Computer Chatter

by Larry Kalinowski

The latest program added to the WAS's library is MARS EXPLORER. It's a shareware program that uses NASA space probe maps to help identify many of Mars' features. The program allows you to pick a section of a flat (Mercator) map for enlargement, then lets you pick a feature with your mouse cursor. The feature's name and coordinates are shown on the screen. An additional feature shows the globe of Mars as though it were in 3-D stereo. The globe rotates to show 80% of the entire surface of Mars. It's a DOS program that can be run in Windows 3.1 or 95, if it's loaded manually.

Is it raining comets on the Earth? Louis Frank, a University of Iowa physicist, says they're falling to Earth at a rate of seven to twenty per minute. That's four to twelve hundred an hour. Since they're mainly water ice, they dissipate into clouds before reaching the Earth's surface as rain. It's created a controversy and it's understandable. Critics say we should be able to measure the impacts of those small comets hitting the Moon, if they're as plentiful as Frank says they are. The only evidence is that which has been interpreted by Frank himself. A polar satellite, that Frank helped design, shows pictures of high altitude, fast moving trails(?), in our upper atmosphere. He believes those trails are the result of dissipated comets. Internet users can see some of the pictures taken from the polar satellite by going to WWW.NSF.GOV.

Has there been a large meteor fall in Australia? Siesmic equipment has measured what was thought to be a weapons test or a mining blast in May, 1993. Aborignaries digging for gold sighted a brilliant meteor just before the quakes were measured. It's estimated that a meteor two meters in diameter may have produced the quake, creating a crater the size of a football field. A search is now under way for that crater in Australia's Outback.

Carl Sagan's novel CONTACT hits the wide screen in mid July. Look for it at many theaters. It's Sagan's and Druyan's attempt to prepare the world for the Earth's first communication with another planet. The effect of alien communication on different sections of our society is portrayed quite well in the book. At first, the contact is considered a joke, originating somewhere on the Earth's surface. Then, further analysis of the signal, reveals much more information. Sounds like a must see for amateur astronomers bent on science fiction (?)

On July 4, 1997 a probe will land on the surface of Mars. Pathfinder is designed to roam the planet's surface and analyze minerals and possible evidence for life.

It's a dwarf planet....no, a super asteroid? Whatever it is, it's a new discovery. Jane Luu, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, says it was discovered last October. It's three hundred miles in diameter and orbits three times as far from the Sun as Pluto. Designated 1996TL66, the period is about eight hundred years and comes as close to the Sun as 3.2 billion miles and moves away as far as 14 billion.

If you're not receiving the League's publication called the REFLECTOR and you're a dues paying member of the WAS, contact Ben Tolbert, our Astronomical League Correspondent (ALCOR), at 810-790-2823. The ALCOR's job is to keep our society's mailing list up to date. Be sure your name and address is correctly recorded on that list.

May's computer meeting was well attended, with comet photos presented by Tim Skonieczny and slides by Walt Wawrzynski and Jack Szymanski. The June computer meeting will be at Gary Gathen's home, on Thursday the 26th, as well as the rest of the fourth Thursday meetings through, and including, October. All new visitors will receive a free Windows planetarium program. Gary lives in Pleasant Ridge, three blocks south of I-696 and a half block west of Woodward Ave. His number is 810-543-3366.
The WASP

Published by
Warren Astronomical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 1505
Warren, Michigan 48090-1505

1995 Officers
President Dave D’Onofrio 213-863-8952
1st VP Lou Faix 810-781-3388
2nd VP Blaine McCullough 810-553-4956
Secretary Glenn Wilkins 810-528-4236
Treasurer Ben Tolbert 810-796-2823

The Warren Astronomical Society, Inc. is a local, non-profit organization of amateur astronomers. The Society holds meetings on the first and third Thursdays of each month, starting at 7:30 p.m.

First Thursday meeting: Cranbrook: Institute of Science
Second Thursday meeting: Macomb Community College
1221 North Woodward Ave
South campus, Bldg. B, Room 209
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48012

14600 Twelve Mile Rd.
Warren, Michigan

Membership and Annual Dues
Student $12.00
College $17.00
Individual $25.00
Family $30.00
Senior Citizen $17.00

Send membership applications and dues to the treasurer:
Ben Tolbert
20206 Vermander
Clinton Twp, MI 48035

Among the many benefits of membership are
Discount magazine subscription:
Astronomy $20.00 (12 monthly issues)
Sky & Telescope $27.00 (12 monthly issues)
CCD Astronomy $27.00

Loaner telescopes (with deposit). See 2nd VP.
Free use of Stargate Observatory.
Special interest subgroups. See chairpersons.
Free use of W.A.S. library. See librarian.
Call list: don’t miss unexpected events.
Free membership in Astronomical League, including Reflector newsletter.
More benefits are listed in Member Booklet

The Warren Astronomical Society Paper (WASP) is the official monthly publication of the Society. Each new issue of the WASP is available at the Macomb meeting on the third Thursday. Non-members will be charged $1.00 for each new issue. Back issues, when available, are free. Requests by other clubs to receive the WASP and other correspondence should be addressed to the editor.

