

Seasons Greetings

Another year draws to a close and another will soon begin! The officers and directors of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society wish everyone of all faiths a pleasant holiday season and happiness and good health in 1990.

From The Editors

A big thank you to Frank Roldan! The members of the MAS Board want to thank Frank for his many years of service to the society. This dedication ranges from serving as President of the Society to that of summer Program Coordinator. Also the role of willing worker on the many MAS projects. While his vocation may call him to LaCrosse, his avocation binds him to MAS with astronomical comradery. We value Frank's continued membership and look forward to his visits when his busy schedule permits.

- Matthew McNeeley & Tom Gill

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December Program-Meeting

The December meeting will focus on the Astronomical League Convention held this summer in Spokane, Washington on July 21-23. Members Dan Koehler, Frank Roldan and Michael Volkomir will share their experiences and impressions while at the convention. A slide show will highlight not only the sights and sounds of the convention itself, but will also present us with some interesting side trips into scenic Washington State.

All members and guests are invited to attend. Time is 8:00 pm at the Helen Carey Day Hospital Building, 9201 W. Watertown Plank Road. For security reasons, the entrance is open from 7:30 to 8:15pm ONLY.

Hope to see you there!

REMEMBER
M-104!

Calender of Events

- December 12 Full Cold Moon
 - December 15 8:00 pm Program-Meeting
Board meeting held before
 - December 21 Winter begins
 - December 22 Deadline for Focal Point
 - December 27 New Moon
 - January 3 First Wednesday Meeting
7:30 at the Observatory
- Saturday Nights—Member night at Observatory—Call key holder

Library News

If you feel the need to "lighten up" amidst all the holiday preparations, I highly recommend Big and Bright: A History of the McDonald Observatory by Evans and Mulholland (1986) recently donated by Tom Milner.

The heirs of William J. McDonald interpreted the part of his will which endowed the University of Texas with nearly one million dollars to found an astronomical observatory as "evidence of mental queerness". Edwin Frost of Yerkes wrote persuasively that astronomical studies had enabled modern commerce to advance because of accurate geographical locating, time keeping and navigation. Perhaps because of his support, the Williams Bay astronomers who were looking for clearer skies were asked to form an alliance with the Texans who had the money, potential sites, but little astronomical experience.

Beginning with Van Biesbroeck and Struve, who took full and remarkably farsighted charge of the operation, the cast of characters reads like a litany of astronomical "saints". Most of them also took part in such mundane activities as picnics and the community affairs of nearby Fort Davis. The story unfolds with engaging warmth and humor ("Jeff Davis County is about the size of Israel and slightly better armed" —Brian Warner) as well as enough technical background to deepen the reader's appreciation of how astronomy came to west Texas in the 1930's and the innovations that have enabled its progress.

We have some more basic instruction type slides thanks to Tom Renner. They include several H-R diagrams, orbital mechanics and a few variable star spectra and light curves with diagrams of the systems. Please note that the Slide Index has been slightly revised to accommodate the new categories.

Again, a reminder: Anyone considering joining the Astronomy Book Club, please let the MAS library sponsor your membership. We then become eligible for some free books for our collection. See the librarian for details.

From the Editors, Pt. II

- Sally Waraczynski

We remind you that while the Focal Point is a great place to find out what's happening in MAS, it's also your newsletter and an excellent place to share your impressions, musings, observations or whatever else you can come up with.

What an opportunity! A willing and eager audience hungry for fresh new ideas and always looking for something different show up amongst these pages. In the near future, we will introduce some regular columns and features designed to solicit response from the membership. In the meantime, you could be thinking of an angle for a short article that captures some of what makes astronomy interesting to you.

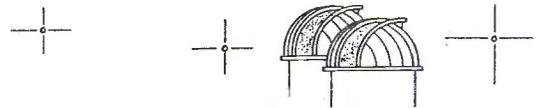
Our members have diverse backgrounds and interests, all sharing a fascination with astronomy. Believe it—everyone cares about what you have to say and the unique way that you say it. Imagine how great it would be to have every member contribute in some way to the Focal Point. We'd all get a better feel for just who we are and it may spark some new friendships. Besides, it's kind of fun to get a byline. You'd probably end up getting extra copies and sending them to everyone you know and before you know it we'll have all these new members joining.

