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A NOTE FROM PRESIDENT TOM WEILAND

Prompted by media attention, the recent excitement around comet ISON has brought the public's interest once again to astronomy. This awareness benefits both the public's understanding of such celestial events and allows for the promotion of activities provided by groups such as ours. The recent usage of TCAA member photographs of ISON in the Bloomington Pantagraph places a spotlight on the capabilities and results that are available with the excellent facilities and equipment which are at our disposal. The quality of the photographs created by our astro-imagers is comparable to (if not better than) that of many professional observatories. This great photographic work, and the knowledge base of our members, makes us a primary source of information for local media outlets. Along with these occasional feature articles, the Pantagraph also regularly promotes our Public Observing Sessions in the "GO" section of its Thursday edition. Not only does this make people aware of our own scheduled events but also encourages interest in our availability to participate in the events of other groups and clubs. This provides for even greater participation of the membership in our public outreach. As always I encourage you to take advantage of the club facilities and become more involved in the opportunities provided by this recurring public interest in our hobby.

Sadly, this will be the final issue of the Observer put together by current Editor, Erin Estabrook. Erin has always been very flexible and understanding about meeting deadlines for submissions of articles, a must when it comes to putting a newsletter together that gets its content from busy members. Bringing this phase of her relationship with TCAA to an end will allow Erin to focus on family commitments which now require more of her time.....a place we all occasionally pass through. As President, and regular contributor I want to extend a huge thanks to Erin for her 6 years of service to TCAA. THANKS and best wishes!

Finally, I would like to remind you that the TCAA annual meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2014. More information will follow. I hope you have already added this date to your calendar. This is our annual business meeting with a catered dinner and an invited guest speaker. This year's guest speaker will be Dr. Linda French, a Professor of Physics from Illinois Wesleyan University. All TCAA members are encouraged to attend.

Clear Skies!!

PROPOSED CHANGES IN DISTRIBUTION OF THE *OBSERVER*

At the Annual Meeting in February, the TCAA Board of Directors will propose a change in the way we distribute The Observer, our club newsletter. We will be transitioning to a new Observer editor after the December issue and have decided to review the possibility of moving to an all-electronic format for distribution of the newsletter. There would no longer be a mailed paper copy. This change would streamline the process as well as reduce paper waste.

Currently annual dues are available which reflect whether a member receives a paper or electronic copy of the newsletter. We would propose that the dues amounts remain the same and that distribution of the paper copy of The Observer cease with the February issue, after approval at the Annual Meeting.

The dues would be as follows: Full-time Student and Senior (over 60) membership would remain at \$25. Regular or Family membership dues would remain at \$40.

This dues structure would allow the club to cover regular annual expenses while also building a modest reserve to address any unforeseen expenses. It should be noted that a significant amount of the funds currently in reserve in the TCAA's accounts have been set aside to cover the property insurance costs for the 15 year term of our lease agreement with the Funks Grove Cemetery Board and the Sugar Grove Nature Center.

In anticipation of these proposed changes the Board has suspended the paper copy membership category to expedite this transition. The Board encourages those currently receiving the paper copy to forward their preferred e-mail address to new newsletter Editor Carl Wenning at carlwenning@gmail.com and to Treasurer Duane Yockey, who maintains the membership roster at duane@lybinc.com. We believe that the time is right to make this change and hope that the TCAA membership supports our proposal.

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.

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Submission deadline is the first of each month.

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 NOVEMBER 12, 2013, BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The TCAA Board met on November 12, 2013 at the office of Duane Yockey. At the meeting were Board members Tom Weiland, Tony Cellini, Lee Green, Dave Osenga and Paul Pouliot, and members Bob Finnigan, Tim Stone, Carl Wenning and Duane Yockey. The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as was the Treasurer's report.

Officer reports included Duane who noted that the club treasury balance included the sale of the Tak-130 telescope, and that the annual insurance for the facilities had been paid. Carl questioned whether the remaining balance of the funds from the equipment sale should be marked as "escrowed" for use towards payment for future insurance payments. Duane was hesitant to segregate the funds, but promised to consider how that might be accomplished. As ALCOR, Duane attended the Illinois Dark Sky Star Party at Panther Creek held Oct. 3 - 6, 2013. He further noted that William Carney had submitted his request for the AL Outreach award.

