

SIDEREAL TIMES

The Official Publication of the
Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton

Director

Bill Murray

Treasurer

Michael Mitrano

Program Chairman

OPEN

Assistant Director

John Church

Secretary

Larry Kane

Editors

Bryan Hubbard and Ira Polans

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June 2009

Number 6

From the Director

Well first I would like to thank John Miller and Ludy D'Angelo for their service as Director and Program Chair, respectively, for the past two years. The programs that Ludy has organized for our monthly meetings have been fascinating to see and hear and John's enthusiasm has been a great boost to the AAAP. All in all, a tough act to follow.

Second I would like to put out a call for **HELP!** We are still without a Program Chair for the 2009-10 season. This is a critical job for the AAAP. The Program Chair recruits speakers for our monthly meetings and hosts the pre-meeting dinners. Both Ludy and I will be willing to assist anyone willing to take this position. If you're interested contact me and we can discuss the details further.

Over the next few months there are several ongoing projects that were started last year that I would like to see completed. For years the roof over the back of the observatory has been leaking and this has caused some of the timbers supporting the back wall of the observatory to rot. The board is currently reviewing a proposal to do a comprehensive fix of this problem and we will be allocating funds for this at a meeting this fall. Additionally, the door on the AAAP observatory at the UACNJ complex at Jenny Jump needs to be replaced and the observatory needs a paint job. This observatory houses the AAAP's venerable 12.5" Simpson reflector, still a great visual scope. I will work to get this done this fall.

Here are some events (and dates) to keep in mind as you are enjoying the long, hot days of summer:

Occultation of Antares by the Moon For the observers in the club the 1st magnitude star Antares in Scorpius will be occulted by the nearly full moon on the evening of Saturday, June 6th between 10:50 PM and 11:30 PM EDT. Although a small telescope is the perfect instrument to view this event even a pair of binoculars will show it. If you've never seen an occultation before check this out if the weather is clear. It's always fascinating to see this demonstration of the moon's motion through space.

AAAP Picnic Our last meeting before our break for summer will be the annual AAAP Picnic at the Nature Center at Washington Cross-

ing State Park (just up the road from the Simpson Observatory). The picnic will start at 4 PM on Saturday, June 13th. Bring some food to share and join us.

The deadline for the Midsummer issue is:

Friday July 17, 2009

Send your submissions to:

editors@princetonastronomy.org

Stellafane I will be attending this year's Stellafane Convention (Aug. 13-16) in Springfield VT. If you have never been to Stellafane give a thought to going. This is the oldest amateur astronomical get together in the country (started in 1926). The array of unique telescopes exhibited there is matched only by the history of the place itself (this is where amateur astronomy was born). The quality of the speakers and raffle prizes is superb as well. If you're interested in going this year contact me. Stellafane was an AAAP tradition in years past. Maybe we can revive the tradition again.

Jersey Starquest 2009 Mark your calendars! This year's Jersey Starquest will be held at the Hope Conference Center in Hope, NJ on Oct. 16-18. Since last year's Starquest was rained out this year's will be perfectly clear (knock on wood!)

Bill Murray, Director

Membership Meeting Minutes May 12, 2009

1. Election of Board of Trustees: (*Held before the meeting's speaker.*)

John Miller read the slate, which was compiled by Nominations Chairperson John Giles. John Miller described each position and asked for nominations for the positions of Director and Program Chair. Outgoing Program Chair, Ludy D'Angelo gave a description of his duties. No one in the audience volunteered

for the position. John Miller then called for a vote on the slate for the Board of Trustees. It passed, unanimously. The Board of Trustees are:

Director: *Bill Murray*
Assistant Director: *John Church*
Treasurer: *Michael Mitrano*
Secretary: *Larry Kane*
Program Chair: *Open (Will be worked on over the summer.)*

