



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Volume 18, Number 2

February 2009

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MEMBERSHIP ALERT!

Please submit 2009 dues, \$30, if you have not done so.

Membership not renewed by Feb 28, 2009, will be terminated.

Send your check in today to FAAC, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121-7527. Please include any updates to your contact information.

Maui: Wow-wee!

President's Corner

Doug Bauer, FAAC President



Photo by Rob Ratkowski

This January, DeeAnn and I had the good fortune to visit Jon and Rosie Blum in Maui. While we were there, Jon contacted Rob Ratkowski, president of the Haleakala Amateur Astronomers Club, to see if we could go to the top of Haleakala to do some observing at his club's site. He graciously agreed to take us up there with him.

The Haleakala Amateur Astronomy Club has a few small permanent buildings at the top of Haleakala among many military and civilian observatories at 10,000 feet. Rob explained that they got all of the building space donated to them by other professional astronomy groups that owned the buildings. He and the club members put a lot of sweat equity into the buildings, insulating them, installing a small kitchen and bathroom, painting and generally making

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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:	Doug Bauer
VICE PRESIDENT:	Chuck Jones
SECRETARY:	Lori Poremsky / Kevin Medon
TREASURER:	Steve Flessa
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Dale Ochalek

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, Administrative 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 Richmond Airport, Unadilla, given prior permission, and Lake Erie MetroPark. 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 Member:	\$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 subscription request and payment. Do not send any money directly to the FAAC for this.

Star Stuff Newsletter Submissions

Your submissions to **STAR STUFF** are more than welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at dake00k@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 that weekend can be included in that issue.

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

President's Corner... (continued from page 1)

the buildings usable. Rob said they did a lot of recycling in their improvement, using old Styrofoam for insulation, picking up various things at garage sales and even had some funds donated by the groups whose buildings they were using. They also have a concrete pad with piers for their telescopes and an old shipping container to store their equipment. The container was going to be moved off the site, when Rob heard about it, he asked if they could have it and it was moved to their site. I was surprised that they had running water and internet access in their building. It was very pleasant inside their facility.

Outside it was very dark, and we were above the clouds! It was also a little chilly, about 27 degrees with a 10-15 MPH wind. The night before the wind was 40 MPH, so this was balmy in comparison. My Michigan observing experience had prepared me well for this.



Photo by Rob Ratkowski

There were five of us up there-- me, Jon, Rob, Jose, and Jose's father Ramon. Ramon was from Nicaragua and ventured out once to check out the view and decided to stay in the building where it was warm. We were only able to stay for about 3 hours, but Rob set up his 9 ¼ Celestron SCT and let us look at several objects. It was very dark, the background in the sky was black and the stars were magnificent. The moon didn't rise while we were up there, but Venus was so bright it was a form of light pollution. I saw the Zodiacal light for the first time. I had brought some 10X50 binoculars and spent some time looking at various objects, M31, M42, double cluster, Venus, and M36, M37 and M38 in Auriga and many more.

It was really special to see all of these professional observatories around us while we did our observing. Some of the observatories are run

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President's Corner... *(continued from page 2)*

remotely, the 2M Faulkes telescope* was in a giant clam shell next to us, it opened up while we were there and you could hear the motors controlling the telescope.



Photo by Rob Ratkowski

It was a great time and I am grateful to Jon Blum and Rob Ratkowski for giving me this great experience. I was thinking, if we had all of the garbage in the US and Canada trucked into Michigan, how long would it take to get a pile 10,000 feet high (above the Michigan nebula)?

*The Faulkes Telescope Project is the education arm of Las Cumbres Observatory Global Telescope Network (LCOGTN). Its aim is to provide free access to robotic telescopes and a fully supported education program to encourage teachers and students to engage in research-based science education. LCOGTN operates a network of research class robotic telescopes.

Currently there are two telescopes, one in Hawaii and the other in Australia. These telescopes are available to teachers for use as part of their curricular or extra-curricular activities and are fully supported by a range of educational materials and a team of educators and professional astronomers.

