

Houston Astronomical Society

GuideStar



.....
August, 2004

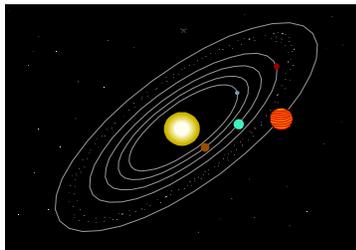
At the August 6 meeting...

The 2003 Mars Apparition

Dr. Schmude

This talk will focus on work done by both amateurs and professional astronomers. The shrinkage rate of Mars' south polar cap will be discussed along with the December 2003 dust storm.

Dr. Schmude will also briefly describe the two major discoveries made by professional astronomers, which are: the discovery of methane in the Martian atmosphere and the discovery that liquid water was once on Mars' surface.



You are encouraged to bring your cell phone and digital watch. There will be at least one demonstration in this talk.

Highlights:

- Cassini's Call Home 7**
- Transit of Venus Observations 9**
- Observatory Meets Funding Goal 11**

HAS Web Page:

<http://www.AstronomyHouston.org>

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

Schedule of meeting activities:

All meetings are at the University of Houston Science and Research building. See the inside back cover for a map to the location.

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

Site orientation meeting: 7:00 p.m.
Classroom 121

General meeting: 8:00 p.m.
Room 117

See last page for a map and more information.

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 & Past President

President: Steve Sartor H:281-370-3544
 Vice Pres: Bill Leach H: 281-893-4057
 Secretary: Brian Cudnik H: 832- 912-1244
 Treasurer: Bill Flanagan H:713-699-8819
 Past President: Kirk Kendrick H: 281-633-8819

Additional Board Members

Steve Goldberg 713-721-5077
 Don Pearce 713-432-0734
 Jay Levy 281-557-4920 .. Field Trip and Observing, Program
 Tessie Nolan 936-321-5422

Liaison responsibility

Committee Chairpersons

Audit Don Selle 281-391-5470
 Education Richard Nugent 713-524-1993
 Field Tr./Obsg. Kenneth Miller 936-931-2724
 Novice George Stradley
 281-376-5787
 Observatory Michael Dye 281-498-1703
 Program John Blubaugh 713-921-4275
 Publicity Joe Khalaf 713- 660-8219
 Telescope Clayton Jeter 281-573-1337
 Welcoming Susan Kennedy 281-376-3262
 Hannah Lange 832-715-7833

Ad-Hoc Committee Chairpersons

Historian Leland Dolan 713-688-0981
 Librarian Peggy Gilchrist 281-443-8773
 Logo Mds Sales Judy Dye 281-498-1703
 Long Range Plan Bill Leach 281-893-4057
 Parliamentarian Kirk Kendrick 281-633-8819
 Publ. Star Party Richard Nugent 713-524-1993
 Rice U. Coord. Matt Delevoryas 713-666-9428
 Schedule Obs'v't'y Steve Goldberg 713-721-5077
 Texas Star Pty Steve Goldberg 713-721-5077

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.
 Dr. Lawrence Armendarez, U. of St. Thomas

Dues and Membership Information

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

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 & Telescope* mag \$32.95/year, *Astronomy* mag \$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.

Table of Contents

- 3 President's Corner
- 4 July Meeting Minutes
- 5 August/September Calendar
New HAS Shirt
- 6 Observations of the Editor
- 7 Cassini's Call Home
- 8 Observatory Duty Roster
HAS Hats
- 9 Transit of Venus Observation
Want Ads
- 10 Upcoming Meetings

Welcome to New Members!

The Houston Astronomical Society encourages you to join our group of active amateur astronomers and take advantage of the benefits of membership. As a member you'll have access to the club observing site near Columbus, Texas. (You're required to participate in a site orientation meeting before you get the gate lock combination.) The site has concrete pads for setting up your telescope, restroom and bunkhouse facilities, and areas set aside for camping. You'll get monthly issues of the *GuideStar* newsletter, you'll get to vote and to serve the organization as an officer, and you will be supporting the local amateur astronomy community.

