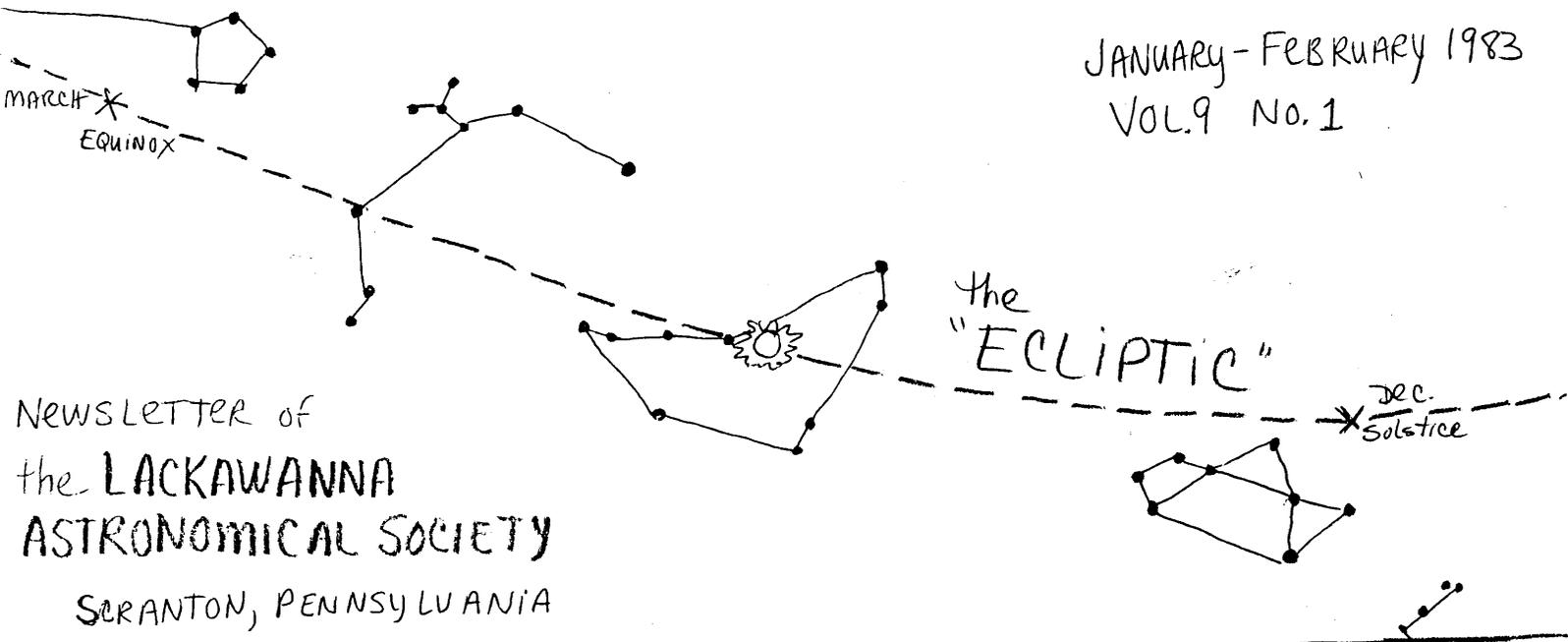


JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1983  
VOL. 9 No. 1



NEWSLETTER of  
the LACKAWANNA  
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY  
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICERS FOR 1983

President - Jo-Ann Pluciennik, 313 E. Elm St., Scranton, PA 18505

Vice President - John D. Sabia, 1112 Fairview Road, Clarks Summit, PA 18411

Jr. Vice President - Scott Bailey, 211 W. Grove St., Taylor, PA 18517

Secretary - Bob Maleninsky, 1265 Snyder Ave., Scranton, PA 18504

Treasurer - Joe Kamichitis, 1066 W. Market St., Scranton, PA 18508

At-Large Members -

Jill Adelstein, 208 Carnation Dr., Clarks Summit, PA 18411

Bob Bolock, 105 S. Grace St., Old Forge, PA 18518

Bill Mecca, 1525 Madison Avenue, Dunmore, PA 18512

To check on availability of facilities at KJC-LAS Observatories on clear Friday or Saturday nights, contact Jo-Ann Pluciennik, 346-3268; or John Sabia, 586-0789.



