



The Night Sky

The Newsletter of
The Astronomy Club of Akron

www.acaoh.org

Volume 27 Number 10

October 2005

Meeting Friday, October 28

Ramblings of the President / Dark Nights, Bright Lights by Dave Jessie

First things first...our November meeting has been successfully moved from the 4th Friday of November to the 3rd Friday. That is, the *November meeting will be on 11/18/05*. I finally received word from our Kiwanis contact that this change was acceptable. Good thing, too! I doubt we would have had too many folks at the meeting had it occurred the day after Thanksgiving. Speaking of the Kiwanis, ACA members were responsible for at least 20 dozen roses being sold. Thanks to all for helping to keep the Kiwanis happy with us.

MARS IS GOING TO BE THE SIZE OF THE FULL MOON! Yeah, right! Have you seen this email or had friends ask you about this? I sure have! It came from an email which was actually true in August of 2003 when Mars and Earth had their last 'close encounter'. The 'big as a full Moon' was taken out of context, though, by simply omitting the qualifier 'when viewed at 70 power with a telescope'. Mars and Earth are again experiencing a close encounter this month – at 12:21 AM Oct 30th, hence the reason you might have seen both Oct 29 and Oct 30 listed as the date of closest approach. Of course, Mars isn't going to be quite as close as it was on Aug 27th 2003, but it'll STILL be closer than anytime until 2018, so

let's give it the attention it deserves. Observatory Director Mark North has designated Saturday, Nov 5th as our official 'Mars Night'. Let's get the word out!! I don't know if we can come close to the turnout the ACA had in 2003 due to all the Mars hysteria that was rampant at the time, but we can try! We now have a far better instrument to show the public our temporarily-close solar system neighbor. One wonderful thing about this close encounter – Mars will be MUCH higher in altitude than it was in 2003, a function of the Earth and Mars' orbits being not quite on a plane. From Akron at the time of closest encounter, Mars will be nearly 60° above the horizon compared to only 30° in 2003. This makes a HUGE difference in what we'll be able to see. Looking through less air will increase the surface details and higher power will be able to be used, all other sky conditions cooperating. How large compared to 2003? 20.16 arcseconds this year compared to 25.10 arcseconds in 2003, so we'll need about 90X instead of 70X for it to be...THE SIZE OF THE FULL MOON! ;^)

How to maximize what you can see on Mars? Use your daylight vision!! Yes, you heard me; don't seek a dark site, GO TO THE LIGHT! Heresy you say!?! No, it's true! Mars is going to be very bright – so bright that details will be hard to see with dark-adapted eyes – your vision will be

overpowered by its brightness. Besides, dark-adapted eyes lack the sharpness that daylight vision provides. In addition, dark-adapted vision is totally lacking in color perception. All of this holds true for Lunar observations, as well. I'm certain you've noticed that colorful double stars like Albireo actually look better if viewed before it truly gets dark. Why? Because you are still using your non-dark-adapted vision which provides color perception. Doubt me if you must, but please try this experiment: Set up a light near your observing location for Lunar or Mars (Jupiter & Saturn, too!) observing. Keep your eyes from dark-adapting. See what details you can see and then turn the light off, allow time for dark-adaptation, and then do some more observing with the same eyepiece. Turn in your reports, but don't copy from your neighbor's paper...

NO CHEATING!!

The ACA would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members...

Allan & Laura Cook

We are thrilled to have you as members and look forward to seeing you at ALL club meetings and events!

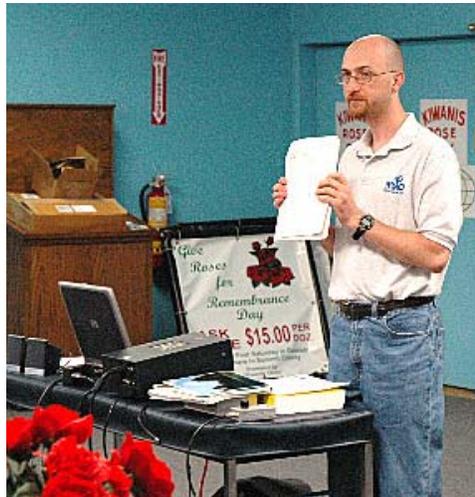


Left - When a group of members gathered at West Branch on Sept. 17 we did not let a little cloud cover from letting us see celestial wonders.

Below - Jason Shinn presents his Radio Jove program at the meeting on Sept. 23.

