

# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER



Vol. 5, No. 8

FLINT RIVER ASTRONOMY CLUB

October, 2001

**Officers:** President, **Larry Higgins**; Vice President/newsletter editor, **Bill Warren**:(770) 229-6108 <warren 1212@mindspring.com>; Secretary (**Dawn Knight**)/Treasurer (**Steve Knight**): (770)227-9871, membership renewals to Steve at 114 Central Lake Circle, Griffin, GA 30223 <sdknight@bellsouth.net>; AlCor, **Neal Wellons**, and Web Site Coordinator, **Cody Wellons**, (770)946-5039; Librarian, **Tom Moore** (770)228-6447. Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224. FRAC web page: <<http://welcome.to/frac>>.

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

\*\*\*

**Club Calendar. Thurs., Oct 11:** FRAC meeting (Beaverbrook, 7:30); **Fri., Oct. 12 :** BB observing (at the school, at dark); **Sat., Oct. 13 and Fri.-Sat., Oct. 19-20:** Cox Field observings (at dark).

\*\*\*

**Vice President's Message.** Whatever appears in these pages, whether seriously or otherwise, pales in comparison to the tragic events of Sept. 11th. I'll offer these thoughts and leave the subject: *If America ever falls, it will be due to our own mismanagement of the nation that our forefathers established, and not because cowards bring our country to its knees by acts of destruction and death.* Anyone who thinks otherwise doesn't understand what our country really stands for. We may have our differences and petty squabbles, but we are at heart "one nation, under God, indivisible," a family 270 million strong whose common beliefs are far

more powerful bonds than our enemies imagine.

God Bless America.

Please join me in welcoming our newest members: **Roger Poore** (10386 Wisteria Lane, Jonesboro, GA 30238, (770)603-0274, <[roger@thepoores.com](mailto:roger@thepoores.com)>); and **Joseph M. Moore** (407 Conkle Rd., Hampton, GA 30228, (770)946-9314, <[jmorris\\_n4eu@netzero.com](mailto:jmorris_n4eu@netzero.com)>). Joe's 15" truss tube 'scope will instantly relegate **Steve K.**'s "Big Boy" to secondary status at Cox Field.

-Bill Warren

\*\*\*

**Last Month's Meeting/Activities.** Eleven members attended our Sept. meeting: **Bill Snyder, Tom Moore, Louise & Bill Warren, Mike & Danielle Stuart, Neal Wellons, Joe Auriemma, Dawn & Steve Knight and Larry Fallin.** Larry received his Regular and Honorary Messier awards, **Joe A.** received his Honorary Messier certificate & pin, and **yr. editor** received his Sunspotters certificate & pin and Master Observer certificate & pin.

Only three members -- **Dawn & Steve Knight and Larry Fallin** -- attended both Cox Field observings on the weekend of Sept. 7-8. **Yr. editor** attended the Friday session.

Sixteen FRACsters attended the PSSG on Sept. 13-16: **Chuck Hancock, David Ward, Bill Snyder, Dawn & Steve Knight, Grady & Cory Dukes** (and their guest **James Golden**), **Larry Fallin, Joe & Cody Hinton, Alex Langoussis, Rich Jakiel, Joanne Cirincione, Phil Sacco, Dr. Richard Schmude** and **yrs. truly.** **Steve K.** finished

his Messiers Friday night.

Twelve members and three guests attended our Sept. 21st-22nd Cox Field observings: **Joe Morris, Dawn & Steve Knight**, Steve's guest **Jeff Jarrell**, and yr. editor (both nights); and **Joe Auremma, Larry Fallin** and Jeff Jarrell's wife **Vickie** attended the Friday night session

\* \* \*

If the earth were a golf ball, Pluto would be a sweet pea almost 8 miles away, and Jupiter would be a basketball about one mile away.

-Christopher DePree and Alan Axelrod  
*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Astronomy.*  
(Dr. DePree is a physics/astronomy professor at Agnes Scott College in Atlanta.)

\* \* \*

**Membership Renewals Due in September: Michael Chappell; and Raymond Hughes.** Please send your check payable to **Steve Knight** or FRAC at the address listed on p. 1.

\* \* \*

**This 'n That.** We were unable to contact the following people before the Sept. meeting: **Michael Chappell** (by telephone); and **Rod Dougherty, John Felbinger** and **Ken Wilson** (by e-mail).

**\*From David Ward:** "I recently heard something interesting: people are using the Meade DS series "GoTo" 'scopes (\$100-250) with the Autostar computer to gut the drive motors and computer for other mounts such as home-made SCTs and CG5 and SP/GP mounts. Costco had the DS60 for \$100. For that price, you got the two drive motors, computer (which, from what I've read, is easily reconfigured), and a nice 60mm finderscope for your other 'scopes."

**\*It Ain't Us, It's the Sun.** A new study has shown that "The U. S. becomes cloudier during periods of increased solar activity, like those of the past couple of years...The researchers

suggest that the jet stream, which guides storms and appears to move northward around solar maximum, may be the culprit (*Astronomy*, Oct. 2001, p. 30)." And all this time we've been blaming it on the new equipment we buy.

