



★ STAR STUFF ★

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

May 2001
Volume 10 Number 2



Editor: Chuck Boren

^^-- BEGINNER'S NIGHT MAY 5 --^^

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New Editor Takes Over

By Chuck Boren

Ok so it may not be headline news but I wanted the first thing you read to be this tidbit. I am the new editor and I want your help. Send me articles, news notes, star birth announcements of something concerning astronomy for our club so I can keep my job and this newsletter fat! People like to read and our club members like to read about astronomy and our club so send me something! You should also know that this will be the last newsletter sent via snail mail to anyone who has an email address! Anyone who has an email address will now be able to access our newsletter via the net. To do that you will need to go to our Internet site www.boonhill.net/faac to read the current issue. When the next issue of our newsletter is published the old one will be removed to make room. Send us your current email address to faac1992@hotmail.com. Send your notes to cboren@ameritech.net but don't send huge gifs or jpgs. I'm still on a land line and at 56K it can really bog things down. The dead line for submissions is the 15th of each month. I won't correct spelling or grammar, you can do that with a good word processor like MS Word. You may send plain txt files or MS Word .doc files. You will need to supply me with permissions from authors if you send me copyrighted material. Get busy or this newsletter will be a short one or two pager! Π

THE COMMANDMENTS FOR AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

I. Thou shalt have no white light before thee, behind thee, or to the side of thee whilst sharing the night sky with thy fellow stargazers.

II. Thou shalt not love thy telescope more than thy spouse or thy children; as much as, maybe, but not more.

III. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's telescope, unless it exceeds in aperture or electronics twice that of thy wildest dreams.

IV. Thou shalt not read "Astronomy" or "Sky & Telescope" on company time, for thine employer makes it possible to continue thine astronomical hobby.

V. Thou shalt have at least two telescopes so as to keep thy spouse interested when the same accompanies thee under the night sky or on eclipse expeditions to strange lands where exotic wild animals doth roam freely.

VI. Thou shalt always submit a new article to Star Stuff on or before the 15th of each month so the editor will not have to publish blank pages as a hint!

VII. Thou shalt not allow either thy sons or thy daughters to get married during the Holy Days of Starfest.

VIII. Thou shalt not reveal to thy spouse the true cost of thy telescope collection; only the individual components, and that shall be done with great infrequency.

IX. Thou shalt not buy thy spouse any lenses, filters, dew shields, maps, charts, or any other necessities for Christmas, anniversaries, or birthdays unless thy spouse needs them for their own telescope.

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

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

Michael J. Bruno
brunomj@mindspring.com

Officers:

President	Dan Kmiecik
Vice President	John Ford
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.

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 Member: \$25; Renewal: \$ 20
Lifetime - \$ 100

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.

Membership Dues Are Due

By Michael J. Bruno, Treasurer

It is that time of the year again! The 2001 Membership dues are now due for all members that have annual memberships. The dues remain at \$25 a year and if you would like to upgrade to a lifetime membership it is \$100.

Your dues payment should be sent to: P.O. Box 7527 Dearborn, MI 48121 and make your check payable to the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club. You may also pay your dues at the next general meeting to be held on May 24, 2001. Your payment was due by January 31, 2001 to remain an active member with all benefits of the Club. If received after that date you will need to rejoin at the new member rate of \$25.

If you have any questions as to your membership status, please get a hold of Mike Bruno through e-mail or by leaving a message on the Hotline. ☐

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. ☐

Advertisements

For Sale: NEW 800-1200 F9.9 zoom lens. Will fit any camera with t-adaptor. \$450.00
Chuck Boren 248-777-2108 cboren@ameritech.net

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Commandments for the Amateur Astronomer

IX. Thou shalt not deceive thy spouse into thinking that ye are taking them for a romantic Saturday night drive when indeed thou art heading for a dark sky site.

X. Thou shalt not store thy telescope in thy living room, dining room, or bedroom, lest thou be sleeping with it full time.

XI. Verily, observe not through thy neighbor's AP or Tak, lest thee be utterly consumed by the lust of apo-fever, and thy brain and thy bank account shall shrivel and wither like branches in a flame...

