



# The Night Sky

The Newsletter of  
The Astronomy Club of Akron

November 2000  
Volume 22 Number 10

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Frank Koby

### In Memoriam

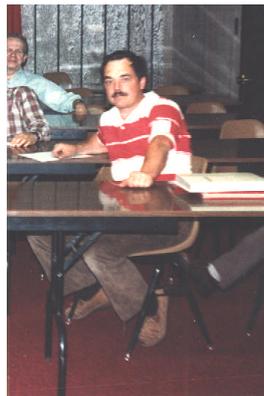
It seems as long as I can remember deaths in a family almost always came in three's. That old adage has happened again. This time it happened to the family of the Astronomy Club of Akron. I mentioned at the last meeting the passing of Bill Combs. Bill was a past president of our club; serving in the mid 1980's. Also the passing of Steve Walker, the manager of Portage Lakes State Park was announced. Steve was instrumental in the ACA building the observatory in the park. The third passing happened on the first of November. Ralph Faix, Ted's father passed away. I do not remember if I ever met Ralph. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families.

Also remember the ACA is holding a contest to design a membership card for the club. The deadline is March 31, 2001. The entries need to be brought to a club meeting. The winner receives a year's membership in the ACA.

There will be a phone-tree set up to remind members of upcoming meetings and other important happenings of the club. Thanks to Jim Anderson, Sheila Schmidt, Gregg Crenshaw and Carl Hervol for volunteering. I would like to also set up a calling list for impromptu observing sessions. We

used to have one but we need to establish another for those clear nights when there is nothing scheduled. (In other words, I'm looking for that volunteer.) I think to start there would be no more than ten people on the list. It would only take about 15 minutes to call the list and say we're going to the observatory.

Don't forget the meeting for November is on the 17<sup>th</sup>; the week before Thanksgiving. See you at the meeting.



Steve Walker

**Next Meeting**  
**November 17<sup>th</sup>**  
**Kiwanis Hall, Portage Lakes**

## Activities Calendar

### Club

Meetings:  
 November 17, Joe Nieberding  
 December, No meeting  
 Observatory:  
 November 25, Random Observing  
 December 16, Random Observing

### Celestial

Leonids Meteors, November 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>  
 Saturn at Opposition, November 19<sup>th</sup>  
 Jupiter at Opposition, November 26<sup>th</sup>

### FROM THE VP

– Gregg Crenshaw

At the point in time I am writing this I have just talked to Joe Nieberding regarding being the speaker at the November meeting on November seventeenth. Although Joe was having more minor surgery on the area around his eye the Monday before the meeting, he assured me that barring any unforeseen complications he will be there. Also he is bringing an additional speaker, Frank Spurlock, with him. For those of you who don't know Joe, he was a scientist at NASA Glen Research Center. Joe retired a few years ago hoping to slow down a bit. It seems Joe is busier now more than ever as a consultant to NASA. When I contacted him (as above) he was in Baltimore. Frank Spurlock is also a retiree of NASA Glen. He worked with Joe there and still works with him on a committee that reviews NASA missions as they are developed. Joe will be showing some short videos of current and future NASA missions. After the videos he and Frank will answer questions and lead a discussion of our impressions of current and known future NASA missions. See you on the seventeenth. Clear skies, Gregg B. Crenshaw

### OFFICERS 2000 – 2001 AND TRUSTEES

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Lou Poda.....330-773-8160

The deadline for article submission is **two weeks before the next meeting**. All word processing files should be saved in straight ASCII text files or any version of Word to minimize import problems. We will not turn away **any** submission, as long as the article's subject is astronomy or a related topic. If you don't have access to a computer, don't hesitate to write something out long hand. As long as it is legible, I will slave over the keyboard and get it published.

#### PLEASE SEND IN YOUR ARTICLES!!!!

**The newsletter (and the club) will be much richer with your contribution. Thanks to all who have used their valuable time to author or collect material for the Night Sky. (Editor)**

Send your articles, items for sale, and comments to:  
**Ray Hyer, 725 Brewer St. Akron, OH 44305**

Email: [rhyer@neo.rr.com](mailto:rhyer@neo.rr.com)

We'll be looking for your name tag designs!!



## THE LAST MEETING

The monthly meeting of the Astronomy Club of Akron was held on October 27 at the Kiwanis Hall on Portage Lakes Drive. Highlights include:

Ray Paul, Observatory Director, gave a report on the observatory activities. He reminded us that the public observing session on October 28 would feature cider and other treats.

Lou Poda gave a report on OTAA activities.

Four wonderful members volunteered to operate the phone tree to keep us all informed of unscheduled activities.

Membership ID card was decided, see Rich Ruggles column for details.

The schedule for members only star parties was proposed, the day after each meeting.

Mark Kochheiser gave a report on the solar system walk signs.

Observatory behavior – a warning against Frisbee throwing around the telescopes.

The club voted to send a gift in honor of Steve Walker.

A proposal was made to consider having another telescope building class, with two scopes being made for club use.

## NOTES FROM RICH RUGGLES

### WIN A FREE MEMBERSHIP

Attention members with artistic ability and those of you that don't. The ACA wants new ID cards that can be used as name tags and we would like you to design it. Use your imagination, your knowledge of astronomy, your computer or your scratch pad and submit your design before or during the March meeting. A panel of expert judges will narrow it down to three and you will vote for the one we will use. The winning design will receive a free membership for the 2000-2001 year.

Send your design to: ACA ID Card, 704 S. Sheraton Cir., Akron, OH 44319

### ACA STUFF AVAILABLE

The jackets are in and most are distributed. We do have two extra jackets for sale. They are both heavy quilted and are \$48.00 each in size

medium and extra large. If you are interested in one or both of these jackets call now 330-644-5912

The Observers Handbooks are in and going fast. The cost is \$15 and can be picked up from me at the next meeting.

