



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Volume 20, Number 2

February 2011

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Planets in Strange Places

By Trudy E. Bell

Red star, blue star, big star, small star—planets may form around virtually any type or size of star throughout the universe, not just around mid-sized middle-aged yellow stars like the Sun. That's the surprising implication of two discoveries in 2006 from the 0.85-meter-diameter Spitzer Space Telescope, which is exploring the universe from orbit at infrared (heat) wavelengths blocked by the Earth's atmosphere.

At one extreme are two blazing, blue "hypergiant" stars 180,000 light-years away in the Large Magellanic Cloud, one of the two companion galaxies to our Milky Way. The stars, called R 66 and R 126, are respectively 30 and 70 times the mass of the Sun, "about as massive as stars can get," said Joel Kastner, professor of imaging science at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York. R 126 is so luminous that if it were placed 10 parsecs (32.6 light-years) away—a distance at which the Sun would be one of the dimmest stars visible in the sky—the hypergiant would be as bright as the full

moon, "definitely a daytime object," Kastner remarked.

Such hot stars have fierce solar winds, so Kastner and his team are mystified why any dust in the neighborhood hasn't long since been blown away. But there it is: an unmistakable spectral signature that both hypergiants are surrounded by mammoth disks of what might be planet-forming dust and even sand.

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President's Corner

I want to thank all of you for honoring me as President of FAAC. I was lucky to discover the club shortly after I got hooked on the hobby about ten years ago. The knowledge, advice, and fellowship I found here made all the difference in my enjoyment.

I can't get too far without giving a BIG thanks to Doug Bauer for the great job he did over the last three years. As Doug pointed out in his November column, there are a great many people who devote many hours of their time to make this club work. Doug provided the leadership necessary to keep everyone pulling in the same direction.

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STAR STUFF

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STAR STUFF is published eleven times each year by:

FORD AMATEUR ASTRONOMY CLUB
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn MI 48121-7527

PRESIDENT: Gordon Hansen
VICE PRESIDENT: Jon Blum
SECRETARY: Doug Bauer
TREASURER: Chuck Jones
WEBMASTER: Greg Ozimek
NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jennifer Zdanowski

Club Information:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club (FAAC) meets on the fourth Thursday each month, except for the combined November/December meeting on the first Thursday of December - at Henry Ford Community College Administration Services and Conference Center in Dearborn. Refer to our website for a map and directions (www.boonhill.net/faac).

The FAAC observes at Spring Mill Pond within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The club maintains an after-hours permit, and observes on Friday and Saturday nights, and nights before holidays, weather permitting. The FAAC also has use a private observing site near Gregory Michigan and Lake Erie Metro Park. See the FAAC Yahoo Group* for more information.

Observing schedules and additional info are available on our website, or via the FAAC Yahoo Group.* Or call the FAAC Hotline, for info and leave a message, or ask questions: 248-207-2075. or send email inquiries to fordastronomy@comcast.net.

Membership in the FAAC is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy. The FAAC is an affiliate of the Ford Employees Recreation Association (F.E.R.A.). Membership fees:

Annual - New Members: \$30 (\$15 after July 1)
Annual - Renewal: \$25 (\$30 after January 31)

Membership includes the STAR STUFF newsletter, discounts on magazines, discounts at selected area equipment retailers, and after-hours access to the Island Lake observing site.

Astronomy or Sky & Telescope Magazine Discounts

Obtain the required form from the FAAC club treasurer for a \$10 discount. Send the completed form directly to the respective publisher with your subscriptions request and payment. Do not send any money directly to the FAAC for this.

Star Stuff Newsletter Submissions

Your submissions to STAR STUFF are welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at jenzdanowski@yahoo.com. Email text or MS Word is fine. STAR STUFF will usually go to press the weekend prior to each general meeting. Submissions received prior to the 15th can be included in that issue.

* FAAC Members are welcome to join our Ford Astronomy Club Yahoo!Group. Messages photos, files, online discussions, and more! URL: groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub.

