



URANOGRAPHOS

*Newsletter for the
Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association*

President- *Dr. Phillip Hill*

Vice President- *Dr. Robert Wade*

Secretary- *Michael Cote'*

Treasurer- *Mark Logsdon*

Michael Cote' and Robert Wade, Editors

June, 1989

JUNE MEETING

The June meeting of the Shoreline Amateur Astronomical Association will be held June 15th at the Vivekananda Monastery (6723 122nd Ave) in Ganges, Michigan. You are invited to a vegetarian dinner which will be served at 7:00 PM (suggested donation \$3.00). If you can't make the meal, plan to arrive a little later. John Dobson, that intergalactic guru, will be our host and present a slide program following the meal. We will also observe through their 22" telescope if the weather permits.

To get there, take US 31 south to the 124th Ave exit. Turn left (east) and proceed to the flashing light. Turn right (south) onto Blue Star Highway and go south to 122nd. Turn left (east) and go about a quarter mile. The monastery is the farm-like complex on the left or north side of the road. It is well sign-posted.

Executive Meeting

The meeting was called to order on June 7, 1989 by Dr. Phil Hill at 7:30 PM. All board members were present. We decided to include those persons that signed their names to our guest list at the recently held Astronomy Day meeting to our newsletter for a few issues.

3882 62nd St.
Holland, Michigan 49423



It was decided that our letter of thanks to the school principal and the school board still should be sent.

Mark reported that we were asked to be interviewed by Holland Community TV and to discuss events and the focus of the SAAA. The board decided that the timing of the program should coincide with one of our forthcoming star parties in the fall. Mark will look into this further.

Sandy is looking into the cost, etc. for club membership or business cards.

Phil brought up that he has been asked to serve on the astronomy advisory committee for the proposed Museum of Science and Technology at Grand Haven.

The board approved his involvement as a member of SAAA. Some discussion revolved around whether this might "dilute" our ability to establish an observatory in the Holland area. It was decided it may pave the way for us by eliminating some pitfalls, establishing effective contacts, and generating healthy cooperation between organizations.

Bob presented thoughts regarding future SAAA meeting programs for the remainder of the calendar year. It was thought that as the club matures less time will need to be spent on business meetings and more time can be spent learning about astronomy. It was decided to place a large calendar of upcoming SAAA events in the school planetarium starting in September. We also would like to make a series of contacts to all resource people available to come and speak to our association. Such resources might include NASA officials, other local club speakers, a trip to the Yerkes Observatory, star party camping outings, universities, etc.

Mark related latest development concerning Voyager and Uranus and our efforts to get Holland Community Education to tape the flyby. Apparently, some funding cuts have been proposed for Holland and the taping results remain a question. Mark will pursue additional information and if possible, propose that SAAA support be supplied to HCE.

The meeting was adjourned at 9pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Cote', SAAA Secretary.

Future Events

Our July meeting will feature Dr. Robert Wade conducting a seminar on "What Every Novice Observer Should Know." A campout for astronomers will then take place in the Allegan State Forest on July 28 and 29. Exact location etc. to be announced. Tentatively, the August meeting will feature "Highlights of the Australian Outback" by the fearless southern sojourners freshly back and still sporting their accents. They will doubtless hold us in thrall as they describe the coal-black skies. Michael Cote' will present a talk on Lunar Geology in September, to be quickly followed by a public star party (location and time to be announced) with the moon as a 'star attraction.'

M.C., R.W.

Star Party

A couple of weekends ago Bob Wade and Peter Burkey went to a star party at Vivekananda. The skies were crystal clear and about 20-25 people from around the area were present. John Dobson conducted celestial tours with the 22" Dobsonian they have there on a permanent basis. There were an assortment of other scopes, ranging from another 13" Dobsonian to 6" catadioptrics. Views through all scopes were good, but through the 22" they were *fantastic!* Galaxies were easily visible and spanned the *entire* eyepiece field. The Ring Nebula in Lyra simply *glowed*. The stars in M-13, the globular cluster in the constellation Hercules, seemed to *leap out* of the eyepiece.

R.W.

Star Quiz

Many of us are familiar with the night sky. We know most of the major constellations visible in the northern hemisphere. However, that past statement may not be true especially if you are a novice. Our monthly star quiz is an effort to get you acquainted with the night sky - if not from actual observing, at least with the aid of a star atlas. In last month's newsletter, we listed the following stars: *Alphecca, Alchiba, Alphard, Acubens, Algieba, Alioth, Alkaid, Alderamin, and Alhena*. Please, if you haven't yet done so, grab that old atlas and do some digging!

Names of the brighter stars are as old as human history itself. Most names are derived from the Arabic, although in most instances the original names have not survived uncorrupted. The 'original' astronomers certainly didn't have to contend with light pollution and their pastoral existence made them intimately familiar with the night sky. *Star Names - Their Lore and Meaning* is a book authored by Richard Hinckley first published in 1899 and reprinted by Dover Publications in 1963. It's a very fascinating source of information for those of you so interested. I'll include a little lore from Richard's book this month and in subsequent **Star Quiz** columns.