Minutes from the meeting on September 23, 2005

- 1) The 2005 fall general membership meeting kicked off with the ACA's Jason Shinn as our speaker. Mr. Shinn spoke about radio emissions from Jupiter and the Sun and his work with the Radio Jove group.
- 2) Treasurer's reports can be found in the newsletters.
- 3) Observatory Director's report by Mark North stated that the observatory is now a SMOKE FREE facility. Also an inventory is being taken to list equipment to be sold to members on a first come first served basis. Items will be listed at the next general membership meeting on Friday, October 28th, 2005.
- 4) Mr. Carl and Betty Hervol received a \$40.00 gift certificate from the ACA as a token of the club's appreciation for hosting the ACA picnic at their home.
- 5) A thank you letter from Childrens Hospital was read by Dave Jessie. The letter thanked ACA volunteers for their participation at the Camp Chops and Camp Wunderlung programs back in early June of this year.
- 6) The November ACA meeting may be moved to the 3rd Friday instead of the 4th Friday in November.. We're awaiting word from the Kiwanis folks about the rescheduling. [This has now been confirmed]
- 7) We discussed purchase of a digital LCD projector for club meetings and observatory programs. Decision to be made at the next meeting.



FOR SALE:

KONUS MOTOR MAX 130
 MAK WITH MOUNT AND
 EXTRAS
 ORION XT8 DOB, MANY
 EXTRAS
 CALL FREDDY HUFFMAN
 at 330-535-8009 ANY TIME

Treasurer's Report: 9/1/05 - 9/30/05
 Diane North, Treasurer

Total Beginning Assets	\$8,849.63
Income	
Dues	\$30.00
Interest on balances	\$6.62
Magazine Subscription paid to ACA	\$32.95
Expenses	
Dues prorating	\$(10.00)
Kiwanis roses (offsetting credit will appear in Oct) ..	\$(270.00)
Newsletter Expense	\$(44.80)
Telescope electronics	\$(32.96)
Telescope counterweight system	\$(93.50)
Total Ending Assets	\$8,467.94

ACA Secretary
 - Pete Flohr

Hidden Hollow 2005

By Jason Shinn

This year was the first time I attended Hidden Hollow Star Party at the Warren Rupp Observatory, south of Mansfield. For that matter it was the first star party that I've ever been to. I was invited by Tammy Plotner, the observatory director, to share my knowledge of the Radio Jove project. The following is an account of my experiences there.

Arriving at the observatory on Friday afternoon, I found my way to the club house just down from the observatory dome, set into the hillside. Stepping into the building I noted a few people standing around. I immediately recognized Tammy standing on the other side of the room. I made my way to her desk and was greeted with gusto and a handshake. She hadn't recognized me from my photos but after introducing myself, I was again greeted with a great big hug, as if we had known each other all our lives.



After receiving my registration packet, and dropping the free door prize ticket into a container to try for a meteorite, Tammy and I headed to the observatory dome so I could get my first look at the star attraction. She had me close my eyes until I got into the doorway and then open them to see one heck of a giant machine of

steel and blue paint. Immediately before me stood the largest optical telescope I had ever seen. A huge blue axel stretched from the upper left to



the lower right of my vision, resting on two square white concrete bases that sat larger at the bottom than at the top. This axel was aligned pointing true north and from it, rotating perpendicular, was another axel. On the far end of this axel hung the telescope, a blue, steel lattice tube covered in black cloth almost from top to bottom. Hanging nearest to me was the largest counter weight I had ever seen. Parked near the wall of the dome, next to the telescope, was a lift. Since the telescope was of Newtonian design and the focal length extremely long, it was necessary to ride the lift up to the end of the tube to peer into the eyepiece. Tammy took me up in the lift to check out the view from the top.

After my feet were firmly back on the ground we headed over to check out the rest of the grounds. I brought my computers, antennas, and receiver equipment used to record my radio observations, to the star party. Had the sun been active we would

have erected the antennas in hopes of listening to radio bursts live from the sun. Unfortunately the sun decided to quiet down and the only thing observable would have been the Milky Way and not much of that.

Instead I opted to display the kiosk simulation we used here for the ACA astronomy day display. Tammy arranged to have a table brought to me in Mohican Lodge near the observatory.

On the way to get my equipment from the car I ran into Jeff Hudson. Jeff had observed the transit of Venus with me on the parking lot at Tops in Fairlawn. We got reacquainted and Jeff helped set up the computers and adjust the software. Some of you may remember the radio astronomy kiosk at the astronomy day event. It was set up so that by clicking the sound buttons with the mouse one could hear and see charted, the radio sound clips recorded from Jupiter, the Sun, and Milky Way.

It was a miracle that I met Jeff there. I had brought my digital camera but discovered I had forgotten the memory card! Jeff was very kind in loaning me his own card. I later downloaded the photos to my laptop.

The first evening could not have been more perfect for a bunch of optical astronomers with their little red lights. The sky became very transparent as it began to darken for the first night's observing. There were lots of telescopes present, seemingly more reflectors than refractors.

