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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: WHAT A GREAT CLUB!

If you're like me, it's always a challenge to get enough time to engage in my hobbies. But like a friend of mine likes to remind me, we've got to take the time to smell the roses as we pass by them. And since we'll pass through the Autumnal Equinox this month, it's easy to see how quickly the fragrances pass.

We've been pretty busy as a club. Between our observing and our public outreach and publishing the Observer, we're also preparing for International Year of Astronomy 2009 and NCRAL 2010. With all these day-to-day activities, I just wanted to take a moment to thank all the members for their enthusiasm and their participation in all our activities. I think we can all be proud of what we have been doing and look forward to joining with you to help make the club everything we'd like it to be.

TCAA BOOTH AT FAIR—GREAT EXPOSURE

Our booth at the McLean County Fair gave us some exposure with our neighbors in the area. The space was donated by the fair staff as part of their Community Awareness Days and allowed us to talk with fairgoers for three days.

The booth was decorated with our display, and we used several of the Night Sky Network banners, books and photographs to highlight the club and our activities. We spoke with at least 300 people during that time and gave out hundreds of membership applications and observing session schedules. We also gave several impromptu presentations on a variety of subjects.

It was a fun time, and I will fondly remember the Fire Prevention booth next to us who had "Pluggie" the radio-controlled fire hydrant that the operator used to engage people remotely. It was fun to watch as Pluggie interacted with people who often wondered how it could converse with them.

Special thanks to all the members who assisted us in manning the booth including Carl Wenning, Dan Miller, Duane Yockey, Jean Memken, William Carney and to all the members who came by to spend time and support us.

HISTORY COMMITTEE FOR TCAA FORMING



The Board of Directors approved the establishment of a 50th Anniversary Committee at the Board meeting on July 22nd. Carl Wenning is willing to chair this committee as requested by the Board. He is now looking for individuals to serve on this committee, the goal of which will be to carry out a year-long celebration of the TCAA's 50th anniversary. Carl thinks that we might begin the

pictures to the history he has written (and continues to write). We need to inventory and pull together all of our historical resources (including finding lost records) and work with the Historical Society of McLean County to ensure its preservation as our legacy.

(Historian's note: Lee Green, working on behalf of this committee, recently reported to Carl that there was an astronomy club in Bloomington that predates the TCAA! According to an e-mail from Lee who has been working with the McLean County Historical Society, "Bill [LaBounty] also found an H. O. Hoffman (see image) in a 1914 [Pantagraph] clipping which listed him as a minister who lived on Roosevelt and Locust. He had an observatory in his backyard that was later sold. They put the scope in Edwards School [on the site of the current Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church on W. Market.]. Apparently this article also mentioned an astronomy club that he formed." A later first-hand review of that article showed that the club was established a few years prior to Hoffman's death in 1908. More details will be provided in the final 50th anniversary edition of the TCAA history.)

If you would like to join Carl and others in this important and exciting work, please let him know (830-4085 or wenning@phy.ilstu.edu). He'd like to hold an organizational and planning meeting during September if possible.

celebration following the next Annual Meeting (49th) and continue through the 50th anniversary that falls on February 4, 2010.

Carl would like to see the committee work on developing a historical document for the club, starting with addition of

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Membership Dues

Individual Adult/Family \$40
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Electronic Newsletter \$25

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MINUTES OF THE JULY 22ND BOARD MEETING

By Lee Green, President & Secretary Pro Tem

The Board meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. on July 22, 2008, by president Lee Green. In attendance were Dan Miller, Duane Yockey, Terry Lee Wright, and William Carney.

The Board discussed the planning for our booth at the McLean County Fair. It was agreed that we would print an additional 500 copies of the TCAA Membership Application and 500 copies of the 2008 Public Observing Session schedule. Additional copies would be printed if needed. A schedule for manning the booth was discussed. Lee will send out a schedule and coordinate with the other members who indicated that they would assist.

The Board then turned to the planned series of discussions at the Bloomington Public Library. These sessions will be held the third Tuesday of each month from August through December. Lee volunteered to take the lead in presenting the *Night Sky Network* presentations and called upon other members to assist him with other discussions during the series events.

The Board noted that our schedule for members hosting the MOOS and POS sessions is full.

