

# THE ECLIPTIC

Lackawanna Astronomical Society

Vol. 25 No. 3

September-December 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

Sept 26 1:00 Solar Observing Day

Oct 5 7:30 Regular Meeting

9 8:30 Club Night

12 8:30 Board Meeting (Location to be announced)

23 6:00 **The Great LAS 40th Anniversary Dinner**  
(Inne of the Abingtons)

31 1:00 Solar Observing Day

Nov 2 7:30 Election Meeting

6 8:30 Club Night

9 8:30 Board Meeting (Location TBA)

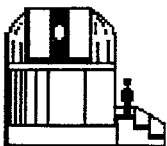
21 1:00 Solar Observing Day

Dec 7 7:30 Christmas Party/Meeting

11 8:30 Club Night

19 1:00 Solar Observing Day

(All activities are PM and are at the Observatory unless noted otherwise. No Board Meeting in December.)



**FORTY YEARS of the LAS!**  
**1959-1999**



## 40th ANNIVERSARY DINNER Oct 23, 1999

There will be a dinner held at the Inne of the Abingtons. This is very easy to find since it is only about one mile west from Exit 60 on Rt 81. and has a nice large sign marking it.

We will have a social hour first at 6 PM (soda, veggie platter, cheese, crackers, etc, cash bar for those who want something other than soda) and what sounds to me to be a great a dinner buffet at 7 PM. The choices include something for everyone.

Guest speaker will be well known amateur astronomer Phil Harrington, author of StarWare and several articles about observing. Those of us who have been going to Stellafane for years have had many opportunities to hear Phil speak. He's always been both informative and amusing.

Please fill out the enclosed reservation form NOW and send it out as soon as possible with your payment. What better way for astronomers to spend a full moon weekend night anyway . Cost is only \$15.00 a person

Jo-Ann Kamichitis

### THE ELDERS (correction)

After putting up with a considerable amount of complaining from my brother-in-law, I'm adding his name to the elders' list.

20 years plus  
Vince Musewicz (quite likely the longest continuous membership for a "non-participating spouse", as they used to say at Stellafane).

Jo-Ann Kamichitis

### 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)

LAS members are encouraged to bring up their own scopes but there are several scopes available up at the observatory for member use, including the club's 17½" Coultter Dob, homebuilt 12" Dob, and the 8" f/10 Dob. Members must be trained and checked out on the use of the 11" SCT before they can "solo" on it.

### SPRING and SUMMER '99

This past spring and summer have been both rewarding and a great deal of fun for those LASers who took an active part. Carol Leola had another successful session of her Stargazing course at Marywood (a course meant for personal enrichment) and got to meet Carolyn Shoemaker at the NE Astronomy Forum. The LAS summer star parties in Lackawanna State Park and Promised Land State Park had good turnouts of LAS members and usually were attended by 30 to 60 of the public. (You can tell we're in a drought since only one of these events was rained out.)

The LAS cookouts had such good attendance that the one was almost as crowded as our Christmas party usually are. Some observers stayed up there until 3 AM or so each good night. Even the one that wound up having no observing due to clouds and haze, kept going until 11:30 PM. You could tell the difference between astronomers and normal cookout attendees, when we all sat around under the cloudy skies with no lanterns or lights except for what managed to come through the office window shade.

The monthly Sunday Solar observing was only attended by eight to ten people but those of us who were there were rewarded by great views of complex sunspot groups through the full aperture white light filter on the 11", and by very striking surface detail and prominences through the T-scanner H-Alpha filter. We're continuing this activity through the fall at least, since the sun keeps getting

more and more interesting and active all the time. One of the most interesting H-Alpha views we've had was at the September cookout where you could see surface detail and prominences as the sun set through a lacy silhouette of trees with the occasional bird flitting from tree to tree trying to find the best roosting site for the night.

Stellafane was well attended by LASers who were keenly disappointed by the two cloudy nights there but anyone who went to the Black Forest Star party was rewarded for their trek into the darkest interior of Potter County by skies that certainly thrilled me!

