

SIDEREAL TIMES

The Official Publication of the
Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton

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Number 6

From the Director

AAAP Regular Meeting June 8. We will make our annual return to the NJ State Museum Planetarium for the next AAAP regular meeting June 8 (8:00 PM). The night will be hosted by AAAP member and planetarium staff lecturer Bill Murray, and will feature the planetarium show based on the NASA Cassini spacecraft mission to Saturn. The Cassini vehicle will soon be orbiting Saturn, studying its rings and moons, including the largest moon, Titan.

New Program Chair to Join Re-elected Board of Trustees. At the AAAP Annual Meeting in May, the membership re-elected candidates for four of the five board positions (see Org. Structure chart): **Director (me), Asst. Director (John Miller), Treasurer (Ron Mittelstaedt), Secretary (Mark Jaworsky).** However, the important position of Program Chair was left unfilled temporarily, due to the recent unexpected resignation of Mark Lopez. Mark had contributed greatly to the AAAP with outstanding guest lectures and many memorable pre-meeting dinners over the past several years.

I am now pleased to report that **Michele Novatski** has accepted the position of **Program Chair**, by appointment and unanimous consent of the Board. Michele has been helping the club in planning special events, such as the Mars picnic/observing session last August, and worked with Mark on programs over the past couple years. Now Michele will be leading the program committee in its quest to continue to bring state of the art lectures to AAAP meetings. The speaker programs have for decades been a distinguishing feature of our club in the world of amateur astronomy. Few other amateur astronomy associations anywhere can hold a candle next to the light from the list of luminaries who have graced our meetings. Efforts are underway now to develop the programs for next season, and it is good timing to bring on board a couple of assistants to create a strong program committee to work with Michele. Whether you are new or experienced, if you would like to volunteer to assist in this most important and enjoyable effort, please contact Michele or any board member to

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Simpson Observatory (609) 737-2575



Astronaut Buzz Aldrin and AAAP member Ken Levy

Commission on Moon Mars and Beyond

The final public hearing on the President's Commission on Moon Mars and Beyond was held at the Asia Society in New York on Tuesday, May 4. The ten member panel listened to over 23 presentations in a two day period from a wide constituent of private enterprise and academia. Speakers included Roger Krone from Boeing, Joel Greenberg from Princeton Synergies and astronomer / author David Levy. Mr. Levy spoke passionately about the media's need to engage the public's imagination and enthusiasm for space travel and scientific discovery. Levy maintained that mobilizing our efforts toward space exploration will insure the United States' future lead in science and technological innovation.

The final and arguably most awaited presentation was given by chief NASA administrator Sean O'Keefe. O'Keefe spoke of the need to fundamentally transform the agency's approach and culture toward a new set of priorities based on incremental initiatives to expand manned exploration and scientific research. The projected 15 year time table for realizing the commission's vision would not exceed less than 1% of the Federal budget, according to O'Keefe.

In attendance was was Apollo 11 astronaut Dr. Buzz Aldrin, who has been an active participant in the hearings. The commission has

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been holding public hearings in locations across the country since late January and will make their final summary / recommendations to the president in early June. For more information, <http://www.moontomars.org>.

Ken Levy

[AAAP member Levy is a free lance writer based in New York and has an article appearing in the review section of Astronomy Magazine this August.]

From the Treasurer

The treasury balance is \$XXXX, of which \$XXXX is prepaid StarQuest attendees. There are 125 paid members.

Note: Please do not contact Sky and Telescope for subscriptions for a club discount. This arrangement will start in August 2004. If you want a subscription now please contact me. I have been contacted by Sky and Tel on several occasions about members calling for club discounted subscriptions now. Sky and Tel cannot verify your membership without a current membership roster, which we will be doing in August. Sky and Tel has extended the courtesy of letting us renew our subscriptions at club rates without going through the club. Let us not abuse this.

Bryan Hubbard, our publisher, will continue putting the dues renewal date on the upper right corner of each Sidereal Times address label. This is the date that your renewal membership is due with the AAAP. This will cease when the club starts the once a year membership policy.

I am not going to send out renewal notices to members who get magazines; they get enough notices from their respective publishers. If I don't receive your renewal on the date indicated on your address label you will be dropped from the roster. If you were a keyholder, the respective observatory chairman will be notified and you will be asked to return the key.

