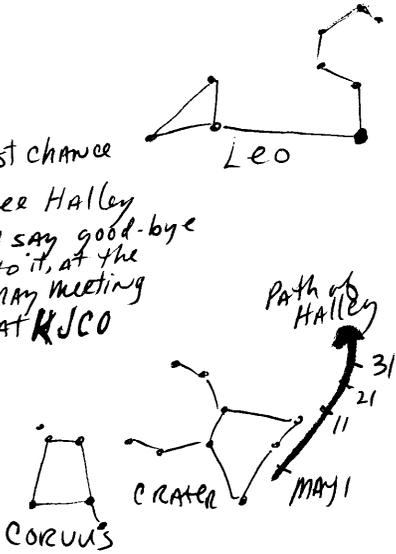


The  
"ECLIPTIC"

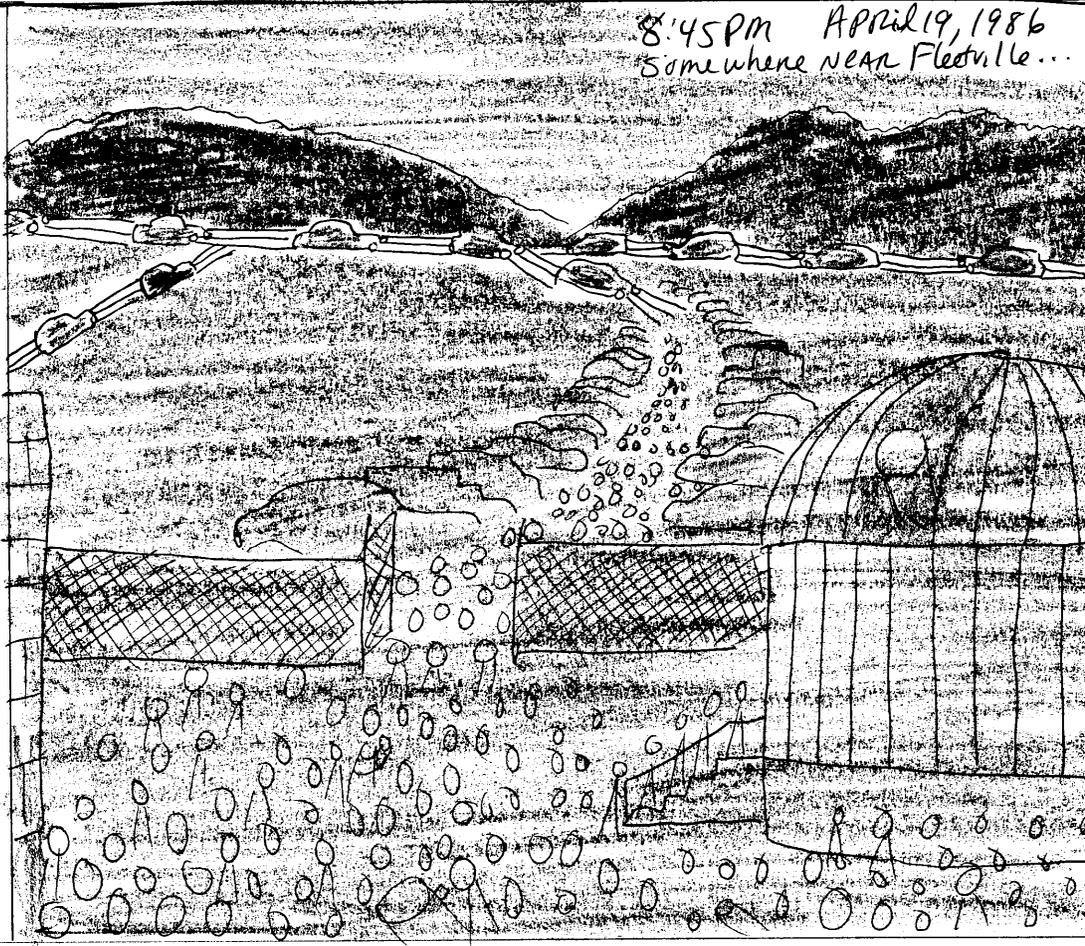
VOL 12 NO. 3

MAY-JUNE 1986

Last chance  
to  
see Halley  
& say good-bye  
to it, at the  
MAY meeting  
AT KJCO



8:45 PM April 19, 1986  
Somewhere near Fleetville...



