

THE ECLIPTIC

Lackawanna Astronomical Society

Volume 25 No. 1

January - March 1999

Officers for 1999:

President - Jo-Ann Kamichitis

Vice-President - Diane Musewicz

Secretary - Carol Leola

Treasurer - Joe Kamichitis

Jr Vice-President - Adam Basalyga

At-Large Members - Joe Krott, Ron Murazzi, Jim Spangler

Calendar of Activities:

Feb 2 7:30 Regular Meeting (Observatory)

Feb 9 8:00 Board Meeting (Home of Joe Krott)

Feb 13 8:30 Club Night (Observatory)

March 2 7:30 Regular Meeting (Obs)

March 9 8:00 Board Meeting (Home of Joe Krott)

March 13 8:30 Club Night/MM Practice Session (Obs)

March 19 7:30 Messier Marathon #1 (Obs)

March 20 7:30 Messier Marathon #2 (Obs)

April 6 7:30 Regular Meeting (Obs)

April 10 9:00 Club Night (Obs)

April 13 8:00 Board Meeting (Joe Krott's)

Public nights will restart in March ... Look for the announcement
in the newspapers and on the radio.

Reasons To Party:

Feb No Full Moon!

Feb 4 Clyde Tombaugh born 1906

Feb 15 Galileo born 1564

Feb 19 Copernicus born 1473

Feb 23 Jupiter and Venus nearly collide 1 hour after sunset

March 13 Percival Lowell born 1855

March 14 Einstein born 1879

KCO Public Nights:

If all goes as it has for the past quarter century, the spring session of KCO Public Nights should begin in mid-March. The actual starting date hasn't been set but it will probably be March 10 or 17. These sessions which feature a slide program followed by observing with the 9" refractor and other telescopes are held every Wednesday beginning about 7:30 PM. They continue through most of May. All club members are invited to come up and observe on their own or assist with public viewing. Public Nights at the observatory have historically been a major source of new club members so try to be on your best behavior.

Televue Day West

Anyone planning a trip to Las Vegas in mid February might consider trying to be there on the 20th. Pocono Mtn Optics is holding its first Televue Day at its new location. Activities there run from 10 AM to 5 PM and feature Al Nagler in person along with his small but high quality telescopes and accessories.

Messier Marathon

Our fourth annual Messier Marathon will be held on Friday March 19 and Saturday March 20 beginning around 7:30 PM at the observatory. If skies are clear and you get there early, wait at the gate. If skies are questionable, call John Sabia or Jo-Ann Kamichitis to see if we'll be there. If skies are overcast, we'll cancel the event. The past three marathons have shown that there is no use getting there around sunset because the sky has to get dark enough to see the objects in the west. Also, between the park-

ing lot and the back observing site, we probably have enough room to park where you like, not just on the east side of the parking lot. Never-the-less, if you are not setting up your own telescope please park so you can leave room for those who are.

Club Night a week earlier will have a practice session for the marathon giving hints on finding objects and perhaps concentrating on the Virgo galaxy cluster.

We will have coffee, tea, and soft drinks available. If you want to bring food for a 2AM pickup do so.

Dress Warm!

KEYHOLDER LIST

Want to observe on a nonscheduled night?

Contact these people to see if they will be up there. All Keyholders have the keys to the gate and the LAS observatory. Only the observatory assistants also have the keys to Keystone College Observatory's classroom building and the dome. So for the most comfort while observing, contact Jo-Ann and John first.

- John D. Sabia 586-0789
- Jo-Ann Kamichitis 343-4006
- Phil Cruikshank 675-8345
- Joe Krott 587-5917
- Carol Leola 586-1582
- Bob Maleninsky 343-3422
- Ron Murazzi 945-9645
- Don Murray 343-2394
- Jim Spangler 587-3972

KCO phone 945-3665 (let it ring for a long time since people are not usually inside and it takes them time to respond)

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FOR 1999

The planets provide many naked-eye and telescopic delights in the coming year.

On February 23 watch the close approach of Venus and Jupiter after sunset (be prepared for calls reporting UFO's).

