



The Night Sky

The Newsletter of
The Astronomy Club of Akron

www.acaoh.org

Volume 29 Number 11

November 2007

RAMBLINGS OF THE PRESIDENT

by Dave Jessie

Have you heard about the comet? Comet 17P/Holmes, that is? Of COURSE you have! It's been a very long time since I've seen such enthusiasm among the members. Our listserv has been abuzz with interest and literal shouts of glee at seeing this amazing comet. Many have posted images of the comet on the list and have even posted mathematical computations calculating the huge size of this beast - now the largest object in the Solar System, larger even than the Sun. Amazing. If you haven't made it out to look at this, please do yourself a favor and do so. Here's a map showing its position in the constellation of Perseus:

<http://phillipsaca.googlepages.com/17PHolmesMap.png>

Just look northeast around 8:00pm. You'll see Cassiopeia (the flattened 'W' lying on its side) and below is Perseus. The bright star you'll see on the horizon is Capella in Auriga - Perseus (and the comet) is above and slightly to the right of Capella. In this chart, the comet is marked with a '17P' and is shown on a red arched line. This line shows the comet's position at 9:00pm for each day until Nov 30. Ron took advantage of the weather and had two unscheduled public nights at the observatory on Monday Oct 29 and Tuesday Oct 30. Ron and Mark Kochheiser announced these events to the Beacon Journal and Channel 5 (WEWS) news. We even got 20 seconds or so of coverage on the 11:00pm news. Lots of public showed up both nights and everyone had a great time. This is what is so great about amateur astronomy...you never know what's going to hap-

pen. WHAM! Suddenly there's a naked-eye comet that everybody can see - out of no where. The Internet is a great source of information about this strange event. If you don't have Internet access from home, you can always go to the local library and use their computers. You'll find it's worth the trip!

MARS is APPROACHING!! On the night of December 18th Mars will be its closest to earth until May 22, 2016 - although opposition isn't until Dec 24th. The reason for this apparent contradiction is the fact that the orbits of Earth and Mars are not circular, but elliptical. While not as close as in August of 2003, it's higher in the sky due to its position above the ecliptic and the fact that the ecliptic is at greatest altitude close to Winter Solstice. We all know that Altitude trumps Proximity. We'll be looking through less atmosphere which is a very good thing. It will be nearly 16 arcseconds in apparent diameter and will shine at a magnitude of -1.6, even brighter than Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. Mars will be in the constellation of Gemini and well placed for us. We have been asked to conduct a public viewing by the National Park Service on the night of Saturday December 15th. This event will occur at the Ledges Shelter on Kendall Park Rd. If the skies don't cooperate, we'll have a computer presentation ready as a fall-back. Please attend if you possibly can. This is another golden opportunity to show the public what we do. Plan on getting there before dark to set up equipment.



Comet 17P/Holmes—October 28, 2007

Photo by Justin Phillips

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Lou Poda		

Activities Calendar

Club

Celestial

Nov. 10, Open House and Star Party 6:30 pm	November 17-18, Leonid Meteor Shower
	November 24, Full Moon
Nov. 16, ACA General Membership Meeting 8:00 pm	December 9, New Moon
	December 13-14, Geminid Meteor Shower
Dec. 1, Open House and Star Party 6:30 pm	December 18, Mars closest approach
	December 23, Full Moon
Dec. 8, Open House and Star Party 6:30 pm	December 24, Mars Opposition

The deadline for article submission is **the second Tuesday after each 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!!!!

Send your articles, items for sale, and comments to: Justin Phillips 402 Crystal St. Akron Ohio
email phillipsaca@gmail.com

OBSERVATORY REPORT

Ron Kalinoski

17P/Holmes really stirred up a lot of excitement among club members. From the time Dave Jessie sent out a notice about the comet on Thursday October 25th, member e-mails continually flowed describing what they saw by visual observations and photographs. The comet was easily seen by the naked eye as a bright star in the constellation Perseus seven degrees east of Mirfak. Telescopic observations of the comet on Thursday showed the coma was composed of two concentric disks with the inner disk much brighter than the outer disk. Granulations could be seen throughout the outer disk. On Saturday October 27th, a bright star-like object appeared at the edge of the inner disk. Rob Watkins captured this star-like object in a photograph, and I compared the image in the eyepiece to a drawing made on Thursday night and speculated it was not a background star, as there was no star in that position on the Thursday drawing. On Sunday, photographs by Rob Watkins, Peter Clausen, and Justin Phillips showed two star-like objects on the edge of the inner disk of the coma and one star-like object on the edge of the outer disk of the coma. Speculation among club members and amateur astronomers outside the club was divided between a split nucleus and intervening background stars. Monday and Tuesday observations gave pretty conclusive evidence the star-like object that appeared Friday night was the comet nucleus and the two additional star-like objects appearing on photographs Saturday night were background stars. The 14" observatory telescope visually showed the comet had increased in size with a bright nucleus at the edge of the inner disk of the coma and no other star-like objects within the

coma. The outer disk of the coma showed a region of subtle rarefaction.

On Sunday morning October 28th, we decided to have a star party at the observatory for club members. Jason Shinn suggested we try to get a message out to the public so they could also attend the star party. Led by our observatory staff's Public Relations Coordinator, Mark Kochheiser, we were able to get notices out to the Beacon Journal, Ohio.org, News Channel 5, WNIR, and Dave Jessie's Fishcreek School observing group. We planned two star parties, Monday night and Tuesday night. We had clear skies and good attendance each night. News Channel 5 showed up Monday night to film members and the public observing the comet through our telescopes. The news team probably got excited about the event after receiving Peter Clausen's photograph of the comet that we had sent to them. News Channel 5 showed footage of our star party on Monday night and Tuesday morning broadcasts.

On November 3rd, the weather was excellent for our scheduled public star party. Members and the public were eager to see what the comet would look like that night. Members' telescopes were the first to examine the comet. The observatory telescope was set on other celestial objects until the comet cleared the observatory roof. The 14" telescope revealed the comet increased in size with a small decrease of coma intensity. The nucleus had a significant decrease in brightness; however, it was still easily seen in the eyepiece. This comet really put on a good show!

During the day on November 3rd, Fred Huffman and I completed sealing the roof with an aluminized, fiber-filled roof sealant. With this action and the previous work of replacing roof nails with gasketed screws, we are confident the observatory roof will not leak for many years.

I would like to announce a new member of the observatory staff, David Feltner. David will be helping the observatory staff develop a 2008 Public Event Schedule and also help generate the 2008 Observatory Budget. Welcome aboard David.

Treasurer's Report: 10/1/07 - 10/31/07

Steve Rohweder, Treasurer

Total Beginning Assets	\$9,025.97
Income	
Other income	\$1.00
Interest on balances	\$1.75
50/50 Drawing	\$25.00
Dues	\$30.00
Kiwanis Rose Sales	\$300.00
Expenses	
Food	(\$28.24)
Newsletter Expense	(\$87.80)
Observatory Improvements	(\$236.06)
Kiwanis Rose Sales	(\$300.00)
Total Ending Assets	\$8,731.62

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

Patrick T. Gleason
Brian Scott Neiferd
David Noonan

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

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Newsletter of the Astronomy Club of Akron

c/o Justin Phillips, Editor
402 Crystal St
Akron, OH 44305-3116

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 Steve Rohweder, Treasurer
3981 Meadow Wood Ln
Uniontown, OH 44685-7785

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.