

Newsletter of the LACAWANNA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY, Scranton, Pennsylvania

LAS OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS FOR 1986

President - John D. Sabia  
 Secretary - Jo-Ann Kamichitis  
 Junior Vice President - Bruce Adams  
 At-Large Members - Joe Bartos/Mike Schirra/Ed Sidorski  
 Vice President - Joe Kamichitis  
 Treasurer - Diane Musewicz

LAS CALENDAR

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>TIME</u>
March 4 Tuesday	Regular Monthly Meeting	Junior Achievement Bdg. 1007 Capouse Ave., Scr.	7:30 PM
March 8 Saturday	Official club observing night	LAS/KJCC, Fleetville	9:00 PM if clear
March 11 Tuesday	Board of Directors Meeting	home of J.D. Sabia	8:00 PM
April 1 Tuesday	Regular Monthly Meeting	Junior Achievement Bdg. Scranton, PA	7:30 PM
April 5 Saturday	Official Club Observing Night	LAS/KJCC, Fleetville	9:00 PM if clear
April 15 Tuesday	Board of Directors Meeting	home of J.D. Sabia	8:00 PM
April 19	Astronomy Day	To be announced	
April 21	Deadline for articles for May/June "Ecliptic"		
May 6 Tuesday	Regular Monthly Meeting	Junior Achievement Bdg. Scranton, PA	7:30 PM

KJC OBSERVATORY SCHEDULE

Public nights open on March 12 and run each Wednesday until the end of May. These include a slide show and observing (weather permitting). Most of the slide shows start between 7:30 and 8:00 PM. (One hour later once DST starts.)

Special sessions for Halley's comet viewing will be on Mondays and Wednesdays at a time to be announced. The dates are April 21, 23, 28, and 30, and May 5 and 7.

Don't forget that the peak observing time for Halley's comet is coming

up. Take advantage of the dark skies at LAS/KJCO even if you must settle for just using the parking lot. Please drive up to the observatory using only your parking lights. Even low beams can destroy photographic attempts and night vision. High beams can lead to personal injury (or at least a lot of ugly remarks.)

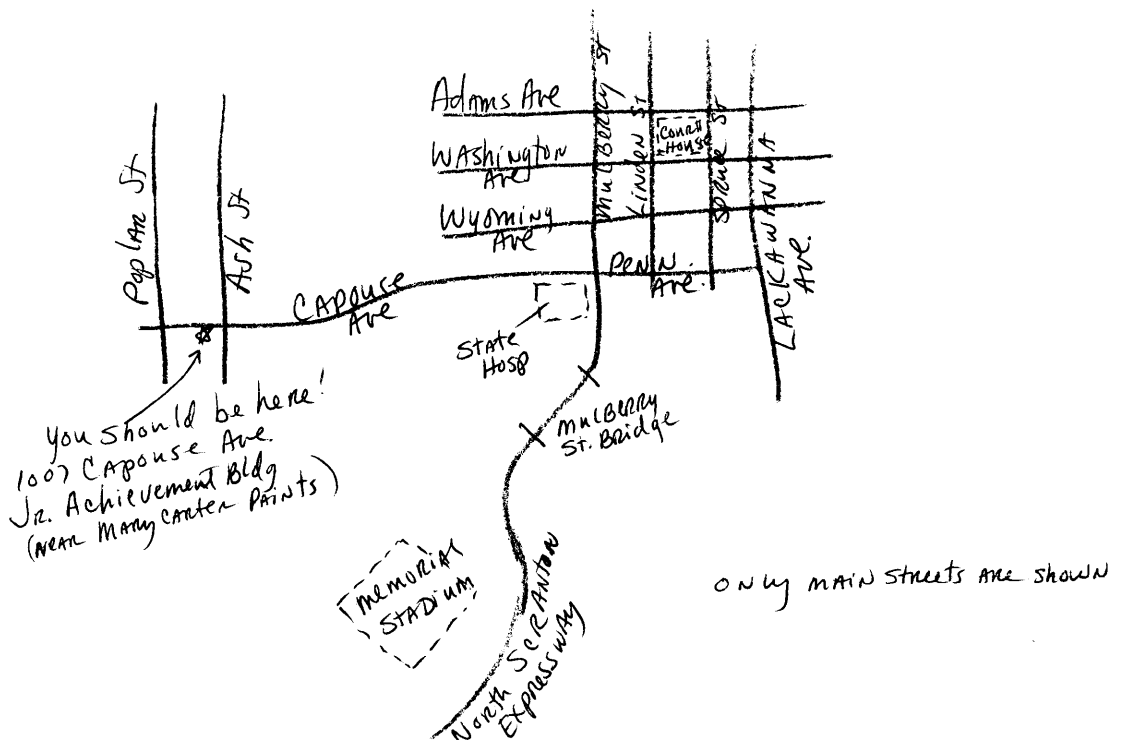
On all clear official club nights, a keyholder to KJC/LASO will be present (either John Sabia or Jo-Ann Kamichitis.) Even on club nights, if you must travel any great distance to get to KJCO, please call J. Kamichitis to be certain of the sky conditions and availability of a keyholder. Also, if the weather is at all iffy, call first to make the arrangements definite. On other clear weekend nights, contact J. Kamichitis (343-4006) to see if the place will be unlocked or whether you will have to bring your own "scopes and warm up in your car. KJC Observatory's phone number is 945-3665, but people are not always near to the phone to hear it. KJC/LASO is on Route 107 about halfway from Exit 61 of I81, as you head to Fleetville Corners. You take a left on Hack Road.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