XII. Verily, observe not through thy neighbor's Dob of Goliath, lest thee be lain bare to the fires of aperture-fever, and thy sanity, thy sacroiliac and thy life savings be crushed as ye grapes of wrath. ☐

Product review

The Meade ETX 70 AT

By Clayton W. Kessler
February 2001

This interesting little scope was purchased to provide an airline portable wide field scope to observe with while in Arizona. I spent some time looking at the alternatives for a "lookin' through" scope to use while my 4" refractor and G11 were working hard taking astrophotos. I researched many alternatives, 8" dobsonians, 4" f5 short tube scopes, a 6" or 8" reflector mounted on my existing SVD mount. All of these had something going for them – but also had many drawbacks. The most common was the physical size. None of these would fit aircraft "carry on" luggage. It would be possible to build an 8" or even a 10" carry on dobsonian telescope but it would not be a small chore. It would take a lot of careful work to craft a scope of this nature.

I was Christmas shopping up at one of the local malls when I drifted into a store that specialized in science and nature items. I noted that the store was stocking up on Celestron telescopes and the Meade scopes were all on sale. A little conversation with a salesman confirmed that a "brand change" was taking place. I took careful note of the 60mm and 70mm ETX style refractors that were on display. These scopes had an identical focal length (350mm) and while they would never be high powered planetary scopes I suspected that widefield views would be quite nice. I popped an eyepiece into the 70mm version and took a look at a light fixture out in the mall. As you would expect the achromat design of this refractor showed color fringing on a bright light source. On the other hand, the view was fairly sharp across the whole eyepiece. Hmmmmmm.....

I must admit to some curiosity about the mount. The ETX mount included the "Autostar" computerized controller. This, if it worked, would make it quite easy to find objects and also opens up the possibility of tracking satellites with this thing. I have never owned a "GOTO" telescope before and this intrigued me quite a bit. A couple of weeks after Christmas I stopped by the mall again and purchased a 70mm sample of this scope.

To those of you familiar with the ETX90 the telescope controls are no mystery. The focus knob is in the back and moves the front lens cell in and out to achieve focus. This worked well but it was somewhat hard for my fat old fingers to reach in and turn this knob. Fortunately "Scopetronix" makes a focus knob extension that replaces the stock knob and is very easy to use. There is a "flip mirror" to allow mounting a camera in the back of the scope. I think

this will work well for terrestrial photography but the mount is not robust enough for astrophotography with this scope. The computer control works on 6 "AA" sized batteries that are supposed to power the system for 20 hours.

The scope came with a 25mm MA and a 9mm MA eyepiece yielding 14x and 38x respectively. While these are not Naglers, they offer a reasonable amount of magnification to use with this little beast. One small complaint, they are not even close to parfocal! It took many turn of the focus knob to change them. After the first time I focused with the 9mm and slid the barrel of the 25mm out until rough focus was obtained. I need to try some parfocal eyepieces with this, maybe some Edmund RKE's will work well.

On my arrival in Arizona the weather was not the best. I arrived about a day or two after the new moon and by the time the rains stopped (4 days later) there was too much moon for astrophotography. For a while I did not think I would get to use this little scope. Fortunately a night spent at Roger Tanner's Rita Ranch observatory gave me the opportunity to put this thing through it's paces. I borrowed a Bogen photo tripod to set the scope on and it proved to be a very sturdy support for this mount. The setup of the computer control was straightforward – I just followed the instructions on the hand controller (I don't need no stinkin' manual!). The scope has you center two stars in the FOV. I thought it was somewhat odd – I had to slew the scope up 10 degrees or so to center each star. Then I realized I had the "position" set as "Ann Arbor Michigan" instead of "Tucson Arizona". I decided to leave this setting alone and see if the scope could cope with this "casual" setup. I got an alignment complete message so I set the scope to slew to M42 which was high in the east. The ETX 70 AT is not as loud as the LX200 scopes – but you can tell that they come from the same family. Once the slewing stopped and the scope "beeped" me to indicate it was finished I peaked into the eyepiece. M42 was almost dead center. Even with the bright moon I could see a lot of nebulosity. A quick change of eyepieces to the 9mm showed the four trapezium stars resolved at 38x. Not Bad.....

Now for something a little harder – a planet. In order to slew to a planet the scope must know what day and time it is. This is set as a part of the initial setup. I told the scope to find Jupiter and after a little growling – presto! The banded planet and it's moons. This scope will never be a high power planetary scope but I could easily see the four moons and the major belts on the planet at 38x. Saturn clearly showed it's rings – although Cassini's division was absent with the supplied eyepieces.

I have to admit being impressed with the performance of this inexpensive GOTO mount.