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 Leach 281-893-4057
 Comets Don Pearce 713-432-0734
 Lunar & Planetary John Blubaugh 713-921-4275
 Occultations & Grazes Wayne Hutchison 713-827-0828
 Advanced Bill Leach 281-893-4057

Other Meetings...

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://www.fbac.org>

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>

North Houston Astronomy Club meets at 7:30 p.m. on the 4th Friday of each month in the Teaching Theatre of the Student Center at Kingwood College. Call 281-312-1650 or E-mail bill.leach@nhmccd.edu. Web site: www.astronomyclub.org

President's Corner

August 2004

by Steve Sartor

After being scopeless for the last number of months I was finally able to make it out to Columbus last week. WOW! Not to take anything away from anyone else that puts in a lot of blood, sweat and tears at the site, but Ed Szczepanski has done a fantastic job as our grounds keeper. I mentioned to Ed that it looked like a golf course and he said that there had been some talk of putting in a par three course. Something about a "lob over the Dob hole." We can just hope he's kidding.

Anne Hallman has just turned in her resignation from the *GuideStar* staff. Her schedule will no longer permit her to continue doing the mailing. So..... we are looking for some help here. Now is your chance to step forward and do your part. If at all interested, please give Anne a call and at least see what the job involves. Anne says she has worked it down to just a few hours per month and would be happy to instruct her replacement in what to do.

And now some kudos for the George Observatory. I had the opportunity to take the boys from Camp Deerfoot down there a few weeks ago, and they couldn't have had a better time. Unfortunately, due to the weather, they did not get a chance to look through the 36", but, Barbara Wilson, Peggy Halford, Hannah Lange and John Graves gave them the thrill of their lives in the Challenger Learning Center. If anyone has not had the opportunity to witness a group of kids "run a mission" you're really missing out.

Steve Sartor

"Youth is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children".

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

Membership Renewals...

Please check the mailing label on your copy of the *GuideStar*, or check your email if you get an electronic copy of the *GuideStar*.

It'll tell you when your membership expires. If it expires soon, please send your renewal to the address on the outside cover of *GuideStar*. The dues information is on page 2.

Membership in the Houston Astronomical Society is one of the great bargains in Astronomy. For a regular membership of \$33 you get the opportunity to support an active and growing organization, you get the monthly *GuideStar* newsletter, and you get access to the outstanding H.A.S. observing site near Columbus, Texas. (You must attend an orientation, given monthly, to use the site.) And, after two months of membership you can borrow, at no charge, one of the Society's loaner telescopes. It's the best deal in town, we think. Please renew your membership when it expires.

Thanks!

Houston Astronomical Society

General Membership Meeting

Friday, July 9, 2004
University of Houston

Minutes

The Meeting was called to order at 8:05pm, and was followed by a welcome and meeting information from the President.

There were 1 new member and about 2 visitors present.

The announcements were as follows:

- Loaner scopes loans have been extended one month due to the absence of the loaner scope chair.
- Bill Leach is organizing Astronomy day at the George Observatory. The event is scheduled for October 16, with the fifth annual regional meeting at the Burke Baker Planetarium on October 15. There will be an organizational meeting at 7:30pm at the University of St. Thomas on Wednesday July 14.
- Michael Dye announced that the fundraising for the new lawn mower raised \$5,000 so far. He put out a call for more donations, with which the Observatory Committee wishes to set up a weather station. There were two further announcements by Michael:
 - H.A.S. Annual Picnic is September 18
 - Please don't drive between the entrance and exit of the Site behind the fence, as there is a huge sinkhole there.
- Judy Dye announced logo sales and gave information about the new Observer's Handbook 2005 as well as received hat orders
- Don Pearce gave the Comet Report:
 - There are 3 binocular comets visible. Comet C/2001 Q4 (NEAT) is fading as it recedes from both Earth and Sun. It is currently magnitude 7 to 7 ½ as it moves northeast through Ursa Major and through the Bowl of the Big Dipper during the later part of the month.
 - C/2003 K4 (LINEAR) is currently at mag. 7 ½ as it moves toward southwest Bootes and brightens. The time of perihelion passage is October 12, but it is receding from the Earth. It will again approach by October 1, when it should reach a maximum magnitude of about 5. Observe this comet over the summer, since it will be much better placed for SE TX than it will be in October.
 - C/2004 H6 SWAN is at magnitude 7.7 and is moving west northwest through Cetus, Aquarius, and Aquila. It now rises around 2am but will be up all night by month's end. The comet passed perihelion on May 12, but will come closest to Earth on July 25

- C/2002 T7 (LINEAR) is on the Southwest horizon in the constellation Sextans, as it gets dark. Glowing faintly at magnitude 8.5. It is invisible to our location due to low elevation.
- Another comet of note, 29P S-W 2 has been in outburst. Normally between magnitude 15 and 17, the comet had recently reached between magnitude 11.5 and 12.0 but is likely fading by now. The comet, observable with a large scope, is in Pisces and rises at midnight.

Steve Goldberg introduced the evening's speaker, H.A.S. member Larry Michell, who gave a talk about Sir William Herschel.

Door prizes were awarded.

The H.A.S. Board Meeting will be held the last Thursday of the month at the University of St. Thomas.

The meeting adjourned at 10:01pm.

August/September Calendar:



Photo by Scott Mitchell

Check the web site:
www.astronomyhouston.org
Webmaster: Bob Rogers
siteworker@juno.com

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

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 siteworker@juno.com.

Date Time Event

August 2004

5		Neptune at opposition
6	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H.
	8:00 p.m.	General membership meeting U of H. Richard Schmude, "The 2003 Mars Apparition," (an amateur and professional perspective).
7	5:01 p.m.	Last Quarter Moon Members Observatory Night - Columbus
12	early a.m.	Perseid meteor shower at maximum
14		Prime Night-Columbus
15	8:24 p.m.	New Moon
23	5:12 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
27		Uranus at opposition
29	9:22 p.m.	Full Moon

September 2004

3	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H.
	8:00 p.m.	General membership meeting U of H. Peter Gural, "Chasing the Leonid Meteor Storms"
4		Members Observatory Night - Columbus
6	10:11 a.m.	Last Quarter Moon
11		Prime Night-Columbus
14	9:29 p.m.	New Moon
21	10:54 a.m.	First Quarter Moon
22	11:30 a.m.	Autumnal Equinox-Fall starts in N. Hemisphere
28	8:09 a.m.	Full Moon

Send calendar events to JBlubaugh@aol.com
 or call 713-921-4275.

New HAS Shirt

We have a new shirt for Logo Sales. It is a short sleeve with a collar, and comes in several different colors. It comes in men's sizes and ladie's sizes. The logo was digitized and will be embroidered on each one, not silk-screened. You will be seeing them (I hope) by the next meeting.

For those of you who want to order a shirt, or for those of you who want to order another one, they have to be prepaid. The price of the shirt will be \$24.00. If you want to order, please call me at 281-498-1703, or you can e-mail me at judyadye@aol.com. All checks are to be made out to HAS and mailed or given to me.

Thank you to the ones who have already ordered a shirt.

