Burnham's Celestial Handbook, Volume 2 1978 P
Burnham, Robert Jr. Burnham's Celestial Handbook, Volume 3 1978 P
Dickinson & Dyer The Backyard Astronomer's Guide 1991 H
Holt, Terry The Universe Next Door 1985 H
Hynes, Steven Planetary Nebulae: A Practical Guide and Handbook
1991 H
Muirden, James Amateur Astronomer's Handbook: Guide to Exploring
the Heavens 1983 H
Muirden, James How to Use an Astronomical Telescope 1985 H
Newton and Teece The Cambridge Deep-Sky Album 1984 H
Page, Lou William A Dipper Full of Stars 1959 H
Ronan, Colin The Practical Astronomer 1981 H
Webb, Rev. T. W. Celestial Objects for Common Telescopes, Vol. 2
1962 P
? The Amateur Astronomer's Catalog of 500 Deep Sky Objects 1986 P

Equipment Selection and Construction

- Berry, Richard Build Your Own Telescope 1985 H
Berry, Richard How to Build Your Own Observatory 1985 P
Dobson, John How and Why to Make a User-Friendly Sidewalk
Telescope 1995 W
Hale, Alan R. How to Choose Binoculars 1991 P
Henry, Paul Telescopes for Stargazing, 3rd ed. 1976 H
Texereau, Jean How to Make a Telescope 1984 H

Astrophotography and CCD's

- Berry, Richard Choosing and Using a CCD Camera 1992 P
Berry, Richard The CCD Camera Cookbook 1994 P
Berry, Richard Astronomical Image Processing 1991 P
Covington, Michael Astrophotography for the Amateur 1985 H
Gordon, Barry Astrophotography 1985 P

Phenomena

- Clarke, Roy S. (ed.) The Port Orford, Oregon Meteorite Mystery
1993 P
Espenak & Anderson Total Solar Eclipse of 1997 March 9 1995 P
Espenak & Anderson Total Solar Eclipse of 1995 October 24 1994 P

Encyclopedias and Atlases

- Doherty, Paul Atlas of the Planets 1980 H
Donn, Bertram Atlas of Comet Halley 1910 1986 H
Lewis, Richard Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Universe 1983 H
Tully and Fisher Nearby Galaxies Atlas (oversize - on top shelf)
1987 H
Yenne, Bill Atlas of the Solar System 1987 H

General Astronomy and Textbooks

- Asimov, Isaac Alpha Centauri, The Nearest Star 1976 H
Calder, Nigel Violent Universe 1969 H
Dickinson, Terence The Universe and Beyond 1986 P
Friedman, Herbert The Amazing Universe 1975 H
Hartmann, William Astronomy, The Cosmic Journey (4th ed.) 1989 H
Jastrow, Robert God and the Astronomers 1978 P
Jastrow, Robert Until the Sun Dies 1977 P
Naval Research Lab A Clementine Collection: Moonglow 1994 P
Parker, Barry Concepts of the Cosmos 1984 H
Preiss, Byron (ed.) The Planets 1985 H
Protheroe et. al. Exploring the Universe (3rd ed.) 1984 H
Sagan, Carl Cosmos 1980 H

Cosmology

- Bartusiak, Marcia Thursday's Universe 1986 H

History of Astronomy

- Florence, Ronald The Perfect Machine - Building the Palomar Telescope 1994 H
Krupp, E.C. (ed.) In Search of Ancient Astronomies 1978 P
Levy, David Clyde Tombaugh, Discoverer of Planet Pluto 1991 P
Pannekoek, A. A History of Astronomy 1961 H

Video

- Al and Lynn Schumann 8mm video

Magazines and Articles

- Sky & Telescope and Astronomy, MANY old issues
Telescope Making, Issues 35-46
Landis, Rob Current State of the Baikonur Cosmodrome 1997 S
Landis, Rob A Shadowy Trace of the Space Race 1993 S