Newsletter of the LACKAWANNA 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 Nusewicz

LAS CALENDAR

Please note 1. The meetings will be at KJCO, not the JA Building.  
2. We need helpers at the Comet Halley Nights.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>TIME</u>
May 5 Monday	Comet Halley Session for Public	KJCO, Fleetville, PA	darkness and on
May 6 Tuesday	Regular Monthly Meeting	LAS/KJCO, Fleetville	7:30 PM
May 7 Wednesday	Comet Halley session for Public	KJCO/Fleetville, PA	darkness and on
May 10 Saturday	Official Club Observing Night	LAS/KJCO, Fleetville	9:00 PM
May 20 Tuesday	Board of Directors Meeting	Home of J. D. Sabia	8:00 PM
May 14, 21 & 28 Wednesday	Public Nights	KJCO, Fleetville, PA	8:30 pm
June 3 Tuesday	Regular Monthly Meeting	LAS/KJCO, Fleetville?	7:30 PM
June 7 Saturday	Official Club Observing Night	LAS/KJCO, Fleetville	9:00 PM
June 17 Tuesday	Board of Directors Meeting	Home of J. D. Sabia	8:00 PM

July 1 Regular monthly meeting  
Tuesday

LAS/KJCC, Fleetville? 7:30 PM

On all clear official club nights, a keyholder to KJC/LASC will be present (either John Sabia or Jo-Ann Kamichitis.) Even on club nights, if you must travel any great distance to get to KJCC, 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/LASC is on Route 107 about halfway from Exit 61 of I81, as you head to Fleetville Corners. You take a left on Hack Road.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our move to the Junior Achievement Building in Scranton was accomplished without much loss in attendance. I extend a thank you to Mr. Frank Adams for locating a good meeting hall. While I'm thanking people, a generous thank you to WEA Manufacturing Inc. for their monetary contribution to the Society.

At the April 1st meeting, the attending members opted to meet at the KJC Observatory classroom for the May 6th meeting. (No, it's not an April Fool's joke.) We figured that afterwards a view of Halley's Comet could be possible, given good weather. At the May meeting the future meeting place will be discussed.

At the March meeting we heard the report from the Instrument Committee and it's recommendation of replacement of the clock drive with a large diameter main gear. The attending members approved the recommendation and allocated a sum of \$400.00 to be used in the purchasing of a suitable drive system. Given the time delays in production and ordering, a new system could be installed by the end of summer. The Committee is actively working towards this goal. In the time between we intend to try out the off axis guider on the 12½" for a run down on it's operation and any possible problems using it on the scope.

The Society will be getting a plug from the WNEP-TV Program "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life" during April and May. I have taped a few shorts for their "Astronomy Tip" Spot to be aired on an irregular basis. Last year "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life" mailed out over 3,800 copies of the Halley's Comet chart the Society made up.

Our May meeting will feature "Schmidt Camera Photography" and some reports from our wandering comet seekers.

See you there!

John D. Sabia  
President

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HALLEY HALLEY HALLEY!

I was begin<sup>n</sup>ing to be resigned to the notion that it would not be possible to see Halley in the morning sky without the hinderance of the moonlight. Earlier attempts passed by with no results, because of weather conditions making a view impossible. Then, as the lunar sphere occupied the same sky as the comet, the warm clear weather came over the east coast. The very last day that Halley could be seen without interference by moonlight was on the morning of March 22, 1986. So I planned to head for KJC/LASC.

Halley rose from the horizon and I spotted its coma in 10 x 50 binoculars with east just 5° from the horizon. The moon hung low on the opposite horizon. Earlier, I had set my camera on the piggyback mount of the Clark tube assembly. It was loaded with hypered 2415 and equipped with a 50mm lens. A #21 red filter and #47A blue filter were ready for use. Two five minute exposures were snapped off while the moon was setting.

On that morning there were 11 members and a guest waiting for a view of the comet. All had arrived hoping someone else would show up. One guest, Steve Giancopoulos, was photographing with a camera-tripod setup. While my second shot was exposing, I happened to ask about his camera settings -- f/ratio and focus. Then it dawned on me. I knew I set my own f/ratio to 1.4, but I didn't remember setting focus after putting on the filter holders! When I terminated that exposure, a quick check confirmed my worst fears. It was set for 10 feet! Had I not been discussing the subject with Steve, I would have lost all of that night's photographs because of carelessness.