Articles for inclusion in the WASP are strongly encouraged and should be submitted to the editor on or before the first Thursday of each month. Any format of submission is accepted, however the easiest forms for this editor are files in plain text format, and graphics in PCX format. Materials can be transmitted in person, via US Mail, via direct modem connection at the phone number listed below (call using voice first), or E-mail on the Internet to bondono@eaglequest.com.
For further information on contribution, see or call the editor:
Jeff Bondono
5105 Kingwood
Shelby Twp, Michigan 48316-4524
810-734-4786

Disclaimer: The articles presented herein represent the opinion of their authors and are not necessarily the opinion of the Warren Astronomical Society or this editor. The WASP reserves the right to edit or deny publication of any submission.

Stargate Observatory is owned and operated by the Society. Located on the grounds of Camp Rotary on 29 Mile Road, 1.8 miles east of Romeo Plank Road, Stargate features a 12.5 inch f/17 club built telescope under a steel dome. The observatory is open to all club members in accordance to the “Stargate Observatory Rules” published in the member handbook. Those wishing to use the observatory must call the 2nd VP by 7:00 p.m. on the evening of the session. The coordinates for Stargate Observatory are 82° 56’ 0.4’ W, 42° 46’ N.

Library. The Society maintains a library of astronomy-related books and periodicals at the Macomb meeting room. See the librarian, Louis Namee, to check out a book.

Special interest groups
Computers Larry Kalinowski 810-776-5720
Deep Sky Doug Bock 810-764-2727
Lunar/Planetary Riyad Matti 810-548-3223
Solar Marty Kunz 810-474-8246
Math John Herrgott 810-548-1442
Telescope Fred Judl 810-758-7456


Did you know that....
the Moon’s shadow is approximately 167 miles wide and travels across the surface of the Earth at about 1,040 m.p.h. during a total solar eclipse? The longest possible time to observe this phenomenon at one location is about 7 minutes and 40 seconds. However, if you could charter a supersonic Concorde, and travel at the same speed as the shadow, you could watch totality for about 3.5 hours. Get out the cocktail peanuts and book me a ticket!

Lou Faix opened the meeting at 7:45 for 27 members and 3 guests. Blain reported that Stargate is fully operational and that there will be an observatory training session in the early evening on 5-17. All officers have keys now. Blain also reported that the treasury balance had decreased to $3,112 as of 5-1.

Lou reported that the Kensington Park Authority was very pleased with the Comet Party event and estimated that 5,000 visitors participated. The programs were “on target” for the audiences. Visitors mentioned radio announcements, and a Channel 50 team showed up briefly before being summoned to a hotter assignment. Lou counted 53 scopes & binoculars on Saturday. WAS now seems certain to be part of Metro long-term planning.

Bob Watt noted 2 small sun spots from Kensington.

Doug Goudie thanked the WAS for Astronomy Day help plus assistance over 17 days with comet viewing. It was estimated that 4,100 showed up for 12 clear evenings including 900 on one evening. Tim noted that there was a web report that Hale-Bopp set two records - longest time above 0 magnitude, and longest time as a naked eye comet going back to 1577.

Jack Shemanski will host the next computer meeting. Maps will be available at the Macomb mtg. for the site near Mt. Clemens. MSU will have an open house at their observatory on May 16/17. Lou noted a recent discovery which strongly suggests an anti-matter explosion emanating from the center of The Milky Way. Sky & Tel called attention to radio pollution which threatens to end earth-based radio astronomy, perhaps in our lifetime.

Roger Bajorek, representing the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, sent the WAS a nice letter thanking us for our invitation and efforts relating to the Camp Rotary Comet Party, and asking for inclusion in future events. Doug Goudie circulated his comet pictures.

Jerry & Mary Ann served coffee during the break from 8:27 to 9:00. Then Mike O'Doud ran his tape describing the extraordinary effort made by Canadian amateur astronomers who made a brief but very impressive “motion” picture of Comet Hyakutaki using time-lapse photography. Their efforts were recognized by the professional community and enjoyed by the general public as well. The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 with an invitation to Denny’s.

Dave opened the meeting with 30 members and guests in attendance on the night of the 3rd. Stanley Cup game! He read a letter of appreciation from the Metro Beach Association indicating that approximately 4,500 visitors attended our comet party despite the poor visibility. The WAS realized a total of $1,300 in profits from sales at both Metro Park events. A few Hale-Bopp T shirts are still available for $10 each.