This months background photos of the moon Page 1 courtesy of John Kirchhoff. See more of John's photos at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/33926475@N06/with/4311533997/>

Presidents Corner

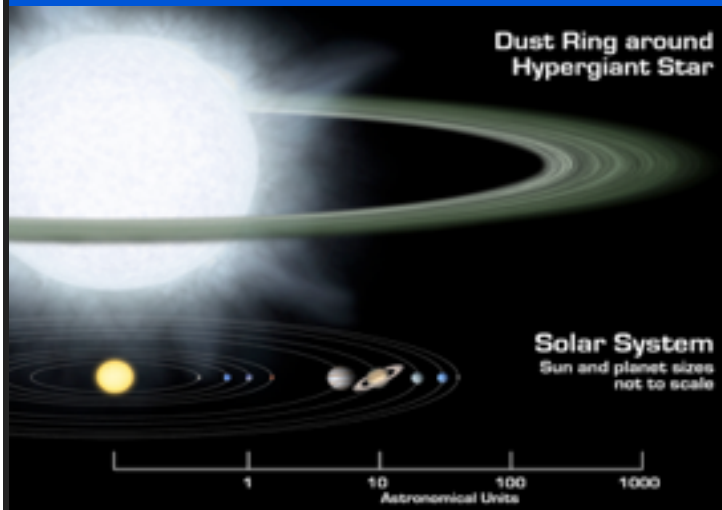
(continued from Page 1)

I have some big shoes to fit into! The good news is Doug is back on the board as our newly elected Secretary. In case you haven't heard, Jon Blum is our new Vice-President and Chuck Jones our Treasurer. This is a great team and I look forward to working with them and with everyone else active in the club. I also want to recognize the hard work Lori Poremsky and Kevin Medon did as Secretary of the club over the last two years. Thanks Lori and Kevin!

Being a club officer is a very good experience, it gives you a chance to see all of the work that it takes to accomplish the many things that, from the outside, look easy. This gives you a great deal of respect and appreciation for the people that make the club tick and it gives you an opportunity to shape the direction of the club. You also get to have a nice dinner at the Senate Coney Island every first Thursday of the month with the rest of the Board and club members that show up to help.

While I'm on the topic of the Board, I want to remind all that you are invited - make that encouraged - to participate in the Board meetings. A lot of the planning and strategizing occurs at these meetings and the more input the better. We typically have ten to twelve people attend. That's twice as many as officially comprise the Board. Don't be bashful - join us! The Board meets on the second Thursday of each month at 5 PM at the Senate Coney Island on Greenfield just north of Rotunda.

An outcome of the last couple of Board meetings is a re-structuring of Beginner's Nights. These observing sessions are intended to help astronomy newbie's get a good start so we're going to add some formalized instructional sessions at the beginning of the evenings. Potential topics:



Artist's rendering compares size of a hypothetical hypergiant star and its surrounding dusty disk to that of our solar system.

Planets in Strange Places

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At the other extreme is a tiny brown dwarf star called Cha 110913-773444, relatively nearby (500 light-years) in the Milky Way. One of the smallest brown dwarfs known, it has less than 1 percent the mass of the Sun. It's not even massive enough to kindle thermonuclear reactions for fusing hydrogen into helium. Yet this miniature "failed star," as brown dwarfs are often called, is also surrounded by a flat disk of dust that may eventually clump into planets. (This brown dwarf discovery was made by a group led by Kevin Luhman of Pennsylvania State University.)

Although actual planets have not been detected (in part because of the stars' great distances), the spectra of the hypergiants show that their dust is composed of forsterite, olivine, aromatic hydrocarbons, and other geological substances found on Earth.

These newfound disks represent "extremes of the environments in which planets might form," Kastner said. "Not what you'd expect if you think our solar system is the rule."

Hypergiants and dwarfs? The Milky Way could be crowded with worlds circling every kind of star imaginable—very strange, indeed.

