

THE ECLIPTIC

Lackawanna Astronomical Society

Vol. 27 No. 2

June-September 2001

Officers for 2001:

President - Carol Leola

Vice-President - Jim Spangler

Secretary - Jo-Ann Kamichitis

Treasurer - Joe Kamichitis

At-Large Members - Ray Krake, Diane Musewicz, John Nallin

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES All activities are PM and are at the Observatory unless noted otherwise. Observing sessions are usually automatically cancelled if skies are cloudy. If the weather is questionable, call around to see if anyone is going up. PLSP = Promised Land State Park, LSP = Lackawanna State Park

JUNE 5 7:30 Regular meeting

9 6:30 Cookout/Observing night

12 8:30 Board Meeting

29 9:00 Star Party LSP

JULY 7 6:30 Cookout /Observing night

10 7:30 Regular Meeting (changed from July 3)

12 9:00 Star Party - PLSP

22 1 - 3 Solar Observing Day

27 9:00 Star Party - LSP

AUG 7 7:30 Regular Meeting

9 9:00 Star Party - PLSP

11 6:30 Club Night/Cookout

14 8:30 Board Meeting

19 1 - 3 Solar Observing Day

24 9:00 Star Party - LSP

SEPT 4 7:30 Regular Meeting

8 6:30 Club Night/Cookout

11 8:30 Board Meeting

16 1 - 3 Solar Observing Day

Public Nights At TGCO Mondays and Wednesdays in July, None in August

KEYHOLDER LIST 2001

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 on unscheduled nights, contact Jo-Ann and John first. Ray says that he and Nancy like to get to the observatory early, sometimes even before nightfall (!), so if you think the same way, call them first.

John D. Sabia 586-0789
 Jo-Ann Kamichitis 343-4006
 Ray Krake 344-9105
 Joe Krott 587-5917
 Carol Leola 586-1582
 Ron Murazzi 945-9645
 Don Murray 343-2394
 Jim Spangler 587-3972
 Wendy Tordoff 343-4185
 Dave Barrett at PMO 842-1500

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

Please keep in mind that just taking your chances is not the most reliable way to be guaranteed entry and that some of us like knowing that someone else wants to be up there besides us. You encourage us to show up too.

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" Coulter 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.

EDITOR'S REQUEST 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.

JULY LECTURE SERIES

The July Lecture Series at the TGC Observatory (formerly the KC Observatory) is underway. These summer public sessions began on Monday July 2 with a talk on Mars by the Director himself and will continue each Monday and Wednesday evening at 8:30 PM through July 25. The Monday program is repeated (and perfected) on Wednesday. There will be observing afterward and LAS members are invited to come up for the lecture and observing.

Second week is Jo-Ann Kamichitis talking about "The Faint and Fuzzies: Deep Sky Objects". The third week has Jon D. Sabia speaking about "Lunar Observing". Week 4, assuming he made it back from Africa will be Bill Speare telling us all about his most recent "Solar Eclipse Expedition".

SUMMER STAR PARTIES

The tradition continues. Once again we will have 3 star parties at Lackawanna State Park (LSP) and two at Promised Land State Park (PLSP). We'll start with a slide program and have viewing after. All members are invited to come and help out, with or without your telescopes.

We always like to have a good showing at both locations. This especially true at PLSP where the skies are dark and we have the potential of dealing with 100-200 campers from urban areas desperate to relieve their boredom. Let's show them what we do.

The dates for LSP are Fridays June 29, July 27, and August 24. For PLSP it's Thursdays July 12 and August 9.

E-Mail Updates

As you may have noticed the newsletter is not out often nor is it always perfectly timely. We take care of many events by means of e-mail reminders and updates. Please make sure that you keep us up-to-date with your e-mail address changes.

Also check the website
<http://members.aol.com/SabiaJohn/LAS.html>

DUES ARE DUE

Believe it or not, we're still accepting dues for 2001 even though this True Millennium Year is half over. If you haven't yet paid you should have a dues notice enclosed. If you have paid and still receive a notice, let the Treasurer know.

CONGRATULATIONS

to famous LAS member Mike Peoples who, along with Tim Puckett (non-LAS member) discovered two supernovas (sorry, I mean supernovae) in the wee morning hours of March 27, 2001.

These were in two Ursa Major galaxies, UGC 6211 and MCG +08-18-9 (aka PGC 27217). These supernovas were at mag 17.8 and 18.2 respectively.

How often have we all looked at these 16th magnitude showpieces and seen nothing?

Joe Kamichitis (not especially famous LAS member)

PASSAGES

Fans of science-fiction (loosely defined, perhaps) lost a good friend on May 12, 2001 when Douglas Adams died. Adams wrote the somewhat wildly popular "The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" best known, in my case at least, through the Public Radio broadcasts of the BBC series back in the early 80's.

