



# March, 1999

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*At the March 5 meeting...*

## **Hernan Contraras**

**“Astronomical Oddities.”**

**A review of astronomical theories of the 17th,  
18th and 19th century, and their common  
misconceptions.**

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*Houston Astronomical Society*

# **GuideStar**

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**Starline - 281-568-9340**

Houston Astronomical Society presents *Starline* -- a recorded message of Society events and astronomical happenings. This service is updated regularly, so call often to keep up-to-date on Society functions, new comets and more.

**H.A.S. Web Page: <http://spacsun.rice.edu/~has>**

**Schedule Changes & Up-To-Date Information**

See the GuideStar's Monthly Calendar of Events to confirm dates and times of all events for the month, and call Starline for any last minute changes.

**Observatory Site Telephone: 409-732-8967**

★★★★★ **The Houston Astronomical Society** ★★★★★★

The Houston Astronomical Society is a non-profit corporation organized under section 501 (C) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Society was formed for education and scientific purposes. All contributions and gifts are deductible for federal income tax purposes. General membership meetings are open to the public and attendance is encouraged.

★★★★★ **Officers and past president** ★★★★★★

President: Don Pearce H: 713-432-0734	Treasurer: Bill Flanagan H: (713) 699-8819
Vice Pres: Kirk Kendrick H: 281-391-3834	Past-President: Allen Gilchrist H: 281-558-1190
Secretary: Matt Delevoryas H: 713-795-0808	

★★★★★ **Additional Board Members** ★★★★★★

Jay Levy ..... 281-992-2708	Liaison responsibility
Bill Leach ..... 713-863-8335	Field Trip and Observing, Program
Bill Molinare ..... 713-664-3261	Observatory, Welcoming
Bill Pellerin ..... 713-880-8061	Education, Telescope
Barbara Wilson ..... 281-933-1289	Audit, Publicity (shared)
Mike Dye ..... 281-498-1703	Novice, Publicity (shared)
	Observatory Director

★★★★★ **Committee Chairpersons** ★★★★★★

Audit ..... Orv Wiens ..... 281-391-2995	Program ..... Scott Mitchell ..... 713-461-3020
Education ..... <open>	Publicity ..... Michael Cubstead ..... 713-307-0270
Field Tr./Obsg. .... Kenneth Drake ..... 281-367-1592	Telescope ..... Clayton Jeter ..... 281-383-1337
Novice ..... Sancho/Spore ..... 281-379-4726	Welcoming ..... Marg Nunez ..... 713-529-2549
Observatory ..... Michael Dye ..... 281-498-1703	

★★★★★ **Ad-Hoc Committee Chairpersons** ★★★★★★

Historian ..... Leland Dolan ..... 713-529-0403	Publ. Star Party ..... Marg Nunez ..... 713-529-2549
Librarian ..... Peggy Gilchrist ..... 281-558-1190	Rice U. Coord. .... Matt Delevoryas ..... 713-795-0808
Logo Mds Sales ..... Judy Dye ..... 281-498-1703	Schedule Obs'v'ty ..... Steve Goldberg ..... 713-721-5077
Long Range Plan ..... Don Pearce ..... 713-432-0734	Texas Star Pty ..... Steve Goldberg ..... 713-721-5077
Parliamentarian ..... Kirk Kendrick ..... 281-391-3834	

★★★★★ **Special Interest Groups & Help Committees** ★★★★★★

These are now listed on the inside of GuideStar (not every month). See the Table of Contents

★★★★★ **Advisors** ★★★★★★

Dr. Reginald DuFour, Rice Univ.	Dr. Lawrence Pinsky, U. of H.
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★★★★★ **Dues and Membership Information** ★★★★★★

Annual Dues: Regular .... \$33.00	Student ..... \$5.00
Associate .... \$5.00	Honorary ..... None
Sustaining . \$50.00	

All members have the right to participate in Society functions and to use the Observatory Site. Regular and Student Members receive a subscription to *The Reflector*. Regular, Student, and Honorary Members receive *The GuideStar*. Associate Members, immediate family members of a Regular Member, have all membership rights, but do not receive publications. Sustaining members have the same rights as regular members with the additional dues treated as a donation to the Society. *Sky & Telescopemag* \$27/year, *Astronomymag* \$29/year -- see club treasurer.

Membership Application: Send funds to address shown on outside cover of *Guidestar*. Attention - Treasurer, along with the following information: Name, Address, Phone Number, Special Interests in Astronomy, Do you own a Telescope? (If so, what kind?), and where you first heard of H.A.S.