EARLY SPRING MEETINGS

The weather and road conditions (sleet and freezing rain) were not good for the February meeting. Only 10 hardy souls managed to get to the Lower Throop Community Room. We didn't have a quorum, but we did have some good programs -- recent photos of Comet Halley taken with telephotos and the 8" Schmidt camera (mainly by Joe Kamichitis); a discussion and photos of the Challenger disaster by Mike Schirra. The comet photos will be reprised at the March meeting. We want to thank Mr. Schirra for obtaining the room for our meeting.

The Everhart Museum will not be available to us as a meeting place for some time, due to renovation work, but we've been fortunate in locating free alternative sites. Mr. Frank Adams has put us in contact with officials of the Junior Achievement Association of Scranton and they have granted us the use of their building at 1007 Capouse Avenue, in Central City, Scranton.



The monthly meetings will continue to feature a narrative slide program on locating the planets as well as highlighting special or annual events. We need members to volunteer to present a slide program on these events, as well as on objects of interest in a constellation. Our March meeting will have a program on Orion which was rescheduled from February. We're also presenting a report on the Annual Amateur Telescope Makers' Convention held each summer at Stellafane in Vermont.

## STELLAFANE

Several members of the IAS have been attending the meeting regularly since 1974 and others have made occasional visits there. The Springfield Telescope Makers, a small club that runs the annual meeting, now finds it necessary to request contributions in order to buy 50 acres adjacent to the clubhouse area. For the past 50 conventions they've been able to use a nearby hillside for parking and camping, but the owner has for years warned them that he has other plans for that land. After this year, they definitely will not be able to use that property.

Stellafane is the site of an observatory that is a National Historic Landmark. Russell Porter (who helped design the mount for the 200" at Mt. Palomar) and the other founding members of that club were responsible for originating amateur telescope making as a hobby in the U. S. and by showing how to make good and relatively inexpensive instruments, encouraged the growth of American Amateur Astronomy in general. Each year the meeting provides the opportunity to look at new designs and refinements, to meet others that share your interests, including well known amateur observers, AAVSO officials, and people like Richard Berry of "Astronomy" magazine, and John Bortle, Dennis Di Cicco and Walter Scott Houston of "Sky & Telescope". We hope we have a quorum at this meeting and that you'll agree with our recommendation to donate to the "Land Fund". Help keep this astronomical opportunity and tradition available to the amateur astronomy community.

