

SIDEREAL TIMES

The Official Publication of the
Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton

Director:
Kirk Alexander

Treasurer:
Ron Mittelstaedt

Program Chairman:
Mark Lopez

Assistant Director:
John Miller

Secretary:
Lisa Yeh

Editor:
Victor Belanger

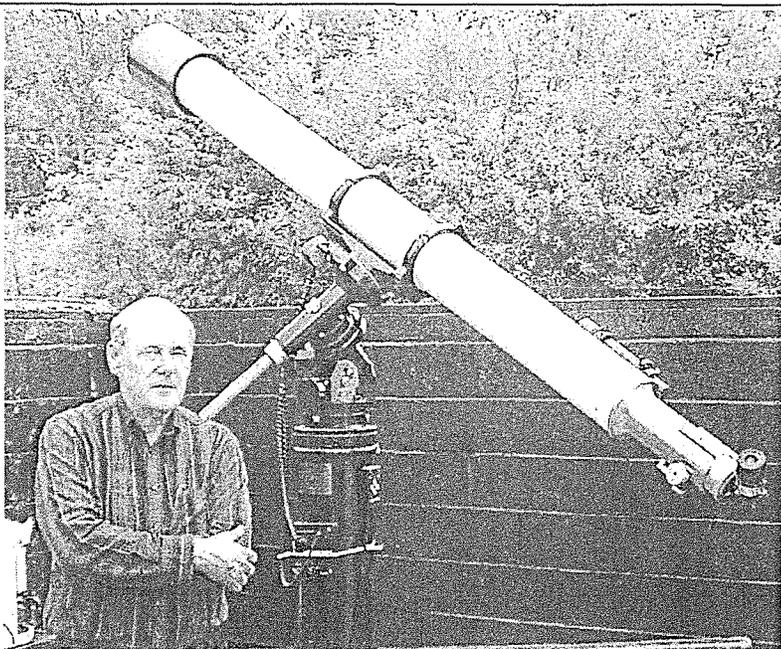
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From the Director

Welcoming and Thanking AAAP SuperNovae Anyone who as worked in a volunteer organization knows what a blessing it is to have a core of people who generously and graciously contribute their time and energy to keeping the organization alive. The AAAP is no exception and I want to publicly thank here those that have come forward in the past couple of months with extraordinary new contributions. First and foremost my thanks goes out to all of those that contributed to the incredible new "tail-pipe" and focuser for our Hastings Refractor at the Washington Crossing Observatory. Ralph Marantino gets the lion's share of credit for generating the idea in the first place and he and John Church and others helped follow up with Bill Burgess who did the machining. John and Gene Ramsey then took it upon themselves to install it in the telescope tube—a task that turned out to be a challenge in itself. We are all grateful to them for their enormous efforts and both the focuser and spiffed up scope look tremendous. I encourage you all to get to WC at your next opportunity to see this incredible improvement in the AAAP telescope arsenal!



I shouldn't stop there with respect to Gene Ramsey, however since he is essentially single-handedly responsible for a number of grounds improvements at Washington Crossing as well. I have thanked him for this previously but he continues undeterred and is now working on improvements to the roof and to the concrete columns. In honor of his contributions (and to welcome more!) I have appointed Gene as Assistant Observatory Chairman for the Washington Crossing Observatory.

Speaking of appointments – this leads me now to our recent election of officers. I was particularly pleased this year both to have our own treasure Ron Mittelstaedt return to the role of Treasurer but even more pleased to have two new folks come forward to the officer rank. John Miller was elected Assistant Director (in addition to his continuing duties as WebMaestro and for which he deserves additional thanks) and Lisa Yeh has graciously accepted the position of Secretary (a job which every Director holds in high esteem due to the importance of having minutes for each monthly

meeting! For the record

The slate was:

Director	–	Kirk Alexander
Assistant Director	–	John Miller
Treasurer	–	Ron Mittelstaedt
Program Chairman	–	Mark Lopez
Secretary	–	Lisa Yeh

The election was held at the last monthly meeting and the slate was approved unanimously.

Coming next weekend is the Jersey StarQuest star party. We're running a little behind on registrations but I hope that simply means that many of you are putting checks into the mail as I write so that you can be included in the meals. It should be a great time and I look forward to sharing time with all of you. See you there... And wish on your favorite star for clear skies!

