



THE FOCUS

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED ASTRONOMY CLUBS OF NEW JERSEY

January • February • March 2005

UACNJ, P.O. Box 150, Hope, NJ 07844

Board of Directors Meetings Highlights

(Held at Jenny Jump, November 13, 2004 and February 5, 2005)

• Treasurer, Larry Smith (AAP) reported that the current balances in UACNJ accounts are:

Checking = \$1931.60

Savings = \$4257.85

CD = \$3621.72

Total = \$9811.17

• Membership Chair, Alan Midkiff (AA) reported that club renewals in UACNJ are in December with a January 1 cutoff date. Individual membership renewals in UACNJ are in January with a March 1 cutoff date. Steps will be taken to recruit more clubs. Present membership is 53.

• Observatory Committee Chair, Barry Malpas (AAI) reported that the UACNJ received donations of 5 Pentium computers, furniture, carpeting, and cabinets from M&M Mars Co., through the efforts of Gil Jeffer (see article).

• Karl Hricko has accepted the function of obtaining speakers for all UACNJ functions.

• Ed Carlos of AAI volunteered to assist Barry Malpas in maintaining our website.

• Duty roster will be organized and displayed.

• Temperature in the house should be set at 60 OF.

• Recommend that our Treasurer investigate the purchase of a generator in the event that there is a loss of electrical power in the house. Motion was accepted to purchase a generator and necessary accessories for \$800.00.

• AAI is taking the necessary steps to have the Tuthill Telescope re-silvered.

• Dates which are set for important events:

April 16, 2005 - UACNJ Astronomy Day;

April 30, 2005 - Astronomy Day at Newark Museum;

June 3, 4, 5, 2005 - StarQuest;

July 30, 2005 - UACNJ Picnic;

September 24, 2005 - UACNJ Symposium;

October 29, 2005 - UACNJ Star Party.

• The same slate of officers was nominated along with a new Trustee - Gil Jeffer.

President: Ted Barker

Vice President: Karl Hricko

Treasurer: Larry Smith;

Secretary: Kevin Conod

Board of Trustees: Gil Jeffer; Ron Miittlestaedt; and

Dave Henderson

Check out the NEW
UACNJ website at
uacnj.org

Thanks to Access.net of Hope, NJ
for offering to host this new site!

Tragedy Marris AOS “First Light” Celebration

Sue Rose

AOS President

The AOS opened its' new observatory in Southold on the grounds of Custer Institute with a First Light Celebration on Saturday, October 9, 2004. Life member Joe Peselli and Associate Member Bob Gunneson flew from their homes, north of Albany, in a private plane to attend the event. Around midnight, on their journey home, the plane crashed and both died. AOS members are heartbroken at this devastating loss.

Joe was a long time friend from when he lived on



Long Island. He transferred his NYS DOT position upstate to take care of his elderly mother about 5 years ago and thoroughly enjoyed the darker skies with his Meade 8", completely overhauled last spring. He and Bob flew south several times a year to attend club functions. Joe made many donations to the AOS through the years of t-shirts and hats, all bearing the AOS logo which he digitized for us. He was made a Life Member in August '03 for his outstanding service to the organization. Both made donations toward the

observatory.

Bob was a long time skilled and careful pilot and President of his flying club which owned the aircraft. He checked the weather reports several times before deciding to fly home that night. They were in communications with Air Traffic Control the whole way and did



Above: AOS Pres Sue Rose, left, and Observatory Co-Chair Jeff Johns, right, present First Light and Venus Transit Observing Awards to Bob Gunneson.

Left: AOS Observatory Co-Chair Jeff Johns, left, and Pres Sue Rose, right, present First Light and Venus Transit Observing Awards to Joe Peselli.

not report any problems so the cause of the crash is still under investigation.

A memorial service was held at the December AOS meeting for members to remember their fallen comrades, those who have left us and this Earth for a better view of the universe they loved to study from so far away.

Join AAI/NJAA “Deep Impact” Event a Success

Ray Shapp, AAI / NJAA

On the Fourth of July, thousands of amateur and professional astronomers will be watching for a huge “fireworks” display, but it won't be showing down at the neighborhood ball field. It will occur when NASA's Deep Impact Mission crashes an 820-pound copper mass into comet 9P/Tempel 1.

The members of Amateur Astronomers, Inc (AAI) and the New Jersey Astronomical Association (NJAA) were invited to participate in a teleconference sponsored by the Night Sky Network (NSN) on January 18, 2005 when Mission Co-investigator and planetary scientist, Dr. Lucy McFadden of the University of Maryland, made a presentation in which

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"TutScope" Restoration Begun at AAI



Rodger Tuthill (left) with his telescope at the 1964 Stellfane.
courtesy Cliff Ashcraft

When Rodger Tuthill passed away in 2000, he left behind a rich legacy of promoting astronomy among his fellow amateur astronomers and the general public. A fitting relic of that spirit is the so-called 20" "Tutscope" which was left by his estate to the UACNJ. This modified Cassegrain, which he made in 1964, is somewhat unique in that its mount is a trailer which allowed Tut to tow the instrument to various events, including Stellafane.

