

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

Newsletter of the Flint River Astronomy Club
Vol. 8, No. 3 May, 2004

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Bill Warren if you have a change of home address, telephone no. or e-mail address.

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Club Calendar. Fri., Apr. 23: Cox Field observing (at dark); **Sat., Apr. 24:** Astronomy Day public observing (Kohl's Dept. Store parking lot in Fayette Pavilion shopping center, Fayetteville, Ga., 4-10:00 p.m.); **Fri., Apr. 30:** ACS "Relay For Life" all-night

observing (Spalding Co. H. S., 6:30 p.m.-dawn); **Tues., May 11:** Beaverbrook PTA observing (7:15 p.m.); **Thurs., May 13:** FRAC meeting (BB media center, 7:30 p.m.); **Fri., May 14:** Relay For Life all-night observing (Gordon College in Barnesville, Ga., 6:30 p.m.-dawn); **Sat., May 15:** Cox Field observing (at dark); **Fri.-Sun., May 21-23:** GEORGIA SKY VIEW star party (Camp McIntosh, 2 p.m. Fri.-noon Sun.).

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Editor's Message. Those of us who have been with FRAC since the earliest days of its existence – **Smitty, John Wallace, Ken Walburn** and **yr. editor** – have always been justifiably proud of our club and its many accomplishments, and we hope you are, too.

Two years ago, our members raised \$120 to help Beaverbrook purchase "Model School" tee shirts for its 600 students. More recently, several members offered personal donations to help Chiefland's **Billy & Alice Dodd** in their time of need. We support Astronomy Day in grand fashion every year, and we also support the American Cancer Society with our annual "Relay For Life" all-night observings. (See p. 2.)

It came as somewhat of a shock, then, to learn that, as of 4/19/03, we had just 12 FRAC members out of a total of 37 "membership units" (i.e., individual or family memberships) registered for our own star party, the inaugural **Ga. Sky View 2004**.

We presently have 52 registrants enrolled (which is slightly more than 2/3 of the 75 we are aiming for) – but it was a bit disconcerting to consider that more than 3/4 of the registrants are non-members who apparently are more interested in supporting FRAC's star party than 2/3 of our own members are.

FRAC can survive a mediocre turnout of its own members for this first GSV 2004 – but our club is not, and never has been – about survival; it's about achieving excellence in everything we do, and have done. We've come too far in 7+ years to start accepting mediocrity in the things we really care about.

If you really care about FRAC and what it stands for, **now** is the time for you to show it. Join us.

Attend if you can, work as a volunteer if you like, or merely soak up the star party atmosphere. But please *don't* let this opportunity pass to show everyone in and out of FRAC that our club is as good as we say it is.

Elsewhere, let me extend a hearty welcome to FRAC's newest members, **Peter** and **Claudia de Guzman** of Jonesboro. We're happy to have you aboard, folks; please let us know what we can do to make your time spent with us worthwhile, fulfilling and enjoyable.

-Bill Warren

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Membership Renewals Due in May: David & Brendon O'Keeffe; Dr. Richard Schmude, Jr.; and Bill Snyder. Please send your \$15 check payable to FRAC c/o **Steve Knight** at his address on p. 1.

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Last Month's Meeting/Activities. We had 12 at our April meeting: **Chuck Sims, Tom Moore, Bill Snyder, Felix Luciano, Curt Cole, David, Brendon & Sarah O'Keeffe, Smitty, Steve & Dawn, and yr. editor.**

While **Steve & Dawn, Smitty, Felix** and **John Wallace** were at the Chiefland Picnic Weekend, **yr. editor** was at Cox Field on those nights, joined by **Larry Fallin** on a deceptively poor Fri. evening and by **Dan Newcombe** on an absolutely splendid Sat. evening that rivaled Chiefland at its best.

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Upcoming Meetings/Activities. We are embarking upon by far the busiest period in FRAC's history. In the span of time covered by this newsletter (i.e., latter April-the end of May) alone, we're offering the following smorgasbord of club activities:

*Two nights of Cox Field observings – **Fri., Apr. 23rd** and **Sat., May 15th**;

*An Astronomy Day day/night public observing in the parking lot of **Kohl's Dept. Store** in Fayetteville

on **Sat., Apr. 24th**. (It's the site of one of our best-ever public observings two years ago.) The observing will begin at **4 p.m.** with solar observing, and will continue with telescopic observing until about **10 p.m.** when Kohl's closes;

*A Beaverbrook PTA observing at the school at **7:15 p.m. on Tues., May 11th**;

*Our monthly FRAC meeting in the Beaverbrook media center at **7:30 p.m. on Thurs., May 13th**;

***Two** American Cancer Society "Relay For Life" all-night walkathon public observings – we'll be showing the sky, not walking -- the first on **Fri., Apr. 30th** at **Spalding High School** in Griffin and the second at **Gordon College** in Barnesville on **Fri., May 14th**. (You aren't expected to stay all night for either event, of course.) Both events will begin at **6:30 p.m.** and continue until dawn;