Library Rules and Procedures

- The librarian will open the library following the monthly meeting.
Books are shelved alphabetically by author. Oversized books are on the top shelf. Magazines are below.
When borrowing, remove the card from inside the back cover, write your name and the month/year on the card, and give the card to the librarian.
NOVAC members may borrow up to 4 items for a period of one month. Please show your membership card. If you do not have your card, and your name is not on the list of members in the library, and the librarian does not know you, you may be out of luck.
Please make every effort to return items to the planetarium the following month, in person or otherwise. If items are not returned on time, the borrower will experience cloudy nights for a year. Return items to the librarian, who will replace the card and re-shelve the item.
Please let the librarian know of any new items you would like to see in the library.
Donations are accepted, but astronomy texts and obsolete books of no historic interest are discouraged.

Outdoor Lighting Design Workshop

Received from Brent A. Archinal

This year's Virginia Section meeting to promote quality lighting will be held on Saturday, November 1 in northern Virginia. With the rapidly spreading interest and increasing activity devoted to preserving our remaining dark skies in Virginia and elsewhere, this is a meeting not to be missed.

The workshop will be held in the Arlington Planetarium, 1426 N. Quincy Street, Arlington, VA from 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Topics to be

addressed in presentations, discussions, and handouts will include criteria for good lighting design, street lighting, sports lighting, lighting ordinances, sign lighting, safety and security, and strategies for preserving the environment. An evening visit to a nearby observatory may be arranged. There will be a \$15 registration fee.

Further details of the program will be available in about a month. In the meantime please

spread the word to anyone you think may be interested, and plan to come to Arlington on 1 November.

Phil Ianna
804-924-7494
pai@virginia.edu

Date: Fri, 1 Aug 1997 18:49:32 +0100

From: Bill Jensen

Virginia Association of Astronomical Societies Convention

Sender: owner-novac@lists.his.com

Fellow NOVAC members, you may be interested in the attached e-mail.

Bill

From: Terry_Barker@vapower.com

To: william.jensen@tcs.wap.org,

Date: Fri, 1 Aug 1997 14:28:52 -0400

Subject: VAAS Convention

Fellow VAAS members — an update on the VAAS convention:

We have lined up a keynote speaker — Dr. Mark Sher of William & Mary. I saw him give a very good presentation at the recent Violent Universe workshop in Williamsburg. He gave a very informative and imaginative talk on the beginnings of the universe, including the possibility of alternate universes. Dr. Sher will be doing something similar for our convention.

Dr Phillip Ianna of UVA (and the International Dark Sky Association) will also be speaking.

And most importantly, we would like to have presentations from the different societies attending. We hope to have 50+ attendees, and this is a good forum to make yourself known to a state-wide audience, as well as polish those presentation skills! Please e-mail me with your ideas and potential subject areas so we can get them advertised.

The other societies that I have contacted and we expect will be attending are: Roanoke Valley, NOVAC (Northern Virginia Astronomy Club), Back Bay, Va. Tech, and Delmarva.

Planning is still in process, but the event will take place on Sept. 27, starting around 8:30 AM, at Randolph-Macon College, in Ashland (10 miles north of Richmond, on I-95).

In addition:

- Astronomy vendors will be present
- Door prizes will be given away
- There will be an after-event cookout
- Observing at the RMC observatory (7-inch refractor)
- Skywatch session that evening
- A comet photo contest

There are only two months left before the big day, so feel free to place this information in your club newsletter and other appropriate vehicles. I also think I can put together a web page especially for this event. Look for more info soon!

DINNER BEFORE THE MEETINGS

Brent A. Archinal

Our "dinner before the meeting" tradition continues in September and October. Wednesdays, September 17 and October 15 are the dates of the next NOVAC regular meetings and therefore our dinners. Here is the perfect opportunity to meet your fellow NOVAC members. There's time to sit and discuss whatever topic (astronomical or otherwise) you wish, away from the time constraints of the regular meetings, and in a place where you'll be able to recognize who you're talking to - unlike during most of our observing events! It will be a good place to discuss our NVTM '97 star party - which will have just taken place in September - and other star parties nationwide as the summer season ends. In any case, all are welcome, so come join us and bring a friend.

