



The Night Sky

The Newsletter of
The Astronomy Club of Akron

www.acaoh.org

Volume 30 Number 1

January 2008

RAMBLINGS OF THE PRESIDENT

by Dave Jessie

Mars Mars Mars: We had our program on Mars at the Ledges Shelter in the Cuyahoga National Park on December 15th despite a horrible night, weather wise. Scott Van Houten, the official who had contacted me about doing the program, was happy with the showing made by our membership and the program we had put together. No viewing of the actual planet was possible due to dense cloud cover and, uh, snow. Lots and lots of snow. Scott arrived there early to have fires going in the two fireplaces at either end of the shelter, but it remained pretty cold inside right up to the time we left at 9:30pm. Who was there? Lets see... from the ACA, we had myself, Rosaelena, Ron Kalinoski, Freddy Huffman, Jeff Kreidler (who brought delicious cakes and eggnog for us), David Feltner (the newest member of the Observatory Staff) and Anirudh Walvekar (who has recently returned permanently to his native India). From the National Park Service, we had Scott Van Houten. How many public were there? None. Nada. Zip. Scott was visibly unhappy about it, but understood that the public realized they wouldn't get to see Mars through the telescopes we had brought, and simply decided to stay home and warm out of the miserable weather. We did score points with the Park Service and can probably take advantage of that some beautiful warm night or two this summer. Despite no visitors, us ACAers had a great time, as we always seem to do.

So Long to Anirudh: Member Anirudh Walvekar has returned to India, and we probably won't see him again. Anirudh joined the ACA in the spring of 2007 and seemed to make it to almost all our observing events. Always laughing, always learning, he had a pair of binoculars and really enjoyed scanning the sky for open clusters. At the Astronomy Day festivities at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History last year, Anirudh was overheard saying to Freddy, "You're a crazy man, but I like you" as only Anirudh could say. We've laughed a lot at that comment, I assure you. I don't know if Anirudh will see this, but if so, please know we will miss you and all the joy you brought to the ACA.

Our Ten-year Lease with the State of Ohio: A couple months ago, I started the process of renewing our ten-year lease with the State for the property in the Portage Lakes

State Park upon which our Observatory resides. It seemed like a simple enough process...write a letter stating our intention to renew. But who to send it to? I called the ODNR (Ohio Department of Natural Resources) in Columbus using a phone number I found on the Internet. Two calls and twelve minutes later, I was speaking with Tim Caris, Director of Properties for the ODNR. He was very helpful, gave me the name and address to send the letter, thanked me for the work the ACA does, and told me everyone was anxious to have us continue our efforts to educate the public with our programs. I wrote the letter, mailed it via snail-mail and also sent it via email to both Kim Caris in Columbus and Bruce Carpenter at the Portage Lakes State Park. Done! Or so I thought. <This is where the sinister background music should start playing> No word until I received an email on December 23rd, copied in its entirety below:

Mr. Jessie:

Thank you for mailing the items attached with the e-mail sent earlier this month. Unfortunately, we have discovered, after conducting an all-encompassing search, that the lease [from 1987] that had been partially executed was never finalized. It is anyone's guess as to how this happened, but what it means is that we will have to issue a new lease rather than taking the quicker method renewing an existing legal agreement.

We are currently coordinating a new lease within our ranks, and will be back in touch with you during the week of December 31st.

I am sincerely sorry that we are faced with these circumstances, but we will do what is necessary to expedite the re-issuing of your organization's lease.

Kim Caris

So much for easy. I last spoke with Kim via telephone on 1/10/2008 and nothing has been done as yet. The lease must be initiated from scratch rather than renewing an existing agreement. I will keep the Board and you informed of future developments.

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OTAA Representative		
Lou Poda		

Activities Calendar

Club	Celestial
Jan. 25, ACA General Membership Meeting 8:00 pm	January 22, Full Moon
Feb. 9, Open House and Star Party 7:00 pm	February 6, New Moon
Feb. 22, ACA General Membership Meeting 8:00 pm	February 20, Full Moon
Mar. 1, Open House and Star Party 7:00 pm	March 7, New Moon

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

Below is the ACA 2008 Observatory Budget approved by the ACA Board.