SEASON'S  
GREETINGS!!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	ACTIVITY	PLACE	TIME
Jan. 4, 1983	Regular Meeting	*Community Room Viewmont Mall*	7:30 PM
Jan. 8	Club Observing Night	KJC/LASO Fleetville, PA	Contact J. Sabia or J. Pluciennik
Jan. 18	Board Meeting	Home of J. Pluciennik	8:00 PM
Feb. 1	Regular Meeting	Everhart Museum Scranton, PA	7:30 PM
Feb. 5.	Club Observing Night	KJC/LASO Fleetville, PA	Contact J. Sabia or J. Pluciennik
Feb. 15	Board Meeting	Home of J. Pluciennik	8:00 PM
March 1	Regular Meeting	Everhart Museum Scranton, PA	7:30 PM
March 5	Club Observing Night	KJC/LASO Fleetville, PA	Contact J. Sabia or J. Pluciennik
March 15	Board Meeting	Home of J. Pluciennik	8:00 PM

---

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Please make note of the change of location for the January 4th meeting. Because the museum is closed for inventory and maintenance in January, we'll be at the Community Room near Sears, Viewmont Mall. In January the meeting will feature the installation of officers and a program "Spectacular Winter Sky Objects," as well as upcoming events and reports on the lunar eclipse, December 30, and the Geminid meteor shower.

February 1, we'll be back at the museum with a Konstellation Kloseup on Orion, and a movie. As of now we're not sure if it will be the "Solar System" or "Observatories" but at any rate it should be informative and well worth sacrificing Ground Hog Day's eve to attend.

See you at the meetings.

Jo Ann Pluciennik  
President

---

THE AMATEUR SPACE TELESCOPE PROJECT

With a vote of overwhelming approval the membership of the LAS has decided to donate funds to the Independent Space Research Group (ISRG) specifically for the Amateur Space Telescope's TV Camera Fund. We are donating \$35.00 to cover a week's worth of operation.

With this donation, the society will receive an official acknowledgment, informing us as to which week we are sponsoring. In addition, copies of the most interesting pictures taken that week will be sent to the LAS. Data from that week's observations will be noted as being sponsored by the LAS.

Why did the membership decide to donate to the ISRG? In my case, I felt it was in keeping with the society's purpose, as stated in the by-laws, "will serve to encourage the growth of interest in astronomy." I think most other members also want to contribute to research in some way too.

Here's some background on the ISRG. It's a world-wide, non-profit, scientific organization with its primary goal being to design, construct and

operate a series of increasingly advanced astronomical satellites for use by serious amateurs, students and professional astronomers. The first of these satellites will be the Amateur Space Telescope (AST).

IRSG headquarters is in Troy, New York. It is sponsoring research and design work by groups of students and faculty at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the University of Rochester.

The AST will be 9 cubic feet in volume, weigh 175 lb. and carry an 18" Ritchey-Chretien Cassegrain telescope, a solid state CID, TV Camera, three photometers, a small spectrograph as well as control and communication hardware.

More information can be found in the feature "An Amateur Space Telescope" in the August 1982 issue of Sky & Telescope (vol. 64 #2).

John D. Sabia

---

#### FROM THE NEW PRESIDENT

There are a number of New Year's resolutions for the LAS, that seem obvious to me. Some of them are repeats from other years (much like my personal resolutions where all I have to do is change the date and I can recycle my old list,) but there are some new ones too. Let's hope we can as a club make some real progress on these. In general the key words are "achievement" and "participation."

1. Get the 12" and its observatory fixed up to a state of such near perfection that we can have a grand opening and invite other clubs up to see the place without feeling a need to blush for our rough edges.
2. Work on programs for the meetings that will make them more interesting and helpful to our members.
3. Encourage the members to make fuller use of LAS/KJCO.
4. Encourage the members to feel free to let the officers know what direction the club should take in the future.
5. Encourage more of the members to become more involved in the programs so it won't be the same ten or twelve members doing everything, and the rest just looking on (although I admit that this is a common condition in any club.)

I realize that it's not easy to find the time to participate fully in a club. I, myself, am an inactive member of three other clubs whose goals and activities I am greatly interested in, but either I don't have the time for them, or else they conflict with LAS activities. I do know that whenever I can participate in their activities, I get much more from those clubs, than I do when I'm just a newsletter reader. Remember, the club is what you make of it.

Happy New Year!