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's 2001 Wall Calendars are now available for \$10. They include a comprehensive listing of astronomical data such as lunar and planetary conjunctions, sun and moon rise and set times, major meteor showers and daily moon phases.

There is also one messier object Sky Spot book set left over to use with a telrad or any finder scope \$30. Call now.

## WINTER OBSERVING SAFETY

Even though winter features some of the most spectacular objects in the sky, many observers do not enjoy them because they are not able to cope with the cold. Here is a short list of ideas that will help you endure the chilly nights.

First, you need to dress in a way that you will have layers to trap warm air near your body. This is done by wearing many layers of clothing instead of one heavy layer. Since you will be standing around and not active, clothes that keep you warm in normal winter activities will not help much at a star party.

Second, cover your entire body. While we are good at wearing coats and pants, we often neglect our head and feet. Much of your body heat is lost through the head, so a hat, parka hood or scarf is needed to keep what heat you have.

Third, be especially careful about the hands. These are in the most danger of frostbite and must be covered. A good technique is to wear thin gloves for mobility and cover that with mittens.

Eat a good meal before going outside and nibble on carbohydrates which provide energy. And remember, No Alcohol, it reduces night vision and dilates capillaries in your skin.

## THE PERFECT NIGHT

The ACA 2000 Fall Star Party

Three months of work went into putting this evening of star gazing together, contacting the land owner, choosing a site high on a hill, having a larger area mowed to accommodate us, and repairing the access road up the hill. Although no one from the ACA attended, the 9 people that were there experienced The Perfect Night. It was an astronomers dream come true.

We started by car caravanning down at 4:00pm. Around 5:30 we arrived at the sight. I stopped by the house to drop off a walky-talky so we could have communications between the house and the hill. This came in handy later.

After setting up the scopes, tent and fire ring, it was getting around sunset. The sunset was nothing spectacular and that was good. A bright and colorful sunset means clouds and we didn't get any of those all night. It wasn't long before the milky way was beaming as bright as a cloud and camouflaging Cygnus and Cassiopeia in its river of stars. The night air was crisp and the seeing and transparency of the sky was excellent. All the stars were like sparkling diamonds. We started to pick out many satellites moving across the sky, about 12 at final count. Then we started on the "M" objects along the Milky Way starting with M7 in Sagittarius and moving NE to the Double Cluster above Perseus. As we started to star gaze I set my watch back so I wouldn't forget, so all my references to the time is now Eastern Standard Time.

Around 8:00pm Mark and Leila, the landowners, came over for a tour of the heavens. I started them off with Saturn, the greatest "Wow" experience for a first time observer, then Jupiter, it looked like a spot light in the sky. I used a Lumicon deep sky filter to knock down the brightness and this brought out clearly at least 8 good bands, the best I have ever seen it.

At this point I noticed a glow to the north and asked Mark what town that was. He replied, "There is not town over there, it must be my mercury vapor in the driveway. Wait, the driveway is over there," pointing east of the glow. The glow seemed to get brighter when Dan, who served in the Air Force and stationed in Alaska, said "That might be....no, not this far south." Just then the glow

intensified and stretched out about 40 degrees east and west and raised to about 35 degrees up. "It's an aurora!" Dan hollered. The words weren't completely out of his mouth when about 15 spikes of colored light shot in to the sky. "I don't believe this!" I screamed. As I ran for the camera I quickly set up the tripod and camera and opened the shutter. I have no idea what my settings were I just had to capture this. Before I finished, some of the spikes of light merged and formed about four large columns of color. This was a real treat. Who would have thought a perfect night to observe and an aurora too. But it didn't stop there. This flair-up was only the first of eight that started around 9:00 and finished at 3:30am. Each flair seemed brighter than the last. They were so bright I could easily read my star charts on the table. Hundreds of spikes and columns, a dozen satellites and perfect seeing conditions, I thought "It just doesn't get better than this."

O, yes it did, Meteors, 50 or 60 of them, very bright. Were they late Orionids or early Leonids or maybe they were taurid, I don't know. All I know is that everybody saw a lot of very bright ones. It seemed that every time I looked up for a constellation location I saw at least two of them. I took my 8" Criterion and the 60mm Unitron down with me and started picking out all the M object in the Milky Way from Sagittarius to Perseus. I also went after some faint NGC objects to compare the viewing between the 8" and the 60mm. I was very pleased with all the objects I easily find in the small aperture refractor and, of course, Jupiter and Saturn were spectacular. The temperature dipped to around 28 degrees but we were dressed for it and I didn't even notice the cold till we packed it in around 4:30am. At this time we got a fire started to warm up for bed and to digest all we had seen.

This was truly A Once in A Lifetime observing session that I rank up there with the S&L 9 crash of Jupiter.

I'm sorry none of you were there to enjoy this.

**THE NEXT ACA DARK SKY STAR PARTY WILL BE SAT. MAY 26 2001**

## The ACA Fall 2000 Star Party

Captured on film for your enjoyment by Rich Ruggles, we see the beautiful aurora that was visible for several hours. To really appreciate, these pictures must be viewed in color, so check them out at the ACA web site!



## OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

By Ray Hyer

This month I am featuring some photos from the ACA Observatory program on October 28. It was cold and fairly clear. The photos will only be appreciated in color, so check out the PDF file on the web site!



Eyeballs to munch!  
What could be better  
on a cold night?



Strange creatures visited us.  
This one did not like the  
cold weather.



A red aurora display against the familiar  
constellation Ursa Major.

Several club members braved the cold to  
set up scopes for wonderful views.