If you haven't seen Mercury yet be sure to look low in the west after sunset during the first week of March. It will be just below Venus and Jupiter.

Mars is coming to its best opposition in a decade in April and will be at least -1 magnitude.

Jupiter and Saturn will be back in the fall at their brightest and highest showings of the decade.

The Perseids occur during a new moon period and we await another possibly "great" Leonids in November. The Geminids in December are also good, peaking during a early crescent moon.

Be sure to time your European trip for August 11 for the total solar eclipse (and don't forget the Perseids while you're there).

For you end-of-the-millennium doomsayers, on December 22 the full moon will be at perigee and cause enormous tides which, I'm told, will destroy much of the east coast. So be it.

Joe Kamichitis

OBSERVATORY NOTES

The LAS CG-11 is in place and fully useable!

Last Sept 16 we removed the venerable 12 1/2" reflector and the Starliner equatorial head. We positioned the 11" tripod over the permanent pier which it cleared by about 2 inches. We eventually plan to get the right diameter pipe and mount just the equatorial head on the pier but right now, with no effort, we have a working telescope.

Jim Spangler attached two Telrad bases to the tube in November. I installed a home-made piggyback bracket which has proven to work very well.

The full aperture glass solar filter purchased and donated by Joe and Cindy Krott is in but we haven't yet gotten to use it. On that note, with solar activity on the increase, we hope to have monthly solar observing days scheduled possibly on a Sunday afternoon. Plans are tentative right now but stay tuned.

The 12 1/2" is also back in service. I cut two side bearings from 2 x 8 lumber and glued a formica strip along the outside edge of each one. On December 12, Jo-Ann, Mike Hodowanitz, and I attached the bearings to the tube assembly, attached a Telrad finder, and with a little creative balancing, the scope fit directly into the mount that came with Jo-Ann's 13" Coulter dobsonian. The scope saw first light in its new configuration later that same day which was Club Night. It worked well but the base still needs a little work to make it move more smoothly (as does the 17"). Also, at a tube weight of about 70 pounds, for safety reasons it's a two person operation to set it up.

Another project we are thinking about is building a table along the east wall of the LAS observatory. We plan to have a light box built in from below with its transparent top flush with the surface of the table. This setup will work great with red light shining through a desk edition star chart.

The first meeting of the new year was one to remember. The story so far this winter is ice not snow. When we arrived at the gate we found the road to be solid ice all the way in. I put the car in low gear and drove slowly in. As bad as the ice seemed, it was formed as much by sleet as by freezing rain, so its surface was slightly granular. The 15 degree temperature also helped to give some traction. I did park in the rear since I envisioned broadside collisions as each car came in. We ended up with 13 people, more than usual for January.

We even had a good observing session using the 9" on Saturn and a dozen other objects. Much to our surprise, the dome was not immobilized by ice but turned freely.

Cindy Krott 1948-1998

Many club members were shocked and deeply saddened by the untimely death on December 11 of Cindy Krott, one of our star members. Cindy and her husband Joe joined the LAS in the summer of 1994 and both quickly became active members coming to every meeting, nearly all club activities and observing sessions, and assisting at most KCO Public Nights. Cindy's enthusiasm got her elected treasurer the same year and she served in that position for the next three years keeping the neatest, most accurate, and organized records anyone has seen before or since. For the past couple of years we've had our board meetings at Joe and Cindy's house. These soon became the social event of the month due to both of the Krott's hospitality and Cindy's talent as a hostess.

We met Cindy and Joe at a roadside rest along Interstate 81 somewhere between Binghamton and Syracuse where we went to view the annular eclipse in May 1994. There was Cindy with her Astroscan and projection viewer set up on a picnic table (complete with snacks). She persuaded several truck drivers to come over and take a look explaining to them what was going on. People even recorded the eclipse by videotaping the images projected by her scope. After joining the club, Cindy and Jo-Ann became observing partners, always having a great time together, especially on those crowded Hale-Bopp nights.

