

IN THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---|---|
| A NOTE FROM PRESIDENT TOM WEILAND | 1 |
| MINUTES OF THE MARCH 6, 2012 BOARD MEETING | 1 |
| AL'S GALILEO CLUB | 2 |
| TCAA CONTRIBUTION | 2 |
| AL OBSERVING PRO- GRAM STANDINGS— QUARTERLY REPORT | 3 |
| EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH | 4 |
| FAMILY SCIENCE DAY APRIL 22 nd | 4 |
| NEXT POS APRIL 21 st | 4 |
| UPDATES ON RORO AND MEO | 5 |
| MAKE PLANS NOW FOR ALCon 2012 IN CHICAGO | 5 |
| TCAA UTILITY AVAIL- ABLE FOR ANDROID | 5 |
| SAFELY OBSERVING THE VENUS TRANSIT | 6 |
| H.O. HOFFMAN AND THE BLOOMINGTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY | 7 |
| TCAA INCLUDED IN "MOON BOUNCE" | 7 |
| MONTHLY REFLECTIONS | 8 |
| TCAA HISTORIAN NAMED EDITOR OF <i>Celebrate Starlight</i> | 8 |
| HISTORIAN NOW "WORKING" <i>Find a Grave</i> | 8 |
| TREASURER'S REPORT | 9 |
| HOW TIME FLIES | 9 |

A NOTE FROM PRESIDENT TOM WEILAND

Our 2012 Public Observation Sessions (POS) got off to a bang with a great turnout on March 24th. According to Lee's report there were 40 guests in attendance. Thanks to Dave and Lee for their contributions that evening and to all the members who brought scopes and shared their expertise. It's great to hear that several members brought family along for the evening. I for one hope this trend continues as it presents an opportunity to get to know each other's families. Sharing our interests with our family in our backyards is something we have all done, but bringing them to a POS can turn the evening into a social event as well as another sharing/learning experience.

The same holds true of friends and acquaintances. Although our POS dates are reported in the GO section of the Pantagraph, are listed on our website and included in the Sugar Grove newsletter, there is nothing quite like a personal invitation. A direct invitation is a great way to get someone involved and the impact of viewing the skies through a scope at a dark location can be multiplied many times as they share their experience with others.

So if the opportunity presents itself to ask someone out to a POS.....do so! We'll gladly share our love of this "hobby" with others and maybe even gain a few new members. Clear Skies!!

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 6, 2012 BOARD MEETING

The TCAA Board meeting was held at the office of Duane Yockey on March 6, 2012. President Dave Osenga called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. In attendance were Dave Osenga, Tom Weiland, Paul Pouliot, Tony Cellini, William Carney, Bob Finnigan, Duane Yockey, Lee Green and Larry Leetzow. The minutes of the annual meeting were unanimously approved as was the Treasurer's report.

William reported that the replacement seals for the observatory had been purchased and that he had contacted Ash Dome to identify the best adhesive needed to install them and that he had obtained the material. Since warm temperatures are required for use, we will need to wait a few months before we can install them.

Lee reported that he had established a Twitter account for the club under the account @tc_astro and that he had tweeted about the 2012 POS schedule. He plans to provide access to the account for club officers through the website.

Duane reported the schedule for several upcoming regional events including ALCON 2012 in Chicago July 4-7 and the Illinois Dark Sky Star Party at Jim Edgar State Park on Oct 11-14, 2012.

The new Board of Directors selected officers for the year with Tom Weiland serving as President, Dave Osenga as Vice President, Lee Green as Secretary and Webmaster, Duane Yockey as Treasurer and ALCOR. William stepped down as Property Manager and Lee volunteered to serve in that role. Carl agreed to continue serving as Historian. Tom thanked Dave for his years of excellent leadership, and all present confirmed the sentiment.

Dave reviewed the annual meeting and commended Dan Miller and John Werner for their wonderful presentation about their recent trip to Peru.

Tom reviewed the plans for the upcoming Venus Transit and noted that a press release was being developed. The event will be held at the Sugar Grove Nature Center and will feature a variety of observing instruments including telescopes outfitted with filters and "sun funnels," solar binoculars and a video display using cameras. With the event running from 5:04pm until sunset, it was suggested that we have presentations, handout materials and activities such as a solar system scale model for the attendees. Suggestions for offering for sale items such as sun shades for viewing, venus transit pins, and refreshments were discussed.

Lee reported that the TCAA will be hosting four exhibits at the ISU Family Science Day on April 22 including Meteorite or Meteor-Wrong using the Night Sky Network toolkit, Venus Transit materials, Measure the Earth using a GPS device, and Solar Observing. Lee has been preparing material for the Venus Transit and will work with Tom and John to assist and will engage Carl to assist with the GPS and Solar Observing activities. He also agreed to coordinate the sign-up for manning the exhibits with club members, and to arrange for printing the POS schedule and membership brochure for distribution at the event.

