


FOCAL POINT



The Newsletter of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

November 1999

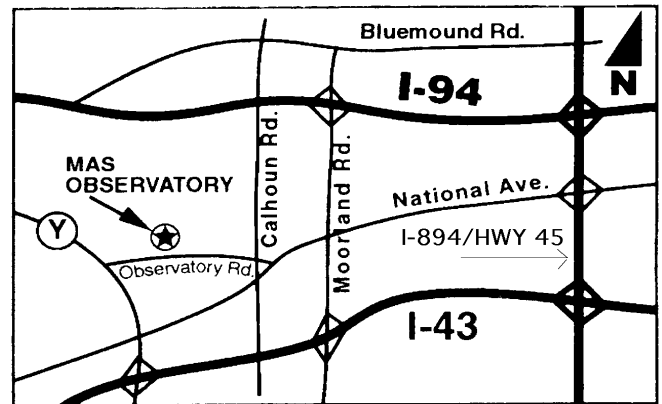
The Leonids (and other Events) Are Coming!

The Leonid Meteor Showers are projected to hit the Earth's atmosphere in the evening of November 17th and the early hours of November 18th. The Leonids meteor shower result from the Earth passing thru the debris trail of Comet Tempel-Tuttle. While the meteors appear in all sectors of the sky, the trails tend to "trace back" to the constellation Leo. The prediction "experts" think that the best shot at seeing a possible meteor storm (on the American continent) is in the east. However there is always enough uncertainty associated with these forecasts that being a few hours off can drastically shift where the center of a meteor storm can be. There is also a consensus that chances are good that a higher density of meteors will occur this year. Some studies have indicated that more intense meteor showers have occurred every 33 years. The last previously intense storm was in 1966. At any rate, there will undoubtedly be die-hard observers at the MAS observatory especially in the wee hours of November 18th (after moonset), weather permitting. For more details on the Leonids, consult either the November issues of Astronomy or Sky and Telescope.

There are some other observing events in November worth noting. A rare opportunity exists to observe the **transit of Mercury across the Sun**. A telescope with a full aperture solar filter and a high power eyepiece is probably the best approach to timing the transit (using WWV). The high power is recommended because Mercury is just shy of 10 arc seconds across. Mercury should be crossing inside the sun's limb just after **3:00 PM CST on November 15th** and the transit should last close to an hour. Do use an approved solar filter or an eyepiece projection scheme (on to a translucent surface) to observe this event. Weather permitting, there may be an attempt to document this event at the Observatory.

This is an observing event well within the capabilities of a properly equipped Amateur. Again, see the above magazines for more details.

Lastly **Saturn and Jupiter** (and associated moons) are starting to become very viewable in the evening sky and present a timely opportunity to see planetary detail. If you haven't studied the bands and rings, this a good time to give it a try.



We Meet on Friday, November 19th at 8:00 PM

at the Observatory site shown on the above map. A speaker for the event was still pending at the time of publication. Past experience says the program will be both informative and entertaining so do plan on being there.

The MAS Board of Directors will meet on the same night but at 7:00PM. Since many changes, additions and modifications to the observatory are occurring and board participation is strongly needed. All board members are urged to be there or call the President and advise him of their inability to attend.

MAS October Campout a Fun Event

Once again the fall campout was a success. Friday night had a good turnout of "one-nighters", people just out for the evening, as well as campers. Contrary to weather forecast, Friday night allowed a fair amount of star gazing as well as campfire camaraderie. Saturday daytime was a beautiful fall day and several of the campers participated in Dan Yanko's Nature hike. Because of the pace that Dan set, some dubbed it "forced march". Saturday night did not provide any extensive star gazing due to fog and clouds. Nevertheless, campfire friendships were forged and a good time was had by all.

Welcome New Members

MAS extends a warm welcome to new members James Schroeter, David Kreiner, James Koshick, Ronald Sehr, James Boudry, and H.R. LaBelle. Please join us at our monthly meetings and scheduled events.

Invitation to a Starry Night

As some members already know, Joan and I are planning a major star party, called Starry Night (#4 or 5), in Westfield, near our summer house, on April 7, 2000. The skies will be full: Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Orion, the Pleiades, and a crescent moon. We need volunteers to give lectures, provide scopes and sky tours, and so forth. A few topics seem built in, like those above, but consider also constellations, impact, contact, etc. We have done trial runs at the excellent pub, The Wild Goose. A few phone calls drew some 35 people, hence it seems probable that serious publicity will attract several hundred. The owner of the Goose even turned out lights in the parking lot. His support is plain as is that of two other area business people, and, best of all, the president of the Chamber of Commerce (who, after a single evening with our scope, can't wait to get his own). We want to use the county fairgrounds, where there is parking, power, buildings, etc. Westfield is 2 hours away, an hour north of Portage, an hour south of Steven's Point.

