



# The Night Sky

The Newsletter of  
The Astronomy Club of Akron

December 2000  
Volume 22 Number 11

## Come to the Holiday Dinner on January 13!

### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Frank Koby

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Season's Greetings Happy Holidays Bah Humbug. There, I think I've covered all of the greetings for this time of the year. I send my greetings to you and your family from our family. Don't forget the Holiday Dinner on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January at the Kiwanis Center at 7:00 PM. We will have a short business meeting before the entertainment. I'm planning for us to take a trip around the zodiac over the next year. We'll start with Virgo and finish with Taurus. Stay tuned for the installments over the upcoming months. Thanks to all those who helped at channels 45/49 on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Remember the reason for the joyous holiday season from ancient days until now.... The birth of a carpenter's son in a little town called Bethlehem.

**Next Meeting**  
**Holiday Dinner Jan. 13**  
**Club Meeting Jan. 26**  
**Kiwanis Hall, Portage Lakes**

### THE LAST MEETING

The last meeting of the Astronomy Club of Akron was held on November 17, 2000. Highlights of the meeting include:

- ◆ Name Tag Design Contest – Submissions are due on or before March meeting
- ◆ Web Site – We are checking on the availability of a domain name
- ◆ Holiday Dinner – To be held on January 13 at the Kiwanis Center

The speakers for the night, Joe Nieberding and Frank Spurlock, were wonderfully informative in their talks on space research. They showed three videos, one on the GOES weather satellites, one on the TDRS tracking and data relay satellites, and one on the GENESIS project to collect solar wind particles and return to the earth.

They discussed their work on the Red Teams to evaluate risks associated with launches of space vehicles and how the safety concerns have changed since the failure of two missions to Mars. Thanks for another very informative program!

## FOR SALE

Celestron Super C8 with Byers worm gear drive and Starbrite coatings. Includes 8X50 finder, sliding counterweight for tube assembly, celestron wedge with robust Meade tripod, Orion Microtrac II drive corrector (dual axis) with Solar/Lunar/Sidereal/Automatic settings, star diagonal, Lumicon Easy Guider (off axis), illuminated reticle with moveable crosshairs, tele-compressor for wider field views, 25mm Kellner eyepiece, piggyback camera adapter. Runs on AC or DC power. Perfect astrophotography setup. Excellent condition...\$975.00

Contact: Ed Eaken @330-482-9837, Email rotorr22@aol.com

## NOTES FROM RICH RUGGLES

### ACA STUFF - Last chance before the dinner

- There is one ACA Jacket available. It is a medium size and could be yours for \$48.00.
- We have 3 "Year in Space" weekly planners for \$10.00 ea.
- 6 Observer Wall Calendars are ready for your wall in 2001 for \$10.00 ea.
- 1 Telrad with base and dew shield treatment has not been claimed and can be yours for \$38.00 and with that you might think about the last Messier Sky Spot Set. This locator shows the placement of the Telrad Bullseye for finding all the "M" objects \$30.
- 9 Observers Handbooks for \$15.00

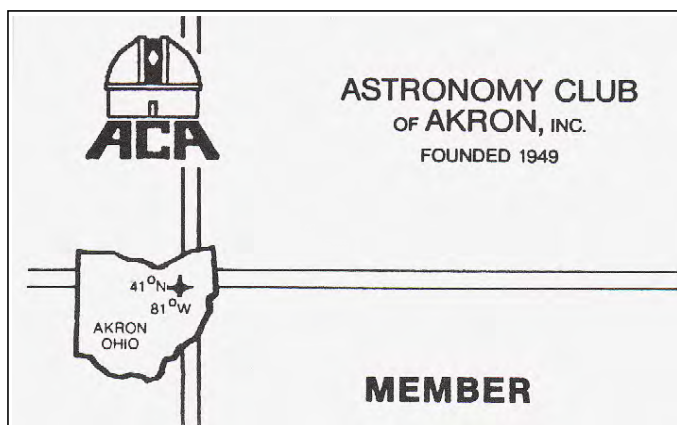
All these items should sell out at the dinner. If you want one now call me. First come, first served. 330 644-5912

### BUILD YOUR OWN 8" DOB.

Back in '95 I headed up the first ACA Telescope Building project. There were 16 people that built their first 4½" DOB. Now some of them have aperture fever, and asked if I could try for 8" DOBs. I found 8" f6 mirrors and 1.30" secondary at \$225.00 for the set. If you're interested in building your own scope let me know. If there are at least 8

of you that want to do this, I'll see what kind of deals I can find. Call 330 644-5912

**DESIGN THE NEW MEMBERSHIP CARD - WIN A FREE YEARS DUES.** Keep the card size 3½ x 4¼ this is our old style.



Here is the design of a card used years ago. Submit your entry on or before the March meeting.