Lee reported that there had been no recent progress on the SGNC Shed electrical work but that additional progress was expected in the near future. Tom, Dave and Dan have all volunteered to assist and Lee will coordinate with them.

(Continued on page 2)

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

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| President | Tom Weiland 309-830-0167 tomcea52@yahoo.com |
| Vice-President | Dave Osenga 309-287-0789 DaveOsenga@msn.com |
| Secretary | Lee Green 309-454-7349 lee@starlightsoftware.com |
| Treasurer/ ALCor/RA | Duane Yockey 309-452-3936 duane@lybinc.com |
| 3rd Director | Paul Pouliot 815-844-7065 ppouliot2@mchsi.com |
| 4th Director | Tony Cellini 309-829-9269 drksky1056@comcast.net |
| 5th Director | Dan Miller 309-473-3465 damiller@mail.millikin.edu |
| Historian | Carl Wenning 309-830-4085 carlwenning@gmail.com |
| Webmaster | Lee Green 309-454-7349 lee@starlightsoftware.com |
| Property Manager | Lee Green 309-454-7349 lee@starlightsoftware.com |

The Observer Editor

Erin Estabrook
314 Covey Court
Normal, IL 61761
309-454-6894
erin@lybinc.com

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Membership Dues

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

To join the TCAA, send your name, contact info and dues payment to
Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 6, 2012 BOARD MEETING (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

Discussions turned to plans for a new observatory. Bob brought a set of plans that Carl had obtained and they were reviewed in detail. A meeting was set to meet with George Farnsworth to review the plans and consider the steps needed to advance the project.

The Board also recognized the steadfast support the club has received from the Sugar Grove Nature Center and discussed the possibility of making a donation from the club. With so many issues under consideration, no action was taken at this time.

The next meetings of the Board were scheduled for May 8 and July 10.

The meeting adjourned at 7:33pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Green

Secretary

AL'S GALILEO CLUB

William Carney recently completed and reported to observations relating to the Astronomical League's Galileo Club. Intrigued by this new club, this is what the writer found out. In honor of Galileo's observations of the heavens beginning in 1609, the Astronomical League started a new observing club named in his honor. This is a thematic observing club rather than a topical observing club. To this end, observers earn the AL certificate and pin for completing 13 sets of observations dealing with diverse topic matter: Milky Way supernovae (optional), the moon, Jupiter's moons, Jupiter's moons in eclipse, Orion's Head nebula, Praesepe Nebula, Pleiades Nebula, Saturn's "ears", Venus phases, sunspots, comets, Neptune, and aurorae (optional).

Only binoculars or a telescope with powers ranging from 10X to 20X may be used to complete this observing club. The instrument should be mounted to provide adequate stability. Go-to equipment is allowed. To find out more about this observing club, visit the AL Observing Programs web page at the following URL: <http://www.astroleague.org/al/obsclubs/AlphabeticalObservingClubs.html>

TCAA CONTRIBUTION

The TCAA receive a generous contribution of materials from Brian Barling. Thanks Brian!

Three sets of Astro-Cards by George Kepple including the Messier Object and two sets of the Finest Deep-Space Objects. These cards are excellent guides to help find celestial objects both for beginning astronomers and for anyone learning the wonders of the sky. Each card features a single object and lists its coordinates and catalog designation. Two maps are shown, one wide scale to put you in the vicinity, and a detailed sky map that shows the star field around the object. Each set has 100 objects. In addition, Brian provided a set of observation cards that let you keep track of the places you have visited.

Also included were four Plossl 1-1/4" eyepieces with focal lengths of 7.5, 12.5, 17 and 25mm. These will be quite handy to help us match the various scopes we will use in our upcoming Transit of Venus and extends the club's fine selection.

Among the other items donated are:

- Orion 0.965" Combined Camera Adapter and a set of Red, Blue, Green and Yellow filters.
- The Real Sky – Southern Edition is a set of CDs that contain the Palomar Observatory Sky Survey.
- Two Star Trek VHS videos
- NASA's Life on Mars VHS video

These materials are now available to TCAA members and are located at the Sugar Grove Observatory.

Thank you Brian! These helpful items will certainly find use by TCAA members in the near future.

AL OBSERVING PROGRAM STANDINGS—QUARTERLY REPORT

Below is a listing of the status of active TCAA observers pursuing AL observing programs reported as of March 31st.