The place to meet continues to be the *Santa Fe Cafe* in Rosslyn. You should plan to arrive at about 5:45 PM, in order to have time to make it to the regular meeting at the Arlington Planetarium at 7:30 PM. This is particularly true as we've been having larger and larger groups of

members attending lately. The *Santa Fe Cafe* is a nice Mexican restaurant with good food, usually some worthwhile specials, and reasonable prices, although credit cards are not accepted. Smoking is allowed in one part of this (large) one room restaurant, but so far NOVAC members have not been smoking and the few others dining at that time have rarely smoked. If you do arrive first, we would appreciate it if you'd try to sit in the front in the non-smoking section. 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 Drive. 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 is

usually available in front of the restaurant, on the other side of the street up the hill, or around the long block (make two left turns) on Clarendon just before it ends by the restaurant. However, be sure to feed the parking meter if you arrive before 6 PM. This location is also quite close to the Rosslyn metrorail station.

Reservations are not necessary, although it helps a lot to know who's coming so we'll know how big a table to get. We've been filling a pretty large table lately, so this information does prove useful. Also should it be necessary to cancel (which it never has by the way), I can let you know. So, if you know you're coming, or if you need a ride to the meeting and back to the metro, or just for more information or directions, please give me a call (evenings) at 703-237-0201. You can also e-mail me at baa@casa.usno.navy.mil.

See you at dinner!

Minutes of the July and August Meetings

Pete Johnson

Minutes of the July 9, 1997 Board Meeting of the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM at the home of President Brenda Jones.

Brenda welcomed Pedro Martinez to his first Board meeting as the new Treasurer.

1. Pedro reported that Lee Polikoff had donated a copy of Microsoft Excel to the club, and he would soon be receiving training on how to use the new software. One possible change would be the issuance of postcard style membership identity cards, replacing the index cards utilized currently.

Tilly Smith suggested that other improvements may be possible using the new software, and Nicole Mastej agreed to research the use of non-profit bulk rate mail for distribution of the newsletter.

2. Pedro distributed a "Statement of Cash Received and Disbursed for the period January 1, 1997 through June 20, 1997", as prepared by outgoing Treasurer Ken Pettijohn. Tilly suggested that an annual budget process tying projects to allocated budget expenditures may be worthwhile.

3. Craig Tupper distributed a financial history for the period 1994 through 1997, including projections until the end of 1997. He then reported on the negotiations to obtain a Losmandy mount for the new club scope which is to be placed at Crockett park for club members' use, noting the current owner was asking \$1,800 for the mount. This mount included encoders and dual axis drives. After discussion, a motion was made, seconded and unanimously adopted to approve purchase of a new Losmandy mounting for \$1,800.00.

Craig further reported he was personally purchasing CCD equipment, and that he intended to share the CCD experience with other club members on the new club scope.

4. Bill Jensen said that he had a conversation with an astronomy store owner relocating to West Virginia, and the possibility of NOVAC's involvement in the maintenance and use of an observatory to be built there. He said that he had given this store owner Craig Tupper's phone and e-mail address, and that he would pursue further contact.

5. Jon Stewart-Taylor's suggestion of a club post office box number was discussed. It was noted that several officers receive club related mail, but no single post office was convenient to all their locations, so there was no interest at pursuing this idea at this time.

6. Brenda reported that Lee Polikoff is planning to highlight AL programs at upcoming

meetings and in the club newsletter. It was the consensus of the board that the club should purchase five copies of the AL publication *Observe*.

7. Tilly presented an update on the upcoming programs for the balance of 1997, including the Russian Space Program in July, a possible Mars mission summary in August, and NOVAC sponsored programs for the fall concerning beginning astronomy, binoculars, telescopes and deep sky observing. He also suggested the possibility of demonstrating the use of the club's web page at an upcoming meeting.

