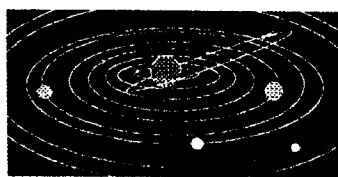


THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



Vol. 4, No. 3

FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

May, 2000

Officers: President, **Steven (Smitty) Smith** (583-2200) -- or, if you prefer e-mail: starship-saratoga@dellnet.com; Vice President/newsletter editor, **Bill Warren** (229-6108; warren1212@mindspring.com); Secretary-Treasurer, **Ken Walburn** (P. O. Box 1179, McDonough, GA 30253 / 954-9442); AlCor, **Neal Wellons**, and Web Site Coordinator, **Cody Wellons** (946-5039); Librarians, **Tom and Katie Moore** (228-6447); Telephone/Hospitality Committee Chairman: **Dan Pillatzki** (707-0270). All of these phone numbers have 770 area code prefixes. Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224. FRAC web page address: <http://welcome.to/frac>.

Please notify **Bill Warren** promptly if you have a change of address or e-mail.

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Club Calendar. Fri.-Sat., May 5-6: Cox Field observings, at dark; **Sat.-Sun., May 6-7:** Griffin Mayfling festival (City Park, 9:30-6:00 [Sat.], 10:30-6:00 [Sun.]); **Thurs., May 11:** FRAC meeting (Beaverbrook media center, 7:30); **Fri., May 12:** BB observing (behind the school, at dark).

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President's Message. For those of you who attended the Atlanta Astronomy Club's *Peach State Star Gaze* last month, I hope you had as good a time as I did. For those of you who volunteered and worked at the event, I salute you! Running the PSSG is an all-volunteer effort; even if you are not a member of the AAC, your time and help

was welcomed and greatly appreciated.. The \$25 registration and other fees are inexpensive compared to other major star parties. Just look into attending the Texas Star Party and others and you will find \$75 and \$90 registrations. One reason they are more expensive is that they must pay outside people to come in and do all the things needed to hold the event.

If you enjoyed the PSSG, I urge you to support it in the future by volunteering your time and help to keep the costs down. It will benefit you in the long run.

I recently spoke at a FRAC meeting about light pollution and the International Dark-Sky Association. The growing problem of light pollution will not cure itself, nor will it go away by wishing; it's going to see a change only if you become part of the solution.

I became a member of the IDA shortly after I acquired my telescope and have been a member ever since. Your \$30 per year membership doesn't involve benefits like free towing if your car breaks down on the road to the observing site, nor do you earn any frequent flyer miles. What you get is an organization -- the *only* organization -- which is concerned with saving our night sky, saving money, and conserving natural resources that are squandered on needless and wasted lighting. Our very existence as astronomers and as an astronomy club is in peril due to somebody else's bad management of outdoor lighting! If you consider yourself an astronomer -- and you

should -- you should also consider becoming a member of the IDA and renewing your membership every year. This too, will benefit you in the long run. You can contact them at: International Dark Sky Assn., 3225 N. First Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85719.

-Saratoga Smitty

Last Month's Meeting/Activities. We had 8 members and 2 guests at our Mar. 31 Cox Field observing: **Mike Stuart; Ken Walburn; Raymond Hughes; Larry Higgins; Dan Byous** (came with Larry); **Katie & Tom Moore; Dawn & Steve Knight; and Trent Knight**, who is no relation to Dawn & Steve, but came as Dawn's date. (Not really; we just wanted to see if you were reading closely.)

On Sat. night, **Toni & Larry Higgins** were joined at Cox Field by a dense cloud cover that would have done justice to the surface of Venus, so they just did a little parkin' and sparkin'. (Just kidding, Mr. Cox.)

Twelve members enjoyed **Phil Sacco's** fascinating and inspiring talk at our April meeting, which featured topics ranging from light pollution to naked-eye observing to cosmology, with a dash of time-traveling thrown in for good measure.

And here's who, to the best of our knowledge, attended the Peach State Star Gaze from FRAC: **Michael Chappell, Joanne Cirincione, Robert Hall, Chuck Hancock, Larry Higgins, Joe & Cody Hinton, Chuck Hancock, Rich Jakiel, Steve & Dawn Knight, Alex Langoussis, Chrissy Mondell, Cathy, Katie & Tom (yawn!) Moore, Dan Pillatzki, Phil Sacco, Dr. Richard Schmude, Smitty & Little Smitty, David Ward, Jerry Williams**, and last but certainly not least, yrs. truly. **Dan Pillatzki** used the occasion to complete his Messier observations and renew his Zombie status. **Katie Moore (Zombie #5), Bill W. (Zombie #6), Steve Knight (Zombie #7) and Jerry Williams (Zombie #8)** earned their Zombie status at the PSSG; the latter two will receive their awards at the May meeting..