Tom and Joan Pelnar
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Board Doings

* Julie Frey submitted applications for eight new members (see Welcome new members).

*Observatory Director Gerry Samolyk reported on the following:

- The second CCD camera An SBIG ST9E, is on order and is expected to be delivered December 1999.

-A second computer has been purchased for use for B scope observing events

Gerry also noted the following observing events:

- Oct. 18, Moon occults Venus
- Oct. 24,27, and 29 asteroid events
- Dec. 2-3, Saturn occults a 9.2 magnitude star

Lastly,

-Tree line at the observatory has been significantly shortened giving a lower line-of sight, especially to the South and southeast.

-September work session cleaned the grounds and completed a repaint of B-scope and the interior walls of the observatory.

-A scope dome drive is in need of repairs. Care should be used in moving this dome manually until the drive is repaired

- Construction committee will meet soon for building new enclosure for Yard scope in near future.

- \$200 expenditure was approved for software to update A scope.

-Tom Schmidtkunz donated \$200 to MAS. His employer, Fortis will provide a matching donation.

Chicago Astrofest, Sept. 17-19, 1999

Again this year son Jeff and I attended Astrofest 1999, the annual astronomy party that the Astronomical Society of Chicago hosts at Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See, the 4-H camp near Kankakee, IL.

This year, unlike last year, we had a flawless uninterrupted trip, arriving at the camp in less than 3 hours from Milwaukee. It was a warm beautiful day, not hot like last year.

The map that the Astrofest organizers provide has not been updated to correct typographical errors but it is still relatively easy to find the camp. Check-in is very painless, if you were pre-registered, not so if you weren't.

Credentials in hand, nametag pinned on, and with the experience of last year, we were better able to find a campsite more to our liking. After the tent was pitched (5 Minutes) we were ready to see what the vendors had to offer this year.

For the most part, the vendors were a repeat of last year. Good buys from some, not so good from others. We were in the market for a set of filters and a short tube Barlow. We didn't buy either.

Last year we brought our compact 3" Unitron and spent most of Saturday night trying to find objects too hard to see with a small telescope. This year we again brought our telescope but never took it out of the case. Unless your telescope is an 8" Reflector or larger, you have a burning desire to show off your hand built beauty, or you are on a mission; you are better off leaving smaller telescopes at home and enjoy the vast array of telescopes and viewing equipment brought by others. The things people think up and build and the things that money can buy never cease to amaze me.

This year's event drew a record number of 1,140 astronomers from all over the country that made the pilgrimage to Kankakee, IL. Milwaukee Astronomical Society and the Wehr Astronomical Society were well represented. We saw old friends and again made new ones.

Volunteering to spend two hours at registration increased our experience. You can learn a lot just by hanging around.

Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See is a very interesting place to visit; there is a fossil filled stream to explore and nature trails to hike or bike. During the afternoon, there were astronomy talks presented by Robert Naeye and Dan Koehler both from Astronomy magazine and a light pollution workshop. After dinner, but before dark there was an awards presentation for the winners of the many contests available including telescope building, astrophotography and an art contest for the children of all ages. By the time the many donated door prizes were handed out (we didn't win anything), it was time for some serious viewing.

The sky around Camp Shaw-Waw-Nas-See is good but not that good and we had the moon to contend with as well. We spent all of our time looking through other people's instruments. Unlike last year, almost everyone made a night of it.

With so many wonderful things to do and see, if you haven't experienced a star party, you don't know what you're missing. For us it is an event worth repeating.

mike marinelle

MAS Library News

New members, or those not acquainted with the MAS Library, may not be aware that our library is one of the most extensive private Astronomy collections in Wisconsin. Our resources include over 500 books, charts-atlases, over two dozen VHS videos, many computer disks, and over 1200 slides. The major portion of library material is now located in the offices of Zemlock (Z Scope). These items may be borrowed by any member on Saturday member nites or at club meetings by arrangement with a MAS keyholder (excluding magazines, charts-atlases, vertical file pages or other unclassified pages). Under special circumstances (Research, projects, lectures) historical and other items may be procured for use by contacting the Librarian-Historian.

A valued recently donated book was:

1. **Full Moon by Michael Light with an essay by Andrew Chaikin- 1999.** The main substance of this book is an incredible photographic voyage in three parts:

1. Lift-off and Voyage to the Moon
2. Man on the Moon and moonscapes, including several spectacular 4 page gatefold panoramas of the surface and astronauts.
3. And the Return to Earth: Splashdown.

Included are Apollo mission data, Earth to Moon diagrams, essays that include impressions and comments on the alien surface of the Moon. Comments include Apollo 11 Buzz Aldrin's "Magnificent desolation"; Others- "dazzlingly beautiful"; "the pictures are only a dim approximation"; "a tiny blue and white world" "to witness an Earthrise".