**\*Question of the Month:** Who are: (a) Great Swami #1, (b) Seadog, and (c) Spiderman? (Answers on p. 3)

**\*From Steve Knight (re cleaning your primary mirror):** "When you're ready to put the soap in with your mirror, dilute the water with some of your distilled water first, making sure that it's thoroughly mixed. That way it'll blend in better in far less time, giving you a better cleaning. That thought occurred to me when I had to change my water because the soap had sunk to the bottom."

**\*A Personal Aside to Smitty from All His FRAC Friends.** We love ya, man; you and your father have been in our thoughts and prayers. The Peach State wasn't the same without you.

And since you collect *Seasonal Star Charts* mistakes, Smitty, here's a nice one for you: while the Spring chart (p. 7) identifies **M81** as lying N of M82, the Winter chart (p. 19) identifies **M82** as lying N of M81.

\*Thanks to **Steve Knight** for hosting the FRACgroups chatroom on the Wed. night preceding the PSSG.

**\*From Our "Let Me Read Your Palms" Dept.:** The *Griffin Daily News* wanted a photo of yr. editor showing off the observing pins on his hat. Okay. But then, when the photo ran in the paper, the caption below it read, "**Bill Warren** shows his class the Astrological Society pins on his hat..."

\* \* \*

**Upcoming Meetings/Activities.** Our next meeting will be held at 7:30 on **Thurs., Oct. 11th**, at Beaverbrook. **Dr. Richard Schmude**, astronomy professor at Gordon College, will be guest speaker. His topic will be, "The 2001

Dust Storm On Mars."

On the following evening, **Fri., Oct. 12th**, we'll hold a Beaverbrook observing at the school.

Then, on **Sat., Oct. 13th**, we'll hold a Cox Field observing, three nights before the new moon.

Our other Cox Field observings will be held on **Fri.-Sat., Oct. 19th-20th** three nights *after* the new moon. The night air should be cool by then, so dress accordingly. (That means wear your *lined* fuzzy slippers, **Dawn.**)

\* \* \*

**The Sky in October.** Mars will set around midnight, by which time **Saturn** will have risen. On **Oct. 6th**, the **Moon** will drift through the **Hyades**, the V-shaped face of *Taurus (the Bull)*.

Elsewhere, the **Orionids meteor shower** peaks on the morning of **Oct. 21st**, and a new comet, 9th-mag. **WM1 LINEAR**, will be visible in *Camelopardalis* and *Perseus*. A chart in *Astronomy* (Oct., 2001, p. 65) shows where to look.

\* \* \*

## "THE HONORS KEEP ROLLING IN"

### a FRAC special report

First, there was **Katie Moore**.

As a 17-year-old senior at GHS and 3-year FRAC member, Katie was awarded the AL's prestigious "Horkheimer 2000 Award for Outstanding Service to Astronomy By a Young Astronomer." All of us took pride in her accomplishment, as we do now in her attending the University of Arizona as an astronomy major.

Now, more than a year later, FRAC co-founder, vice president and newsletter editor **Bill Warren** has become only the fourth person nationally -- worldwide, actually, since the AL's membership is not confined to our country's boundaries -- to earn **Master Observer** status.

The AL's brand new "Master Observer"

program offers a large and attractive pin and equally lovely certificate for anyone who earns five required pins (Messier, Deep-Sky Binocular, Lunar, Double Star and Herschel 400) and any other five optional pins from among the AL's 17 observing clubs. Bill's five optional clubs were the Binocular Messier, Urban, Universe Sampler, Sunspotters and Arp Peculiar Galaxies.

Bill has been notified by **Vic & Jen Winter**, editors of the AL's quarterly newsletter, *The Reflector*, that his article submission, "How To Become a Master Observer," will appear in an upcoming issue.

The purpose of the Master program is to motivate AL members to become regular observers on a long-term basis. Since most AL clubs are designed to take at least a year to complete, earning a Master Observer pin will take about ten years if a member pursues only one club at a time.

Don't let that statement discourage you, though, says Bill. "It took me 6-1/2 years to collect ten pins, but 2-1/2 of those years were spent working on the Messiers, mostly alone in my backyard because I wasn't a member of a club and had no one to show me how it was done.

"Now, though, it's not unusual for our members to earn their Messier pins in about a year because they can get help and support along the way from other club members when they need it."

Bill advises members to be on the lookout for his article, since the *Reflector's* thick, absorbent pages make an excellent lining for a birdcage.

\* \* \*

Answers to "Question of the Month": "Great Swami #1 is **Steve Knight**, for reasons best known to **Larry Fallin**; "Seadog" is, of course, **Smitty**, an ex-Navy man to the corps (core, that is, get it, **Tom?**); and "Spiderman" is **yr. editor**, who doesn't always check his tube for obstructions as often as he should.

##