Dave Barrett has been quoted as saying they were the best skies he's seen in the East, even though, Gary Honis from GHAAS (the Hazelton club) who has observed from Cherry Springs many times characterized it as mediocre nights for that site. Great! I can't wait to get up there for an exceptional night! As it was I saw the Helix nebula in my 14X70 and 9X25 binoculars, almost convinced myself I saw spokes in the rings of Saturn, saw a plainly blue-green feature on Jupiter, saw the Perseus galaxy cluster easily in Dave's 24" and saw blues, greens and reds obviously in the Great Orion Nebula, both in Dave's scope and a really fine homebuilt 18½" Dob with dob driver. Not too shabby for a pair of allegedly mediocre to merely good nights!

Now here comes the Fall and Winter with the best of the planets ( Jupiter and Saturn), the prettiest constellations for naked eye observing (Orion, Canis Major, Taurus, Gemini and that crowd) so even if you don't get out much the views are still thrilling from your porch, and possible meteor storms! I can't wait!

JoAnn Kamichitis

### STELLAFANE '99

Dave Barrett, Joe Daukantas and I arrived at Stellafane on Friday morning at about 10 a.m. Dave and I spent the previous 2 days at a camp ground in Mass., at the Summer Star Party. Joe arrived Thursday afternoon. Naturally he got in without paying.

The first night was cloudy but Thursday was a good night, excellent for double stars and the planets, but haze cut down on deep sky observing. Of course, Dave stopped his Dob down, trying to turn it into a refractor. To be honest, it showed much detail on the belts. A very large festoon was clearly shown. Joe and I spent a lot time comparing his 4" APM & Takahashi. Both performed very good on Jupiter and Saturn. It was a

good night, but it always is, when you can observe doubles and the planets.

As for Stellafane, we were unable to do any observing. It was cloudy both nights. Dave immediately set up his 24" on Breezy hill. The rain started on Saturday afternoon. Dave felt that it would "clear soon"! Joe D. pulled out that morning after making a killing at the flea market. Steve Pastor also cleared out. In fact anybody with any sense left on Saturday. Apparently Dave & I have no sense, we stayed. Dave felt it would "clear soon"! When the rain started, we opened the back door of the van to act as an awning, sat on the bumper and laughed a lot. Dave got up every once in awhile to check the sky. He noticed quite a few bright areas and felt it sure it would "clear soon"!

The only things left on Breezy Hill, except for trees and rocks, were Dave, me, the van and of course the 24" wrapped in a desert storm cover. As I said, we laughed a lot that night. It was either laugh at ourselves or cry. Around 9:30 p.m. we walked the long walk down to the food tent for coffee. Soon Joe and Jo Ann Kamichitis walked up from the talks and joined us for coffee. Jo Ann was lucky enough to win a laser collimator in the raffle Saturday night. After an hour or so we walked back up the hill and at midnight. We went to bed after Dave said he felt it would "clear soon"! I say bed but we really slept in the van, Dave in the driver's seat and I in the other.

A number of times that night, Dave opened the door and leaned out, wiped the rain from his eyes and checked the sky. Each time he indicated to me that he felt it would "clear soon".

At 5:15 we crawled out of the van and forced our bodies to stand erect. Dave checked the sky, and again, he felt it would "clear soon"! I told him we're getting down off this #%@( \$^# mountain now. After a quick stop at McDonalds we left Springfield at 6:15 am and arrived at PMO at 11:15 am. We drove through 5 states and it rained in every state. As I was driving out of the PMO parking lot I saw Dave looking up at the sky! His lips were moving and I could guess what he was saying.

To sum up Stellafane '99! The most interesting experience I had on that mountain was watching them empty the Job Johnny's.

Don Murray

Ed Note: Don's been the official club curmudgeon since the mid 70's.