It wasn't long before she and Joe amassed a half dozen telescopes including big Maks and Dobs. Perhaps her favorite was a Pronto which she frequently set up in her yard to look at the sun. This brought puzzled looks from people coasting through the stop signs in front of her house. Her favorite holiday was Halloween. She would decorate her house and get great enjoyment from all the kids coming in with their costumes. Several of our club Christmas parties were just a little more festive from Cindy's touch. She even had free balloons for the kids set up for Astronomy Day!

There is something strangely different now in the club and at the observatory. -Cindy isn't here. Good-bye Cindy. We miss you. We'll remember you always.

Jo-Ann and Joe Kamichitis

We have several articles that members had written of their comet adventures for a newsletter we have yet to produce. Here is Cindy Krott's take on things.

COMET COMMENTS or TAILS YOU WIN!

Guarded optimism is one thing, but as winter approached the nay-sayers were at it again. And, they were wrong.

"Hale-Bopp Flop" indeed! Tell that to the four hundred plus who waited in line two hours . . . yes, two hours . . . (And, I might add, on more than one occasion) to get a glimpse of it in the Clark refractor. Tell that to the club members who braved certain frost bite to serve the public and act as crowd control. Okay, a slight exaggeration. (The frost bite, not the crowds.)

And then there were the magazine articles instructing us, "How to Find and See the Comet"?!?! Really, now. Find and see? Look up, already.

The spring public night program at Keystone Observatory draws to a close. While astronomers ponder the dust tail, the ion tail, the most important Hale-Bopp tale is the one indelibly etched in the minds of the hundreds of kids that were hoisted to the eyepiece. Neither the Jupiter impacts nor Comet Hyakutake generated the public interest of Hale-Bopp. Nor did the interest stop there! Mars and the moon were favorites of the munchkin set. The gum-chewing, baseball hat bunch also had difficulty disguising their enthusiasm beneath the ultra-cool disinterested exterior of young adulthood.

So, can a comet change the course of history? I think perhaps this one might. Consider the number of budding astronomers who will remember this as their first contact with the heavens. Maybe, putting all humility aside, you're the one who made a difference in their life's work and passion. Food for thought of the cast-your-bread-upon-the-water sort.

Altruistic? No, let me say how much I enjoyed observing the comet all these months. It forced me out on nights I might have deemed too

cold or too iffy or (gasp) I was too tired, too busy. The rewards? We watched zodiacal light as a pillar, slowly tilt northward as the nights passed. Two weeks ago after a particularly busy public night, we were treated to a pretty decent aurora display. (Not to worry if you missed it though, Jo Ann captured it on film. Future viewing in the Great Aurora Slide Show is a certainty.) Last Wednesday, on a night no one would expect great seeing, Mars was absolutely magnificent: clearly defined land features and two polar caps were visible.

Yes, the comet with the funny name was a rousing success by anybody's standards. Once, when I thought it might need some advance publicity I suggested a Hale-Bopp Sock Hop. Thankfully, I was voted down; and thankfully, Comet Hale-Bopp turned out to be everyone's comet. Frankly, I'll miss it.

C. Krott
05-07-97

RIGHT : Cindy Krott graciously posing with Jo-Ann's 18" (using her 5' self "for scale" in the picture)
Note her Pronto's shadow looming in the background.

