



The Night Sky

The Newsletter of
The Astronomy Club of Akron

www.acaoh.org

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Ramblings of the President

By Glenn R. Cameron

Hello my fellow starphiles. I'm sorry I missed the Solar/Lunar/Hot Dog Roast star party. I always look forward to it every year. This year, my family and I were on vacation.

We first went to Washington D.C. then on to Philadelphia. We had a great time. It was fun showing the kids the replica of the Hubble Space Telescope and impressing upon them how it has far outlived its predicted lifespan and how it has a few more good years ahead of it after the latest service mission. They oohed and aahed appropriately at its school bus size.

While in D.C. we went to Arlington National Cemetery. This was a first for me and it's a very solemn experience. There are so many stories of bravery and hardship in that place. Apropos to our club, I took a couple of pictures of the memorial markers for the two space shuttle disasters. It is so sad that those lives were lost but we have often read in the news from the families and loved ones of those brave astronauts how none of those lost would have changed anything in their lives. They loved what they were doing and they would not have wanted the space program to be ended. They knew the risks and they literally flew in the face of those risks. I am including the pictures of those two markers in this article.

As always, help us to keep our club great and I'll see you over the summer at our great star parties.



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Calendar

Club

July 18- Open House and Star Party- 9:00 PM, Open Clusters! Observatory

July 25- Open House and Star Party- 9:00 PM, Naked Eye and Binocular Objects! Observatory

August 8- Open House and Star Party- 8:30 PM, Sky Atlases! Observatory

Remaining OTAA Conventions this year:

Aug 22 - MVAS OTAA meeting at MVCO, Braceville, OH

Sep 18-20 - RAA Hidden Hollow 2009, in Mansfield, OH

Sep 19 - Black River OTAA, Birmingham, OH

Celestial

July 7- Full Moon

July 15- Last Quarter Moon

July 22- New Moon

July 22- Total Solar Eclipse, Asia and the Pacific

All month- Jupiter rising in Capricornus

August 12- Geminid Meteor Shower

Treasurer's Report From Lew Snodgrass

Opening Balance, 5/1/2009= \$ 8630.13

Income

Hot Dog Roast/Telescope Raffle	\$236.30
Bank Interest	\$1.22
Dues	\$180.00
.	

Total income \$417.52

Expenses

Statement reconciliation \$0.90

Total Expense \$0.90

Income less expenses \$416.62

Closing Balance, 5/31/2009 \$9046.75

Account Breakdown-

Checking	\$3126.08
Savings	\$5920.67

Observatory Report

Ron Kalinoski

We have experienced some good luck this year with respect to weather. Daytime clouds have consistently given way to clear skies at star party time. Our June 13th star party was no exception. When I left home for the observatory, rain was coming down and a rainbow stretched across the sky. By the time the observatory roof was rolled back and latches secured, the sky was cloudless. Saturn was our featured celestial object and we had an exceptionally high number of children at this star party to view Saturn and its moons. Several member telescopes were set up on the observatory grounds to also provide the public with a variety of deep sky objects. Sky conditions remained favorable throughout the observing session. There was a good turnout of members and public.

We started our June 20th star party with a presentation on asteroids and followed up with observations of Ceres. Ceres was shining at mag 8.6 and was located a quarter degree northeast of mag 3 star Theta Leonis. The two formed a pretty pair in the eyepiece. Ceres dwarfs all other asteroids in the Asteroid Belt with a diameter of 590 miles. It comprises 32% of the mass contained within the Asteroid Belt. We also viewed The Cat's Eye Nebula, The Ring Nebula, 24 Coma Berenices, and the beautiful open cluster NGC6633. Frequent rain during the week helped launch an attack by mosquitoes on the humans and by 10:30pm member telescopes were absent from the observatory grounds.

Our Solar Lunar Hotdog Roast was a great success! Members set up solar telescopes to view the sun; although, the sun continued to be void of any sunspots. Thanks to Rosaelena Vilasenor, Mary Pickelsimer, and Peggy Stabholz for running the hotdog roast. Hotdog sales tallied \$81, just clearing the cost of the cookout. About 35 people attended the event and after the hotdog roast Tom Mino treated attendees

to a presentation on the Sun. Dave Jessie followed Tom with a hands-on presentation on the Moon. Thanks Tom and Dave for the great work! Next, we held our telescope raffle. Rosaelena sold many tickets before the raffle and netted \$58 for the club. All three telescopes found new homes. The skies remained clear so members pointed their telescopes at a five day old Moon. First time visitors were elated at what they saw. Their responses sum up the essence of observational astronomy. To close the star party, late arriving Marty Breyer requested the 14" telescope be pointed to a near horizontal position to view open clusters M6 & M7 just rising in the east in the constellation Sagittarius. Despite the length of atmosphere transversed by the light, both clusters looked impressive. This star party was definitely a 2009 highlight. Thanks to all who helped and participated.

