Election Results

Manning Butterworth, Rick Weiss, and Dick Swan were elected to the Board of Trustees for three year terms. One year appointments were issued to Charles Shirk, William Trost, Jeff Soper, and Mark Forsthoefel.

After the Elections the new board deliberated and chose officers and committee chairpersons for 2004. President – Ron Sherman, Vice-President – Don Parker, J’ Kelly Beatty of “Sky and Telescope” magazine, Michael E. Bakich of “Astronomy” magazine, and Marni Berendsen, educational coordinator from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP), were among the speakers. In addition there were “hands on” workshops for teachers and educators as well as workshops on CCD imaging. Fellow amateur astronomers from all across the U.S.A. and Canada attended the convention. Also door prizes were given away daily from sponsors such as Meade, Starry Night Software, and Astronom. Also present at the convention was an assortment of vendors of astronomical merchandise.

The Cassini spacecraft contains an orbiter and the Titan probe. Titan is one of the more interesting places in the solar system due to evidence of “pre-biotic” chemistry in its atmosphere. Theoretical models of Titan’s atmosphere indicate that organic molecules condense out of the atmosphere and “rain” down onto its surface, possibly forming lakes or oceans of this organic material. For more information on the Cassini mission to Saturn please visit http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov.

The afternoon session consisted of discussions on forming and operating an after-school astronomy club. There were also demonstrations of astronomy projects for public outreach programs. We all broke up into small groups and did the “solar system on a string” project, built model rockets with straws, tape, and balloons and went out into the parking lot to launch “Alka-Seltzer Rockets” which consisted of 35mm film canisters, water, and Alka-Seltzer tablets. Some of the “rockets” made it up to about 20 feet in altitude. I’m sure the hotel guests were wondering what we were up to in the parking lot with our homemade projectiles.

Next on the agenda was Marni Berendsen from the ASP discussing the “Night Sky Network” (NSN) project due for release in Feb. 2004. The NSN is a collaborative project between NASA, JPL, ASP, and the Astronomical League to develop educational materials and training to distribute to amateur astronomy clubs throughout the US to assist them in their public outreach programs. For more information on the NSN please visit http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov.

Friday’s activities consisted of talks by Dr. Richard Schmude from the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO) on recent observations of Jupiter and Mars. Paul Lewis from the BSAS then gave a rousing demonstration on various activities that amateur astronomers can perform for astronomy outreach programs. Dr. Don Parker presented a talk on CCD imaging of Mars with recent images and observations. He mentioned that the dust storm on Mars first detected on 1-Jul-03 has begun to subside. This was certainly good news for the current Mars apparition.

The afternoon sessions began with the National Young Astronomer award winner, Maxwell Moe, giving his presentation on the study of the effects of light pollution. Next the Jack Horchheimer award winner, Kayla LaFrance, discussed her volunteer activities as a member of the Spokane Astronomical Society. Next up was the International Space Station – Amateur Telescope (ISS-AT) project committee, which gave an update on the plan to place an amateur telescope aboard the ISS. The ISS-AT committee...

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MVAS Officers & Committee Chairpersons

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AMATEUR Astronomer

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Ron Sherman - 937-423-7480

Articles should be sent to:  
MVAS 2600 Dewees Pkwy  
Dayton, OH 45414
or via e-mail: mvas@mvas.org

MVAS Tee Shirts and Calendars

MVAS tee shirts can be picked up at the General Meeting. 2004 Astronomy calendars are available from the MVAS now at 20% off retail price ($10)

mentioned that the operations center for the ISS-AT project will be moving to Dyer Observatory near Nashville, TN.