This classic book was donated "to our dear friends in MAS" by Tom and Joan Pelnar. Thank you Tom and Joan.

Fifteen Astronomy 2000 calendars remain and are available at significant discount at any meeting.

Scott Laskowski- MAS Librarian-Historian

For Sale

Cookbook 245 CCD Camera. Looking for a good home for my CB 245. I've upgraded to an ST-7E. Excellent performer but seldom used now. This is a 12 bit camera that delivers images in 378x242 high res format and 252x252 lo res mode. Chip imaging area is 6.4mmx4.8mm with pixel size of 17x20 microns (about the same size as an ST-& in the medium resolution mode. Electronic shuttering from 1/1000th to 9999.9 seconds. Includes the Cookbook and all software. For more information, see my website under CCD Equipment. Sample images can be seen in website in the Gallery section.

Homepage: <http://www.1.wcf.net/~radduci/eagle/index.html>.

Price: \$350 Firm Call 594-2903

Dick Adduci

radduci@wcf.net

Note to the Editor

We are finding out that some of our MAS friends had not heard about Trevors birth. Could you put this short notice in the next Focal Point?

Karen Wesener and Lee Keith would like to let all of their MAS friends know of the birth of their son, Trevor Wesley Keith. He arrived on June 28 and is healthy and happy. He joins his big sister, Celeste, at the center of the Keith/Wesener universe.

Lee Keith & Karen Wesener

leekeith1@juno.com

Voice: (414) 425-2331

Scientific Theory?

In the process of scanning the month of November 1999 RASC Calendar for moon rise and set data, the Editor found this quote from PBS comedian Mark Russell: "The scientific theory I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed entirely of lost airline luggage".

After having temporarily lost luggage recently in Amsterdam (on the way home from Madrid), I don't brush away the above theory quite as quickly.

Ed.

Thinking Out Loud

MAS Holiday Outing , Get Together, Planned

Tentative plans have been made for a club get together in December. The last couple of years gatherings at Los Mariachis were very popular. We're trying to put together a similar event but with possibly an Italian flare and targeting the second Friday in December. Because of the jam of group parties in December, we were still looking for confirmation of the reservation at the time the Focal Point went to press. An early December Focal Point is planned with the details of when and where. Please hold your options open for this event.

Under the helm of our President, Observatory Director, et al, digitizing of our fixed observatories has progressed to the point where Z scope is one step away from being operated remotely from a warm downstairs office in the Zemlock building. Similarly two new CCD imagers are breathing new life (in observation capability) from our increasingly light polluted site.

In the past, we had talked about finding a new dark site. This would have been both very costly and inconvenient in the glow of the Waukesha/Milwaukee metro area.

A third option has been kicked around. What if we set up remotely operated scopes on very small parcels of land (in dark site areas) and telephone linked to our Zemlock offices (or member homes, for that matter). Suddenly our digitized set-up has a lot of dark site access with the flick of an "auto-dial".

Now I have this hill behind my lake place (a very dark site) in the middle of the Hiawatha National Forest, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, with telephone and power lines nearby.....

Ed.

MAS Officers/ Staff

President	Scott Jamieson	896-0119
Vice President	Lee Keith	425-2331
Treasurer	Dan Yanko	453-3382
Secretary	Margaret Warner	327-7427
Observatory Director	Gerry Samolyk	529-9051
Assistant Observatory Director	Paul Borchardt	781-0169
Focal Point	Rudy Poklar, Editor	786-8931

Future MAS Events

MAS Holiday Get-together in December- Watch for December issue of Focal Point.

MAS Membership is open to all with an interest in Astronomy and expanding their knowledge of the Universe. Yearly Membership Dues are: Individual \$28/yr.; Family \$32; Non-resident (individual \$18, Family \$22); Student (under 18) \$12. **For more information, contact Membership Chairperson Julie Frey, 11040 W. Meinecke Avenue, Milwaukee WI.**

Focal Point Publishing Guidelines

Focal Point Newsletter is published monthly from Sept through May with a Mid-summer issue in July. Articles, Announcements, Graphics, Photos, Swap/Sale Ads etc should be submitted at least 10 days prior to the first of the month (of the desired issue). Article inputs are preferred via E-Mail, or diskette in a text or Word compatible format, if possible. Submit FP inputs to:

MAS Focal Point c/o Rudy Poklar
12905 W. Crawford Drive

Saturday Keyholders

November

6	Terry Ross	784-2093
13	Tom Schmidtkunz	352-1674
20	Scott Laskowski	421-3517
27	Chris Weber	789-7128

December

4	Dan Yanko	453-3382
11	Wanda Berner	646-8229
18	Paul Borchardt	781-0169
25	Gerry Samolyk	529-9051

** If members want to be assured of observatory access on a given Saturday nite, they should call the keyholder ahead of time.*

PLEASE NOTE: The above keyholder list reflects additions and deletions to previous lists. Please discard any prior list.