- ☆ Carl Wenning observed 49 Herschel II objects over the course of four nights in February. During late March he was able to observe 42 more for a grand total of 363. He is now more than some 91% of the way toward achieving his goal of 400 required observations.
- ☆ William Carney pointed out an inaccuracy in the listings reported in January recently. He wrote, "I finally noticed that in the newsletter that it states I have 60 for the Deep Sky [Binocular] observers which is the first level. Actually, 60 is all that is required and I have the pin and certificate for that completed program – program completed in December 2009." The record has been updated accordingly. Early in March, William reported having a total of 56 asteroids, and 4 additional double stars. He has now completed 8 observing clubs and is close to earning his AL Master Observer designation that requires the completion of 10 observing programs. Near the end of March William was able to boost his double star count to 27.
- ☆ At the February Annual Meeting Lee Green received his honorary-level Messier Pin and certificate for having completed 110 objects as well as his Double Star club for having completed 100 observations. He now has completed 7 observing clubs, and is closing in on completing several others as well. Like William, Lee is very close to earning his AL Master Observer designation.

If you would like to have your information included in next July's listing, be certain to forward your observing totals to Carl by the end of June. Be certain to get your completed observing records to our ALCor, Duane Yockey, as soon as an observing program is complete so that you might be appropriately recognized on a timely basis. Our next award presentation will be at the summer picnic.

| Astronomical League Observing Club | Brian Barling | William Carney | Mark Honzell | Lee Green | Dave Osenga | Carl Wenning | Duane Yockey |
|---|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Asteroid Club Reg25/Gold100 | | (56) | | | | | |
| Binocular Messier 50 | | (100) | | (72) | 56** | (78) | 49 |
| Caldwell 109 | | | | | | 34 | |
| Comet Club Silver12/Gold30 | | (31) | | | | 4 | |
| Dark Nebula Imaging 70 | | | | 63 | | | |
| Deep Sky Binocular 60 | | (60) | | 43 | | (60) | |
| Double Star Club 100 | 29 | 27 | 47 | (100) | | (100) | |
| Earth Orbiting Satellite 28 | | 5 | | | | | |
| Galileo 13 | | 2 | | | | | |
| Globular Cluster Club 50 | | | | (55) | | (65) | |
| Herschel Club 400 | 288 | (400) | | (400) | | (400) | |
| Herschel II Club 400 | | | | | | 363 | |
| Lunar Club 100 | (100) | (100) | | (100) | (100) | (100) | |
| Lunar II Club 100 | | 38 | | | | | |
| Open Cluster Club B100/25// A125/50 | | | | 95 | | 2 | |
| Planetary Nebula Club B60/A110 | | 1 | | | | (103)* | |
| S. Skies Binocular 50 | | 5 | | | 25 | (50) | (50) |
| S. Sky Telescope 50 | | | | | | (52) | (50) |
| Telescope Messier Pro70/Hon110 | (110) | (110) | 76 | (110) | 107* | (110) | 31 |
| Master Observer (10 clubs) | 2 | 8 | | 7 | 2 | (10) | 2 |
| Urban Club 100 | | (100) | | (100) | | (100) | |
| Outreach Award B10/S60/M160 | | | | (*, **), *** | | (*, **, ***) | |

* Program or first award level now complete. ** Second award level now complete. *** Third award level now complete. AL recognition (certificate and/or pin) will be given at the next general membership meeting if available. Numbers in parentheses (#) indicate that the associated pin and/or certificate has been received.

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

By Lee Green with additions by C. Wenning

Conditions were unexpectedly clear and warm for our first Public Observing Session of the year held on March 24th. The forecast clouds never materialized (at least until around 10 p.m.) and we had excellent viewing conditions with a magical western triplet featuring the thin crescent Moon, Jupiter and Venus. Dave O. provided an excellent presentation and demonstration that showed how the tilt of the Earth leads to the procession of the seasons. Lee G. gave the laser-guided sky tour and pointed out many of the constellations and features visible at this time of the year. We had many members and telescopes set up and the 40 guests who attended had many targets to view and there were many questions and great discussions.

Among TCAA members were Bob Finnigan, Larry Leetzow, William Carney, Tony Cellini, Paul Pouliot and Amber, Dave Osenga and his family, Carl Wenning and his family, Duane Yockey, John Werner, Dan Miller, Brian Barling, Libby Norcross (along with a brother and sister), and Lee Green. In addition, we had several guests including Todd Sneddeker and Jeff Benway who brought their scopes, as well as Tom Willmitch from the ISU Planetarium. Russ and Pam Warren – prospective members – were there for the duration. In all we had at least 10 telescopes set up and several people had binoculars too.