The telescope and trailer-mount was delivered to AAI in Cranford, NJ. Unfortunately, it had sat in Tuthill's backyard for some time and the elements had taken a toll. It was disassembled and stored in the shop at AAI's Sperry Observatory for a while and now AAI's Research Committee has taken up the task of its restoration. The Committee's head, Ed Carlos, established a sub-committee composed of both AAI and UACNJ members to assess the telescope's condition and make recommendations for how to best preserve it.

It was decided to use Sperry Observatory for this project for two main reasons. The first is that with the on-going clean-up and reconstruction at Jenny Jump following last

year's flood, there isn't room for it. Second, there is an important talent pool at AAI. Cliff Ashcraft, for example, was involved when Tuthill originally constructed the instrument. His efforts at understanding the optical system have revealed a sophistication of design in the transfer lens assembly that might not be apparent from such peculiarities as Tut's choice of a tube that a lady's girdle had been sold in - complete with period illustrations. It didn't need to look pretty, it just had to work!

A major step forward was taken in this process when AAI's Hank Adams offered to donate up to \$1,000 towards the cost of getting the mirrors re-coated. As of press time, it has been agreed to contract Evaporated Metal Films of Ithaca, New York to re-coat both the primary and secondary mirrors.

The consensus among the UACNJ Board of Directors has been to maintain as much of the original form as practical. The AAI/UACNJ joint committee will be making further recommendations regarding the best ways to proceed.

Joint AAI / NJAA Event a Success

(Con't. from Front)

she described both the science of the mission and how amateurs can participate. After the talk, questions from several UACNJ members were answered by Dr. McFadden.

Also participating in the presentation was Elizabeth Warner, the director of the University of Maryland Observatory. As a part of her job, Ms Warner announced that she would be available to conduct public outreach talks at local astronomy clubs.

I immediately contacted NJAA QO team leader, Teri Bellows, a science teacher at the Voorhees High School, who is faculty advisor to the VHS astronomy club. Teri arranged for the VHS astronomy club to host the first-ever joint meeting of AAI and NJAA at the VHS auditorium. NJAA and AAI member, Al Witzgall used the school's stereo microscopes to display his impressive collection of meteorites, including two of cometary origin.

A star party on the high school grounds was scheduled for after the presentation, but on the night of March 19th, we were clouded out. The event, nevertheless, was a big success. About 140 people attended, and nearly \$300 was collected in donations at the door.

Both Dr. McFadden and Elizabeth Warner have called for observation reports, images, and photometry measurements from the amateur astronomy community. These are needed to supplement the professional observations being made during the limited time allotments available on the world's great telescopes

The impact will occur at about 0600 UTC on July 4th. Approximately 24 hours earlier, the impactor will separate from the Fly-By portion of the space vehicle. Both the impactor and the Fly-By vehicle will record and transmit close-up images of the comet. The impactor and its 820-pound payload of copper will be totally vaporized by the collision which will take place at 23,000 miles per hour.

Instruments aboard the fly-by vehicle as well as on the Hubble Space Telescope and a vast array of Earth-bound equipment will record the resulting "fireworks" both spectrographically as well as in visible and infra-red wavelengths.

The goal is to learn about the structure and composition of comets. By looking into the crater and by comparing any subsequent changes in the comet's coma and tails, it might be possible to determine whether cometary outgassing declines because of exhaustion of volatile material or because a "crust" forms on the surface as comets make repeated orbits in proximity to the Sun.

Ed Carlos, AAI Research Committee Chairman, has made imaging of Tempel 1 a project for Sperry Observatory. To see more information about the project, visit the Research Committee pages on the AAI website at www.asterism.org. For more information about the Deep Impact Mission, click on Other Links > Space Missions to see the main NASA and JPL sites as well as the University of Maryland Deep Impact website maintained by Elizabeth Warner.

PROJECTS UPDATE

COMPUTERS

Five of the eight PC computers are now up and running, ready for networking. Software has been loaded. Thanks to Gil Jeffers for spearheading this process.

COMBOS CHANGED

New combinations have been set on the locks on the gates and front door at Jenny Jump. Members should have received an email with these new combos from UACNJ Membership Chair, Alan Midkiff.

DISPLAY ROOM

The sheetrock is now all up, taped and spackled. Painting has begun and it is hoped that it will be fixed up at least to allow rudimentary display for the start of the public nights in April.

Gordon Bond (AAI) continues to work on the graphics for a display installation about what it is amateur astronomers do.

SOLAR TREASURE

Ralph Marantino (AAAP) has spent the last dozen years regularly observing and recording the Sun's activities in his drawings. Recently, he decided to scan them all into digital form and make them available to the UACNJ as a resource.

Displays Coordinator, Gordon Bond (AAI) hopes to be able to have these turned into a time lapse video that can be worked into the "What Do Amateur Astronomers Do?" installation. Lonnie Buinis had produced a video using Ralph's drawings and has offered to assist again in doing this. This latest effort will be the first to incorporate over a decade's worth of observations.

Ralph will be giving Gordon a CD with these drawings and has agreed to allow UACNJ to make copies for anyone who would be interested. If you would like a copy, please email Gordon at tpoastro@yahoo.com

NEW OBSERVER'S HANDBOOK

Observatory Chair, Barry Malpas (AAI) has been revising the handbook for UACNJ Observers and Team Leaders, outlining general rules and procedures. A first draft was reviewed on March 19th. Hard copies will be made available and it will be posted on the UACNJ website.