MAS Observatory 542-9071

The Milwaukee Astronomical Society

2933 N.68th Street
Milwaukee, WI. 53210-1208

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**We Meet Friday, November 19th, 8:00PM at the Observatory*



Eds. Note;

The board has managed to assemble a quorum at the vast majority of its meetings and conduct the business of MAS, but there are a handful of board members who are notorious for missing most of the meetings without a stated valid reason or even an apology. I remind board members that section 4 of the MAS bylaws states: "Should a Director absent himself without good cause for three (3) consecutive meetings of the Board, his directorship shall be declared vacant by the Board of Directors". No, I'm not proposing strict enforcement of that bylaw, but there is no reason why a board member can't take 30 seconds to call the President to be excused. Secondly, for those of you who have a track record of zip attendance, courtesy says you should consider making room for a more active and interested member to participate on the Board.

I technically violated the above By-law this summer but I did call and explain my absences. Further, I resolved to juggle my schedule to avoid that problem in the future.

The next morning (Sunday) had great promise for the perfect fall day. The survivors of the Battan death march of the day before were invited for a brisk early morning walk before breaking camp. We were either brain dead or the path was far more forgiving than it was yesterday. It was great fun. After we were all packed up, we decided to visit, for some, and revisit for others the "Ma and Pa" hamburger joint on Long Lake that was so boastfully bragged about the night before. They were right. It was a great burger and great cherry malt (or was it just the great fresh air.)

Are you getting the picture that if you weren't there, you missed a super time? Did you also know that MAS picks up the tab for this super time? It really doesn't matter if we have sky or not (of course we want sky) to enjoy just being together and sharing experiences. Take it from me, you don't have to know anything about astronomy to have fun. This year's campout was again sponsored by The Milwaukee Astronomical Society and a new sponsor this year was Maraska Slivovitz. When you see a MAS Board member or Maraska Slivovitz be sure to say "thanks for the memories." mike marinelle

If it's early October - it must be? Awe, come on you know! It's the Milwaukee Astronomical Society's annual fall campout at the Greenbush (North Unit) Kettle Moraine State park campgrounds. MAS had two group campsites reserved for the occasion. One site with a fire pit was for camping and philosophizing; the other site was for viewing and philosophizing.

Son Jeff and I arrived early Saturday morning, thinking that Friday night would be bad for viewing because of predicted rain. It wasn't. Don't those weather guys ever look out the window? As it turned out, it was the best night of all. But, Saturday was a beautiful warm day with all of nature showing off its fall wardrobe before signing off for the year. After dropping off our gear at our campsite, we walked over to the telescope viewing area to shoot the breeze with MAS members who were recapping the night's activities. It seems that quite a crew made it up for Friday night viewing. Most had just come for the night and had left by the time Jeff and I arrived on Saturday.

Because it was such a beautiful day, Dan Yanko suggested that a casual walk on the Parnell Woods nature trail would be the perfect warm-up for night of stargazing. Little did we know that Dan was a hike "Nazi." and would be conducting an iron man forced march that would require a nap just to have enough energy to be able to stay awake for the night. I found it interesting that by the end of an up and down trail hike how roots and rocks would jump right up under your feet to try to trip you.

Staggering into camp some three (or was it six) hours later, I was really ready for a nap, but Jeff had supper ideas in mind. So while some of the group set out for a professionally prepared meal, we cooked our "No-Name-Steaks" with all of the trimmings. Ah, the joy of cooking and camping in the great out-of-doors.

By the time the group returned from their supper seeking journey with stories of finding the greatest hamburger this side of Solly's; it was time for a night of serious viewing. Unfortunately Mother Nature had other ideas. Why is it that "Mom" pulls down the shade when there are telescopes set up for observing? It's not like we are trying to peek at something we were not suppose too. Well, anyway, we spent a frustrating night in and out of the cloud cover trying to keep the scopes from fogging while picking out a few objects here and there. It was a good time nevertheless.

Finally things socked in for good so we adjourned to the warmth of the Ring of Fire and the camaraderie of good company. The night's conversation didn't focus as much on the heavens as it did on earth travel. With drink (soft that is) and munchies making their rounds, we in turn told of the many lands and strange places we had visited. It made you want to pack your bags as soon as you got home and set out to revisit the world. Some of us did. When the embers started glowing orange, red, black and yellow; it seemed appropriate to turn in for the night. Dutifully dousing the glowing coals, we said our buona notte.