The success of the book that resulted spawned several sequels including "The Restaurant at the End of the Universe" and "So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish" as well as a TV version and a video explaining everything.

If you ever hear anyone say that the answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything is 42, that's where they got it.

Adams was a much-too-young 49 years old.

Lunar Observation: RUKL 52 Elevation

While observing the lunar surface on Wednesday May 5, 2001, Dave Barrett brought a unique feature to my attention. A complex elevation was coming into view on the terminator. A white crescent feature stood out sharply in the morning rays of the sun. Other portions of the complex were partially illuminated by the rising sun on the moon's surface, but none as brilliant as this feature.

The complex had an interesting shape; I liken it to that of an overhead view of a battleship. The only other lunar feature I knew of similar to this is Mons Rumker, a complex lunar dome region on the Oceanus Procellarum. Locating the feature on Rukl's map took a little time, and was surprised that a region of this size, I estimate it to be up to 30 miles in size, was not labeled with a proper name. The elevated region is marked on Rukl's map number 52 at west 30 degrees south 16 degrees; due east of Gassendi. The crescent shape that we viewed is also clearly indicated on the map. A crater as magnificent as Gassendi overshadows observation of this elevation to its east.

Looking for images of this elevation on the Internet has not yet meet with success. Most show the crater Gassendi in favorable lighting conditions.

The distance to the moon that night was at one of its closest approach. Some 369720 km, (229,733 miles) from the Earth. Using lunar software on the computer, the colongitude for that date and time worked out to 30.8 degrees. The program also projects the next occurrences of that colongitude and the altitude of the moon above the horizon from my location.

From the data the next "warm weather" observing will be on July 1, 2001 UT, followed by November 25, 2001 UT, Jan 24, 2002 UT, and back to May 22, 2002 UT.

John D. Sabia

My Life as a LAS'er : Becoming a Star Geezer-ette

Back in my 20's, I used to tell my pals that I planned to become an eccentric old lady, so I needed to develop some quirks. Some of said pals would quickly point out to me that I was well on my way and I merely had to choose which one or two of my existing quirks I should concentrate on.

I finally decided on becoming a star geezer (AKA a long-time observer).

Geezer-ette or not, I have tried to avoid being too firmly entrenched in my observing style and opinions about equipment. This has been a struggle since I now own telescopes that are older than some of my observing buddies! What can they possibly tell me that I don't know? Plenty, as it turns out.

I bought my first scope in 1967. Although I craved one of those Unitron equatorial refractors you'd always saw on the back cover of "Sky & Telescope" (especially tantalizing at Christmas when they'd show it in front of a Christmas tree with a pink bow tied around the tube), I bought a Criterion RV-6, 6" f/8 Newtonian on an electrically driven German equatorial mount, with a 9X30 finderscope. I spent months reading catalogs and ads, trying to get the perfect combo of features, price and aperture. At a cost of \$194.95, it was the first thing I ever bought on time payments. I just couldn't squeeze out another \$90 to buy the RV-8 I lusted after.

Well it turned out that I want the thrills of observing not all the fussing around with equipment. I never polar-aligned the scope (OK maybe I did twice in the 25 years before Joe redid the scope as a Dobsonian for me) and when I sold the mount I wasn't even sure the drive even worked since I'd never plugged it in.

Luckily, my interest astronomy was lifelong so I persisted with the hobby even with that dinky finderscope, those teeny field lenses in the oculars that came with the scope and the neighbors who would turn on their porch lights or call my dad when they heard Diane and me prowling out there in the yard. "It's only the girls", Pop would say to those who

feared Peeping Toms in the neighborhood. My sister and I were not to be embarrassed out of the hobby the way my baby brother had been for a few years

Diane and I joined the LAS in December 1970, with the idea that we'd actually participate. We've "paid" for that plan over the years by each of us holding every office at one time or another, except for Junior Vice President. We've been repaid for that plan by getting to see some great things that we might have missed otherwise and meeting a slew of interesting and nice people. Other benefits to me have been getting a nice part time job at Keystone College's observatory and meeting my husband, Joe, at the January 1980 meeting.

What I've enjoyed most is observing in groups. You get to try out other equipment (Hmmm, maybe a GO-TO system isn't "all" bad.) (Hmmm, maybe spending big bucks on eyepieces is a good idea!) (Hmmm, maybe I'll just stick to tripod mounted camera astrophotography.) and pick up ideas about observing. Also the howls of coyotes aren't as nervewracking when you're in a clump of people. Besides you get to pick people's brains about observing tricks.

