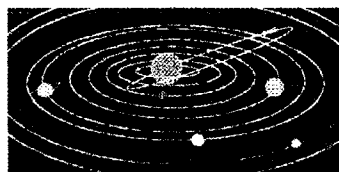


THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



Vol. 4, No. 4

FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

June, 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); AICor, **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); Observing Chairman & Public Observings Coordinator: **Larry Higgins** (227-2233 / <larrylhiggins@yahoo.com> . 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., June 2-3: Cox Field observings, at dark; **Thurs., June 8:** FRAC meeting (Beaverbrook media center, 7:30); **Fri., June 9:** Hampton Library observing, 8:00; **Tues., June 27:** Riverdale Branch Library observing, 8:00.

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President's Message. First, allow me to welcome FRAC's newest member, **Rod Dougherty**, and offer him our unqualified support in his getting started in astronomy. Rod is a good example of why our participation in the Griffin Mayfling is so important.

We're proud as punch of **Katie Moore's** winning the **Horkheimer Award 2000**. (See pp. 4-5. -Ed.) It's a great achievement, and one she is extremely worthy of. Of course, Katie has always been **No. 1** with us -- but this is a *national* award! I've e-mailed several of my friends in astronomy around the state about it, and each of them (including **Kimberly Novak** -- remember her? She was a FRAC member when she taught at East Coweta H. S.)-- sends congratulations and best wishes for Katie.

Our web site has come a long way, baby, in a very short time. Those same folks I correspond with via e-mail have had some nice things to say about our site and what it has to offer. I had **Cody Wellons** add some interesting links, and the results have been remarkable! Give it a look-see at the address directly opposite this line next time you have a few minutes to spare.

-Saratoga Smitty

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Last Month's Meeting/Activities. Continuing poor skies contributed greatly to the mediocre attendance at our May observings: **Mike Stuart, Joe Auriemma & yrs. truly** attended the Fri. night observing, **Larry Higgins, Smitty, Jerry Williams & yr. obdt. srvt.** came on Sat. night; and **Katie & Tom Moore, Larry H., Jerry W., Mike S. & yr. humble reporter** attended the BB observing.

On the latter evening, Jerry found 25 lunar features to bring his total to 75.) Instead of emulating Jerry and searching for lunar features, **Tom Moore** used the time to explain

why he hasn't found any new (to him, anyway) Lunar Club targets since 1905.

Smallish crowds showed up for this year's Mayfling festival. Our FRAC booth was capably manned by: **Larry H. & yrs. truly** (both days); **Mike & Danielle Stuart and Dawn & Steve Knight** (Fri.); and **Smitty, Jerry W., Katie M. and Neal Wellons** (Sat.). Why the Griffin folks insist on pitting Mayfling head-to-head with the larger and more well-known arts & crafts festival in Gay, Ga., on the same weekend is a mystery to us. Still, we had a good time together and got a new member -- **Rod Dougherty** -- out of it, so it was well worth our effort. Ask Smitty to show you his new license plate.

We had twelve in attendance at our club meeting to enjoy (and participate in) **Larry Higgins's** excellent hands-on presentation, "Sketching the Sky." **Ken Walburn's** sketches were predictably wonderful, **Suzy Wellons's** delightful, **Cody Wellons's** surrealistic -- in fact, *everyone* present showed considerable promise as budding astro-artists -- everyone, that is, except **yr. artistically challenged reporter**, who eventually produced something that looked like the bottom of a birdcage.

It occurred too late to be included in last month's newsletter, but on Fri., Apr. 28th, seven of us staged an observing for a nice crowd of 50-60 students, parents and teachers at Griffin's Futral Road Elementary School. Representing FRAC were **Katie & Tom Moore, Toni & Larry Higgins, Dawn & Steve Knight** and **yrs. truly**. Steve joined Katie as a charter member of "**Katie's Club**," which is limited to those who find the *Trapezium* in **M42** with no more than one of Orion's seven bright stars showing.

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Club News. You might want to check out **Robert Hall's** new web page, <www.hom.net/~hbyhall>. And while you're at it, take a peek at the new links (from **Smitty**) that **Cody Wellons** has added to our club's

website.

***How would you like to win a free Meade 12" LX200 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope valued at \$4210?** You can register as often as once a day between June 1-June 30 for that prize in a drawing sponsored by Natural Wonders Stores. The drawing will be held on or about July 7, 2000.

To register, you can: fill out an entry blank at any Natural Wonders store; go online to <<http://www.naturalwonders.com>> and click on the sweepstakes button; or send a 3" x 5" card with your name, address, phone no. and e-mail address (if any) neatly written, to: **Natural Wonders Sweepstakes, P. O. Box 757, Ellenton, FL 34222-0757**. No purchase is necessary to win.