## KCO PUBLIC NIGHTS

The Fall session of KCO Public Nights has begun. The Observatory opens each Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM through November 17 for a slide program and viewing afterward. All members are welcome to come up and impress the public with their telescopes and knowledge of the heavens. (Or, if you're shy, you can observe on your own.)

## LAS OBSERVATORY NOTES

The LAS 11" Celestron has just celebrated its first birthday. It has proven itself to be quite popular and it's been in use often even over the winter months. Most of the time its digital setting circles are used, or a computer with or without a CCD camera is hooked up to it. We have just purchased a focal reducer for both viewing and photography. We're getting a Losmandy universal plate to use other equipment on the mount, one in particular being the 8" Schmidt camera belonging to the college.

We've recently installed a chart table built by Joe Kamichitis along the east wall. This holds the newly acquired Sky Atlas 2000 and has a built-in light table that makes using the charts efficient and enjoyable. (A magnifying glass is provided for those observers over 40.) We're working on getting another electrical outlet installed near the table for power.

The purchase of the CG-11 outfit was made less painful for the club by the direct monetary donations of several members. The Club officially thanks the following people for their help: Bruce and Janet Hogg, Richard Hogg, Jo-Ann and Joe Kamichitis, and John and Marie Nallin for their \$100 donations, Bob Brauer for \$80; and Ned Leahy, Carol Leola, and Jim Spangler for donating \$50 each. Thanks also go to Joe and Cindy Krott for their donation of the full aperture solar filter.

## METEOR SHOWERS

The Leonid meteor shower has a predicted peak around 6 PM on Wednesday Nov 17. This is the year for the possible Leonid "Storm" which sometimes comes to fruition about every 33 years. Some people convinced themselves that they saw more than usual last year so we'll see how this year goes. We have no official "watch" scheduled but the observatory will be open anyway on that day since it is the final KCO public night for the year. If skies are clear be sure to come up - we may see a once-in-a-generation event. The moon is at about first quarter.

The annual Geminid shower peaks on the afternoon of December 14. Again, there is no official meteor watch but if skies are clear from the 11th to the 15th, call around to see if anyone will be at the observatory. First quarter is on the 15th.

By the way, if anyone has mentioned a transit of Mercury for this November, there is one on the 15th but it begins here just after sunset so it won't be visible for us.

## TELEVUE DAY

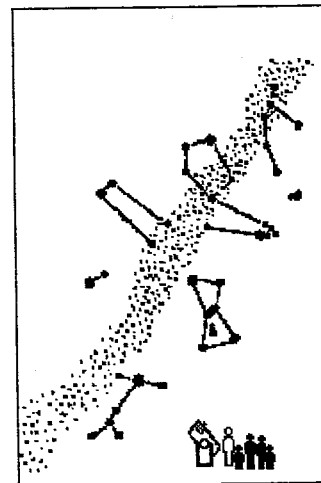
Once again, the yearly East Coast event for October will be Televue Day (a.k.a. Nagler Day) at Pocono Mountain Optics. Festivities begin on Saturday October 16 at 10 AM and run to 4 PM. There will be door prizes and refreshments. Visit Pocono's showroom and meet Al Nagler, the guy responsible for the second mortgage on your house.

Come on up to KCO/LASO at night if it's clear.

## NOVEMBER ELECTIONS

As usual, at the November meeting we elect club officers for the next year. These will be the people who will lead the club into the next millenium. (Actually not true since the "next millenium" doesn't begin until 2001 but that's another story.)

If you're a member who's been around for a while and considers yourself to be (or wants and plans to be) an active member of the LAS you might want to run for an office. If so, see John Sabia, the nominations committee chairman.



**OUR SOLAR SYSTEM**

MERCURY is fleet of foot, and takes the inside track; It's close-in orbit keeps it very warm in front, but still quite cold in back.

VENUS, our near neighbor, is a beautiful white sphere. It has the hottest surface due to its dense atmosphere.

EARTH can be regarded as a watery oasis. For all the living things thereon, a paradise this place is.

