
STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Robotic Observatory in Plymouth MI

by Greg Miller

Not many of you current FAAC members may know me, although I have been a member since 1993. A few of you know me for sure. That is because I haven't been that active in participating in FAAC star parties and meetings in recent years. However, that may change now that my kids are getting close to the age where they can enjoy my favorite hobby with me.

Probably since 1984, when I purchased a Coulter 13.1 inch Dobsonian, I had longed for a permanent robotic observatory. In 1992 I purchased a Meade LX200 10-inch telescope. As I transported that telescope to star parties as well as set it up in my backyard, it became more apparent that a permanent observatory was essential to my need to accomplish my goal of automated observing. They say that necessity is the mother of invention. Well, it most certainly is! As you know, the setup times involved with leveling the tripod, polar aligning (or setting alt-az), and so forth can preclude one from enjoying an evening of observing, especially on a work night!

Continued on page 4

TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE OCTOBER 27

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is sponsoring two separate public viewing events on the evening of October 27-th. The club is working with Henry Ford Community College and the University of Michigan-Dearborn to observe from the Dearborn area.

The second location will be the Huron-Clinton Lake Erie Metropark Marshlands Museum in Brownstown, with sponsorship by the Lake Erie Metropark Management.

See page 3 for additional event details.

Falling Back

by Dale Ochalek, President, FAAC

The earth, tilted on its axis, has begun in earnest its long lean away from the sun in the north; thus starts the sad end of warm and languid summer eves, spent settling shirt-sleeved under late night asterisms. Welcome now the onset of crispy temperatures, phenomenal fall colorations, sweaters and jackets, earlier sunsets and longer nights. The colder air does bring with it a return of familiar friends - the Seven Sisters, Orion the Hunter, Saturn, then Jupiter ...

Back in September, we felt the precursors of seasonal change, firsthand, as astronomers from around the state gathered in Gladwin, Michigan. It was the Sept. 17 Star Gaze, where we enjoyed clear and crisp, but dewy nights. There was good representation from our FAAC membership among the crowd of 100-plus campers, many trying out new equipment, taking advantage of dark sky astrophoto opportunities, or trading tales with fellow star-worshippers.

Continued on page 6

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FORD AMATEUR ASTRONOMY CLUB
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CLUB INFORMATION

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club holds regular general meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month, except for the combined November/December meeting held on the first Thursday of December. Meetings are held in the Administrative Services and Conference Center building at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn. Refer to our website for a map and directions.

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club 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.

Observing schedules and additional information are available by calling the FAAC Observing Hotline at 313-390-5456, on the Ford Intranet at www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html, and on the public internet at www.boonhil.net/faac

Membership in the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy.

Membership fees are as follows:

Annual – New Member:	\$30	(\$15 after July 1)
Annual – Renewal:	\$25	(\$30 after January 31)
Life Membership:	\$150	

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

MAGAZINE DISCOUNTS

Do not send money to the FAAC for ASTRONOMY or SKY & TELESCOPE magazine subscriptions. Obtain a discount form from the club secretary and send the form directly to the publisher with your subscription to receive a \$10 discount.

STAR STUFF NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Your submissions to STAR STUFF are more than welcome! Send all items to the editor at skyfog@comcast.net preferably in MS-Word format, but in-line email text is fine too. STAR STUFF will usually go to press the weekend prior to the week of each general meeting. Submissions received prior to that weekend will be included in that issue.



OCTOBER 2004 - VOLUME 13 - NUMBER 10

IN THIS ISSUE

Page

Features

Robotic Observatory in Plymouth MI by Greg Miller	1
Falling Back by Dale Ochalek	1
October Total Lunar Eclipse by Bob MacFarland	3
November Observing Trip by Gordon Hansen	4
Poetry by Anna Scott	5
Gladwin Outing by Dale Ochalek	5
Comet Machholz by George Korody	7

Departments

Help Wanted	5
Astrophysics Phun Phacts	5
Welcome New Members!	5
Astronomical Calendar	7
Astronomical Imaging S.I.G.	8
Minutes of the General Meeting	8
The Boardroom Corner	9
From the Editor...	10
Treasurer's Report	10

Flyers

Sky Publishing Discount	11
Lunar Eclipse Experience	12

October 27/28 Total Lunar Eclipse

by Bob MacFarland

Two FAAC Lunar Eclipse Event Locations:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is sponsoring two separate public total lunar eclipse viewing events on the evening of October 27th.

