

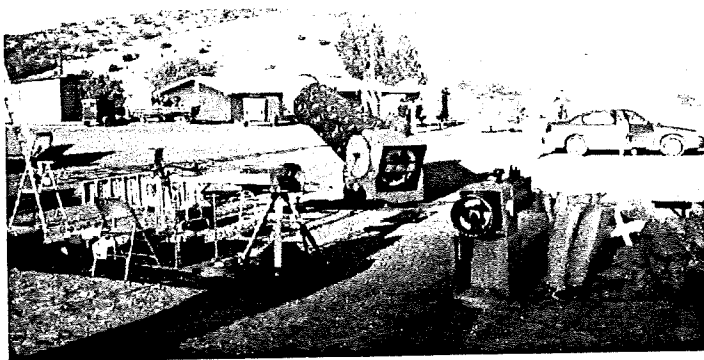
Star Stuff

Volume 7 Number 5



June 1998

Feature of the Month



"The Stars At Night Are Big And Bright...."

By Clayton Kessler

Deep in the heart of Texas - at the Texas Star Party!

I was fortunate enough to be one of five local amateurs that made the 1700 mile trek to Fort Davis Texas for the Texas Star Party. This group consisted of FAAC President Greg Burnett, noted local astronomer Doug Bock, David Lee, Doug Scobel from the University of Texas and myself.

This was a large and impressive event with people from all over the country and Canada at the ranch to share the exceptionally clear skies. A wide variety of telescopes were set up on all

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ASTRONOMY AND OLD BOOKS (Part 2) by Harry L. Juday

Part 1. dealt with used book stores where I have found a number of interesting and useful books on Astronomy. In part 2, I would like to discuss some of the books I have purchased, with some commentary (from my very novice point of view).

"Galaxies" by Timothy Ferris (Published by Harrison House, NY, 1987). This is a large book, 13 1/4" x 14 3/4" and originally sold for \$75.00. This is an excellent volume, devoted to galaxies, from the Milky Way to all types. It has outstanding astrophotos to illustrate the various subjects with many full page pictures. It contains numerous illustrations and the two main highlights for me are the 4 page foldout of the Milky way, a composite of seventy-seven smaller B&W

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Star Stuff
Monthly Publication of the:
Ford Amateur Astronomy Club.

Star Stuff Newsletter
P.O. Box 7527
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1998 Club Officers

President	Greg Burnett
Vice President	George Korody
Treasurer	Ray Fowler
Secretary	Harry Kindt

General Meetings

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club (FAAC) holds regular general meetings open to the public on the fourth Thursday of the month at 5:00 PM. Meetings are held in conference room 1491 of the Ford Credit Building

Observing Site

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club has an established observing site, by permit, at the Spring Mill Pond area of Island Lake Recreation Area in Brighton, Michigan located near the intersections of I-96 and US-23. Members are responsible for opening and closing the gate after the parks 10:00 PM closing time. (Summer season only)

Observing Hot Line - (313) 390 5456

On Friday and Saturday nights, or nights before holidays, you can call the hot line number up to 2 hours before sunset to find out if we will be observing that night.

WWW Page

FAAC maintains a web page on the internet at URL:
<http://kode.net/~dougbock/faac/>
Ford Intranet at:
<http://be0084.be.ford.com/fhl/faac>

Membership and Dues

Membership to the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is open to both Ford employees and the general public. The dues structure is as follows:

Annual Individual/Family	\$ 20.00
Lifetime Membership	\$100.00

Membership benefits include a subscription to the Star Stuff newsletter, discounts on subscriptions to Astronomy and/or Sky and Telescope magazines, after hours use of the observing site at Island Lake, and discounts at selected area astronomical equipment retailers.

Newsletter Editor:

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Editors Corner

By Jack Kennedy

Another month is gone and our summer observing season is here. What a great way to start it, with a star party at Kensington and an opportunity to get to know David Levy the noted Comet hunter. Considering rather dismal weather for an astronomical event it was a great time. I particularly enjoyed seeing all the local clubs together. The presentations were all well attended and really enjoyable. We had talks on basic equipment, the moon, asteroids, a comet making presentation and of course the talk by David Levy. Both The Nature Company and Riders Hobby had nice displays which attracted lots of attention. All in all two very nice evenings under Michigan skies.