Next to us is MARS, a world of orange and red. Once thought to harbor life, it now appears cold and dead.

(The space 'twixt Mars and Jupiter, once thought to be a void, is home to many worldlets known as asteroids.)

The largest planet, JUPITER, was known to Greeks as Zeus. It has a famous Great Red Spot that actually looks pale puce.

Galileo's telescope showed SATURN with ears or wings. It was left to Cassini to determine they were rings.

URANUS was discovered by Bill Herschel across the ocean. It has a peculiar sideways spin due to it's inertial motion.

NEPTUNE is too distant to see with eyes alone. It consists of layers of ice around a core of stone.

PLUTO's status as a planet is currently in doubt, but one thing is now certain, it's the furthest planet out.

At the center is the SUN, a star so hot and bright, that if we were to go there it will have to be at night.

This completes our whirlwind tour of our SOLAR SYSTEM. If there are more planets yet to find, so far it seems we've missed'em.

Norman Sullivan

**Lackawanna Astronomical Society**

**Directions to KCO/LASO**

Take I 81 north to exit 62.

Turn left on rt 107 , you'll go about 1.5 miles and there will be a stop sign.

Take a right and go another 0.3 miles , you will be at Hack Road (a dirt road) .

Take a left and you will see a big sign for the observatory immediately on your left.

The gate is right next to it.

Remember, You only get lost the first time!

**EDITOR'S WHINING**

I'm finally getting the hang of this program so I want to get the ECLIPTIC out more frequently. Please send any articles, poems, observations or pictures you'd like published in the newsletter to the editor at the address listed on the last page.

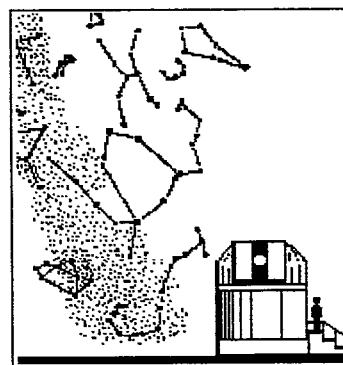
I really prefer articles to be sent as TXT files (no other format please) to me at this e-mail address.

JoAnnKami@aol.com

Pictures preferably in GIF or JPG format may also be sent to that address. I can read other formats though so if you're not sure, just ask me in an e-mail.

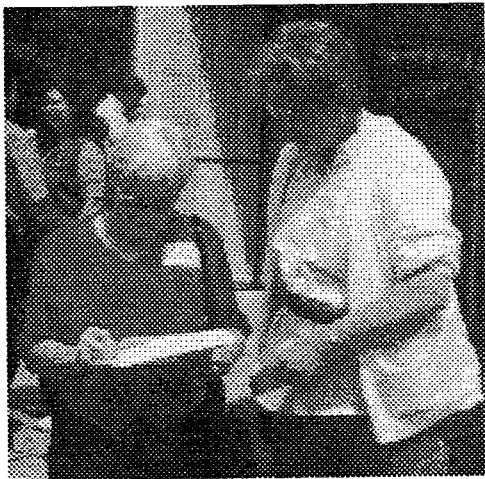
I can also scan in prints to be used in the newsletter.

Jo-Ann Kamichitis



Scranton, Pa

**Photo Gallery Carolyn Shoemaker speaks at the NorthEast Astronomy Forum**



**Picture top left ... Carolyn Shoemaker  
other picture's Mrs. Shoemaker and Carol Leola**

Carol Leola (LAS secretary) meets Carolyn Shoemaker, multiple comet discoverer, at the Northeast Astronomy Forum.

The most famous discovery by Mrs. Shoemaker her late husband, Gene Shoemaker, and David Levy, was the Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 which crashed into Jupiter in 1994.

The NorthEast Astronomy Forum was one of many fine spring and summer events LASers enjoyed.

**"The Ecliptic" is the newsletter of the Lackawanna Astronomical Society.  
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