

Newsletter of the LACKAWANNA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, Scranton, Pennsylvania

LAS OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS FOR 1991

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SECRETARY Joe Kamichitis

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AT-LARGE MEMBERS: Phil Cruikshank / Bernie Gillot / Don Murray

THE PRESIDENT'S RANTINGS & RAVINGS

I am happy to report that the goals which were presented at our 1/08/91 meeting were received with support and enthusiasm. The theme of this presidency is "Astronomy, the Challenge, Friends & Fun".

There is no need for detail regarding the challenge of astronomy. Viewing objects that are upside-down through a telescope, facing temperature extremes, insects, cloudy nights, trying to develop an understanding of some of the physics of this hobby will keep us all busy for a lifetime.

To begin with, we have just about completed the Outline for a Beginner's Astronomy Course, which will begin in April. Specific

details will be published in "The Ecliptic" and local newspapers. Vice-President John Sabia is responsible for running the course and it will surely provide a foundation necessary to enjoy and grow in this hobby.

I have already begun correspondence with the Association of Lunar & Planetary Observers for guidelines and recording forms for submission of all our members' observations.

This might provide a little more motivation to increase our observing time.

There is also the possibility of establishing an internal form of recognition for our members. A LAS Observers Certificate will be awarded to members who complete a variety of observations, to be determined by the Board. We will be using the

S.T.A.R.T. Program from the Popular Astronomy Club of Augustana College as a guide.

These are just some of the plans for 1991 to facilitate the challenge theme of 1991.

Group activities are my primary goal. Friends and fun make the failures at observing somewhat humorous and the successes more memorable. Group activities may include meteor watches, observing eclipsing binary stars such as Algol, an Amateur Photography Group, and a Constellation & Messier Scavenger Hunt.

The consensus of the Board and Officers is that these plans address the interests of the beginners and experienced members.

We are happy to assist all

members in observing and recording this information within their interest and capability. We also want you to have some fun doing it.

I hope to see more of you at the March 5, 1991 meeting at Allied Services. The Board and Officers are interested in your observations and opinions and you in particular.

Steve Gedrich

THE LAS OBSERVING PROGRAM - 1991

This year the Society will embark on a program of recording observations of some specific events. They will be split along the lines of group events such as meteor watches and solo observations that can be done with a watch and binoculars. Not only will these events be interesting to view, but they will also be instructional. Participants will gain skills that will be helpful when observing in future programs.

I have chosen two projects to begin with. One requires only the use of the human eye or binoculars, while the other requires a telescope of at least six inches in aperture.

The first project is an event that many have heard

about, but never witnessed. The periodic light drop of the famous eclipsing binary star Algol. I have listed the times when the minimum light will occur for our location. At maximum brightness, Algol shines at 2.1, but when at minimum, the star fades to 3.4. The stars Alpha Persei (1.8) and Gamma Persei (3.4) are good comparisons and are located nearby. Use a star chart from "Sky and Telescope" or "Astronomy" magazine.

With the use of a telescope and a watch, you can participate in the timing of the mutual events (eclipses and occultations) of the moons of Jupiter. An eclipse occurs when one of Jupiter's moons passes into the shadow of another moon. When one moon passes in front of another, an occultation occurs. In both cases, a drop in magnitude will be seen but varies depending on how much of the moon is in the shadow of another or covered by another. I have listed the events that can be viewed from our area.

Additional details on observation and record keeping will be discussed at the regular meetings.

MINIMA OF ALGOL

Feb. 6, 1991	1:32AM
Feb. 8, 1991	10:21PM
Feb. 11, 1991	7:10 PM

MUTUAL EVENTS OF JUPITER'S MOONS

- Feb. 12 - 8:19 PM
Europa Occults Io
(Partial Event)
- Feb. 12 - 9:01 PM
Europa Eclipses Io
(Annular event)
- Feb. 19 - 10:29 PM
Europa Occults Io
(Annular event)
- Feb 20 - 8:05 PM
Ganymede Occults
Callisto (Partial Event)
- Feb 27 - 1:39AM
Europa Occults Io
(Partial event)
- Feb. 27 - 2:51AM
Europa Eclipses Io
(Annular event)