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***Call the Starline, 281-568-9340 for updates and changes***

## **Welcome to New Members!**

Jeff Beauchamp, James Cate, Walter Cole, Jan Baker Dabney, Joseph Dabney, III, Eleanor Dahlin, John Fennell, Denis Fitzgerald, Rodolfo Gonzalez, Mark Gruenke, Lovie Harrison, Peter Harrison, Christopher Hysinger, Marcie Hysinger, Phillip Legare, Peter Nolan, Theresa Nolan, George Pierce, III, John Pierce, Jr., Susan Underwood, Elizabeth Underwood, David Underwood, Charles Vickers

## **Special Interest Group Listing**

*Any member who wants specific information on a SIG listed below may call the listed individual. Also, see the "Ad Hoc Committee Chairpersons" on the inside front cover and the "Special Help Volunteers" listing (not in every issue).*

Advanced .....	Bill Flanagan .....	713-699-8819
Comets .....	Kenneth Drake .....	281-367-1592
Lunar & Planetary .....	John Blubaugh .....	713-921-4275
Occultations & Grazes ...	Wayne Hutchison .....	713-827-0828

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## The President's Message



This past Saturday (prime night- Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>) was a wonderful night for doing astronomy at our Columbus site. The skies were clear, and although the seeing varied the transparency remained very good for most of the night. Even though the prediction was for freezing temperatures, (and indeed it must have reached that point because I noticed some ice on my vehicle), with no wind it seemed very tolerable if dressed appropriately. I

was dressed so warmly, in fact, with two layers of long underwear, that for most of the night I didn't even wear a hat, gloves, or coat, and I was perfectly comfortable.

I noted that the site was virtually full of observers, which is always good, especially for a February night. Of course, with large numbers of observers there occurs occasional, undesirable incidents of "light pollution." I think several things should be said about such incidents.

1. Anyone can make mistakes, we all do, even people with years of experience coming to this site have "light polluted."
2. Therefore, rather than being harsh and critical, especially in light of our recent growth and influx of new members, let us resolve to try to be helpful when encountering a light pollution incident. The "polluter" feels much more anguish and embarrassment than the "pollutees" actually suffer from loss of dark adaptation etc. On the other hand one severe light pollution incident could ruin an astro-photograph (a reason to switch to CCD imaging?).

I have found that removing the corresponding fuses when I arrive at the site always solves the problem, and I have never owned a vehicle that

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***Houston Astronomical Society***

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***Meeting Notice  
For Friday, March 5, 1999***

**Hernan Contraras**

***“Astronomical Oddities.”***

***A review of astronomical theories of the 17th, 18th and 19th century, and their common misconceptions.***

**Schedule of meeting activities:**

Novice meeting: ..... 7:00 p.m.

Jose Sancho and Susan Spore began a new year of novice programs in January. This year the Novice committee will work with you to complete the Messier list.

Site orientation meeting: ..... 7:00 p.m.

General meeting: ..... 8:00 p.m.

See the inside back cover for more information.

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# March/April Calendar:

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>
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## March

2	1:00 a.m.	Full Moon
5		HAS Club Meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H
	8:00 p.m.	General Membership Meeting - U of H
6		Members Observatory Night-Columbus
10	2:44 a.m.	Third Quarter Moon
13		Prime Night-Columbus
16	7:00 p.m.	Advanced SIG Mtg.-Rice Univ., contact Bill Flanagan, 713-699-8819
17	12:50 p.m.	New Moon
20	7:46 p.m.	Vernal Equinox, Spring begins
24	4:19 a.m.	First Quarter Moon
31	4:50 p.m.	Full Moon

## April

4	2:00 a.m.	Standard Time ends, Daylight Saving Time begins -set clocks forward 1 hour
8	9:53 p.m.	Third Quarter Moon
9		HAS Club Meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H
	8:00 p.m.	General Membership Meeting - U of H
15	11:23 p.m.	New Moon
22	11:00 a.m.	Lyrid meteor shower peaks
	2:02 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
24	1:00 p.m.	Mars at opposition
30	9:54 a.m.	Full Moon

Send calendar events to [JBlubaugh@aol.com](mailto:JBlubaugh@aol.com) or call 713-921-4275.

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## ***President's Message... from page 4***

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one could not locate the fuses, although I will be the first to admit that my current van has been the toughest challenge. It may take a few minutes, but I think that when first entering the gate, a good habit is to stop, pull the fuses, and then proceed to the observing area or observatory. Your vehicle should contain a manual indicating the location and function of each fuse.

Incidentally, I spent some time observing Comet Williams (C\1998 P1) and concluded that it was approximately magnitude 10.5, with a central condensation of 3, and a coma diameter of approximately 4 minutes of arc. Logan Rimes, who was photographing it next to my pad, indicated he noticed a very faint tail, and indeed, (with some averted and perverted imagination) I could make out a faint extension. Logan indicated later that the image showed a tail 40 minutes of arc in length.

Clear skies and le croissant lunaire

*Don Pearce*

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## ***Magazine Subscriptions***

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One of the benefits of membership in the Houston Astronomical Society is discount subscription rates for *Astronomy* and *Sky & Telescope* magazines.

	Normal rate	Discount rate
Astronomy	\$ 39.95	\$ 29.00
Sky & Telescope	\$ 37.95	\$ 27.00

Contact Bill Flanagan at 713-699-8819 or via E-mail from the HAS web page if you wish to join this program. If you are already a member of this program then **send your renewal notice**, with the normal rate quoted on it, to Bill Flanagan with a check for the discounted rate.