For the first time, the club is working with the Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn to pick a site on their campus. Details for this event are currently being worked out and will be formally announced via the FAAC e-mail distribution, this newsletter, the FAAC web page and the telephone Hotline at 313-390-5456.

Our second location will again be at the Huron-Clinton Lake Erie Metropark Marshlands Museum in Brownstown, MI. with the sponsorship of the Lake Erie Metropark Management.

Whether you choose one location or the other, these opportunities may be the last formal club observing event of the year for you to get out and hobnob with some old and new friends around our astro equipment while we have a significant event going on.



Tony Licata

Lake Erie Metropark Event:

Last May, the Lake Erie Metropark management was quite accommodating as they opened up their facilities to us during that event. Outside of the Lake Erie Metropark Marshlands Museum there will be room to set up your telescopes and binoculars with good views to the East and South to watch the eclipse. And again, the heated museum building including the classroom and the rest rooms will be open for public use during the eclipse event. So, you and your friends can warm up inside at any time.

When to show up?

The eclipse will begin its first phase at 9:14 EDT. We plan to be setting up our equipment at about 8:00 pm. While we are waiting for the eclipse to begin, we plan to be observing the other wonders of the sky. We'll also be bringing along a schedule of the iridium flare, satellite and the International Space Station passages to watch for while passing the time. In addition, you could even snap some fantastic nature shots such as did Tony Licata during our eclipse event from this same location last May (see accompanying photos).

What to Bring?

The lunar eclipse can be viewed with no more than your naked eyes or with binoculars. Many observers bring their telescopes to view the other objects available in the Fall skies. Some bring their photoimaging equipment. Whatever you decide on, wear winter clothing to keep yourself warm. The wind can get to be fairly brisk by the river.

How About Dinner?

One of the other fun highlights of this evening is to have dinner before the event at the Three Hermanos Mexican Restaurant with your fellow club members just a half mile from the park entrance. We plan to meet for dinner at 6:30 pm. Seating is somewhat limited. So, reserve your spot by calling and leaving a message on the FAAC Hotline at 313-390-5456 or contacting Bob MacFarland at bmacfarl@ford.com. The Three Hermanos is located at 33019 West Jefferson in Rockwood. 734-379-9600.

Cost?

There is no cost for the event. Everyone is welcome. However, there may be \$4.00 vehicle permit fee at the park entrance. If you plan on dinner at the Three Hermanos, you will order and pay for your dinner directly to the restaurant staff.

Directions to the Park:

The Lake Erie Metropark is located at 32481 West Jefferson, in Brownstown, MI. You may call the park at 313-379-5020 or 1-800-477-3189 for more information. The directions follow:

From I-75, exit at the Gibraltar Road exit and go east
Drive 1 ½ miles to West Jefferson and turn south (right)
Drive 1 ½ miles South to the park entrance on the left
Signs will be set up to direct you from the entrance to the Marshlands Museum about a mile inside the park.

Eclipse Phase Timing:

The key eclipse timing from the NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center Eclipse web page are as follows:

Partial Eclipse Begins: 9:14 pm Wednesday Night
 Total Eclipse Begins: 10:23 pm
 Mid- Eclipse: 11:04: pm
 Total Eclipse Ends: 11:45 pm
 Partial Eclipse Ends: 12:54 am Thursday morning

We hope to see you there!



Lunar Eclipse November 8th 2003

Tony Licata

November Observing Trip

by Gordon Hansen

Hi all,

I booked one of the Rustic Cabins in Cheboygan State Park for Friday 11/12 through Monday 11/15 (new moon weekend!). This is an attempt to get to a dark sky site before the terrible Michigan winter sets in. The cabin (its called Poe's Reef) is right off the beach and should provide unobstructed views to the West, North, and East - the tree-line will get in the way of the horizon to the south.

The cabin sleeps 8 people - four bunk beds, you provide the sleeping bag. Wood burning stove for heat and cooking. Basically this is a no-frills accommodation. There should be no issue driving up to the cabin door this time of year.