Duane noted that he had not yet received a bill for the club's new projector. Lee promised to send that at his earliest convenience.

Duane will send our current inventory list to William for updating to ensure we have a current list of our assets. Lee suggested that this might be a candidate for inclusion on the club's web site.

William reported that the water issue at SGO is about fixed. With over two inches of rain last week at SGO we only had some minor water issues. He will continue to monitor it, but the worst is over for now. Lee and William agreed to meet with Danny Rhodes to inspect the observatory and devise recommendations for updates needed at the observatory.

William discussed several options he had found for purchasing the new laptop for the observatory. Since these funds were previously approved and allocated, William indicated that he would proceed with the purchase in the near future.

William will donate a new straight thru finder for the

10" SCT since it is currently using the one from the 12" LX200. The original was a right angle that is difficult to use and with a narrow field of view. William expressed hope that sometime in the next month or so the 16" and 10" Newtonian reflectors will be brought to a usable state. Both have some problems that he hopes to solve. He will be donating a new eyepiece focuser for the 16" that will allow use of two-inch eyepieces. William could use some help in making a new secondary spider for the 16" and a Dobson cradle for the 10".

William noted that the 70mm telescope that was recently donated to the club had a broken mount. He suggested that the optics could be used as a finder scope for the 12" Meade.

William further reported that the 12" scope will be shipped back to us in the next few days; hopefully, it's fixed. The bad news is that Meade has changed its rules for insuring telescopes. It seems they are not going to allow Sky Assurance for scopes older than 5 years. He will be contacting them again once we get our scope back and checked out just to make sure. The tech he spoke with said we might get service for another year providing we send it in for a "check" which would cost \$450.00 plus \$50.00 shipping then be able to buy a year plan for \$350.00. After that we would not be able to renew it again but he also said it was ineligible for service agreement at this time. So we either have a possibility of another year of maintenance agreement (\$850.00) or none at all. Either outcome is not good considering the repair history of this scope. He will keep us appraised. We spoke about the possibility of buying a new mount and removing the 12" OTA since most of the repair issues have been with the fork, drive and electronics. At this time we don't have the funds for such a purchase.

The Board approved the creation of a committee to help us plan the celebration of the TCAA's 50th anniversary. Carl Wenning was selected as the Board's choice to lead this committee, if he is willing.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for September 23, 2008. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

ISU PLANETARIUM PROGRAM

The ISU Planetarium will present *Follow the Drinking Gourd* from September 12 through November 15. Presentations will be at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays, and 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Saturdays. The Planetarium's brochure describes the program as follows: "The stars of the Big Dipper are among the brightest and most distinctive of the night sky – pointing the way to the North Star. Throughout time these stars have been thought to resemble everything from a bear pursued by three hunters to a drinking gourd guiding the way to freedom. Join us as we explore the tales surrounding the Big Dipper and the stars that it points to!" There will be no shows October 24-25; a \$4 admission fee is charged for adults, and \$3 for children. Call the Planetarium at 309-438-2496 for details.

AUGUST EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

TCAA Booth at 4-H Fair

From Wednesday, July 30th through Friday, August 1st, the TCAA maintained a display booth at the McLean County 4-H Fair. This was a first for the club and followed a suggestion by Terry Lee Wright at the June Board meeting for such a display. Working the booth at various times were Lee Green, William Carney, Dan Miller, Carl Wenning, Duane Yockey, and Jean Memken. We had as our backdrop the club's blue poster board along with our new *NASA Night Sky Network* banner and several personal computers showing astronomical images and programs. We also had the Night Sky Network toolkits for demonstration. Over the course of three days we had several hundred visitors. Club members passed out membership brochures and POS fliers.



Picnic and POS

The August 2nd POS was held in conjunction with the club's summer picnic. The picnic began at 6:30 p.m. with the following club members in attendance: the Miller family (3); the Wenning family (3), Brian Barling, Duane Yockey, Lee Green, and William Carney. Also in attendance at the night's event were club members Lucien and Val (4), David Hahn, Gail Nelson, and Ginnie Underwood... The evening's picnic talk was provided by Carl and Duane and dealt with their February trip to Chile. Dan Miller spoke about "Surviving a Black Hole" for the POS immediately thereafter. About 20 members were present for the first talk; the second talk was attended by about 50. Following Dan's talk, Carl gave a 10-minute sky lecture. Six telescopes were used to point out objects in the night sky, and were operated by William and David (12" telescopes), Lee and Carl (11" telescopes), Lee (14" telescope), and Dan (66mm telescope).