Tim reported that the property and equipment were in good shape and that there were no known problems. Bob indicated that Illinois Wesleyan University has a defective tripod, and offered for sale one of the club's tripods that we have on hand. No one had a problem with this since we have no particular use for or plans for the tripod in question. It was reported that the scope lent to Bryce Heineger had been cleaned and that Bryce was delighted with having an instrument to use.

Turning to new old business, we discussed and declined to plan any public events for Comet ISON due to the early morning hours needed for viewing.

Reviewing the location of various club assets, there was some question as to who had the Oberweis binoculars; one of the 10" Odyssey telescope was on loan to the Challenger Learning Center; and Rebecca Wenning Vieyra had the 8" Dobsonian scope.

As noted earlier, the Tak-130 has been sold and the Board expressed their appreciation to Craig for making this happen. The C-14 was mounted so that it could be evaluated before it was placed for sale, but it had an issue that would need to be addressed before it was ready.

Turning to the idea that an astrophotography class would be a worthy project for the club, Tim noted that while he has been doing this on an informal basis, he has been too busy to pursue the project and that it would entail a great deal of work to do well. He suggested moving the project from the Board's agenda to the 5-year plan. Carl suggested that the project was important enough to maintain it on our list of active efforts and the perhaps setting a date for executing the class would provide a deadline that would motivate progress.

Tim distributed copies of a document he had prepared for the Board's review. His 'Considerations for Usage of TCAA Facilities' was well received as an excellent starting point towards guidelines governing the use of the facilities. Members were encouraged to offer suggestions at the earliest possible time on how the document might be improved so that it could be reconsidered at the next Board meeting. Tim offered to provide a copy in Word format so that people can suggest changes. Dave noted that he has begun efforts to develop a checklist of operational procedures for the facilities; Carl noted that he had notes that he had taken from previous sessions with Bob, and they agreed to work with Tim consolidate the documents. Dave also reported that his request for furniture donations from State Farm was still pending.

Discussion returned to a discussion about installing a doorstep and sidewalk to the PSO. Tom reported that he had discussions with the SGNC and that the only option for pouring concrete would be to run directly to the north to meet the existing sidewalk. No other option was possible because it would extend beyond the limit of the footprint approved for the facility. The temporary use of 'pavers' was discounted, and the topic was deferred until the next year.

Turning to new business, the next meeting of the Board will be held at Duane's office on January 14, 2014. The Annual Meeting of the club was confirmed to be February 1, 2014. Dr. Linda French has agreed to return as our guest speaker for the event. Dave agreed to investigate scheduling the Normal Township Hall for that date and to contact Redbird Catering to arrange the dinner.

Tom raised a suggestion from Angela Funk that the TCAA sponsor a Boy Scouts Merit Badge. Lee suggested that this would be a fun effort and would be best accomplished with two members working together. At least two group meetings would be needed to meet the requirements of the badge; the first to review the requirements and provide an introductory observing opportunity, followed by an interactive topical discussion. Additional observing opportunities would be scheduled as possible to give the scouts every chance to learn and experience astronomy. Tom will communicate further with Angela on this effort, and it was agreed that March and May might be excellent times for the program. Carl agreed to assist Lee.

(Continued on page 3)

NEW NEWSLETTER EDITOR NAMED

At the November 13th Board of Directors meeting Carl Wenning was named to replace newsletter editor Erin Estabrook who will be stepping down from that position at the end of the current year. Carl will be responsible for assembling future editions of *The OBSERVER* (as well as writing most of its content as has been the case for the past several years). However, due to his busy schedule, Carl simply does not have the time to print, assemble, fold, seal, label, affix postage, and take hard copies of the newsletter to the USPO. He accepted appointment to this position on the condition that he would not have to prepare and distribute printed copies. Printed copies will be prepared and distributed by Duane Yockey for a limited period of time after which the publication will become electronic only. Moving ahead to an “electronic only” version of the newsletter will have numerous benefits:

- All images will henceforth be in color
- Resolution of images and texts will be enhanced
- No limitation on the size of the newsletter
- Hyperlinks will be active
- Distribution through email will be immediate and timely
- The club will save some \$500 per year on printing and postage costs

The 2014 editions of *The OBSERVER* will contain some new columns, and members are invited to contribute in any of a variety of meaningful ways:

- Questions for an “Ask the Editor” column in which the editor (also the club’s historian) will answer questions about the state of the club as viewed from an historical perspective. For instance, one recent question was brought up, “Is there any visual observing going on within the club and how can I get involved?”
- Calendar of Celestial Events
- The newsletter will be published on the first day of the month whenever possible so that it is received by the membership in a timely fashion. Contributions submitted less than 3 days prior to the date of publication will be held over to the following month. This deadline must be observed so that members receive timely notices and reminders for events of the following four weeks.
- The newsletter will feature in its masthead color astronomical imaged submitted by club photographers so as to showcase their work and make the newsletter more visually interesting.