## OBSERVATORY PLANS

At the January Board Meeting, a committee was established to review the operation and photographic potential of the society's 12½" reflector. The committee will examine the mounting and equipment used on the scope. One of the main goals is to set up the 12½" for photographic use so well that we can reduce the set up time beforehand. The committee has met once already and will meet regularly at IAS/KJCO on club night at 9:30 PM. All members are welcome to attend and join the discussions. The committee members will come up with an overall plan and then make the changes to the scope.

## HALLEY'S COMET!

Just a reminder! Halley's comet will once again be visible in our skies. It will be in late morning twilight during the first week in March, and by April will work its way into the late evening sky. Details of our plans will be given at the meetings. So far we're going to make sure the observatory is available on Saturdays and Fridays to members and on April 19 we'll have the place open to the public for Astronomy Day (actually night.) There will be no big plans for slideshows or movies, etc. on that day -- mainly observing. Since we've had 20 or 30 or 50 "public" join us up there when the place wasn't officially open, and 100 to 150 "public" there on a cold, full moon-on-the-snow night which was the best we could schedule for the public, we'll surely need help with crowds should a publicized event like Astronomy-Halley-Night, surprise us and have clear skies!!

See you at the meetings and the observatory!

John D. Sabia  
President

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## DUES ARE NOW OVERDUE

If your name is not on the enclosed membership list, our records do not show you as having paid for 1986, and you will find a pink dues slip in this mailing. Also, this will be your last "Ecliptic" issue. We hope you will rejoin us, since we need all the astronomy enthusiasts we can get. Dues may be paid at any regular meeting or any chance encounter with Diane Musewicz, our treasurer. (You can recognize her by the 3 little kids who usually trail after her.) Dues may also be remitted by mail to Diane at 431 Palm Street, Scranton, PA 18505.

At the annual dues scale of \$5.00 - junior members (under 18 yrs old), \$8.00 - adults, \$12.00 - family, the IAS is one of the biggest bargains in town. Remember! The IAS wants you!!

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## INSTRUMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

The new Instrument Committee has met a couple of times already in brainstorming sessions designed to get a sense of what we should do in our continuing effort to make the LAS 12½" reflector a perfect working instrument capable of doing, at a moments notice and without much difficulty, serious photographic and observational work, keeping in mind, of course, that such an instrument will also be capable of giving the casual observer many hours of enjoyment.

We have already made strides in the area of photography with the purchase of an Olympus camera body and a Lumicon E-Z Guider, but as so frequently happens, whenever one part of an operation is refined to perfection, other areas show their weaknesses. As it stands now, the telescope performs very well optically, but it is simply tough to use. An observer who finds it easy to use would be characterised by having above normal strength, a neck two feet long, a prehensile tail, and a complete lack of vertigo.

Among the ideas the Committee has suggested are these. The finder should be moved closer to the eyepiece but not so close as to interfere with the camera and E-Z Guider. Small counterweights should be applied to the tube to balance the finder and camera set-up. Handles could be attached at logical locations on the tube so an observer would not have to "grab the finder and pull" to make adjustments. A camera platform could be attached over the declination axis for quick and easy piggyback photos. The problem of the eyepiece getting into difficult positions is tough to avoid but a solution might be to attach a collar to the tube and loosen the existing cradle rings just enough to permit rotation.

All fun and games so far! The major and most expensive undertaking is to replace the existing clock drive with one worthy of being on an observatory telescope. The 150 pounds or so of telescope and counterweights are now woefully driven by a 5" gear and the Committee believes that the club should replace this with a 10 or 12 inch drive. This would set us back nearly \$400 due to what's known as the price of precision.

Joe Kamichitis

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## MEMBER NEWS

Joe Mazzarella brought his fiancée, Crystal, to the observatory to see Halley's comet. They're getting married in July 1986.

Ron and/or Lou Ann Benjamin have been seen everywhere -- jogging on CMC Flyers, posing for articles with the Robert Dale Chorale and singing with the NE Penna Philharmonic Chorus (Ron even had solo lines in "La Boheme"!)