Stargazing at Lincoln CC

On Sunday, August 17th, Lee Green and Carl Wenning hosted an observing session for about 20 students at LCC at the request of former TCAA member Mike Miller. The viewing session coincided with a s'mores and hot dog roast and party at a fire pit in a field adjacent to student housing. This event was part of a welcome back week with classes beginning the next day. The students were interested and engaged, asking questions and expressing appreciation for our efforts. Despite the near full moon and city lights, the power of the two go-to telescopes to find celestial objects was well demonstrated to the delight of all.

Discussion Series at BPL

Lee Green presented the first of five discussions about astronomy for member of the general public at the Bloomington Public Library on Tuesday, August 19th. William Carney and Carl Wenning were in attendance along with three non-members. Lee delivered an excellent 45-minute talk featuring some 70 slides that dealt with how astronomers study the objects of the solar system. A lively discussion ensued, and lasted until almost 9 p.m.

TCAAers are more than welcome to join us for the remaining sessions in the series. Note that all events run from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., and all dates are the third Tuesday of each month. The remaining sessions are as follows:

- September 16 - *How Telescopes Changed the World*
- October 21 - *The Search for another Earth*
- November 18 - *Our Galaxy, Our Universe*
- December 16 - *How to Survive a Black Hole*















SGO UPDATES

By William Carney

The club's 12-inch telescope was returned from Meade Corporation on Wednesday, July 30th. Carl Wenning and I reinstalled the telescope following our day at the fair. The telescope had been returned to Meade for repairs. My tests show that the telescope seems to be running fine so far. I had some alignment issues at first attempt, but it's close to being right on for now. I have not had the time yet to check the updates on the controller but will do that soon.

I purchased a laptop for the club today (Saturday, August 2nd), and I am in the process of working through the bugs and updates. *Cartes du Ciel* was installed in the laptop, and it did connect to the scope for control. In fact, I just spotted Venus with the scope and then naked eye – at 3:30 p.m. no less.

SEPTEMBER SKY GUIDE

01	The Moon passes 5° south of Venus, 4 P.M.	
	The Moon passes 3° south of Mercury, 6 P.M.	
02	The Moon passes 5° south of Mars, 3 A.M.	
03	Saturn is in con- junction with the Sun, 9 P.M.	
06	The Moon passes 0.3° south of Antares, 10 P.M.	
09	The Moon passes 3° south of Jupiter, 3 P.M.	
10	Mercury is at greatest eastern elongation (27°). 11 P.M.	
11	Mercury passes 4° south of Venus, midnight	
	Venus passes 0.3° north of Mars, 4 P.M.	
12	Mercury passes 3° south of Mars, 4 P.M.	
	Uranus is at opposition, 9 P.M.	
18	Venus passes 3° north of Spica, 4 A.M.	
22	Equinox (northern autumn/southern spring begins), 11 A.M.	
27	The Moon passes 5° south of Saturn, 3 P.M.	
30	The Moon passes 5° south of Mars, 11 P.M.	

REPORT FROM JULY MOOS AT FARM VIEW OBSERVATORY

By Dave Osenga

John Werner invited the TCAA members to visit his Farm View observatory just south of Streator on Saturday, July 26, 2008. This was in place of the regular MOOS. Dan Miller and his son Chris, along with two Millikin students - Andrew Schenk and Bobby Arn, Duane Yockey, and Dave Osenga traveled together to the observatory.

John gave us a tour of his observatory that was very well constructed and equipped. John has his scopes solidly mounted and set up for some serious astrophotography. Equipment includes a Vixen 102SS refractor piggybacked to a Celestron 9.25" SCT, an Atlas GOTO mount, and a filter modified Canon Rebel XT digital camera. He has a small but nicely furnished warm room as part of the observatory. He has a comfortable couch, the obligatory microwave and small

refrigerator, a desk with the computer and monitor for doing the astrophotography.

The rest of us setup outside with Dan and Chris experimenting with some astrophotography. The students setup two scopes including a brand new one. Duane and Dave set up their scopes for some clear sky observing. A few family members, neighbors, and friends stopped by for both the observatory tour and some viewing through the scopes.