Note! Memberships that are due in June until August should pay \$10.

\$10 basic membership.

\$40 for membership and subscription to Astronomy magazine.

\$43 for membership and subscription to Sky and Telescope magazine.

\$73 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. This service will be provided until August.

Ron Mittelstaedt

Deadline for the
Midsummer Issue of Sidereal Times
July 9, 2004

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get involved.

June 8, Venus Transit Observing at WC Park. Observatory Co-Chairs Brian and Gene have communicated the plan for the Venus Transit observing session. We will assemble at the west end of the soccer fields in Washington Crossing State Park promptly at 4:50 to 5:00 AM on Tuesday June 8 (weather permitting). Because of park security the gates will be re-locked at 5:00 so please be on time. The transit will be in progress as the sun rises at approximately 5:25 and continue for 2 hours (see June issue of Sky & Telescope). We will have several telescopes on site, feel free to bring your own (**must have solar filter**). This is your chance to view what no living human has ever seen.

New Keyholder. Congratulations to **Jane Lanahan** for completing training and passing the test, and receiving her Key to become a AAAP Observatory Keyholder.

Jersey StarQuest June 18-20. It's not too late to register for Starquest- see elsewhere in this issue for info (also on the AAAP website). We want to have a high turnout of AAAP members for this, our premier observing event, which defines the passion of our club!

Dark Skies! -- Rex

From the Editor

Summer is upon us and vacation plans are swimming through everyone's mind but let's remind ourselves to keep June 18th through the 20th open. Yes, that's the dates for **StarQuest '04** and its only two weeks away. Don Monticello, Larry Smith, and many others are working hard to pull together a great program of speakers, door prizes, fishing, and swimming for the kids. Bill Murray will once again have a **StarQuest Challenge** at both an amateur and pro level for our all night viewing pleasure. As usual, those that get a passing grade will receive our beautiful **StarQuest Challenge** pin as an award to keep. For me, my main challenge will be to avoid the legions of attack turtles that will be holding vigil for my arrival.

June Meeting Remember this Month's regular meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, the 8th, will be in a different venue. As is our long standing tradition in the AAAP, the June meeting is held at the New Jersey State Museum Planetarium in the State House Capitol Complex. Easy to get to in downtown Trenton and traffic is usually light at 7:30 in the evening. Bill Murray will have a new program for us followed by a short business meeting.

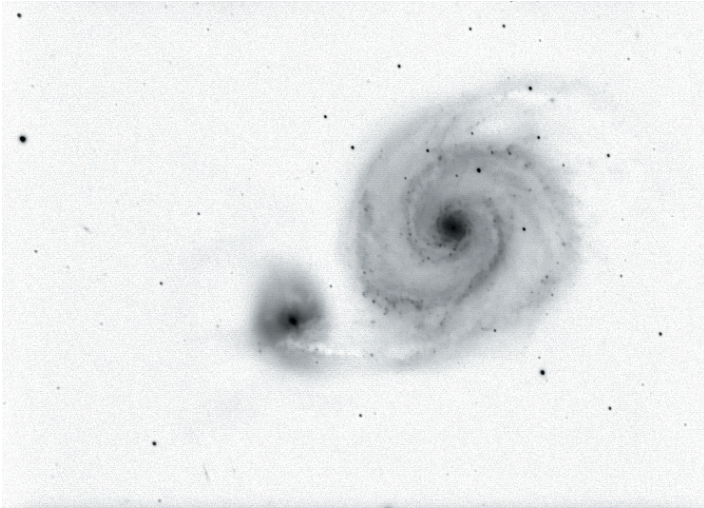
New Author I would like to introduce a new correspondent to the pages of the Sidereal Times. Ken Levy is a more recent member of AAAP for and he is most likely not related to well-known amateur astronomer, astronomy writer, and author David Levy, but we hopefully look forward to seeing his byline grace the pages of the Sidereal Times again in the future. I'm eagerly awaiting my August issue of Astronomy magazine to see more of his work.