Bob Maleninsky writes to say he's been busy with his new aquisition -- a stock car. It seems he can do more with the car than he can with his telescope at his light polluted site.

LAS'ers have been busy spreading the word about Halley's Comet!!

Bill Speare addressed the February meeting of the Mineralogical Society Northeastern PA.

Jo-Ann Kamichitis presented a slide-talk at the February meeting of the American Business Women's Association (Lackawanna Chapter). (Coincidentally Scott Bailey's mother is program chairperson.)

Joe Kamichitis's photos of Halley's comet have been published in the "Scranton Times" and the "Abington Journal" as well as been featured on the Channel 16 weather report with Tom Clark.

Tom Cupillari was featured in a "Sunday Times" article about KJCO and the comet.

John Kosek, Riverside High School Observatory Director, was also featured in an informative "Sunday Times" article in the fall.

LAS Globe-trotters:

Mike Schirra and Bill Speare are heading for Australia to see the comet.

Ron and Lou Ann Benjamin have plans for a South American excursion.

Let us know what you've been up to, especially astronomically!!

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#### OBSERVATORY ASIDES

What a run of cloudy (also snowy, rainy, sleety, freezing rainy) weather we've had! We've been photographing the comet for the International Halley Watch as much as possible. Imagine our amazement at the number of photographs this one contributor in Tennessee was able to send to John. We did get a chance to use snowshoes and cross country skis up there, anyway.

Usually while the guys would scurry to get a couple of Schmidt plates taken, I'd have the duty to show the comet to whatever public, LAS members, or relatives showed up. It's fun to deal with interested people! I was happy to see a number of them independently discover M42 in Orion!! At this time of the year you also have available such crowd pleasers as M45 (Pleiades), M35 in Gemini, and M31 and its companion galaxies in Andromeda. Not to mention the flashing beauties of Sirius and the other bright winter stars.

We took my nieces up to the observatory to check out the comet in the 10". (They're 7 and 4 years old.) Over hot chocolate, they gave us their artists' renditions of what they saw. I was fascinated to find that the stubby little Q-Tip I saw came out as a marvelously swooping, dynamic vision for the 4-year-old.

There's very wide-spread interest in this comet. Teachers at my school who can barely distinguish between the sun, moon, and stars have requested information on the comet. I've heard from my high school guidance counselor, who remembers the comet from 1910. She's anticipating her view of this spring apparition and was pleased to hear that KJC and the LAS had plans for public viewing.

We are surely going to need all the help we can get if our public observing plans are graced with clear skies. In the club newsletters I get, reports of as many as 1,000 people are common! In any case, as known interested amateurs, you should all take advantage of what the club and the observatory have to offer. Even my brother-in-law, Vince, who generally can be described as a member of the non-participating "spouses auxiliary" of the LAS, took a peek at the comet through the 10". (Okay, I will admit that he only came up to pick up his daughters!)

Just ask yourself -- where will you be in 2061!

Jo-Ann Kamichitis

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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, may be sent to:

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

Staff: Diane Musewicz  
Joe Kamichitis  
Julie Musewicz  
Sarah Musewicz

LACKAWANNA ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP LISTING 1986

If there is an error in the listing in any way, please notify Diane Musewicz. An asterisk by the name indicates a junior member.

Officers for 1986: John D. Sabia - President  
 Joe Kamichitis - Vice President  
 Jo-Ann Kamichitis - Secretary  
 Diane Musewicz - Treasurer  
 Bruce Adams - Junior Vice President