The sky was very clear with some haze on the horizon, but the observing was good, with a very pleasant clear view of the sky just for naked eye viewing. The Milky Way was glowing, and Jupiter was very bright in the southern sky. Thanks to John for his hospitality! It was very much worth the trip.

AUGUST POS

By Lee Green

At the August Public Observing Session, we combined a number of activities into this one outing.

We started the evening off with the TCAA picnic. Everyone brought their own entrée and a dish to share. The food was delicious, and it was a pleasure to share some camaraderie and joviality with everyone.

The next phase of our evening ensued with Carl and Duane presenting a travelogue about their trip to Chile this year. It was fascinating to hear about their adventures and the great people they met and the wonderful places they saw. Thanks, guys, for sharing the details of your trip and congratulations for joining the ranks of international ambassadors for the TCAA.

As the crowds arrived, it became clear that we would be hosting a full house. Dan Miller started off the next phase of our evening with the Night Sky Network presentation, How to Survive a Black Hole. As always, Dan made the information interesting and enjoyable, and the audience was very appreciative.

Carl then led our guests through a thrilling survey of the sights in the night sky. This was followed with telescope observing through the six telescopes we had set up.

In addition to the 14 members who assisted, we had 54 guests who came to enjoy the beautiful summertime weather.

AUGUST MOOS

By Lee Green

The August MOOS was held on August 30, 2008. The sky conditions were the best the we've had all summer. With perfectly clear and transparent skies and excellent seeing conditions, we all gathered with high hopes for outstanding viewing. The sky did not disappoint us and gave us a dazzling display with a bright stars, numerous meteors and a brilliant Milky Way.

The event was well attended with 10 members and two guests, and we all enjoyed the stellar conditions. Jim & Debbie Schertz brought their new telescope out. Dan and Chris Miller, Bobbie Arn and Lee Green brought their telescopes with their cameras and did some photographic work. Special thanks to Brian Barling, Dave Osenga, John Werner and Paul Pouliot for their contributions and support and to our guest John Littlefield and his friend. It was great to have everyone there to share the outstanding conditions and our love of the night sky.

POS and MOOS COORDINATORS

For the record, here is the list of the 2008 Public and Members-Only Observing Sessions at Sugar Grove Nature Center. Two coordinators per session are preferred. Please add your name to the list if you are willing to co-host one of these Saturday sessions by contacting Carl Wenning. See the POS brochure available through the TCAA website for details about times.

2008 Date	POS Topics	POS Coordinator(s)
September 6	<i>Our Galaxy, Our Universe</i>	Lee Green
October 4	<i>Andromeda and Her "Rock" – M31</i>	Carl Wenning

Members-Only Observing Sessions occur one week earlier than the above POS – on Saturdays nearest the full moon. Two coordinators (one of whom should be an SGNC key holder unless they have their own telescope they can bring along) are desired for all of these Saturday sessions. Please sign up with Carl Wenning (309-830-4085, wenning@phy.ilstu.edu) if you are willing to assist with coordinating any of these events.

2008 Date	Location	MOOS Coordinator(s)
September 27	IDSSP, Springfield	Details to follow in newsletter (IDSSP)
October 25	SGNC (6:45 p.m.)	William Carney, Carl Wenning

AL OBSERVING PROGRAMS

Below is a listing of the status of observers pursuing AL observing programs reported as of late August. If you would like to have your information included in next month's listing, be certain to forward your observing totals to Carl Wenning before the end of the month.

	Brian Bar-ling	William Carney	Lee Green	David Hahn	Dave Osenga	Carl Wenning	Sandy Wolford	Duane Yockey
S. Sky Binocular 50						50*		50*
S. Sky Telescope 50						52*		50*
Telescope Messier Prov70/Hon110	(110)	(110)	82*	82*	48	(110)	(110)	
Binocular Messier 50		(100)	12			68*		
Herschel Club 400	210	352	397			400*	(400)	
Urban Club 100		(100)	84			95		
Comet Club Silver12/ Gold30		22*						
Arp Galaxy CCD Club 100							53	
Dbl. Star Club 100	17		7			93	(100)	
Lunar Club 100	98	(100)	78			17		
Asteroid Club Reg25/ Gold100		24						
Outreach Award Basic10/Stellar60/ Master160 hours						Basic* (31hrs in 2006)		

* Program or first award level now complete – will receive AL recognition (certificate and pin) at the next TCAA Annual Meeting in February 2009. Numbers in parentheses (#) indicate that award has been both earned and received.