***It's great having Larry Higgins, FRAC's founder and guiding light, back with us on a regular basis.** In our humble estimation, at least, Larry is to FRAC what **Gene Shoemaker** was to astronomy itself -- a dynamic, unifying force in blue jeans. As we've often noted, Larry doesn't talk down to anyone; he simply raises them to his level. It's a rare gift, and we're delighted that he is again using it with us after far too long an absence.

Larry is now functioning in a dual role as FRAC's new observing chairman and public observings coordinator, two roles he is eminently qualified to fill, having formerly served as the observing chairman of the Atlanta Astronomy Club. Please note that **The Hig** is now online: you'll find his phone no. and e-mail address in the top left corner of p. 1. You can contact Larry anytime you have questions about any of the AL observing programs, or if you know of a group that would like to schedule FRAC for a public observing.

***We enjoyed visiting with Stephen Byous** while he was in town recently. The sky didn't cooperate for a planned observing, but it was fun sitting around and chewing the fat with Stephen, his brother **Dan**, and **Larry H.**

Stephen later e-mailed us from Silver Springs, MD: "The MIR made a nice pass the

other evening and I had a great view even in a well lit apartment parking lot. Ah, urban astronomy!"

***Smitty & I** have had trouble recently in reaching some of you via the e-mail addresses you gave us. To verify that your listing is correct on our membership list, it would be extremely helpful if you'd send me a brief e-mail message at the address listed on p. 1.

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Membership Renewals Due in May: Joe & Martha Auriemma; Donald Harden; Joe Herbert; John, Lisa, Morgan, Ian & Erin Kelley; Dr. Stephen M. Mann; and Eric Shelton. Send your \$10 check to Ken Walburn at the address listed on p. 1.

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Upcoming Meetings and Activities. Our Cox Field club observings will be held on **Fri.-Sat., June 2nd-3rd**, the former falling precisely on the new moon.

Our club meeting on **Thurs., June 8th**, will feature **Katie Moore** teaching us how to make an astrocamera from a used disposable camera. The meeting will start promptly at 7:30; it probably will end when **yr. photographically challenged reporter** stomps on his inoperable camera in frustration, showing you why they call them "disposable."

On the next night, **Fri., June 9th**, we'll hold another observing for the folks at Hampton Library. To get there from Griffin, go N on Hwy. 19/41 and turn right onto Hwy. 20 at the stop light and Wendy's near Atlant Speedway. After about 3/4 mi. Hwy 20 makes a sharp curve to the left where a paved road, the Old Atlanta Road, joins it. Turn right onto that road, and the library and observing site are on the right, about 75 yards from Hwy. 20. **Please Note:** *This observing will take the place of our Beaverbrook observing in June. There will be no Beaverbrook observing this month.*

At 8:00 p.m. on **Tues., June 27th**, we'll have an observing at the Riverdale Branch Library in -- you guessed it, **Ken Walburn!** -- *Riverdale, Ga.!* Since at writing we haven't received directions to the library, either **Larry H.** or **Dan Pillatzki** will contact you sometime prior to that date with directions for getting there if you'd like to join us.

* * *

IF A FREE YEAR'S MEMBERSHIP SOUNDS APPEALING, we still have one available. All you have to do is be the next member to contact **Smitty** or **yrs. truly** and volunteer your services to speak at one of our meetings. With **Katie M.** speaking at the June meeting, only one more will be offered.

* * *

"As important as any telescope or binoculars is to observing, so should the sketchpad and pencil be, for they are powerful tools in the quest to appreciate deep-sky objects. Where astrophotography preserves an image, only an eyepiece drawing accurately records what is REALLY seen through a telescope."

-Scott Mitchell

(quotation supplied by **Larry Higgins**)

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The Sky in June. Mercury will be an early evening "star" low in the W sky in June. It will be at its highest during the 1st week of June. *Astronomy* says to locate mag. 0.6 Mercury by extending your hand toward the setting sun: 50 minutes after sundown, Mercury will be one fist-width above the horizon in that direction. *Astronomy* (June, p. 83) also tells how to locate **Comet LINEAR (c/1999 S4)** and the bright asteroid **4 Vesta** -- or just **Vesta** if you're not good at math -- during June. LINEAR is supposed to reach its peak in brightness in July.

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* * *

People You Should Know: Neal, Cody & Suzy Wellons. No greater oversight has ever occurred within these pages than this, that it has taken us 3+ years to get around to recognizing the Wellonses as people you should know.

Neal and his family joined FRAC in April, 1997. Shortly thereafter, Neal's wife **Cindy**, a schoolteacher, died in a tragic auto accident, leaving Neal to raise their son **Cody**, then 14, and daughter **Suzy**, then 9. As we've noted many times in these pages, Cindy would be very proud of all of them for what they've become.