Counting myself, four people have signed-up for the trip. If you're interested in joining us (for 1, 2 or 3 nights) let me know - first come first served! The cabin costs \$45/night. We'll split the costs up based upon the number of people who come. Cheboygan is about a 15 minute trip from the Cabin so meals can be either cooked in the cabin or head out to a restaurant.

The following link is to the park's website. Some pictures scroll through on the opening page - one is of one of the three cabins.

<http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/ParksandTrailsInfo.aspx?id=441>

Let me know if your interested,
 Gordon Hansen
ghansen320364@comcast.net

Falling Back

... continued from page 1

The campground, the organization, the hot chocolate and cookies, the night-long vigils, the warm community feeling, along with the dark-sky ceiling, all made this a must-do event, well worth repeating. Unfortunately, I could only stay one night. Next time, though ...

Among the FAAC campers there, Doug Bock was seen trying out his new rig, a Newtonian tube mounted on a goto fork mount. It seemed to work flawlessly as Doug showed off a view of the Wild Duck globular cluster, M11, at one point. I also met up with Bob MacFarland, Jeff Thrush, and others while making the rounds. As for me, I had my LX-200 there for the slewing, but it was much more fun to walk around and see what else was going on. It was like a giant Dob City.

Ed Halash and wife were camped next to me; Ed surprised all with his lazy-Susan style "binocular chair" (see photo in this issue). Across the way, Tony Licata kept the camera aimed all night for some more of his stunning photon captures, as did Clay Kessler, and others, no doubt. We are waiting for further evidence of the "harvest," gentlemen ...

Speaking of which, the "harvest moon" was September 28 this year. A harvest moon is the full moon occurring closest to the autumnal equinox. During this time the retardation (later rising each night) of the moon is at a minimum, because of the relation of the moon's path to the horizon. Thus on several nights in succession, the moonrise is at nearly the same time, and there is almost full moonlight from sunset to sunrise - great as a guiding light to that final row in the field of crops, after dark, or before sunrise. But bad for those finding faint fuzzies in an eyepiece field of view, of course.

The next full moon appearance is similar in nature, and is called the "hunter's moon" (this time, lay down the plow, and gather ye thy rifle). This occasion, October 27, features a

total lunar eclipse. Be sure to come, and bring friends or family, to one of our two Lunar Eclipse sites that night – either at Lake Erie Metropark, or at the Henry Ford Community College / U-M Dearborn site. See the information included in this issue for more details, but basic times are: first contact at 9:14 pm, totality from 10:23 pm to 11:45 pm, last contact at 12:54 am.

Changing of the guard: With this newsletter issue, after saying good-bye to Jim Frisbie as editor, we welcome Greg Burnett to a new term. Greg, as you know, has been founder and a huge contributor to the FAAC efforts over the years, and has had published many excellent articles in newsletters past. To view a sample of Greg's past articles, go to our club website, and use the FAQ link to his basic observing tips (<http://www.boonhill.net/faac/other/basic/basic.html>). No doubt Greg will count on your continuing contributions to the newsletter, as well as those of the new astronomy expert in the family, Greg's wife, Vicki.

Of course, Jim Frisbie will still contribute greatly to the club, as has been his way; Jim now heads the Astrophotography SIG, taking the reigns from George Korody, who initiated the SIG formation. Furthermore, Mr. Frisbie, with others, is organizing the next swap meet - possibly for this November - and also helping with the annual FAAC dinner plans, targeting a date in February 2005.

Many thanks, Jim, and Greg, for your outstanding efforts on behalf of our club.

-- Dale

Poetry

by Anna Scott

Music of the Night Skies

When we quiet our soul and listen,
We can hear the golden moon.....
Through the silence, and the distance,
We can hear the cosmos, tune.....

When we still our soul and listen,
We can hear the Milky-way,
And the music of each planet,
As it spins along it's way.

All the Universe is singing,
But we never hear.....until,
We quiet our soul and listen,
For to hear,we must be still.

--Anna
July 3, 2004

Welcome New Members!

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club welcomes the following new members:

William Ohlsson (Life Member)

We hope your membership will be rewarding and enjoyable. Let us know how we can help you enjoy amateur astronomy.

Astrophysics Phun Phacts

by Vicki Burnett

The author is on sabbatical this month due to excessive academic obligations. This department will return next month with exciting new phun phacts! -Ed.

