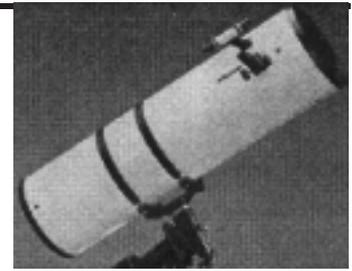


# The Observer



The Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers  
April 2004 Volume 29, Number 4

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## TCAA Officers

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Treasurer	Duane Yockey 309-452-3936 duane@lybink.com
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## Observer Editor/ TCAA Education Coordinator

Rebecca Wenning 21 Grandview Dr. Normal, IL 61761 309-454-4164 rwennin@ilstu.edu	Submissions must be received by the 1st of each month!
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## The TCAA and SETI@home by Wayne Kreps

What is SETI@home? You may or may not have heard of it. SETI stands for the “Search for ExtraTerrestrial Intelligence” and the @home is, you guessed it “at your home”. Yes, you too can search for E.T. in the comfort of your own home. Read on and I’ll tell you how.

The University of California at Berkeley has set up a program that uses radio signal data recorded from the Arecibo Radio Telescope in Puerto Rico. These radio signals are analyzed by computers to see if there really are aliens out there trying to contact us – or anyone else out there. Remember the movie Contact with Jodi Foster? Those were radio signals, but in reality the signal we are listening for are too finite to listen to by ear.

The folks at UC Berkeley were faced with a problem. They could not afford the supercomputers needed to process all of the data they were getting from Arecibo. You see, searching for aliens is not at the top of the list for government grants. (Continued on page 6, SETI@home)

## TCAA Calendar

### Astronomy Day

17 April 2004 - Saturday  
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
Eastland Mall in Bloomington

### Members-Only Observing Session

17 April 2004 - Saturday  
Dusk-Dawn - Sugar Grove NC

### Public Observing Session

24 April 2004 - Saturday  
9:00-11:00 PM - Sugar Grove NC  
Featured Sky Objects: Carl Wenning  
“Jupiter; Galaxy M65, M66, & NGC 3628”

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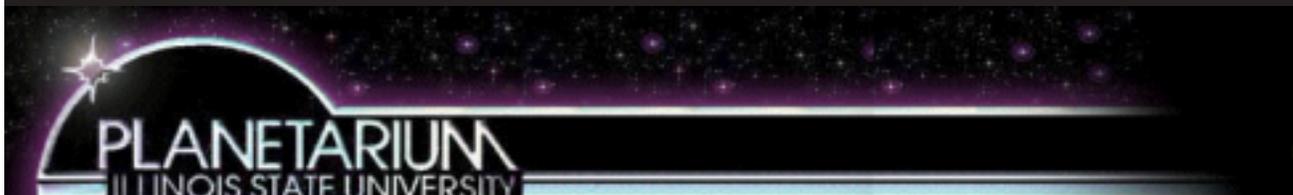
## Minutes of the TCAA Meeting

Monday, March 8, 2004

The meeting was called to order in the ISU Planetarium at 7:03 p.m. by President Dan Meyer. Fourteen members and guests were in attendance. Dan introduced himself, welcomed everyone, and asked Tom Willmitch to present his latest work "Follow the Drinking Gourd." After the program and following a 10-minute break, the business session began. He started the session by introducing the new officers. He addressed business matters in the following sequence.

- 1) TCAA general membership meetings will no longer be held on the second Monday of each month at the planetarium. Rather, these meetings will be coordinated with the TCAA's public observing sessions (POS) on Saturdays. Membership events open to the public will be presented on Saturday afternoons April through November this year. Special member-only events will then take place December through February when no POS will be held.
- 2) Coordinators are needed for one meeting and several public observing sessions (see table on the next page). Kal Kumar agreed to have his name added to the list of coordinators. Additional coordinators are needed for POS. If anyone in the membership is willing to coordinate these sessions, they are asked to contact Carl Wenning at 309-454-4164 (evenings) or at [wenning@phy.ilstu.edu](mailto:wenning@phy.ilstu.edu).
- 3) Vice President Lyle Rich will be coordinating promotion of all these events, and he has been in contact with the Pantagraph and a number of other publications for promotion of these events. He will also work with Mike Rogers to update the TCAA Web page. Dan pointed out that good promotion does help, noting that some 500 people had turned out at SGNC to view the recent opposition of Mars.
- 4) Dan noted that Karen Moens was about 2/3 way through cataloging the TCAA library. She has been making sleeves for books, lending cards, a records box, and has put things in folders and binders. She will be completing the task within about two weeks at which time Dan will deliver the library to the observatory. Carl Wenning noted concern about wind carrying rain and snow into the observatory through a vent where the library will be placed. Dan will see to it that some sort of protective barrier is set up over the top of books if necessary.
- 5) The high frequency vibration of the SGO observatory was again noted by Dan. Jim Steidinger has offered to assist with reinforcing the metal framework that supports the telescope above the concrete pier with cross struts containing turnbuckles. William Carney also noted that something might be done to better brace the metal framework where it interfaces with the pier. Jim and Dan will work on a solution to this problem. Jim, who runs Iron Horse Forge out of Fairbury and is a member of the Illinois Blacksmith Association, is at SGNC working in the new foundry on the third Saturday of each month from about 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Dan will coordinate work with his visits to SGNC.

