

THE FOCUS

The Official Newsletter of United Astronomy Clubs of New Jersey

September 1995

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THE EDITORS DILEMMA

This newsletter is a real joy to put out and I have been experiencing excellent feedback from the members. But a newsletter cannot be a success if only one person is contributing. I've heard this complaint from several newsletter editors in various UACNJ clubs. The job is difficult enough, trying to get the most pertinent articles for the publication, trying to make it all fit and still have it be informative and look appealing all at the same time. Not an easy task.

Unfortunately many times a deadline will pass and there's not enough content to fill a newsletter. This is due to lack of member participation. It is extremely important that YOU contribute to this and other club newsletters. Not only will you be informing your members of something informative or interesting, you'll make yourself feel useful and appreciated.

I am urging you to contribute in any way possible. If you attend a star party, write about it, if your doing some kind of interesting research or project, write about it, if you have a great night observing in your backyard, write about it, even if you have a lousy night, write about that too. Anything will be appreciated. As far as this newsletter goes any event or activity that a club is doing would be greatly appreciated. We will

be glad to help publicize your events for your club.

To contribute to The Focus, send articles to:

The Focus
c/o Wayne Zuhl
717 Brookside Place
Cranford, NJ 07016

or you can send e-mail to me at:
zuhlw@soho.ios.com

Weighting Out the Night

by Susan Kalas

The weather was perfect and had been for more weeks than is healthy for anything green. But I was just waiting for a good moon phase and praying the weather would stay clear for a little while longer. It did and as I put the finishing touches on the neatly placed Velcro strips on the mirror end of my Dob, I envisioned a perfect night of observing at Jenny Jump.

Finally I wouldn't have to stand and hold the open end of the tube... my counter weights were going to do that job for me! I used a really strong, well recommended cement and I had the perfect weight, two 1 1/2 pound ankle weights complete with Velcro straps. These would work great! I could use them together or one at a time. I had 10 inches of space to compensate for any angle and any center of gravity. So I packed the car with 1000+, my red light, food, water, a light jacket, a snack, the works! All I had to do was wait for my observing pal to show up and off we went to Jenny.

The ride was full of anticipation of a great night! A really good omen was

seeing a million hot air balloons out the sun roof as we sped up Route 31. And then it happened, in the middle of Washington, NJ. "OH S&%\$#@#T!!!" I brought everything but the ankle weights. Well, where do you find a sporting goods store that sells anything but bait and tackle in Washington, NJ? There it was and I pulled in and low and behold they had one pair of weights... but they were 5 lbs apiece (bummer).

"OK", my friend said, "Jenny Jump has a tool room, don't worry, you'll find something heavy enough to use." Well, yeah, but you know how it feels to orchestrate a project, carry it through and then, wham, one little detail overlooked and the whole thing seems lost. So we continued north on 31 then east on Rt. 46 and finally up the hill to the road on the mountain.

It was still light and clear so there was a very good feeling in the air when we, another pair of observers, got out of the car and joined a crowd of about 30 for a late summer night of astronomy. I, on the other hand was a "woman on a mission", gotta get something that would be an acceptable counterweight. I entered the workshop and was surrounded with aluminum, plug boxes, hinges, connectors, you name it, it was there, but the aluminum made everything too

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UACNJ Board Meeting

The next meeting will be held on
Sat., September 23, 1995, 10 a.m.
The meeting will be hosted by
UACNJ at the Observatory at
Jenny Jump State Forest.



THE JUMP NOTES

Several events will be taking place in the near future at the *UACNJ* Consortium observatory at Jenny Jump State Park in Hope, NJ.

There will be regular **Saturday Work Sessions** on October 7th and 21st, November 2nd, 16th and 30th. Work sessions usually begin at 10 a.m. and run all day. During these Saturday work parties, renovations are made to the house and the grounds and anything else that needs work. If you haven't yet attended a work session, you really should. You'll not only be helping with the site but it's a great way to meet people from other clubs.

We are looking for a donation of a full sized refrigerator. If you have any info contact Barry Malpas at 908-755-6932.

Public Programs are held every Saturday through October 21st. Programs run from 8 p.m. till 10 p.m. Programs consist of a brief talk, usually accompanied by a slide presentation, followed by observing if the skies permit.

