

The OBSERVER

The Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc.

November 2006 Volume 31, Number 11



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THE OBSERVER ACQUIRES NEW EDITOR

~ by Erin Estabrook ~

I am your new *Observer* editor starting with the December issue. I'm excited to be doing this, although a little nervous at the same time. I do a lot of things like this, but each publishing activity has its own challenges and figuring them all out is the nerve-wracking part.

Anyway, I'm a friend of Duane's, as well as an employee. I've been friends with Duane for more than 15 years—ever since I started work for LYB. I've been married to my husband, Scott, for 14 years, and we have 2 amazing sons, T.J. who is an 8-year-old 2nd grader at Prairieland, and Daniel who is a lively 3-year-old. Scott has been interested in astronomy and space exploration forever (I think), and T.J. seems to have grasped on as well. T.J. is a Wolf Scout in Cub Scout Pack 19, and he received his astronomy belt loop very quickly.

As for me, I've been an engineer at LYB since I graduated from Bradley in 1991. I am an active member of First United Methodist Church (again, with Duane), and I have jumped in with both feet in volunteering at Prairieland. I help out in many of the committees with the parent-teacher group at the school including designing the group's website. This year, I have taken on the task of completing the yearbook for the school. I also help in the classroom and with as many other activities

as my schedule allows.

I'm usually easier to reach at the office, and my contact information is below.

Erin L. Estabrook, P.E.
Lewis, Yockey & Brown, Inc.
505 North Main Street

REBECCA WENNING STEPS DOWN AS OBSERVER EDITOR

~ by Rebecca Wenning ~

I have served as editor of the *Observer* for the past two years and have enjoyed serving the TCAA with my time and talents. However, as the end of the semester approaches, I find myself preparing to student teach physics (and yes, a bit of astronomy, too!) at Clinton High School. Both as I will be quite busy and no longer in the Twin Cities, I will be unable to fulfill the obligations as editor.

I would like to first express my gratitude to all those who have been supportive of my editorial position, in particular, to my father, Carl Wenning, for writing most of the content, as well as to all other contributors who have submitted articles, photographs, and the occasional crossword puzzle.

Secondly, I would like to thank Erin Estabrook for her willingness to step up to the position with such enthusiasm.

Thank you!

Upcoming Events

- November 18
Members-Only Observing Session at SGO, dusk-dawn
Coordinator: Carl Wenning
- December 9
Holiday Social at SGNC, 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. **Bring a refreshment/treat to share!**
- December 16
Members-Only Observing Session at SGO, 7:00 p.m. - dawn
- January 6
Members-Only Observing Session at SGO, 7:00 p.m. - dawn

The Observer

Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

The Observer is a monthly publication of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization of amateur astronomers interested in studying astronomy and sharing their hobby with the public.

TCAA Officers

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Rebecca Wenning Submissions
21 Grandview Dr. must be
Normal, IL 61761 received by
309-454-4164 the end of
rwennin@ilstu.edu each month.

Membership Dues

Individual Adult/Family \$40
Full-time Student/Senior \$25

To join the TCAA, send your name, contact info, and dues payment to:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 8 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Board members President Dan Miller, Vice President Brian Barling, and Treasurer Duane Yockey assembled for the semi-monthly meeting at the offices of Lewis, Yockey, and Brown (LYB) in downtown Bloomington. Also in attendance were Carl Wenning (secretary) and Lee Green (visitor). Not in attendance were 4th and 5th Directors William Carney and Neale Lehmkuhl. Dan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Dan began the meeting with a series of announcements and updates regarding past and future observing sessions:

- November 1, Millikin Observatory, 150 students, Taylorville Grade School
- November 9, SGNC, 7-8 p.m., Irving Grade School
- November 18, SGNC, MOOS, joined by 6-8 graders from Olympia School District
- December 16, SGNC, MOOS, 7 p.m.
- January 6, SGNC, MOOS, 7 p.m.

It was agreed to hold a holiday social for club members at the SGNC on December 9 assuming that we can gain access to the building. Carl will contact Angela Smith about availability that evening. In addition, February's Annual Meeting as tentatively slated for February 10 with a back-up date of February 24. Casey Watson from Millikin University, a new Ph.D. with interest in cosmology, will be the speaker. Dan will talk with Jean Memken about availability of catering in the "usual" ISU location. Dan said that he hasn't given up on the membership card idea, and that membership cards will be ready for distribution at the Annual Meeting.