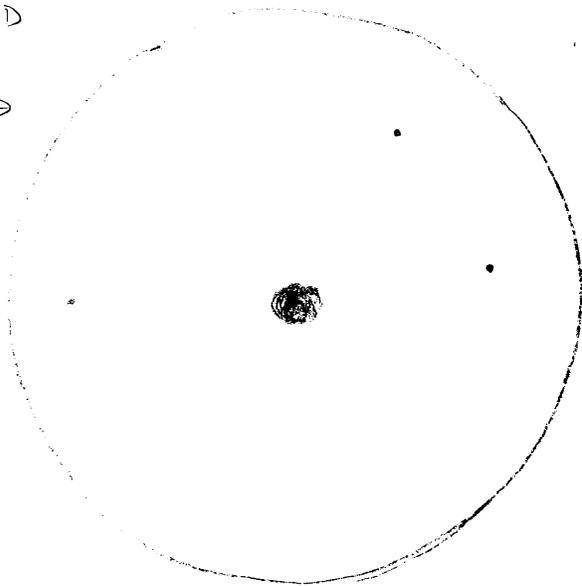
When the moon had set, the comet appeared easily with the unaided eye (for a person who knew where to look.) My binoculars could trace out a tail for 4" from the head. The head had a bullet-shaped form. It had reminded me of the appearance of Comet West on March 24, 1976. I had seen the comet in a dark sky just 30 minutes before twilight. It was well worth the time trying.

Viewed with the 9" Clark, one could see a elongated condensation with a fan-type jet on the sunward side. The #21 red filter gives a better print which shows the comet clearer at the horizon that did the unfiltered photos. Photos will be displayed at the next meeting.

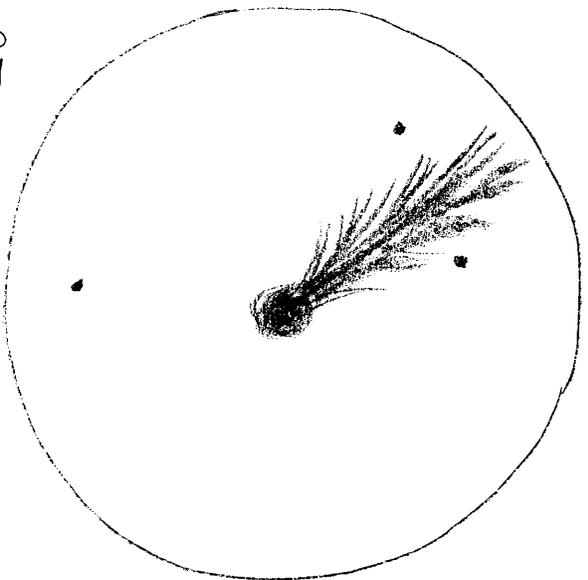
John D. Sabia

April 18th 10:42 PM Halley's AT 72X using A 10" f4.5 Dobsonian	Tom Holava Dickson City PA
----------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------

The SAD  
Reality  
→



... After two  
Beers and  
1/2 hour  
of  
Delusion  
AND  
wishful  
Thinking.  
→



Ed note: Tommy is also the author of bitter essays about the skies of Dickson City.

### HALLEY'S COMET FIZZLES

Excerpts from SPACE, April 1986, St. Petersburg, Florida.

"The general consensus at Hickory Hill clubhouse on the morning of April 5 was unmitigated disappointment and incredulous surprise that what had seemed to be so protentious in March had deteriorated into a mere pitiful tailless fuzzbball in the 10 days that moonlight interferred from Mar. 24 to Apr. 3. In fact, the whole phenomena of cometary observation has been dealt a severe blow. Most of the expressions heard at Hickory Hill are unprintable even in this newsletter, but some of the printable ones were: "Who cares?, So what?, Big deal, bah humbug, is that all there is?, I can't see anything?"

If you think Halley's Comet has let us down, consider all the folks who blew thousands of hard earned money to go south to get a better look at what turned out to be a pathetic dim fuzball. Will the so-called expert comet forecasters: John Bortle, Stephen Edberg, Don Yeomans, Bryan Marsden know how to explain their way out of this fiasco or will they eat crow?"

WHEW!! ARE WE GLAD APRIL IS JUST ABOUT OVER

This is a description of the clubs observing session at 3:00 AM on the night of April 4-5, 1986.

"Upon calling Pres. Wayne Tripp the following day to check on the previous night, he related that the situation reminded him of a football crowd trying to tear down the goal posts after a game as distraught folks physically attempted to knock over the parking lot street lights. The St. Pete police apparently detecting a potential riot ushered some sleepy city worker to the switch box to turn off the lights to the roaring simultaneous cheer of all. Pres. Tripp also reported that when he left to go downtown at 3 AM on 1st Ave. S., he wondered why there was so much traffic, whereupon it dawned on him that they were going to the comet watch. Being a late arriver, he struggled to get into the designated Senior Citizens Center parking lot observing area finding lines several hundred feet long behind the dozen or so telescopes. The total crowd was estimated to be between 12,000 and 20,000 converging on a area of total light pollution to see what?? A mere FUZZ BALL!?!?? Mike O'Dell said he was embarrassed to have to show such an unimpressive object. Special certificates of observation, having been printed up by the St. Pete Times numbering 10,000 were given out during the first 1½ hours, and people were angered when they ran out."