We need your support to make the Observatory a success. If you're already a supporting member of the Consortium then you know that yearly dues are due. Regular membership is \$20, Sustaining memberships cost \$50. Your dues help pay the bills that are incurred at the Observatory to keep it operating. This may sound like a beg-a-thon but that money is needed to help keep this fine dark sky site available to amateur astronomers. If you are not a Consortium member and would like to become one, contact Barry Malpas for more information.

2nd Annual UACNJ

Symposium

This year's *UACNJ* Symposium will take place on Saturday, September 23rd, from 1:30 p.m. until whenever. The Symposium will be held at the *UACNJ* Consortium Observatory at Jenny Jump State Forest.

This year's symposium will consist of several speakers who will be discussing general and technical topics. The topics of the general astronomy presentations will be Great Telescopes of the World, Astronomy Computer Animation, Meteorites, Aurora Borealis from Jenny Jump and the Fall Sky. Technical presentations will include CCD imaging with Cookbook Equipment, Lunar Transient Photometry, Planetary Photography Techniques and New Electrim CCD equipment.

During the day, weather permitting of course, there will be telescopes set up for safe solar viewing. Inside, several computers will be running demos of various astronomical shareware. There will also be displays of Astrophotography and other projects done by *UACNJ* members.

Refreshments will be available. Contact Barry Malpas for more information.

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light. A plug box full of rocks didn't work, it acted like a slingshot (ouch). As I stood among the tools, I noticed something stashed way under the work bench. A large dirty bucket filled with, what are those things? I went to pull it out and EUREKA there was major weight in this package... old, rusty, 12 inch iron nails! Immediately the picture came to mind! Bind up a bunch, attach to the bottom of the scope, set the scope on a low angle of altitude and slide those nails out one by one till balance is achieved. This sounded like the perfect solution. And you know what? It was! Not only did they attach tightly and securely with a bungie cord, but you could actually add one or two as needed, depending on the position of the scope.

So what's the lesson here? I don't know I was just thrilled that something a lot more interesting than ankle weights acted as if they were planned as part of the original project.

Hey Don, don't throw them out!!

Live from the Stratosphere

Would you like to take part in a NASA live observation event?

On Friday, October 13th the Liberty Science Center will be hosting "Live from the Stratosphere", an event at which 600 students from Summit Middle School will be computer up- and down-linking with NASA's Kuiper Air-

borne Observatory as it flies at over 41,000 feet to study planets, stars and galaxies with its infrared telescope. NASA's Advanced Technology Satellite will provide the live video down-link with the KAO. The program will also include two Star Lab Planetariums, on-line networks over the Internet, via Gopher and World Wide Web, as well as a number of hands-on activities.

During the five hour program (8:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.), the folks at LSC would like to make available amateur telescopes that the students can view through from the balconies at the center. Although dark sky objects are in all probably out, certainly Saturn and possibly a few other bright objects could be observed from the site. If any amateurs have displays or activities of special interest that might help broaden the spectrum of activities they would be welcome, so long as the activity is registered before coming. The students and staff at LSC will also be in contact with the KAO asking questions about the facility and astronomy. Amateurs are encouraged to submit questions that the personnel on board the observatory will respond to. The event will be taped for future broadcast on PBS stations.

It would be great if as many amateurs with their telescopes from most of the *UACNJ* clubs could be represented. If you want to get on the list, you must first register. LSC will need to know how many are to be expected so they can make proper space accommodations. To do so call Barry Malpas at (908) 755-6932. There will also be information about the project and further details, and a sign-up sheet at the Symposium at Jenny Jump on Saturday, September 23rd.

To receive "Live from the Stratosphere" introductory materials and other background information, send an e-mail message to:

info-lfs@quest.arc.nasa.gov
or call 1-800-626-LIVE (1-800-626-5483), or you can contact Geoff Haines at (908) 273-4108.

Stella-Della IX

The *Bucks-Mont Astronomical Association* will be hosting this years annual Stella-Della Valley Conference, on October 20th thru 22nd. The gathering will be held at Camp Onas in Ottsville, PA.

For more information contact Ed Melnick at (215) 443-7929.