AUGUST OBSERVERS' LOG

Lee Green went out for some casual observing on the nights of August 7 and 9. They were beautiful nights, and Lee wanted to do some photography. Despite this "limitation," Lee was also able to advance his Urban and Lunar club observation counts and started on the Double Star club to fill in the time waiting for photographic targets to rise. Over these nights he "captured" four additional Messier objects (qualifying him for the provisional Messier certificate), brought his Lunar Club up to 78, upped his Urban Club by 21, and observed 7 double stars. Lee remains at 397 Herschel objects, 3 away from the goal of 400, as these objects are now hidden in the glare of the sun.

Carl did some "heavy duty" observing on the night of August 10-11. He set up his CPC1100 telescope at SGNC after sunset and completed another round of Jupiter-Ganymede observations. William Carney was there until around 10 p.m. and departed after concluding that the waxing gibbous moon was too bright for him to make the necessary comet and asteroid observations. Lee's totals (as well as those of other observers) can be found in the AL Observing Programs totals found elsewhere in this issue.

After William left, Carl started working on observations of Cygnus using *The Night Sky Observer's Guide* by Kepple & Sanner. He was able to observe a number of very interesting stars and deep-sky objects he had never seen before, and found the session quite rewarding. Because he was mostly interested in viewing early morning objects and moonset at 1:45 a.m., he attempted to get a bit of sleep between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. (Yes, the truck was cramped and the observatory floor was hard; we really do need to add a cot to the SGO!) After a restless rest, Carl continued observing until about 3 a.m. under a dark, clear sky. He observed an additional seven Binocular Messier objects between 9:42 p.m. and 12:54 a.m. The final object observed there was NGC 613 – the last of the Herschel 400 objects – at 2:57 a.m. In order to see galaxy NGC 613, Carl had to fight the heavy dew and approaching fog banks of Funk's Grove. (It took Carl nearly three years – from 11/21/05 to 8/11/08 – to complete the entire program.) Returning home, Carl again began viewing from his front yard. He continued until morning twilight interfered significantly with his observation. At home, he saw one additional Binocular Messier object (bringing his total to eight for the evening), seven double stars, and nine Urban Club objects. To finish off the in-town session, Carl sat back and watched for Perseid meteors; he saw three around 5 a.m. Only one Perseid was observed from SGNC earlier in the night. (Carl has now completed four Astronomical League observing programs this year.)

Inspired by Lee Green's article about the constellation Ophiuchus in the August issue of *The OBERVER*, Carl continued his constellation-by-constellation viewing session – this time from town and under the light of the full moon. On the evening of August 16, between 8:45 and 11:30 p.m., Carl was able to observe 36 objects in Hercules, Lyra, Cygnus, Andromeda, and Aquila, including M31, globular clusters, "interesting stars," open clusters, and planetary nebulae, and Jupiter. Four neighborhood teens took the opportunity to view with Carl starting just before 11 p.m.

Carl transported his telescope out to Ohio for a family reunion. On the night of Saturday, August 23, he showed about 10 of his "kith and kin" the wonders of the heavens. The following night Carl and Lee Green went observing at SGNC from about 9:15 to 11:15 p.m. Carl was able to observe all Messier, NGC, and Barnard objects (dark clouds) within the range of his 11-inch telescope in Sagittarius (42) and Capricornus (2). He also observed (13) such objects in Aquila giving him 57 objects for the evening, most of which he had never seen before. Some were quite spectacular, especially when observed with his O-III nebula filter. Lee took advantage of the dark sky to focus attention on his Messier observing program having captured an additional 11 objects. Lee now qualifies for the provisional Messier certificate as does David Hahn who passed the magic number of 70 during July. Carl and Lee observed until such time as a cloudbank rolled in and stopped the observing for the evening.

Carl took advantage of the crescent moon and somewhat hazy morning sky of August 27th to make more Urban Club and double star observations. From about 4:00 to 5:15 a.m., Carl was able to observe and record 14 double stars and 12 Urban Club objects bringing his totals to 93 and 95 respectively. A total of 100 objects are required to earn the observing award in each program.