Kirk
p.s. Don't forget the special June meeting at the Trenton Planetarium hosted by our own Bill Murray (June 11th at 8:00, our usual meeting time but different meeting place.)

Simpson Observatory (609) 737-2577

**Minutes of the
Board Meeting of the AAAP
May 9, 2002**

Director Kirk Alexander called the meeting to order at 7:42 PM.

Starquest Chairman Don Monticello reported that 15 people have registered so far for Jersey Starquest (in addition to 3 people receiving free passes). The next issue of Sidereal Times will contain a second printing of the Starquest registration form and additional information on Starquest will be included on the club's website. Don has e-mailed Starquest information to previous Starquest attendees. The deadline for registration is May 24th. Current speakers for Starquest include Bob Vanderbei and Mary Lou West.

Louisa Lockette will send out a second round of publicity information on Starquest to the local newspapers. Starquest brochures will be available at the observatory for distribution on public nights. The board has decided to spend \$400 on door prizes for Starquest.

Observatory Chairman Rex Parker thanked Bill Murray and Gene Ramsey for the cleanup of the observatory. A work party for later this summer is being planned. Projects to be done at this work party include checking the status of the rail track and painting the observatory. Ron Mittelstaedt will pick up the new focuser for the 6" refractor at the NEAF conference. George Walker has had the refractor tube repaired and recoated. All keyholders are requested to log their observations using the C14 in order to create a record of the optical performance of the C14. The optics on the C14 will be cleaned and checked in order to optimize its performance. The new Paramount for the C14 will be delivered sometime this summer. Rex will ask John Church to fix the alarm on the observatory.

Nominations Chairman Rex Parker reported that the current slate of candidates for the elections in May are:

Director	-	Kirk Alexander
Asst. Director	-	John Miller
Program Chairman	-	Mark Lopez
Treasurer	-	Ron Mittelstaedt
Secretary	-	Lisa Yeh

Pete Oppenheim having to withdraw from the position of Treasurer due to other commitments. Nominations remain open until the May meeting when the election will take place.

Sidereal Times Editor Vic Belanger stated that the deadline for the June issue of the Times is Fri. May 31st.

Rex attended the State Park Service Award ceremony to accept the award the AAAP received for recognition of volunteer service. A copy of the award will be posted in the observatory. Public activities of the AAAP are now being printed in the Hopewell township brochure. The Township is sponsoring a trip to the new Rose Center (Hayden Planetarium) in New York on Sept. 7th. Volunteers from the AAAP will be needed to act as guides for this trip.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Bill Murray, Secretary

**Minutes of the
Regular Meeting of the AAAP
May 14, 2002**

Director Kirk Alexander called the meeting to order at 8:03 PM.

Kirk reported that the AAAP had been given an award by the State

of NJ for the volunteer activities the AAAP sponsors in the state park (In particular for Vic Belanger's "Introduction to Amateur Astronomy" program and our public observing nights.) Kirk thanked all the members whose efforts resulted in this award.

Gene Ramsey generously donated several pieces of excess equipment (including several Barlow lenses and an eyepiece case) to club members who could make use of them.

Kirk made an announcement about Jersey Starquest (June 7-9) encouraging club members to sign up for the star party. Speakers for the event include Mary Lou West and Bob Vanderbei.

Program Chairman Mark Lopez introduced the speaker, Bill Murray of the AAAP whose talk was titled "CCD Astro-imaging - Tricks of the Trade". The talk was well received.

Acting Nominations chairman Larry Smith reported on the slate of officers for the 2002-3 term. The slate was:

Director	-	Kirk Alexander
Asst. Director	-	John Miller
Program Chairman	-	Mark Lopez
Treasurer	-	Ron Mittelstaedt
Secretary	-	Lisa Yeh

The election was then held and the slate was approved unanimously.

Asst. Observatory Chairman Gene Ramsey reported that the newly landscaped area west of the observatory was ready for use as an observing field but should not be driven on. Gene then reported on several projects that needed to be done around the observatory. These included building a sheet metal stop at the point where the roof meets the rails to prevent entry by squirrels (cost \$70), repairs to the masonry columns supporting the rails (cost \$30), and rust proofing and repair of the rails (approximate cost \$50-\$100). The club approved an appropriation of \$150 for Gene to buy supplies and begin the repairs.