## CHRISTMAS SOLAR ECLIPSE

By the Editor

The partial solar eclipse on December 25 was nothing especially spectacular, except for the fact that the sky actually cleared during this cloudy month so we can appreciate the event. I used eyepiece projection with my 4 ½" Newtonian to observe the eclipse. I noticed several sets of sun spots but they did not show up on my lousy photos, taken by my digital camera aimed at the cardboard projection screen. I hope you were able to get out into the chilly air and enjoy the eclipse.



## THE 2000 STAR PARTY REVIEW

By Rich Ruggles

Every year many OTAA Clubs sponsor star parties. Here is a review of the ones I attended. I hope this will spark the interest to those of you that have not experienced any to plan on attending one or more next year.

First up was The Mahoning Valley Astronomical Society. This gathering in Braceville, Ohio has a reputation for an outstanding "Food Fest." The pot-luck dinner always has some delicious homemade delights like chili and pastas along with chicken, ham, cold cuts, and hot dogs and sausage on the grill. This year was no exception. About 60 people attended. We only had about 2 hours of observing before the clouds moved in.



Mahoning Valley has 2 observatories. One houses an 8" Refractor and the other a 16" Cassegrain and their clubhouse.

This was the first year I looked through the 16" but due to the clouds my view wasn't very good. Some people left when the clouds moved in but many of us just sat around and talked astronomy. Even though there wasn't much observing this was still a good gathering.

One month later we had The Black River Astronomical Society Annual Star Party. The Black River Club holds theirs at the Strawberry Mountain Convention Center in Birmingham, Ohio. Like

Mahoning Valley, Black River also has a great pot luck dinner that has turned into a competition between the 2 clubs as to who has the best food. Black River always has their "Midnight Hot Dog Roast." This year I supplied them with ten pounds of quarter pound hot dogs which only lasted for the dinner. I was asked to do it again next year.

Black River's location is perfect for a rain or shine convention. This year we needed it. We had a torrential downpour while we were inside having the drawing. Oh, yes, did I mention that all these OTAA conventions have door prizes? Some of the prizes have been Celestron 8" Dob., Meade ETX-90, Nagler and TeleView eyepieces and dozens of other stuff. It's worth going to these just for the drawings. Where was I.....O yes, it rained and rained. Since there was no observing going on some brought their scopes into the hall and talked about the uniqueness of them and there is always a good swap table set up for all to buy and sell stuff. Some great deals too.

Well, we didn't start out too good. The first two OTAA star parties got rained on. Could this be a bad omen of things to come?.....NO!.....

Next up is Hidden Hollow. The Richland Astronomical Society holds this major convention every other year at Camp Hidden Hollow, the home of the Warren Rupp Observatory. The 31" f/7 telescope, known as Big Blue, is the largest aperture around. I have been attending Hidden Hollow for 10 years and have never seen such a clear night as that Friday night.

The seeing and transparency of the sky was the best I have ever experienced. I was showing a cluster of galaxies in Virgo with a 25" Dob. It was incredible and a first for me to see. The Yard Scope (36" Dob.) was there and offering some amazing views of the planets. An 8" f9 refractor showed a crystal clear view of Saturn showing several ring and planet bands. Randy Leason, former ACA member and ace amateur astronomer, had his award winning 17 1/2" Dob. on the observing hill and as usual went after all the faint treasures in the night sky. It was good to see him again. And finally bumping into David Levy, ace comet hunter and author, on the hill and spending some time talking about telescope building.

The Richland club is going to have what they call "Hidden Hollow Lite" next year which will only be a star party. This will permit all the OTAA clubs to get to Warren Rupp every year for a view through Big Blue as they did ten years ago.

Well, finally a star party with clear skies. Will this continue?

In the past, Hidden Hollow was the last star party of the year. This year I found another that was advertised in Sky & Tele Magazine. It was the Sandusky Valley Amateur Astronomy Clubs Autumn Astro-Tour 2000. This star party was co-sponsored by Tech 2000, the makers of the Dob. driver. This was Sandusky's Second Annual Astro-Tour and one I strongly recommend to attend next year.

The Autumn Astro-Tour was held just north of Tiffin, Ohio at the Tiffin Ranger Camp, home of the Ballreich Observatory. This observatory houses the 12.5" McMillin Refractor built around 1890 for Ohio State University. It was the largest refractor I ever looked through and the view nearly knocked my socks off! Jupiter-you could see swirl in the central bands and see more bands than ever before.....Saturn-Cassini's Division looked like someone took a black paint brush around the rings. You could also easily detect the difference in ring markings and bands on the planet.