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## ***Northside Astronomical Society***

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The Northside Astronomical Society ( temporary name ), sponsored by Kingwood College, will have its inaugural meeting on Friday, April 23, 1999 at 8:00 PM in the teaching theatre of Kingwood College. The fourth Friday of the month has been chosen to compliment other meeting dates. The status of amateur astronomy in the Houston area just got better. With the cooperation of the Houston Astronomical Society and the other three astronomy associations in the community, this new organization wishes to become part of the greater Houston astronomy community and its efforts to advance the knowledge and practice of astronomy. All members of the Houston Astronomical Society are strongly encouraged to attend this first organizational meeting and help support this new effort. For more information contact Bill Leach at 281-312-1650 or [bill.leach@nhmccd.edu](mailto:bill.leach@nhmccd.edu)

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## ***H.A.S. Membership Cards***

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The welcoming committee is introducing a new color picture ID card for the membership that can be used for a 10% discount at Land, Sea & Sky and other upcoming discounts. This card will be issued with all new renewals of membership on a monthly basis. The welcoming committee is setting up this new ID system on a temporary basis. We will test this new program for a year and then determine if it has any future. If you would like your picture on your new ID card then you need to send in a color picture of yourself with your annual dues or you can give the picture to Marg Nunez or Bill Leach. Please print your name on the back of the picture. Members that do not submit a picture will receive a new color ID but without a picture.



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# ***March Comets and Some Recent Observations***

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By Kenneth Drake

kdrako@swbell.net

I managed to combine a New Moon weekend with a work free and cloud free one on February 13. And what a weekend! Clear, dry, cool air had moved in on Friday morning producing 39 degree air at my house in Conroe. The fine, transparent conditions held until Monday afternoon. The turnout at the site was better than I had seen it since Labor Day weekend 1991 or was it '89. At dark, there were only 2 or 3 pads remaining. The strange thing was that I had announced a field trip and got no responses. I'm hoping that the cold predictions or Valentines Day was the cause.

I got a chance to observe several comets in 12 through 24 inch scopes. Tom Fox offered the use of his fine LX200 12 inch SCT while Don Pearce allowed me to view through his 13.1 inch Dob and Barbara Wilson shared her time on her 20 inch with me. I used my 24 inch Dob for some early morning comet observations.

Tom Fox nailed Giacobini-Zinner early on with his computer driven LX200 and at about 200 power it appeared moderately condensed, about one minute in size and easily visible with direct vision. It is near mag. 11.5. We next plugged in the position for comet Jager P/1998 U3 and the LX200 effortlessly slewed to the field. Jager appeared about a mag. brighter and much more condensed with elongation E-W. I spent several hours rubbing elbows with folks and got a peek at comet Williams 1998 P1 in Don's 13.1 incher. I later made size and mag estimates in the 24 inch and an exciting (almost) "discovery"!

When I finally made it back to my scope I found that I had pinched optics. Even though the seeing was horrible, the mirror showed triangular shaped star images in focus. Once mirror cell tweeking was done I managed to get the 6 to 10 arc second star images the sky was producing. The five inch class scopes were doing much better, which just proves that seeing cells can effect different aperture in different ways.

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## ***March Comets...from previous page***

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Comet Harrington-Abell 52P fell next. At 195 power in the 24 inch, it appeared round, about 45 seconds in size and mag. 11.5. The degree of central condensation was about 1. This comet is predicted to be about mag. 17.0. It has been about 5 mags brighter since early Summer.

### **Using software or the “discovery” or shades of another “SLO”**

At 4:15am I tracked down comet Williams 1998 P1 in the 24 inch. It appeared as a mag. 11.8 thirty arc second round diffuse glow with a very weak central condensation. 0 to 1. Something very odd was going on here though! Just 30 seconds northeast was an elongated fainter soft glow. Nothing showed on my MegaSar chart in that position. And it was too “bright” to not be showing on the software. I popped in a Swan band filter. The mystery object got fainter as the comet grew to engulf it. The coma swelled to two minutes in size. I woke Barbara who was the only one around to assist with this. Everyone else was gone or asleep! It turns out Matt was busy fixing something in the observatory. Barbara looked and became excited also. She asked if it had moved with the comet. Smart girl! I had not checked but I did have the snap to make a drawing of the field with both objects. We checked Uranometria while I was thinking, "It ain't showin' on MegaStar, Barb, so why would it show on Uranometria!!" Nothing showed there either. The mystery object had not moved in 30 minutes despite the comet moving over one minute to the northwest. It turns out that I had used a configuration in MegaStar that had all galaxies turned off!!! Yikes!!! The mystery object was CGCG 181-70 a 15.2 mag galaxy 12 x 24 seconds in size!! Dumb! Always make sure your software is configured correctly!!

After all that I still had the strength to hunt down comet Linear 1998 M5. I was glad I did! At 5am I was surprised to see a large coma at near 4.2 arc minutes with a good central condensation. My mag. estimate puts it near 8.9. NICE!

*Continued...*

# *March Comets...from previous page*

Below are listed the March positions of the brighter comets that are well placed for dark sky viewing. I hope to be out at the site on the 21st so look me up if you need assistance finding your mystery object.