Carl distributed a letter he wrote on behalf of the Board to IWU in the hopes of acquiring some donated computers. The Board (later in the meeting) agreed to sending the letter, and Dan will take care of this. In the interim, Dan noted that he has a number of laptop computers to put out on loan to those TCAAers in need of units

to drive their computers. He will hand off 6 or 7 computers to Lee for examination and updating as necessary in the hopes of identifying 4 computers that meet requirements. Others may then contact him about obtaining a loaner computer.

Dan mentioned that Rebecca Wenning would be stepping down as editor of *The Observer* after two years of dedicated effort. The Board expressed its profound thanks to Rebecca, and was delighted to have on board another volunteer editor – Erin Estabrook (see accompanying article). She has been in contact with Rebecca and Carl, and a smooth transition is expected.

Carl announced that the TCAA's adult education program will take place on January 13, 20, and 27. Carl will set the fees in order to cover the cost of materials, a room "rental" donation to SGNC, and such. He will consult Angela Smith about the final fee structure. He told those assembled to watch the *Observer* for details.

Dan then led a discussion relating to nominations for next year's Board of Directors. A number of new names were brought up. A number of the current officers and Board members are willing to stay on in their current capacities. (Duane is willing to serve as Treasurer, Carl is willing to serve as Secretary and Historian, Dan and Brian will be happy to serve in any capacity.) Active members whose names were brought up will be contacted in the not too distant future to see if they will run for the Board or an appointed office.

Dan brought up the idea about State Farm employees volunteering time on behalf of the TCAA which is a 501(c)3, non-profit educational corporation chartered in Illinois. When State Farm members contribute 40 hours of volunteer efforts on behalf of the TCAA, the TCAA can receive a \$500 contribution. Dan noted that several of our current members are State Farm employees, and that some have contributed many hours of service to the TCAA – among them, Past President Kal Kumar. Carl will pursue information about



obtaining these grants.

Dan then brought up the idea of assembling a repository of old astronomy slides (some undoubtedly from ISU and MU) that might be donated and then scanned to be used in the production of a number of PowerPoint programs that can be used during the public observing sessions. This would help keep presenters from having to re-invent the wheel each time they give a talk. The idea met with approval, but no plans were made to carry out this project.

The next Board meeting was slated for January 17 at 6:30 p.m. at LYB, Inc. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

SGNC AUTUMN CELEBRATION

On Saturday, October 21, more than 350 individuals visited the Sugar Grove Observatory as part of the Autumn Celebration at SGNC. The weather forecast for the day had been for overcast sky with rain by noon, but by opening time, 9 a.m., the sky began to clear and it remained partly cloudy until about 2 p.m. During these hours more than 200 individuals were able to observe the sun with a smattering of sunspots. After 2 p.m., the sky was overcast and viewers were entertained by images of local trees with branches, leaves, and berries.

Dan Miller brought out the club's tabletop display, and an 8-inch telescope outfitted with an H-alpha solar filter. The table was a source of information, including brochures for the 2007 POS schedule and membership brochures.

Also working this event all day were Chris



Miller (who staffed telescopes throughout much of the day), Lee Green, and Carl Wenning. Also assisting were TCAAers Dave Osenga, Sharon MacDonald, and Mike Rogers. Sheri Rodgers also visited along with her two sons. TCAAer Rebecca Wenning was also present to help with the club display, but was drafted by Angela Smith to work as a face painter from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

2006 PUBLIC OBSERVING SESSIONS CONCLUDE

The last regularly schedule TCAA public observing session for 2006 was held at SGNC on Saturday, October 28 with 21 people in attendance. The sky was partly cloudy at around 6:00 p.m., but by 7:00 p.m. had become almost entirely overcast. Despite the clouds, Duane Yockey started the session with a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation focusing on "The Andromeda Galaxy and Its Companions." Dan Miller then led members of the general public on a tour of the telescopes set up in hopes of viewing (those belonging to Lee Green, Duane Yockey, and John Warren (guest). Short glimpses of the first-quarter moon were had at this time. Dan concluded the evening's events with a tour of the SGO.

Also in attendance at this event were TCAAers Chris Miller, Ginnie Underwood, and Carl Wenning.