**Support Your Local Planetarium!**



- 6) Astronomy Day is coming, and there is a need to coordinate events between TCAA, the ISU Planetarium, and the Challenger Learning Center if they wish to involve themselves with this project. The TCAA/CLC/ISU Planetarium coordinating committee will meet soon. Another TCAA representative is needed to join Lyle Rich; one volunteer is yet needed. Please contact Dan Meyer if interested in serving in this capacity.
- 7) Carl Wenning, the new Historian, asked members to contribute small written vignettes and pictures to the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary history of the TCAA that he will be putting together. He will gather the club's portfolios from whoever has them to include in his work.
- 8) Carl noted that David B. Williams, a TCAAer from the 1960's, has indicated an interest in attending the Annual Meeting during February 2005 to present information about his AAVSO variable star work.
- 9) Dan reviewed briefly the findings of his membership survey conducted at the recent Annual Meeting. He will be writing an article for the next edition of the *TCAA Observer* to provide a comprehensive summary question by question.
- 10) Wayne Krepps has volunteered to help members get involved with using *SETI at Home* software on their computers. Both he and Lyle Rich have scrutinized about 4,500 units for the project.

Being no further business or announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

### List of TCAA 2004 Meeting Dates/Topics

'04 Date	Mtg Time	Meeting Topic	Mtg Coordinator	POS Time	POS Topics	POS Coordinator
April 17	10a-4p	Astronomy Day	Duane Yockey	N/A	N/A	N/A
April 24	N/A	N/A	N/A	9 p.m.	Jupiter, M65, M66	Carl Wenning
May 22	TBA	Spectroscopy	Dan Meyer	9 p.m.	M51, M104, comets	
June 19	TBA	Stonehenge	C & R Wenning	9 p.m.	M13	Dan Meyer
July 24	TBA	Telescope Workshop	Carl Wenning	9 p.m.	M8, M17	
Aug 21	TBA	GPS Workshop	Rebecca Wenning	9 p.m.	M11	Carl Wenning
Sept 18	TBA	The Moon	Kal Kumar	8 p.m.	M27, Albireo	Kal Kumar
Oct 16	TBA	Variable Stars	Dan Meyer	7:30 p.m.	M57, Uranus/Neptun	
Nov 13	TBA	Galaxy Classification	Rebecca Wenning	6 p.m.	M31	Lyle Rich
Dec 18?	TBA	Saturnalia Party	TCAA Board	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jan ?	TBA	CLC?	Carl Wenning	N/A	N/A	N/A
Feb 5?	TBA	Annual Meeting	TCAA Board	N/A	N/A	N/A

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## Historical Treasure Trove “Discovered”

TCAA Historian Carl Wenning is now working to prepare the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *A Short History of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers*. Recently, while searching through materials he had referenced and accumulated for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this organization, he uncovered a number of important historical items. First, he ran across several handwritten personal vignettes that had been prepared by early TCAA members as recollections of the earliest days of the TCAA. He also came across several letters that were in the possession of Weldon Schuette at the time of his death in 1986 that Carl had never read, but which contained important club information. He came across a tribute to Weldon Schuette written shortly after his death and read to the membership after his funeral but never published. He also has found a number of books, newspaper clippings, and reports that appear to contain records of some of the club’s earliest events. Written reports by David Williams and Taylor Cisco have also been recovered. All these materials will be on display at the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting of the TCAA, along with photographs and other club memorabilia, in February 2005. Club members are once again encouraged to prepare personal vignettes of about 300 words for inclusion in the TCAA history. Inclusion of a picture would also be helpful. Contact Carl with your literary contribution.

