

THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

Newsletter of the Flint River
Astronomy Club
Special Edition #4 Winter, 2003-04

STEVE & DAWN KNIGHT:

A PERSPECTIVE

With **Steve's** announcement that he would not be seeking reelection as president of FRAC this year after three years of devoted officer service to the club, it is altogether fitting that we celebrate his and **Dawn's** tenures as FRAC officers with a Special Edition of the *Observer*.

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Introduction. Like the Biblical **Moses**, Steve & Dawn were not born to the job of running FRAC, they were recruited for it by club founders **Larry Higgins** and **Bill Warren**. In assuming the positions of treasurer and secretary, respectively, in March, 2001, Steve & Dawn brought with them no exceptional skills beyond a deep and abiding love for FRAC and willingness to work hard on the club's behalf. Their education in leadership skills was gained through on-the-job training.

As you'll see, their accomplishments are many and varied (e.g., unparalleled membership growth, revising the Bylaws, expanding the officer base to include an elected Board of Directors,

gaining incorporation and tax exempt status for FRAC, sending the newsletter via e-mail, expanding our web site resources, arranging and overseeing FRAC's plans for the upcoming **Ga. Sky View** star party, Dawn's co-creating the **FRAC 50 Observing Program** [with **Larry Fallin**], etc.). Such noteworthy accomplishments have greatly expanded FRAC's outreach and potential to be a leader in amateur astronomy in Georgia and the nation as well.

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(from the April, 2000, issue of the *Observer*):

People You Should Know: Steve & Dawn Knight. Since joining FRAC in Aug., '99, Steve and Dawn have become two of our most active members. (Well, *Steve* is at least semi-active most of the time, anyway; but those lines on the sides of Dawn's face aren't wrinkles or a birthmark, they're *chenille marks* from her most recent nap.)

Sporting a neat little 4-1/2" Celestron First Scope, Dawn & Steve attend our meetings and club and public observings with a regularity that should embarrass the rest of us. Steve's goal is "to get all of the AL pins"; he's saving his pennies toward buying something larger, but for now the 4-1/2" is serving him well. Dawn's somewhat less lofty goal is "to stay awake and warm."

Steve works at Raymond Pontiac (*now Cronic Chevrolet -Ed.*). Dawn is a clerk in the detective office of the College Park Police Department. They have no children, but are devoted to their nephew **Michael Chappell** and nieces **Brittany & Kristin**.

Steve's favorite celestial objects are **Saturn** and **Andromeda Galaxy**; Dawn

prefers the open cluster **M35** in *Gemini*, which she insists is the “Playboy Bunny Cluster.”

Outgoing, friendly, dependable and extremely likeable, this closely-knit pair enjoy talking with members and visitors alike. If you haven’t already met them, you need to – and maybe you need to attend more of our club functions.

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Beginnings. It was all Dawn’s fault, really.

Having noticed our FRAC booth at the Griffin Mayfling celebration in May, ’99, Dawn dragged hubby Steve over to talk with us because she knew he’d be interested. And he was, too. He – and she – liked what they heard and saw, and came to our next club meetings and observings. They joined FRAC in August, 1999.

And here was the *Observer’s* first mention of them, courtesy of **Smitty’s** “President’s Message” in the Aug., ’99 issue:

“I want to give a hearty FRAC welcome to our newest members, **Steve & Dawn Knight**. Armed with a 4-1/2” equatorial reflector, the Knights are proving to be just the kind of members we like to attract, namely, enthusiastic observers who enjoy spending time with us at meetings and outside under the stars. Although they’ve been members for less than a month, Dawn & Steve logged more time at Cox Field in July than all but three of our members.”

Steve & Dawn brought their 13-year-old nephew, **Michael Chappell**, to Cox Field in August, and enrolled him in the club in September.

From the Nov., ’99 *Observer*:

“**Steve & Dawn** joined **yrs. truly** at Cox Field on Oct. 2nd, and...Steve wondered why, even though it wasn’t a scheduled club observing, more of our members weren’t out there on a clear night for observing. Good question.”

And again, from the Jan., 2000 issue of the *Observer*:

“**Steve & Dawn** —whose value to our club grows with every passing month...came to our BB observing on Dec. 10, Steve sporting new growth of neatly trimmed facial hair and Dawn in curlers, fuzzy Playboy bunny slippers and a housecoat. (Not really, but the image boggles the mind.)”

Dawn won the door prize at our March, 2000 FRAC birthday party: a *Sky Atlas 2000.0* (2nd ed.); and she contributed two quotations to our May, 2000 issue. Those quotations:

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

-**Oscar Wilde**

Vision is the art of seeing the invisible.

-**Jonathan Swift**

In Aug., 2000, having collected contributions from individual members and adding a considerable amount himself, Steve presented **Katie Moore** with a polarized lunar filter and two sets of regular filters for her having won the Horkheimer 2000 Award for Exceptional Service to Astronomy By a Young Astronomer. That occasion marked Steve’s first venture in club leadership activities. It was followed shortly thereafter by his and Dawn’s organizing our first annual “Picnic On the Grounds” at Cox Field in Oct., 2000, which drew

20 attendees as we honored the Coxses for their support of FRAC.