Help Wanted

GUIDE THE PLANETS... STEER THE STARS! Search when Jupiter aligns with Mars. It's dawning of an Age of Opportunity! You can be a club planetarium trainee, working through Henry Ford CC and the FAAC. We are looking for a few potential star guiders, willing to team up to learn to run the HFCC planetarium, for future club events !!! Seems like the biggest astronomy works you might ever get your hands on? Unless you plan to supervise a Keck telescope, maybe it is! Don't be daunted – we'll put the fickle skies at your fingertips! Reply back to club president Dale Ochalek, at dale0k@comcast.net, to inquire.

RIDERS OF CANTON IS LOOKING FOR CHRISTMAS HELP! Must be available Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:00 to 8:30PM and Saturdays 10:00AM to 6:00PM. It is part time work in the Scope department. Experience and general knowledge in the hobby required. Willing to train the right person in the retail end. Pays \$6.50 to \$7.00/hr depending on experience. Come and work for a store dedicated to the toys and hobbies of your dreams. Can be a lot of fun and may lead to a more permanent position. If interested please come in and fill out an application, and while your there look at the scopes! Contact Rider's Hobby Shops of Canton, 42011 Ford Rd., Canton MI 48187 Ph. (734) 981-8700

Gladwin Outing

by Dale Ochalek

Just a note to report on the great skies at the Gladwin Star Gaze. I was only able to stay one night, due to another commitment. Here are a couple preliminary pics - the grounds in daytime, and Ed Halash, trying out Halash's beautiful

contraption - the binocular chair - for an enthusiastic westward look at some late afternoon sunspots.



Dale Ochalek



Dale Ochalek

Robotic Observatory

... continued from page 1

In 1995, I purchased a Meade Pictor 416 CCD camera. And as you've probably heard or experienced, this is a very cumbersome and time consuming device to get working! Needless to say, my observing sessions were involving trying to setup my telescope and getting the CCD to work! I was getting absolutely nowhere! With Meade in California and my working full time, it became obvious that the only solution was to get a permanent observatory.

So the years went by, the technology improved, and in the spring of 2003, I finally obtained the funds to purchase a Robodome by Technical Innovations. The new dome finally arrived in May 2003. Fast forward to the fall of 2004. I am now taking pictures automatically! However, it was not an

easy road to getting here and my work is still not done to fulfill my dream of complete automated observing. Although things are progressing much better now.

The spring and summer months of 2003 involved making the egg shaped floor out of plywood to match the shape of the Robodome's base. Four 42" holes were drilled into the hard clay ground and 4X4 wooden decking poles were sunk into these holes filled with concrete. The poles were leveled before the concrete dried. The LX200's wedge was mounted to the plywood floor consisting of two 3/4 inch oak plywood sheets nailed and glued together.

Polar alignment came next. For some reason, I struggled the whole summer trying to get the polar alignment right. For those of you that have an LX200, you know that it has a keypad driven procedure for doing polar alignment. It involves setting the telescope declination circle to 90° and the right ascension (RA) hour angle to 0° and pressing Enter. Then you need to center Polaris by adjusting the altitude and azimuth knobs of the equatorial wedge. In my case, this involved moving the observatory base back and forth and adjusting the hand screw on the wedge up and down until Polaris was centered.

Once Polaris is centered, you press Enter on the keypad and the telescope automatically slews to one of the alignment stars in the telescope's database that is close to the meridian. This can be done repeatedly to improve polar alignment. If you can keep the telescope powered up at all times, you can iteratively improve polar alignment over a period of days, weeks, and months. If you turn off the telescope or lose power, you need to restart the polar alignment. So an uninterruptible power supply was purchased to keep the telescope running.

Once I had the polar alignment set, it was time to get the Pictor 416 CCD camera working. Well (ha ha), lots of luck with that thing. Having said that, I know of somebody in Michigan who has had success with the 416 (Mark Sibole in Kalkaska). I have not been so lucky yet. Now I know many of you are screaming at my article, "why don't you just by an SBIG?" The reason is, I have a couple thousand invested in the Pictor and I don't have that kind of money or the desire to invest those kind of bucks in another CCD camera at this time.

So the fall and winter of 2003 was spent trying to focus the 416. Trying to install different version of the Meade Pictor software. Trying to upgrade Windows to 98, ME, and finally XP. One really nice thing about the 416 is that it has a SCSI interface, allowing fast downloads of images from the camera to a PC. So an Adaptec SCSI PCMCIA interface was purchased.