Jo-Ann Pluciennik  
President

---

#### COME THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

When the current revolution ends, I'll be ready. The craze for aperture in the form of Dobsonian-mount telescopes will, despite Walter Scott Houston's stirring words at Stellafane, run its course in the footsteps of another increasingly large and cumbersome former animal, the dinosaur. I predict a return to smaller smaller instruments, critical observing, and an appreciation of image quality and mechanical workmanship.

Ray Mitchell would scoff at a mirror secured by a leather strap. John Mallas would walk on by a telescope made of cardboard, plywood, and spray

paint. Image quality? - at Stellafane it seemed like every other Dobsonian had its mirror masked by black paper cut to various shapes to hide zonal defects. The 22" everyone stood in line for gave one of the poorest views of M57 I've ever seen. I didn't even look through the one disguised as a chimney - I assume that was done as a joke. The attraction for these white (or blue elephants hovers, perhaps, around the claim that with them all of the NGC objects can be detected. This may be true, but it reminds me a little of peak-bagging in the Adirondacks where the goal is simply numbers. Besides, Mr. Houston has probably seen them all in his 4" Clark. The day will return when mirrors are real mirrors and mounts are real mounts.

What do I do in the meantime? In my backyard, large aperture is as useful to me as a degree in Home Ec is to Linda Sensenig. Extended objects much below about magnitude 7 are unreachable so galaxy hunting is low on my list. My favorite telescope in recent months has been my lowly 2" refractor -- an f/12 system with a Meade 50mm achromatic doublet objective - taped, er, mounted on my old Edmund semi-equatorial modified fork mount. I can walk out the door with the entire telescope in one hand, eyepieces, maps, and notebook in the other.

With this instrument, I've had views of elusive objects like M1 and M33 that rivaled those given by much larger apertures. With a little attention, M42 shows plenty of detail and the Trapezium is more distinctly (though perhaps not as obviously) resolved than it is with a short-focus 6-inch. Open star clusters are the forte of the small refractor. Large aperture reflectors show so many background stars that many smaller clusters lose their identity. Bright, loose, and large clusters like M6 and M7 fill the field at low powers and are so easily resolved that higher powers and larger apertures actually detract from their appearance. And Mallas was right, the best view of the Pleiades is in a 2" at 15x. My 40mm eyepiece has the entire cluster in view and shows stars down to at least 10th magnitude. A 2" shows many of the familiar clusters in a different way. M35, for instance, while nicely resolved, does not show the curving rows of stars I always see in larger telescopes. The winter clusters of Auriga, Canis Major, Puppis, and Monoceros all offer attractive viewing.

Small as my 2" is, its convenience, ease of use, and its quality images mean that it will be a while before it goes back on the shelf in favor of something else. I have to admit, though, that the aperture bug has bitten even me - I've recently ordered a 3".

Joe Kamichitis

---

OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK  
"S U TAURI"

For most of the Winter, variable star observers will be keeping a close watch on the star S U Tauri. This star is located near the star Zeta Tauri and is easily found. S U Tauri is classed as an R-CRB (R Corona Borealis) type variable. R-CRB stars are sometimes called reverse novae, for they remain at maximum light for extended periods then suddenly drop in magnitude.

As reported to the International Astronomical Union by J. Mattei from mag 10.4 on October 19.21 to mag 12.1 on October 26.42. This star may continue to fluctuate for weeks or months. S U Tauri's position is R. A. 05<sup>o</sup> 46" Dec+19<sup>o</sup> 3.

The last observation I made on December 8, 1982 at 10:50 pm showed it to be below magnitude 9.5 as seen in a 10x50 binocular.

"LUNAR DOMES"

In the Vol. 8 No. 4 issue of the Ecliptic, I wrote on observing the difficult lunar domes. Since then a night of great seeing and favorable conditions gave me the chance for observations of ten domes on the floor of Ocean Procellarum.

Along with the 9" (23cm) Clark refractor, a neutral density filter #20 was used with the Brandon oculars. Steadiness of image allowed the 8mm (425x) to be used without deterioration of image quality. The region near to craters Hortensius and Milichius was explored. At 175x the dome named π next to

Milichius is very prominent, being well defined by its short shadow. Without a doubt, the central pit could also be seen.

In a more open space to the lower right of this beautiful dome is a larger one. The shadow of this particular feature is not as sharp as  $\pi$  but it is unmistakably a dome, I could see a large central pit also. Very similar to this is a string of three domes to the lower left situated at the base of isolated mountain massifs, these are much more difficult to find; there are no signs of central pits in any of them.