When we left Akron that Friday the sky looked more like Toronto weather than observing weather. One of the attendees left Cleveland under snowy conditions. By the time we finished the two

hour drive west on 224 it was already dark and the sky was crystal clear. Looks like we got two in a row with pristine skies. How lucky can you get- in Ohio.



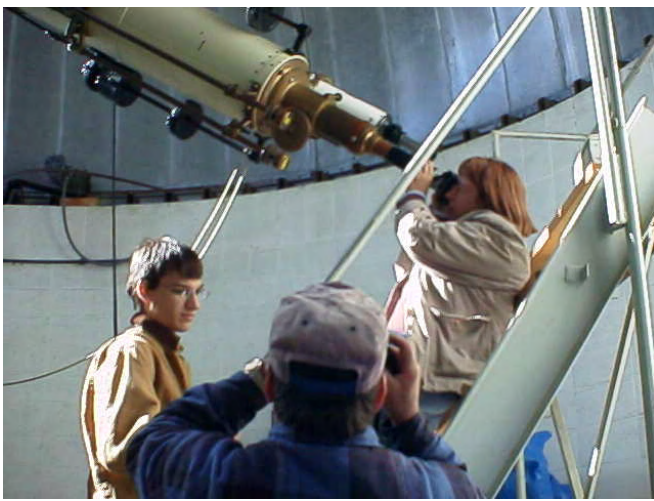
Rich Ruggles and Sandusky Valley Amateur Astronomy Club President Tom Day



12.5" McMillin refractor at the Ballreich Observatory of the Sandusky Valley Amateur Astronomy Club

Friday night the skies were excellent. I spent a lot of time at the eyepiece of my 8". The night was cold with a light breeze, so every so often

I went into the observatory to get a break from the cold breeze and took another look through the refractor. Around 3:00am I packed in my scope and table and stuff and walked around the observing field to see who was left. I found Jeff Harren and his father with their Mead 12" LX200 with go-to capability. Jeff and his Dad are from Stow, Ohio and he credits our own Dave Jessie with his inspiration to get serious with observational astronomy. I spent the next hour and a half jumping from object to object with his 12" Schmidt. It was nearing 5:00am and time to hit the bunk in a nicely heated cabin for some well needed sleep.



Solar observing at the Ballreich observatory.

On Saturday we cooked breakfast around 11:30am and had the necessary gallon of coffee. I set up all the ACA stuff to sell and found I was the only vender, which boosted my sales. The day included some outstanding views of the sun through the big refractor, an interesting talk by John Calkins from South Shore, Kentucky on the Aether Ball Cosmology. A very interesting talk followed by a good Q & A session.

Later in the day, Guy Myers was showing his 8" Dob with some rather unique designed sections to serve his purpose and needs. Guy modified the mirror cell of this 8" f6 Dob. to make it as short as possible by making it a 1 3/8" high and still adjustable. His finder was a combination of an objective housing of a 10 x 50 binoculars mounted to a diagonal focuser from a Tasco refractor. This permitted him and a friend with vision impairment

to focus the finder to suit each of them. Guy also noted that the power of the finder could also be changed by simply changing the eyepiece. Some very innovative changes were made in the building of his first scope and he plans a few more.

Later Roger Wise, a Sandusky member set up a beautiful brass refractor that was built around 1893 and was used as a transit scope. It had an old Russian military finder scope. The only modifications made to this was to mount it to a Alt-Azimuth mount.

Due to the threat of heavy cloud cover forecasted for Saturday night I left and headed home around 6:00. What a mistake that was! I found out latter that Saturday night was just as good as Friday. It's always better to wait and see than to miss out on a good night of observing.



Rich just had to stop at Ruggles, Ohio on his way to the Sandusky Valley Astro Tour 2000

Well, I now had two out of four great star parties and that's not bad for Ohio observing. The last star party of the year was the Fall 2000 ACA Dark Sky Star Party. If you read last month's Night Sky, you know all about it, if not, go to the

web site and look at the pictures of this experience. It was the perfect night. A perfect location at 1200 feet atop a hill, perfect viewing conditions of the sky, a dozen or so satellites, over 50 meteors, and the most incredible display of aurora I have ever seen, one for the record books.



Aurora display at the Fall 2000 ACA Dark Sky Star Party.



Visitors to the ACA observatory at the July 22 public program.



ACA set up at Silver Creek



More activity at the ACA Observatory during the past summer.

That's how it was in 2000, not bad three out of five with excellent viewing and to get three in a row is almost unheard of for Ohio. I hope you all plan to attend at least one of the many OTAA & other star parties in 2001. If so, I'll see you there. Keep looking up.



Rich promotes sales at a monthly meeting.