2. After the speaker, outgoing Director, John Miller, called the meeting to order.
3. Treasurer Michael Mitrano gave the Treasurer's report which is included in another section of the Sidereal Times.
4. Observatory Repairs: John Miller reported that we are awaiting a line-item estimate from John Church's contractor. A discussion was held on how to hold a membership vote to authorize the expenditure. John Miller suggested that everyone go to our website to look at the constitution and by-laws to find out how this vote can be conducted. Bill Murray suggested that we could do a non-electronic mailing to the membership
5. The June meeting will be a picnic and will be held on the 13th at 4:00 pm. We will try to hold it at the W.C. Park Nature Center.
6. Public Outreach: Jeff Bernardis announced that there two activities on the calendar. The event in Plainsboro will be held Wednesday or Thursday of next week. On Saturday, May 30, a boy scout troupe will be at the observatory.
7. Sidereal Times: Next due date is May 29.
8. Simpson Observatory: There is a problem with parking the 14 inch SC. John Miller re-stated that when the software session is complete, the operator should not save the program as normal. One way to manage this problem is to delete all the "normal.dat" files and let the program re-assign them when it initializes.
9. Larry Smith announced that he was at Jenny Jump and determined that the door to our observatory needs to be replaced and the rest of the observatory requires other maintenance. John Miller suggested that Larry put this in writing and email it to him. John will then send it out to the membership and put together a work party. The new door may have to be cut down fit the observatory.
10. Star Quest: Planning will continue until we hear from UACNJ. Some people bought items at NEAF for SQ door prizes. John Miller suggested that we try to approach vendors for donations.

Larry Kane, Secretary

Community Outreach

We only had one event this past month – On May 21, John Giles, Dave Letcher, and Dave Viscio had a glorious evening to show Saturn - and other sights - to the students of Millstone River Elementary School in Plainsboro.

As mentioned last month, we still have one event on our calendar: on June 5 (Friday) we will be having a star party for Stuart Country

Day School. This will be our fifth attempt to have this event; let's hope for their sake it happens this time. Thus far, I have John Giles and Dave Letcher signed up, but more are always welcome. If you would like to help out with this event, please let me know.

This most likely will conclude our outreach year – there is much less activity during the summer when the observatory is open. That doesn't mean you can't contact me to indicate your interest in helping out in the future. I maintain a mailing list of volunteers; if you would like to get emails when new events are scheduled, contact me at

Jeff Bernardis, Outreach Coordinator

Treasurer's Report

There has again been little financial activity during the last month. Our surplus since July 1, 2008, is about \$3,200 or \$900 higher than budget mainly because spending on the observatory so far has been low.

The AAAP's cumulative surplus remains slightly over \$18,000.

Michael Mitrano, Treasurer

From the Program Chair

Greetings to all! We hope that for the last 9 months your knowledge of the universe has been expanded. And even more by all the invited guest speakers we have had.

As always, we are in constant lookout for future speakers. So any suggestions and/or comments are welcome and appreciated. Have a certain subject you'd like covered? Know someone who is doing really interesting work in the field of astronomy? Send your suggestions to Bill Murray, who will give them to the next program chair. During the summer, work will be done to invite speakers for our next season starting in September.



Now that the season is wrapped up, its time for a party! This year's annual AAAP picnic will be at our observatory in Washington Crossing State Park on June 13th at 4 PM. We will meet under the pavilion at the Nature Center next to the observatory. The club will provide basic food and drinks. We encourage everyone to bring a salad or desert and your family and friends. After the picnic, and if it is clear, we will continue by opening the observatory for an evening of relaxing observation. We will need volunteers to bring a grill or two, cook, and help set up and clean up. Please RSVP to me if you will be attending.

See you there!

Ludovicio D'Angelo,

Interested in keyholder training?

Contact: **or by**
cell phone

Other News...

Shuttle Atlantis and Astronauts Return to Earth after Upgrading Hubble I recently returned from a wonderful experience witnessing the May 11 launch of Space Shuttle Atlantis direct from the Kennedy Space Center Press Center. That is as close as humans are permitted to observe. I obtained NASA press credentials and was reporting for *The Planetary Society* and *Spaceflight magazine* on Atlantis mission to repair and upgrade the Hubble Space Telescope for the 5th and final time.

Altogether I published 13 reports so far online at *The Planetary Society* covering the entire Hubble repair mission, NASA's soon to launch new lunar probe, LRO, which I observed up-close in the clean room, and my interviews with top NASA officials on Hubble, Shuttle and the Future Exploration of Mars and Saturn.

Space Shuttle Atlantis and her crew of 7 astronauts glided in to a smooth and triumphant touchdown on Sunday, May 24 at 11:39 AM EDT at Edwards Air Force Base in California. The high stakes flight of STS-125 completely renovated and rejuvenated the iconic Hubble Space Telescope and enables a new chapter of breathtaking science discoveries. Popularly known as 'The People's Telescope', Hubble is now at the "Apex of its Capabilities".

NASA ordered a diversion in Atlantis return trip from the primary landing site at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) to the alternate landing strip at Edwards AFB due to poor weather at KSC.