*On **Fri.-Sun., May 21st-23rd**, FRAC will hold its first-ever **GEORGIA SKY VIEW 2004** star party at Camp McIntosh. The gates will open for registrants' arrivals at 2 p.m. on Friday, and the event will run till noon on Sunday. Members planning to work at the event will be permitted to enter the grounds at noon on Friday in order to set up the facility for our guests. **Steve K.** says that he will call Indian Springs State Park (which administers the camp as well as the park) on Thursday to try to obtain clearance for our own workers to get started earlier than 12:00; if there's any change in that time, he'll let us know.)

Got all that marked down on your calendar? Okay, here are directions to the various sites.

Kohl's Dept. Store (from Griffin). To get to Kohl's from Griffin, follow Ga. Hwy. 92 (McIntosh Rd.) to Fayetteville, turn right at Ga. Hwy. 85 N in Fayetteville, and after about 3 mi. look for the massive **Fayetteville Pavilion** shopping complex on your left. Turn left onto the road through Pavilion, and Kohl's will be about ½ mi. on your left. It's the last store in that section, near the W end of the huge, E-W aligned shopping complex.

Beaverbrook PTA observing site. Instead of parking in front of the school, bear right and go

around behind the school. We'll set up at or beyond the end of the pavement.

Spalding Co. High School (from Jonesboro). Come S on U. S. Hwy. 19/41 and stay on it until you reach the Ga. Hwy. 16 (Griffin/ Newnan) exit. Get off the 4-lane there, turn left onto Hwy. 16 and stay on that road all the way through Griffin. (Street signs may refer to it as Taylor St.)

After maybe 3 mi. you'll pass the Griffin-Spalding Co. Regional Library on the right, then go through a stoplight intersection and past Dairy Queen on the right. Stay on the main road past the point where a side road peels off to the right, and ½ mi. from the Dairy Queen you'll cross a RR track; 3/10 of a mile farther on you'll come to a green sign and arrow indicating the direction of Spalding Co. H. S. (i.e, to the right) at the next corner.

Turn right at that street – Wilson Road – continue past the stop sign at American Excelsior Co., and the school will appear almost immediately on the left beyond a small rise. Drive past the football field, turn left at the first intersection (Futral Road) and turn left again at the first road leading into the school property. We'll set up our 'scopes at the southern end of the football field (i.e., the end farthest from the school).

Gordon College (from Jonesboro). Stay on U. S. Hwy. 19/41 South past the Williamson Rd. (Ga. Hwy. 362) exit to Cox Field. A bit more than 2 mi. past that exit you'll come to a stoplight with the Griffin Ingle's on the right; from that point, it's 14.1 mi. to the turnoff to the Barnesville observing site.

Meanwhile, **don't** follow U. S. Hwy. 41 into Barnesville; instead, stay on the 4-lane (U. S. Hwy. 341) that bypasses that town. You'll pass Barnesville Ingle's on the right; later, after passing a Ford dealership on the right, you'll see a BP station on the left at College Drive. Turn left onto College Drive, and after about a mile you'll enter the Gordon College campus with a walled fence on either side of the road.

Turn right at the first stoplight. (The white street marker on the right side of the road indicates "Gordon Road," the road you're looking for; the street sign on the left side of the road reads "Stafford Avenue". Drive .8 mi. out Gordon Rd., and you'll see Pineview

Baptist Church on the left and the Ed Taylor Memorial Recreation Complex on the right. Turn right into the athletic complex.

(Note: This should **not** be confused with the Gordon College tennis courts and playing fields that you'll see on the left immediately after turning onto Gordon Rd. Drive past that area for .8 mi. and all will be made clear to you.)

Camp McIntosh (from Jonesboro). Go S on I-75 to Exit 67 (Ga. Hwy. 16). Turn left. Jackson, Ga., is 8 mi. to the E. Hwy 16 merges with U. S. Hwy. 23 in Jackson; follow 16/23 through Jackson and, where 16 branches off to the left, stay on 23 that bears to the right. After 3 mi., bear right on Ga. Hwy. 42. Go past the rocky creek at Indian Springs State Park and turn right at the blinking light and convenience store on the right. Camp McIntosh will be about a mile ahead, its paved entrance just beyond where the main road curves to the left. The Registration Office is the dark brown building on the right just inside the main gate. Use the visitor parking area when registering.

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This 'n That. GA. SKY VIEW 2004 News, Hot Off the Presses: As of Mon. morning, April 19th, "We currently have 52 people registered for the party (12 are FRAC members). We have added several speakers to include **Phil Sacco** and **Rod Mollise**. **Jim Fly** has been added as a door prize donor but I don't know what yet (he will also be attending). Other than that things are going along smoothly. –Dawn."