Members who would like to ask questions of the editor or make contributions are encouraged to contact the new editor at carlwenning@gmail.com.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Nominations are now being sought for the 2014-2015 Board of Directors. A new Board will be elected at the club’s Annual Meeting on February 1st. In accordance with the club’s bylaws, the president and vice president are determined by the Board members at their first meeting and are selected from among the Board members. Other officers and positions – secretary, treasurer, historian, newsletter editor, and property manager for instance. If you are interested in running for an office or accepting an appointed position, please contact TCAA President Tom Weiland.

ness to prepare the content for publication, with the stipulation that he would not have to distribute the hard copies to the members. We discussed options for converting to paperless delivery of the newsletter, noting that we might need to adjust our membership dues structure to accommodate this change. Duane noted that we would need to obtain emails addresses for several members and agreed to review the costs associated with printing and delivery of the newsletter. It was agreed that we should alert members to the possibility of this change in a newsletter article and bring the issue before the members at the Annual Meeting.

Carl noted that the Challenger Learning Center would be hosting an evening for presentations and observing at their facility on December 6. Lee and Paul agreed to consider helping out at the event. Carl will contact Stacey Shrewsbury about specific needs.

A call for volunteers was made to stand for next year’s Board of Directors. Tom and Dave expressed their willingness to server. Paul, Tony and Lee expressed reservations and hoped that other members would step forward for the role. A call for volunteers should be published in the upcoming edition of the newsletter.

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 12, 2013, BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING (CONT.)

(Continued from page 2)

Carl raised a concern about the safety of the roof of the PSO and related a concern that his associate had raised about the roof’s susceptibility to damage in case of violent weather. He suggested several low cost alternatives toward reinforcing the roof using tie-downs. The Board authorized him to investigate possible solutions to the problem.

Our esteemed newsletter editor Erin Estabrook indicated that she will no long be able to serve that role. The Board expressed it appreciation for the excellent job she has done. Discussion turned to her replacement. It was noted that Carl provided a wealth of material for the newsletter, and he indicated his willing-

(Continued on page 5)

COMET ISON IMAGE FROM NOVEMBER 14TH

Bob F. and Carl W. observed Comet ISON during the pre-dawn hours of November 13. Bob took a set of "contingency" shots of the comet. The next morning, both returned to SGO earlier to do a better job of imaging the comet. The RAW image files (LRGB) were obtained by Bob using the 17" telescope which had to be used due to the comet's low elevation. Subsequently, Tim Stone processed the image using a technique pointed out by Craig Prost. Both the Pantagraph and Chicago Tribune have used the image shown above.



COMET ISON DURING DECEMBER

Comet C/2012 S1 (ISON) passed 730,000 miles above the solar surface on Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 2013. The earliest reports were of the comet's demise. But much like Mark Twain once said, "The stories of my death are greatly exaggerated." With a few hours of the comet's supposed vaporization by the sun, "something" appeared to be emerging from the glare of it sun and it was what was left of Comet ISON. The material appeared consists of both a trail of material and a tale. By December 1 even this material appeared to have dispersed and the comet has been declared dead once again. For what it is worth, here is some information – published earlier – about where to find the comet should it be at visible at all.

Post-perihelion morning sky: Almost immediately after Comet ISON passed perihelion, it will appear roughly north-northwest of the sun in the sky. Therefore it will be visible both before sunrise and after sunset for short periods of time starting with the morning sky. Even though its head will not be visible in the east for a few more days, its tail should extend northward from the sun and roughly in the direction of the North Star. Fortunately, Earth's moon will be at new phase around this time and will not interfere with observations. By December 3, the comet's head will appear above the eastern horizon at the start of nautical twilight (about one hour before sunrise). The comet appears to move away from the sun toward the upper left with its tail preceding it. If observers are fortunate, they will observe both dust and gas tails on this comet. If very lucky, members will see a "fan tail" reminiscent of Comet McNaught visible in the southern hemisphere back in 2007.) The head of the comet will continue to diminish in brightness and the tail to disappear.