Keep up with the latest findings from the Spitzer at www.spitzer.caltech.edu. Kids and their grownup friends can enjoy beautiful images from Spitzer while playing Spitzer Concentration at The Space Place (spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/spitzer/concentration).

This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Treasurer's Report February 06, 2011

By Chuck Jones

Bank Accounts	
Checking	\$283.40
Savings	\$1,645.75
TOTAL Bank Accounts	\$1,929.15
Cash Account	
Cash	\$105.22
TOTAL Cash Account	\$105.22
Investment Accounts	
CD 1	\$1,052.66
CD 2	\$1,093.83
TOTAL Investment Accounts	\$2,146.49
Asset Accounts	
Equipment	\$1,454.97
Scholarship	\$568.80
TOTAL Asset Accounts	\$2,023.77
OVERALL TOTAL	\$6,258.39
Memos	
GLAAC	\$1,904.58

Meeting Agenda - February 24

HFCC –Hacket Conference Rm, Health
Careers Educ. Center

For map see: http://www.hfcc.edu/contact/campus_maps.pdf

5:30 PM

Opening/Introduction/Member Observing

Main presentation:

Siberian Tunguska Event Dave Holt

Tech Talk:

Planetarium Software on Handheld Devices
Gary Strumolo

Club Projects/Committees/Member Support

- 2011 Astro Expo/Swap Meet - Sat, March 12th
- Metro Beach Metropark Outreach - Sat, March 26th
- Farmington Hills Nature Center Outreach - Sat, March 26th
- FAAC Banquet - Karl's Cabin in Plymouth - \$30/person - Sat, April 16th
- SIG - March 17th Senate Coney Island
- Friday, May 13 - Howell Girl Scouts
- Open Discussion

Club Business/Secretary/Treasurer/Equipment Reports

Club Projects/Committees/Member Support

Presidents Corner

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- Using a planisphere and other sky charts
- Setting up a GEM
- Collimating a Newtonian reflector

These 30-45 minute talks (one each month) would occur before dark and be followed by a "Tour of the Night Sky." To make this work we will need some volunteers to conduct the sessions. If you have an expertise in a topic that would be of use to a beginner (come on you know you do) let me know. If you're a beginner and there's a topic you'd really like some help with – let me know that also and we'll try and schedule a talk.

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Astro Imaging SIG

Gordon Hansen

The January meeting was held at HFCC

All are invited to join us in the Astro Imaging SIG meetings, to share and discuss images, experiences, and techniques.

We always have a good time, with lively discussion, and sharing of valuable information.

Next meeting is March 10th. The meeting room location – HFCC Admin. Services and Conference Center (same building), Berry Amphitheater Auditorium.

Topics invited. Pizza served.

FAAC Events 2011

Kevin Medon and Lori Poremsky

Feb 24 - General Meeting

Mar 10 - Astrophotography SIG Meeting

Mar 12 - Astronomy Expo & Swap Meet

Mar 26 - Metro Park Outreach

Background Photo from Lunt Solar Scope Image taken at the Hector J Robinson Observatory, June 28, 2010

One FAAC members blog

<http://hjrobservatory.blogspot.com/>

A few updates on the observatory, quick articles and photos. I'll try to improve my writing on this blog. Also, I try to keep daily updates on this blog. - Greg Knekleian, HJRO volunteer.

Items For Sale

Meade Lightbridge Deluxe 12" – F/5, 1524mm focal length. Purchased new last year. Perfect condition mechanically, optically and cosmetically. Big, clear deep sky views. Built-in battery powered cooling fan, two-speed Crayford focuser (1.25 / 2-inch). Easy to transport, set up collimate and use - smooth as silk. Upgraded with Bob's knobs and heavier collimation springs. Includes shroud, cover, Telrad and secondary mirror heater. Over \$1000 invested, will sell for \$650.

Contact John Johnson at jjohnsonpub@yahoo.com

or (248) 515-0014.

