



STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

March 2002
Volume 11 Number 3



Editor: Jim Frisbie

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STAR STUFF is a monthly publication of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club, an affiliate club of the Ford Employee Recreation Association.

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

P.O. Box 7527

Dearborn MI 48121-7527

<http://www.boonhill.net/faac>

Submissions to STAR STUFF are welcome Please write to the address above or contact the editor:

Jim Frisbie

via tele #: 734-453-1422

or email: w8tu@peoplepc.com

Dead line is the 15th of each month for the following month of publication.

Officers:

President	Don Nakic
Vice President	Ken Anderson
Secretary	Don Klaser
Treasurer	Mike Bruno

General Meetings:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club holds regular general meeting on the fourth Thursday of each month (except the combined November/December meeting held the first Thursday of December) at 5:00 PM in conference room 1491 in the Ford Credit building in Dearborn, Michigan

Observing:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club observes at Spring Mill Pond within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The club maintains a permit for after-hours access. Weather permitting, the club observes on Friday nights, Saturday nights, and nights before holidays.

Club Information:

Observing schedules and additional Club information is available by calling the Observing Hotline at: (313) 390-5456 or via the Ford Intranet: www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html or the public Internet: www.boonhill.net/faac.

Club Membership:

Membership in the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is open to Ford employees and non-employees. Write or call for an application.

Annual - New Member: \$25; Renewal: \$ 20 (before Jan 31 of each year)

Lifetime - \$ 150

Membership includes:

A subscription to the STAR STUFF newsletter and the quarterly newsletter the REFLECTOR published by the

Astronomical League.

Discounts on ASTRONOMY and SKY & TELESCOPE magazines, after-hours access to the observing site and discounts at selected area equipment retailers.

Magazine Discounts:

Do not send money to FAAC for SKY & TELESCOPE or ASTRONOMY magazine subscriptions. We have a form that you send in with your subscription directly to the publisher to receive a \$10 discount. Pick up a form at the next meeting, or contact a club officer. ☆

SWAP & SHOP

For Sale: Meade ETX125EC, 1 yr old, deluxe tripod, dew shield, hard case, 26mm plossl eyepiece, \$ 1,150 obo. Contact: Tom Ellison, @ 248-549-7675

For Sale: Meade 203SC/300, 8" f/10 SCT with GEM. Very little use, perfect shape. Contact: Paul Chaveriat @ 734-721-3346

For Sale: Celestron CG4, equatorial mount & RA motor. Like-new/excellent condition. Asking \$150. Also, Celestron Ultima, 5mm eyepiece, 1 1/4", asking \$30. Contact: Thomas Blaszk @ Ofc: 313.323.9842 After hours: 313.277.3365

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A special program note: George Korody with the help of Al Bates will make a presentation at the March General Membership Meeting on "Building an Observatory"...This is the one we have all been waiting for!...At least that is why we haven't seen the stars in a while!

LAKE HUDSON - DARK SKY LEGISLATION APPROVED !

...Heard an unconfirmed report from a co-worker today that NPR local news announced that the Gov Engler signed the Dark Sky Bill for Lake Hudson ! If its true congrats to all and a big Thank YOU to the Jackson club for spearheading the effort !

As someone very famous said back in '69

" That's one small step....." John Kirchhoff

A call to Paul Overeiner at the Jackson Citizen Patriot Newspaper confirmed that Gov. Engler signed the Legislation into law during the week of March 10th. For more detail go to: <http://www.mlive.com/news/jacitpat>

**MINUTES OF THE
FEBRUARY 28, 2002
FAAC GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
by Don Klaser**

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Ken Anderson @ 5:05 pm. Pizza and pop was enjoyed by all as the roundtable introductions and conversation were held. Mike Bruno was not able to get the financial numbers together for a treasurers report at the meeting. He will compile it and have it published in the newsletter. The dinner party will be held on Saturday, March 23rd at Kiernan's Steak House in Dearborn. Cocktails at 6:30pm, dinner will follow at 7:00 pm. Secretary's Report from last month was approved by the membership. Ken discussed the new meeting format - All in attendance liked the new line-up. The Scholarship Program will continue for 2002; Its continuation in the future was discussed by the membership - it was decided by the membership on a vote of 29 to 4 to continue the program for 2002 & 2003. Jan Kessler, Gordon Hanson, Don Nakic will serve on the Scholarship Advisory Board. Greg Burnett talked about helping out the Grosse Isle Nature and Land Conservancy start an Astronomy Program there. Anyone interested in helping can contact Greg. John Ford will be holding a Beginners Night @ ILSP on April 11 & 12. A discussion was held on the possibility of sponsoring a club road trip to one of the following, votes were as follows: Abrams Planetarium - 20 people; Detroit Science Center - 15 people. The board will discuss the possibility of building a telescope for the club and housing it in an observatory. A discussion on using a laser collimator was conducted by Jim Frisbie. A suggestion was made the Club purchase a laser collimator for use by the membership. The meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm.

**A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
by Don Nakic**

I would like to thank Ken Anderson for assuming my role in the last FAAC General Meeting due to a last minute business trip.

You probably noticed a slight change in the agenda. As I promised in the last newsletter my goal as president is to promote a higher level of awareness of the science and hobby of astronomy. One means to achieve this is to have more technical discussions. A part of these discussions will focus on teaching fundamental concepts. The other part will cover more broad-brush topics such as current events or latest technological advances. I hope you enjoy the change.

At February's FERA Board Meeting I was informed of buildings on Ford's campus that are opening their doors for club meetings. One such building is the Family Learning

Center located on Rotunda between Southfield Freeway and Oakwood Blvd. I arranged a visit with the center's facility director. Some of my key findings were:

- No Ford ID to enter the building
- Large conference rooms with all types of multi-media capability
- Library with plenty of shelf space
- Wall boards to advertise events
- Ample parking, unfortunately its well lit
- Extremely helpful and pleasant staff
- Crowds of visitors with families whom are interested in extra-curricular activities

The past FAAC Board Meeting was held at the center. At that time the board felt it would be prudent to switch the club's general meeting venue. The change will not take place until this May. Additional information will be provided at the general meetings and on our website. If you want to learn more about the Family Center, their website is www.familycenteronline.org.

As we proceed forward through this year, I hope to see more changes to the club. I would like to hear your suggestions! My intent is to ensure that everyone is getting the most from FAAC. Together we can grow the club and ourselves.

**NIAGfest
by John Kirchhoff**

The 16th annual NIAGfest/GreatCon Star Party and Astronomical Convention will be held April 26/27th at Camp Crosley YMCA. Camp Crosley is located in North Webster Indiana approximately 4 hours from Detroit. The star party is the result of the combined efforts of four Northern Indiana Astronomy Clubs and is very well organized and a lot of FUN! Lodging at the camp (bunkhouse) is available for Friday and Saturday nights or you can camp right on the observation field. Both lunch and dinner are available and served at the dining hall on Saturday or there are several restaurants close by. The sky is quite dark, much better than Island lake and almost as good as Lake Hudson. Most attendees observe both Friday and Saturday nights before heading home on Sunday.

The cornerstone to the convention is a group of three great seminars given at the meeting hall on Saturday. Past speakers have included John Dobson and various professional and amateur astronomers. This year the lineup will feature three guest lecturers. The topics will include Robotic Surveys of Near Earth Asteroids, Observing Experiences with the world's largest telescope Keck II and an update on the International Space Station-Amateur Telescope. There are also telescope making workshops and

contests for astrophotography and telescope making. The convention ends with a Astronomy quiz and lots of great door prizes.

Vendors will also be present and in the past have included Rex's Astro Stuff, Tech 2000, Rider's Hobby Shop, Mitterling's Meteorites and others. Many telescopes of all makes and sizes will be on display both inside and at the field.

If you would like more information about the Con, contact me at the shop or go to www.boonhill.net and click on the Warsaw club icon.

THE DARK SIDE OF ASTRONOMY

by Bob MacFarland

Many people find that this hobby of astronomy can evolve into a passion. We all have been bitten by the zeal to utilize our scientific knowledge to find those difficult faint fuzzies, to image the unseeable or to view the unrepeatable.

However, the obsession to which I am referring is one which if left unchecked, could lead a soul down a slippery slope into the dark valley of deceit and deception that may become impossible to climb out of. This is the passion, which puts personal relationships and financial solvency at higher and higher levels of risk as one spends more and more money to own the ultimate in astronomical equipment.

This is one such story of an amateur astronomer who lives his life on the edge as he fuels his quest for the "end all" in observing tools. The story is true - at least as true as the internet can be. The excerpts were taken verbatim off the net with a few clarifications, which are shown in the italicized print. The names have been changed to protect the Fifth Amendment rights of our central character (and to avoid potential litigation against the editor).

Our astronomer's story begins with a cry for help from his telescope newsgroup "friends" when he finds himself in a precarious situation. Over several days, the respondents offer him words to assist, encourage, console, envy, condemn, mock and even share some of their own experiences. However, in the end, our astronomer takes it to a new level as he slides further down the slope.

This is serious business. Ask yourself: Do you recognize these behaviors in yourself? This could happen to you. 8^()

DAY 1 - Request To Newsgroup:

OK, here's the story. I ordered a new TV102 last week from Scopetronix and it's due to arrive at my house tomorrow night via UPS. Now, there's at least a 50% chance that the house's chief financial officer won't even know the box is

here, I'll find it when I get home, slip it into the garage, and from there it will find a home, unnoticed in my study among the other telescopes I have. Now, if she notices, she'll surely ask what it is and I can maybe pass it off as "some more astronomy stuff". But, there is at least some chance that the truth will out, that I have a new telescope, and, heaven help me, she might even find out how much it cost (\$2200). So, the stress level is a little high tonight.

Anybody got any good stories I can use? Failing that, how about a place I can stay for a while? - **Fred**

Response 1:

Fred, Preparation is everything. Over a period of several evenings, over dinner, mention your friends and co-workers who are buying \$30,000 Harleys and \$70K Beemers, just to make themselves look more attractive to those young floozies out there. When she finds out about your acquisition, she'll silently smile, and take comfort in the fact that she wound up with a "Masculinus Domesticus", instead of the more dangerous variety, "He-Manisaurus Rex". But, you may need to hide that TV102 somewhere for a couple of weeks, while you set things right. Feel free to drop it off, anytime.... ;-) - **Vic**

Response 2:

Well, Fred, if I were in your hot "tripods", I'd do something like this. Get home early with a bottle of her favorite wine. Oh, don't forget to send the kids to Grandma or something ;-). Dig out that old recipe book and start making her that favorite dinner. Set a nice table out in the patio for two under the gibbous moonlight with two candles. The TV-102 is next to the wine cooler, pointing at the moon. Don't forget a fire pit or a heater! As soon as she gets home, you morph into a waiter and seat her at the table. Now morph back into Fred, seat yourself and pour you both some wine. Etc, etc, etc... After dessert, instead of schnapps, bring her over to the TV-102 and look at the moon together and tell her how much more beautiful the moon look through the TV-102, but no match, not even close to the real beauty - you know who ;-). Say, I guess that ought to do it; no money back guarantee however ;-). - **Rick**

Response 3:

Hi Fred, Good CFO's are hard to come by, and are worth hundreds of scopes. So I will help you out of this potentially dangerous situation. Your story is that I have sent you my scope for your convenience to try out, and you are in the process of returning it to me. Use the same box. Please let me know what the postage costs are, that is the least it can do. No need to look for another place to stay. - **Jim**

DAY 2 - Reply To Newsgroup:

Well, through an incredible stroke of luck, UPS attempted to deliver the scope this afternoon and nobody was home. Since the package required a signature confirming delivery, they

left a note stuck on my front door. When my wife got home, she came in through the garage as always and didn't see the note. It was still there when I got home. So I stashed it away and later, on a trip to the store, called UPS and arranged to pick up the package at their shipping center tomorrow. Whew, the risks we take - **Fred**

Response 1:

Fred, One scope cost me two wing chairs, and another cost me a love seat, coffee table and end tables. Most eyepieces run only a new pair of shoes and a couple of sweaters. We won't even talk about the CCD set up with the AP mount. - **Mike**

Response 2:

If this becomes a sitcom there is a happy astronomy ending. Fred gets caught, gets kicked out of the family, and takes his TV102 to the woods or desert, and observes happy ever after with a dark sky. - **Alan**

DAY 3: Response to newsgroup

OK, I was really just rehearsing my lines in case I got caught! As a follow-up, I got the scope home and into the garage without detection yesterday evening. Late last night, while my wife was watching television, I removed the 5", F8 homebuilt from the Gibraltar and stashed it deep in the closet. I went out to the garage and removed the TV 102 from its case and brought it back into my study only to find the wife sitting at my computer checking email, directly between the Gibraltar and me. "Whatchadoin'", she asks, as I stood there like a deer in headlights. "Just putting my telescope back on the mount" as I walked around her, TV102 in hand. "Oh", she says, glances at it, and goes back to her email. The TV102 has been on the Gibraltar all day now, and even though she's been in and out numerous times, she's never noticed that it's now more of a stark white, a little smaller, and a lot more beautiful than before. Eventually the whiter white will draw her attention and she'll ask about it. Oh, well, one day at time. Now, I wonder where I should start looking for an 18" mirror... - **Fred**

DAY 4:

Say, Fred, I saw that you're putting up the TV-102 for sale on Astromart; so I guess you couldn't escape the "boss" :-(. Wishing you the best of buyers. - **Rick**

STAR STUFF BOOK REVIEW

by Greg Burnett

Blind Watchers of the Sky by Rocky (Edward W.) Kolb, Helix Books—Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, New York, 1996, HC \$25.00.

This book is more about us than about astronomy. It is about how the human mind works, and how the methods of science help us overcome the frailties of our thinking. As Kolb states in the preface, "...a reader with no technical knowledge of astronomy, cosmology, or physics should be able to enjoy the book." This is true, because the book is not about those things. They are merely the vehicle for an investigation of scientific thought, the human reasoning that is science. Biology or geology would have served equally well.

The protagonists of the story are the great contributors to astronomy and cosmology: Aristotle, Ptolemy, Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Herschel, Hubble, Einstein, and a large supporting cast. Through them the book explores heroic leaps of human intuition, when your suspicions go against everything known to be true, everything you grew up taking for granted, the very wisdom of the ages. For example, Kepler struggled mightily to distill the concept of elliptical orbits from the data of Tycho Brahe's observations. Why was it so hard? After all, an ellipse fit the data perfectly. It was hard because planetary orbits were perfect, and circular, and everybody knew it without question, and it had been so since the dawn of time. It took uncommon courage and insight for Kepler to break through the prevailing wisdom and embrace his three famous laws of planetary orbits. And yet, he went to his grave still pursuing the ill-conceived notion that the orbits of the then five known planets were in some way related to the five Platonic solids (tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron, and icosahedron).

The great minds of astronomy from all times saw a universe heavily colored by the knowledge and philosophies of their times. Even though they interpreted their observations with great intelligence, they were often blinded to what was really there before them. Many people today have a misconception of what "science" really is. Science is not a collection of facts, or a body of knowledge. Science is a way of thinking, a discipline necessarily imposed upon the noisy, distracted, and error-prone human mind, in order to ensure that, little by little, we will be able to assemble a useable understanding of the universe we inhabit. "Oh thick wits!" Brahe declared. "Oh blind watchers of the sky!"

Rocky Kolb is a professor of astronomy and astrophysics at the University of Chicago. He was the founding head of the NASA/Fermilab Theoretical Astrophysics Group at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory.

CONSTELLATIONS FOR THE BEGINNER

March — Leo

By Janice A. Kessler

Leo is a large constellation seen south of the zenith during the month of March. Its stars include:

Denebola or β Leonis: Magnitude 2.14

Chertan or θ Leonis: Magnitude 3.34

Zosma δ Leonis: Magnitude 2.56

Regulus α Leonis: Magnitude 1.35

Rasalas μ Leonis: Magnitude 3.88

Adhefera ξ Leonis: Magnitude 3.44

Algieba γ Leonis: Magnitude 2.61

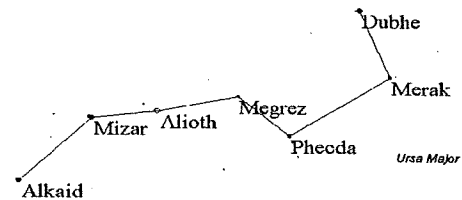
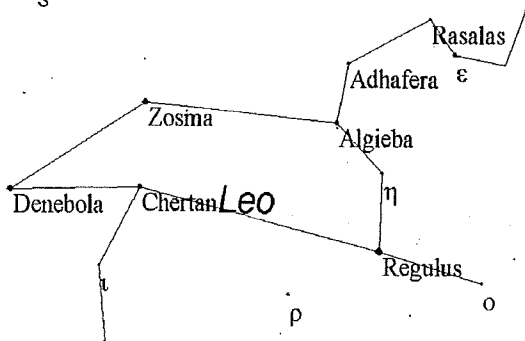
η Leonis: Magnitude 3.52

\circ Leonis: Magnitude 3.52

ρ Leonis: Magnitude 3.85

ι Leonis: Magnitude 3.94

ε Leonis: Magnitude 2.98



All maps and facts are courtesy of Chris Marriott and SkyMap 4.0.

All maps were designed to be viewed from Southeastern Michigan at Midnight around the 15th of the month. If you are at another location or viewing at another time, you may not be able to see this constellation.

FAAC March 28, 2002 General Membership Meeting 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm Agenda

- Introductions	Don Nakic	20 min
- Reports: Treasurer's Secretary's	Mike Bruno Don Klaser	5 min
- Old/New Business	Don Nakic	5 min
- Upcoming Events	Don Nakic	5 min
- Technical Discussion	Don Nakic	15 min
- Building an Observatory	George Korody	30 min

A CALL FOR PAPERS!

Star Stuff is looking for FAAC Member written articles, topic of your choice, for the April edition. Please submit articles by 15 April 2002 to Jim Frisbie, email: w8tu@peoplepc.com

April - Big Dipper

In the northern sky is the constellation, Ursa Major. Within its boundaries is a group of stars well known and easily recognized as the Big Dipper. A common way to find the North Star is to draw an imaginary line from Merak through Dubhe and the line will continue forward to the North Star. The bright stars of the Big Dipper are as follows:

Megrez or δ Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 3.31

Alioth or ξ Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 1.77

Mizar or ζ Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 2.27

Alcor or θ Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 4.01

Alkaid or η Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 1.86

Phecda or γ Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 2.44

Merak or β Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 2.37

Dubhe or α Ursae Majoris: Magnitude 1.79

ASTRONOMICAL CALENDAR 2002

March

All times are Eastern Standard Time or Eastern Daylight Saving Time, whichever applies.

- March 23 Moon near Gemini Twins (dusk)
March 25 Moon near Regulus (dusk)
March 28 Full Moon 1:25 pm (*Sap Moon*)
March 29 Moon near Spica (9 pm)

April

- April 1 Moon near Antares (1 & 2 dawn)
April 4 Last Quarter 10:29 am
April 7 Daylight Saving Time begins.
April 12 New Moon 3:21 pm
April 14 Moon near Venus (dusk)
April 15 Moon near Mars (dusk)
April 16 Moon near Saturn (dusk)
April 17 Jupiter-Moon-Saturn line (dusk)
April 18 Moon near Jupiter (dusk)
April 19 Moon near Gemini Twins (dusk)
April 20 First Quarter 8:48 am
All five naked-eye planets visible at same time in western sky at dusk now through early May during Mercury's best appearance of the year. The span of five planets from Jupiter to Mercury is 54 deg long today. Look early to catch Mercury 9 deg lower right of Venus (half hour after sunset).
April 21 Moon near Regulus (21 & 22 dusk)
April 25 Moon near Spica (dusk)
April 26 Full Moon 11:00 pm (*Pink Moon*)
April 28 Moon near Antares (11 pm to dawn)
April 30 Mercury 6 deg lower right of Venus (dusk). The span of planets is 40 deg long today.

This information was obtained from the Henry J. Buhl, Jr. Planetarium in Pittsburg, PA.

CLUB CALENDAR

Activity	Date	Time	Contact
- FAAC Dinner Party	Mar 23	6:30pm	Bruno
- Beginners Night	Apr 11,12	-	Ford
- Island Lake Star Party	Sep 14	-	-
- GLACC Star Party	-	-	-
- Lake Erie Ice Days	-	-	-

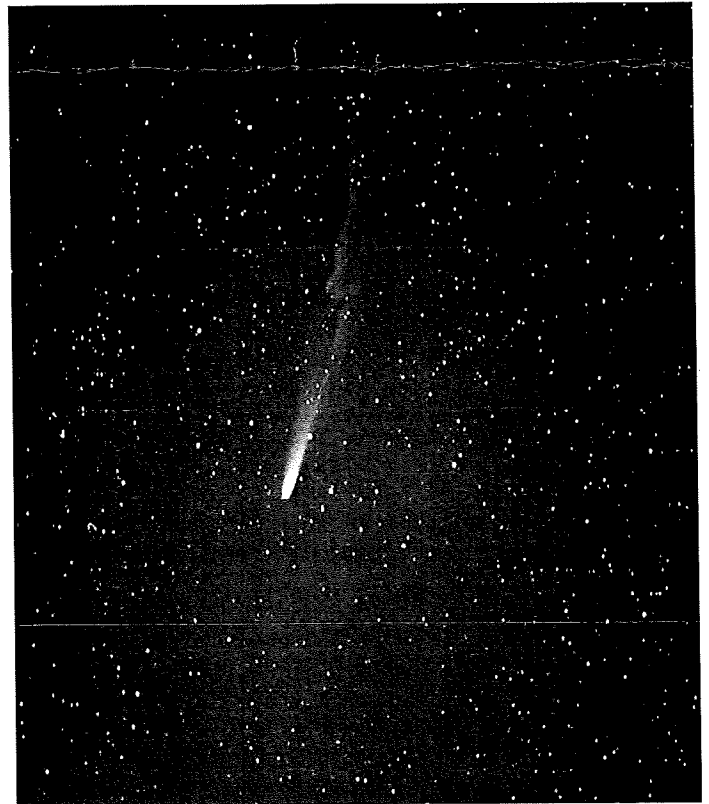
Please help with new items and filling in the blanks.....

Comet IKEYA ZHANG

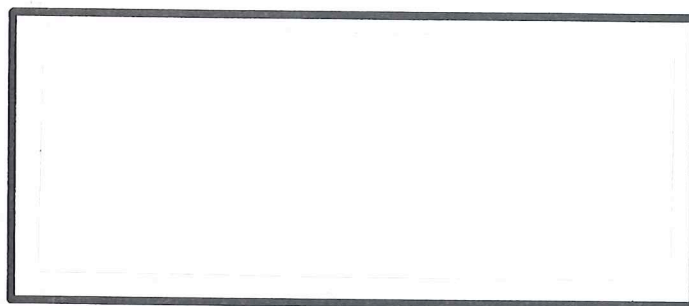
by Clay Kessler

Both shots were taken early in the evening of March 11, 2002 during the "First Annual Empire Mountain Star Party", 70 miles southeast of Tuscon, hosted by Jack Kennedy and Roger Tanner. The first picture is two 15min exposures using a 4" f6 refractor. "Zodiacal Light" caused some loss of contrast in the second picture, a 15 min exposure taken with a Soligor 200mm f3.5 lens in piggyback mode. Film was Kodak LE400.

Check out the tail !....



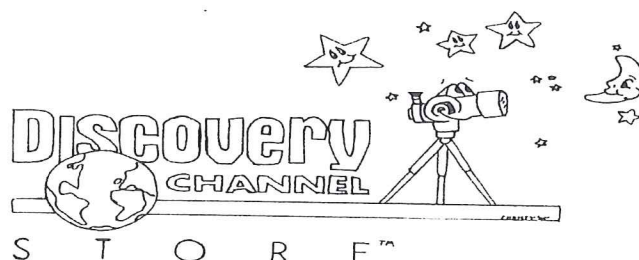
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