2008 ACA Observatory Budget

Budget Summary

1) Concrete Pad at roof roll off area	\$800
2) Miscellaneous Observatory Maintenance	\$360
3) Paint for doors, molding, and roof roll off area structure	\$140

Total 2008 ACA Observatory Budget **\$1300**

Details of Budget Items

Item #1 Concrete Pad at Roof Roll Off Area **\$800**

cost breakdown:

1) 7 tons of #4 limestone base; 5 inch depth (delivered)	\$168
2) 4.5 yards of six sack concrete; 5 inch depth	\$553
3) miscellaneous materials	\$79

description: This item would include all raw materials for a concrete pad at the location of the observatory roof roll off area. The Observatory Staff Maintenance Coordinator believes members can perform all necessary pre-work to set forms as well as pour and finish the concrete. The concrete pad will provide the following:

- 1) An aesthetically appealing weed free area, requiring no periodic maintenance.
- 2) Elimination of storm water entering the observatory under the north wall.
- 3) A shaded area for members to get out of the sun during club picnics.

Item #2 Miscellaneous Observatory Maintenance **\$360**

cost breakdown: \$30/month

description: This item would cover all miscellaneous expenses required to keep the observatory in good condition. Examples of this item would include light bulbs, log books, batteries, cleaning supplies, locks, keys, electrical supplies, caulking, and fasteners.

Item #3 Paint **\$140**

cost breakdown:

1) 1 gallon stain	\$50
2) 1 gallon white paint	\$50
3) brushes, rollers, pans	\$40

description: The doors, door frames, building molding, roof roll off area structure need paint. If these areas are not painted, their lifetime will be reduced.

**Don't forget: The first
ACA meeting of 2008
is on January 25!**

Treasurer's Report: 11/1/07 - 12/31/07	
Steve Rohweder, Treasurer	
Total Beginning Assets	\$8,731.62
Income	
Interest on balances	\$3.45
Dues	\$194.00
Expenses	
Miscellaneous	(\$29.74)
Observatory Upkeep	(\$110.85)
Total Ending Assets	\$8,788.48

Time for New Blood

John Crilly

I've had a great time serving as Vice President of the Club these four years. I know that David has enjoyed his tenure as President as well. Each of us went into our positions with our own specific ideas about how to retain the things we liked best about the Club and how to help the Club to move in new directions. I'm pleased with the way things worked out; it's still a great Club and continues to fulfill an important role in the community. I think we've had an impact, and on the whole I feel it's been a positive one.

According to our Bylaws, though, it's time for David and me to move on. The Club founders, wisely realizing that maintaining the same roster of officers for too long leads to stagnation and a lack of new ideas, established term limits for our offices and they have been reached in both of our cases. This means that for the Club to remain healthy – and especially for the Club to grow and improve further – we are going to need some new folks to step up the plate.

Here's the challenge: What didn't we think of? What problems face the Club that we failed to

address? What mistakes did we make that should be corrected? What did we almost get right but fell short in the end? Anyone taking a serious look at the Club will surely see something in at least one of those areas that he or she would like to change. If you do, then here's your chance to make it right and do it your own way. It's a satisfying challenge, and the potential benefits to the Club and to the community make the effort well worthwhile.

What does it take to become an effective Club officer? Beyond the specific requirements set forth in the Bylaws (18 years of age, Club member, etc.) it requires interest in the Club and a desire to contribute to its well-being. Anyone with all those attributes is eligible to run for office. A successful candidate has a real opportunity to make a difference!

Please consider accepting nomination for office – it's the best way to help guide the Club in the directions you consider most important.