So after slogging through all that, I finally figured out that I must have a defective Pictor thanks to input from Mark Sibole. I learned that Mark had to send in his Pictor to get it fixed by Meade and now he is taking beautiful images with his.

I then learned that Canon makes a 6.3 megapixel Digital SLR camera called the Digital Rebel. I was able to pick one of these up on eBay in the early Spring of 2004 for a lot less than the cost of a new CCD camera. This camera is really nice in that it has a USB connector on it and it can take approximately 20x30 arcminute color photos at prime focus on my f/6.3 10-inch LX200.

Unfortunately, my observatory is located about 25 feet from my garage where my computer is setup and USB only goes up to 16 feet. Then on eBay I found a "USB extender" which allows you to use a twisted pair Ethernet type cable to connect USB devices up to 150 feet away!

Now things were starting to come together! What really made the Digital Rebel camera perfect for my application was the ability to take unlimited length exposures with the use of an electric relay. The camera has a port to connect a relay switch made my Canon.

Well, I was able to customize this switch (I had to hack it up a bit) so that I could connect it as a digital I/O device to my computer. I then had to do some programming to automatically open and close the shutter for a variable amount of time, controlled by home brew software. I wrote another program to automatically move the telescope to an object in the LX200's database or to a specified RA and DEC. This was done by connecting the LX200 to a serial port on my computer.

So now I have a program to move the telescope to an object in a text file list on my computer, take a picture of the object via the other program controlling the camera, and then move the telescope to the next object in the text file list and so on. By October 2004, I had done enough software programming to allow my telescope to run from dusk to dawn and I took over 64 pictures automatically!

Recently, I purchased an Pictor 201XT autoguider because my pictures have shown quite a bit of drift on long exposures, over 3 minutes. However, I have been able to get some 10 minute exposures with very little drift. The problem with the autoguider is that it needs to be reset for each object to be imaged. This will require that I set up some kind of solenoid system that pushes the button on the autoguider under computer control. So that's my next challenge.

I also need to synchronize the dome slit with the telescope and I need to install my weather station. The weather station will tie into the dome's microcontroller (the manufacturer calls it Digital Dome Works or DDW) and it will automatically close the dome if it starts raining or snowing.

Another thing I need to do is raise the telescope higher in the dome. It turns out the optical train consisting of the camera and the autoguider is so long that in its current location, the camera will slam into the wall of the observatory when it goes above a certain declination altitude.

So my work is far from over. But I am now getting results. I do plan on getting back to the Pictor. Mark Sibole found some information on the web that will enable me to automate the Pictor via the SCSI port. The Meade supplied software does not allow you to automate the CCD (although requiring a significant programming effort). One drawback of the Digital Rebel is that it requires longer exposures, it doesn't have a thermoelectric cooler, it is less sensitive than the Pictor, and it is not easy to combine images. Having said that, I have been getting beautiful color images from the Digital Rebel.

If there is a lot of interest expressed in the FAAC to see my setup, I can host a star party in my backyard sometime. On a clear night, the Milky Way is slightly visible from Cygnus to the top of the teapot in Sagittarius.

Astronomical Calendar

by Jim Frisbie

All times are Eastern Standard or Daylight Saving Time

October

- 27 We Full Moon-Lunar Eclipse
- 31 Su Daylight Savings Time ends

November

- 3 We Moon near Saturn
- 4 Th Venus near Jupiter
- 5 Fr Last Quarter Moon
- 9 Tu Moon near Jupiter
Moon near Venus
- 10 We Moon near Mars
- 12 Fr New Moon
- 13 Sa Moon near Mercury
- 19 Fr First Quarter Moon
- 21 Sa Mercury at Greatest
Elongation East
- 26 Fr Full Moon
- 30 Tu Moon near Saturn

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

Comet Machholz

by George Korody

Here is a CCD picture that I took of new 10th magnitude Comet Machholz this morning [Tuesday, September 21, 2004 -Ed.] at 4:40 AM. It was very low in the SSE sky at 15

degrees elevation and -25 degrees DEC. That is a lot of air to image through and the light pollution was bad. There were no bright stars in the field of view. The two close bright stars towards the bottom of the picture are 15th magnitude. The two close weaker ones slightly left are 16th magnitude.