Judy Ann Dye

At the HAS meeting, please remember to park across from Entrance 14 because of the construction in the parking lot of the Science and Research bldg.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**GuideStar deadline
for the September
issue
is August 15**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Observations... of the editor

by Bill Pellerin, GuideStar Editor



I was in west Texas last weekend with my little 2.7" refractor. After a shortage of good skies in the Houston area it was very nice indeed to get to a place where it was clear, dark, and cool at night (in the 50's). Although this was not primarily an observing trip, I was able to do a bit of 'casual' observing from near the visitor's center at the McDonald Observatory. I saw the Lagoon (M8), the Triffid (M20), M22 (globular in Sagittarius), Albireo (double star), Epsilon Lyr (a double-double star set), M13 (the Hercules cluster), Jupiter and its four major moons, M4 (globular in Scorpius), M51 (galaxy in Canes Venatici), M81 & M82 (a beautiful pair of galaxies in Ursa Major), and more, I'm sure. Perfect observing conditions, if you ask me.

As is mentioned elsewhere in this issue, a new volunteer is needed to print and mail the *GuideStar*. It's a whole lot easier now that we don't use bulk mail and the number of mailed *GuideStar* copies is much, much smaller. Call the prez or call Anne Hallman if you can help with this. (You'll need a computer, with email, and a printer to print the 'master' copy.)

My thanks to Anne for her help getting the *GuideStar* in your hands. She started the job when *everybody* got a copy in the mail, so it was a much bigger task when she started than it is now.

Larry Mitchell's talk last month about William Herschel was excellent. Larry effectively used his Powerpoint slides to illustrate his story of the life of one of the greatest (if not the greatest) visual observers for all time.

Did you see Barbara Wilson's excellent review of the book *The Herschel Partnership* in the July issue of *Sky and Telescope* magazine? The book amplifies on the story of the relationship as described by Larry Mitchell. If you want to follow-up on Larry's information, this book would be a good place to start.

I'll be showing *The_Sky* and *SkyTools* software at the August novice meeting. There won't be much time for this presentation, so I'll only touch on the programs briefly. Other software (including *MegaStar*) will be presented as well to give you an idea of what this stuff does. I look forward to seeing you there.

I'm hoping that as the year wanes we'll be entering into weather patterns that allow for a more consistent observing program. My poor telescope is feeling neglected and needs some attention paid.

In this issue we have a short description of the Venus transit as witnessed by Bill Molinaire (and transcribed by Leland Dolan). If you have had an interesting observation and would like to share it with other HAS members, send me the information and I'll publish it here.

Michael Dye reports a successful fund raising campaign for the observatory. I made a small contribution and I'm pleased to see that the total of the contributions met the goal. It costs money to keep the observatory up-and-running and your contributions help all of us enjoy the facility.

I'll see you at the August meeting!

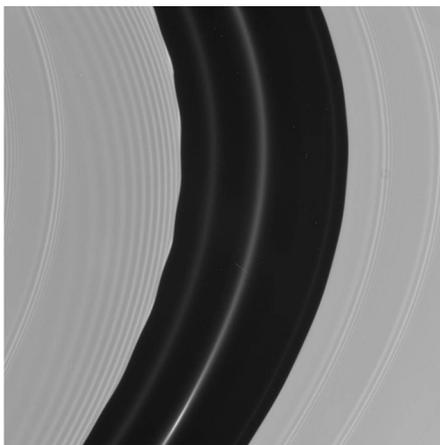
*Until next time...
clear skies and new moons!*

..Bill

Waiting for Cassini's "Safe Arrival" Call

The evening of June 30, 2004, was nail-biting time at Cassini Mission Control. After a seven-year journey that included gravity assist flybys of Venus, Earth, and Jupiter, Cassini had finally arrived at Saturn. A 96-minute burn of its main engine would slow it down enough to be captured into orbit by Saturn's powerful gravitational field. Too short a burn and Cassini would keep going toward the outer reaches of the solar system. Too long a burn and the orbit would be too close and fuel reserves exhausted.