- Doug Bauer

January Meeting Minutes

John Schroer

FAAC vice-president Gordon Hansen presiding for FAAC President Doug Bauer, suffering in Maui, Hawaii.

The Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Bob Fitzgerald announced having three Royal Astronomical Society of Canada Observers' Handbooks remaining for sale at \$18.00. Treasurer Steve Flessa has nine Deep Sky Mysteries Calendars left for sale.

Introductions were made, followed by member observing reports. The Main Speaker for the January 2009 FAAC Meeting was G.M. Ross, with his presentation "A Tribute to Bruce Siddell, the 2nd greatest Michigan Visual Observer of Galaxies," Astronomers in non-ideal conditions make great discoveries through and by sheer determination and will."

After the presentation, John Schroer and Sandra Macika of the Elections Committee gave their Final Report. The Candidates for the 2009 FAAC Officers were:

Doug Bauer – President
 Chuck Jones – Vice President
 Treasurer – Steve Flessa
 Secretary – Lori Poremsky and Kevin Medon

No Nominations were submitted from the floor, and each candidate was elected by acclamation. Minutes of the December 2008 General Meeting were accepted as published in the January 2009 Star Stuff.

Treasurer's Report was accepted. Treasurer and the officers reminded all that 2009 FAAC dues are due at the end of February.

Projects/Committees/Events

The Ann Arbor Hands On Museum is hosting a FAAC outreach event on February 4th.

Reminder of the FAAC Annual Banquet at Ernesto's of Plymouth at 6 PM on Saturday, March 14th. Make your reservations and submit your payment of \$35.00 per person immediately.

Tom Blaszk reminded all of the FAAC 6th Annual Astronomy Expo and Swap meet on Saturday, March 7th 2009 at Holy Cross Church's Gymnasium on Six Mile Road between Middlebelt and Merriman in Livonia. Admission is \$5.00 at the door, with tables available at the door for \$20.00 each.

FAAC TV was proposed to create a series of TV programs to promote FAAC and its events. Members that volunteered to work on this project include Bob Clubb, Ed Halash, Gordon Hansen, Don Klaser, Greg Ozimek, John Schroer, and Steve Uitti.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.



Where Did All These Gadgets Come From?!

Ion propulsion. Artificial intelligence. Hyper-spectral imagers. It sounds like science fiction, but all these technologies are now flying around the solar system on real-life NASA missions.

How did they get there? Answer: the New Millennium Program (NMP). NMP is a special NASA program that flight tests wild and far-out technologies. And if they pass the test, they can be used on real space missions.

The list of probes that have benefited from technologies incubated by NMP reads like the Who's Who of cutting-edge space exploration: Spirit and Opportunity (the phenomenally successful rovers exploring Mars), the Spitzer Space Telescope, the New Horizons mission to Pluto, the Dawn asteroid-exploration mission, the comet-smashing probe Deep Impact, and others. Some missions were merely enhanced by NMP technologies; others would have been impossible without them.

"In order to assess the impact of NMP technologies, NASA has developed a scorecard to keep track of all the places our technologies are being used," says New Millennium Program manager Christopher Stevens of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

For example, ion propulsion technology flight-tested on the NMP mission Deep Space 1, launched in October 1998, is now flying aboard the Dawn mission. Dawn will be the first probe to orbit an asteroid (Vesta) and then travel to and orbit a dwarf planet (Ceres). The highly efficient ion engine is vital to the success of the 3 billion mile, 8 year journey.

The mission could not have been flown using conventional chemical propulsion; launching the enormous amount of fuel required would have broken the project's budget. "Ion propulsion was the only practical way," says Stevens.