George Korody

Recap: October - Astro Imaging S.I.G.

by Jim Frisbie

George Korody substituted for Jim Frisbie as discussion leader. The topic was "Ask the Imager". Everyone seemed to air their questions and problems, participate in a lively discussion and enjoy the meeting which ran until 8 pm. A total of seven members were in attendance.

Astronomical Imaging S.I.G.

by Jim Frisbie

The Astronomical Imaging S.I.G. meeting will take place at the Henry Ford Community College (HFCC) on Thursday, November 11th starting at 5:30 PM. This will be the last meeting in 2004. We will have a time slot that extends to 8:00 PM as needed. Jim Frisbie will lead a discussion on Image Amplifiers for Astro Imaging.

We will meet in Roseneau Conference Rooms A & B, which are the same rooms where the regular FAAC General Membership meetings are held. The Roseneau Conference Rooms are in the Administrative Services and Conference Center (ASCC) building. Parking can be in Lot J or in the Staff Parking lot next to the ASCC building if Security is present there. Security will be there to permit parking for us only.

A layout of the college area can be found in the July newsletter, which is on-line at our WEB site at <http://www.boonhill.net/faac/>. If anyone has questions, they can contact me at w8tu@comcast.net

Minutes of the FAAC General Meeting

by Bob MacFarland

September 23, 2004

Dale Ochalek opened the meeting at 5:30 pm by welcoming and then asking for a round of introductions from the 38 attendees in the room. This included our visiting presenters, Gerry Moss and Jack Szymanski from the Detroit Observational and Astrophotographic Association (DOAA). Several members commented on their observing experiences since the last meeting. These included several members who had attended the Star Gaze held in Gladwin, MI last weekend.

Thanks go out to Milton French and Gordon Hansen who arranged for the pop and pizza for the meeting.

Bob MacFarland made two corrections to the August minutes. First, he made note of the misspelling of Dennis Salliotte's name and then the August star party held in Ontario is entitled the Starfest (not Astrofest) in last month's minutes. Otherwise the August minutes were accepted as written. Gordon Hansen detailed the status of the club treasury (found elsewhere in this issue).

George Korody announced that he was turning over the coordination of the Astrophotography SIG to Jim Frisbie. George was given a round of applause for forming up and promoting the group during the last couple of several years. Thank you George for all your efforts! The next meeting for the group is planned for 5:30 pm on October 14th in the Hackett conference room in the Health Careers building at the HFCC.

There was a good turnout of people and equipment and the weather was cooperative for the 12th annual FAAC September 11th Island Lake Star Party. Bob MacFarland reported that Gordon Hansen and Bob Fitzgerald lead the Farmington Webalos through their field training on how to use a telescope and a tour of the constellations. Over fifty cars were counted in the IL lot that night.

Dale Ochalek reported that two venues are being considered for the night of October 27th lunar eclipse. These are: the Lake Erie Metropark, and a site to be determined on Henry Ford Community College/U of M Dearborn. Bob Fitzgerald and Bob MacFarland are coordinating the Lake Erie event which will be preceded by dinner at the Three Hermanos restaurant in Rockwood. Dale is working with Dr. Jacobs and Eric Rasmussen to determine the on campus location. Details will be worked out as soon as possible and times, locations

etc. will be announced on the FAAC Hotline (313-390-5456), on the web page (<http://www.boonhill.net/faac>), elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter and on the FAAC e-mail distribution list (go to the web page for directions on how to subscribe).

Ed Halash and Dale Ochalek discussed the HFCC's interest in hold club events at their planetarium. They also indicated that the college was inviting some FAAC members in training to become one of their planetarium operator/guides. Any interested members should contact Dale or Ed.

Jim Frisbie and Diane Worth were volunteered to coordinate the annual FAAC dinner party. The general consensus was to schedule it earlier next year (this year, it was held on April 17th). Jim Frisbie also reported out on the status of the FAAC Swap Meet plans. The goal was to hold it sometime during the first three weeks of November. A location has not yet been finalized. However, Ed Halash has been working on the possibility of holding it on the campus of HFCC. Tom Blaszak and John Kirchhoff are also working on this project.