Bob Watt showed us the plaque which was prepared for mounting to our 22” scope. It reads as follows:

The members of the Warren Astronomical Society dedicate this telescope to Frank McCullough for his many years of service.

- Scroll -
22 inch f5 Dobsonian
Completed July 1996 by
The WAS Telescope Making Group

An identical plaque on rosewood will be sent to Frank.

Ben reported a treasury balance of $4,405.72 as of today. Blain indicated that about 7 to 10 members showed up for the observatory training session. It was complicated somewhat by the large number of interested scouts that are now expected to be there most weekends. Therefore, further serious use of the observatory should be scheduled for weekdays whenever possible. Marty Kuntz reported seeing a brief fireball last weekend that was as bright as the full moon but only lived for a degree or two.

Coming event summary - Doctor Dave Harrington will talk about the physics of solar eclipses on 6-17. Jeff Bondono will present an in-depth review of the Hubble Deep Field results on 7-3. The 7-17 meeting is being rescheduled to Stargate, tentatively on 7-26. The 8-7 meeting is being designated as a family/friends event at no cost. The planetarium and observatory will be used. Ray Travis will discuss Cepheid variables at the 8-21 meeting. Beta Lyra forms are also available at all meetings for those wanting to participate in this useful test - an area where amateurs can make an important contribution. Campsites are still available at Sleeper State Park for the Perseid event.

Treats were provided by Angie and Mary Ann. Then the feature presentation on light pollution was made by Norbert Vance of the Eastern Michigan University Astronomical Society.
ACROSS
2  The ram
5  The serpent-bearer
6  The indian
8  The furnace
10 The sea-goat
14 The twins
15 The table
17 The shield
18 The bull
19 The dragon

DOWN
1  The herdsman
2  The water-bearer
3  The river
4  The fox
7  The watersnake
9  The eagle
11 The hunter
12 The big bear
13 The flying horse
16 The hare

Note: All spaces and/or grammatical symbols have been eliminated from the puzzle.
June  Thu 19  7:30 pm  Meeting: Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. B, Room 209  
    The Physics of Solar Eclipses, by Dave Harrington  
    Thu 26  Computer Subgroup Meeting, contact Larry Kalinowski  
July  Thu 3  7:30 pm  Meeting: Downstairs at Cranbrook Institute of Science  
    The Hubble Deep Field, by Jeff Bondono  
    Thu 17  7:30 pm  Meeting: Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. B, Room 209  
    Thu 24  Computer Subgroup Meeting, contact Larry Kalinowski  
    Sat 26  2:00 pm  Stargate Summer Outing  
                   Picnic, Star Party, and Observatory Training Program  
    Wed 30-Sun 2  SMURFS ’97  
Aug  Sun 2-Sun 9  4th Annual Nebraska Star Party  
    Thu 7  7:30 pm  Meeting: Downstairs at Cranbrook Institute of Science  
                   Family Night: a public-oriented meeting with a planetarium show,  
                   observing, and a tour of the museum.  
    Fri 8–Sun 10  Perseid Meteor Shower campout at Port Crescent State Park  
                   As of June 1st, Port Crescent State Park was full for the weekend of Aug  
                   8 till the 10th. Reservation are still available at Sleeper State Park which  
                   is about 7 miles down M-25. Anybody that has not made reservation for  
                   the campout and is planning on going might want to check at Sleeper or  
                   elsewhere. The state park’s reservation line is 1-800-44-PARKS.  
    Tue 12–Wed 13  Peak of Perseid Meteor Shower (continued camping for those that wish)  
    Thu 21  7:30 pm  Meeting: Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. B, Room 209  
                   Cepheid Variable Stars, by Ray Travis  
    Thu 29  Computer Subgroup Meeting, contact Larry Kalinowski  
Sept  Thu 4  7:30 pm  Meeting: Downstairs at Cranbrook Institute of Science  
    Fri 5–Sun 7  Astrofest, at Kankakee, Illinois  
    Thu 18  7:30 pm  Meeting: Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. B, Room 209  
    Thu 25  Computer Subgroup Meeting, contact Larry Kalinowski  
Oct  Thu 2  7:30 pm  Meeting: Downstairs at Cranbrook Institute of Science  
    Fri 3-Sun 5  Cadillac Star Party, contact Doug Bock  
    Thu 16  7:30 pm  Meeting: Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. B, Room 209  
    Thu 23  Computer Subgroup Meeting, contact Larry Kalinowski  
Nov  Thu 6  7:30 pm  Meeting: Downstairs at Cranbrook Institute of Science
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