According to Dave Doody, a Cassini Mission Controller at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California, there



Right after entering Saturn orbit, Cassini sent this image of the part of the Encke Gap in Saturn's rings. Image credit NASA/JPL/Space Science Institute.

was a good chance the Earth-bound Cassini crew would have to wait hours to learn whether or not the burn was successful. Of the three spacecraft-tracking Deep Space Network (DSN) complexes around the globe, the complex in Canberra, Australia, was in line to receive Cassini's signal shortly after the beginning of the burn. However, winds of up to 90 kilometers per hour had been forecast. In such winds, the DSN's huge dish antennas must be locked into position pointed straight up and cannot

be used to track a tiny spacecraft a billion miles away as Earth turns on its axis. "The winds never came," notes Doody. The DSN complex at Goldstone, California, was tracking the carrier signal from Cassini's low-gain antenna (LGA) when the telltale Doppler shift in the LGA signal was seen, indicating the sudden deceleration of the spacecraft from the successful ignition of the main engine. Soon thereafter, however, Goldstone rotated out of range and Canberra took the watch.

After completion of the burn, Cassini was programmed to make a 20-second "call home" using its high-gain antenna (HGA). Although this HGA signal would contain detailed data on the health of the spacecraft, mission controllers would consider it a bonus if any of that data were actually captured. Mostly, they



just wanted to see the increase in signal strength to show the HGA was pointed toward Earth and be able to determine the spacecraft's speed from the Doppler data. If possible, they also wanted to try to lock onto the signal with DSN's closed-loop receiver, a necessary step for extracting engineering data.

Normally it takes around one minute to establish a lock on the HGA signal once a DSN station rotates into range. Having only 20 second's worth of signal to work with, the DSN not only established a lock within just a few seconds, but extracted a considerable amount of telemetry during the remaining seconds.

"The DSN people bent over backwards to get a lock on that telemetry signal. And they weren't just depending on the technology. They really know how to get flawless performance out of it. They were awesome," remarks Doody.

Find out more about the DSN from JPL's popular training document for mission controllers, Basics of Space Flight (www.jpl.nasa.gov/basics) and the DSN website at deepspace.jpl.nasa.gov/dsn. For details of the Cassini Saturn orbit insertion, see www.jpl.nasa.gov/basics/soi. Kids can check out The Space Place at spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/dsn_fact1.shtml to learn about the amazing ability of the DSN antennas to detect the tiniest spacecraft signals.

This article was written by Diane K. Fisher. It was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Observatory Duty Roster

by Michael B. Dye, Observatory Chairman

This is the duty list for August, September and October. If you are listed in this roster, please 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.

August Supervisor Don Selle 281-391-5470
Clayton Jeter Site
Stanley Jones Site
Keith Jurgens Members Observatory Night 08-07-04
Arnie Kaestner Site
David Kahlich Members Observatory Night 08-07-04
Jerod Kendrick Site
Robert Kuna Site
Jay Levy Site
Mary Lockwood Members Observatory Night 08-07-04

September Supervisor Allen Gilchrist 281-443-8773
Robert Menius Site
Larry Mitchell Members Observatory Night 09-04-04
Debbie Moran Site
Mark Mulrooney Site
Johnny Norris Members Observatory Night 09-04-04
Richard Nugent Members Observatory Night 09-04-04
Ralph Overturf Site
Don C. Pearce Site
Sim Picheloup Site

October Supervisor Logan Rimes 713-681-5397
Scott Poteet Members Observatory Night 10-16-04
Leonard Raif Site
Henry Schneider Site
Linda Sternbach Members Observatory Night 10-16-04
Larry Wadle Site
Mark Watson Members Observatory Night 10-16-04

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.

Houston Astronomical Society Hats

I will take orders for HAS hats at the next meeting. If I receive enough orders, I will try to place and order. I would like to know if you are interested in blue, white, or have an assortment of colors. I will need your name, phone number, and color desired. I will contact you to let you know how much the hats will cost.

If you can't come to the meeting, please call me at 281-498-1703, or e-mail me at judyadye@aol.com <<mailto:judyadye@aol.com>>.