8. Tilly mentioned that a review of membership renewal commentary indicated that many club members did not want any large changes, indicating overall approval of the operation of the club. Several comments requested beginner oriented presentations, and expressed appreciation for the club newsletter. Finally, the importance of more dark-sky sites, the web site, and possible trips organized for observing was mentioned. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Jensen, for

Pete Johnson, Secretary

Minutes of the July 1997 General Meeting of the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Club President Brenda Jones at the Arlington Planetarium. There were 47 members in attendance.

Announcements

Geoff Chester announced that the NSNO is looking for volunteers to take folks on open house tours on Monday nights. He's looking for several people who can donate one Monday night every 4 to 6 weeks. A benefit to this duty would be possible use of the Observatory's 14" Celestron. Geoff's phone number is (202) 762-1438.

Lee Polikoff said that he had sent the Astronomical League the latest list of 238 NOVAC members. He also set out a copy at the meeting so members could check to see if their information was correct. Lee has ordered sets of the AL guide to Messier objects and Hershal Handbooks.

Craig Tupper reported that the club has purchased a CG-11 equatorial mount for the club telescope. Craig has also purchased an ST-7 CCD imaging system for himself which he is willing to make available to club members. The plan is to set up a schedule so members can try out astrophotography.

Nicole announced that the Kalmbach book catalogs are available. Contact her if you want to place an order.

John Avellone reviewed his trip to ALCON-97 (AL-97). He showed overheads and photographs of his trip.

Officers reports

Vice President Tilly Smith reported that the upcoming programs are

Tonight - Rob Landis, "The Russian Space Program"

August - "Status of Mars Missions"

Then we will have a four part series presented by NOVAC members

Sept - "Getting Started in Astronomy"

Oct - "Choosing and Using Binoculars"

Nov- "Telescopes and Eye Pieces"

Dec - "Deep Sky Techniques"

Secretary Pete Johnson announced that he has returned from his vacation. The phone hotline had gone down during his absence and he wasn't sure when it happened.

We have received several slide sets for the presentation kit but we are still looking for a projector.

Treasurer Pedro Martinez noted that his address on the application was incorrect and requested that it be fixed. If you wish to subscribe to *S&T* or *Astronomy*, or renew a previous subscription, contact Pedro.

Observing report

Presented by Jeff Stetekluh.

The Sky Tour was given.

Program

The night's program was presented by Rob Landis on "The Russian Space Program".

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pete Johnson, Secretary

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(Continued from page 8)

Minutes of the August 13, 1997, Board Meeting of the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club.

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m. at the home of club president Brenda Jones.

1. Pedro Martinez is working on new membership software and producing new mailing labels. Everything is going well. Samples of the new labels were distributed and discussed.
2. Nicole has researched getting a bulk mail rate for the NOVAC news letters. She circulated an analysis of the different price savings. As a result of Nicole's work a motion was made to go with a bulk rate. The motion was approved.
3. Craig said the lock at Crockett was gone. Brenda said she would look into it.
4. In regard to the Telescope Meet on Sept 6th, Brenda said we usually get the meet announced in the Style section of the *Washington Post* in Friedlanders column. Tilly agreed to create the event flyers and get them printed. It was agreed the swap meet would start at 4:00 p.m. and viewing would begin at sunset.
5. Pete said that there was a storm of calls on the hotline requesting information about the public viewing of the Perseid meteor showers. Several radio stations apparently picked up on the web page announcements and wrongly concluded that there was a public event to announce. It was agreed that we need to separate the public events from the club events to help avoid future confusion.
6. In regard to the club scope, Craig received his ST-7 CCD camera and showed off his first few images of M57. Craig talked about getting a pier built at Crockett. A discussion about the power availability at the pier location followed. Craig and Tilly agreed to talk with Gary at Crockett to discuss the options.
7. Brenda talked about the upcoming elections and said we needed an election committee to search the membership for possible candidates. Brenda appointed Bill Jensen, and Nicole volunteered. The current officers were then polled as to their intention for the upcoming term:
 - Pete - Will seek another term and possibly another position.
 - Tilly - expressed an interest to run for president or VP again.
 - Jeff - wished to continue as a Trustee.
 - Craig - enjoys his role as a trustee gadfly too much to give it up.
8. Tilly Smith said that the August program will be Pete Banholzer presenting technical information on present and future Mars missions.
9. Pete Johnson reported that it looks like we may have a projector for the presentation package.