That night I got my first look through the Warren Rupp thirty-one inch Newtonian. Standing in a short line I peered into the dim red light of the observatory dome, waiting my turn. The loud whir of an electric motor signaled the lift was coming down and I was up



next. A guide at the door ushered people in and out after each observation and assisted the lift operator in keeping people safely away from the hardware. The guide came for me and I followed him inside under the telescope's axle to the opposite side of the observatory. I climbed the stairs on the lift into the basket and with a shaky whir I was hoisted high into the heavens. Through the open doors of the observatory dome I could look up and see the star clouds of Cygnus. I looked out over the observatory grounds to see flashing red lights and shadows walking this way and that. The lift came to a stop at the eyepiece. I was instructed where to look, shown the coarse adjust, the fine adjust, and told that the object at hand was globular star cluster M15. A beautiful sight greeted me in the eyepiece. I had never seen a star cluster look so much like a photo in a book. It was a pile of diamonds set against the blackness of space, a scene I won't soon forget.

By this time I had been up well over twenty-four hours from working the night before and was ready to retire. I strolled down to the observatory club house to bid my hostess

goodnight, and then headed off to my car and a soft comfy bed at the Travelodge.

The next day was filled with lectures from nine in the morning until five that evening. Guest speakers included myself, speaking about the Radio Jove project and radio astronomy at 20.1 MHz. Brent Archinal, professional astronomer and planetary geodesist, spoke on the Huygens landing at Titan and his work in processing the data. Stephen James O'Meara, volcanologist and contributing editor to *Sky & Telescope* magazine, spoke on visual astronomy. Terry Mann, As-

tronomical League Vice-President, spoke on aurora. Nate Cardarelli, retired radiation/biophysicist, spoke of his life's work and his experience working with NASA developing protective suits for the astronauts. And finally, Barb Hubal of the Black River Astronomy Society presented information on safe solar viewing.

I counted heads at the gathering for the twenty or so door prizes. There looked to be about ninety in attendance.

The second evening was not as perfect as before but the stars did command a presence. I made sure to look through as many telescopes as I could. I also attempted more astrophotography using Jeff's memory card again.

Former ACAer Rich Ruggles was also there. Rich was one of the original contributors to the ACA photo gallery. His photos of aurora were quite nice. Rich was perhaps the luckiest guy in the crowd. He won a brand new telescope as the final winner in the door prize drawing. As for my single bid for a beautiful metallic meteorite, I was not so lucky. Perhaps next year my luck will change.

I had a great time at Hidden Hollow and encourage anyone who hasn't been there to visit on a public night or attend the next star party. It's worth it just to have a look at that magnificent instrument they call the Rupp Telescope.



**From the Observatory Director
- Mark North**

The observatory staff has been busy sprucing up the building over the past couple of months. Most of what we've tackled have been minor repairs and a couple of modifications. Most-notable, the Club's 14-inch telescope has been lowered several inches resulting in a more-comfortable viewing height. Yes, we still have need of the metal staircase, but only occasionally now. We've also remounted the 100mm

refractor on the top of the 14-inch telescope. This will give us additional viewing options and, speaking from the nerd inside of me, it just looks really cool sitting there on top of the main tube. I'm sure that the viewing public will be impressed as well!

This past year has been a very busy one and sometimes the daily news brings us more than we care to read or hear. But we belong to a privileged group, sharing a common bond of friendship and a unique view of the sky above us.

This thought struck me recently while observing in the middle of a very wet, very quiet field. For those few hours, all that seemed to matter were the stars. Yes, the deep-space objects were particularly bright that night and all of them were calling out to my telescope. But as I gazed at the stars from my fold-up chair, I realized once again how beautiful and how special they were. Just "plain old" stars... And I felt sad that I had neglected them so much lately.

With our GOTO scopes and

detailed star maps, we tend to zero in on the faint fuzzies with fancy names and abundant photons. Rarely however, do we look at "plain old" stars. But like true friends, they're always there, waiting to hear from me...

When was the last time you can remember turning your binoculars or telescope toward a solitary star? What color was it? Was it nestled among countless other points of light or did it seem to occupy its own little personal space with very few nearby stars? Did

you stop to realize that that "plain old" star was likely very close to you, in a relative sort of way? It may have been only a few thousand, few hundred, or few tens of light-years away from you – like a neighbor calling

out over the picket fence, wishing you a nice weekend.

Maybe it's been a while since you've found the time to set up your telescope or dig out your binoculars? Sometimes I can hardly believe that another week has passed by and with all that I have to do, dragging my gear out into the night doesn't always rank very highly. But each of us has to make the time; schedule it; and enjoy it! If we don't make time, it will elude us and what we miss out on, though not earth-shattering, is a loss nonetheless. Losing touch with our night-sky friends is sometimes viewed as an inevitable part of the tradeoff that we're forced to make when scheduling our lives, but it doesn't have to be.