Congratulations to Michele Novatski, our new Program Chairman. I just recently got done thanking her for her great work as Sidereal Times Publisher/Distributor and now I can express our thanks for taking over this new job. It will be a challenge to fill the shoes of Mark Lopez who has done an outstanding job as Program

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Imaging with a Cooled CCD

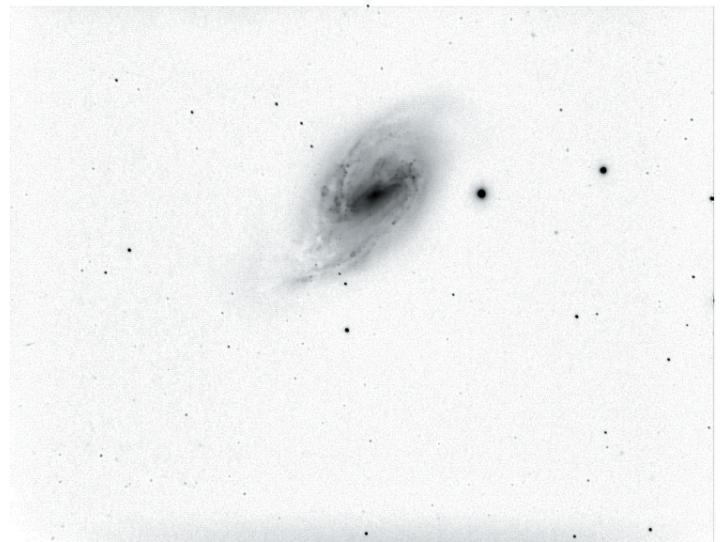
Tis the season for comets and galaxies. Well this year anyway. I spent a lot of time at the Simpson Observatory this year learning to image with a cooled CCD. I've spent some 3 to 4 nights getting images through the C14 with surprising results. One of the most important parts is our new mount. One of the biggest hassles when trying to image is getting your object to land on the camera's CCD detector. With the Paramount that problem is nonexistent. Once synced I could slew to an object and start imaging right away with out having to scan for it. This allowed me to get many objects (up to 6) in one night. The main interest I had since getting the CCD was to go after those faint fuzzies. A fascinating part of getting the DSO images is seeing one or several other deeper galaxies



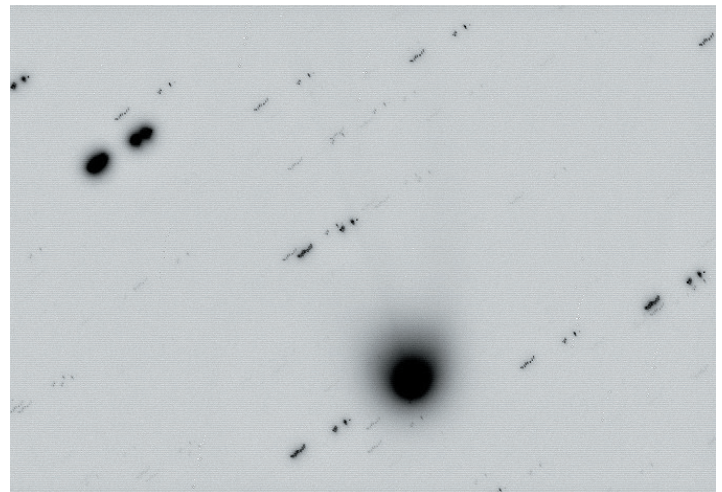
that appear in the background of the same field. Now that we have at our disposal a great mount and telescope OTA can we get something to turn off the clouds and sky glow at the observatory?

I would like to thank a club member, Bob Vanderbei, for helping me out with getting started in operating my camera and showing me the ropes on processing to get more out of my images. Without his help I would have never gotten to this level of imaging. This is what makes it worth belonging to a club, the people in it helping others.

My last attempt at imaging was going after Comet NEAT Q4. I tried at the observatory one public night but the clouds said the



comet was camera shy that night. So I tried the following night at my in-laws using my smaller scope. The clouds said the comet was



getting over its shyness but still wasn't ready to cooperate fully. I took what I could get and took a lot of images. I sifted through them and kept the better ones. The placement of the comet was higher but also it meant that it was getting dimmer, especially the tail. I'll just have to wait for the next one to pass by.