(Non-ACA) Astronomy Events in January:

NASA Glenn Third Saturday Series Event: *Inner Space*. Find out about the planets Mercury and Venus as NASA prepares for the MESSENGER spacecraft's first encounter with the innermost planet. January 19, 2008 at NASA Glenn Research Center
<http://www.nasa.gov/centers/glenn/home/index.html>

NASA Glenn Third Saturday Series Event: *NASA in Cleveland!* Join us for a discussion about Glenn Research Center's origins in Cleveland and how it continues to be an integral part of Northeast Ohio. February 16, 2008 at NASA Glenn Research Center
<http://www.nasa.gov/centers/glenn/home/index.html>

Some Notes:

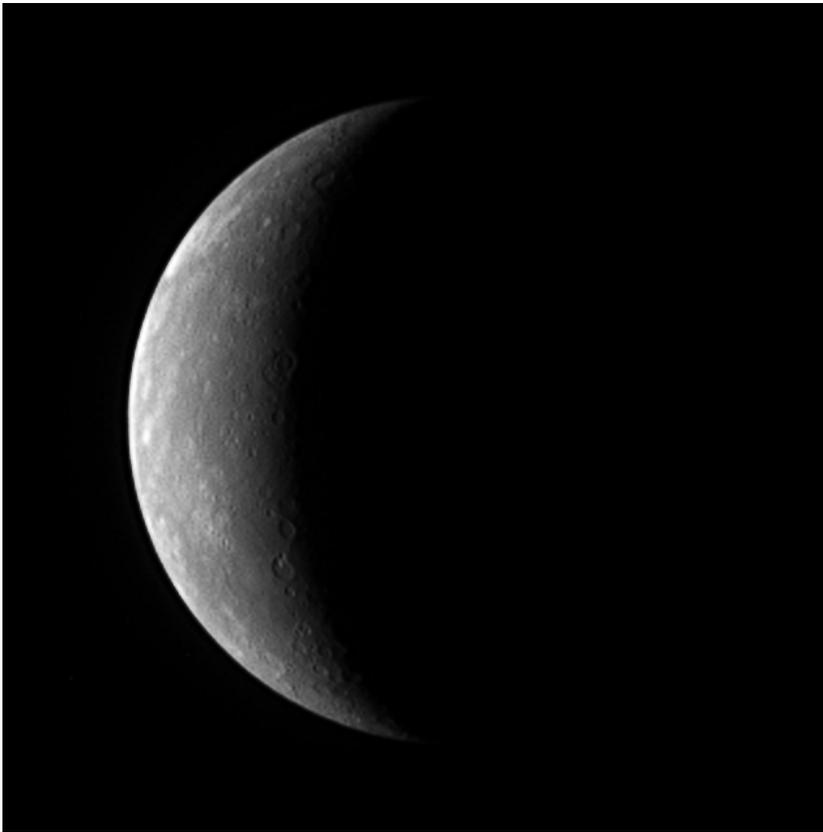
An observatory schedule is included with this month's newsletter. It is the last page in the online edition, and an insert in the print edition.

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

Barry L. Ganoe
Jason Greenfelder
Scott & Diane Horstman (welcome back!)

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

Note: We currently have 94 members!



MESSENGER Meets Mercury

The MESSENGER spacecraft conducted a fly by of the planet Mercury on January 14. This image is the most detailed one released as of press time. Find more at the MESSENGER website:

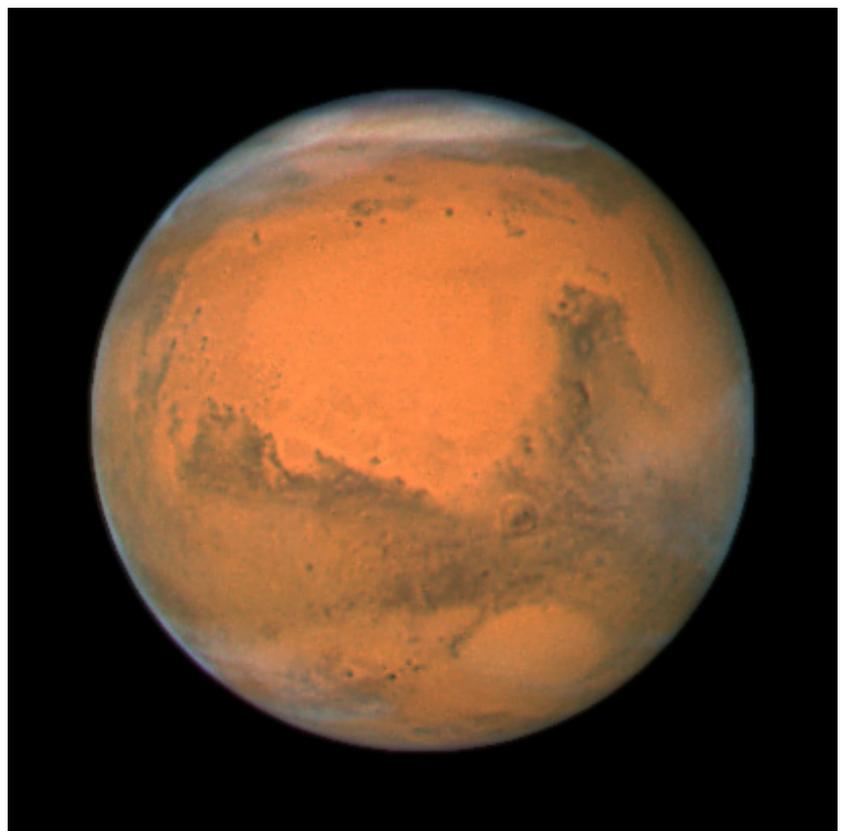
<http://messenger.jhuapl.edu/index.php>

Credit: NASA/Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory/Carnegie Institution of Washington

Hubble Shoots Mars

The Hubble Space Telescope photographed Mars during the planet's closest approach to Earth in 2007. More information about this image can be found on the Hubble newscenter website:

<http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2007/45/>



Credit: NASA, ESA, the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA), J. Bell (Cornell University), and M. Wolff (Space Science Institute, Boulder)

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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.



Astronomy Club of Akron

2008 Observatory Schedule

Portage Lakes State Park, 5031 Manchester Road, Akron, OH 44319

www.acao.org

- Our star parties are free and open to the public. Please join us for stargazing and educational activities. Star parties will begin promptly.
- Events may be cancelled if the skies are cloudy. If the skies are questionable, please call for the latest information: 330-837-5848
- If you have a telescope or binoculars, please feel free to bring them with you.
- This is an outdoor activity in an unheated environment. Nighttime temperatures drop rapidly, even in the summer. Dress appropriately.
- A restroom is available for your convenience.
- Please be considerate of those who bring their own telescopes. Children should be supervised at all times. Pets should be left at home.
- Smoke and expensive optics don't mix. Please, **no smoking** in or near the observatory or on the surrounding grounds where club members have set up their telescopes. If you must smoke, walk to the down-wind side of the observing site. Be considerate of your fellow observers.

January 5 – 6:30pm

It's Spring on Mars, come see the north polar ice cap.

February 9 – 7:00pm

See stars being born in a stellar nursery: Orion Nebula

March 1 – 7:00pm

See a dying star in its final stage of life: Eskimo Nebula

March 8 – 7:00pm

How many of Saturn's moons can you count? Find out tonight.

March 29 – 8:00pm

Program: Winter & Spring Constellations

Special Event: Messier Marathon, stay all night to observe all 110 Messier objects with ACA club members.

April 5 – 8:00pm

Program: Crab Nebula

Messier, Anasazi Indians, & Modern astronomers

April 26 – 8:00pm

Program: Saturn

See Saturn cast its shadow on its magnificent rings

May 3 – 8:30pm

Program: Galaxies*

View Mercury at sunset and then galaxies in the Virgo Cluster

May 24 – 8:00pm

Annual ACA Telescope Seminar! Our members will describe the advantages and disadvantages of each type of telescope.

June 7 – 6:00pm

Solar & Lunar Event / Hotdog Roast! View sunspots, solar flares, and prominences on the sun and craters, mountains, and maria on the Moon. Enjoy a hotdog for a small fee.