CONSTELLATION OF THE MONTH: CASSIOPEIA—THE QUEEN

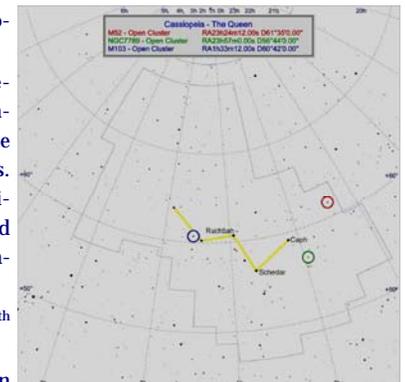
Cassiopeia is a bright northern constellation that is easily recognized by the distinctive "W" pattern of its stars. It is best viewed during the autumn months, but Cassiopeia is circumpolar and can be seen throughout the year.

Cassiopeia was the beautiful Queen of Aethiopia who ruled with her husband Cepheus. Their daughter, Andromeda, and their son-in-law, Perseus occupy nearby constellations. When Cassiopeia boasted that her beauty was as great as the Nereids, the sea-nymphs, they took offense and set the monster Cetus to harass the coastal waters. Cepheus consulted an oracle who direct that Andromeda be chained to a rock as sacrifice to Cetus. Before the monster could claim his prize, Perseus arrived and killed Cetus, claiming Andromeda as his wife. This story is memorialized in five constellations.

Cassiopeia is the 25th largest constellation covering 598 square degrees. It is the 28th brightest constellation and reaches opposition on October 7.

Several stars in Cassiopeia are named. Schedar, Caph and Ruchbah are three stars in the "W" shape. Schedar is a multiple star system with three close companions.

Cassiopeia lies in the Milky Way along its northern extent. Cassiopeia is home to two Messier objects, M52 and M103. Both of these are striking open clusters. Another fabulous open cluster, NGC7789, contains several hundred stars.



PSO PROTECTION SYSTEM STRENGTHENED

Following weather-based "emergency email" from Carl W. on Saturday morning, November 16th, Tom W., Tim S., and Bob F. went out to Prairie Sky Observatory to install four tie down straps to help keep the observatory's roll-off roof from blowing off during high winds expected the following day. Bob returned with Carl on Sunday morning to replace two missing turnbuckles and fix two eyelet bolts associated with the original system tie down system, part of which was either lost or damaged since the end of initial completion of the observatory on July 24th.

True to a warning appearing in the Saturday *Pantagraph*, the area received extreme weather starting around 12:30pm on Sunday. Locally, there were very high winds, more than 1 inch of driving rain, and 3-inch hail stones in isolated areas. The weather event lasted for around 30 minutes. In Washington, IL, some 250-500 houses were destroyed by an EF-4 tornado. Carl returned to PSO after the passage of the storm and noted that PSO had weathered the situation without damage. While the 10-point tie down system served admirably, it is also fortunate that the PSO stands in the wind shadow of the Nature Center to the southwest, the storage barn to the west, and the SGO to the northwest.



Despite surviving this weather event, it was suggested that the club invest in tarps and bungee cords for tie down to cover the telescopes and cameras. If in the future should the roof be blown off, the tarps would probably protect telescopic equipment from rain damage. New member Brad Welch has most kindly provided an "H2O emergency kit" for protection that includes the following:

- Four (4) 6' x 8' waterproof rip stop tarps
- A set of 12 Bungee cords to help keep the tarps in place around each scope
- A 60' role of duct tape, multipurpose
- Assorted plastic tie wraps (to keep power off the ground in the even of flooding)
- A plastic container to keep everything organized and out of the way
- A 10'x10' roll of 4 mil plastic to cover the laptops and Desktop PCs
- Epoxy to fix any small roof leaks
- Small towels for wiping up any water.

Brad is providing this kit at no cost to the club. Thanks to all who have contributed to strengthening the protection system for PSO.

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 12, 2013, BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING (CONT.)

(Continued from page 3)

Carl noted that he had received the reservation materials for the 2014 ISU Family Science Day event to be held on April 5, 2014 at Redbird Arena. Lee indicated that he had also received the materials and we discussed the program. It was agreed that we would provide a three-element program including The Spectrum of Light, Solar Observing and Telescope Observing. Lee will coordinate the program to get our reservations established.