## The Dues Blues

Please check your membership dues renewal on the front portion of your newsletter. If the box is marked, you have not paid your dues. You can find your personal renewal date on the address label just below your name. Please be considerate, and send in your dues promptly. Those paying late dues will be cut from the newsletter mailing list. Now, wouldn’t that make you blue?

## Historical Treasure Trove “Lost”

Carl Wenning was recently named historian for the TCAA. In an attempt to obtain the historical record of the club, he was unable to locate anyone who admitted to having the club’s two portfolios filled with pictures, newspaper clippings, and other historical documents. Is this treasure trove of the club’s history lost forever? There is a possibility that the portfolios might be located among the club’s library materials (currently unavailable due to cataloging), or with one of the former historians. If these materials are lost, it will be a real tragedy. Please, if you have the club’s historical documents or know who might, contact Carl at (309) 454-4164 during evenings.

## March 27<sup>th</sup> Public Observing Session

Eight TCAAers and about 10 member of the general public were present for the March 27<sup>th</sup> POS at SGNC. In attendance from the TCAA were Dan Meyer, Dan Miller, Kal Kumar, Lyle and Mary Jane Rich, Duane Yockey, Wayne Kreps, and Carl Wenning. The evening started at 7:30 p.m. with a 45-minute presentation by Carl dealing with Saturn, M44, and M67. Members of the general public didn’t start arriving until 20 minutes after the beginning of the talk. Members of the public continued to arrive until 8:20 p.m. ostensibly due to difficulties with finding SGNC in the dark. At about 8:30 p.m. the overcast sky began to slightly clear, and was eventually replaced with a thin haze. Observed were bright objects such as Jupiter, Saturn, and the first-quarter moon. Observing lasted until shortly after 9 p.m.

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## William Carney Earns Urban Club Award

At the Annual Meeting in February, William Carney was honored with a citation and pin for having made sufficient observations to earn the Astronomical League's Urban Club Award. According to the A.L., "The purpose of the Urban Club is to bring amateur astronomy back to the cities, back to those areas that are affected by heavy light pollution." William, one of the TCAA's most active observers, made most of his observations from home on the west side of Bloomington. He justly deserved to be honored both at that meeting and in the pages of the *TCAA Observer*.

To qualify for the A.L.'s Urban Club Award, an amateur astronomer must observe under light polluted skies 100 objects found on the Urban Club list. Light polluted skies are defined as any sky where the Milky Way cannot be seen with the unaided eye. Observers may view the objects with the naked eye, binoculars or any size telescope, but "go to" telescopes may not be used. Telescopes from six- to ten-inches in aperture are recommended because a larger aperture helps pull out fainter objects in a low-contrast sky. Previous observations of these objects may be used toward this award as long as they were done under light polluted skies. Observations made in achieving the certificate for the Urban Club may be used toward certificates of other A.L. observing programs.

Congratulations to William Carney for completing this set of observations and earning the Urban Award. William is a holder of several A.L. awards including the Messier Club and the Lunar Club. His actions would be great for all armchair amateur astronomers to emulate.

## Eyepiece Filter Set Arrives

The Meade #3200 lunar and planetary color filter set has arrived. These filters are designed to be screwed into the telescope end of 1-1/4 inch eyepieces used with the 12-inch LX200 telescope at Sugar Grove Observatory. Three color filters and one neutral density filter have been purchased. The filter colors are light yellow, light red, and light blue. The filters are designed for the moon and planets; these filters should NEVER be used to observe the sun, either individually or in tandem. If improperly used, instant and irreversible eye damage could result.

The yellow filter is helpful in increasing the contrast of red and orange colored phenomena such as the belts of Jupiter. It can also be used to enhance the contrast of lunar topographic features. The red filter increases the contrast of greenish-blue surface details. It can be used to advantage to observe the polar regions of Jupiter and Saturn. The blue filter helps to enhance areas of low contrast for the moon and planets similarly.

The neutral density filter, passing only 18% of light at nearly all wavelengths, is good for reducing the apparent brightness of objects such as the moon or Venus, and reduce glare associated with brightly contrasting objects. It may also be employed to help split close double stars in the case where the primary star greatly outshines the secondary.