The sky, though not terribly dark and steady, revealed some spectacular views, among them incredible views of M82 – the edge on “exploding” galaxy in Ursa Major – that Carl remarked as the best he had ever seen of the galaxy. Irregular dust lanes were clearly evident. Also easily visible was the 13th magnitude supernova in Messier 95. Bob and Larry spent time in SGO photographing M95 with good results. The evening drew to a close around 10 p.m. when stratus clouds formed in the place, filling the sky in a matter of minutes.

However we tally the event, this session was definitely a successful start to our observing and outreach season, with a record attendance and fabulous weather for our March Public Observing Session!

FAMILY SCIENCE DAY APRIL 22nd

Family Science Day 2012 will be held this year on Earth Day, Sunday, April 22nd. The event will take place at Horton Field House at Illinois State University from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. We had a tremendous turnout last year, and are looking forward to a bigger and better event this year. Here are the planned offerings by the TCAA this year:

- *Meteorite or Meteor-Wrong?* - Can you identify the meteorite from a sample of Earth rocks? Become a Meteor Detective and learn about what make meteorites different from rocks. Hold an actual meteorite to see how heavy it is.
- *Eclipses and Transits* - When planets line up, amazing things happen. Learn how eclipses and transits happen and why they happen so rarely. Find out about the Transit of Venus on June 5, 2012 and how to safely observe the event.
- *Measure the Size of the Earth* - Join us as we use a handheld GPS unit to measure the size of the Earth (a short hike of a few hundred feet is required). Learn about how we map the Earth and how that helps us navigate.
- *Observe the Sun* - Did you know that the Sun has spots? View the sun safely through a telescope outfitted with solar filters. How many sunspots can you see?

Make plans now to attend and participate in this annual event. With four stations this year, the TCAA will have to turn out in force to cover each of these. Lee Green is coordinator of this year's event.

NEXT POS APRIL 21st

The second education and public outreach event of 2012 will take place on Saturday, April 21st at Sugar Grove Nature Center. The program will start at 8:00 p.m. with Lee Green giving a talk titled, “**Mars, the Red Planet.**” The talk will run for approximately 20-30 minutes, and will be followed by a brief laser-mediated constellation tour. Subsequent to the sky lecture, members of the general public will be invited to view through a variety of telescopes set up for their viewing pleasure.

The TCAA Board of Directors has approved the following POS schedule and topics for all of 2012, and that information is below. A new 2012 POS program brochure is now available on the TCAA website at <http://www.tcaa.us/>. Recall that all POSs are on Saturday evenings, and this year feature a nearly moonless sky most evenings. Additional prominent sky objects such as planets, nebulae, star clusters, and galaxies will be viewed when visible. Note that a coordinator is still needed for the October 13th talk dealing with Uranus and Neptune.

| Date (Sat.) | Time | Topic | Coordinator |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| May 19 | 8:30 PM ~ 10:30 PM | Saturn, the Ring World | Tom Weiland |
| June 16 | 9:00 PM ~ 11:00 PM | Arc to Arcturus and Speed to Spica | Carl Wenning |
| July 21 | 8:30 PM ~ 10:30 PM | Asteroids, Meteors, and Meteorites | William Carney |
| Aug 18 | 8:00 PM ~ 10:00 PM | Clusters and Nebulas of the Milky Way | John Werner |
| Sep 15 | 7:30 PM ~ 9:30 PM | Stories of the Constellations | Eve Pouliot |
| Oct 13 | 7:00 PM ~ 9:00 PM | Uranus and Neptune | (coord. needed) |

UPDATES ON RORO AND MEO

On Thursday, March 8th, Carl Wenning, Bob Finnigan, Duane Yockey and Tom Weiland met with George Farnsworth as three of his SGNC volunteer construction crew to view and talk about the plans for the proposed roll-off-roof observatory (RORO). If approved by the SGNC Board, the plans call for the construction of a 16'x32' building including a 16'x24' observing space and an 8'x16' warming room. The following recommendations/points were made and agreed to pending final approval of the proposal:

- Per recommendations of Duane, the floor should be 5" thick reinforced concrete with 34" (or more) footers all around. The concrete will be laid over a bed of loose gravel as specified in the drawings.
- Because the drawings obtained from CJE Construction (Backyard Observatories) are incomplete, detailed drawings must also be obtained showing various work such as the drop-down south wall, and the observing room. Carl suggested that we might work with John Bishop, an experienced architect at the Farnsworth Group who helped with the design of the Challenger Learning Center in the former terminal of the Central Illinois Regional Airport.
- It was agreed that J.G. Stewart Contractors would be the best to pour the concrete; a quote needs to be obtained for the work following the development of drawings.
- The location has yet to be determined with precision, and there is a possibility that the RORO could be placed further east than earlier expected in order to preserve the location of the tree tapping trunks.
- Because two donors will be paying for the construction of the RORO should it be approved (the first up to \$15,000 for the observatory proper and the second up to \$5,000 for concrete), they will determine the type and number of telescope piers, the number and location of doors, specifics about the warming room, the nature of the drop down southern wall, electrical conduits, and so forth.
- Carl and Bob noted that a new "professional grade" telescope would be placed permanently at the center of the observing area with portable telescopes (e.g., Carl's 18-inch Obsession and/or the club's recently refurbished C14) should be placed at either end.