Pete also spoke about SETI@HOME, which is a project from the SETI group to produce a screen saver for interested people with access to the Internet to run. The screen saver would download a set of SETI research data from over the Internet, analyze it as part of the screen saver function, and return the data to SETI when completed. It is a way to expand their limited computing abilities. A discussion followed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Pete Johnson, Secretary

Minutes of the August 1997 General Meeting of the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by club President Brenda Jones at the Arlington Planetarium. There were 47 members in attendance.

Announcements

The Telescope meet is scheduled for September 6th at Crockett Park. The swap meet will begin at 4:00.

Brenda asked if anyone knew about the lock at Crockett disappearing. A member said that someone from the park brought it to their attention and that the park officials know about it. Brenda said a new lock had been ordered.

Lee Polikoff distributed Astronomical League handouts on how to polar-align telescopes in the field. Lee gave out AL certificates for binocular Messier certificates, 100 Messier Objects, 70 Messier objects and 50 Southern Sky objects. Lee said that if you did not receive your copy of the *Reflector* give him a call.

Brent Archinal told about the International Dark Sky's conference scheduled for November 1 at the Arlington Planetarium. They are planning to invite city engineers to educate them about light pollution. There will be more information in the upcoming newsletter.

Elliott Fein is looking for articles for the news letter.

Officers Reports

Vice President Tilly Smith reported that the next few months will feature a four part series, presented by club members, on getting started in astronomy.

September - Getting Started, John Stewart-Taylor

October - Selecting Binoculars

November - Eye Pieces

Secretary- Pete Johnson presented travel brochures offering Solar eclipse cruises in 1998.

He also talked about Seti@home, a project from the SETI group to produce a screen saver

for people with access to the Internet to run. The screen saver would download a set of SETI research data from via the Internet, analyze it as part of the screen saver function, and return the data to SETI when completed. SETI sees it as a creative way to expand their limited computing abilities. Pete said he would mail out the web address over the e-mail.

Treasurer - Pedro Martinez: Asked members to contact him if they wish to get the club discount on *S&T* or *Astronomy* magazines. If you are interested, send Pedro your renewal notice or the mailing label from the subscription.

Pedro spoke about the new software package for managing the membership information.

He circulated an updated list so members could verify their entries.

Observing report - was presented by Brenda in Jeff Stetekluh's absence.

The Sky Tour was given by Brent Archinal.

The night's program was presented by Rob Landis on the Russian Space Program.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Pete Johnson,
Secretary

NOVAC Notices and Benefits

Discounts on Sky & Telescope and Astronomy.

As a member of NOVAC you can get astronomy magazine subscriptions at a discount. To obtain *Sky & Telescope* for \$27.00 (instead of the standard \$36.00), make your check out to "Sky Publishing Co." for \$27. You can subscribe to *Astronomy Magazine* for \$20.00 (one year). Make your check payable to "Kalmbach Publishing Company". In each case, note on the check: "new subscription" or "renewal." If this is a renewal, include your customer number. Send your check to Treasurer Pedro Martinez, Jr., 6319 Anneliese Dr., Falls Church VA 22044.

The treasurer will send in the checks to Sky Publishing and Kalmbach once a month on the first of each month. To have your renewal included, be sure to have it in his hands by the last day of the preceding month.

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.

There are no special 10% discounts offered on publications from Kalmbach Publishing, but read what follows.