Saturday’s events began with a talk by J. Kelly Beatty, Sky & Telescope magazine’s Executive Editor, with a talk entitled “Where are the Young Astronomers?” Mr. Beatty discussed possible reasons why there are so few young people entering the amateur astronomy hobby today. Mr. Beatty mentioned that there are about 200,000 active amateur astronomers currently in the US. However, the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) currently has a membership of only 10,000 (only 5% of active astronomers) and the AL has a membership currently of 20,000 (only 10% of active amateur astronomers). He also mentioned that according to a 2002 National Science Foundation (NSF) survey, a full 25% of the US population thinks that the Sun goes around the Earth and 50% of the US adult population didn’t know that the Earth goes around the Sun in one year. He also stated that there are only about 6,500 professional astronomers in the US. Mr. Beatty then stated his opinions as to the shortage of young astronomers as follows: 1. Light Pollution – We all know that most people can’t just walk outside and see the true glory of the night sky anymore. 2. High Tech Intimidation – Look at all of the ads for new high tech telescopes & equipment aimed at novice observers. 3. No Time to Think – Teachers now have to teach according to strict study guidelines, leaving little time for electives such as astronomy in high school. 4. Opportunities for hands-on instruction – Unfortunately, there not many opportunities for hands-on instruction in astronomy in elementary and high schools today.

Next Michael Bakrich, “Astronomy” magazine Amateur Editor, discussed amateur astronomy’s past, present, and projections of its future. Then Dr. Michael Reynolds, past Executive Director of the Chabot Space & Science center in Oakland, CA, gave a presentation entitled “Falling Stars – Meteors & Meteorites” in which he discussed the science of meteoritics along with its origins & history. He also discussed some of the more famous meteorite “falls” & “finds” throughout recorded history. He also discussed the classification of meteorites as well as some of the identifying characteristics of meteorites & “meteor wrongs” (rocks purported to be meteorites but which are of terrestrial origin). He also had numerous samples of meteorites to pass around to the audience for examination.

Next Dr. Bob O’Dell discussed star formation in the Orion Nebulae. He concluded his presentation with an extraordinary 3-D computer simulation of flying within the Orion Nebulae based on recent Hubble Space Telescope (HST) observations.

The final event of the convention was the awards banquet. At the banquet the AL awards were presented. This included the National Young Astronomer Award (NYAA), the Jack Hoekheimer award, the Astronomy Day awards, and the Leslie Peltier award. The NYAA winner received a 10” LX-200 Schmidt-Cassegrain Telescope (SCT) donated by Mead Instruments, a lifetime pass to McDonald Observatory, and an all expense paid trip to the AL convention. The second place NYAA winner received a Meade ETX telescope. The Jack Horkheimer award winner received a check for $1,000. The final doorprize awarded at the convention was an 8” LX-200 SCT courtesy of Meade Instruments which was awarded at the conclusion of the awards banquet. The guest speaker at the banquet was Dr. Martin Weisskopf, lead project scientist for the Chandra X-ray Observatory. His talk covered the story of the construction and launch of the Chandra observatory. His talk also included several images of recent discoveries by Chandra.

We all had a great time hearing the great presentations, observing, and enjoying the company of fellow amateur astronomers at this year’s AL convention. We’re already looking forward to next year’s convention. See you all at next year’s ALCon!

Board Meeting Notes

The Saturn Dealership stargaze was a success. A donation to the MVAS was followed up with a thank you letter.

The Apollo Observatory at the Boonshoft Museum is operational.

The scope is open to the public every clear Friday and on the third Tuesday of every month.

The Solar telescope is taking shape. The contract work is complete. The optical bench is in place. Charles Shirk will complete the assembly to make it operational.

Rendezvous 2004 presentation will be given to the board by rendezvous chairman Rick Weiss. We are honored to be joined this year by Jack Newton and Ron Wodaski.

Venders are also being contacted. See the web for details http://www.mvas.org/rendezvous.html

Apollo Rendezvous 2004 should just be as successful as ever. If you want to get involved Rick has scheduled meetings at 7:00 before the general meetings.

Treasurer’s report. The yearly audit is planned.

Proposed expenditures were proposed for 2004 including a Maury Childs memorial observatory.

The MVAS is looking into participation in NASA Night Sky Network (http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/), a new free program specifically designed for amateur astronomy clubs. More information will be available later. NASA and the Astronomical Society of the Pacific announce the official launch of the Night Sky Network, a national coalition of astronomy clubs engaged in public outreach. Membership for the MVAS is at 120.