For complete mission details, please read my reports online covering the flight from start to finish with numerous pictures at *The Planetary Society* here:

Atlantis and Crew Return Safely to Earth after Rejuvenating Hubble <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001962/>

Memorial Day: Remembering the fallen who gave their lives exploring space <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001963/>

Farewell to Hubble, Obama Calls, Astronauts Testify to Congress as Shuttle is Set to Land <http://www.planetary.org/blog/article/00001958/>

Hubble Astronauts Boldly Go Where No One has Gone Before! <http://www.planetary.org/blog/article/00001954/>

Hubble Spacewalks: 2 Down, 3 to Go, Never Routine <http://www.planetary.org/blog/article/00001945/>

Atlantis Astronauts Rocket into Space and Grab Hubble <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001943/>

One-on-One Chat with Ed Weiler on Hubble and the Future of Mars Exploration <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001940/>

Atlantis Launches on a Final Mission to Hubble <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001938/>

Fueling Atlantis! T Minus 6 Hours and Counting <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001936/>

"Go" at T-2 days from launch—Hubble Science Instruments Preview <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001934/>

Astronauts Fly into Cape. Countdown Clock Ticking for Mission to Save "The People's Telescope" <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001932/>

NASA's Final Servicing Mission to the Hubble Space Telescope <http://planetary.org/blog/article/00001931/>

Please contact me by email for more info or presentations



Ken Kremer and Space Shuttle Atlantis at Launch Pad 39 A on the day before Blast-Off to the Hubble Space Telescope. Read my mission reports online at The Planetary Society. Credit: Ken Kremer

Submitted by Ken Kremer

20 Years Ago In Sidereal Times...

SIDEREAL TIMES

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Princeton, Inc.

Editor: John Simpson

June, 1989

FROM THE DIRECTOR

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Jay Albert formally for the fine job he has done in his THIRD stint as Director. He filled the position during a time when the AAAP was in need of developing a new group of leaders, going above and beyond what normally could be expected of anyone. Thanks for being there when you were needed, and for the good humor and enjoyment you brought to us all.

Some time ago George Griggs brought a binocular telescope he designed and built to one of our meetings, and Jack Schott showed us his beautiful Maksutov. Both drew a lot of interest from our members. Lately, Joe Eschuk displayed a star-tracking telescope which had the same effect on us. Also I've heard rumors about a barn door drive that Pat Colestock built and used to take photos with on Palomar Mountain (of all places!). It seems that there might be more designers and builders of various sorts of astronomical gizmos out there who would share their ideas and expertise by bringing them to Star Parties, Members Night, etc. These things don't have to be full-blown telescopes. They could be the construction of a Chesire eyepiece (used for collimating a scope), a sun dial, or a star map case (or anything practical for observing like that). Perhaps a few comments in the Sidereal Times [the EDITOR LOVES THIS!--Ed.] from designers near and far (Karl Koehler) would be in order. I happen to think that it's a side of our hobby that precious few of us participate in and that more of us would like to explore, if only to see and appreciate what others have done. I'd like to invite any of you who have built a telescope or accessory to prepare it for our lunar eclips observing session in August and display it at that time. Later, bring it to Members Night to project more exposure. Professional results aren't required!

[Note from the Director: My phone number was inaccurately printed last time. My actual phone number is: 924-8085.]

MAY 20 WORK PARTY

The work party was a GREAT SUCCESS. The door and exterior trim were painted, the roll-off roof rails and I-beams were wire-brushed and Rustoleumed, wooden protective trim was replaced, the junky closet was finally (!) cleaned, and trash disosed of. The finder for the 6½" refractor was replaced with our Celestron 10x40 finder, and the interior walls have been wire-brushed,

preparatory to painting. The design for the roll-off roof mechanism has been worked out tentatively with parts being collected at this time. (This is a COMPLEX UNDERTAKING, folks!)

Those who gave their time, energy, and wits to the work party were: Larry Gross, Ron Mittelstaedt, Don Monticello, Bill Murray, Bob Slusher, George Walker, and Chip Yuill. John Church and Don Monticello are working separately on the roof-opening mechanism. Thanks, guys! You've made the observatory a better place for all of us. There's a lot more to do, so if you haven't been out to help, try it. The roof over the shed needs replacing, along with painting the interior walls and replacing the valve in the deep well. The roof-opening mechanism has to be installed after all parts arrive; and the floor has to be painted in the fall.