This ends the series of eight POS' for this year. The four sessions were well attended (June 3 – 55 attendees, July 29 – 20 attendees, September 30 – 60 attendees, and October 28 – 21 attendees). Unfortunately, half of the eight sessions were clouded out (April 1, May 6, July 1, and August 26) and were therefore cancelled.

TCAA HOLIDAY PARTY SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 7-10 P.M.

The TCAA's traditional winter holiday party (Saturnalia?) will be held on Friday, December 9, at Sugar Grove Nature Center from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. Angela Smith has agreed to allow the TCAA membership to use the Nature Center's classroom to hold this informal event at no charge to the club. While the number who will turn out for this event is unknown, we suspect that all those who do attend will have a good time meeting other club members and sharing their enjoyment of astronomy. If the sky is clear, we'll be certain to have the Sugar Grove Observatory open for periodic viewing.

Because this is a "no host" event, all TCAAers who will be attending are urged to bring both refreshments and treats to share. If anyone has a source of music to liven up the event, then please bring that along too. If you own astronomy resources that you haven't quite been able to understand or get to work, then bring those along as well. The resources might prove to be the origin of a lively and informative conversation. If you have pictures to show, they too will be greatly appreciated. In the event of inclement weather (e.g., 6 inches of snow) or if you get lost on the way out to SGNC, feel free to call Carl Wenning on his cell phone at (309) 830-4085. A map and driving directions to Sugar Grove can be found on the TCAA web site at <http://twincityamateurastronomers.org>.

Last year the TCAA Holiday Party was a real pleasure. A large part of the evening was spent gathered around an electric fireplace in the Nature Center's bird viewing room. There was much lively conversation, and excellent food and drink. We had a chance to meet face-to-face and actually see the faces of those with whom we were talking for once. Several members who we don't see often enough showed up, and lively talk ensued. Conversations ranged from past and future travels to observing programs and equipment, our January adult education program, and just about anything else you can imagine. If you are unable to attend this year, may the joy and peace of this holiday season be yours throughout the coming year.



ASTRONOMY COURSE BEGINS JANUARY 13 AT SGNC

Make plans now to participate in a 3-part observational astronomy course to be held at Sugar Grove Nature Center on three successive Saturday evenings during January. The course is intended primarily for adults, but is open to youths 12 years of age and older with an accompanying adult. The main themes of the course will be solar system objects, deep space objects, and how to use a telescope. Those wishing to learn how to use their own telescopes may bring them along to obtain specialized instruction after class.

The lead instructor will be Carl Wenning, former director at the ISU Planetarium. Other qualified members of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers will assist with the teaching of this course, and will help those who bring along their own telescopes learn how to use them.

Classes will take place on three successive Saturday evenings, January 13, 20, and 28, 2007. Class activities begin at 7:00 p.m. sharp and will continue through 9:00 p.m. each evening even if the sky is cloudy. In the event of inclement weather or poor road conditions, the class will be postponed. Phone Carl between 5 and 6 p.m. at (309) 830-4085 if road and weather conditions are of concern.

A supplemental telescope observing session will take place following each class if the sky is clear. Members of the astronomy club will assist with observing sessions, and will help instruct class members in the use of their own telescopes – so bring yours along if you have one.

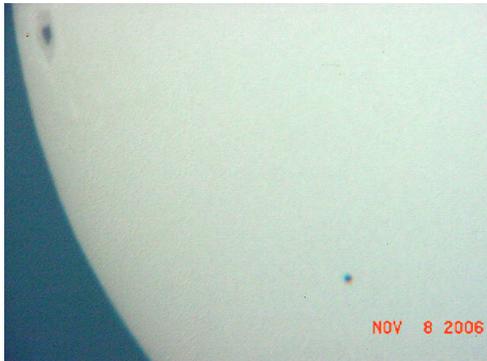
A registration and materials fee will be collected the first night of class. The fee is \$20 per person for the general public and \$17 for members of SGNC. If no instructional materials are desired, the fees will be \$13 and \$10 respectively.

Registration for this course is required, and may be completed by contacting Sugar Grove Nature Center by phone (309) 874-2174 or email sugargrovinc@earthlink.

net by January 5, 2007. Let us know the names of all participants in your party, and whether or not materials are desired. Fees will be collected at the first class. Register early if you wish to attend. Last year the course filled to over-flowing, and a number of individuals had to be turned away.