MVAS Annual Elections are at the January general meeting. The following members have been nominated to fill three expiring Board of Trustees positions.


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New Outreach Toolkits

Terry Mann, Vice President of The Astronomical League, sent this to the MVAS.

Additional information can be found at this site. http://www.astroleague.org/nightsky.htm

Marni Berendsen, Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 415-337-1100 ext 116 mberendsen@astrosociety.org


Amateur astronomy clubs interested in enhancing or expanding their public outreach and education activities are invited to apply for membership in the “Night Sky Network,” a new program specifically designed for amateur astronomers.

Selected clubs will receive free Outreach Tool Kits from NASA on a variety of astronomy and space-related topics. Jointly developed by NASA, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP), and the Astronomical League, the program also includes training, special opportunities for working with NASA scientists and educators, access to a dedicated website for communicating with other Night Sky Network participants, and public recognition by NASA for their outreach activities.

The Outreach Toolkits, designed and tested by amateur astronomers, make it easy for any interested amateur, of any experience level, to enrich and expand their role in public star parties, club meeting presentations, school visits, and youth or community group events.

The ASP encourages astronomy clubs from all over the United States, large or small, urban or rural, to apply for this exciting new program. Participating clubs will have the opportunity to use unique, engaging materials and demonstrations at all of their events, participate in special content and presentation training, involve more of their members in outreach, and even win national recognition for their public outreach activities.

“We’re very excited to be working on this wonderful outreach program with NASA,” said Michael Bennett, ASP Executive Director. “It aligns so perfectly with the ASP mission—to increase the understanding and appreciation of astronomy—and our experience in working with amateurs who like to do outreach activities. Amateur astronomers represent a huge source of public outreach expertise and energy, and the Night Sky Network is a great way to catalyze and amplify that energy even more.”

“NASA is very excited to be working closely with the amateur astronomy community,” said Michael Greene, head of public engagement for JPL’s Navigator Program, and PlanetQuest initiatives. “Amateurs want more people to look at the sky and understand astronomy, and so do we. Connecting what we do with our missions to the sense of wonder that comes when you look up at the stars and the planets is one of our long-term objectives. We have a strong commitment to inspiring the next generation of explorers. Lending support to the energy that the amateur astronomy community brings to students and the public will allow NASA to reach many more people.”

For more information and an online club application form, amateur astronomers can go to http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov and click on “How To Apply.” Applications must be received by February 29, 2004 in order to be considered for the first round of memberships. Membership is limited and clubs are encouraged to apply as early as possible.

The Night Sky Network is sponsored and supported by JPL’s PlanetQuest public engagement program. PlanetQuest is a part of JPL’s Navigator Program, which encompasses several of NASA’s extra-solar planet-finding missions, including the Keck Interferometer, the Space Interferometry Mission (SIM), the Terrestrial Planet Finder (TPF), the Large Binocular Telescope Interferometer (LBTI), and the Michelson Science Center.

The non-profit Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP), one of the nation’s leading organizations dedicated to astronomy and space science education, is developing and managing the Night Sky Network in cooperation with JPL. Perhaps best known for creating Project ASTRO and its best-selling resource book, Universe At Your Fingertips, the ASP’s education and outreach programs include its members magazine, Mercury, and its best-selling resource book, Universe At Your Fingertips. The ASP’s education and outreach programs also include its members magazine, Mercury, the web-based Universe in the Classroom teacher’s newsletter, a website with many astronomy resources and links, and the creation and distribution of a wide range of astronomy education materials. Learn more about the ASP at http://www.astrosociety.org.

The Astronomical League (http://www.astroleague.org/) is a federation of amateur astronomical societies throughout the United States with almost 300 member societies and is one of the largest astronomical organizations in the world.

MVAS Membership Notes

As mentioned in past Board Meeting notes Membership for the MVAS has gone up $5 for 2004. The MVAS has received a letter from Sky & Telescope informing us that club rates are going up for expiration dates in 2004. The new rates are $32.95, or an increase of $3 per year. The MVAS treasurer requests RENEWAL notices from S&T that were sent to the members. LOOK AT THE MAILING LABEL ON THE AMATEUR ASTRONOMER! Your membership expiration date is now being printed on the label. Please use this monthly reminder to keep your membership up to date. If the date does not agree with your records, please contact the Membership Director to correct the error.