MEADE Telescope and Tripod 6 years old - in excellent shape **LXD 75** - Series Schmidt - Cassegrain 8" f/10 SC-8AT (Super Coated, Autostar Guided) - Focal Length 2000 mm Telescope weight = 24 lbs - with MEADE EMC Super Multi-Coatings and with optional Ultra-High Transmission Coating Tripod weight = 45 lbs - Die cast Aluminum German-Type Equatorial Mount with Variable-Height Field Adjustments Autostar Controller guides to 30,223 objects

Includes a Sun Filter, Overnight Protective Cover, Transportation Containers. Contact phone no. 248-851-5053, e-mail robertboswell@comcast.net

Two Scopes For Sale

Celestron 6" Schmidt Cassegrain w XLT Like new condition. With diagonal and finder.

Tote bag. \$325 Retail \$699

Meade Lightbridge 10" With std accessories. Used one time, includes transport boxes. Going for \$475 Retail \$599 + Ship + Tax Need to raise cash for toys.

Tom Blaszk key_string_guy@yahoo.com

Presidents Corner

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Reminder: The 2011 Astro Expo & Swap will be held at Holy Cross Lutheran Church on March 12 from 9 AM to 4 PM. This is always a great event – dust off those un-used gadgets and turn them into cash for some new ones.

Thanks again for the trust you've placed in me.

See you at the next meeting!

Gordon Hansen

ghhansen@comcast.net

Spotlight On Our Boardmembers: President, Gordon Hansen

I was born, raised, and did my schooling in Brooklyn, New York. After graduation from college ('69) with a degree in Metallurgical Engineering I moved to Michigan to work for Ford. Susan, also from NYC, and I married in 1971. After 40 years she still considers herself a New Yorker, thus the rule we must live in a house with street lights and side walks (not a great rule for astronomy!) We have two wonderful daughters (and son-in-laws) and three grandchildren. I stayed with Ford for 36 years and retired in 2005.

When I was 14 or 15 I won a telescope for new newspaper subscriptions. As I remember it was about a 4" Newtonian with a cardboard tube. I don't remember much else – I think I had to slide the eyepiece up and down in the draw tube to focus. I remember viewing the moon and being impressed, but, stars (the few I could see from my backyard) didn't look any different in the scope. I thought there had to be more to this, but, stick-ball and other "teen-age interests" displaced any thoughts of astronomy. Fast forward about 40 years to early 2000. My niece had purchased a pretty

nice Meade 4" on a tracking GEM for her boyfriend as a Christmas present. I kept saying one of these days I'm going to buy one. Well add 40 years additional light pollution to NY and its no surprise the scope did nothing but gather dust and take up space. She told me either take it or it was going out on the curb. How could I resist? I took it home and one of the first objects I viewed was Saturn. That's all it took and as they say, the rest is history. Six telescopes (you can't have too many!) and couple of mounts, eye pieces, cameras, et. Cetera, et. Cetera, now take up the space in my garage where the car used to be.

My main interest is in astrophotography. I decided that my mature eyes don't see the details that others can, so, astrophotos make up the difference. I'm also discovering that there's a lot of imaging possible, even in the light polluted skies (remember the street lights and sidewalks rule) of Woodhaven.



Hector J Robinson Observatory Update

by Greg Knekleian

O-SIG group

FAAC is starting a HJRO SIG group. It will be called the O SIG (observatory sig). This will likely meet monthly basis at Senate Coney Island, and possibly other locations. Check out the Yahoo group announcements for times and locations.

SNOWSTORMS Limit observing

The end of January and early February was marked with snow and cold weather.

We cancelled the first scheduled HFCC outing due to the two day snow storm that dumped several inches around the observatory.

Twice I opened up the observatory and left the shutter closed due to blowing snow and bitter cold. I'd check out the snow accumulation and brush off the dome with a long 28 foot extension broom and wait. I carved a path through deep snow a couple of days before warmer weather arrived.