Dale asked for volunteers to work on locating a dark sky alternative observing site (as opposed to IL). Ed Halash agreed to chair and Tony Licata, George Korody, Gordon Hansen and Bob Fitzgerald signed on to be committee members.

Having concluded the business portion of the meeting, Dale introduced Gary Strumolo who gave a reading of the "Hitchhiker's Guide to Astronomy" by Burton Wright from Cloudy Nights. This was a tongue-in-cheek look at the social phenomena of astronomer's behavior which covered the areas of: whom one should observe with, various observing techniques, equipment choices and telescope designs. It was enjoyed by all.

Finally, the meeting was concluded with a very dynamic audio-video presentation created by members of the DOAA called "First Point in Aires". Gerry Moss provided some introductory comments which included an invitation to FAAC members to come out to the James C. Veen Observatory near Lowell, Michigan at some future date.

This "First Point in Aires" feature took the audience through a historical tour of the universe of celestial objects via a collage of outstanding photography and poignant readings with a backdrop of moving musical scores. The media provided a look at scores of astronomically related art works along with contemporary photo images and narrative readings from noted astronomers, historians and poets throughout history. The presentation was very well received as it was evident that an extensive amount of time was put into this work. Thanks again to the DOAA for coming to the Ford Amateur Astronomy club to share their creative works.

The Boardroom Corner

by Bob MacFarland

October 14, 2004

Dr. Charlie Jacobs, Dale Ochalek, Don Klaser, Gordon Ross and Bob MacFarland opened the board meeting at 5:00 pm in a conference room inside the Science Building at Henry Ford Community College.

Plans for the October 27th lunar eclipse parties at the Lake Erie Metropark and the HFCC were firmed up. The HFCC event will start with a planetarium show and then move to the University of Michigan – Dearborn campus parking garage (walking distance) where the set up for eclipse observing will begin at about 8:00 pm. Details for both events are being announced through the FAAC media (e-mail distribution list, the hotline, newsletter and web page).

Dr. Jacobs authorized FAAC's use of a storage locker in the Physics Department offices for the library. Access details will be worked out by the October 28th meeting when a volunteer librarian is identified.

The Board also discussed the vision of what the student astronomy club would look like. Dr. Jacobs stated that his vision was that just the exposure opportunity of what FAAC had to offer students in the way of FAAC meeting topics, observing event opportunities, etc. would be plenty. If the students wanted to start their own sub-club, that would be up to them to work out. It was agreed that there would have to be a nominal student membership fee to assure compliance with our Island Lake permit and any potential insurance coverage needs.

The Board tentatively plans to hold the December 2nd general membership meeting in the HFCC planetarium as a special year end event. Dale agreed to work out the details with the planetarium staff and report out at the October 28th meeting.

Mike Rousseau stopped in to suggest that the club consider a general membership starting time of 7:30 pm on a quarterly basis. This would allow members who are unable to make the 5:30 pm meetings a chance to attend at least 4 times a year. The board deferred this until next year since it is too late to make a major time change before the December 2nd meeting. (not all members are on the e-mail distribution list or have access to a computer).

The proposed agenda for the October 28th meeting was reviewed. Technical subject speakers are needed.

It was reported that the Swap Meet planning team has examined several possible locations. At this time, it would cost the club some \$300 for the best opportunity. The search is still in progress.

The Boy Scout Troop 854 from St. Michael's church in Canton has asked FAAC to give a public awareness event tentatively

on 11/15. Don Klaser has volunteered to lead it and is soliciting help from the membership.

Gordon Hansen will be sending out 2005 membership renewal notices shortly. Also, the board agreed that a replacement bulb for the digital projector should be procured. Mike Rousseau and Al Bates were identified as potential purchasers since they bought the project some months back.

The Board agreed to set their meeting day on the 1st Thursday of the month starting in November.

From the Editor...

by Greg Burnett

Fellow Amateur Astronomers,, As you may already know, I am taking over from Jim Frisbie as editor of STAR STUFF, the monthly newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club.

Many thanks to Jim for all his hard work over the last three years, during which he ably and consistently produced an exceptional newsletter. I hope to continue in this tradition.

And it is a lot of work putting together a worthwhile newsletter. But the work is made much easier when *you* contribute your articles, photos, stories, book reviews, and other writing. These make the newsletter *yours* and a true reflection of the activities of our club. Along with Jim, I add my thanks to all of you who have helped make STAR STUFF an on-going success.