SEPTEMBER MOOS AT IDSSP

The Sangamon Astronomical Society and the St. Louis Astronomical Society presents Illinois Dark Skies Star Party 2008. The event takes place September 25th through 28th at Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area (JEPC), 25 miles northwest of Springfield. This area boasts some of Illinois' darkest skies as Lee Green and Carl Wenning (who attended the event last year) can attest. Naked eye views of fifth and sixth magnitude stars are not uncommon. Plans for star party events include guest speakers, presentations and astrophotography contests.

The park has lots of daytime activities including hiking, biking, fishing, horseback riding and hunting. JEPC is just 30 minutes from historic Lincoln sites such as: Lincoln's Tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield; Lincoln's Home and Law Office, Springfield; Lincoln Homestead at New Salem State Park, Petersburg. JEPC is also just minutes from grocery stores, restaurants and shops in the small nearby communities.

The afternoon events are punctuated with a number of speakers... Complete details about IDSSP can be found at the following URL: <http://www.sas-sky.org/main.html>. Please note that the online reservation deadline is September 5th.

CONSTELLATION OF THE MONTH: AQUILA—THE EAGLE

Aquila is located north of Sagittarius south of Sagitta, east of Ophiuchus and Serpens Cauda and west of Delphinus and Aquarius. Aquila is best visible in the early evening during the late summer months. Aquila spans the celestial equator and lies along a bright area of the Milky Way including a portion of the Great Rift.

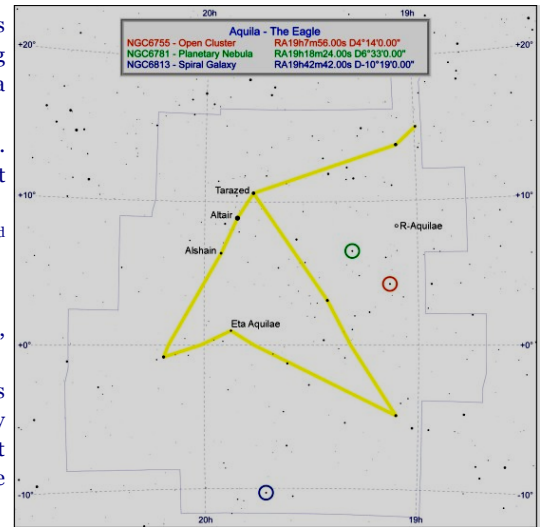
In mythology, Aquila was the eagle that delivered the thunderbolts from Jupiter. Aquila is often pictured carrying an armor shield or arrows commemorating the great war between the gods and the giants.

Aquila is the 22nd largest constellation covering 652 square degrees and is the 23rd brightest.

Aquila reaches opposition on July 16.

Since Aquila is in the Milky Way, it contains a vast profusion of stars, open clusters, planetary and dark nebulae and it includes a number of galaxies too.

The brightest star in Aquila is Altair, a first magnitude star that lies just 17 light years away and is the southern star of the asterism, the Summer Triangle. Altair is flanked by two other stars named Alshain and Tarazed. Eta Aquilae is a Cepheid variable star that has a period of 7 days, 4 hours. R Aquilae is a Mira-type long period variable star whose magnitude varies between 5.5 and 12 through 284 days.



STARGEEZER STARGAZING

By Carl J. Wenning

Anyone who has been reading messages on the TCAA listserv or paying attention to the content of *The OBSERVER* knows that I have been taking advantage of my retirement to do the celestial observing I have put off for years due to being over worked and just plain tired. Now that this has changed, let me point out an observing practice I have been utilizing lately and have found particularly rewarding.

Last winter, following a recommendation by Lee Green, I purchased the two-volume set *The Night Sky Observer's Guide* by Kepple & Sanner. These volumes are overflowing with pictures, drawings, and descriptions of celestial objects worth observing. They are organized by constellation. While in the past I have used Lee's books to confirm an observation, I never used them for the reason they were originally intended - to be a guide to observations. So, during the early part of August I undertook an observing program focusing on the constellation Cygnus that now is near the zenith shortly after sunset. Here is what I have observed:

- Interesting variable and double stars that I have frequently overlooked. This includes the beautiful double stars 18 Cygni and 61 Cygni. The latter pair of stars - being only 11 light years distant - were the first to show parallax and prove the revolution of the Earth about the Sun.