It's only within the past few years that I've started to use higher power on deep sky objects although the combined efforts of Cindy Kott, Dave Barrett, and Wendy Tordoff still haven't gotten me stacking Barlow lenses. Jim Spangler has managed to get me using my ZOOM eyepiece on things other than the moon and planets. Now I seek just the right combo of magnification and field-of-view for the most pleasing and detailed image.

Even though I still MUCH prefer my 13 inch and 18 inch scopes, I have actually been using my smaller scopes to try for things. The best view of the North American Nebula I ever had was on a great night using my 22 mm Panoptic in my Astroscan. Cindy had convinced me that even the smallest scopes can show a lot more than I'd ever thought. The best view of the California nebula I ever had was on another great night using my 8 inch. (Hmm great skies in both cases ... no wonder I loved Cherry Springs State Park so much ... and Stellafane).

From Mark Thomas, I learned that I have to control my thrill seeking and actually spend time looking care-

fully at such things as M 61, using various powers to catch details. Mark also instigated the 15 minute rule, to curb some of the socializing among some of us on truly good nights. You can't spend more than 15 minutes between looks into an eyepiece on a good night.

From Larry Peoples, I actually got to see the charm of a GoTo system. From Dave Barrett, I've gotten back into marking the really good objects on my star charts (although I'll never adopt his constellation figures) and am now planning to adopt his style of looking for just about everything on any particular Tirion Chart. But now that my knees are going he still has to really sell me on climbing his big ladder to see some planetary. It'd darn well better not be star-like.

Don Murray has shown me the beauty of a good double star, while Joe Dukantas illustrates the value of a red observing hat and has sold us some of our favorite scopes.

John Sabia, much as I make mock of his gushing over every little meteor and faint comet, has gotten me to train my eye to really see detail on the moon and the planets and has helped me keep my observing enthusiasm high. I still can hear him yelling "Don't unpack your car just get over here!" the night we got to see the 3 biggest impact spots on Jupiter. Or the way we both dashing from our cars into the observatory trying to hustle a college class out to see a really red aurora. They thought we were just a couple of nuts and checked with Tom Cupillari first before following us outside.

Bill Speare may still gripe that it's not worth owning a scope in NE Pennsylvania but I wouldn't have ever tried a solar eclipse expedition without his experiences as inspiration. Not being a beach person I would have never gone to the South Pacific, except for solar eclipses.

I've been able to watch TGC Observatory develop from the beginning. What a break it was that Tom Cupillari wanted to get that 9 inch and had the ambition and the skills to get the money and the support for the observatory. Thanks a lot Tom, especially now that my back yard is so useless for observing.

I've also had a lot of fun at the State Park Star Parties that we started under Joe Kamichitis' first administration. You even find that you even have regulars at the parks and at public nights at TGC Observatory. John Nallin is a great assistant ... watching the scopes and reminding me to start with M 13 or M 27. My sister isn't quite as good at that although she and her kids do do better at blocking out car headlights or the moon from people's eyes.

Near as I can figure out becoming a Star Geezer-ette is easy and you don't even have to become a crabby geezer-ette. In fact, up here I'm usually on one of my observatory highs. Astronomy keeps you young in mind so you don't give off an actual standard geezer vibe. Being "odd" saves you from that fate.

Jo-Ann 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.

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Articles, cartoons, news items, etc, may be sent to:

Jo-Ann Kamichitis, Editor
(e-mail: JoAnnKami@aol.com)
1047 Mohawk Street
Scranton PA 18508