If an article or blurb is still unlikely, how about sharing your comments about the Focal Point? What would you like to see covered in these pages? Give us the ideas and we'll work hard for you. Reminder—Next issue deadline is December 22!

—Tom Gill & Matthew McNeeley

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From the Past...



DOUBLE DOME

—20 years ago

Interest in a group effort with respect to the March, 1970 eclipse is being shown by observers from Racine, Madison and other areas. A point in particular is transportation—would there be interest in forming pools or chartering public transportation?



—10 years ago

Something for the funny bone:

Mrs. Astronomer: "Darling, what a lovely moon."

Mr. Astronomer: "For heavens, sake, let's not talk shop!"

New Members

The following new members were recently announced by the MAS Board.

Dean and Darlene Berglund
- West Allis

Timothy J. and Mary Burrus
- Brookfield

The Society extends a big welcome!

For Sale

Celestron 300mm F15.6 mirror lens; \$100

Harold Schenk
2300 S. 11th Street
Sheboygan, WI 53081

Phone him at 458-6726.

Ed note: I'm confused. A mirror lens? I couldn't reach Harold by deadline so it's printed like I got it. It is a Celestron so it's probably worth a hundred bucks.

Nite With The Big Guns

Ed note: Adapted from SKY FORUM, an armchair astronomy publication.

You probably know him or know of him. He enjoys near celebrity status because he makes darn good telescopes with one feature that really stands out: They're *big*. When MAS member Dave Kriege (of Telescope Making fame and builder of a trio of giant dobsonians—an 18", 20" and his pride and joy, a 25" F5) invited me to join him at a dark sky location this summer, I subdued my usual apprehension about mid-week observing in the season when it doesn't get dark until way past 10pm. Peter Smitka (17 1/2" F4.5) and Rick Moscow (12 1/2" F6) would be there too. I grabbed my 11x80 binoculars and hit the highway, anxious to spend a night with some Big Guns.

My first sight of the 25" was memorable—an ominous contraption silhouetted against the early evening sky. Open trusses rose like pillars from the beefy mirror box and connected to the eyepiece cage above our heads. Examination with a red flashlight revealed exceptional craftsmanship. In operation, this baby was *smooth*. You'd never guess it weighed in at 265 lbs. I was especially pleased to see a Telrad present and another standard accessory with a scope like this is a 8' stepladder. Amazingly, the whole package fits neatly into a van and sets up in minutes.

It finally got dark, and from several feet over my head, Dave announced M-51. I bounded up the ladder, remembering the first time I had located M-51 (in 11x80 binoculars) and also my first hint of spiral structure in my 10.1" Dob. This was different. Not a faint, fuzzy image requiring strained concentration to glimpse main features. This is "Wow, I can see it!" viewing, requiring only such observational tactics as Direct Vision (you get used to it easily) and diverted breathing (lest those gasps of astonishment fog the eyepiece). The Whirlpool Galaxy was a fitting start for a night tour of distinct galaxies, prominent central stars, wispy tendrils, H II regions, resolved cluster cores and spiral arms going every which way. It was really fun. I had no desire to take notes this night, content to enjoy the view like a traveler might stare in wonder at a landscape without knowing much about it.

When the earth's rotation had done what it does best—bring new objects into view—Dave brought the giant scope nearly parallel to the ground. "Aha!" he exclaimed, "I've been waiting for this one!" With both feet planted firmly on the ground and right eye to the ocular, he asked "Anyone want to see the Bug Nebula?"

The big guns offer more than just knock-your-socks-off images: Often when viewing a 'popular' object, you get a bonus—more objects! Problem is, there aren't many star charts or books that expound on or even mention some of the faint objects that are easy pickings for a 25". An example: In the M13 region, I was enjoying the companion galaxy (NGC 6207) and looked for another small galaxy on the opposite side. I found three! At home, I found no mention of the extras in the 'usual' sources. This scope needed the Mt. Palomar Observatory Sky Survey for an atlas!

As the night went on, we fought fatigue simply by looking up—the sky kept getting darker and the views better. I could always catch up on sleep, but how often would I have an opportunity to spend a whole night with a scope of this size without waiting forever in a long line?