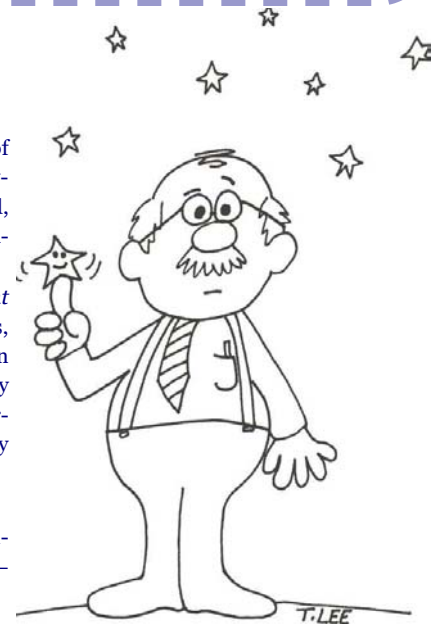
- Deep sky objects that I have never observed. While many of the brighter open star clusters are pretty typical, some of the fainter ones are rather spectacular!

- Planetary nebulas - The planetary nebulae I've never seen before are remarkably more common than I ever thought. I have been impressed with observations of and the observing tips for the "Blinking Planetary" and "Campbell's Hydrogen Star."

- Emission and dark nebulae are often overlooked in my usual observing runs - not any more after sights of some of these objects - the Veil Nebula, the North American Nebula, and the Crescent Nebula. I recently ordered a narrow-band OIII filter to view them in greater contrast against the night sky.

I have found that observing programs in general are the key to getting amateur astronomers out to observe. I can understand why always looking at "the same old things" can lead to a sense of frustration and boredom, but this need not be the case. Get involved in the Astronomical League's observing award programs or just strike out on your own following on of the several excellent observing guides available to amateur astronomers. You won't be disappointed and it is likely that you'll be greatly impressed how goal-oriented observing can enhance your enjoyment of amateur astronomy.

To learn more about unscheduled observing sessions which all TCAAers are free to attend, be certain to join our e-mail listserv. To join this listserv, send a blank e-mail message to TCAA-subscribe@yahoo.com.



HISTORY OF THE TCAA

Beginning with the article, "The Origin of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers" in the May 2007 issue of *The OBSERVER*, TCAA Historian Carl J. Wenning began chronicling the history of the club. He will continue this series, culminating with the 50th anniversary of the club in 2010.

Changing Gears

1995-1998: Part B

Despite a strong desire to build a club observatory at Timber Pointe, a decision was made at the October 4, 1997 Board meeting to put development plans "on hold." The reasons cited included: (1) limited access with a maximum of only five key holders, (2) a horizon substantially blocked by trees as the observatory would not be in the middle of the large open field, and (3) the lack of financial resources. A fundraiser held earlier through Cub Foods (redemption of receipts) netted the club only \$81.43 – far short of the thousands of dollars actually needed.

Even with this set back, progress toward an astronomical observatory continued, but this time at Sugar Grove Nature Center. In his January 1998 "Presidential Letter," Avo pointed out that the Sugar Grove Nature Center was just starting to be developed, and that the possibility of a TCAA observatory on site probably existed. Inquiries about a club observatory for private and public uses were mentioned at the SGNC board meeting on February 10th. By March 9th, an architect by the name of Don Gronert, developed initial drawings for an observatory, and later that same month a members-only observing session took place at SGNC. Over the course of the year, the rather simple plan developed by Avo had "exploded" to become a \$100,000 facility with a spiral incline for use with the disabled, and contained an adjoining building that could well hold a meeting room, storage space, sleeping quarters, and restrooms. This was a great expansion over the original plan of developing a small observatory an existing rectangular corn crib foundation between the Nature Center and a barn to the northeast.