IMPORTANT: Your contributions are welcome any time...please do not feel you are working to a deadline if you'd like to submit something. However, if you are aiming at a particular issue, you need to get your material to me sometime during the third week of the month, the week prior to the meeting week. You can email in-line text, or MSWord, or whatever is convenient for you...I will coerce it into the proper format for the newsletter.

ALSO IMPORTANT: Do not think you must be a Pulitzer Prize contender to write something for your newsletter. The

membership is interested in hearing your ideas, experiences, and opinions. Please share them freely.

For the foreseeable future I will hold (approximately) to the publication schedule that Jim established, each issue coming out the weekend prior to the Fourth Thursday General Meeting. I hope you will forgive any hiccups that may occur as I get the process going.

With your continued support, I will make my best effort to continue the long tradition of excellence that STAR STUFF and the FAAC represent. Thanks.

--Greg

Treasurer's Report

by Gordon Hansen

September 23, 2004

Bank Accounts

Checking	\$386.21
Savings	\$738.05

TOTAL Bank Accounts	\$1,124.26

Cash Accounts

Cash Account	\$100.43

TOTAL Cash Accounts	\$100.43

Asset Accounts

FERA Ticket Sales	\$ -
GLAAC	\$795.00
Projector	\$606.20
Scholarship	\$60.00
Swap Meet	\$ -

TOTAL Asset Accounts	\$1,461.20

OVERALL TOTAL \$2,685.89

Its time to renew your membership in FAAC!

Avoid the year-end rush and send your check in today to:

FAAC
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn, Michigan 48121-7527

Renewal fees for 2005 are only \$25 or sign up for a Life Membership for \$150 and never have to worry about paying dues again.

Please include any updates to your address (snail mail or email), phone numbers, etc.



Sky Publishing is pleased to announce a limited time offer of a 15% discount on books and products* sold through our catalog and on our online store at SkyandTelescope.com. This offer is made exclusively to astronomy club members and replaces our previous discount program.



Here's how the discount works:

1. Go online to SkyandTelescope.com and make your purchases. Continue to the checkout process and at step 1 fill in the promotion code field with CLUB04H. Your discount will automatically be applied.
2. Call 800-253-0245 (Outside the us and Canada dial +1-617-864-7360) and

tell the customer service representative *you* would like to take advantage of the special club discount offer. Mention the promotion code of CLUB04P to qualify for the discount.

Please communicate this information to your members at your next meeting or through your newsletter.

Hurry, this offer is good until October 31, 2004

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* Discount not valid on magazine subscriptions and sale items.



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The University of Michigan - Dearborn
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The Total Lunar Eclipse Experience

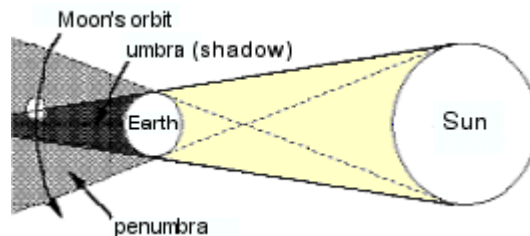
Wednesday Night - October 27, 2004



8:00 pm – Planetarium (in HFCC Science Building)
Fall skies / eclipse (limited seating – come early!)

9:00 pm – Top of UM-Dearborn Parking Structure
Prepare to see the eclipse, beginning at 9:15.
There will be telescopes there, ready for the viewing,
or bring your own!

Eclipse times – 9:15 pm, first contact. Totality - 10:23 - 11:45 pm



See the moon move (as shown) into the earth's shadow, beginning at 9:15 pm. At around 10:23 pm, the moon will turn a reddish brown hue, at totality, and remains so until 11:45 pm. Final contact (eclipse ends) 12:54 am.



After first contact

-

Totality

-

Before final contact

Directions: The HFCC Science Bldg and UM-Dearborn Parking Structure are on Evergreen (west side), just north of Hubbard Dr., in Dearborn, Michigan.

Also visit www.boonhill.net/faac for maps and information, or call (313) 390-5456.

Bring friends and family! Be sure to dress warm!

Restroom facilities available

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
Star Stuff Newsletter
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Dearborn MI 48121-7527



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