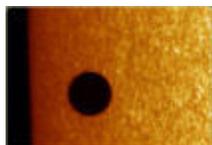
Thank you.

Judy

Transit of Venus, as Seen from Connecticut

By *Bill Molinare*

I observed the transit of Venus, June 8, from my sister's home in Fairfield, CT, about 45 miles north-east of New York City. Her home sits on a hill overlooking Long Island Sound, with a good horizon from Northeast through South, around to the West.



Picture from the Internet

It had been cloudy for several days, but the morning of the transit dawned practically clear, except for a few clouds low in the East that covered the Sun for the first hour after it had risen. Finally, the clouds moved on, and the Sun appeared

about 20 degrees up in the East-Northeast. In 10x50 binoculars I could clearly see a little black spot on the Sun, just inside the lower edge.

I set up my 4¼ inch (ball telescope); a Schmidt-Newtonian design. Using a 7mm eyepiece, which gave me about 64 power. I found that a single layer of

Mylar worked perfectly, while the recommended double layers made the Sun almost too dim to see, due to its low elevation. The Sun also appeared its natural white color when viewed through Mylar.

At exactly 11:05:40 UT the silhouette of Venus appeared to touch the limb of the Sun.

For the next 20 minutes the planet gradually moved off the Sun's surface, and at 11:25:50 UT, the tiny notch on the Sun's edge disappeared, ending this year's transit of Venus. No "black drop" effect was visible from my location with my equipment, but this is no doubt an effect of Earth's own atmosphere.

Our next opportunity to observe this extremely rare event will be June 6, 2012, which will be visible throughout North America and the Pacific Ocean. From Hawaii we will be able to observe the complete transit (ingress and egress) in the "cloud shadow" of Mauna Kea on the west side of the "Big Island". If you miss the transit in 2012, then it will be 105½ years until the next occurrence.

(Transcribed by Leland Dolan)

Want Ads

For sale —

Celestron C-8, Black tube Super C-8 Plus w / star bright coating.

1 eyepiece, (30 mm Plossl).

1- 8x50 Polaris finder scope w / illuminated reticle

1- Telrad finder scope, new in box

1- Davis Instruments Mark 3 Sextant (Plastic).

1- Celestron dew cap / lens shade

1- Celestron tripod for fork mount

1- trunk for scope

\$ 800.00

Contact Clayton Jeter @ 281-573-1337

Upcoming HAS Meetings

General Meetings

September 10—Peter Gural “Chasing the Leonid Meteor Storms” - Discussion of the ground-based and airborne missions to study the Leonid meteor storms where I contributed as an amateur meteor enthusiast. The ground based missions to Mongolia (1998), La Palma (1999), KSFC (2000), and Alaska (2003) as well as the Leonid MAC air based campaigns of 2001 and 2002 will be discussed.

October 1—Richard Nugent “New Developments in the field of Asteroid Occultation’s”

November 5—Dr. Larry Pinsky “The Accelerating Universe” (originally scheduled for April, but postponed until November)

December 3—Kelly Taylor. "Industrial Light Pollution" Kelly Taylor, working for the power generating plant at Premcor Refinery in Port Arthur, noticed the wasted light that his refinery was putting into the sky. And this wasted light cost money to produced and harmed the environment in several different ways. Kelly set about adjusting the position of some lights, replacing many with lower wattage bulbs, and turning other off. These changes reduced glare, made the working environment more friendly, and helped comply with OSHA standards.

Novice Presentations

August 1: An Overview of Computer Programs for the Amateur Astronomer: Bill Flanagan, Bill Pellerin, Steve Sartor and Don Selle. The program will describe what each of AstroPlanner, MegaStar, Sky Tools, Starry Night Pro, and TheSky can and can't do. Each participant will use his laptop for a “live” demonstration.

September 10: Coordinate Systems: Ed Preston. Don't miss this one if you are a beginner — it's your key to finding things in the sky.