Annual meetings during this interval featured the following keynote speakers: Daren Drake (1995), Tom Naber (1996), Jim Kaler (1997), and Curtis Niebur (1998). During the 1996 Annual meeting, Brian Barling and Sandy McNamara were recognized with the inaugural 1996 Founder's Award – an award established by the ISU Planetarium for recognizing TCAA members who made significant contributions to education and public outreach associated with amateur astronomy. During the 1997 Annual Meeting Lenore Trainor was recognized as one of the club Outstanding Amateur Astronomers when she was inducted into the G. Weldon Schuette Society.

Not to be forgotten were the long-serving editors of *The OBSERVER* – Jean Memken and Mike Rogers – who prepared a 12-page newsletter year after year. In 1998 they received the inaugural Mabel Sterns Award on a unanimous vote by the Astronomical League's leadership recognizing them for publishing the best club newsletter in the nation. Also unofficially recognized were the many contributing writers of the newsletter: Avo Vill with his presidential letters, Sandy MacNamara with her observing columns, Carl Wenning with his minutes and historical documentation, Roger Eggleton with his astronomical stamps series, Mike Rogers with his light pollution series, Bob Cuberly with his "In search of dark skies" series, Lenore Trainer with her travel reports about visits to astronomical observatories, and Jean Memken's reports of family travels to astronomical sites around the world. In addition to this recognition, Jean and Mike received the 1998 Founder's Award from the ISU Planetarium for their contributions to education and public outreach in the area of amateur astronomy.

TCAA ADULT EDUCATION COURSE STARTS 9/11

Because of its ongoing popularity even as a winter course, the TCAA will now offer an autumn adult education course at Heartland Community College. The course will be offered on four consecutive Thursday evenings from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. September 11th through October 2nd. With the pleasant evening temperatures and clear skies of autumn, we are looking forward to a large enrollment.

Join us as we narrow our attention on the constellations and solar system objects. Receive \$45 worth of resources to learn constellations, star names, and their associated mythology. Learn how astronomers explain the motions of the sun, moon, and planets. Find out about comets, meteors, and asteroids. In-town observing sessions will be held immediately after the first and second nights' classes if the sky is clear. The class includes a scheduled visit to the ISU Planetarium during the third session. During an optional fourth session at Sugar Grove Observatory, we will train our telescopes on these objects and more.

The fee for this course is \$60.00 and will include Terence Dickinson's book *Nightwatch* as well as a 10-inch-diameter planisphere. Other handouts will also be provided as well. Carl Wenning will serve as lead instructor of this course; feel free to contact him with any questions you might have during the interim at (309) 830-4085 or wenning@phy.ilstu.edu. In the past Lee Green and Duane Yockey have served a co-teachers of this course.

Visit the following HCC website now to register for course SCIENCE 1034: *Night Sky Watch* at <http://www.heartland.edu/communityEd/>. The fee must be paid in advance using credit card. Other registration options are available. Phone HCC at 268-8160 for details. Unless there are at least 7 registrants, the course will be canceled.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – August 2008

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2008 - \$ 2,407.43

Income

None - \$ 0.00

Expenses

LYB Inc. (August Observer) - \$ 15.90

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – August 31, 2008 - \$ 2,391.47

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2008 - \$ 3,516.05

Income

None - \$ 0.00

Expenses

William Carney (laptop computer) - \$ 598.52

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – August 31, 2008 - \$ 2,917.53

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – August 31, 2008 - \$ 5,309.00

Respectfully submitted,
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

Sugar Grove Observatory

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

Duane Yockey (renewed through 2008)
Michael Rogers (renewed through 2008)
William Carney (renewed through 2008)
Carl Wenning (renewed through 2008)
Brian Barling (renewed through 2008)
Christopher Franklin (renewed through 2008)
David Osenga (renewed through 2008)
Josh Lindsey (renewed through 2008)
Andrew Morrison (February 2008)
Dan Miller (renewed through 2008)
Lee Green (April 2007, renewed through 2008)

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 6—POS

September 11—HCC Adult Education
Course

September 16—*How Telescopes
Changed the World*, BPL

September 23—Board Meeting

September 25-28—IDSSP

September 27—POS (at IDSSP)

Editor's Note: TCAA has not received the current Sky Maps as of the printing of *The OBSERVER*.

The OBSERVER

Newletter of the TCAA, Inc.

Erin Estabrook, Editor
314 Covey Court
Normal, IL 61761

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**

Visit the Twin City Amateur Astronomers
on the web at
www.twincityamateurastronomers.org/