Bob raised a question about installing a fourth pier in the PSO to house the Astro-Physics mount that is scheduled to arrive in the near future. We had extended discussion about the question. With the facility having been recently completed after an extended planning period, several Board members were reluctant to rubberstamp a second major, permanent change to the facility less than two month after its Grand Opening on September 28, 2013, especially in light of the Board's recent approval of the installation of a third permanent pier before the facility was completely built. We discussed the placement of the proposed fourth pier and several members were concerned that it would block entrance into the facility by visitors; we discussed the equipment that was installed, the people who are using the equipment, some of the conflicts that arise from the use of the equipment and how the facility can best be used by all members in an equal and unbiased fashion. We discussed how our decision to allow the third pier to be installed had been intended to provide additional capacity and flexibility for the benefit of active members like Craig Prost who has well-utilized that position in the last few months, and for all members. Because no consensus could be found to the question of approving a fourth permanent pier in the facility, we agreed to allow a tripod-based telescope to be placed at the location proposed for the fourth pier, with the understanding that this arrangement would give us a chance to consider the impact of such equipment on the use of the facility. No motions were made.

Bob then requested permission to mount a computer monitor on the east wall of the PSO control room with the intent that it would provide an effective display to visitors to the PSO. After an abbreviated discussion, the Board considered and approved the request.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted, Lee Green, Secretary

ASTROBITS

- ★ Overlooked earlier, the TCAA was given a “Cheer” in the “Cheers and Jeers” section of *The Pantagraph* on October 4th. The statement read, “Cheers... to Twin City Amateur Astronomers, which has opened a second observatory at Sugar Grove Nature Center in Funks Grove. The TCAA welcomes the general public to its many sessions, with members providing educational and humorous commentary while answering the most arcane (or simple) questions. Thanks for not letting us forget the awe and wonder that comes with sky gazing.”
- ★ IWU’s Mark Evans Observatory was in the news again recently. There was a feature article and nice photograph of the club’s former 11” Celestron and CGE Pro mount. The article, titled “IWU observatory earns Smithsonian certification”, appeared on page A3 in the November 5th edition of *The Pantagraph*. In a personal note, Linda French noted the contribution of the TCAA in updating the observatory but that aspect of her comments never made it into the story. Check out the story on the *Pantagraph* website.
- ★ During the predawn hours of November 13th, Carl Wenning completed all observations required for his Astronomical League (AL) Planetary Nebula Club observing award (advanced level). He began this observing project on September 26, 2008. Carl is looking forward to receiving his Herschel II, Carbon Star, and Planetary Nebula observing club pins at the February 1 Annual Meeting. With these three pins, he will have completed 13 AL observing clubs at the highest levels.
- ★ Carl observed Comet ISON for the first time at 5:16 a.m. on November 13th. A few minutes later, Bob F. joined him at the eyepiece. The next morning, Carl and Bob observed both Comet Lovejoy in northern Leo and Comet ISON in Virgo. Later that morning, Carl had an interview at the new Sap and Honey House at SGNC with Lenore Sobota and photographer Steve Smedley of the *Pantagraph*. They both expressed interest then about a Comet ISON feature story, and Steve shot a few contingency shots within PSO and SGO.
- ★ An article featuring both the TCAA and Comet ISON appeared in the *Pantagraph* on Tuesday, November 26th. The article featured a November 14th image of the Comet taken by Bob F. and processed by Tim S.
- ★ Carl W. looked for Comet ISON on the morning of November 24th, but could not find it beside Saturn and Mercury where it was supposed to be located. At a predicted magnitude of +3.8, it was lost in the morning twilight glow being very close to the sun at this time.
- ★ Tim Stone has been in contact with the Chicago Tribune in relation to Comet ISON. He shared an image taken by Bob F. that he later processed. It appears as though the TCAA is becoming one of the “goto groups” the media consult with regard to important astronomical events. Unfortunately, the image was not used in the news story published by the Tribune.
- ★ Despite a temperature in the upper teens and a wind from the north, on November 24th Carl W. made 43 additional observations for the AL “Stellar Evolution” observing program. This brings his current total count to 70.
- ★ If you have been making observations in relation to Astronomical League observing clubs, please send any updates you care to have included in the January report to Carl Wenning (carlwenning@gmail.com) by December 26th.
- ★ Sugar Grove Nature Center depends on charitable donations to keep its programs going. The Hazel Funk Holmes Trust has just announced that it will match all contributions up to a total of \$20,000 over the coming months. Every dollar donated will become two due to this match. The goal is to reach a \$40,000 donation; won’t you help out? Please send your membership donation made payable to Funks Grove Foundation and send it to Sugar Grove Nature Center, 4532 N 725 East Road, McLean, IL, 61754.
- ★ The TCAA historian noted recently that he is missing three copies of *The OBSERVER* from December 2003 through February 2004. Duane Yockey recently pulled files for 2003 and 2004 out of his archives and found a January 2004 issue of the newsletter. His files for those two years have all the issues except December 2003 and February 2004. We now suspect that issues were never published for those months, but don’t know for sure. This copy will be scanned and added to the online repository that Lee Green maintains on the TCAA website on behalf of the club. Thanks to Duane and Lee for supporting the work of the club’s historian and maintaining club history.
- ★ Did you know that a 139-page history of the TCAA is available for download from the TCAA’s website? Historian Carl Wenning published a limited edition, spiral-bound book for the club’s 50th anniversary back in 2010, and an electronic copy is available. Check out this publication at <http://www.tcaa.us/History.aspx>