In this issue we have an article on the Texas Star Party at the Prude ranch in Fort Davis Texas and the continuation of Harry Juday's article on Astronomy and old books. I have been getting lots of good feedback on the articles over the last few months so lets keep writing those articles. We all have something the rest of the club would love to hear so put it down on paper or the computer and send it to me at the address at the right, and till next month Clear Skies.



House Bill 4254

The light pollution bill is still in the Senate committee for Technology and Energy. Representatives from the area clubs are planning a trip to Lansing with Norbert Vance to testify before the committee. This has not been confirmed yet. If you would like more information on this bill or the trip to Lansing contact Jack Kennedy at 248-399-9403 or e-mail to jkennedy1@voyager.net

Observations

by Greg burnett

The 1998 Texas Star Party (TSP) was held at Prude Ranch near Fort Davis, Texas. The TSP is one of the premier annual star parties, and I was pleased to be able to attend, along with several companions. Doug Bock, Calyton Kessler, and I traveled in Doug's van, and bunked in his pop-up camper. David Lee and Doug Scobel traveled together in David's van and stayed in his trailer. We all drove the 1700 miles straight through, leaving Michigan on the Friday evening before event and arriving early Sunday morning.

Doug Bock was the ostensible leader of our piece of the expedition, since he had been to the TSP once before. On that occasion he had driven the whole way by himself, in one go; an amazing feat. It was a loooooong trip by any standard, even with three of us taking shifts on driving. When we arrived at 2:00 AM Sunday morning, we parked the camper just inside the entrance to the ranch, which was totally blacked-out for this astronomy event. Doug was somehow able to find his way through the darkness and lead us to the "upper observing field" where we found a number of telescopes deployed under a sky of diamond-studded black velvet. The TSP was underway.

During the first couple of nights Doug experienced some frustration with his 20-inch telescope, which seemed to be out of alignment in some manner that was not altogether straightforward. This led to some grumbling and fussing (he even went so far as to say, in a moment of weakness, "Maybe I oughta get a refractor!"), but eventually all was made right with the help of a 3/8-inch threaded rod provided, naturally enough, by Clay the Machinist. Once the scope was properly tuned, Doug hit his stride, working through the densest pages of Uranometria as galaxy after galaxy fell to the 20-inch. At one point, with obvious delight, he showed us an astounding view with nine galaxies in the field at the same time!

Clay Kessler took a somewhat more technical approach to his TSP observing. A lot of his

observing time was spent exploring the intricacies of his ST-4 autoguider. The results were mixed early on, but after several trips into town for one-hour photo processing, he got it under control and began producing some really nice telephoto and piggy-back shots. Clay's technical background came to the fore on more than one occasion during the trip. At the McDonald Observatory he asked the tour guide at the Hobby-Eberling multiple-mirror telescope how far the actuators could move the mirror segments. "A tenth of an inch." was the response. "Hmm..." Clay pondered out loud, "a hundred thousandths..." "No, a tenth of an inch." the guide repeated. "Yeah, a hundred thousandths." Clay insisted. Further breakdown of communications was forestalled by Doug, who pointed out that astronomers and machinists may use different language for the same things. We all spent the remainder of the trip measuring everything in thosandths.

Although they traveled and camped separately, David Lee and Doug Scobel were also part of our entourage. Doug (aka Ancient Jedi Master) brought a large Dob and a barndoor platform on the trip, and he produced some excellent wide-field astrophotos. And simply put, David Lee brought everything he owned to West Texas. To my knowledge, there was only one person at the TSP doing C-41 film processing on-site. It was David. And I saw only one full-size 3200psi compressed gas cylinder that had been lugged all the way to the TSP. It was David's. His dry nitrogen for preventing film buckling also came in handy for clearing optics of the ubiquitous West Texas dust. But David's dedication and serious approach to astrophotography produce results. His photo of Comet Hale-Bopp won the "Solar System" category of the TSP astrophotography contest!

Stars are many, but good friends are few. I was privileged to be in the company of these noble warriors of the night, who generously shared both their wisdom and their good nature. They made the TSP trip much more than it would have been otherwise. Thanks guys!