[Editor's Note: One more thing on the observatory. Bill Murray and I will be taking the primary and secondary mirrors out of the 12½" reflector when the roof is being finally "re-mechanized". We will take both mirrors to Denton Vacuum in Cherry Hill, New Jersey to have them both re-aluminized. Denton Vacuum re-aluminized them in May of 1983; and an open-tubed reflector ought to have it's mirrors re-done every 3-5 years. So the "Simpson" (AAAAHHHH!) reflector is due. So after the roof is finished the mirrors will be back and the 'scope will be READY TO GO!]

SUMMER OBSERVING SCHEDULE

~~6/16---Al Zampiri, Larry Gross~~
 6/23---Art Esposito, Mike Moreken
 6/30---John Church, Don Monticello
 7/7---Dennis Hicks, Pat Colestock
 7/14---Bill Murray, Chip Yuill
 7/21---Louise Lockette, Ron Shulter
 7/28---Helen Marotte, Kurt Goepfert
 8/4---Larry Gross, Vic Belanger
 8/11---Dick Sivel, Larry Smith
 8/18---Doug Wurzler, Roxanne Peery
 8/25---Ron Mittelstaedt, Ed Petry
 9/1/---Joe and Kevin Mooney, Bob Slusher
 9/8---John Ewald, Dave Brown

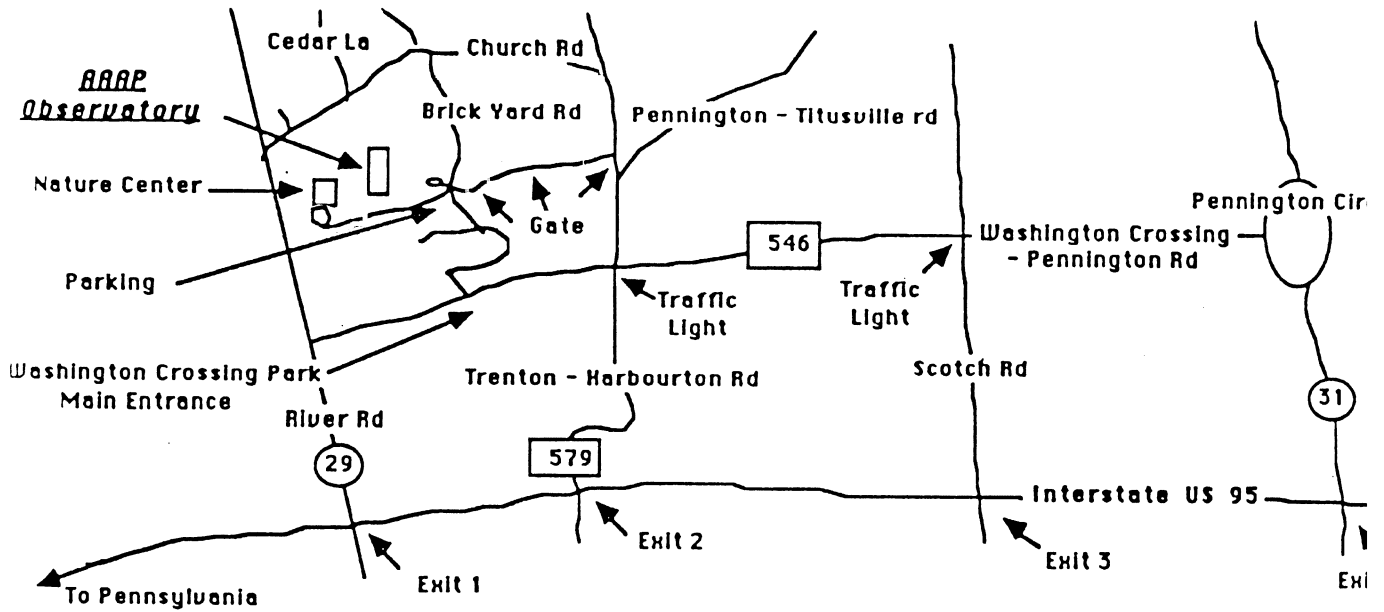
For changes in schedule, call Bill Murray at least two weeks in advance for your own replacement.

AAAP CALENDAR

June 13, Tuesday: Meeting at the N.J. Museum Planetarium in Trenton. Dick Peery will speak in what has become our annual Planetarium talk. NOTE: there will be NO DINNER this month.

June 9,10,11 Weekend: Beemerville trip. Maps and instructins to be mailed to registered attendees.

Late June/early July: 12" scope mirror to be re-alumized [see Editor's note above]. Telescope out of commission for about a week.



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. The Simpson (AAAP) Observatory's phone number is (609) 737-2575.

See us on the Web: www.princetonastronomy.org

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