Open Observatory

By Ron Sherman

The MVAS is reviving an Open Observatory Night at JBO. The Saturday nearest the New Moon the JBO will be scheduled open, rain or shine, for member access. I need key holding volunteers to commit to open JBO on these one of these dates, please contact me. Open Observatory Night at JBO for MVAS members and their guests will be on September 27, October 29, November 22, December 20, 2004.

November’s Lunar Eclipse from BMD

By Alan Zucksworth

The evening was brisk, just like out at JB, and Charlie Shirk, Cheri Adams, Beth & John Meece, myself, Steve N. & Pat Craig gathered down at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery (BMD) to witness the total lunar eclipse and to share the experience with the general public. Charlie & Cheri operated the 50 cm telescope in the Apollo Observatory, Pat Craig set up his “spotting ‘scope” and Steve N. & I had binoculars.

We first noticed “umbral contact” around 6:30 PM through the trees on the roof of the museum. Shortly thereafter, the public started to arrive at the observatory and down in the museum parking lot to view the eclipse. I was assisting Pat in the parking lot, passing around my 7x50 binos and describing to people what was happening to the moon. At the same time, other people were enjoying the view through Pat’s little ‘scope. The views of the moon were very pleasing through Pat’s little telescope and the binos. We estimated around 200 people joined us that Saturday night in November to enjoy the eclipse.

After the eclipse began in earnest, we always had a small group of people gathered around Pat’s telescope in the parking lot viewing the progression of the eclipse with us. Cheri was very thoughtful and would bring Pat & I some nice hot chocolate every now & then to keep us warm. It was a very colorful & enjoyable eclipse and we had fun viewing it and sharing it with the public.

We had people viewing the eclipse up until about 10:00 PM. We finally packed up and went home around 10:30 PM. Thanks to all who helped make this another enjoyable and successful MVAS event.
Please Sign Me Up!

☐ New Member
☐ Membership Renewal
☐ Individual Membership $35
☐ Family Membership $50
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☐ Sky & Telescope $33
☐ Astronomy $30

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Add the selected options. Make check out to MVAS and mail to:
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January's Observers Highlights

03 Jan ............................................................ Quadrantids Meteor Shower Peak
08 Jan ............................................................ Full Moon 15:37
11 Jan ...................................................... Comet C/2003 L2 Linear closet to Earth (2.6 AU)
14 Jan ...................................................... Last Quarter Moon 12:43
15 Jan ...................................................... Venus 0.9 deg from Uranus
17 Jan ...................................................... Mercury At Its Greatest Western Elongation (24 Degrees)
17 Jan ...................................................... Comet C/2002 T5 Linear closet to Earth (3.2 AU)
19 Jan ...................................................... Comet C/2003 L2 Linear Perihelion
21 Jan ...................................................... Comet C/2003 L2 Linear Perihelion
29 Jan ...................................................... First Quarter Moon 03:29

January Historical Events

02 Jan 2004 ............................................. STARDUST, Comet Wild 2 Encounter
04 Jan 2004 ............................................. Mars Exploration Rover A (Spirit) Lands
06 Jan 1998 ............................................. Lunar Prospector Launch (Moon Orbiter)
06 Jan 1968 ............................................. Surveyor 7 Launch (Moon Lander)
07 Jan 1610 ................................. Galileo discovers Io, Europe and Callisto Moons of Jupiter
08 Jan 1973 ............................................. Luna 21 Launch (Soviet Moon Lander/Rover)
10 Jan 1946 ............................................. US Army makes the first radar contact with Moon
13 Jan 1610 ................................. Galileo discovers Ganymede Moon of Jupiter
22 Jan 1968 ............................................. Apollo 5 Launch
31 Jan 1958 ............................................. Explorer 1 Launch (1st Earth Satellite by USA)