Brian Van Liew

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Chair bringing years of the best of programs to the membership of our club every month. Rumor has it that Michele is awaiting confirmation of two heavies in our fall line-up. John Miller reports that he and Bob Vanderbei have engaged Michael Strauss to take the November 9, slot with a talk on high red-shift quasars and that APO Director, Dr. Ed Turner will accept our invitation for either the October 12, or December 14, meeting. We thank John and Bob for their able assistance in the transition period and hope they will continue helping on Michele's committee.

Deadline for the Midsummer issue of the Sidereal Times will be July 9, 2004. This is after StarQuest '04 so I would challenge the membership to write a little copy, throw in a few pictures of the event that they may have taken, and e-mail it to me for inclusion. It is always best jot down your notes quickly after the conclusion of

activities and then clean up your copy in the next days and week. You'd be surprised how easy it is write an interesting article if you follow these simple procedures.

Clear Skies, Vic

For Sale 20-INCH SPLIT-RING EQUATORIAL f/5 Newt. Home-built of birch veneer plywood in 1992, used 1992-1994. In storage since then. The mirror needs some cleaning. Internally-counterweighted mirror box, eight aluminum struts, rotating diagonal cage; removable 2-inch focuser. Variable-speed motor drives equatorial ring. Mount rolls on two back wheels (55-inch axle) with a steerable front wheel and screw-down locking point. One of the three 6-point supports (18-point mirror mount) has broken, and needs replacement or repair. \$2000 OBO.

Financial Audit 2004

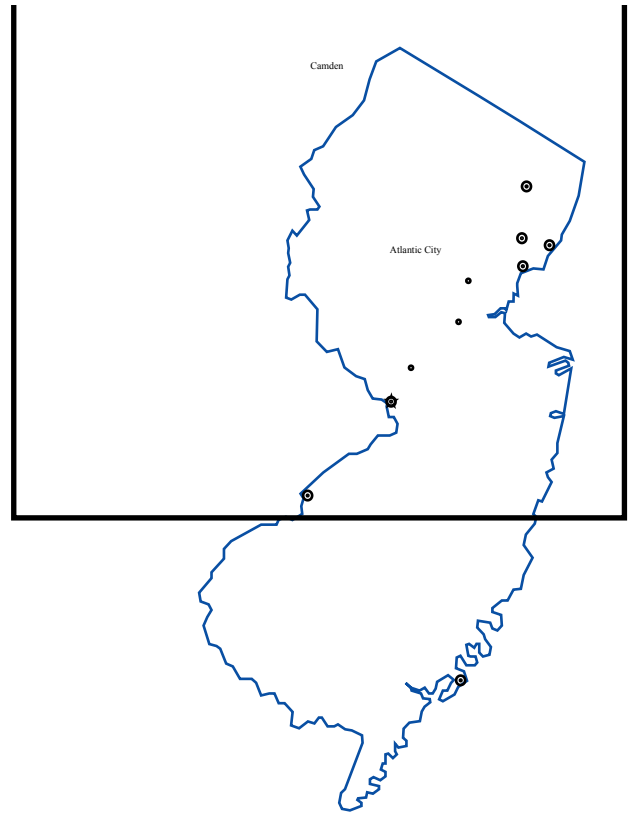
Recently I was asked to examine the financial records of the AAAP, in compliance with a requirement in the AAAP bylaws. My examination was not an audit in that I did not carry out some of the steps that an auditor would take to verify club revenues and expenses against sources outside the financial records. I therefore cannot provide assurance that the AAAP's financial reports are free from material error. However, my examination brought no such error to light.

I closely examined the club's bank statements, account book, summary spreadsheet, and expense receipts. I found the books to be well kept and in good order. Balances agreed between the different documents and all major expenses that I checked on the bank statements were supported by entries in the account book. Expense amounts and payees appeared reasonable and appropriate. Reconciliations had been done. Checks were appropriately annotated with the purpose of each expense.

People join AAAP because of their interest in astronomy, not in bookkeeping. It's time-consuming to handle the club's many small deposits and expenses as well as to keep detailed records. For these reasons, I was pleased to see that the records are in good shape.

Michael Mitrano

[On behalf of the Board and the membership I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Michael for conducting this audit. -ed]



June 2004

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