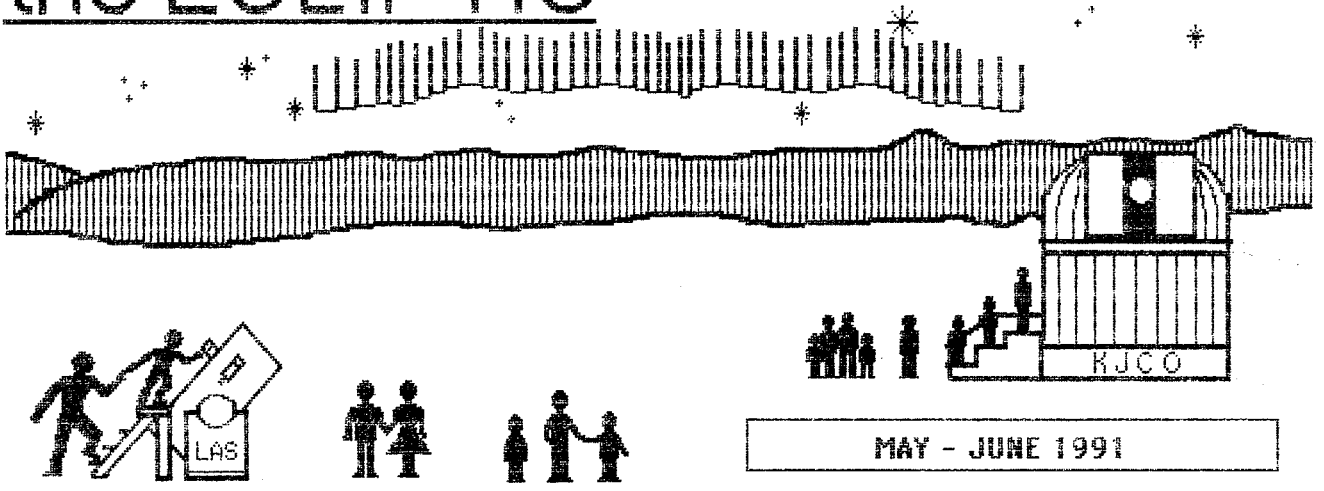
the ECLIPTIC

Volume 17 Number 3



MAY - JUNE 1991

Newsletter of the LACKAWANNA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, Scranton, Pennsylvania

LAS OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS FOR 1991

PRESIDENT Steve Gedrich	VICE PRESIDENT John D. Sabia
SECRETARY Joe Kamichitis	TREASURER Diane Musewicz
AT-LARGE MEMBERS: Phil Cruikshank / Bernie Gillot / Don Murray	

LAS CALENDAR

LAS MEETINGS: Tuesdays, 7:30PM at KJC/LAS Observatories, Fleetville, PA
May 7, 1991 June 4, 1991
Saturday, 6:00PM at KJC/LAS Observatories, Fleetville, PA
July 6, 1991 August 3, 1991
These are Cookout/Meeting/Club Nights (Meeting starts at 8:00PM)

CLUB NIGHTS: Saturdays, 9:00 PM if clear, at KJC/LAS Observatories, Fleetville, PA
May 11, 1991 June 8, 1991

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS: Tuesdays, 8:30 PM at the home of Diane Musewicz, Scranton, PA
Any interested member may attend -- call 961-1264 for directions.
May 14, 1991 June 11, 1991 July 9, 1991

KJC PUBLIC NIGHTS: Runs from March 20, 1991 through May 29, 1991

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.

✳ 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!! ✳

THE PRESIDENT'S RANTINGS & RAVINGS

I understand from a friend of mine the LAS Astronomy Course is going well. Albeit the weather hasn't been co-operative, the material and teacher, John Sabia have sold a few more individuals on this exciting science.

There has been a lot of activity with Board Members thus complicating our schedules. Jo-Ann had exams and report cards to complete, and I've started building my house and couldn't make the last Board Meeting.

For myself, there's been little observing, but I have continued to keep abreast of the Discovery launch and the scientific experiments. I'm watching and taping the "Astronomer" series on PBS ---"Some amazing findings and theories."

I will be brought up to date regarding Astronomy Day activities, etc. and report on them at the next meeting.

To borrow a closing line, "Keep looking up."

Steve Gedrich
President

OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

An interesting fact showed up when verification of the minima dates for the stars RZ Cass and R CMa were compared to the dates published in *Volume 8 Variable Stars*. The listed date and time as published for RZ Cass is January 1, 1991 at about 2:00 UT. Based on the ephemerides I had for RZ Cass, the program predicted the first minima for 1991 would occur on January 2 at 2:35 UT. I assumed that my data was incorrect. By using the reference B106 (Vol. 36, page 200 *Sky & Telescope* 1968) I found my date to be correct. I can only assume a misprint of information in *Volume 8 Variable Star*.

This is further supported by observations of two minima for RZ Cass at the predicted times from the program. It's a shame that such a popular star has its start date misprinted, but that is expected in first edition run of books.

In the case of R CMs *Volume 8 Variable Stars* lists the minima at January 1, 1991 at about 8:00 UT. Based on the ephemerides I have, the first minima for the year 1991 does occur on January 1, but at 20:49 UT. Lacking any other reference I could not confirm the data until observations of R CMa are undertaken. Curiously however, the difference between them is about 12 hours. The same difference between JD time and UT time.

This is not to imply that *Volume 8 Variable Stars* is without merit. It is an excellent book on the topic of variable stars, highly recommended for your bookshelf. I just happen to find these two inconsistencies by accident. After all for a first edition with numerous tabulated data some errors are expected. The published minima data for stars V1016 Ori(Theta), BM Ori, and RS CVN agree very well.