Discount on Books

NOVAC is participating in the discount book sales program offered by Kalmbach Publishing. They will sell our members any astronomy related book in their catalog for 25% off the list price when we send in a group order. Nicole Mastej is coordinating the sales. If you are interested, please see her at a meeting or call her at home (703) 435-8724 to place an order. Make your check payable to "NOVAC" for the price of the book minus the discount when you place the order. We anticipate doing this 3 - 4 times a year if demand warrants.

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.

One telescope is a Celestron model SP-C6 on a Super Polaris German equatorial mount and wood tripod. It will readily fit disassembled in any car, is easily transported, and can be set up quickly at remote observing sites. The telescope comes with Orion Ultrascopic 10mm and Meade MA 25mm eyepieces with 1.25-inch barrel sizes.

The other telescope 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 a telescope you will need to show your NOVAC observing pass and leave a \$500 (for the Celestron) or \$250.00 (for the Dobson) security deposit. To borrow the Celestron, contact Doug Mistler at (703) 437-0513; for the Dobson, contact Bob L'Hommedieu at (703) 978-0946. 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 telescope 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 borrow books, see NOVAC Librarians Pedro Martinez or Craig Tupper 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 1997

Observing at Savage Farm, C.M. Crockett Park and Nichlason site: see the back cover of this newsletter.

Observing at Parsells Field: any evening.

General Membership Meetings

General Membership Meetings are held at the Arlington Planetarium, 1426 N. Quincy Street, Arlington, VA, on the third Wednesday of every month. To reach the Planetarium, take Interstate 66 to exit 71 West, North Fairfax Dr. (Rt. 237). Go east on Rt. 237 to the 5th stoplight, N. Quincy Street (about 0.8 miles). Turn left onto N. Quincy Street (at the funeral home). Go 6 blocks (about 0.5 miles). The planetarium is the low white domed building on the left.

Trustee Meetings are held the Wednesday before the week of the General Membership Meeting. Non-trustees interested in attending should contact a club officer or board member for further information.

7:30 on 3rd Wed

NOVAC On-line

NOVAC maintains an e-mail mailing list. 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 Chewning Toulmin, pct@his.com.

NOVAC Observing Site Rules

C. M. Crockett Park: Any night that NOVAC observes at Crockett Park, the observing session will be open to the public. The gate will be locked and will not be unlocked unless a NOVAC member enters the park, at which time the gate should remain unlocked until 10 o'clock (or some other prearranged time) when the Assistant Park Manager will come out and ask members of the public to leave. The gate will then be locked and should remain locked through the rest of the evening. NOVAC members may remain until they are finished with their observing session. There is now a 2-week lead time requirement for permission to observe at Crockett Park on nights other than those listed on our schedule at the back of this newsletter. Gary Kwolek recommends that anyone interested in observing in that area on unscheduled nights drive out to the Crockett Park gatehouse, turn left and drive down to the cul-de-sac where you can set up your telescope on the public road.

If any NOVAC member out observing at Crockett Park notices any member of the public violating park policy, he or she is requested to notify the Assistant Park Manager, who lives in the house adjacent to the end of the parking lot.

During EDT, set up on the large field to the left. During EST, 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; 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 noise, alcohol, or loose dogs, and pick up after yourself. We are guests of the Dulles Little League, and could

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

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 your phone number. 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. Make sure the gate is locked whenever you are in the park, and 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.

Nichlason Site: The same rules apply as for the Savage Farm Site except that in seeking permission to use the site for non-scheduled observing call Smokey Jacobs (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority) at 703-250-9124 and follow same procedure as with Savage Farm Site.

Directions to NOVAC Observing Sites

C. M. Crockett Park: From the Washington DC/Northern Virginia area, go west on I-66 21.7 miles from I-495 to Exit 43A in Gainesville onto Rt. 29 South toward Warrenton. After 11.8 miles on Rt. 29, stay left (towards Culpeper), to bypass Warrenton (but still on Rt. 29 S.) Go about 1 mile to Rt. 643 exit, Meetze Road. At top of ramp, turn left to go East on Rt. 643. Go 7.5 miles on Rt. 643. Watch for the C.M.Crockett Park sign on your right, and turn right into the Park Entrance Road. Once on the park entrance road, go one-half mile to the park gate.