This filter set will be kept in the eyepiece box located at the base of the SGO telescope. Please be careful when threading the filters into the eyepieces as damage to the delicate threads can occur if improperly aligned. If you do use these filters, please be certain to return them to the boxes from which they were each taken.



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## SETI@home(con't.)

They came up with this plan, instead of getting a supercomputer to process the data they would divide the data into small chunks and let smaller computers do the work. Well great, you say, but how could they afford small computers if they couldn't afford a supercomputer? That's where you come in.

Many computers in this world are only used a fraction of the time that they are turned on. That is a lot of wasted CPU cycles. The folks at UC Berkeley wanted to use the average consumers' wasted CPU cycles to process their data. Lots of users have a screensaver that comes up when they are not using their computer (remember the flying toasters). This is what UC Berkeley set up, a screensaver program to process the data from Arecibo. It can also be run as a regular application. SETI@home, to date, has just under 5 million users.

So what happens is you go to their website (<http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/>) and download the free screensaver program, register with SETI@home and download a work unit. A work unit is one of those small chunks of data taken from the Arecibo Radio Telescope. You turn off your regular screensaver program if you have one and setup SETI@home to run

when you are not working on your computer. VOILA! Now when your computer is idle YOU are searching for E. T. The SETI@home program keeps track of what data you are analyzing, how many work units you've processed, and average and total hours of CPU time your computer has spent analyzing radio telescope data. Some of the things you can get from

you can compare yourself to other SETI@home users. You can also form "groups" which are SETI@home users that pool their stats and work units processed. The TCAA has a group formed and you can find it at <<[http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/stats/team/team\\_134100.html](http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/stats/team/team_134100.html)>>. Here you can see the individual and group stats from the members of the TCAA that have joined the group. If you want to be part of the group, get SETI@home up and running and go to the link above and click the "Join" link. As of this writing we have thirteen Helvetica members in the SETI@home TCAA group and have processed over 17,000 work units, which is over 30 years worth of CPU time. I myself have been a SETI@home user for over four years and am creeping my way toward 5000 work units completed. I run it on two computers at home. A 17" Flat Panel iMac and an iMac DV+. It takes me approximately 12 hours to complete a work unit.

"What if I discover an alien signal?" you say. Yes, you'll be famous, bring national and world acclaim to yourself and hopefully the TCAA. Get out there and check it out.



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## TCAA Treasurer's Report' – March 2004

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OPERATING FUND BALANCE – February 29, 2004 - \$ 1,486.70

Income

Mark Cabaj (dues renewal) -	\$ 40.00
Roy Lawry (dues renewal) -	\$ 40.00
James Wharton (senior dues renewal) -	\$ 25.00
James Steidinger (senior dues renewal) -	\$ 25.00
Banquet Donations -	\$ 25.00

Expenses

Van Gundy Insurance (liability insurance) -	\$ 150.00
Carl Wenning (lunar & color filters) -	\$ 45.73
Carl Wenning (plaque reimbursement) -	\$ 60.20

OPERATING FUND BALANCE

– March 31, 2004 - \$ 1,385.77

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OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – February 29, 2004 - \$ 900.31

Income

None -	\$ 0.00
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Expenses

None -	\$ 0.00
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OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – March 31, 2004 - \$ 900.31

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TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – March 31, 2004 - \$ 2,286.08

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Respectfully submitted, Duane Yockey, Treasurer  
 Sugar Grove Observatory

Listing of Official Keyholders (Paid \$10 deposit/\$5 renewal)

Lenore Trainer

Jim Swindler (April 2001, renewed through 2004)

Duane Yockey (April 2001, renewed through 2004)

Sandy McNamara (June 2001, renewed through 2004)

Dan Miller (August 2001)

Michael Rogers (August 2001)

Dan Meyer (February 2002, renewed through 2003)

William Carney (March 2002, renewed through 2003)

Vic Connor (August 2002)

Neale Lehmkuhl (May 2003)

Carl Wenning (January 2004)

Brian Barling (February 2004)

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## The Welcome Mat



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### The Observer

Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc.

Rebecca Wenning, Editor  
21 Grandview Dr.  
Normal, IL 61761

**Dues Due?**

### The Dues Blues

If you see a check in the box above, it means your dues are due. To retain membership -- and with the new observatory, why quit now? -- please send \$40 to our esteemed treasurer:

Duane Yockey  
508 Normal Avenue  
Normal, IL 61761

Thank you for your support!