New Members!

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

Gary & Sue Davis from Cuyahoga Falls,
John & Annette Dietrick from Twinsburg
and
John Nichols from Akron

We are thrilled to have you with us and look forward to seeing you at all Club functions!

Outreach

August 12, Richfield, OH- Astronomy intro and meteor observing at a private family camp. Contact Tom Alexander, if interested.

Renewals

If you have not renewed your membership, please do so ASAP! A renewal form is on the back page.

Celestial confusion

An astronomical illiterate seeks a star to steer by — any star

by Michael Kilday

I've been a sailor all my life. One of the fundamental skills that sailors are supposed to possess is a knowledge of the stars. I am apparently the exception to that rule. For me, stars have always been little bits of light in the night sky that I futilely wish upon. This was a particular shortcoming when I began bluewater sailing because we had only celestial navigation to guide us from one place to another.

I remember taking a celestial navigation class in the 1970s. The instructor stood in front of the class pointing to a large chart of the night sky that showed all the constellations and their key stars that we were supposed to use for taking star sights. He could just as well have been



pointing to the stains on the carpet for all the good his chart and explanation did me. I spent the entire four-week class trying to make a gaggle of stars look like twins, a scorpion, or a lion. The truth was I could have made anything I wanted out of those stars. Want a bunny? A seashell? A naked woman? Admittedly, the last took some doing but the class was really boring. Instead, I sailed across the Pacific Ocean using the only objects in the heavens I could identify: the sun and the moon. And I shot the moon before dark so I never did need to identify a “navigational star.” It’s a good thing. Otherwise I would probably have missed Asia.

Elusive Big Dipper

I spent most of my night watches trying to find the Big Dipper, because if I did I could then identify the Little Dipper and the North Star: a trisect giveaway. Venus didn't count, since it always appeared over our bow and, until full dark, it was like following a street lamp.

Night after night, my star illiteracy haunted me. On any given night, I found a hundred candidates for the Big Dipper. And later, I learned that the North Star is not actually due north. What? Did they mention that in my class? Maybe while I was conjuring up the naked lady.

Now, many years and sea miles later, my wife, Donna, and I are serenely anchored aboard our little cutter in a lovely bay in Grenada, West Indies. Above us every night is a plethora of stars. While we have a sextant aboard, we navigate these days with GPS plotters and computers. For us, the stars have become what they have always actually been for me: another pleasant after-dark diversion.

Each evening, I sit in the cockpit and look up at the stars and identify the various constellations for Donna. Since she has no idea and little interest in which stars make which constellation, and since she also has nearly blind trust in my judgment (otherwise she would *never* have gone offshore with me in the first place), I blithely point out various clusters of light and tell her the "name" of that constellation.

Rum and astronomy

Since I once heard that Orion's Belt is near the equator, I always choose two or three stars in a straight line in the southern sky and tell Donna that they are Orion's Belt. For the Big Dipper, well, that depends on how close we are to finishing our nightly single ration of rum-and-Coke. If the big jelly glasses are nearly empty, I just point to the sky and announce firmly, "There, can't you see it?" If we are just getting started, I look at our compass, find the North Star (almost any star in the north works great for this exercise), look off at an angle and find something that looks like a bucket. And *voilà!* We have the Big Dipper. When she asks for the Little Dipper, I tell her it's not visible in this hemisphere.

Naturally, Donna knows I'm making all this up. But she doesn't spoil it because she likes the Bunny and she knows how much I look forward to finding the Naked Lady.

Michael Kilday and his wife, Donna, are currently circumnavigating the Caribbean on their 36-foot steel cutter. Michael has been sailing for 30 years in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Caribbean . . . never with much help from the stars above.

Editor's Note:

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Newsletter of the Astronomy Club of Akron

c/o Tom/Leigh Alexander, Editors

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For Club information, please visit our website: www.acao.org. Astronomy Club of Akron annual memberships renew in the month of May.

To join the ACA, **or to renew your membership**, please fill out the form below, place in an envelope and mail to:

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Lew Snodgrass, Treasurer, Astronomy Club of Akron
1865 Stabler Rd
Akron, OH 44313-6124

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

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

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 sent by email to , but I would rather have a B&W version mailed to my address via USPS.