U.T.=universal time RA=right ascension Dec=declination  
 Mag=magnitude prediction E.D.=Earth distance S.D.=Sun distance  
 E=elongation of Comet-Earth-Sun

Local Time	U.T.	RA	Dec	Mag	E.D.	S.D.	E
LINEAR C/1998 M5							
1999 Mar 11 0:00	Mar 11 6:00	19 55 45.7	+85 41 25	9.6	1.5276	1.8398	91
1999 Mar 12 0:00	Mar 12 6:00	19 59 23.9	+86 42 46	9.6	1.5283	1.8439	91
1999 Mar 13 0:00	Mar 13 6:00	20 05 33.7	+87 44 19	9.6	1.5294	1.8482	92
1999 Mar 14 0:00	Mar 14 6:00	20 20 33.9	+88 45 52	9.6	1.5310	1.8525	92
1999 Mar 15 0:00	Mar 15 6:00	22 35 49.5	+89 44 50	9.6	1.5330	1.8569	92
1999 Mar 16 0:00	Mar 16 6:00	07 06 45.2	+89 08 13	9.6	1.5354	1.8613	92
1999 Mar 17 0:00	Mar 17 6:00	07 31 58.2	+88 06 29	9.6	1.5382	1.8659	92
1999 Mar 18 0:00	Mar 18 6:00	07 40 1.7	+87 04 19	9.7	1.5416	1.8705	92
1999 Mar 19 0:00	Mar 19 6:00	07 44 20.6	+86 02 04	9.7	1.5453	1.8752	93
1999 Mar 20 0:00	Mar 20 6:00	07 47 14.5	+84 59 49	9.7	1.5495	1.8799	93
1999 Mar 21 0:00	Mar 21 6:00	07 49 27.3	+83 57 38	9.7	1.5542	1.8848	93
1999 Mar 22 0:00	Mar 22 6:00	07 51 17.0	+82 55 33	9.7	1.5593	1.8897	93
1999 Mar 23 0:00	Mar 23 6:00	07 52 52.6	+81 53 38	9.7	1.5649	1.8946	93
1999 Mar 24 0:00	Mar 24 6:00	07 54 18.8	+80 51 54	9.8	1.5709	1.8997	93

Local Time	U.T.	RA	Dec	Mag	E.D.	S.D.	E
Jäger P/1998 U3							
1999 Mar 11 0:00	Mar 11 6:00	06 37 22.6	+22 33 40	10.8	1.6011	2.1340	108
1999 Mar 12 0:00	Mar 12 6:00	06 38 26.2	+22 22 20	10.8	1.6112	2.1340	108
1999 Mar 13 0:00	Mar 13 6:00	06 39 31.2	+22 11 04	10.8	1.6215	2.1341	107
1999 Mar 14 0:00	Mar 14 6:00	06 40 37.6	+21 59 54	10.9	1.6318	2.1343	106
1999 Mar 15 0:00	Mar 15 6:00	06 41 45.3	+21 48 48	10.9	1.6421	2.1345	105
1999 Mar 16 0:00	Mar 16 6:00	06 42 54.3	+21 37 47	10.9	1.6526	2.1347	105
1999 Mar 17 0:00	Mar 17 6:00	06 44 4.6	+21 26 50	10.9	1.6631	2.1350	104
1999 Mar 18 0:00	Mar 18 6:00	06 45 16.1	+21 15 57	10.9	1.6737	2.1353	103
1999 Mar 19 0:00	Mar 19 6:00	06 46 28.8	+21 05 08	10.9	1.6844	2.1357	103
1999 Mar 20 0:00	Mar 20 6:00	06 47 42.8	+20 54 24	10.9	1.6951	2.1361	102
1999 Mar 21 0:00	Mar 21 6:00	06 48 57.9	+20 43 43	11.0	1.7059	2.1366	101
1999 Mar 22 0:00	Mar 22 6:00	06 50 14.1	+20 33 05	11.0	1.7168	2.1370	101
1999 Mar 23 0:00	Mar 23 6:00	06 51 31.4	+20 22 31	11.0	1.7277	2.1376	100
1999 Mar 24 0:00	Mar 24 6:00	06 52 49.8	+20 12 01	11.0	1.7387	2.1382	99

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# ***More Comets...***

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*by Matt Delevoryas*

## **Comet 52P/Harrington-Abell**

Following is an ephemeris for Comet 52P/Harrington-Abell, brought to you by the folks at Starline, with information provided by the IAU Circulars Committee. Do not believe the magnitudes listed. The comet has spent months nearly ten magnitudes brighter than these predictions, which are based on its normal behavior. Check Starline (281-568-9340) for information about its current magnitude. During the ephemeris, it is overhead early during the night, in Gemini. The elements are from MPC 27081, and the magnitude is from the 1990 Comet Handbook (which is also the magnitude still used in MPC 31882). For elements, contact the Committee. For additional ephemerides, please contact Kenneth Drake, the Chairman of the HAS Comet SIG. The columns C-E and C-S give the comet-Earth and comet-Sun distances in a.u., and each line is for 0<sup>h</sup> UTC.