The deadline for the June issue of the Times is Fri. May 31st.

Secretary Bill Murray reported that the June meeting (June 11th) would be held at the planetarium in Trenton. Planetarium director Dick Perry will present the planetarium show "Journey to the Stars". Dick will be retiring this year after 35 years at the planetarium and Bill suggested that the club buy him a card for the many years of planetarium programs he has given for the AAAP.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 PM.

Bill Murray, Secretary

**Deadline for the
Mid-Summer Issue of the
Sidereal Times
July 12, 2002**

Make sure to get your pictures of Jersey Starquest to myself or John Miller for inclusion in the Times and on our Website.

From the Treasurer

Peter Oppenheim gave me a year's rest, which I am most grateful for, but I'mmmmm BACK! Yes, I'm back in the treasurer's position. Thirteen years just wasn't enough.

This weekend I attended the Northeast Astronomy Forum. I was able to obtain several items for NJ Starquest door prizes. Picked up several eyepieces at the Tele-Vue table, then on to the Software Bisque booth to view what our new Paramount G-1100ME mount will look like and how it will operate, a fine machine. Our unit is in this summer's production run and hopefully we will see it in July. Steve also gave me a door prize of "The Sky" version 3.

Next was Jim Kendrick's booth where I got five red flashlights, something for the younger attendees to our event. Last stop was with our old friends that have a new name, "High Point Scientific." I got some good prices on a pair of Celestron 10X50 binoculars and a Telrad finder. I may have a chance of winning a door prize this year hearing that the registration is down. I also obtained a 2" Tele-Vue "Starbrite" diagonal for the Hastings 6 1/4" refractor.

On the subject of the Hastings refractor, we are now the owners of a work of art. A company call Burgess Optical took on the task of making a tail piece/focuser. Bill Burgess took this task as a challenge. Wanting to keep the focuser in tune with the era of the scope (1879) he made the housing out of brass. The drawtube has about a five-inch travel. The fine focus is about twenty to one. Even the knurling on the focusing knob is of a design of the late 19th century. For the love of making this scope a showpiece with his focuser, Bill took a loss on this sale. We are most grateful for his dedication. Photos of this project can be viewed on Bill's web page: www.bdinstruments.com/generic9.html. We also need to thank George Walker's son who had the optical tube of the Hastings stripped and painted and the brass polished. This is one scope that will be better than new.

I was so impress with this focuser and the one he made Ralph for his Astro Physics that I'm having Bill build one for my C-11. He also has 2.7" eyepieces for this focuser, which he is lending me to use at Starquest.

The treasury balance is \$8794.89 and we have 133 members.

Note: I will continue putting the dues renewal date on the lower right bottom of each Sidereal Times address label. This is the date your dues are due with the AAAP. Those with club magazine subscriptions, Astronomy and Sky and Telescope, who wants their subscriptions renewed, please send you payment about three months prior to the date of your club renewal. Please act accordingly, for if you wait until your club dues are due to pay you may miss one or two issues. I am not going to send out renewal notices to members who get magazines; they get enough notices from their respective publishers. Just trying to cut some of the workload of this job.

The dues structure is as follows: \$30 basic membership; \$60 for membership and a subscription to Astronomy or Sky and Telescope magazine; \$90 if both magazines are desired with membership.

If you have a Sky and Tel subscription please send the subscription notice and the postage paid envelope when renewing

your membership.

You may send the dues directly to me at: Ron Mittelstaedt, Treasurer, 149 Palmer Lane, Ewing, NJ 08618-3207

Ron Mittelstaedt

From the Webmaster

A major upgrade has just been completed on the AAAP web site. The photo gallery section has been completely redesigned. The layout mimics a photo album, highlighting an event or subject. Here's how it works:

1. Go to the web site: www.princetonastronomy.org
2. Click on the image of Saturn (Gallery) at the top of the screen
3. Look at the left margin of your screen and click "Enter the Galleries"
4. In the center of your screen you will see a section listing the photo album topics. Topics currently include: StarQuest 2000; 2001; 11-2001 observatory work party; Club dinner with Tony Tyson; Bill Murray astropix; NEAF 2002.
5. Click on the topic of your choice. This will bring you to a page of "thumbnail" photos with captions. Click on the individual thumbnail photo for a larger version of that picture.
6. To navigate through the gallery look at the small links above the photo area.