Then came the following noteworthy event:

“On Mon., Nov., 20th (2000) – just before we put this issue of the *Observer* to bed – **yr. editor** ventured out to Cox Field for a spot of observing on an extraordinarily clear night...only to find **Steve & Dawn** already set up and going strong with their new 14” Discovery Dob. The ‘scope came a month early, albeit with a couple of glitches to keep them from getting overconfident, but lemme tell ya, folks, the Big Boy is awesome! (The ‘scope that is, not Steve). Using that monster to find their remaining Messiers will be like duck shooting with surface-to-air missiles!”

The Officer Years. March, 2001 brought two huge steps forward for the Knights. First, there was Steve’s first article for the *Observer*, “Seeing Through the Cat’s Eye”; and at our club meeting Dawn was elected club secretary and Steve treasurer. They have been officers continuously ever since.

Steve finished his Messier program in May, 2001.

An observing tip from Steve appeared in the July, ’01 *Observer*:

“If, like me you make notes about the things you find when you’re observing and then go back later to rewrite your notes at home, don’t let them pile up until you have about 30 of them scattered around the house. I did that once with a bunch of Messiers, and it took me all day to get it straightened out.”

Also in July, ’01, Steve obtained FRAC’s first e-mail address, and he (along with **Larry Fallin**) gave his first talk at a club meeting, then followed up in August with another talk while **yr. editor** recuperated from foot surgeries. The topics of their show-and-tell demonstrations were (a) the Catseye collimator and Tectron Autocollimator, and (b) collimating your secondary mirror.

In Aug., ’01, Steve began organizing a motorcade southward to attend the Chiefland Star Party, and Dawn completed her first two A. L. observing clubs (Messier and Universe Sampler).

In October, 2001, Steve was unanimously elected to serve as FRAC’s interim president for the remainder of **Larry Higgins’s** unexpired term, with Dawn serving as secretary/treasurer.

On Sat., Nov. 17, 2001, Steve attained legendary stargazer status by setting his telescope on fire at Chiefland.

Steve’s second article, “The Lap of Luxury: The Denver Observing Chair,” appeared in the Jan., ’02 *Observer*. During that month, FRAC achieved its greatest membership total ever, 54.

Steve contributed a 3-part tech article, “Putting Heat In Its Place,” to the Feb.-April, ’02 issues of the *Observer*. In February, he was elected FRAC’s president and announced the formation by **Smitty** of a FRACgroups web site.

In March, 2002, Steve and **Larry Fallin** did a Chiefland Messier Marathon; they found 109 of the Messiers, but not **M30**. Dawn completed her Binocular Messier list.

The two of them arranged an Apr. 20th Astronomy Day public observing at Kohl's Department Store in Fayetteville; their advance preparations made the occasion wildly successful, drawing more than 200 passersby for a look through our telescopes.

In April, '02, Steve was a speaker at our "Homework Astronomy" club meeting.

Dawn completed her Caldwell Club searches in June, 2002.

In Aug., 2002, the Knights purchased a lovely, spacious travel trailer with a generator the size of a company safe. And in Sept., '02 Steve and **yr. editor** overhauled the club's outdated Bylaws and presented them for approval at the November meeting. They passed unanimously.

In Feb., 2003, Steve's article, "Keeping Heat In Its Place," was accepted for publication in **Tom Clark's** *Amateur Astronomy Magazine*. He and Dawn were re-elected as club president and secretary, respectively, and a new vice president and board of directors were elected to serve one-year terms. And in March-May, '03, the *Observer* contained a new 3-part article of Steve's, "Putting Heat *Back* In Its Place."

In April, '03, Dawn received the club's first "Capt. Midnight" award for having earned more pins in that calendar year – three – than anyone else in FRAC.

Dawn completed her Double Star observations in June, '03.

In July, 2003, under Steve's leadership FRAC got a new web site that avoids those irritating popups that plagued our earlier site.

In September, '03, Dawn and **Larry Fallin** presented their long-awaited **FRAC 50 Observing Program**, the culmination of nine months of research and discussion.

Steve's "Putting Heat In Its Place" article appeared in the Winter, '03 issue of *Amateur Astronomy* in October, 2003.

In November, '03, Steve bagged 139 Herschel Club objects at Chiefland.

Conclusion. Hopefully, Dawn & Steve will continue to be an actively united force for the betterment of FRAC for many years to come. Regardless, however, the club owes them a debt of gratitude that cannot be easily repaid.

As Steve & Dawn would be the first to admit, they have by no means worked alone: it has taken the combined efforts of many members to get us to where we are today. Still, without the vision and leadership the Knights have given FRAC, it is extremely unlikely that FRAC would have expanded in the ways outlined in this Special Edition of the *Observer* in the foreseeable future.

Our club is by far the better for having enjoyed the fruits of their labors over the past 4-3/4 years.

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