Date	Julian	J2000.0				B1950.0				Mag	C-E	C-S
		RA	Dec	RA	Dec							
mmm dd	Date	h m	deg mi	h m	deg mi							
Feb 26	2451235.5	7 14.1	+30 28	7 10.9	+30 34	17.2	0.98	1.78				
Mar 3	2451240.5	7 19.0	+29 19	7 15.8	+29 25	17.3	1.02	1.79				
Mar 8	2451245.5	7 24.5	+28 11	7 21.4	+28 17	17.4	1.07	1.80				
Mar 13	2451250.5	7 30.8	+27 04	7 27.7	+27 10	17.6	1.11	1.81				
Mar 18	2451255.5	7 37.6	+25 58	7 34.5	+26 05	17.7	1.16	1.82				
Mar 23	2451260.5	7 44.8	+24 53	7 41.8	+25 00	17.8	1.21	1.83				
Mar 28	2451265.5	7 52.6	+23 48	7 49.6	+23 56	18.0	1.26	1.84				
Apr 2	2451270.5	8 00.6	+22 45	7 57.6	+22 53	18.1	1.32	1.86				

## **Comet C/1998 P1 Williams**

Following is an ephemeris for Comet C/1998 P1 Williams, brought to you by the folks at Starline, with information provided by the IAU Circulars Committee. During the ephemeris, it transits north of the zenith at the beginning of the night, in Lynx, entering Auriga on the 22nd when it fades past magnitude 13.0. The elements are from MPC 33189, and the

*Continued...*

## *More Comets... from previous page*

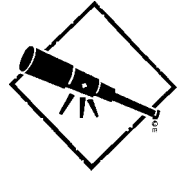
magnitude follows IAU Circular 7042. For elements, contact the Committee. For additional ephemerides, please contact Kenneth Drake, the Chairman of the HAS Comet SIG. The columns C-E and C-S give the comet-Earth and comet-Sun distances in a.u., and each line is for 0<sup>h</sup> UTC.

Date	Julian	J2000.0			B1950.0			Mag	C-E	C-S
		RA	Dec		RA	Dec				
mmm dd	Date	h m	deg mi	deg mi	h m	deg mi	deg mi			
Feb 25	2451234.5	8 43.0	+40 01	8 39.7	+40 12	11.7	1.38	2.24		
Feb 27	2451236.5	8 34.3	+40 30	8 31.0	+40 40	11.8	1.43	2.27		
Mar 1	2451238.5	8 26.2	+40 53	8 22.8	+41 03	11.9	1.48	2.29		
Mar 3	2451240.5	8 18.6	+41 12	8 15.2	+41 22	12.1	1.53	2.31		
Mar 5	2451242.5	8 11.6	+41 27	8 08.2	+41 36	12.2	1.58	2.33		
Mar 7	2451244.5	8 05.2	+41 39	8 01.8	+41 48	12.3	1.64	2.36		
Mar 9	2451246.5	7 59.2	+41 48	7 55.8	+41 56	12.4	1.69	2.38		
Mar 11	2451248.5	7 53.8	+41 55	7 50.4	+42 03	12.5	1.75	2.40		
Mar 13	2451250.5	7 48.9	+41 59	7 45.4	+42 07	12.6	1.80	2.42		
Mar 15	2451252.5	7 44.4	+42 02	7 40.9	+42 09	12.7	1.86	2.45		
Mar 17	2451254.5	7 40.3	+42 04	7 36.8	+42 11	12.8	1.92	2.47		
Mar 19	2451256.5	7 36.6	+42 04	7 33.1	+42 11	12.9	1.98	2.49		
Mar 21	2451258.5	7 33.2	+42 03	7 29.7	+42 10	13.0	2.03	2.51		
Mar 23	2451260.5	7 30.2	+42 02	7 26.8	+42 08	13.1	2.09	2.54		
Mar 25	2451262.5	7 27.6	+42 00	7 24.1	+42 06	13.2	2.15	2.56		
Mar 27	2451264.5	7 25.2	+41 57	7 21.7	+42 03	13.3	2.21	2.58		
Mar 29	2451266.5	7 23.1	+41 54	7 19.6	+42 00	13.4	2.27	2.60		
Mar 31	2451268.5	7 21.2	+41 51	7 17.7	+41 57	13.5	2.33	2.63		
Apr 2	2451270.5	7 19.6	+41 48	7 16.1	+41 53	13.6	2.39	2.65		

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# *Observatory Corner*

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*By Michael B. Dye Observatory Chairman*



The Friday/Saturday/Sunday nights of February 12/13/14/15 were Prime Night at the Observatory Site. According to most reliable witnesses, there was a very good turn out. All but two of the Original Circle of 6 X 6 pads were in use. I am in receipt of 20 Pad Log forms. While this does not seem to be near enough, the results indicate that at least more members are starting to file Log Forms. The consensus of these Log Forms was that the transparency was about 5 and the

Seeing ranged from 2 to 10 with most people settling on about 7 or 8. It evidently got as cold as 19 degrees F. In other words it was a great night to be observing. The only fly in this otherwise marvelous ointment was the plethora of light violations

There were in fact four reported light violations of some note. Before you think that the light violations were caused by first timers, be advised that half were caused by members who had been there before, i.e. experienced members. The problems spanned the gauntlet from pulling fuses that prevented the auto from working correctly to (my personnel favorite) operating the Panic Button on the Auto Remote Control. The latter action resulted in more lights and sound than was thought possible at the time.

This looks like a good time to review some of the requirements of driving or entering one's auto after dark.