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three fields. These ranged from simple 4" Newtonian Reflectors to 36" Obsession Dobs to Takahashi Astrographs to AP Refractors. It was a visual feast of commercial and ATM built telescopes. Most people stayed up to the wee hours pursuing various sky targets. It was amazingly quiet at night, mostly soft murmuring of the observers broken by an occasional group exclamation as a bright meteor flashed overhead. Near dawn the last hearty souls were covering their scopes and tottering off to sleep and the early risers were fixing coffee.

The sky was fantastic. Very dark with "billions and billions" of bright points of light. Venus, Jupiter and the Moon put on an early morning display as they approached conjunction - an awe inspiring sight. The winter constellations, Taurus and Orion set into the evening Zodiacal light while the milky way rose at around 2:00 AM. In between these areas lay the magic land of faint galaxies, Leo, Virgo and Coma Berenices. We all pursued our various interests, observing or astrophotography. Doug Scobel completed the "TSP Observers Challenge" with his 13" Dob and earned an award. David Lee concentrated on astrophotography with a large format (6X7 cm) camera and an interesting "all sky" 4X5" camera that he built. David brought along a complete photo processing setup so we were able to look at the negatives - very cool, I can't wait to see the prints! Doug Scobel took some great shots with a homemade "barn door" tracker. Our own Greg Burnett took many piggyback and prime focus shots through his Astro-Physics refractor. And all this time Doug Bock kept saying "Guys come here - you have got to see this!!!!" It was a truly wonderful place to be an amateur astronomer! I should mention that David Lee won the Astrophoto Contest for a solar system object with a picture of comet Hale-Bopp that he took at last years TSP.

Meteors? Lots of meteors. We were in the middle of the Lyrid meteor shower. It was quite amazing just how many of those rapid flashes of light that can be seen from a truly dark site. These varied from small quick flashes to bright fireballs. You knew that you missed a good one by the collective gasp as you squinted through the eyepiece!

The Prude Ranch people were wonderful. Food was on time, tasty and plentiful. Most meals featured a "Southwest Flavor" with side dishes of rice and beans and savory salsas. Mr. Prude was present daily checking that everything was going smoothly - and it did! The ranch hands played the "Texas Cowboy" to the hilt and this provided some amusing moments - we all learned that there was a big difference between "Full" and "Plumb Full".

The best part was the people. The organizers said that they had around 600 registered on Friday. These people all seemed friendly and eager to share experiences and equipment tips. There was a lot to learn and many willing teachers. Al Kelly was there doing fantastic CCD images with a Cookbook 245 CCD camera and he was happy to talk about his methods and equipment. Sky and Telescope had several people wandering around asking and answering questions. Tony and Daphnie Hallas were set up just down the field and they had a vendor table selling their fantastic pictures. Author Robert Reeves was among the judges for the astrophoto contest. Everywhere you looked someone had a "dream setup" of some kind or another and was happy to talk about it.

Downside? What Downside? Well - maybe the dust. I learned that West Texas was made of dust, several miles deep in places. We watched "dust devils" sweep down the

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Meeting Minutes for 5-28-98

by Dave Beard

The meeting was called to order by our President Greg Burnett at 5:06 p.m. There were 30 members and guests present. Members started immediately on the pizza and pop provided by George Korody and Ray Fowler.

Greg passed around an atto parsec ruler, a flyer for the Okie-Tex star party (Oct. 18 -25), an astronomy article from the N.Y. Times, and a light pollution awareness beverage cup from a McDonalds restaurant he picked up on the way to the '98 Texas Star party. The members introduced themselves and talked about their recent viewing experiences.

Greg Burnett introduced the Texas Star Party show, and Clay Kessler started off the event by passing around some beautiful prints of some of his camera work at the TSP, and relating some amusing stories of the trip that he and Greg Burnett, Doug Bock, and Doug Scobel took to the party. Ray Fowler told the members that he had a few T-shirts left over and members were encouraged to purchase them so that Ray would not have to take them home.