Cody, spiked hair and all -- he's an aspiring rock musician on the way up -- is the one to blame for our web pages' occasionally psychedelic look -- but he's also the one to thank for its existence at all. It is, after all, an unpaid, behind-the-scenes function, and Cody does it well and makes it look easy. You can contact Cody at the phone no. listed on p. 1 if you have comments or suggestions regarding the web site -- or if you'd like to schedule his band for an out-of-this-world performance.

Suzy is a lovely and loving child of whom Neal and Cody are justly proud. She attends many of our club meetings and contributes in her very special way. We hope she knows how much we enjoy her presence.

And then there's Neal. For starters, he's the one responsible for enrolling you in the AL and seeing that you get your quarterly *Reflector*. He's also the one who printed and mailed out the *Observer* you're reading right now. Those time-consuming tasks involve a great deal of preparation, but if there's a phrase that best describes Cindy's family, it's **willing workers** who see tasks through to their completion.

It was Neal who brought to the May meeting the giant commemorative cookie honoring **Katie Moore**; Neal insisted on paying for it himself -- and he provided the door prize for this month's meeting (and next month's as well), the Natl. Audubon Society's

"Galaxies & Other Deep-Sky Objects." Neal also headed this year's Mayfling committee.

But here's what Neal is *really* like in a nutshell: he went to this year's PSSG, paid the full \$25 registration fee, worked for *four hours* at the front gate -- and left after a single, brief tour of the observing field. He never had any intention of staying overnight, or even observing after dark, but he drove over to Camp McIntosh anyway and *paid them to let him work*. His comment: "I knew they needed help, and since I'm not really into observing myself I didn't want to deprive someone else of an observing space. I was glad to help out."

What a blessing the Wellonses have been to our club!

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A BRIGHT YOUNG STAR EMERGES.

"Dear **Katie (Moore)**," the letter began. It was dated May 12, 2000.

"On behalf of the officers and 18,000 members of the Astronomical League, I would like to congratulate you for winning this year's Jack Horkheimer Award for exceptional service in astronomy. The competition was intense for this award, and your achievement is absolutely superb.

"Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Jack Horkheimer, we will present an Astronomical League check for \$1,000 to you at our annual awards banquet in Ventura, California, on July 22. We will also present the first place plaque at our banquet. In addition, the International Dark-Sky Association is pleased to give you a one-year, gift membership. IDA promotes better outdoor lighting to preserve the beauty of our night skies.

"The League will pay your travel expenses to the convention and your registration for the meeting and banquet...

"Based upon your outstanding achievements, we plan to publish an article

about you in an upcoming issue of the *Reflector*. For this publicity, we would appreciate a photo of you in an "astronomical setting," if possible...

"In closing, I would be pleased to write letters of recommendation for any of your college applications. Let me know when and where to send the letters...

"Clear skies, good observing, and best wishes in your future astronomical endeavors.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Gent, Vice President
Astronomical League."

WAY TO GO, KATIE!!!! We always knew you were a supernova waiting for its time to come, but none of us thought it would come this soon! All of us in FRAC share in the pride of your accomplishment.

* * *

...And Here's a Bit More About Mr. Jack Horkheimer and the Award He Sponsors:

Since 1976, Jack Horkheimer has hosted a five-minute syndicated weekly TV show, "*The Star Gazer*," that is devoted to promoting public interest in naked-eye astronomy. Witty, animated and passionately devoted to astronomy, Horkheimer brings the universe down to earth for 300 seconds every week for an estimated 20 million viewers world-wide, many of whom are inspired to go outside and see the wonders he describes so fervently. Horkheimer's talent lies in making the universe seem *important* to people who never thought of it in such terms before.

The **Horkheimer Award for Exceptional Service by a Young Astronomer** is one of two awards presented annually for young astronomers by the Astronomical League. (The other is the National Young Astronomer Award (NYAA). The "Horkheimer Award," as it is commonly known, is made possible through

the generosity of **Jack Horkheimer**, the "Star Gazer." The winner receives a check for \$1,000 at ALCon, the Astronomical League's national convention. The award is given in honor of **Arthur P. Smith, Jr.** Art Smith was president of the Astronomical League from 1964-66, and he inspired Mr. Horkheimer to become active in astronomy.

For a more in-depth look at "Jack Horkheimer: America's Astronomy Evangelist," see **Stephen James O'Meara's** interview with Horkheimer in the Oct., 1999, issue of *Sky & Telescope*, pp. 84-87.

* * *

The Deep-Sky Observer's Lament

I think that I shall never spy

Another object in the sky.

Those dark, clear nights I well recall

Have gone away until the fall.

So here I sit without a hope

Of getting out my telescope

(Except to clean or collimate it).

Cloudy nights.

The haze.

I hate it.

-Bill Warren

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