Frank Adams Jr., 5149 S. 98 Plaza #15, Omaha, NE 68127 402 592-1296  
 Frank Sr. and Bruce\* Adams, 301 Hill Street, Moscow, PA 18444 842-7092  
 Steven Anderson\* 702 Shady Lane Road, R. D. 5, Clarks Summit, PA 18411  
 586-1325  
 Edward Balunas, 34 Highland Ave., Carbondale, PA 18407 282-2843  
 Lou Ann and Ron Benjamin, 628 Moosic St., Scranton, PA 18505 346-6737  
 Dr. Michael Case, Dept. of Earth & Environmental Sciences, P. O. Box 111.  
 Wilkes College, Wilkes Barre, PA 18766 824-4651 Ext. 245  
 Tom Cupillari, R. D. 2, Box 269C, Factoryville, PA 18419 945-3687  
 John Earley, 1221 Schlager St., Scranton, PA 18504 347-5730  
 Thomas C. Elias, Box 40B, R. D. #5, Moscow, PA 18444 842-6079  
 Claude and Alice Fanucci, 104 Gallagher St., Jessup, PA 18434 489-3834  
 Esther Friedman, 612 Birchwood Road, Clarks Green, PA 18411 587-1530  
 Jane Frye, 952 N. Webster Ave., Scranton, PA 18510 343-5144  
 Edward & Joan Geary, 1616 Pine St., Scranton, PA 18510 342-2037  
 Deborah Holmes, 210 Van Brunt St., Moscow, PA 18444 842-9104  
 Jo-Ann and Joe Kamichitis, 1047 Mohawk Street, Scranton, PA 18508  
 Marianne and Bobby\* Kleha, 917 Taylor Ave., Scranton, PA 18510 347-4266  
 John Kosek, P. O. Box 176, Moscow, PA 18444  
 Joseph Kuranda, P. O. Box 224, Lake Ariel, PA 18436 698-9296  
 Larry Kwasnick, 75 E. Bergh St., Plains, PA 18705 823-7397  
 Jean and Herbert Levy, Evergreen Apts, Valley Road, Mt. Gretna, PA 17064  
 Ivan Mahady, 508 N. Elkhart, Lubbock, TX 79416  
 Robert Maleninsky, 1265 Snyder Ave., Scranton, PA 18504 343-3422  
 Joseph Mazzarella II, R. D. 3, Box 60, Clarks Summit, PA 18411 587-1524  
 Joseph Mazzarella III,  
 Karen and Bill Mecca, 1525 Madison Ave., Dunmore, PA 18512 961-2542  
 Don Murray, 514 Walsh St., Scranton, PA 18505 343-2394  
 Diane & Vincent Musewicz, 431 Palm St, Scranton, PA 18505 961-1264  
 Patricia Nape, 241 Harrison Ave., Scranton, PA 18510 347-6046  
 Richard Novak, Box 1, R. D. 7, Shavertown, PA 18708 696-3055  
 William Luke Parry, R. D. 5, Box 221, Moscow, PA 18444  
 Mike Patrician, 714 Layton Road, Clarks Summit, PA 18411 587-5747  
 Susan Pecukonis, R. D. 1, Box 400, Dallas, PA 18612 675-4221  
 Scott Petill, 2133 N. Gower Ave., Hollywood, CA 90068  
 Nancy & John Pordon, R. D. 1, Box 205, Hopbottom, PA 18824 289-4327  
 James and Jeremy\* Pribula, P. O. Box 18, Clifford, PA 18413 222-4817  
 Mildred and Merton Ruth, 57 Tilbury Ave., Nanticoke, PA 18634 735-2772  
 John D. Sabia, 1112 Fairview Road, Clarks Summit, PA 18411 586-0789  
 J. Michael Schirra, 115 Meadow Ave., Scranton, PA 18505 348-1189  
 Tim Seamans, P. O. Box 440, Factoryville, PA 18419 945-5019  
 Charlotte and Ed Sidorski, R. D. 3, Box 842, Susquehanna, PA 18847 756-2135  
 William Speare, R. D. 4, Gravel Pond Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411 346-7186  
 Jane and Ed Swarts, 205 Tulip Circle, Clarks Summit, PA 18411 587-4906  
 Larry Theilgard, Box 307, Waverly, PA 18471 586-0098  
 Eric Turock\*, Wynd Wood Road, R. D. 3, Dalton, PA 18414 563-2165  
 Ken Smith, 3220 Greenwood Ave, Scranton, Pa 18505 343-4803