Membership Renewals Due in May: Dr. Richard Schmude; and Neal Wellons. Send your \$10 check to Ken Walburn at the address listed on p. 1.

Upcoming Meetings and Activities. Our Cox Field observations will be held on **Fri.-Sat., May 5th-6th.** The new moon will be on the 4th.

On **Sat.-Sun., May 6th-7th**, FRAC will again participate in the **Griffin Mayfling Festival**, held at Griffin's City Park. It's a chance for us to meet the public and tell people about our club, who we are and what we do. Members may sign up for any or all of four time shifts, two each day. The following members have already signed up: **Sat., 9:30-2:00: Larry Higgins, Dawn & Steve Knight, Bill Warren; Sat., 1:30-6:00: Katie Moore, Neal Wellons; Sun., 10:30-2:30: Larry Higgins, Smitty, Jerry Williams, Bill Warren; and Sun., 2:00-6:00: Katie Moore, Smitty, Bill Warren.**

If you'd like to join us, we'd certainly love to have you. Just contact **Neal Wellons, Smitty or Bill Warren** at their phone nos. listed on p. 1 and tell us which shift you'd like to attend, and we'll tell you how to get to City Park from where you live. (Just tell the people at the gate that you're working with the Flint River Astronomy Club exhibit.)

You don't need to bring your 'scope unless you have a solar filter, but veteran FRAC Mayflingers might suggest your bringing along a chair, an umbrella (we have a small open shelter) and sunblock.

The speaker at our May FRAC meeting on **Thurs., May 11th**, will be **Larry Higgins**, whose topic, "Sketching the Sky," will include hands-on practice in drawing what you see. You won't want to miss this one, since Larry -- a Renaissance man if ever there was one -- is as knowledgeable and broadly talented as anyone you'll meet.

The meeting will begin promptly at 7:30 -- if, that is, Larry has finished his cigarette by

then.

Our Beaverbrook observing will be held behind the school on **Fri., May 12th**, at dark.

IF YOU'D LIKE A FREE YEAR OF FRAC MEMBERSHIP, all you have to do is be one of the next two members to contact **Smitty** or **yrs. truly** and volunteer your services to speak at one of our meetings. (We're exempting ourselves from this deal.) Our original proposal was for three free membership renewals to be given, but with **Larry H.** gobbling up the first one by volunteering for the May meeting, only two more will be offered.

[Editor's Note: Our thanks to Dawn Knight for submitting the following two neat little quotations. And we thought Dawn was just another pretty face...]

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.

-Oscar Wilde

Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.

-Johnathan Swift

(Swift would have been a perfect candidate for the Herschel 400, Herschel II or Arp Peculiar Galaxies observing clubs. -Ed.)

The Sky in May. All of the naked-eye planets are near the Sun in May. **Mercury** will be low in the W during the last half of the month.

The **Eta Aquarids meteor shower's** peak will coincide with our **May 5th-6th** Cox Field observings. Late-night or early-morning observers may witness about 15 meteors per

hour, dust remnants from Halley's Comet that have been trapped in orbit around the Sun.

People You Should Know: David Ward.

Has it really been *fourteen months* since **David**, his pretty and talented wife **Roxanne**, and their daughters **Rachel** (13) and **Melissa** (8) joined FRAC? Gee, it doesn't seem like a day over 13-1/2 months! (Uh-oh: since David is an administrative sergeant with the Clayton Co. Sheriff's Dept., I'll probably get thrown in the slammer for that one every time I drive through Jonesboro.)

Actually, David's position involves mainly working with computers, not arresting alleged perpetrators who haven't paid their FRAC or AAC dues. (David, like **Smitty**, maintains close ties with both clubs.)

David's interest in astronomy dates back to his childhood when he discovered that there were other heavenly bodies in the universe besides Playboy centerfold models. He used a rickety old 60-mm. 'scope back then, and although he still has it he has since graduated to a Celestron C-6 (by Vixen) with a Super Polaris mount -- a nifty outfit, and David plays it with the precision of a concert violinist.

Discussing David's search skills, **Smitty** has said, "David is a very good -- and *active!* -- observer. The times I've observed with him and seen him find very faint objects under less than ideal conditions is unreal...He is very efficient with that 6-inch; I think if you gave him enough time he could make it sing!"

David will soon receive his Messier certificate and pin -- but that's hardly surprising to those of us who are aware of David's tenacity and talents. His celestial preferences are -- well, *universal*. He simply enjoys finding things. His advice to beginners in the club is, "Start observing the AL lists. And write it down."

It's good advice from a very talented observer.

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