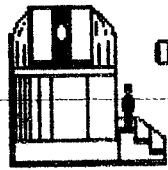
I like to supplement my notebook with more than magnitude estimates and time of observations. In February there are three nights when Algol will be at minima for our area. Besides just witnessing the event, record it on film or even video tape. At the last meeting we viewed a video of Jupiter and its moons taken with a 8 inch f/4 scope and a hand held video camera by Phil Cruikshank. Very impressive results for a first time try. The same setup (with a tripod) could yield an interesting tape of Algol as it undergoes eclipse.

By using a standard 35mm SLR camera, 50mm lens, and a tripod, a collage of prints can be constructed depicting Algol's eclipse. A

black and white film of 400 ISO or more could be exposed for at least 30 seconds at 10 minute intervals.

These are just two ideas of many you can perform to explore the night sky.

John D. Sabia



OBSERVATORY ASIDES

This Springtime sounds exciting to me. Of course that may just be because we've got snowdrops opened up already (February 2). But also it's because the board members have come up with some great ideas.

Club nights will be following themes. We've got plans to learn how to make sketch observations at one session and at another one, learn easy (and later more complex) astrophotography techniques.

We've even got a plan to set up a phone call network for when unusual events occur. We've already got sort of a mini-phone chain for naked-eye sunspots (we've had plenty) and another for aurora (a very disappointing year for me personally.) We've also decided to set up a phone network for weekend

observing sessions. Let us know if you want to be on one of these lists.

Best of all could be the Observational Astronomy Course that John Sabia, the club's premiere observer, has put together for this spring for both club members and the public. If you're an experienced observer you can volunteer to help out; if you're a rookie, then be sure to take advantage of this offering. It should be a lot of fun and a great help to anyone starting out (or just getting used to new equipment).

Come on up!!
Jo-Ann Kamichitis

FLASH!! ASTRONOMY COURSE COMES TO THE LAS

Over one year in the planning ... many years in the mulling over ... here comes the Introductory Observational Astronomy Course so many members and public have requested.

This course is geared to the person starting from scratch. You will be introduced to the constellations and the use of star maps and planispheres. You will find out how to identify the planets using information from the popular astronomy journals.

You will learn how to use

a telescope, with several types available for hands on experience.

Techniques and methods of visual observation of the moon, planets, deep sky objects, and double and variable stars will be stressed. Simple fixed camera astrophotography will also be taught.