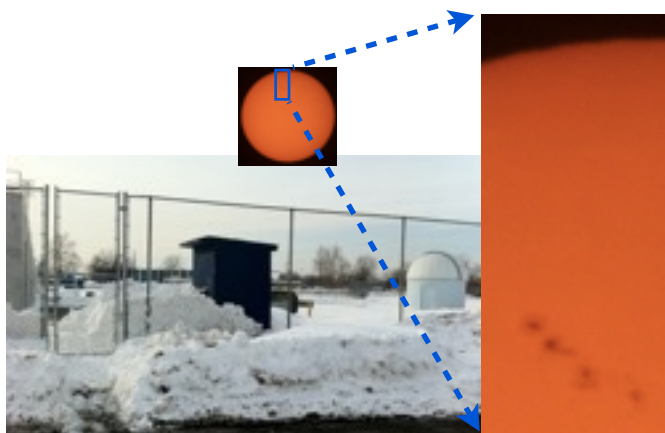
LP School System Observatory Site / phone

Ed, Tim and I briefly looked at the sun through before a meeting to discuss Lincoln Park's website and observatory phone number options. Large sunspots were present, but clouds cut short photography options.

The school district observatory website is:
<http://observatory.lincolnparkpublicschools.com/>

The Observatory phone number (with Google voicemail) is: 313 288-8720.

(Below: January snowfall and February "Jupiter sized" sunspots.)



In Memory of Bob Justin



Photo provided by Al Bates

(Excerpts from the Yahoo group)

Bob was a man with great determination driven by a brilliant mind, there wasn't a project too big or complex, he would find an answer and he did. After retiring from GM with a graduate degree in Astro Physics he committed his life and energy to the Astronomy Dept at Eastern Michigan.

Bob was instrumental and contributed time and energy to the Eastern Michigan Astronomy Club. He readily volunteered his time at "Astronomy on the Beach" and other Michigan Astro events.

He left us knowing a man with profound courage, humor, and sweet nature. He will not be forgotten he will live inside all that loved him. He will be missed.

Diane Worth

He was my tried and true helper at ALL of the Kensington Star Parties...OK OK...Astronomy At The Beach... as well as most all of the other events Rider's and yours truly participated in. He was always giving of his time and his optimism knew NO bounds!

I told him that I would keep the passenger seat of my truck open for him and he was welcome anytime...I won't be a bit surprised if he doesn't put in an appearance when I make it to New Mexico or Arizona. Thanks for all of the good memories buddy!

John Kirchhoff

FAAC General Meeting Minutes

January 27, 2011

By Jim Frisbie, for Doug Bauer, Secretary

Opening:

The meeting was called to order in the Berry Auditorium at 5:30 pm by Chuck J., Vice President. The February General Meeting will be held in the Hackett Conference Room of the Health Services Building. Gordon H. has the name tags and will take requests. Three new members were present, all from the HFCC Astronomy Club. All attendees introduced themselves. Chuck mentioned the mentoring program is alive and well. Feel free to ask an officer for direction to a Club Mentor. A new member handout was also provided. 2011 Club Dues are due by 31 January 2011. At that time the rate will increase from \$25 to \$30 annually. Members contributed their observing experiences: Milton F. talked about the Lunar Eclipse. Mo M. talked about the International Space Station. Also, Mo has a tile piece from the Space Shuttle Challenger. Gordon H. did some astro-imaging of M42...while staying warm inside. Ken A. talked about visually observing Jupiter and Uranus. Greg K. talked about M42 imaging at George K's house.

Elections:

Jim F. presented the slate of officers approved by the Board of Directors. George K. conducted the elections. The slate of officers was seconded and elected without opposition. 2011 Officers: President – Gordon Hansen.; Vice-President – Jon Blum.; Treasurer – Chuck Jones.; and Secretary – Doug Bauer.

George K. also thanked the outgoing officers for their service. Chuck J. said the experience as Vice President has been pleasant and rewarding while thanking those who helped during the last year.

Program:

Frank A. delivered a presentation on "February Skies".

In addition to his PowerPoint Presentation, he lead an open discussion with good audience participation. Chuck J. followed up Frank's presentation with "Ask The Astronomer".