Now, we need more pictures!! (Please email me before snailmailing or emailing new pix).

Hope you enjoy this new feature.

John Miller

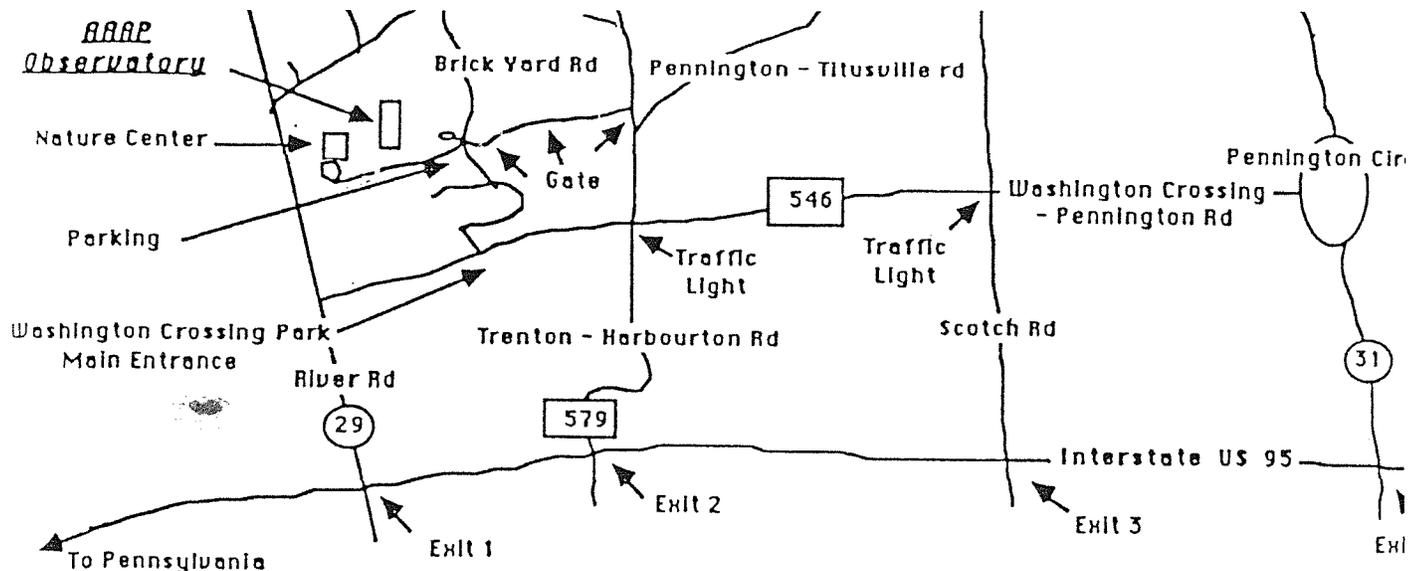
From the Archives

From time to time I will be bringing things from the archives to the pages of the Sidereal Times. To start this column off, nothing would be more appropriate than the Minutes Of Our First Meeting; Nov. 5, 1962, nearly 40 years ago.

After introductory remarks by Robert Sanders, founder of the Association, it was moved that the name of the organization be Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton. The motion was passed. Mr. Sanders suggested that three committees be formed, and appointed members as follows. Meetings and Programs: Gifford Havens, chairman; Stan Wells, Nancy Harris. By-Laws: Fred Bowers, chairman; Milo Wadlin, Ron Rogers. Nominating: it was suggested that this committee wait for a couple months to allow members to become acquainted. After some discussion of meeting dates and times, it was decided to hold meetings on the second Monday of each month. The next meeting will be on December 10, 1962 at 8 PM.

There was some discussion of telescopes owned by members. Six members have their own telescopes, and four have observatories. Mr. Sanders suggested that the next meeting be devoted to telescopes. A motion to make Sanders temporary chairman was passed. He offered to have the next meeting at the Lawrenceville School. A motion to adjourn was passed. (Signed) Gifford Havens.

John Church



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

Amateur Astronomers'
 Association of Princeton
 PO Box 2017
 Princeton, NJ 08543

June 2002