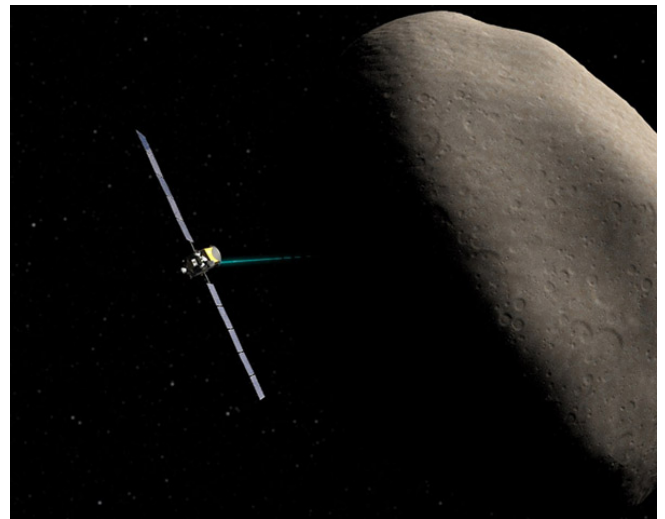
In total, 10 technologies tested by Deep Space 1 have been adopted by more than 20 robotic probes. One, the Small Deep Space Transponder, has become the standard system for Earth communications for all deep-space missions.

And Deep Space 1 is just one of NMP's missions. About a half-dozen others have flown or will fly,

and their advanced technologies are only beginning to be adopted.

That's because it takes years to design probes that use these technologies, but Stevens says experience shows that "if you validate experimental technologies in space, and reduce the risk of using them, missions will pick them up."

Stevens knew many of these technologies when they were just a glimmer in an engineer's eye. Now they're "all grown up" and flying around the solar system. It's enough to make a program manager proud!



Dawn will be the first spacecraft to establish orbits around two separate target bodies during its mission—thanks to ion propulsion validated by Deep Space 1.

The results of all NMP's technology validations are online and the list is impressive: nmp.nasa.gov/TECHNOLOGY/scorecard/scorecard_results.cfm.

For kids, the rhyming storybook, "Professor Starr's Dream Trip: Or, How a Little Technology Goes a Long Way" at:

spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/nmp/starr

gives a scientist's perspective on the technology that makes possible the Dawn mission.

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

Meeting Agenda - Feb. 26

5:30 pm HFCC - Rosenau CR - Admin. Services and Conference Center *

(For map see:

http://www.hfcc.edu/contact/campus_maps.pdf)

Opening/Introduction/Member Observing

Presentation: How Average is our Own Star, the Sun? - Dave Bailey of the Warren Astronomical Society

Tech Talk: Better Cheap Dobsonian Bearings - John Schroer IV of FAAC and DSC

Club Business/Secretary/Treasurer/Equipment

Club Projects/Committees/Member Support

- Club Banquet Ernesto's in Plymouth - 6:00 pm, Sat, March 14th - \$35/person
- 2009 Expo – Sat - March 7th – Tom Blaszk
- Astrophoto SIG – Tony Licata
- Dark Sky Committee– Frank Ancona
- Lincoln Park Observatory Restoration – Tim Dey
- International Year of Astronomy 2009
- Open Discussion

Treasurer's Report

Steve Flessa

Account	2/22/2009 Balance
Bank Accounts	
Checking	\$2,202.21
Savings	\$1,336.63
TOTAL Bank Accounts	\$3,538.84
Cash Account	
Cash	\$147.50
TOTAL Cash Account	\$147.50
Investment Accounts	
CD 1	\$1,068.75
CD 2	\$1,033.30
TOTAL Investment Accounts	\$2,102.05
Asset Accounts	
Equipment	\$994.46
Scholarship	\$399.05
TOTAL	\$1,393.51
OVERALL TOTAL	\$7,181.90
Memo:	
GLAAC	\$1,666.60

Items for Sale

Schmidt-Newtonian 10" – F5.35, 1360 mm focal length with 2" focuser, 60 mm guide scope, Thousand Oaks Full aperture solar filter (Mylar). Cooling fan, extra set of "O" rings, Optron Corrector plate.