In the same field of view at low power is the crater Hortensius. Hortensius is just a mile larger than Milichus, measuring 9.0 miles in diameter. Just north, or bottom of the eyepiece with the refractor, is an amazing clustering of domes. They are about the same size as  $\pi$ . There were very sharp shadows in these five domes. I could only detect crater pits in the central region of three of these. There is extremely interesting variety in this area of the Lunar surface.

Consulting the Lunar quadrant map section II, I found four to have the designations of Omega, Tau, Phi, and Sigma. However, Antonin Rukl's book Moon, Mars and Venus, Map 30, depicts a sixth dome in this cluster. When I viewed this area, that sixth dome was clearly a small crater about 5 miles in diameter, much the same size as the domes. I looked very carefully at this crater to confirm it was indeed a crater. Perhaps a space craft photograph of this area could clear this up.

John D. Sabia

---

#### ASTRONOMICAL WORLD ROCKED!

Attn. - Users of Edmund Scientific Mag 5 Atlas. At least two mistakes have been discovered using this popular atlas. The declination of M27 is  $22.5^{\circ}$ , not  $35.7^{\circ}$  as given on page 17. Also, the position of Eta ( $\eta$ ) Cassiopeiae is plotted incorrectly on Map 1 and has caused some recent (although momentary) confusion in the field for this observer. My copy is a few years old - perhaps these errors have been corrected in newer editions. Has anyone found others? An error of omission is pointed out by John Sabia, namely, that Omega Centauri, the great southern globular cluster, is not shown at all.

Joe Kamichitis

---

#### OBSERVATORY ASIDES "Stargazers" Again

I was particularly interested in the "Forum" section of the December 1982 issue of Astronomy magazine, since the first two items in it were replies to my reprinted article in the August 1982 issue. I was fascinated. To think the article would generate such a response. But even more interesting to me was the fact that I apparently do not make my views as clear in print as I had hoped.

My article was mainly a response to the attitude that some amateurs feel they must justify the hobby by turning it into a job; and as a corollary, some sound as if only those who do "useful" astronomical work are worthy of respect. I don't feel you have to justify the hobby at all, nor do I feel you must be grim about the work you do, should you choose to be "serious."

I found myself being defended by people who assumed I had an attitude I do not quite completely agree with - that of being in the side of the serious workers, only. I found myself being disagreed with in an article by J. Derrold Muholland himself, which for the most part sounds like my own point of view, except for the fact that I don't feel I was one who "takes offense" at the correcting of an error and is "possessed of an unreasonable persecution complex." I've always found my persecution complexes to be totally reasonable.

I also was interested to see an article I thought was a plea for everyone to feel good about whatever they do in astronomy, referred to as a "diatribe." Obviously the writer was not sitting in my classroom the day I discovered some pyrite and galena had been stolen. Now then you'd have heard a diatribe worthy

of the name.

This quote from Robert Frost's "The Star Splitter," shows what the hobby means to most amateurs.

" I recollect a night of broken clouds  
And underfoot snow melted down to ice,  
And melting further in the wind to mud.  
Bradford and I had out the telescope.  
We spread our two legs as we spread its three,  
Pointed our thoughts the way we pointed it,  
And standing at our leisure till the day broke,  
Said some of the best things we ever said."

Have a good new year.

#### "WINTER OBSERVING"

A nice winter so far. Although it's been pretty cold when clear, we have not yet had to trudge up the driveway through the snow. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving we had another good aurora - this one with homogeneous arcs, some rays and a number of bright pulsating patches. It never got any higher than Polaris, but it did photograph well. This has been a remarkable year for aurora.

Jo-Ann Pluciennik

---

#### DUES TIME AGAIN

Enclosed you'll find a yellow dues notice form. If you've already paid, we thank you, and suggest you just discard the form. Otherwise, please send the form and your dues to Joe Kamichitis, 1066 W. Market St., Scranton, PA 18508, or bring them to the January meeting at the Viewmont Mall, or the February meeting at the Museum.

We'd like to get a reasonably complete membership list together by March so we can include it in the next Ecliptic, so please pay your dues as soon as you can. Any spare cash you have will also be acceptable as donations to the society.

---

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."

We are in need of anecdotes, articles, essays, cartoons, carefully prepared puzzles, etc. Share your observing secrets, your experiences, even your questions with the rest of us. Send them to me at:

Jo-Ann Pluciennik, Editor  
313 East Elm Street  
Scranton, PA 18505

Staff: Diane Musewicz  
Joe Kamichitis