Greg Burnett covered the upcoming events on the agenda, and George Korody reminded everyone of Doug Bock's upcoming Summer Solstice event at his Northern Cross site, on the 26th and 27th of June. The treasurers report was read and accepted.

New officers were introduced to the Club, Al Bates as Membership Chair, Ray Fowler and George Korody as Refreshment Co-Chairs, Bob Fitzgerald as Observing/Hotline Chair, and David Beard as Club Secretary candidate.

Greg Burnett discussed a proposal by the Executive Committee that the Island Lake site be opened only on 1st quarter weekends, 1 per month. Bob Fitzgerald stated that he didn't have a problem updating the hotline at anytime, and invited any comment or criticism of the hotline. Bob asked that members do leave a message indicating if they did want to observe, so that Bob could know how many folks were interested in observing, and that he could get in touch with them. Members can hit "1" on their dial to leave a message. Greg told the members the gate lock code, and strongly advised members not to be confrontational in any way with any non-astronomers, do not stand in anyone's way if they are seeking to get into the park, or provoke any kind of incident. Greg stated that the members are not involved with security, and to be careful if any situations do arise. Also Greg mentioned that it would be a good idea if we all carried our membership cards. See Ray Fowler if you need one.

Several members of the club will be giving an astro demonstration to Boy Scout troop 100 in Manchester on June the 16th.

Greg reported that the Executive Committee proposed that the Club dues become delinquent on tax day, every April 15th, and delinquent members names be published in the following months newsletter. The proposal was seconded, and passed by unanimous vote.

Greg mentioned that Executive Board meeting will take place again the 2nd Thursday each month at 5:00 p.m. at the City Tavern restaurant. All members are welcome, but you have to pay for your own dinner for this meeting.

Doug Scobel and Greg Burnett then gave an excellent slide show of photographs, both astro and terrestrial, of their and Doug Bock's and Clay Kessler's trip to the 1998 Texas Star Party. All the members present were amazed at the beauty of the photo's and of the dark skies available down at the Prude Ranch where the party is held (Clay Kessler stated that the milky way was so bright, it cast a shadow!).

There were also a few slides from the Kensington event, and Bob McFarland gave us some information on the very positive feedback from the Metroparks people, the vendors and David Levy. Dave is interested in returning, and that will be looked into. Also, the Metroparks people are considering another party, and possibly a dark site for the area clubs.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.



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observing field pushing Dobs like weathervanes. It was a wonder no major damage was done. No matter how much dust was blown off the field there was always more to take it's place! There are, however, ways to deal with this. Experienced TSPers staked down their equipment against wind accidents. There were also a lot of tarps staked down on the field. This greatly reduced the dust generated by walking around your scope - a great idea for next year!

I had a wonderful time and I learned a lot. It was clear every night (though somewhat dusty at times) and very dark which made for great seeing. I am already making plans for next year..... lets see, I need some tarps, I need to finish the new scope, bring lots of canned air..... See you at the next TSP.



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photos and the full page, negative print (for detail) of M13, the Hercules Cluster, showing the numerous galaxies that exist in that part of the sky. This was one of my better bargains as I found it in an obscure little store in Frankfort, KY for \$7.95. I plan to bring this volume to an upcoming Club meeting for all, who care, to see.

"A Catalog of Southern Peculiar Galaxies and Associations" by Halton C. Arp and Barry F. Madore (Published by Cambridge University Press in 1987). This large (9 1/4" x 12 1/4") two volume work is the result of an approximate 10 year effort utilizing astrophotos from the United Kingdom's 48" Schmidt Telescope located in Australia as part of the ESO/SRC Southern Sky Survey. These photos capture objects of fainter magnitude than anything previously seen up to that time. The work covers 25 different types of Galaxies including Interacting (doubles to quintets), Ring, M51 type, Multiple Armed, Peculiar Disks, Irregular or Disturbed, Dwarfs and Miscellaneous (rare or distinctive objects). Volume I contains the descriptive text associated with the Books (sparse) and position listings for more than 6,000 Galaxies. Volume II contains approximately 1,000 negatively printed photos illustrating each of the 25 types of Galaxies listed. This pair of books cost me \$25 at the downtown John King store, but I find it worth it as I study all of the different types of Galaxies

(most of which I will probably never be able to see first hand through a big telescope) and I marvel at the wonder and magnificance of our Universe.