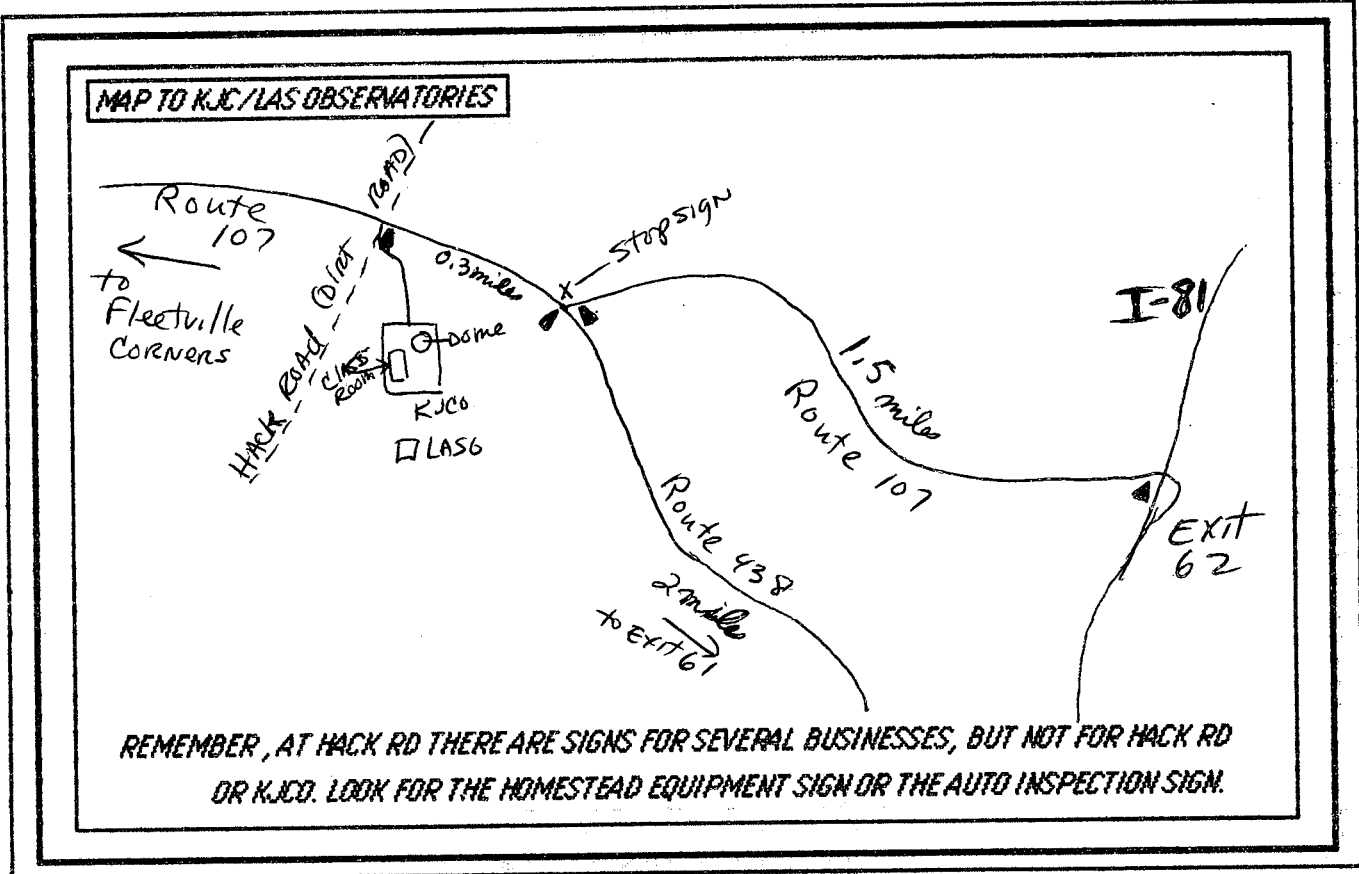
The course will run four Saturdays in April. The dates are April 6, 13, 20 and 27. Starting time will be 8:00PM. There will be lectures and demonstrations followed by actual observing practice. Chief instructor will be John D. Sabia with assistance from other famous LASers.

There will be a \$5.00 fee for LAS members to cover cost of materials. Non-members will be charged \$10.00.

LASers should sign up as soon as possible before we open the course to the public. Call 586-0789 to register for the course, or send in the included form with your fee enclosed.

Come on up. It should be a fun way to master the basics of a great hobby!

By the way, dues are still due from some of you. There's a form enclosed for that, too, if you still owe them.



*** TO GET TO KJC/LASO, TAKE I-81, EITHER EXIT 61 OR 62 AND HEAD TOWARDS FLEETVILLE. THE OBSERVATORIES ARE LOCATED AT THE INTERSECTION OF ROUTE 107 AND HACK ROAD. IF YOU FIND YOURSELF AT FLEETVILLE CORNERS, YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR!! ***

On all clear official club nights, a KJC/LASO keyholder will be present. If the weather is at all questionable, please call either John D. Sabia at 586-0789, or Joe and Jo-Ann Kamichitis at 343-4006, in order to be sure that someone will be there (and maybe inspire them to take a chance on an "iffy" night!) On other clear nights, check with the keyholders or call the Observatory number (945-3665). Let the phone ring long since we may be outside, and may not hear it right away.

"The Ecliptic" is the bimonthly newsletter of the Lackawanna Astronomical Society. A subscription to "The Ecliptic" is one of the benefits of membership in the LAS. No permission is needed for nonprofit use of any material published in "The Ecliptic" provided it is properly credited. Articles, cartoons, news items, etc. may be sent to:

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