Dan Bricker, editor  
SPACE

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NEW MEMBERS/MEMBER NEWS

Scott Bailey, Evans Hall, Box 104, Wilkes Barre, PA 18766  
Joseph Partos, 110 Sunset Drive, Dunmore, PA 18512 346-0138  
George Fanucci, 110 Center Ave., Mt. Pocono, PA 18344 839-7921  
Steve Gedrich, 1036 N. Sumner Ave., Scranton, PA 18508 347-3653  
Tommy Holeva, 1035 Carmalt St., Dickson City, PA 18519 489-8214  
Gregory Krager, P. O. Box 183, Hawley, PA 18428  
Frank Maros, 307 Edgar St., Clyphant, PA 18447 383-0594  
John Meyer, R. D. #1, Box 101A, Clarks Summit, PA 18411 587-0123  
J. C. Moritz, HC60 Box 43, East Branch, NY 13756 607 363-7330  
Dennis Myroniuk, 131 Salem Road, Carbondale, PA 18407 282-5602  
Mary Rose Schirra, 115 Meadow Ave., Scranton, PA 18505 348-1189  
Kathi Van Vert, 35 E. Pettebone St., Forty Fort, PA 18704 283-1700

Get well wishes to Claude Fanucci who is recovering from surgery.

Bill Speare and Mike Schirra were featured in the "Scrantonian" about their trip to Australia to see Halley's Comet.

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OBSERVATORY ASIDES

or

I SURVIVED HALLEY'S COMET (SO FAR)

Lately I've been having trouble recalling why I love astronomy. Then it comes back to me in a flood of memories. Escape from the hub-bub of a close-knit family, and a job in a high school crawling with adolescents. Hours of peace and quiet spent out in a dark site with just a very few friends joining me as I commune with the cosmos. The soothing rhythm of the seasons as you note each constellation in its hour and the noises of nature's cycles -- migrating geese, sounds of spring peepers, the call of mockingbirds, kildeer, the great horned owl. So nice to be away from the noise of crowds of people, phone calls and traffic.

Comet Halley is the cause of my amnesia. It's brought as much disruption as a visit from the Pope, or some rock star. No matter when we're up here there's phone calls, and even drop-in visits from clumps of public. (Some of them are even here before we are.) The heavy turnout in December for a nearly full-moon freezing night should have warned us of what the spring would mean.

Warm weather and the knowledge that the comet is moving away rapidly have certainly boosted attendance at KJCO. For example, consider April 19, the LAS's "Astronomy Evening."

The start of comet observing was scheduled for 9:00 PM. When John Sabia, our president, got to the observatory just after 8:00 PM, people were waiting for him. It was an amazing thing to see the parking lot and the driveway filled with cars.

The traffic from all roads converging on the site of the observatory. People were lined up from the dome of the 9" Clark to the far end of the parking lot (a line that never seemed to get shorter until about 1:00 AM.) You couldn't even move around the compound without stepping on some one. The haze, some clouds and the first quarter moon made finding the comet difficult, so those people whose telescopes didn't track the sky and were easily knocked off the object had a tough time. Tommy Holeva resorted to showing people a comet simulation -- M13. The comet's motion was noticeable which added some attraction to a dull object. It was interesting to see people hauling their little kids up to Fleetville so next time they'd be 2-timers. We also had many second apparitioners. Thanks a lot to the LAS'ers who worked up there -- Ed and Charlotte Sidorski, Bruce Adams, Diane Musewicz, Steve Gedrich, Tommy Holeva, Eric Turock, Debbie Holmes, John Sabia, and Joe and Jo-Ann Kamichitis. *Also Tim Seaman who ran the 9"*

We could use help up at the observatory on the rest of our comet observing nights. Ron & Lou Ann Benjamin helped us a lot by bringing up their telescope on April 28, when we had 1,000 people (down from the 3,000 at "Astronomy Evening.")

I've always loved comets and have enjoyed following Halley, but I'll be glad once the comet is gone and the busting is over. But still, I will miss sharing a comet that's been watched by William the Conquerer, Sir Isaac Newton, and, of course, Edmund Halley.

Come on up and enjoy your hobby again.

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  
Vince Musewicz