"Outlines of Astronomy" by Sir John Herschell (1792-1871, son of Sir William). This little book was part of larger series of books, "A Library of Universal Literature" published by Collier & Sons in 1901. I have

not read this book as yet, but have glanced through it. It should be interesting to see what was known when the text was written. There are a few illustrations and charts to supplement the text along with sketches made from telescope views. This book is in quite good condition and for the grand price of \$3 I could not pass it up (if for historical purposes only).

I would like to end this article with a short review of a book I bought new, but find very interesting, "Visual Astronomy of the Deep Sky" by Roger N. Clark (Published by Cambridge University Press and Sky Publishing, 1990). Some of the Chapter headings are "The Human Eye", "The Eye and the Telescope", "The Faintest Star Visible in a Telescope", "A Visual Atlas of Deep Sky Objects" covering more than 60 deep sky objects with photos and the authors sketches. However, it is the Appendices I find the most interesting with chapters and charts on the following subjects (among others), "Star Clusters for Finding Your Limiting Magnitude", "Air Mass, Atmospheric Extinction and Other Calculations" and "Optimum Detection Magnification for Deep Sky Objects" with charts for 2" thru 24" aperture telescopes. As a novice, I found this book valuable in telling me what I could, and could not, expect to see with my telescope and under various sky conditions. I really recommend this book for someone starting out as I am. H. L. Juday, 18 March, 1998.



F.A.A.C. Golf Shirts

There are still a few unclaimed shirts. If you are interested contact Ray Fowler at the next event or meeting.



Kensington Metro Park Spring Festival Star Party

On May 1st and 2nd Kensington Metropark had their Spring Festival. This years main attraction was a multi-club astronomy star party. There were representatives from most of the area clubs giving presentations, talking astronomy and displaying equipment. Clubs included:

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
Detroit Astronomical Society
Warren Astronomical Society
Oakland Astronomy Club
University Lowbrows
EMU Astronomers

and others.

Both Riders Hobby and The Nature Company were present to display all sorts of astronomy equipment and books. The park has a policy about selling anything in the park but both vendors seemed to enjoy the party and I am sure they got lots of walk-ins in their stores from the Kensington event. Both companies are supporters of the Island Lake Star Party in the fall and are getting more involved in supporting the local amateur astronomy community.

Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate and allow any viewing of the night sky.

There was a talk on meteorites and samples were passed around, and a comet making demonstration by a park employee. One of the Lowbrow Astronomers did a presentation on Moon sites. Barry Craig had his porthole to the moon setup. Our own clubs president Greg Burnett did his always interesting Astronomy 101 presentation.

Our guest speaker David Levy who was there signing books and giving great talks both nights on Astronomy, comet hunting and his relationship with the Shoemakers. David was present thanks to The Nature Company. All in all both evenings were as good as astronomy gets under cloudy skies.

We look forward to future events with Kensington MetroPark.



ASTRO LINGO by Paul Mrozek

immersion - The disappearance of a celestial body at the beginning of an eclipse or occultation.

insolation - A measure of the solar radiation received by a celestial body per square meter per second. (The degree of insolation and absorption determines how hot the surface will become.)

invariable plane - The fundamental reference plane for computations of solar system dynamic. It is at a right angle to the spin axis and through the center of mass of the solar system.

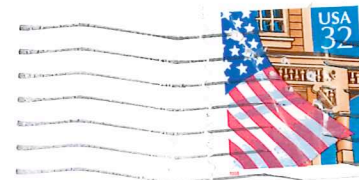
isophote - A line connecting points of equal brightness on a map showing the distribution of light intensity.

jansky - The unit of flux density used in radio astronomy. (Named after Karl Jansky, who discovered radio emission from the Milky Way in 1932.)





Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
Star Stuff Newsletter
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn, MI 48121



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Coming Attractions:

Product Reviews:

- * SBigs ST-4 Autoguider/Imager.
- * Meade ETX
- * Filters

Events:

- * SMURFS
- * Island Lake Star Party
- * Summer Soltice Star Party
- * NCO Wilderness Star Party