1. Turn OFF or deactivate all dome lights, don't forget the one in the trunk.
2. Cover or pull fuses to prevent operation of Break and Backup lights.
3. Bring towel (or something in that category) to be used to cover your dash board while auto is on. This allows one the ability to drive in the dark without having to fight the glare from the dash board. Please remember that when your Parking (Running)

*Continued...*

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## ***Observatory Corner... from previous page***

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lights are not ON the auto thinks that it is daylight outside and increases the power to the LED, LCD and Plasma display panels resulting in a night blind driver.

4. Test the effectiveness of items 1, 2 & 3 at home in a garage (or other suitable location) to see if you have extinguished all the lights in your auto. Do not wait until you are at the Observatory Site to perform this test.
5. Now make sure your auto will start and run. This is important. If your auto does not run, you may have to make other arrangements to control light emissions from your auto. Make a list (on paper) of what you did so that when you get to the Observatory Site you can do it again, and also put everything back where it belongs when you leave. The local constabulary frowns on driving down the Interstate without any lights on. Expensive tickets can result.

One of the main items to look out for is that fuses do not control only the items listed for a particular fuse. Auto manufactures are famous for hiding other functions on fuses whose primary labeled function is say the backup lights. Like, say, the Auto Computer. Loss of power to the later device can result in a non operative auto. This is one of the reasons that I recommend trying out your light control actions before you come out to the Observatory Site.

One thing that I would recommend that you do before you pack up to leave the Observatory Site (at night) is to start you auto and let it idle for a while. While the auto is running turn on the windshield wipers and heater/defogger (winter) or Air Conditioning (summer). This should get the windows to clear up before you start to drive. This will increase your ability to drive in the dark while experiencing fewer obstacles while attempting to look through your windshield.

If we all follow the above rules, we should all have an enjoyable evening of astronomy every time we are at the Observatory Site.

***Please fill out the appropriate log form when you use the site.***

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# ***H.A.S. Banquet***

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*by Bill Pellerin, GuideStar Editor*

The annual H.A.S. Banquet was held on the evening of February 20th at the Renaissance Hotel in Greenway Plaza. It was an outstanding event. The food, a choice of Mahi Mahi or Steak, was excellent. I enjoyed the Mahi Mahi with rice and green beans preceded by a leaf salad. Desert was a very nice chocolate cake.

The featured speaker for the evening was Dr. John Lienhard from the University of Houston. He writes and presents "The Engines of our Ingenuity", which is broadcast nationwide (locally on 88.7 at 7:35 a.m. and 3:55 p.m.) His presentation had as its theme "Reach for the Stars" and he



Leland Dolan



The Pearce's

discussed how humans are a species that values exploration. Much of the desire to pursue other-worldly goals has been fueled by the imaginations of science-fiction writers, and Dr. Lienhard gave several examples of this. He discussed the idea of an elevator-to-space proposed by more than one author.

Dr. Lienhard expressed some disappointment at our failure to follow-up on our success of reaching the moon.

There are significant manufacturing and research opportunities associated with a permanent lunar base, but it is unlikely that we will return to the lunar surface in the near future.

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## ***H.A.S. Banquet... from previous page***

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His talk was followed by a short question-and-answer session with Dr. Lienhard describing the motives behind the luddites. The fear of uncontrolled use of technology is founded in the problem of unforeseen consequences. For example, Dr. Lienhard said, how could we have foreseen the effect of the automobile on our cities (from a densely populated, concentrated city to a 'flattened' low-population-density city).



Judy Dye, Mike Dye, Marg Nunez

Congratulations to Bill Molinare, Leland Dolan, and Marg Nunez ended the event.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
*GuideStar deadline*  
*for the April*  
*issue*  
*is March 15*  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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## *Other Meetings...*

**Brazosport Astronomy Society** meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the Planetarium of the fine Arts Center at Brazosport College. Call Steve Lamb for program details (409) 297-3984

**Fort Bend Astronomy Club** meets the third Friday of the month at 8:00 p.m. at the First Colony conference Center. Novice meeting begins at 7:00, regular meeting begins at 8:00. Web site: <http://rampages.onramp.net/~binder/>

**Johnson Space Center Astronomical Society** meets in the the Lunar and Planetary Institute on the 2nd Friday of each month. Web site: <http://www.ghgcorp.com/cbr/jscas.html>

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## *HAS Web Page*

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The Houston Astronomical Society Web page has information on the society, its resources, and meeting information.

The address is: <http://spacsun.rice.edu/~has>

Want your astronomy work and name on the Internet for the whole world to see? Have some neat equipment? Pictures in film, CCD, hand drawings or video format are all welcome on the page. Do you have an idea to improve the page? I'm listening. Send me Email at [goldberg@sccsi.com](mailto:goldberg@sccsi.com). (You can click on my name on the HAS home page). Or, you can call me, Steve Goldberg (WebMaster), at 713-721-5077.

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# ***Observatory Duty Roster***

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*by Michael B. Dye, Observatory Chairman*

This is the duty list for March, April and May. Be sure to contact your supervisor for any information that you may need and the date and time to be at the site. You may change from site duty to open house or from open house to site duty by pre-arrangement with the Site Supervisor for that month. Changes between months require Observatory Chairman coordination.