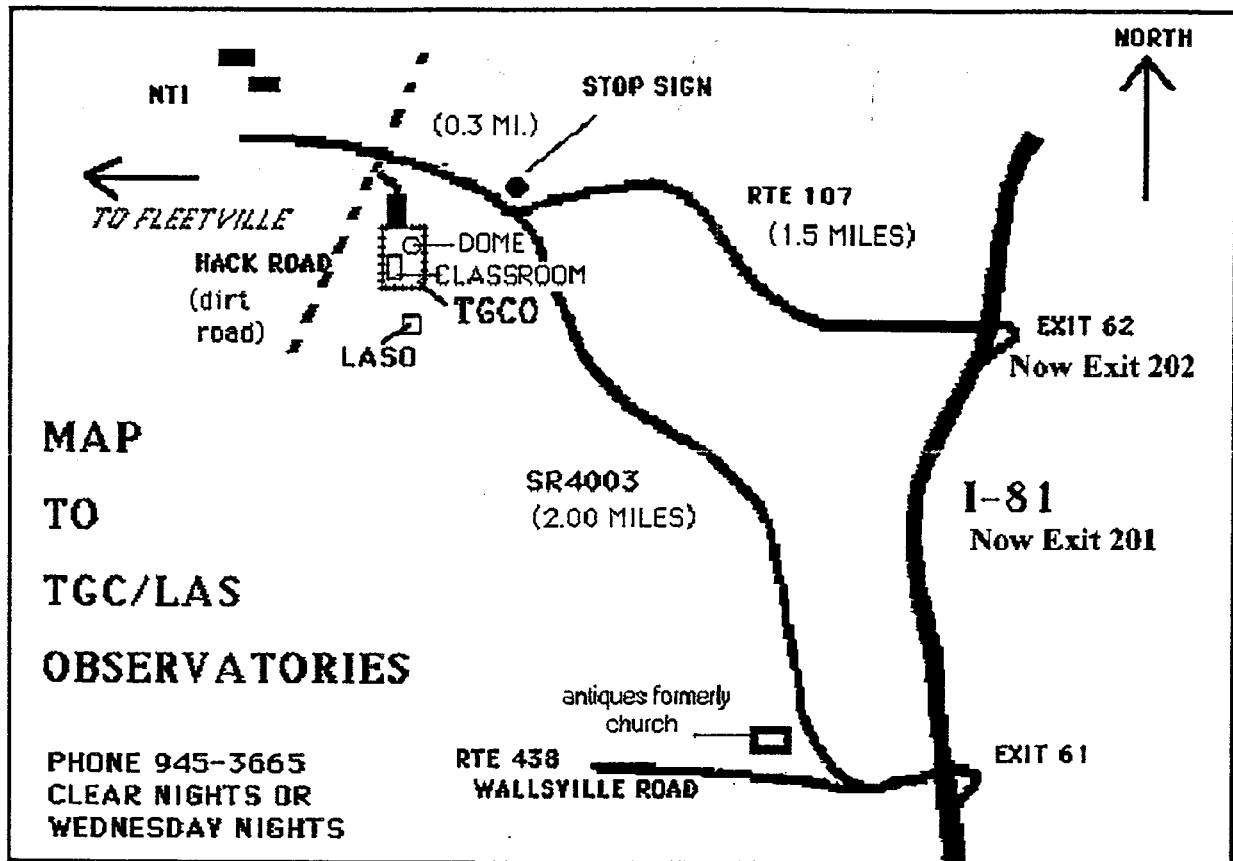
Web page: <http://members.aol.com/SabiaJohn/LAS.html>

Staff:

Jo-Ann Kamichitis, Joe Kamichitis, Diane Musewicz

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STAR PARTY NOTES:

At Lackawanna State Park, get off at exit 61 of I81, now called exit 199. We meet by the open air amphitheater which is just beyond the entrance to the camping site.

To get to Promised Land Park, take I-84 and get off at the Promised Land exit and drive until you come to the ranger station. You'll be going to the Deerfield camping area. The slide program here is indoors and will be given no matter what the weather.

Curiously enough, at both places we set up near dumping stations! We prefer to believe the only significance of that is that that's where there's a treeless area



Lackawanna Astronomical Society Calendar Spring/Summer 2002

March	5	7:30	Regular Meeting
	9	8:30	Club Night
	12	8:30	Board Meeting
	13	7:30	Start of TGCO Public Nights
	16	7:00	7th Annual Messier Marathon
April	2	7:30	Regular Meeting
	6	8:30	Club Night
	9	8:30	Board Meeting
	20	6:00	Astronomy Day Activities
	28	1:30-3	Solar Observing Day
May	7	7:30	Regular Meeting
	11	9:00	Club Night
	14	8:30	Board Meeting
	26	1:30-3	Solar Observing Day
June	4	7:30	Regular Meeting
	8	6:00	Club Night/Cookout
	11	8:30	Board Meeting
	21	9:00	LSP Star Party
	23	1:30-3	Solar Observing Day
July	2	7:30	Regular Meeting
	6	6:00	Club Night/Cookout
	11	9:00	PLSP Star Party
	19	9:00	LSP Star Party
	21	1:30-3	Solar Observing Day
August	1	9:00	PLSP Star Party
	6	7:30	Regular Meeting
	9	9:00	LSP Star Party
	10	6:00	Club Night/Cookout
	11-12	9:00	Perseid Meteor Watches
	13	8:30	Board Meeting
	25	1:30-3	Solar Observing Day

All Activities are PM and are at the observatory unless otherwise indicated.

LSP = Lackawanna State Park PLSP = Promised Land State Park

The PLSP dates are tentative but the LSP dates are confirmed

Overcast skies will cancel most observing events except for Star Parties and Cookouts.

If our records do not show you as being current, there should be dues notice enclosed in this mailing. Please let us know if you have paid and still get a notice.