POS TELESCOPE GIVEN AWAY—FINALLY

The 2013 POS telescope drawing winner was Jennifer Achs, a senior-level ISU biology major from Grayslake, IL. She attended the September POS with her roommate Andrea Bruck who just happens to be an ISU Planetarium employee. Jennifer’s name was drawn at the October meeting, and Carl worked with both Jennifer and Andrea to conduct an observing session during which the telescope demonstrated that it had a problem. Carl fixed the problem and transferred the Jennifer on November 16.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – November 2013

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – October 31, 2013 - \$ 1,953.96

Income

Dan Grieder (Dues) - \$ 41.00

Expenses

LYB Inc. (Observer copies & postage) - \$ 30.62

PayPal (Dan Grieder) - \$ 1.20

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – November 30, 2013 - \$ 1,963.14

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – October 31, 2013 - \$ 8,838.94

Income

Donation (Kentuckiana Campground) - \$ 50.00

Transfer to Escrow (Insurance Payment) - \$ 386.00

Expenses

Transfer to Escrow (Sale of 5" Tak) - \$ 5,660.00

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – November 30, 2013 - \$ 3,614.94

INSURANCE ESCROW BALANCE – October 31, 2013 - \$ 0.00

Income

Transfer from Observatory Fund - \$ 5,660.00

Expenses

Transfer from Observatory Fund - \$ 386.00

INSURANCE ESCROW BALANCE – November 30, 2013 - \$ 5,274.00

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – November 30, 2013 - \$ 10,852.08

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

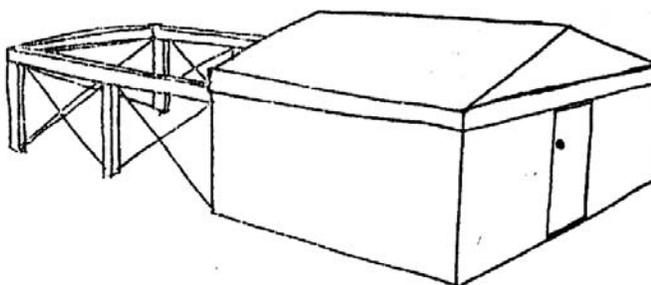
December 1963 – The club watched a movie called "About Time" during the first December meeting at IWU. An informal party was held at the second December meeting to celebrate the holidays. On the evening of December 13th, three club members met at the home of Hank Janeczek (in Normal) to observe the Geminid meteor shower. A drawing showing the club's proposed "Beehive" roll-off-roof observatory was included in this month's newsletter. (Historian's note: How prescient! It only took 50 additional years for the club to erect a second, nearly identical observatory. The only real difference is the scale of the structure, the placement of the door, and the equipment inside.)

25 Years Ago

December 1988 – The Wenning's host the club's "Saturnalia Party" in their home on December 16th. This annual event followed a club visit to the ISU Planetarium to see Carl's "Seven Wonders of the Universe" program. The next evening, the club attended a private planetarium program "Our home star: The sun" to learn about the sun's annual motions among the stars.

10 Years Ago

December 2003 – Alas, we are missing copies of *The OBSERVER* for December 2003 and February 2004. Should you have a copy of any of these issues, please let the historian Carl Wenning know. At the very least, he'd like to make copies of these issues "for the record."



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**