**For March supervisor ..... Robert Rogers ..... 281 997-9682**

W. Charles Barns ..... Members Observatory Night 03-06-99  
Don Bates ..... Site  
John Blubaugh ..... Site  
Ken Carey ..... Members Observatory Night 03-06-99  
Ronald R. Carman ..... Site  
John Chauvin ..... Site  
Art Ciampi ..... Members Observatory Night 03-06-99  
Mickey Davis ..... Site

**For April supervisor ..... Howard Leverenz ..... 713 957-8667**

Kenneth Drake ..... Site  
Mark Egan ..... Site  
Jean-Marc Follini ..... Site  
Fred Garcia ..... Members Observatory Night 04-17-99  
John Garza III ..... Site  
Clifton Goldman ..... Members Observatory Night 04-17-99  
David Granadino ..... Members Observatory Night 04-17-99  
Michael Gumler ..... Site

**For May supervisor ..... Logan Rimes ..... 713 681-5397**

Chai S. Heng ..... Site  
David L. Herlinger ..... Site  
Gary Hlivko ..... Site  
Wayne Hutchinson ..... Members Observatory Night 05-08-99  
Clayton L. Jeter ..... Site  
Stanley G. Jones ..... Members Observatory Night 05-08-99  
Keith A. Jurgens ..... Members Observatory Night 05-08-99  
Arnie Kaestner ..... Site

Please remember that Site work can be done anytime and does not have to be done just before Members Observatory Night. Contact your Site Supervisor for details. Names are selected for Site Duty using the current Alphabetical listing for Observatory Key Holders. If any member knows of a conflict please call me before your name is listed.

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# ***B&Ps from the IAUCs***

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*by Matt Delevoryas*



This last month of Circulars saw a Pluto debacle. On February 4th, Minor Planet Electronic Circular 1999-C03 was an editorial notice which appeared to be suggesting that Pluto was about to be given the designation of a minor, not major, planet. (Actually, to be specific, this Circular was a reprint of something published two days earlier in MPC 33615-33616, which enjoys less wide circulation than the MPECs.) What the Circular actually was about was the imminently expected occasion when minor planet designator number (10000) was about to be bestowed upon some body. There is a tradition of doing something special with asteroid numbers which are multiples of a thousand. An idea being floated was that the designation (10000) be given to Pluto. However, as Brian Marsden, author of the Circular, wrote, "It is also very important to affirm that there is absolutely no implied 'demotion' or 'reclassification' of Pluto from its position in the list of the 'planets' (or 'major planets' or 'principal planets'). Unfortunately, many of the articles that have appeared in the press have accidentally (or deliberately) misinterpreted this issue." So, even if we had come to see "(10000) Pluto," we were not to be deprived of a planet! Marsden went on to explain that Pluto is routinely misreported as an asteroid, and sometimes is deliberately measured without any easy means to disseminate these measurements. The idea of creating "(10000) Pluto" was to kill three birds with one stone: A suitably grand recipient of the designation (10000), assuring "Pluto will be at the head of the Transneptunian list" (very soon, recent Kuiper belt discoveries will start receiving permanent designations), and providing a bookkeeping and disseminating facility for astrometric observations of Pluto (as if it were an asteroid). The Circular explained that the IAU Small Bodies Names Committee had been grappling with the (10000) issue for a while, including the proposal of "(10000) Pluto." The Circular solicited feedback from all readers, which might be used to help support the "(10000) Pluto" idea, or suggest a (10000) alternative. Even as feedback was arriving, the IAU issued a press release, dated the 3rd, which clarified that there was much misunderstanding (there really was no intent to strip Pluto of planet-hood), but also that the Small

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## ***B&Ps... from previous page***

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Bodies Names Committee had decided that Pluto would not receive a minor planet designator. This decision (if one read between the lines of the press release in just the right way) may very well have been motivated by the backlash against the nonexistent plan to strip Pluto of planet-hood! On the 5th, MPEC 1999-C10 was issued, also an editorial notice on the same subject (and mentioning the press release). Although the SBNC had decided against "(10000) Pluto," it still hadn't decided what to do with (10000), with a little over three weeks before the decision had to be made. The feedback solicited by 1999-C03 had run about 2:1 for "(10000) Pluto" but no obvious other alternative sufficiently deserving of (10000) had yet to appear! In another month, we'll finally see the end of the story.

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## ***Hill Country Astronomer's Spring Banquet***

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On the Southwest Texas campus in San Marcos  
March 27, Mixer is from 5-7 with cash bar, Dinner is at 7  
Our after-dinner speaker is Dr. Reginal Dufour from Rice University  
(<http://spacsun.rice.edu/faculty/dufour.html>)  
The Dinner costs \$17 but it is optional. Dr. Dufour's talk is free.  
Everyone who attends needs to make a reservation by mailing \$17  
to:

Russell Doescher, Physics Dept, NSB 280, Southwest Texas State  
University, San Marcos, TX 78666

Questions and speaker only reservations can be emailed to:  
sa39782@swt.edu

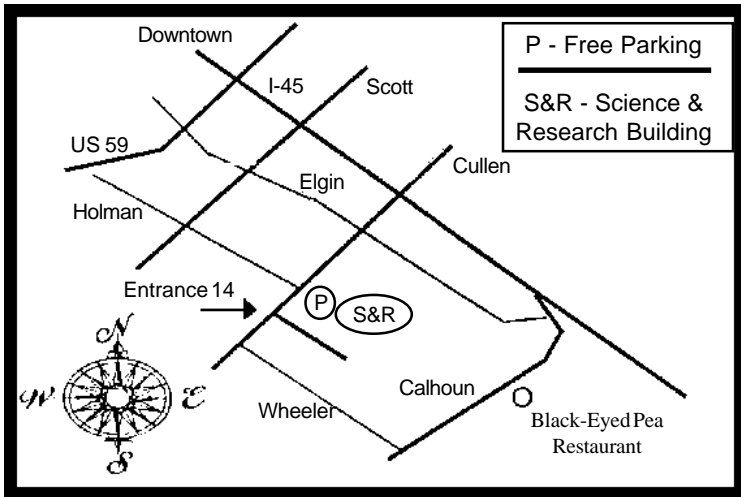
Sharon Alexander  
sa39782@swt.edu  
512-245-6144

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# Special "Help" Volunteers

Any member who wants specific information on a subject listed below may call the individual listed. If you have a moderate knowledge of a special subject and would be happy to have others ask you about that subject, let the editor know and your subject, name and phone will be listed in *GuideStar* in the future. Note that we have listed a few possible areas where you might volunteer, but, of course, you are not limited to these. You can also have a specialty which is a sub-group of another. Note that the number of names for any subject is not limited to only one person. Also see the "Ad Hoc Committee Chairpersons" on the inside front cover and the "Special Interest Groups Listing" article.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Asteroids .....	Barbara Wilson .....	281-933-1289
Astrometry .....	Richard Nugent .....	713-910-5945
Astrophotography .....	Steve Goldberg .....	713-721-5077
Beginning in Astronomy .....	Peggy Gilchrist .....	281-558-1190
	Amelia Goldberg .....	713-721-5077
Comets .....	Kenneth Drake .....	281-367-1592
	Don Pearce .....	713-432-0734
Computers .....	Matt Delevoryas .....	713-795-0808
	Leland Dolan .....	713-529-0403
	Ricardo Palmeira .....	713-669-1409
Cosmology .....	Ricardo Palmeira .....	713-669-1409
Deep Sky .....	Larry Mitchell .....	281-448-8700
	Barbara Wilson .....	281-933-1289
Double Stars .....	John Blubaugh .....	713-921-4275
Drawing (Sketching) .....	Scott Mitchell .....	713-461-3020
Herschel Objects .....	Larry Mitchell .....	281-448-8700
History, Astro'y - General .....	Leland Dolan .....	713-529-0403
	Ricardo Palmeira .....	713-669-1409
History, Astro'y - Amateurs .....	Tom Williams .....	713-526-2868
Mathematics, Astronomical .....	Richard Nugent .....	713-910-5945
Messier Objects .....	Novice Committee (see inside front cover)	
Photometry .....	Tom Arnold .....	281-495-0142
Radio Telescopes .....	John Hiatt .....	713-464-4010
Satellites, Artificial .....	<open>	
Solar Observing .....	Larry Mitchell .....	281-448-8700
Spectroscopy .....	Tom Arnold .....	281-495-0142
Thin Crescent Moons .....	Don Pearce .....	713-432-0734
Variable Stars .....	Barbara Wilson .....	281-933-1289
	Tom Williams .....	713-526-2868
Video .....	Larry Mitchell .....	281-448-8700



### General Membership Meeting

The Houston Astronomical Society holds its regular monthly General Membership Meeting on the first Friday of each month, unless rescheduled due to a holiday. Meetings are in Room 117 of the Science and Research Building at the University of Houston. A Novice Presentation begins at 7:00 p.m.. The short business meeting and featured speaker are scheduled at 8:00 p.m. Also typically included are Committee Reports, Special Interest Group Reports, current activity announcements, hardware reviews, an astrophotography slide show by members and other items of interest.

### Board of Directors Meeting

The Board of Directors Meeting is held on dates scheduled by the board at 7:00 p.m. in Room 106 of the Space Science Building at Rice University. Call StarLine for Board Meeting information. Information provided to GuideStar will be published. The meetings are open to all members of the Society in good standing. Attendance is encouraged.

### GuideStar Information

The H.A.S. *GuideStar* is published monthly by the Houston Astronomical Society. All opinions expressed herein are those of the contributor and not necessarily of Houston Astronomical Society. The monthly Meeting Notice is included herein. *GuideStar* is sent via bulk rate mail to Regular, Student, and Honorary Members of H.A.S., selected individuals and recent visitors to the General Membership Meeting. Contributions to *GuideStar* by members are encouraged. Electronic submission is helpful. Submit the article in ASCII text, MS-Word (preferred), or WordPerfect format on an IBM format floppy or via AOL (BILLP10566). Mail copy to the address shown on the outside cover or to the editor at 256 East 5th Street, Houston, TX 77007. Copy must be received by the second Friday of the month for inclusion in the issue to be mailed near the end of the same month. Or, bring copy to the General Membership Meeting and give it to the Editor, or phone to make special arrangements.

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