Anyone with a modest sense of curiosity will note that most of the above names begin with an *Al-*. This is an Arabic prefix meaning 'the'. Although many stars were named as part of larger constellations,

many others were named as if the star itself - apart from others - was the named object.

Alphecca is in the constellation Corona Borealis. It is the brightest star in the 'Northern Crown,' but in ancient days it was known as *Al Nair al Fakkah*, or 'the Bright One of the Dish.' It's interesting how an asterism can be a dish to some ancient peoples, and a crown to others. *Algieba* is one of the bright stars in Leo, the lion. Specifically, it is part of the lion's mane. The Latin word for mane is *Juba*, and Richard thought it likely that this star was Arabicized either by transcription or by design. *Alkaid*, is the first star in the tail of Ursa Major, or the Big Bear (known to most as the Big Dipper). It derives from *Kaid Banat al Naash*, or Governor of the Daughters of the Bier (Chief of the Mourners). The bear has also been seen as a coffin procession! The origin of *Alioth*, also in Ursa Major, is much less certain. One source says it was *Alyat*, or Fat Tail of the Eastern Sheep. Another says *Al Hawar*, or White of the Eye. Still another says *Al Jaun*, or the Black Courser. It's easy to see that the present form of the name may bear little resemblance to an original name! *Alderamin* was originally *Al Dhira al Yamin*, or the Right Arm. Today this star marks the right shoulder of Cepheus, the King. The constellation Hydra (The Serpent) contains *Alphard*, which is aptly derived from *Al Fard al Shuja*, or the Solitary One in the Serpent. Hydra is a long constellation measured in degrees of arc, and *Alphard* is the brightest. Corvus, the Crow, contains the star *Alchiba*. To the Arabs, Corvus was the Tent, and *Al Hiba* was the name for the entire asterism. Cancer, the Crab, is barely above the western horizon now. *Acubens* is the brightest star, and is derived from *Al Zubanah*, the Claws. *Athena* in Gemini (the Twins) is now below the horizon at sunset and comes from *Al Hanah*, the Brand or Mark.

Hope you enjoyed this brief historical excursion. Next month I'll list about half as many stars, and we'll try for different constellations.

R.W.

Astronomy Day 1989

SAAA members and normal people enjoyed a most satisfying observance of Astronomy Day at Holland's Merrick Library May 24, 1989. The zenithal feat at the fete surely was the commentary provided by professional amateur astronomer John Dobson. Mr.

Dobson freely delivered thought provoking ideas and provocative explanations as an adjunct to two excellent slide presentations; one by Peter Burkey and the other by Sandra Plakke.

In addition to the above, many people enthusiastically swarmed around, among, and over the smorgasbord of reflectors and refractors on display by members. Our thanks in particular go to all those members who gave of themselves to make this our first and most successful "kickoff" event to celebrate National Astronomy Day. Many people gained new insights into a local club that is becoming active in their community as a resource. And in fact we gained two new members to boot!

The SAAA wishes to thank Mr. Dobson from the bottom of our collective starry hearts for sharing his unbounded energy and love of astronomy with us and making our observance such an unprecedented memorable occasion.

M.C.

Sky Watch

Many publications exist which have good lists for objects to observe on a month by month basis. Ask any officer of our club and we'll be glad to help. I won't attempt to duplicate them. I feel that for a beginning club we can initially focus on objects which don't take special equipment. This month I'll focus on the visible planets. Give us your thoughts on what you would like to see in this column on a regular basis - after all, this is your club!

June and July are sometimes desultory months for the amateur astronomer because of the summer solstice - long days and short (not very dark!) nights. Nevertheless, there are some standard must-see objects for everyone. *Come to the June meeting and learn more about them!* There is nothing like listening and watching an experienced observer reel through the sky.

If you're an early riser and have access to a flat eastern horizon, look for **Mercury** in the morning sky. On the 18th, it is 23° away from the sun. Look for it in the glow that is developing on the east-northeastern horizon about 30-45 minutes before the sun is due to rise. This planet is considered a challenge to see due to its proximity to the sun and some experienced amateurs haven't bothered to try to see it.

Venus sets around 10:30 PM, so it is still visible low in the horizon after sunset. Look for this bright jewel in the glow after the sun sets. **Mars** (between Leo and Gemini) sets about 11:30 PM, so it will be further up from **Venus** after sunset and not nearly as distinct. **Jupiter** is now behind the sun, so you won't have any luck there. **Saturn**, the last easily visible planet if you know where to look, rises about the time **Venus** sets. It is low in the constellation Sagittarius and crosses the meridian (an imaginary line drawn through the sky connecting the north and south poles) around 2 AM. A pair of binoculars will easily reveal the rings.

Why don't some of you who know how be prepared to share how *you* distinguish planets from the stars.

R.W.

We, the editors of **URANOGRAPHOS**, invite you to consider writing something for our club newsletter. If it's astronomically related, you'll find it in print sooner than you imagined!

We are still working on coordinating material for the newsletter in a timely fashion. Please bear with us... Future newsletters should arrive in your mailbox about week before the current meeting.