
Desert Sky Observer

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NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTELOPE VALLEY ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC
P.O. BOX 4595, LANCASTER, CALIFORNIA 93539-4595

*The Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is a California non-profit Corporation
Visit the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club website At www.avac.av.org
The A.V.A.C. is a Sustaining Member of The Astronomical League*



Up-Coming Events

April 4: Last Quarter Moon

April 12: Monthly Club Meeting*

April 12: New Moon

April 13: Star Party, Saddleback Butte

April 15: YEA Essay Contest Ends

April 20: First Quarter Moon

April 20: Antelope Valley Poppy Festival

April 21: Antelope Valley Poppy Festival

April 26: Full Moon

Anytime: *Observe.*

* Monthly meetings held at the S.A.G.E. Planetarium at the Cactus School in Palmdale on the second Friday of each month. The meeting location is at the northeast corner of Avenue R and 20th Street East. Meeting starts at 7 p.m. Please note that food and drink are not allowed in the planetarium. Monthly A.V.A.C. meetings are open to the public.

President's Report

Terry Pedroza

I just can't believe that another month has gone by already. The Messier Marathon was a bust. With the clouds and cold, no one made it past 10:30. We did, however, get to see comet Ikeya-Zhang. This is a beautiful comet, with a tail of at least three degrees as seen at dusk. We did have a great time!

The Y.E.A. essay contest midway media event is now behind us. I was disappointed with the light turnout of AVAC members! But, I would like to thank those who did make it and showed their support! You guys are the greatest! If you didn't make it, you missed the chance to meet some of our local government leaders and school administrators.

Our next major event is the Poppy Festival, April 20th and 21st. We need your help with this event! Last year, we had a great time and made some money for the club all at the same time. Please contact Debora to volunteer your time. We will have an opportunity drawing for a Nexstar 60 telescope! This should make some individual or family very happy! We had so much fun seeing the faces light up of those who had never seen the Sun thru a telescope before!

This month's meeting will feature Tom Hames. This I am sure will be a great presentation! Hope to see everyone there.

Vice President's Report

Matt Leone

Well, it was cold, cloudy, windy and raining. These are, of course, the worst possible conditions for a Messier Marathon. If everyone would just stop purchasing new equipment, the weather would get better. If we wait just a little longer, we will get some good viewing conditions. Getting to the better side of life, I will have my 24" mirror at the Poppy Festival and I will need many volunteers to help me grind the curve into the mirror. It will be loads of fun and a lot of work. To volunteer, you may reach me at (661) 948-1521, please ask for Matt Sr.

At this month's club meeting, Tom Hames will be giving a talk on mirror making. It will be a treat. Tom is a very experienced mirror maker and he has a touch for glass along with painting. Tom will go over how a mirror is curved and tested. It's a special treat to get Tom, so be sure to be there to ask him questions. He has a lot of knowledge of astronomy, painting and mirror making.

I will see all of you at the meeting, and remember, no more equipment so we can have clear skies.

Matt Leone

Very Cold Vice President

Dir. of Community Development

Debora Pedroza

Hello Everyone! Our "Media Mid-way Push Event" for the essay contest was held at the Planetarium on Thursday, March 21st. Aside from the fact that membership attendance was much lower than we expected...it was a huge success and definitely a night to remember.

Senator Pete Knight opened our event with a talk about the infinity of the universe and how the journey to what is still unknown will be traveled by our young people in the future. He strongly encouraged youth participation in not only the essay contest but to pursue both science and mathematics in their education.

Our Club was also honored to have in attendance for the evening two local dignitaries: Palmdale mayor Jim Ledford and Lancaster mayor Frank Roberts. Both of these gentlemen spoke of the importance of setting goals, pursuing a good and solid education and most importantly...perseverance. Thank you, Mayors, for your support!

We also heard from Captain Bob Redmond, who remains one of our strongest supporters. He gave us interesting insight into his "Captain Bob" presentations that he performs for our local children. My personal favorite was his story about how he demonstrates the time factor of the "speed of light" using a marble and a tunnel box. Amazing!

Clearly, the night's most motivational moments was when teen jet pilot Katrina Mumaw shared her personal story about her dream to become a jet pilot in the Air Force. We saw an amazing video, which showed footage of her flying various types of jets at the tender ages of five through eight years old! She loves to perform aerobatics while flying and she is the youngest person to break the speed of sound! She was a "walking testimonial that dreams do come true" when she publicly announced that she had just been accepted into the Air Force! Congratulations, Katrina, and thank you for being the incredible role model that you are!

Last but not least... my absolute favorite part of the evening was being reunited with three of our six winners from last year's essay contest. I hadn't realized how much I missed them and hearing them talk about their experiences as contest winners made me as proud as can be!

For those club members who came and demonstrated your support...THANK YOU! For those of you who missed this exciting and rewarding event...phooey...you really missed out! Until our next event...take care and reach for the stars!

Minutes of the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club, Inc.
Club Meeting
March

Call To Order:

Terry Pedroza, President, called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.;

Terry welcomed visitors;

Brian Peterson read the minutes from the February Club meeting;

Terry thanked Steve Trotta for the excellent appearance of the Club website (www.avac.av.org);

Terry presented the Club calendar.

Vice President's Report:

Matt Leone gave information about Crystallaire and the upcoming Messier Marathon, which will be held March 16.

Treasurer's Report:

Mary Andrus, Club Treasurer, announced that our ending balance is: \$2,364.73;

We now have 62 members.

Director of Community Development:

Debora Pedroza discussed the 2nd Annual Essay Contest. Some essays already have been received. She needs help at the Media Night, March 21, 2002, at 6pm at the Planetarium.

Prizes for the winners include jackets, hats, and a JPL tour.

Debora also needs help at the Poppy Festival, April 20 & 21.

May 2nd is Base Day and we have been asked to help Lockheed Martin. Contact Debora for details.

Committee Report- A.L. Correspondent:

Tom Koonce informed the group that: on March 11 Jupiter's Red Spot will be visible at about 7:45pm; on March 13 two moons of Jupiter- Gannymede and Io- will transit the giant planet simultaneously; on March 15 the moon and Venus will be together in the sky.

Old Business:

The Club is still looking for an Astro-vid.

Errol Van Horne is working on the issue of Dark Sky lighting in the local cities.

New Business:

New Members Class: a discussion and a non-binding vote were held regarding when to hold brief classes for new members. The classes will be designed toward an education of telescopes, star party etiquette and the like.

A discussion was held about renting access to the Mt. Wilson 60" telescope.

Speaker/Presentation:

Famed "Sidewalk Astronomer" and cosmologist John Dobson returned with his usual dry but sharp wit. With his trademark flair and brilliance, he energetically debunked the "Big Bang" theory.

He spoke about cosmology and the relationship between space and time, matter and energy.

Q&A was interspersed throughout Mr. