

# STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

March and April 2000  
Volume 9 Number 3



Please send articles to [westpark@mediaone.net](mailto:westpark@mediaone.net) by April 30th for May Newsletter!

## CONTENTS...

*Editor's Comments...*  
*Amazing!*  
*Zion National Park*

## DEPARTMENTS...

*Heard on the Net*  
*Meeting Minutes*  
*Next General Meeting April 27th*  
*Calendar of Events*

## Editor's Comments By John Kmiecik

I am sure that most of you have been wondering "Where is the newsletter?" – well let me tell you.

During the past month, I have had 2 problems with my laptop – where the newsletter info is stored. First, a virus got past my virus detection and locked up my computer so bad it would not start up. I had to send it back, and that took 2 weeks to do. After that, it took a week to rebuild the laptop. I had backups of the newsletter but not enough to make a newsletter yet since I had gotten more info but could not save it. So I decided with the approval of our President, to combine the March and April newsletters. Sorry for any trouble this may have caused. <

**FAAC Meeting Minutes for  
02/24/00**  
**By Mike Kruskie**

As is customary, everyone enjoyed pizza and pop while the round-table introductions and recent observations were discussed. We had two newcomers to the club meeting...  
**WELCOME TO THE CLUB!**

The Treasurer reported, \$2608.24 in checking, and \$1122.86 in savings. The scholarship fund, which is included in the savings and checking balances, totaled \$862.00. There was a motion to move some of the checking funds into savings. The motion was accepted.

There will be a GLAAC meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup> at 1PM in the Kensington Metro Nature Center. The date for the Kensington Star Party has not yet been set. The Park desires it to be in August and there was a proposal to try and tie it into the Perseids meteor shower.

There was no Old Business to report.

**For New Business,**  
There was some discussion regarding observing for charity on Astronomy Day (April 8<sup>th</sup>). The proposal was for a nominal fee, 25 cents, for a view through the telescopes and binoculars. The proceeds would go to Muscular Dystrophy. Last year Meade donated a telescope to the club with the largest donation. Last years telescope winner was a club in Texas that raised \$1400.

It was agreed that the committee would follow up with the discussion.

The FAAC Dinner Party is fast approaching and reservations are required by March 11<sup>th</sup>. The dinner party is scheduled for March 25<sup>th</sup> at Kernan's in Dearborn from 6:30 to 7:30. There are 4 menu items and there is a cash bar. Please contact a club officer if you wish to attend.

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, NCO (Northern Cross Observatories) will be having a star party following their 4pm meeting. There is a potential that you may have to park on the road, depending on conditions. NCO also reported a BOON trip for March 31<sup>st</sup> through April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Also, there will be six trips to BOON this year.

Regarding the Scholarship Fund, there have been NO applications to date for this year. The due date is February 28<sup>th</sup> each year, so get the word out.

**Main Program,**  
Greg Burnett shared with us some of the interactive demonstrations from his astronomy class (Note: Greg will be teaching another class this spring, get with him for details). The demonstrations were very creative and very insightful. Greg showed us some props relatively sized to demonstrate, the Earth/Moon system, density of the

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

Your submissions to STAR STUFF are welcome. Please write to the address above or contact the editor...

John Kmiecik  
westpark@mediaone.net

#### Officers:

President	Dan Kmiecik
Vice President	Don Thompson
Secretary	Mike Kruskie
Treasurer	Mike Bruno

#### General Meetings:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club holds regular general meetings 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.

#### Hotline:

Observing schedules and additional club information is available by calling the Observing Hotline at (313) 390-5456.

#### 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: \$ 25 - Renewal: \$ 20  
Lifetime -- \$ 100

Membership includes a subscription to the STAR STUFF newsletter, discounts on ASTRONOMY and SKY & TELESCOPE magazines, after-hours access to the observing site, and discounts at selected area equipment retailers.

props relatively sized to demonstrate, the Earth/Moon system, density of the galaxy and the size/distance scale of the solar system. When the solar system was laid out it was amazing to see the enormous open spaces between the outer planets. Well over 400 feet (I forgot the exact number) from the sun (which was a ping-pong ball) to Pluto (a little dot on an index card).

Also, as part of the main program Clay Kessler gave a slide show presentation of his latest trip to Tucson with Jack Kennedy. They stayed at Kitt Peak Observatory and had the use of a 16" Meade LX 200 loaded with accessories. Best of all they had their own astronomer to help them with the equipment. As always Clay gave us an extraordinary commentary with the slide show as well as some super Astrophotos. ◇

#### FAAC Meeting Minutes By Mike Kruskie

The meeting was called to order at 5:02PM. Everyone, as is customary, enjoyed pizza and pop while discussing their latest observing experiences and or newest gadget acquisitions.

The Treasurer reported a checking account balance of \$2453.89 and a savings account balance of \$1343.15. The scholarship fund balance, included in the checking and savings accounts, is \$913.83.

We received (2) scholarship applications recently prior to the deadline. One student is a Chemical Engineering major and the other is a Biology major.

Currently in the club we have 108 members.

#### GLAAC Report

The Kensington Star Party will be the weekend of July 21/22, 2000. There is a new moon that weekend and the comet LINEAR (?) will be close to

naked eye visibility. Hopefully, this will be a nice attraction to the Star Party. Also Jack Lousma, a former astronaut, is scheduled as the guest speaker for Saturday night.

#### Other/Old Business

It was mentioned, the NEAR satellite was re-named in memory of Gene Schumaker.

Greg Burnett will be teaching another Astronomy class in May. Please contact Greg for details.

The status of the MIR "Crash" Date Competition was mentioned. It was suggested to award the prize to the latest guess? Details to follow at a future meeting.

#### New Business

Ryder's Hobby will be hosting an open house for Astronomy Day, April 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### Main Program

There was a demonstration of the new Meade ETX125EC and the New Celestron solar filter.

Also there was a demonstration detailing the collimation of a Schmidt-Cassegrain Telescope. ◇

#### Amazing!

From George Korody

If it costs one cent to ride a thousand miles, a trip around the world would cost twenty-five cents; to the moon, two dollars and thirty-eight cents; to the sun, only nine hundred and thirty dollars; but a trip to the nearest star would cost two hundred and sixty million dollars! ◇

#### Heard On The Net

from the sci.astro.amateur newsgroup  
by Bob Lambeck

Last month, we heard about Fred Block embarking on his quest for a

new telescope. Well, his original "quest" became an "obsession." I hope you enjoy hearing about it. Fred's narrative continues ...

We left off with our hero waiting for the meeting of the round table to occur hoping that it would shed more light on the subject and turn him in the right direction.....the saga continues.....

As the meeting of the round table had completed, it was clear to me what my path shall be. I should go to the land of Discovery to trade my gold for the 17.5" Truss Monster. The next day I awoke and packed my trinkets to prepare for my long and perilous journey. I mounted my faithful steed and set forth to the Land of Discovery.....

As time passed I ventured into a large forest. Oh, but this was not just a forest. 'Twas a forest in the land of Obsession!!! Such a fearful place as I knew that it was full of Obsession Truss monsters and more! I heard noises from all around! About half way through I was thwarted by a band of Magical Truss monsters from the Land of Obsession! My deepest and darkest fears came to be and I began to wonder what would come of my life. As the sands fell through the glass of time, the night arrived swiftly. Oh, thou shalt be wary for the next part of the tale gets rather fearful indeed!!! Through the darkness of the night these beasts came at me from all sides. I looked down the throats of 15", 18", and 20" Truss Monsters, and more! Surprised I am that I can see to this day, it was blindingly clear the fearful message that these monsters were telling me. I had no choice.....

As the morning sun came to rise in the deep forest, I was awakened out of what seemed to be a cruel nightmare. Still dazed from the prior nights events, I traveled down to the stream that runneth nearby to partake in it's cold and refreshing splendor. As I doused the water on my face I was

surprised to be surrounded by the same ethereal truss monsters that were in my dream! This time they gathered carefully around me....closer they came....closer....closer. The light before my eyes darkened as I felt myself falling to the ground.....

As I awoke I found that I was somewhere mysterious. A place I had never been. An incredible castle with grand views of the hillside. 'Twas an incredible sight indeed. Startled by a sound at the entranceway of what appeared to be my quarters, I jumped to the floor to seek my trusty sword. Nowhere to be found, I realized that I was defenseless. A majestic man entered the room and claimed himself King Kriege of the Land of Obsession. He told me of how he tracked my plans to cross his forest en route to the Land of Discovery and had his spies follow my every move. "Do you remember you dream last night my son?", he asked. A dream? A nightmare? I remembered it as if it were a minute ago. I sheepishly answered with a nod of my head. "Rise my son and let me show you the wonders of the land of Obsession.", he said. I followed him to a room containing a magical box that glowed with mystical pictures on it. He was a wizard! Amazed I watched the images of Obsession Truss beasts shine before me. It was unlike any memory I have ever experienced. After what seemed to be an eternity the light faded to darkness. "My son, it would not be nobel of me to allow you to venture forth into the land of Discovery before showing you the ways of Obsession. I believe you will make the correct choice in the end." 'Twas true!! I had seen the light from the magic box. I was mystified. No longer did I need the guidance of the villagers for I had found my peace. I had found.... Obsession. I left the land of Obsession feeling peaceful and refreshed. My quest had ended. The king had told me that my new 20" Obsession Truss Monster would be born in the 8th month of the year 2000 and the magics

of delivery should have it with me soon after. The mystery has ended.....I am Obsessed.

So it goes, my friend Dan who owns an 18" Obsession had shown me the views in his scope and it was tough to let go. I saw m76 and m1 as I had never seen them. Then he gave me the video from Obsession and I watched. It was all over from there. 2 days later I called Dave at Obsession and ordered my 20" Obsession Truss Tube Dob with the Galaxy Mirror and the enhanced coatings. All in all, and about \$6,200.00 poorer (\$500.00 for shipping alone!), I am quite pleased. The only thing that stinks is that it won't be here till August. I am sure that I won't regret spending the extra cash after I get my first light with this monster of scope. The thing stands about 100 inches high which means I will need a small step ladder to reach the eyepiece even though I stand about 74 inches tall!!! I am glad that you all have enjoyed my little story and will post my first light with the scope sometime in August. (More than likely in normal plain ole every day english... <g>)

By the way, please visit Fred's astronomy related website at [www.monmouth.com/~fblock/astro.htm](http://www.monmouth.com/~fblock/astro.htm) <img alt="arrow pointing right" data-bbox="718 612 738 624"/>

#### VISIT TO ZION NATIONAL PARK By Dean Musgrave

In early March, Kathy and I visited Zion National Park in extreme SW Utah for hiking and astronomy. The following details may be of interest to anyone considering such a trip. Zion is located about a 2.5 to 3 hour drive from Las Vegas, Nevada which sometimes offers fairly low air fares. There are two entrances to the park and they are only connected by a 45 minute drive using roads external to the park.

The Southern (or main) entrance is near Springdale (pop. 300) and there are about a dozen motels in this small town. The Bumbleberry Inn looks like a good choice and it is much closer to the entrance than St. George, Utah where we stayed. There are also two campgrounds inside the park near this entrance plus the expensive (and probably hard to reserve) Zion Lodge with 120 rooms four miles inward.

We observed from the visitor center (soon to be the old visitor center) and the 4,000 foot elevation and the super dark sky was quite a treat for my 11x80 binoculars. The sky was useable right down to the horizon and random scanning uncovered countless objects. It was so dark that Sirius and Jupiter were hazards to night vision and I was glad when Jupiter set behind a giant rock.

This experience is yet another confirmation that the site is the most important element of observing. Indeed, I'd much rather have a 5 inch scope at Zion than any 8 inch scope at Island Lake.

Changes are planned for this section of the park; they are both good and bad.

A new visitor center is being built nearer the entrance and the two campgrounds. People will still be able to use route 9 which passes by the old visitors center and thru the park to the east but the area further north will be restricted to tram use only. The trams will be large two section buses powered by propane. This will be great for observers at Zion Lodge and anyone who can hike and carry equipment on the tram route. Perhaps one could use the tram at night but it is unclear how late the trams will run. It could be a great improvement if car traffic (and headlights) north of the route 9 turn is eliminated and those areas can still be accessed. In the summer, the visitor centers and campgrounds would still be excellent sites if one can hike away from the bulk of the visitors.

The superb option, however, is the North end of the park (called Kolob Canyons). It is much more isolated (no camping sites), cars will continue to be allowed, and the visitor center is now at 5,000 feet. Furthermore, the well-marked road continues 2 miles east to the Taylor creek trail (around 6,000 high) and it would be a fine location. The very best choice is to

just drive to the end of the road (around 6,500 ft high at the Kolob Canyons Viewpoint/ picnic area). One can then hike along the Overlook trail which climbs to around 7,000 feet and ends in a huge circle with near horizon views in most directions. There are no dropoffs and the trail could be used at night since the parking area is visible in the distance for orientation. The entire length of this trail is claimed to be 0.5 miles although it seemed somewhat farther to me. Modest snow (around one to two inches) was present at this time of the year. There are many good sites along the way since trees (Christmas tree pines or slightly larger) are sparsely spaced. The nearest "city" is Cedar City (pop. 13,400) which is 20 miles to the North.

There is a \$20 fee good for 5 days (including tram use) for the entire park or a \$10 fee for just the North end.

Contact me [Dean Musgrave] (565-3869) if you have questions or wish to borrow maps. <

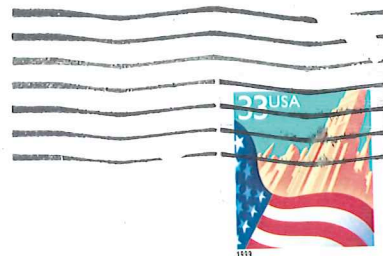
**2000 Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Calendar**  
**FAAC, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121-7527**  
(upcoming events are underlined)

<u>Apr 27</u>	<u>FAAC General Membership Meeting</u>
<u>Apr 29</u>	<u>NCO Planning Meeting @ 4:00 PM Followed by Star Party</u>
<u>May 5 thru 8</u>	<u>NCO Boon Hill Star Party – Boon, West of Cadillac – BYO Everything</u>
<u>May 6</u>	<u>Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze</u>
May 25	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Jun 3	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Jun 2 thru 5	NCO Boon Hill Star Party – Boon, West of Cadillac – BYO Everything
Jun 22	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Jun 23-24	17 <sup>th</sup> Annual NCO Summer Solstice Star Party
Jun 30 thru	NCO Boon Hill Star Party – Boon, West of Cadillac – BYO Everything
Jul 5	
Jul 1	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Jul 27	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Jul 29	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Aug 24	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Aug 26	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Sep 23 thru	NCO Boon Hill Fall Star Party – Boon, West of Cadillac – BYO Everything
Oct 1	
Sep 28	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Sep 30	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Oct 7	Eighth Annual Island Lake Star Party
Oct 26	FAAC General Membership Meeting
Oct 27 thru 30	NCO Boon Hill Star Party – Boon, West of Cadillac – BYO Everything
Oct 28	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Nov 25	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze
Dec 7	FAAC Joint November/December General Membership Meeting
Dec 23	Lake Hudson Dark Sky Stargaze

Check for updates on the FAAC hotline: 313-390-5456

Ford Intranet: <http://www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html> or the External Internet: <http://kode.net/~dougbock/faac/>

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club  
P.O. Box 7527  
Dearborn, MI 48121-7527



48121-7527