Business Meeting:

- Secretary's Report was presented by Lori P.
 - Treasurer's Report was presented by Gordon H.
 - Swap Meet, March 12, at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Livonia
 - Metro Beach Outreach, March 26
 - Farmington Hills Nature Center, March 26
 - FAAC Banquet, April 16 at Karl's Kabin, price \$30/person
 - SIG Meeting will be held on the second Thursday in the Auditorium
 - A second SIG Group is forming for the Hector J. Robinson Observatory, if interested please contact George K.
 - A new Club Scope has been purchased (an Orion XT8i). It should be available for check out at the next General Meeting.
 - A volunteer is needed to put the New Member Package together.
 - Jim M. asked if there will be a Messier Marathon this spring.
 - Diane asked if anyone was interested in apparel this year.
 - Jim M. volunteered to mentor anyone interested in building wooden telescopes.
 - Mo M. asked about recommendations for color filter use.
 - Surplus hot dogs and hamburgers were donated to a local shelter and fed over 200 people.
- The meeting was adjourned by Chuck J. at 7:05 pm.

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Astronomy Expo & Swap

8th Annual

**Saturday March 12, 2011 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
@ Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Livonia**

Day's Activities

Astronomy Discovery and Attendee Participation

10:00 am Astronomy 101 – G Hansen

11:00 am Binocular and Small Scope Observing - J Frisbie

Workshops – Free Form Q&A

1:00 pm Before Observing – Eyepiece, mirror, lens cleaning, Imaging and CCD equipment, the GEM and AltAz tracking, electronics in Astronomy, reference books and star charts, Solar filters, observing logs and software, what to take to star party & observing

2:00 pm Observing Site – Site etiquette, Go To Mounts, Using the Intelliscope, Collimation how to, star hopping and session tips, imaging manipulation software, using scopes and telescopes for maximum session rewards

Featured Subjects

10:00 am Starting off Right in Astronomy – T Trusock

11:30 am Einstein's Legacy – L Halstead

1:00 pm Planets, Planets, Everywhere – K Bjorkman

2:00 pm Panoramic Image of the Night Sky – A. Mellinger

Planetarium Lectures @ 10, 11, am & 1, 2 pm

**Food Provided by Leda's Coney Island
(Pitas, salads, coneys, rice pudding, hot/cold drinks)**

Admission: \$5 at the door. Young people Under 15 FREE.

Table Fee for Resellers: \$15 in advance by February 28 or \$20 at the door.

Doors open at 8 AM for table/vendor set up.

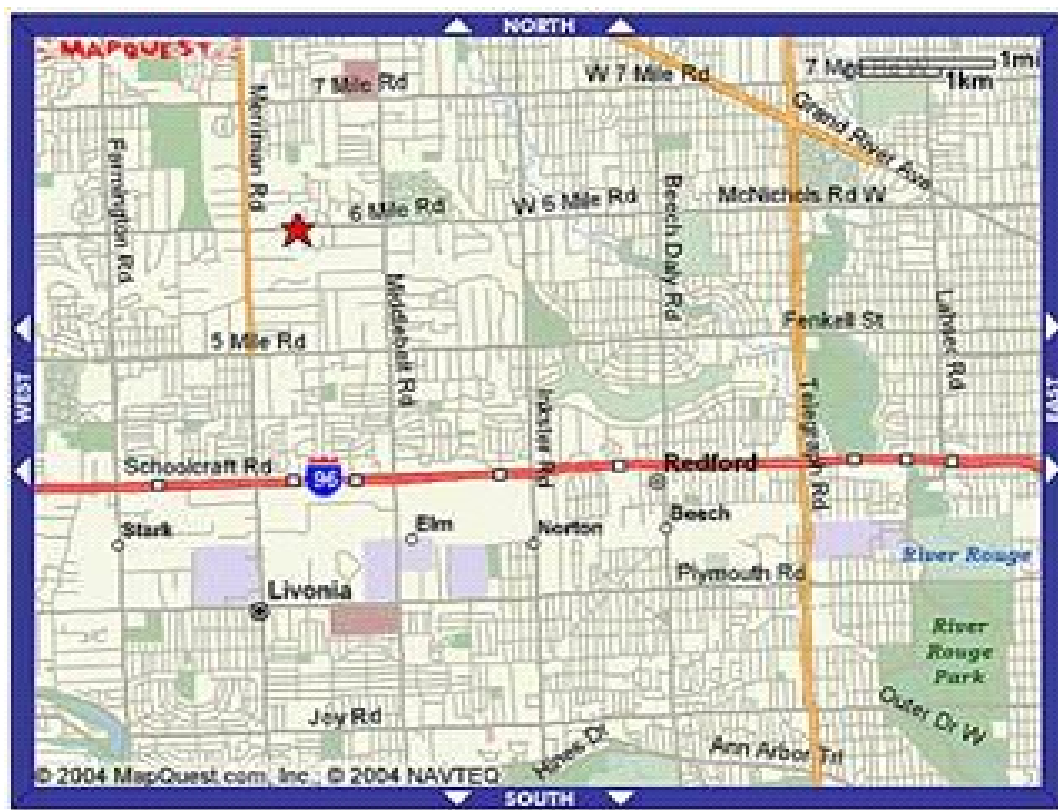
Site Located at: 30650 Six Mile Rd, Livonia, 48152