Parsells Field: (Note: Because of ongoing construction, the directions that follow may be misleading, incomplete, or incorrect. Use at your risk! See the article on the "Parsells Page", earlier in this newsletter) 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 left on Route 625, Waxpool Rd. (!), and go about 1.4 miles (through the Broadlands development), then turn left onto Waxpool Rd. (!!), which is then a gravel road. The field is about 200 yards ahead. Once on the gravel, you will need to continue straight ahead on a drivewayish road, rather than bearing right and continuing on Waxpool. Note that the field itself is currently undergoing refurbishment, so there are no signs marking it at this time.

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 on the left 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 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. 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 from the outside. 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.

Nichlason Site: I-66 to Rt. 7100 (Fairfax County Parkway) south to Ox Road (Rt. 123) south to second right on Chapel Road to immediate left onto Wolf Run Shoals Road (Rt. 610). Continue on Wolf Run Shoals Road (watch signs carefully at twists and turns in the road) for 3.9 miles to the site. It is immediately after a yellow house with white picket fence on the right. Nichlason Site is on the left marked by "Wildlife Sanctuary" signs on utility poles. After third "Wildlife" sign there is a dirt/gravel lane into the site.

From Springfield/Burke area: go north on the Fairfax County Parkway (Rt. 7100) to left onto Burke Lake Road. Burke Lake Road becomes Clifton Road just after the intersection with Rt. 123. Continuing on Clifton Road, turn left at the Citgo station onto Wolf Run Shoals Road. Follow Wolf Run Shoals Road as above to site.



The NOVAC Newsletter is the official publication of the **Northern Virginia Astronomy Club** and is published six times per year at 5 Carter Court, Rockville, MD 20852-1005, Elliott D. Fein, Editor and Publisher. The NOVAC Newsletter is sent to members of NOVAC as a regular membership benefit.

Membership in the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club is \$18.00 per year and is open to anyone interested in astronomy or the sciences. Additional memberships at the same address without additional copies of the newsletter are \$6.00 per person. Contact Treasurer Pedro Martinez, Jr., 6319 Anneliese Dr., Falls Church VA 22044. All notices of change of address should be sent to Pedro Martinez, Jr. Please include both old and new addresses.

NOVAC does not knowingly accept advertising for products of inferior quality nor does it accept responsibility for the quality of advertised products.

NOVAC members are invited to submit articles for publication in the *NOVAC Newsletter*. The editor reserves the right to edit all materials submitted.

Article submissions, in ASCII please, may be sent to Elliott Fein at edfein@cpcug.org, or to Elliott's address in Rockville, given above. Questions? Call (301) 762-6261, or send e-mail.

Deadline for submissions is three weeks in advance of publication, e.g., October 10 for the November/December Newsletter

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The 1997 NOVAC Membership Directory

NOTE: This directory is not to be reproduced or be used for any commercial purpose.

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1997 NOVAC Observing Dates (Subject to change)

C. M. Crockett Park

September 5, 6 (NOVAC Telescope Meet), 26, 27

October 3, 4, 21 (Orionid meteor shower), 24, 25, 31

November 1, 17 (Leonid meteor shower), 21, 22, 29

December 13 (Geminid meteor shower), 19, 20, 22 (Ursid meteor shower)

Savage Farm & Nichlason Site

September 5, 6, 7, 26, 27, 28

October 3, 4, 5, 21 (Orionid meteor shower), 24, 25, 26, 31

November 1, 2, 17 (Leonid meteor shower), 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30

December 13 (Geminid meteor shower), 19, 20, 21, 22 (Ursid meteor shower), 26, 27, 28

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Inside:

- Parsells Page,
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- Upcoming meetings,
- and much, much more!