Program 1: The Sun *Program 2:* The Moon

June 28 – 9:00pm

Program: Spectroscopy*

What can you learn from starlight?

July 5 – 9:00pm

Program: Star Atlases*

We'll show you how to follow a map to the stars!

July 26 – 9:00pm

Program: Nebulae*

Learn about emission, reflection, and dark nebulae and then view them up close.

August 23 – 8:00pm

Program: Jupiter

View Jupiter's moons and the planet's intricate band structure.

August 30 – 8:00pm

Program: Comets*

What makes these dirty snowballs act the way they do?

September 20 – 7:30pm

Program: Radio Astronomy*

What can we learn about the Universe at radio frequencies?

September 27 – 7:00pm

Programs: Globular Clusters*

View a few hundred thousand stars in the eyepiece!

October 4 – 7:00pm

Program: Double Stars*

View the finest double stars in the night sky!

October 18 – 7:00pm

Program: Stars*

Learn the life cycle of the stars

October 25 – 7:00pm

Program: Summer & Fall Constellations

November 1 – 7:00pm

View the Giant Gas Planets Uranus & Neptune

November 22 – 6:30pm

A blue snowball in space? Yes, come view the Blue Snowball Planetary tonight.

December 6 – 6:30pm

Observe the Straight Wall on the Moon!

December 20 – 6:30pm

View Venus, the brilliant beacon in the southwestern sky.

This will be the best viewing of Venus in 2008. Venus will be 30 degrees above the horizon at sunset.

* listed program or make-up program

Getting Started in Astronomy

Getting started in astronomy as a hobby isn't necessarily as expensive as most people think. While it's easy to spend several thousand dollars on high-end equipment, most skywatchers begin their odyssey with little more than an inexpensive skychart and their own eyes. Taking it one step farther, a modest pair of 10x50 binoculars can be had for less than \$50. While binoculars are seemingly less glamorous than a telescope, the views offered are nothing short of incredible. Many deep-space objects are visible and the sheer number of stars that are revealed will delight and amaze.

While the temptation to purchase an inexpensive, department store telescope can be overwhelming, you should think twice before taking the plunge. The optical quality is often enough to discourage rather than encourage. Claims of super-high magnification are nothing but smoke and mirrors in the world of amateur astronomy. How much light your instrument can collect and effectively bring to your eye is what really matters. It's not at all unreasonable to expect pricing in the \$300 dollar range for a reliable and more importantly, useful telescope. It's really worth waiting and saving for such an instrument if need be.

The Astronomy Club of Akron (ACA) hosts public viewing events, also known as "star parties," throughout the year (see reverse side for dates and times). As a non-profit entity with public education as our goal, the ACA's mission is to bring astronomy to you! Our public events are designed to teach and to foster interest in amateur astronomy. This being the case, our permanent observatory facility at the Portage Lakes State Park houses a 14 inch, computerized, Schmidt Cassegrain telescope. This instrument is the centerpiece of our public star parties and everybody is welcome to have a look through the eyepiece at whatever happens to be targeted. We enjoy answering questions and requests to see astronomical objects are gladly accepted. In addition to our observatory, you will find members scattered around the property, expertly manning their own private telescopes and binoculars. Again, questions are welcome as is the opportunity to show you

astronomical wonders through a variety of brands and optical designs. If you don't currently own a telescope but are considering purchasing one, our public star parties are fantastic sources of information. Come and see the many choices and options available and see how much more informed a purchasing decision you can make afterward!

As a non-profit organization, the ACA exists and operates through a combination of charitable donations and membership dues. If you'd like to be a member, you will know that your dues help to support our recurring expenses and purchase of new and replacement equipment. You will also receive discounts on annual subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines and will be able to borrow ACA loaner telescopes. You will be invited to our members-only events and will be eligible to vote on club issues. Even more important, you will know that you are part of our effort to teach and enlighten those who may never have been exposed to astronomy in any other way.