Make checks payable to: FAAC P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

Vendors, Manufacturers, Commercial contact Tom Blaszak at: key_string_guy@yahoo.com
OR Doug Bauer at: DougBauer@comcast.net,



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Telescopes • Lasers
Accessories



Trip To Perkins Observatory

by Greg Knekleian

January 28, 2011, I died and went to Astronomer's Heaven. Well maybe it wasn't that dramatic, but it seemed that way once I arrived at Perkins Observatory in Delaware Ohio.

Perkins website is: <http://www.perkins-observatory.org/> Perkins is a lot more than a telescope under a dome.

The observatory was founded by professor Hiram Mills Perkins. He made a small fortune supplying pork to the Northern Army during the Civil War. Not wanting to personally profit off the Civil War, Professor Perkins donated profits to build two observatories. He lived a frugal life teaching at Ohio Wesleyan University after the war.

US GLASSMAKING INDUSTRY

The first large mirror for a telescope in the United States was cast for Perkins Observatory after WWI. World War One destroyed large glass works in Europe, so the USA developed a large glassmaking industry. (They cast 4 bad mirrors, before finally producing a suitable 69 inch mirror.) At it's completion, it was the third largest telescope in the world.

SKY & TELESCOPE

"The Sky" was first published in 1935 by New York Amateur Astronomers. In 1931 a magazine called "The Telescope" was published by Harlan Stetson, director of Perkins Observatory. When the two magazines merged they became "Sky and Telescope" magazine.

THE ROOTS OF SETI

There was a famous radio telescope built at Perkins observatory by OSU students, called "The Big Ear". This heard an extraterrestrial signal which was named the OSU "wow" signal back in 1977.

MY TOUR BEGINS

Arriving early I snapped some photos of Perkins Observatory under a clear sky.



Inside I was greeted by Professor Tom Burns, (the director) and one of the volunteers. (Call ahead admission was \$7.)

The library is near the entrance contains many books, computers and telescopes. Visitors can try out one of dozens of computers running astronomy programs in the library. The Perkins building provides a nostalgic 1920's atmosphere.

It felt like a museum visit. The big dome was simply icing on the cake.

That night three staff members helped 45 visitors. Professor Burns gave a great astronomy presentation.

OBSESSION VIEWS

During the presentation other staff members quietly slipped outside to setup a 14 inch Obsession telescope. The sky wasn't clear enough to get good views through the 32 Schottland Reflector (pictured below).



Views through the Obsession 14 confirmed the poor viewing conditions. To increase viewing opportunities, I offered to setup my small telescope. Some visitors peered through my little reflector while waiting to view through the Obsession. *(continued next month)*

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