Houston Astronomical Society General Membership Meeting – University of Houston June 4, 2004 – Minutes:

- The meeting was called to order by president Steve Sartor at 8:10 PM.
- Steve Sartor and Bill Leach reported on Don Perce and his hospitalization.
- The membership were reminded that the 2004 July and September meetings will be held on the second Friday of the month due to scheduling conflicts with holidays.
- Clayton Jeeter updated the society on the telescope loaner program.
- Bill Leach announced a June 25 regional astronomy meeting at Kingwood College where Steve Edberg of the JPL NASA Cassini Team will speak on the Cassini mission. The H. A. S. membership was invited to attend.
- Ken Miller announced a “Southern Sky Star Party” for June 12 at the Columbus site.
- Michael Dye announced that the metalwork on the observatory had been sand blasted and painted and he encouraged donations to the observatory fund.
- After consulting with the treasurer, the vice president reported that a quorum of members were present. (54 members were present; 15% of 300 members requires 45 members for a quorum).
- Nominations were opened for a vacancy on the board due to the resignation of Chris Mendel, Director at Large.
- Ken Miller was nominated. Michael Dye moved that nominations be closed. Jay Levy provided the second. Ken was elected by a unanimous vote.
- Steve Sartor read and explained the proposed changes to the H. A. S. bylaws. (see attached)
- Jay Levy motioned that the proposed changes be accepted. Ken Miller provided a second.
- Matt objected questioning whether the intent of Texas state law had been satisfied relative to the notification of the membership prior to a vote on bylaw changes. A discussion followed concerning modes of “electronic communication”.
- A call for a vote received a first and second.
- One member was opposed to closing the debate.
- A vote on the objection yielded, 15 in favor of the objection and 39 opposed to the objection.
- The vote on the proposed bylaws changes proceeded with 49 in favor of the changes and 2 opposed.
- Three winners of the H. A. S. science fair awards were introduced. Each gave a short presentation followed by a few questions.
- Steve Goldberg gave an update on the 2004 Texas Star Party.
- Members needing nametags were asked to sign a list.
- The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 PM.

*H. A. S. VP
Bill Leach*

Observatory Corner



By Michael B. Dye Observatory Chairman



Just before the start of the last General Meeting (July), some of you may have noticed Ed Preston and me sitting up front of the meeting room busily working with a laptop computer and a bunch of envelopes. Ed and I were counting up the Fund Raising donations that came in the envelopes that Bill Flanagan had delivered to me just minutes before. Ed and I finished totaling the donations

just before the announcements started. I am happy to announce that we made our initial goal of \$5,000.00 in less than 30 days. The last donation that night was \$5.00 in cash by Ed Preston when we realized that we had combined total of \$4,995.00 for all of the donations received to date. Ed donated the \$5.00 to bring the total to \$5,000.00 and I was able to make the announcement at the meeting that the membership had met the Observatory Committee Goal of \$5,000.00.

Debbie Moran delivered five more envelopes the afternoon of the 20th containing another \$260.00. At this point the Observatory Committee has collected on the order of \$5,260.00 in donations. I would like to thank all the members who have contributed to make this year's fund raising drive a total success.

In the same package of envelopes that Debbie collected from the Society mailbox, she also delivered the latest Randalls statement. I am pleased to announce that the Society members spent \$8,534.50 in the first quarter and \$6,405.00 in the second quarter at Randalls. This spending by the membership will result in a payment of \$85.35 for the first quarter and \$64.05 for the second. The Society Treasurer will send half of this money to the Observatory Committee Fund, which will be used by the Observatory Committee to maintain the Observatory Site.