If the RORO project is approved by SGNC, Carl and Bob will draw up a memorandum of agreement that will detail all expectations and include all stakeholders. Once the agreement has been signed and all planning completed, Carl will once again contact George Farnsworth about starting construction. It is hoped that the observatory will be completed by the end of the summer.

Bob and Carl met with Farnsworth Group architect John Bishop on Monday, March 19th, to talk about the required detail drawings. The meeting lasted about 30 minutes during which time our team spoke with John about design requirements for concrete, a drop down wall southern, the roll-off roof, latching mechanisms for the roof, doors, warming room with window, electrical conduit placement, siding requirements, telescope piers, and so forth. If SGNC approves the RORO, John will be commissioned to provide detailed drawings for these as appropriate.

On March 26th, the Sugar Grove Foundation Board met to consider the proposal of the RORO. The Board agreed with the concept pending approval of the Funk's Grove Cemetery Board (FGCB) that owns the land occupied by the SGNC. In separate conversations with Bob and Carl the next morning, Angela Funk described the general terms for obtaining approval by the FGCB at their next meeting on April 23rd. The FGCB would like to sign a memorandum of agreement for the observatory that includes the key donors, the TCAA, and the SGNC. Bob F. and Carl W. met on March 29th to draft the basic agreement in the expectation that it will be shuttled between the various groups for their comments and approval before the April 23rd FGCB when the project will be formally approved if all stakeholders agree to the terms of the memorandum.

With regard to updates at IWU's Mark Evans Observatory, Dr. Linda French noted on March 1st when emailing William Carney that, "Bob and Carl have provided me with the information about the equipment, and I've passed it on to our Associate Provost. I'm waiting to hear back. Thanks for the update."

MAKE PLANS NOW FOR ALCon 2012 IN CHICAGO

The Astronomical League's annual summer convention will be held in Chicago, July 4-7. The theme will be *Celebrating 150 Years of Organized Astronomy: 1862-2012*. FEATURED SPEAKERS: Mike Simmons, President, Astronomers Without Borders Dr. Donald Parker, ALPO, Planetary Astrophotographer Dr. Dave Crawford, Co-founder IDA (remote presentation) Wally Pacholka, TWAN, Landscape Astrophotographer Dr. Jason Steffen, Kepler Mission Scientist Dr. Mark Hammergren, Adler Asteroid Expert Dr. Philipp Heck, Field Museum Meteorite Curator Dr. Hasan Padamsee, Physics Professor/Playwright, Cornell Univ. Vivian Hoette, Astronomy Educator at Yerkes Observatory Jeff Talman, Artist, Star Sound Installation, "Nature of the Night Sky" Dr. David Blask, Expert in circadian disruption/cancer/light pollution David Eicher, Editor-in-Chief, *Astronomy Magazine*. Complete details can be found online at <http://alcon2012.astroleague.org/> Make your room reservations now and save \$100 per night. (Carl Wenning has made reservations for a room with two double beds; he is willing to share accommodations for the duration of ALCon2012 if the costs are split.)

TCAA UTILITY AVAILABLE FOR ANDROID

Chrystian Vieyra, Carl Wenning's son-in-law, is an Android operating system programmer, and he took out about 10 minutes on Monday evening, March 12th, to build an Android application that can connect TCAA members and interested others directly to the TCAA website through their Android products – without having to use a web browser.

If you would like to have this free application, contact Carl directly at [<carlwenning@gmail.com>](mailto:carlwenning@gmail.com) and he will forward it to along with instructions on how to install this non-Android Market (unknown sources) application. To date two TCAAers have asked for the application.

SAFELY OBSERVING THE VENUS TRANSIT

By Lee Green

We are certainly looking forward to the upcoming Venus Transit event, the last of these in our lifetimes. The TCAA has been preparing to host an event at the Sugar Grove Nature Center on the afternoon of June 5 to observe this amazing event. In my article in *The Observer* last month, I tried to describe the celestial mechanics of this rare conjunction and this month I wanted to address how best to observe the event.

Because Venus will cross the face of the Sun it is vitally important that we use common sense to protect our eyes and our vision from the damage and injury that can easily result during solar observing. These special precautions must be taken at all times and by all observers. As we host this event and entertain many members of the general public, we must be especially vigilant in our preparations to ensure that everyone has a safe observing experience.