A funny thing didn't happen after that night. Aperture fever did NOT set in. The image brightness was great, but what I really found exciting was seeing things I never saw before and working at the limits of the scope. I've been a casual observer lately and I realized if I got off my hinder and out to a dark sky that there were hundreds and maybe thousands of objects that I could 'discover' if I would just aim my 10" scope in the correct direction.



MAS INFORMATION

MAS OFFICERS

President	Dr. Richard Wiesen 781-4786
Vice President	Matthew McNeeley 354-5347
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Assist. Obs. Director	John Asztalos 774-5418
Librarian	Mrs. Sally Waraczynski 312-0918
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New Berlin, WI
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Gleanings from the International Dark Sky Association

Ed note: Many of you remember Dr. David Crawford's interesting and entertaining program at the 1988 MAS Banquet. Light pollution affects everybody since if no one pays attention to the laws, methods and equipment of lighting, it will only be a matter of time before dark starry nights are just memories. MAS is already involved in educating the public via our open houses and literature and some community involvement (more on this in a future Focal Point). The IDA, however, needs the involvement, contributions (money and input) from serious astronomers such as the membership of MAS. The board was asked to place this information in the Focal Point as space permits and we were happy to comply. The following is taken from their literature.

Help Preserve Dark Skies!

Here's why the IDA was formed: The Universe is receding from view, dimmed by Light Pollution. Your help is needed to stop this threat. IDA has been incorporated as a non-profit organization, and can be effective in this cause, but it needs your help; your membership, your activities, your awareness. Please do help. Now you can do something to stop this environmental impact on dark skies. A united approach should be very supportive of the many local and individual efforts. Much has been accomplished in some locations, but much more needs to be done everywhere.

All IDA activities are conducted under IRS 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation rules and regulations. As well as memberships, donations are most welcome.

Do join us, and help cure the problem. We can succeed in preserving dark skies and improving the nighttime environment for everyone.

IDA can and will be supportive of members' problems concerning these issues, by sharing common knowledge on a local, national and international basis. Specific areas where IDA will be active include: education on all phases of the issues; a Quaterly Newsletter; brochures, leaflets, economic information, lighting design examples, and other such resources and reference. Also Speaker's Bureaus; documentation of good and bad lighting via photos and video; Good lighting awards; media contacts; press releases; marketing the issues; developing viable and effective Sections as local resources in many communities.

Annual Membership:

	Member*	Sponsor	Supporter	Sustainer	Patron	Angel	Benefactor
Individual:	\$20	\$50	\$100	\$200	\$500	\$1000	\$2000
Organization:	\$100	\$200	\$500	\$1000	\$2000	\$5000	\$10000

* Student or limited income individual membership at \$10 or small (less than 100 members) Astronomy Club at \$50.

For more information, or to join and help, send your name address, phone number, comments and check (in USA dollars) to:

International Dark-Sky Association

3545 N. Stewart
Tuscon, Arizona 85716 USA

We accept Master Charge or Visa. Include the above information, your card number, type card, expiration date and your signature which authorizes us to charge your account. We thank you for your support!

Saturday Nite Keyholders

December 9	Jim Toeller 352-7144
December 16	Richard Wiesen 781-4786
December 23	John Aztalos 774-5418
December 30	Paul Borchardt 781-0169
January 6	Greg Ceislak 744-5703
January 13	Brian Ganiere 272-4649
January 20	Chris Hesseltine 482-4515
January 27	Lee Keith 961-8752

Plea for Help

The International Dark Sky Association's membership is approaching 400—not bad for a new organization with no monies and little public funds and, most importantly, the impact to continue our efforts effectively. We'd really like to see a significant increase in membership by the next annual meeting in April 1990. Will you consider joining and finding another member to join? We are going to do a major mailing late this year. Does anyone have any address lists, especially on IBM disks?

Do you have information on good shields for dusk to dawn and other types of offensive lights? Do you have experience in your own community fighting for good nighttime lighting? Write and let us know. We want to learn from your experience and pass useful information on to others.

-Tim Hunter

International Dark-Sky Association
3545 North Stewart
Tuscon, AZ 85716