Crestliner mount (on wheels) available. Scope made by Nelson Lewis of Detroit Astronomical Society in 1962. Purchased 1981. Selling telescope for \$325. Mount for \$200. Contact Harold Thomason 313-584-7465

Celestron 6-inch Schmidt-Cass with XLT coatings. The package has a diagonal and a finder. There are no eyepieces. The telescope has been used 3/4 times. Asking \$400 or OBO. Contact Tom Blaszk, key_string_guy@yahoo.com

Coulter 10" Dobsonian telescope. \$400. Contact Bob Stonik, 313-361-4954

Astro Imaging SIG

Tony Licata

Gallery Submissions Requested! If you have any interesting photos, astronomy related or not, please send them to tglicata@aol.com as JPG attachments. The SIG gallery of images will be viewed during each SIG meeting. A reminder is posted on our Yahoo site periodically for submissions. All are invited to join us, share and discuss their images. We always have a good time, with lively discussion.

Next meeting is March 12. Topics invited.

Lock Code Change March 31

The Island Lake gate lock code will be changed. The new code has been picked (and is taking effect March 31, 2009). You must be a member in good standing and contact any Board Member to obtain the new code. Do not contact the Hotline for the code. The lock code will only be given to FAAC Members.

Do not give the code to anyone else. Giving the code to non-members violates our agreement with Island Lake and Richmond Airfield and could jeopardize our future use of these sites.



6th Annual

RIDER'S HOBBY SHOPS

Astronomy Show & Swap Meet

Saturday, March 7, 2009 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Holy Cross Church Gymnasium, 30650 Six Mile, Livonia, 48152

ASTRONOMY PRESENTATIONS

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|---|
| 10:00 am: | Gordon Hansen | Astronomy 101 |
| 11:00 am: | Clay Kessler | Climbing the Learning Curve – Astrophotography with a DSLR |
| 12:00 noon: | John Schroer | Astronomy 102 – Practical Astronomy for Newcomers |
| 1:00 pm: | Jim Frisbie | Binocular Observing |
| 2:00 pm: | M. Kedzior | Building/Assembling Your Own Telescope - Workshop |

Featured Topics

- | | | |
|-----------|------------------------|--|
| 10:30 am: | Frank Ancona | Introduction to the Dark Sky: Finding It – Saving It |
| 11:30 am: | Tony Licata | Choosing Astrophotography Equipment |
| 1:00 pm: | Dr. K. Bjorkman | Stars and Disks (and Planets?), Oh My! |
| 2:00 pm: | T. Trusock | Star Testing Your Optics: A Primer on Optical Aberrations |
| 3:00 pm: | Dr. Fred Adams | Extrasolar Planets |

Planetarium w/ Lectures @ 10am, 11am, 1pm, 2pm – T. Cervenak

Buy / Sell / Trade:

Telescopes - Eyepieces - Cameras - Binoculars - Mounts
Tripods - Software - Publications - Accessories, etc.

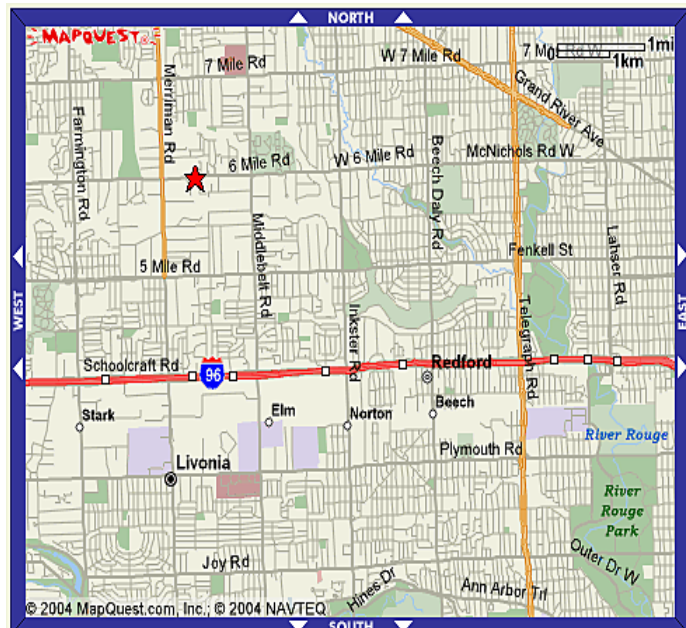
Admission: \$5.00 in advance or at the door
Sales Table: \$15 in advance, or \$20 at the Door, as available. One admission included.