The two primary techniques used by astronomers when observing the Sun are projection and filters. The safest method to view the Sun is by not looking directly at the Sun but instead using indirect viewing where the image of the Sun is projected onto a medium that can be safely viewed. When observing the Sun directly, proper filters must be used to remove the harmful radiation and to reduce the brightness to safe levels.

The traditional way to project an image of the Sun is to use a 'pinhole camera' which has two opaque surfaces to block the light. A tiny hole in the Sun-ward surface lets a small amount of light through and an inverted image of the Sun is focused on the rear surface. To make the image larger, simply increase the separation between the surfaces. Moving the surfaces closer together will cause the image to be smaller and brighter. Since the image can only be viewed when your back is to the Sun, safe viewing is guaranteed. Never look through the pinhole at the Sun.

There are a variety of other techniques for indirect solar imaging. Tom Weiland and I have built four low-cost "sun funnels" for use at the event. These funnels use a small telescope to collect the sunlight with a standard 1-14" eyepiece to project and focus the light far beyond the eyepiece on a translucent screen material where the image can be viewed. Another alternative is the use a camera to image the Sun and allow views to see the image on a computer screen.

When using binoculars or telescopes for direct viewing, additional special precautions must be observed because of the additional concentration of light provided by these instruments. Always filter the light at the objective (at the front) to reduce the amount of light entering the optical system. Never rely on eyepiece filters as the only means of limiting the sunlight. Too much sunlight passing through your telescope will quickly cause heating and potentially damaging your optics, and concentrating unfiltered sunlight will likely melt eyepiece filters and expose the observer to EXTREMELY DANGEROUS conditions. Effective telescope solar filters normally block a majority of the light using an opaque cover in front of the instrument and further reduce the light's intensity with filters such as aluminized Mylar that are mostly opaque.

The best option for directly viewing the Sun is to use special solar telescope, such as a Coronado, which blocks most of the light at the front and passes only a narrowband color allowing you to view H-Alpha light. There are solar binoculars available which are built using special objective lenses that remove harmful radiation and drastically reduce the intensity of the light; these binoculars can be used only for observing the Sun.

There are other "eyeshade" filters available to let you directly observe the Sun. Welder's glass with a rating of 14 or above can be used safely so long as you view directly and not through binoculars or a telescope. Low cost "Eclipse Shades" with aluminized polyester or a black polymer can be used, but you should examine these before use to ensure that there are no holes or cracks in the material. When using any kind of filter, never stare directly at the Sun for long periods of time. Instead, look at the Sun briefly, then look away.

During the upcoming Venus transit, I would encourage everyone to use indirect methods to the extent possible. During the event, Venus will appear to be approximately 1 arcminute in size, and that is near the limit of resolution of our eyes for direct viewing. So for best results and for maximum safety, the projection techniques are recommended.

With proper precautions, it is possible to safely view the Sun and enjoy seeing our star in all its glory.

H.O. HOFFMAN AND THE BLOOMINGTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

By Carl J. Wenning, Historian

Back in 2007 Lee Green altered me to the presence of an astronomy club in Bloomington that pre-dated the TCAA by about 60 years. His father-in-law, Bill LaBounty, who is a member of the McLean County Historical Society, had come across an article published in the *Pantagraph* on March 19, 2006, about a Rev. H. O. Hoffman and his affiliation with an "Astronomical Society" (henceforth called the Bloomington Astronomical Society, BAS). Bill sent the clipping to Lee, and Lee forwarded it to me. What little I then found out then was included in *History of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers: 1960-2010*. Since that time I have continued to pursue the history of Hoffman and the BAS.

Recently, I increased my research efforts on Hoffman and the BAS as I was working on version 5.0.3 of the *History*. I naturally wanted to find out more, and so dove into the Internet. I was not disappointed. From information I found there, I was able to visit the grave of Rev. Hoffman (d. 1908) at Evergreen Cemetery in Bloomington. Still, I was missing lots of essential information. A breakfast with Bob Finnigan on March 3rd helped resolve some of the deficiencies in the record.

After breakfast, Bob and I went to the Bloomington Public Library. Bob, a master genealogist, was able to find a number of important records for me (including newspaper articles, an obituary, and housing and census records). Librarian Karen Moen, a former TCAA member, pointed out to me some valuable historical church records from the First Methodist (Episcopal) Church of Bloomington. Later in the day Bob and I went to the McLean County Historical Society and found yet more information about the beginnings of the Bloomington Astronomical Society. I subsequently have been able to prepare a detailed 5-page history with lots of footnotes. This history of the Bloomington Astronomical Society (circa 1893-1914) will appear in complete form in the next published edition of the *History*. Members may obtain a copy of this history by writing Carl at carlwenning@gmail.com. An abridged version of the history of the Bloomington Astronomical Society was provided to the AL on March 8th for inclusion in the upcoming book *Celebrate Starlight*.