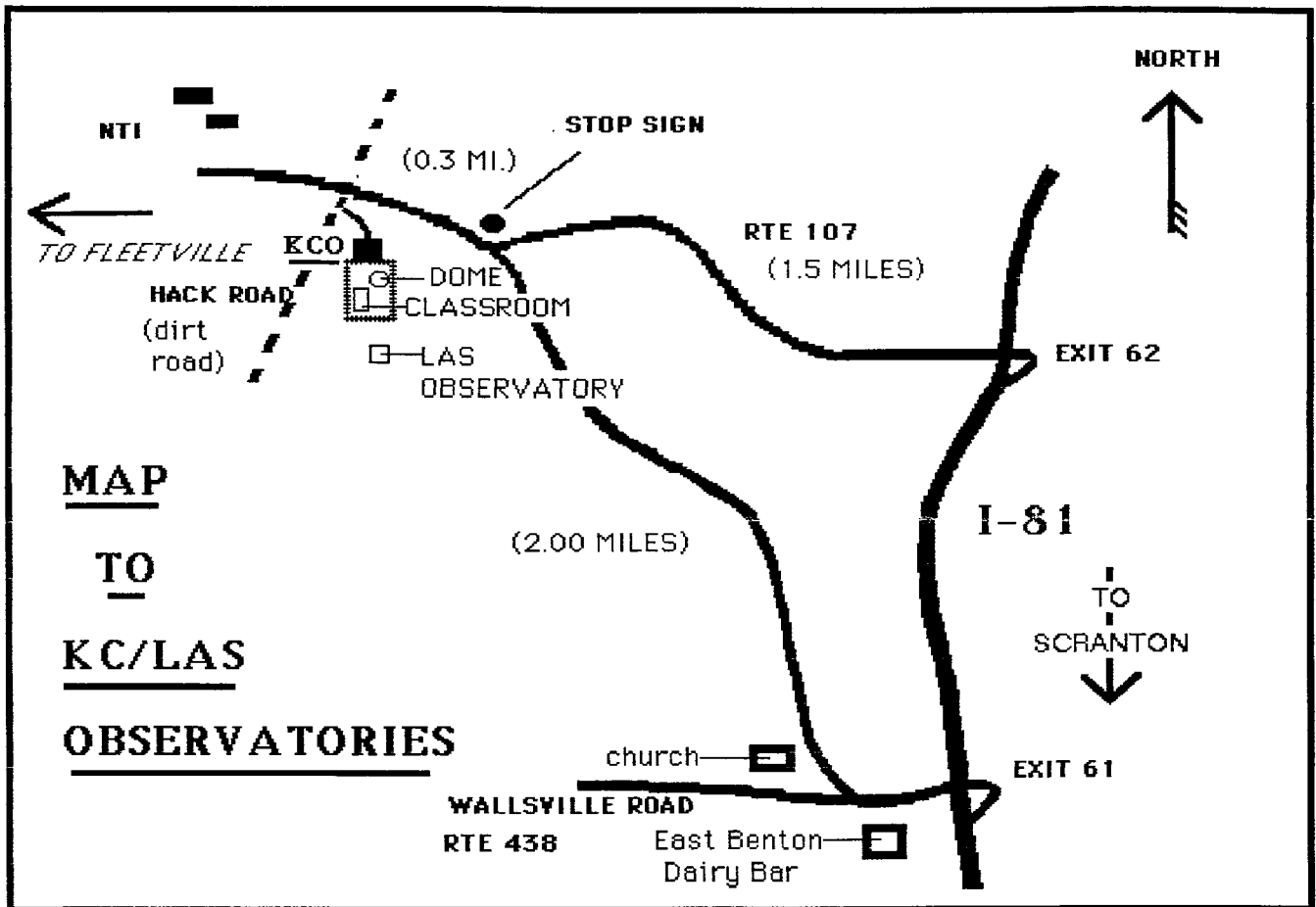
BELOW:
Comet Hale-Bopp and the aurora (crescent moon just setting off the frame to the left) April 10-11, 1997

DUES are DUE for 1999

If you've all ready paid, thank you, and you shouldn't have dues notice included. If you do it's my slip-up. Let me know so I can check my records. If you haven't renewed your membership for 1999 see the enclosed dues notice.

Joe Kamichitis





"The Ecliptic" is the 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:

Jo-Ann Kamichitis, Editor
 1047 Mohawk Street
 Scranton Pa 18508

(e-mail: JoAnnKami@aol.com)
 Web page: <http://members.aol.com/SabiaJohn/LAS.html>

Staff: Jo-Ann Kamichitis, Joe Kamichitis, Diane Musewicz

Printed through the courtesy of : Office Furniture/USA, 321 - 327 Pear St. Scranton, PA 18505