As an experiment I slewed to M44, the beehive cluster. I then left the scope to track by itself in Alt-Az mode for about 2 hours while we hunted and killed a "pizza". During that 2 hours the beehive barely moved from dead center of the eyepiece field of view. In fact everything that I asked it to slew to ended up in the field of view. This included a couple of trips across the sky to look at M31 and the double cluster. Like the LX200 it is easy to center an object and re-synchronize the mount to refine your alignment. On this moon washed night the dimmest object that I could see was M104 – the Sombrero Galaxy. It was just a dim oval patch but it was there in direct vision. On a darker night I suspect that most or all of the Messiers will be possible with this scope.

Conclusion:

This is looking to be a very nice scope. The size of this scope is such that it can be placed in a small duffel bag and carried onto an airplane. I am impressed with the ease of use and performance of the GOTO mount. As long as one does not expect to use high magnifications this satisfies the requirements for a "grab and go" scope for an experienced observer. In my opinion this also represents a fine scope for a beginner – as long as one does not expect to use high magnifications. I suspect that – atmosphere permitting – 100x will be the max usable on this system, and this will be a rare night indeed. On the other hand I am anxious to try my 7mm and 4.8mm Naglers in the scope. I suspect they will be very nice at 50x and 73x. As the weather warms I will try to get out to Island Lake some weekend if anyone is interested in getting some eyepiece time with this interesting telescope. Π

the clubspOt

By Daniel J. Kmiecik

The observing clubs offer encouragement and certificates of accomplishment for demonstrating observing skills with a variety of instruments and objects. These include the Messier Club, Binocular Messier Club and the Herschel 400 Club, the Deep Sky Binocular Club, the Southern Skies Binocular Club, the Meteor Club, the Double Star Club, and the newly formed Lunar Club.

When you have reached the requisite number of objects, your observing logs are examined by the appropriate authority and you will receive a certificate and pin to proclaim to all that you have reached your goal. Many local astronomical societies even post lists of those who have obtained their certificates.

I'll cover the Lunar Club in a 3 part series. Included in this issue are the binocular objects. Next month will conclude the series with the telescope objects. If

you have a computer and are able to get online, you may visit the Lunar Club page at <http://www.astroleague.org/al/obsclubs/lunar/lunar1.html> and work at your own pace. You will need a Moon map that lists the features of the Moon and their locations.

Lunar Club Program

The binocular features to be observed for the Lunar Club are listed on Page 5. There are five columns: CHK, Object, Feature, Date and Time. The "CHK" column should be used to check off the feature as you observe it. The "Object" column lists the features and tells you what you are observing and when the best time is to observe it. The "Feature" column lists the features to be observed. Finally, the "Date" and "Time" columns allow you to log when you observed the objects

2000/01 Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Calendar of Events and Activities

May 5	Beginners Night
May 24	General Membership Meeting and

Check for updates:
on the FAAC hotline (313) 390-5456
Ford Intranet: www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html
or the Internet: www.boonhill.net/faac

Your Astronomy Article...

...could have gone here!

LUNAR OBSERVING LIST – BINOCULAR OBJECTS

CHK	OBJECT	FEATURE	DATE	TIME		CHK	OBJECT	FEATURE	DATE	TIME
	CRATERS ~ 4 days old	Lunar Rays					~ 7 days old	Cassini		
		Sinus Iridum						Hipparchus		
		Sinus Medii						Albategnius		
		Sinus Roris						Aristillus		
		Palus Somnii						Autolycus		
		Palus						Maurolycus		
		Epidemiarum					~10 days old	Plato		
		Mare Vaporum						Archimedes		
								Ptolemaeus		
		Langrenus						Alphonsus		
	~ 7 days old	Vendelinus						Arzachel		
		Petavius						Walter		
		Cleomedes						Maginus		
		Atlas						Tycho		
		Hercules						Clavius		
		Endymion						Eratosthenes		
		Macrobius						Longomontanus		
		Piccolomini						Copernicus		
		Theophilus						Bullialdus		
		Posidonius						Aristarchus		
		Fracastorius					~ 14 days old	Gassendi		
		Aristoteles						Kepler		
		Eudoxus						Grimaldi		

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

"Ice Breaker" Beginner's Night at Island Lake

May 5th, from 7:00PM to Midnight
(Arriving at 7PM will allow you to get help during daylight)

For more info or details on this event, contact John at Pattern120@hotmail.com or Dan at faac1992@hotmail.com