TCAA INCLUDED IN "MOON BOUNCE"

On March 31st, Carl Wenning forwarded 24 images that capture the history of the club to CAS's Audrey Fischer for the creation of a club montage that will be bounced off the moon some time during the month of April – Global Astronomy Month. The "moon bounce", being done individually for each Astronomical League affiliated club that avails itself of the opportunity, will consist of a single photo mosaic composite. This single image will be sent back and forth between Earth and Moon using the 25-meter Dwingeloo Radio Telescope in the Netherlands. The moon bounce is part of the ALCon2012 *Celebrate Starlight* project.

On March 17th, Carl announced a call for photographs for inclusion in the moon bounce. Paul Pouliot was the first to respond with a shot of the active membership at the 2012 annual meeting and another image of himself along with Eve and Amber. Hearing back from no one else, Carl selected an additional 22 pictures for inclusion in the photo mosaic composite. The packet of pictures for the club montage included the following:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Current TCAA logo | 13. W. Carney at Meade 12" LX200 |
| 2. Sugar Grove Observatory | 14. NCRAL 2010 group shot |
| 3. P. Pouliot with Eve and Amber | 15. Moon rocks at 1980s Astronomy Day event |
| 4. Club at February 1984 Annual Meeting | 16. D. Williams, W. Blunk, L. Rich, and T. Cisco |
| 5. <i>The Sky is Yours</i> poem | 17. R. Finnigan in August 2010 |
| 6. W. Schuette and G. Skinner | 18. February 1961 regular meeting group shot |
| 7. C. Wenning at ISU Planetarium 1978 | 19. <i>Vital Statistics</i> for June 4, 1964 |
| 8. Carolyn Wenning at TCAA's 25 th Anniversary | 20. J. & B. Kieviet 40 th Anniversary photograph |
| 9. TCAA's Praesepe Observatory | 21. R. Wenning receiving Messier certificate |
| 10. Group photo at 2012 Annual Meeting | 22. J. Kieviet presenting at Exchange Club 1968 |
| 11. Aubrey and Miriam Johnson | 23. W. Schuette and B. Kieviet in 1985 at "cabana" |
| 12. C. Wenning dressed as an Indian | 24. S. MacDonald and L. Trainor |

MONTHLY REFLECTIONS

By Carl J. Wenning

The first half of March was pretty much overcast. On the morning of March 19th, even though the sky was overcast, I was outside at around 5 a.m. to pick up my copy of *The Pantagraph* from the front porch. At about that time a -8 magnitude Iridium flare (an Earth-orbiting satellite about 60 times brighter than Venus at its maximum brightness) occurred 50 degrees up in the south and I was able to observe it directly through the clouds!

The POS on Saturday, March 24th, provided some absolutely terrific views of deep space objects. While there was a substantial amount of twinkling and the sky wasn't terribly dark – it was exceptionally clear with the sun going down that evening almost as white as it would appear at midday. Observations with my CPC 11-inch revealed many celestial objects in hitherto unseen detail. M97, M42, M45, M65, M66, M95 (including the recent supernova seen in the accompanying photograph by Bob F. and Tony C.), M81, M82, M1 and so on were exceptionally detailed that evening. It is an evening I will not soon forget.

That evening I was able to spend much of my viewing time with Russ and Pam Warren who attended my observations for more than an hour. I was delighted to speak with them, and am looking forward to them becoming TCAA members. (Pam, who I have known for a number of years, is an accomplished aerial photographer in her own right, and both are looking forward to learning astrophotography.) I was also great to see Jeff Benway who I've also known for many years. Dave O. brought the TCAA to the attention Jeff after he recently acquired a used 8-inch Galileo telescope (made in India) from a friend. Thanks go out to Tony C. who did an initial re-collimation of the mirror that had been making the telescope unusable. I hope, too, to see Jeff among our membership as well.

The next evening, Sunday, March 25th, was partly cloudy, but that didn't keep TCAAers from observing again. On this evening I wanted to continue working on my Herschel II observations. William C. and Bob F. were at SGNC observing as well, with William doing photography using film and Bob photographing "The Box" galaxy group in Coma Berenices. A nearly overcast sky occurred by around 1 a.m. and observers left shortly thereafter. I was able to observe an additional 42 galaxies that are part of the Herschel II Club that evening, bringing my total to 363 – nearly 91% of the way toward completion – with only 37 more to go.