*And here is the registration fee schedule for GSV 2004:

Each adult or child age 10 or older: \$26.00
Each child under age 10: \$10.00
Tent, trailer or RV camping: free
Dormitory lodging: \$5.00 per night
State parking pass (required): \$2.00

After May 1st, registration fees will be:
Each adult or child age 10 or older: \$36.00
Each child under age 10: \$20.00

Those one-time fees cover the tentire weekend.
Commemorative tee shirts: \$18.00

Make your checks payable to the Flint River
Astronomy Club and send them to **Dawn Knight, 114
Central Lake Circle, Griffin, GA 30223.**

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The Sky in May. First, of course, there are the two possibly naked-eye comets, **Comet C/2002 T-7 (LINEAR)** and **Comet C/2001 Q-4 (NEAT)**. Comet LINEAR, probably the brighter of the two, will begin May as a morning object in the E and wind up the month as an evening target in the W; in both cases it will, unfortunately, lie low in the sky.

Comet NEAT, on the other hand, will be nicely placed to offer GA. SKY VIEWERS two nights to remember. From *Sky & Telescope* (May, 2004):

“The last chance for a great naked-eye view of Q4 will be on the weekend of **May 22**, when the comet should glow around magnitude 2.5. It will be well placed in the evening sky then and should be a pretty sight through either binoculars or a small telescope.” (p. 72)

Elsewhere, **Venus** – with its lovely crescent shape visible in telescopes but not naked-eye – will still be bright but dropping lower in the W sky in May, **Mars**, looking more star-like with every passing month, will lie midway between Venus and **Saturn**, the three of them spanning a mere 15 degrees – the width of your spread index finger and pinky held against the sky – on the evening of **May 10th**.

Mighty **Jupiter**, the king of the planets, will be up all night in May. (Like **Tom Moore**, Jupiter sleeps during the day, the differences being that Jupiter doesn't take power naps at work, and it probably doesn't snore.)

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CLEANING YOUR EYEPIECES

article by
Felix Luciano
and

Steven “Saratoga Smitty” Smith

(Editor's Note: This article began with a FRACgroups e-mail from Dan Newcombe: “I noticed that there is a lot of crud on my eyepieces – a year or two of dew buildup. What is the overall FRAC opinion of methods for cleaning lenses? The two suggestions I've found either involve a LensPen, or alcohol and Q-tips. Something tells me this is not a job for my Dremel!”)

Felix

First, I use an air bulb to blow away as much loose dirt as possible. Then I use a LensPen to brush VERY lightly in a circular motion.

If the eyepiece is really dirty, I use isopropyl alcohol (not less than 99%), which I special order from a local pharmacy, applying a very small amount of it to a 100% cotton ball. I VERY lightly wipe the lens of the eyepiece, using a circular, inside-to-outside motion. The alcohol leaves a thin but harmless coating on the lens. *(Note: See Smitty's comments. –Ed.)*

If the eyepiece is not too dirty, I breathe on it and then use a microfiber cloth in a circular motion to wipe the moisture from the eyepiece, and use a Q-tip to clean the edges.

Zeiss lens cleaner also works well for me.

I use very little quantities of any liquid(s) while cleaning my eyepieces, because I *don't* want to risk having any of it filter through into the inside of the lens assembly. And I **don't** apply any cleaning solution directly to the eyepiece, but always to a cotton ball or Q-tip, and I carefully squeeze most of it out.

So far, this process has worked very well for me.

Smitty

Even though I don't own a LensPen, I would say that using both methods would be perfect.

I used to clean my eyepieces with alcohol and Q-tips and was perfectly happy. This method will get them clean but sometimes leaves a slight pattern of the “leftovers” from the alcohol evaporating – no

problem here, it doesn't affect the view through the eyepiece at all.

The problem with using a LensPen only, is that it's a dry brush cleaning – you may finely scratch the lens coatings by moving the dirt around, that you're cleaning off, with the brush. However, it's great to use if the eyepiece is fairly clean OR as a final clean after using alcohol and Q-tips.

What I use now is Zeiss lens cleaner. It does a wonderful job and is not expensive, around \$5-6 a bottle. A cleaning with this cleaner, or a final cleaning with a LensPen after alcohol will make your eyepiece look like new – providing it's already in good shape.

*(Editor's final note: For what it's worth, FRAC co-founder **Larry Higgins**, who believed that applying any chemical to optics is a risky business over the long haul, preferred to use distilled water and Q-tips in cleaning his eyepieces. Larry's point may not have been valid, however, since (a) he used minute amounts of dishwashing detergent in cleaning his primary mirror, and (b) if there were any long-term damage to eyepieces from using alcohol or a lens cleaner such as Zeiss, we'd have heard about it long ago via the astronomical grapevine.)*

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