Advance registration ends February 15, 2009.

Doors open **8:00am for setup**. *Catering by KIM (Pizza, Hot dogs, Wraps, and other Morsels).*

Send check, payable to FAAC, for advance admission or table registrations: **FAAC, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121-7527.**

Location: Holy Cross Lutheran Church Gymnasium
 30650 Six Mile, Livonia, 48152, north side of Six Mile,
 ½ mile east of Merriman. See **STAR** on map.



For More Information: **Contact Tom Blaszk:** key_string_guy@yahoo.com or call (313) 516-5978, or **Don Klaser:** dklaser4750@wowway.com



FAAC Dinner Banquet 2009

*Saturday, March 14, 2009
6:00 pm until ?*

Astro Slide Show – Door Prizes – Astro-Jeopardy

LOCATION: Ernesto's, 41661 Plymouth Road, Plymouth, Michigan (734) 453-2002.

Dinner Selections:



Chicken Ernesto with Italian sausage, bell peppers, mushrooms, & sweet cherry pepper sauce

or

Broiled Salmon with Cucumber-Dill sauce

or

Roast Top Round of Beef with a rich red wine mushroom demi-glace



Dinner includes a side of Penne with Tomato Basil, a tossed mixed greens salad, and freshly baked bread

Assorted Desserts



Coffee, tea, iced tea, and soft drinks will be available throughout the evening.

A Cash Bar is available. Ask your server for beer, wine, and mixed drinks.

Dinner Speaker: Gary Strumolo

ADMISSION: \$35 per person.

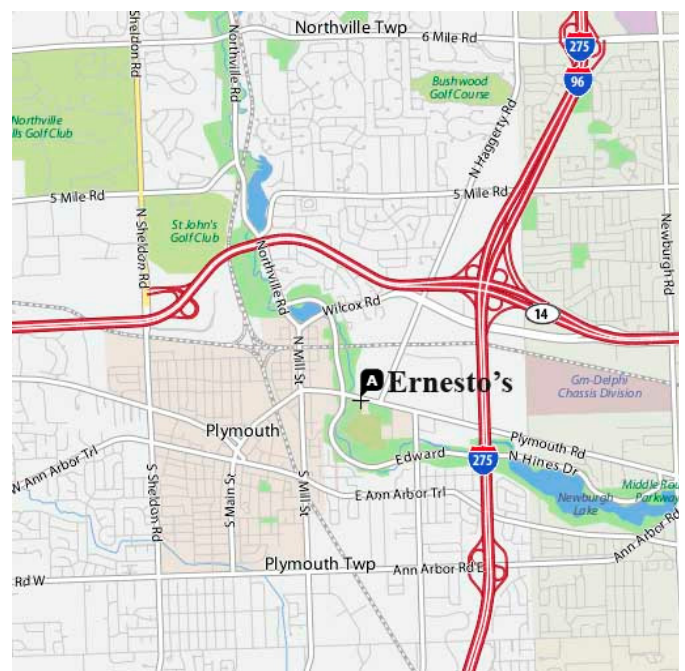
Cocktails 6:00 pm (cash bar) - Dinner 7 pm.

Make Checks Payable: Please pay Gordon Hansen at the General Meeting, or send payment to Ford Amateur Astronomy Club, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121.

"Thank you for another great year. We hope to see you there. Please let us know if you are coming!"

-- FAAC Board.

Location: The restaurant, **Ernesto's**, is located on Plymouth Road, near Haggerty. * See A on map*



For More Information: Gordon Hansen at ghhansen@comcast.net or post on the Yahoo Group.

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Star Stuff Newsletter
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Buy / Sell / Trade Astronomy Goods, etc.
(see inside for more details)