This past year has offered us clouds and more clouds, but this

only means that we have to watch the weather and the Clear Sky Clock much more closely; otherwise, we'll miss out on the few opportunities thrown our way. It also means that our public events sometimes amount to nothing more than sitting around with a group of fellow observers, looking for sucker-holes, talking about astronomy, and enjoying each other's company.

Sadly, our public events have seen fewer and fewer participants this year. While I can't really blame anybody for leaving their gear at home when the sky looks foreboding, I'd still like to see more of you at our public events, even if you just stop by to say, "Hi," and help us look for sucker-holes!

Dark, clear skies are nice, but don't lose touch with your human friends at the ACA. Most important, don't forget to take time to look up from this raft called "Earth" and be thankful that we have so many "plain old" stars to enjoy...



For Sale:

1) Homebrew (not by me) 12" F/5 truss dobsonian telescope. It's built much bigger and heavier than I would have done it; the mirror box is large enough for a 17.5" mirror. I'd consider it a rebuild project to make it smaller and lighter but it works as it is. Includes a nice welded multipoint primary cell, a quality secondary holder and spider, a 2" helical focuser and a shroud. Mirror coatings are a little scratched but a recoat will fix that - \$500

2) Tasco Starguide 60GT - same as Celestron Nexstar 60GT; 60mm F/11 achromat refractor with alt/az GoTo mount & tripod - includes a Celestron Nexstar 60GT handbox instead of the Tasco - \$125

- John Crilly
jcrilly@neo.rr.com

Great Lakes Star Gaze 3— Trip Report by John Crilly (jcrilly@neo.rr.com)

The Sunset Astronomical Society's third annual Great Lakes Star Gaze was held the weekend of September 30 at the Club's observing site near Gladwin, Michigan. I've visited the site a number of times; it's about 6 hours (350 miles) from Wadsworth by Jeep. This was my first visit to the star party, though.

Attendance was about 225, up from last year's record of 140. The site is next to (and owned by) the River Valley RV Park so folks could leave their trailers in the campground proper and walk up to the observing field or, as I did, set up tents on the observing field and stay there. The photo on the right shows the AstroJeep and my color-matched tent.

I had originally planned to go with observing buddy, Scott Horstman, but he was forced to cancel so I had to get everything I was taking into one vehicle. It took a little planning, but in the end I had Dobbest II (20" F/3.8 truss dob), the PST and Vixen tripod, the 12" RCX400 (WITH tripod this time!), assorted tables, chairs, eyepiece cases, accessory cases, batteries, tent, cot, and the sleeping bag all loaded and still had room for a driver. Coming home I had all that plus an Intes MN61 I picked up there.

The SAS did a great job of arranging the observing field; I had never seen more than 6 or 8 telescopes there at once on the informal observing nights but even with the large attendance there was plenty of room this year. GLSG isn't a vendor show but several Michigan vendors were in evidence - Dale Penkala's DBA Astronomy, Rider's Hobbies, Antlers Optics, and Meridian Telescopes all had displays. There was always complimentary coffee and hot chocolate on the observing field, and a food wagon was available in the RV park. There were about 75 door prizes to share among the 225 attendees. Prizes were donated by the above-named vendors, plus Denkmeier Optical, Astronomics, Anacortes Telescope & Wild Bird, and various other entities.



In this photo you can see the Tak EM200 a buddy of Tom Trusock's squeezed in between Gary's Obsession and Dobbest II. At night an FS128 rode on the Tak mount.

In this photo you can see the RCX400, Dobbest, and Gary Gibb's 20" F/5 Obsession. The trees are to the North so they didn't affect observing.



We were fortunate in that, although it was very rainy a week before, the skies cleared up nicely for the Star Gaze. The first night we experienced great transparency but medium seeing, while the second night the transparency was down but the seeing was wonderful!

The Night Sky

Newsletter of the Astronomy Club of Akron

c/o Ray Hyer, Editor

725 Brewer St

Akron, OH 44305-2103

To join the ACA, **or to renew your membership**, please fill out the form below, place in an envelope and mail to the address shown in the return address area of the form.

Please be sure to enclose payment for the membership level desired.

The Astronomy Club of Akron
c/o Diane North, Treasurer
795 Mohawk Ave
Akron, OH 44305-1811

Yes! I want to become a member of the Astronomy Club of Akron

www.acaoh.org
(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Astronomy Club of Akron annual memberships renew in the month of May.

ADULT (ages 18 and older)..... \$30.00

JUNIOR (ages 12 to 17).....\$15.00

ADDITIONAL ADULT member \$15.00

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP\$40.00

I realize the full color version of *The Night Sky* newsletter is available for download by members from our web page at www.acaoh.org, but I would rather have the B&W version mailed to my address via USPS.