OBSERVING LOGBOOK

The beginning of October saw a flurry of observing activities despite the presence of a near-full moon. William Carney led a number of observing sessions (including Kent Ferguson and Duane Yockey) from the south side of Lake Evergreen to view Comet Swan. The eighth-magnitude comet had just moved from the morning sky into the evening sky, where it was viewed in close proximity to the Sun. Observations



took place on October 5, 6, 12, and 16 using a 4.7-inch refractor at 20X. William noted that the comet had a blue-green color, and only a hint of a tail. Al Timke reported observing

Comet Swan from Chatham, IL, on October 16 using his 4.1-inch Astroscan reflector at 18X and 37X. He noted, "I'm not sure whether I saw a tail, but the distinctive green color was unique." Gerry Schroeder sighted Comet Swan on October 13.

On Wednesday, November 8, several TCAAers independently observed the transit of Mercury across the face of the sun. William Carney, observing from SGO, was able to capture an image of the event. The event began at just after 1:15 p.m. locally and continued until after sunset, which occurred at approximately 4:42 p.m. The next time this event will be visible locally will be on May 9, 2016. On the average, there are approximately 13 transits of Mercury each century. The last such event was May 7, 2003, but it was not visible locally.

Make a date with

StarDate

on

WGLT, 89.1 FM

Weekdays @ 6:58 AM & 6:58 PM

Sponsored by the TCAA

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2007 PUBLIC OBSERVING SESSIONS SCHEDULED

The 2007 public observing sessions (POS[®]) have been set and will feature the following objects:

- March 24 – Great Nebula of Orion
- April 21 – Ring World Saturn
- May 19 – Galaxies of Leo, Coma, and Virgo
- June 16 – Globular Clusters M3 and M13
- July 21 – First Quarter Moon and Jupiter
- August 18 – Planetary Nebulas M27 and M57
- September 15 – The Milky Way Galaxy
- October 13 – Double Cluster in Perseus

Two volunteer coordinators are needed for each POS. If you would like to volunteer, please contact a club officer or board member. The official 2007 public observing schedule flier is now available for download as a PDF from the TCAA website at <http://twincityamateurastronomers.org/>

Member only observing sessions (MOOS[®]) for 2007 will occur one week earlier than the POS dates listed above. Each MOOS needs at least one coordinator, and this coordinator should be a key holder if (s)he does not have access to his/her own telescope. MOOS coordinators must be able to guarantee that members attending each session have access to either the SGO or another field-based telescope. In many cases the coordinator is responsible for showcasing celestial objects for new members with little or no viewing experience.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – October 2006

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – September 30, 2006 - \$ 1,784.54

Income

John Keenan (Dues) - \$ 40.00
Wudtke family (Dues Renewal) - \$ 40.00

Expenses

Rebecca Wenning (October **Observer**) - \$ 30.56

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – October 31, 2006 - \$ 1,833.98

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – September 30, 2006 - \$ 1,024.33

Income

Donation (Wudtke family) - \$ 10.00

Expenses

None - \$ 0.00

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – October 31, 2006 - \$ 1,034.33

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – October 31, 2006 - \$ 2,868.31

Respectfully submitted,
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer
Sugar Grove Observatory

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

Duane Yockey (April 2001, renewed through 2006)
Michael Rogers (August 2001, renewed through 2006)
William Carney (March 2002, renewed through 2006)
Carl Wenning (January 2004, renewed through 2006)
Brian Barling (February 2004, renewed through 2006)
Lenore Trainor (December 2004, renewed through 2005)
Kevin Brown (May 2005, renewed through 2006)
Sothilingam family (June 2005)
Christopher Franklin (July 2005, renewed through 2006)
Kal Kumar (renewed August 2005)
David Osenga (January 2006)
Gerry Schoeder (February 2006, renewed through 2007)
Karen & Ed Duran (February 2006)
Josh Lindsey (August 2007)



Welcome New Member!

John Keenan



The OBSERVER

Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

Rebecca Wenning, Editor
21 Grandview Drive
Normal, IL 61761-4071

Are Your Dues Due?

The Dues Blues?

If you see a check in the box above, it means your dues are due. To retain membership, please send your dues renewal to our esteemed Treasurer:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761