The two other stars U Cep and U Sge are not found in *Volume 8 Variable Stars* Information on these two stars can be found in *Burnhams Celestial Handbook*, also in the LAS library. I am awaiting a clear sky to confirm the predictions. I would like to hear from anyone observing these two stars at the predicted times. The stars in the program are RZ Cass, V 1016 Ori, BM Ori, R CMa, RS CVN, U Cep, U Sge and Algol.

John D. Sabia

ASTRONOMY AND MURPHY'S LAW

I've already related to the entire Board of Directors of the LAS, the exciting events on Jupiter on this particular evening.

There was the 5 trips up and down my basement for the telescope mount, eyepieces and motor, etc. Not to mention polar alignment and proper dress.

What the ...!!!
The moons were in no position for occultation, eclipse or transit. After careful examination, I learned I was one day late. The conversion of Universal Time (UT) to EST was again misinterpreted e.g. 3:30 2/15/91 was not 10:30PM 2/15/91, *but* 10:30PM 2/*14*/91. Such a simple mistake.

While attempting to star test my 6" Meade reflector, I placed an eyepiece and extender in my pocket. No big deal. After making some adjustments, I placed the eyepiece and extender into the focuser -- black as the ace of spades. No star images or light whatsoever. Now what did I do?! After five minutes of investigation, I found a small eyepiece cover had made its way from my pocket into the extender tube. It's unimaginable the things that can go wrong in this hobby (HST, maybe not.)

It's my opinion "Astronomy and Murphy's Law" could be a regular in the *Ecliptic*.

Let us hear from you.

Steve Gedrich

LAS UP-DATE

Astronomy Course -- a great success (even through adversity).

The big surprise was the size of the group. Only 8 had pre-registered, but 35 showed up. These were the most tenacious group you're ever likely to meet. They persevered (with the ocassional lapse) through the most miserable weather you'd expect to hit in spring -- windy, blustery and overcast; snow and wet rain; just rain; and , finally, a clear night with heavy haze and full moon (no real surprises here). They even survived the fabled LAS snacks -- coffee and cheap cookies.

It was pretty tough to do much hands-on stuff, but we did practice connecting the dots on star maps, sketching the mon and Mars (from slides), identifying slides of constellations, and finally locating things in the real sky.

Maybe next year the weather will cooperate. Ha!

Congratulations to all those new official Rookie Stargazers.

☆ LAS Astronomy Day 1991 -- May 18 -- the best ever.

A great night -- we had 60 people show up (with only minimal publicity out) . We all enjoyed solar observing, Venus in the daylight sky, an extensive naked-eye astronomy slide show, followed by observing of the moon, Venus, Mars, and Jupiter.

Several scopes were out, including some the public was able to aim with the Telrad (they loved it). We used the 9" Clark, an Astroscan, the Meade 8" Schmidt-Cass, Don Murray's refractor, Jo-Ann Kamichitis's 5" refractor, Steve Gedrich's binoculars with mirror mount he constructed , and the club's 17" and RV-6 Newtonians.

Thanks to all members who showed up to help out, especially Don Murray, Bernie Gillott, Diane Musewicz, Tom Elias, Steve Gedrich, Dot Searfoss, John Sabia, J. and J. Kamichitis.

Jo-Ann Kamichitis

PLANETS IN MOTION

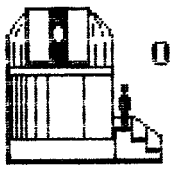
These enclosed flyers have been handed out at public and group nights, my high school classes, LAS meetings and Astronomy Day. They were meant to show the planets in early April. Now (June 7) all three planets surround M44 with Mars and Jupiter both to the east of it.

These three weeks of June are the most interesting time to keep track of this planetary grouping. Either mark the position on the map or take photos of them.

I've been using ASA 400 film and about 30-second exposures. I use my old Pentax K-1000 single lens reflex camera on a tripod with the shutter on bulb, and a locking cable release. My 50mm f/1.4 lens can now be used, but originally if I wanted to photograph the three planets, I had to take 2 or 3 separate shots with the 50mm (2 if I used my 28mm lens).

Either way of observing helps you to pay close attention to the way the planets shift through the stars. A mere glance once in a while will not do. Observe carefully every clear night after sunset. It's fun, relaxing, low-fat and has no cholesterol.

Jo-Ann Kamichitis



OBSERVATORY ASIDES

If you haven't yet gotten a #14 welder's glass filter, I recommend that you do so now. Currently there's one of the most obvious naked-eye spots I've seen in years on the sun. This group has a complex umbra system, complete with light bridges from one part to the next and was responsible for the aurora warning put out by the press.

Unfortunately for us, Tuesday, June 4, when there were numerous aurora reports across the U.S., it was cloudy here. Wednesday, June 5, Joe and John each got a call from Rich Hogg about an auroral spike he saw from Clarks Summit. John got a couple of quick shots of it before the sky clouded up; it was cloudy in Scranton.

Friday was a beautiful night, with the summer Milky Way quite spectacular, and M7 so low in Scorpius, being naked eye. Yet all you could hear was grumbling about where was that aurora!!

How odd to hear people grumble about there being too many stars visible!

Still more publicity hit for June 7 and 8. But although it was clear and some LASers (with a few stray public) were at KJCO both nights, the only aurora we saw was a low, small, subtle one visible at 2:30AM June 8-9 just as we packing up.

Well, we can keep on hoping. Come on up!

Jo-Ann Kamichitis

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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