TCAA HISTORIAN NAMED EDITOR OF *Celebrate Starlight*

Carl Wenning has been named editor of the Astronomical League's emerging publication *Celebrate Starlight*. Carl, an amateur historian, has written not only the 139-page TCAA *History*, he has also spent more than 35 years researching the history of *Emerson McMillin and His Astronomical Observations: 1896-1976*, along with another historian from Ohio now living in Kentucky. Carl has been working recently with Bob Finnigan to detail the history of the Bloomington Astronomical Society, circa 1893-1914. That effort, along with another recent effort to encapsulate the TCAA's history into a 4-page document in preparation for inclusion in *Celebrate Starlight*, resulted in a request by AL officials for Carl to serve as editor. The publication will debut this summer at ALCon2012 in Chicago where Carl it is expected that he will serve as an invited speaker.

HISTORIAN NOW "WORKING" *Find a Grave*

Continuing to both pursue and document the history of the TCAA, Historian Carl Wenning is now "working" *Find A Grave* (<http://www.findagrave.com>). This website allows the general public to provide photographs and a historical narrative for each grave identified in its database. Carl recently updated the grave of G. Weldon Schuette, the club's original "Outstanding Amateur Astronomer." You can find this update by visiting Weldon's "online grave" at the following shortened URL provided by Google: <http://goo.gl/anu2G>

Carl has plans right now to update the online graves of all deceased TCAA members as a tribute to their time in the club – assuming that he has enough information to provide a meaningful contribution. Carl will next turn his hand to working on the online graves of John and Bertha Kieviet (founders), Eugene Sutton, Aubrey and Miriam Johnson, Ayne Vandebrook, Lenore Trainor, and many others. He will then develop an online "virtual cemetery" consisting of all TCAA members whose graves he can find. This might seem a bit macabre to some club members, but this is just another way to acknowledge the contributions of club members from the past and preserve it for posterity's sake.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – March 2012

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – February 29, 2012 - \$ 1,589.87

Income

Roy Lawry (Dues) - \$ 26.00

Expenses

LYB Inc. (Observer copies & postage) - \$ 48.26

Redbird Catering (Annual Dinner) - \$ 281.51

Secretary of State (Ann. Report Fee) - \$ 10.00

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – March 31, 2012 - \$ 1,276.10

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – February 29, 2012 - \$ 2,954.91

Income

Donation (State Farm) - \$ 50.00

Expenses

None! - \$ 0.00

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – March 31, 2012 - \$ 3,004.91

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – March 31, 2012 - \$ 4,281.01

Respectfully submitted,

L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

HOW TIME FLIES

TCAA Historian Carl Wenning provides monthly updates about the history of the club going back to intervals of 50, 25, and 10 years. Details about all mentioned events will be found in either the club history (<http://www.tcaa.us/History.aspx>) or in *The OBSERVER* archive found on the club's web site (<http://www.tcaa.us/Observer.aspx>).

50 Years Ago

April 1962 – The first meeting of the club this month featured a film *The Challenge of Outer Space* narrated by Werner Von Braun. A club trip to Adler Planetarium in Chicago during May was being planned. Work continues on mirror making. A 10-inch blank is being ground for the club.

25 Years Ago

April 1987 – The April meeting was held at the ISU Planetarium with President Kevin Brown giving a talk about galaxy types. Gary Skinner wrote an interesting article about a 1963 partial solar eclipse observed locally. Kevin announced that the club leadership went to Decatur to purchase a 16-inch Daystar reflecting telescope. The cost was \$1,100. The club now has a membership of some 70 individuals, thanks in large part to the 1986 apparition of Halley's Comet.

10 Years Ago

April 2002 – The TCAA reading group continued to meet. The month's featured reading was *A Brief History of Time*. A presentation was given at the ISU Planetarium about HST "retrofit"; Jim Swindler gave the presentation. Astronomy Day was held later in the month. Mike Rogers mentioned in an *OBSERVER* article that a Meade 12-inch LX200 might be coming soon to Sugar Grove Observatory.

MISSING OUT ON TCAA ACTIVITIES & EVENTS?

If you are missing out on club activities or celestial events, be certain to join the TCAA listserv. Many activities are planned at the last minute, and announced only hours in advance through the club's listserv. Reminders about celestial events are also broadcast to the membership through the club's listserv. To join this free service by Yahoo, send a blank email to TCAA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Unsubscribing is just as easy. To unsubscribe, just send a blank email to TCAA-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com.

To keep up to date on celestial events not described in *The OBSERVER* or addressed in the listserv, visit Carl Wenning's observing page at www.phy.ilstu.edu/~wenning/observing_page.htm. It has been recently updated to include an extended sky calendar of events as well as additional space weather and satellite viewing links.

The OBSERVER

Newsletter 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**