Last month we made a discovery we have a new problem with our drainage. As a result of the county improving the road outside the North fence, water that used to drain across the road (and make the road a muddy mess) now pools on our side of the road on our property. This causes, what can only be described as a muddy sinkhole on our side of the fence in the area that used to be the road between the Entrance and Exit gates. One of our old returning members who didn't know about the change in the drainage conditions, inadvertently used this non-road to try and get from the Exit Gate to the Entrance Gate parking area. The SUV ended up getting stuck in the mud up to the axles. Ken Miller and I broke two steel cables trying to get the SUV out of the mud. All this at 12 midnight. Anyway, the owner of the SUV ended up calling a Tow truck to pull his vehicle out of the mud. Please don't use the road between the Entrance and Exit gates inside the Observatory Site fence until we resolve this problem.

The last item I want to talk about is the Annual Picnic. I am going to keep bringing this subject because I don't want anyone to claim I didn't advertise it enough. This year it will be on September the

18th. The moon will set at 22:06 (according to Matt Delevoryas), but the good news is that the New Moon will have been on the 14th. This means that this is only a four-day moon, which should not be too much of a problem. The reasoning behind choosing the 18th of September, was that (a) August is too hot, (b) October has Astronomy Day, (c) the 4th of September (Members Observatory Night) was Labor Day Weekend and (d) the 11th was prime Night and nobody liked that date. Please make plans now to attend the Annual Picnic and help make the activity a success this year.

The Society continues to benefit from members who shop at Randalls and now Krogers. For this we (the Society) thank you. Please link your Randalls card to the Houston Astronomical Society so that the society can benefit from the Randalls program. Our number is #6618. This is very easy to do, just go to the Courtesy Booth and tell the person there what you what to do. If you shop at Kroger, we now have a card available (at the General Meeting) that you present at the cash register when you check out. We can thank Joe Khalaf for his efforts in getting the cards.

Please fill out the appropriate log form when you use the site. Remember we use these forms as attendance records and to report Observatory Site problems such as broken toilets.

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. Parking is NOW across from Entrance 14, by the stadium.

Board of Directors Meeting

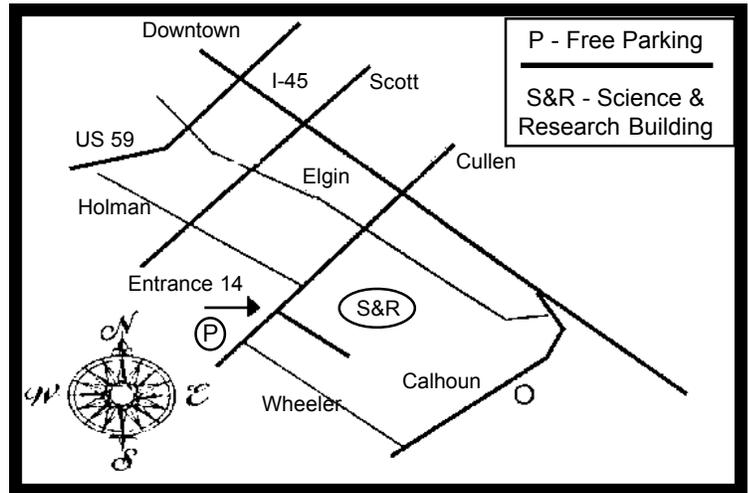
The Board of Directors Meeting is held on dates scheduled by the board at 7:00 p.m. at the University of St. Thomas. Information provided to GuideStar will be published. The meetings are open to all members of the Society in good standing. Attendance is encouraged.

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 text, MS-Word format via email BillP10566@aol.com. Copy must be received by the 15th 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.

Editing & Production: Bill Pellerin, 713-880-8061; FAX: 713-880-8850;
Email: Billp10566@aol.com

Reproduction and Mailing: Anne Hallman & Debbie Moran
Advertising: Advertisers may inquire concerning ad rates and availability of space.



Houston Astronomical Society

Meeting

August 6, 2004

7:00 Novice & Site Orientation

8:00 General Meeting

University of Houston



Houston Astronomical Society

P.O. Box 20332 • Houston, TX 77225-0332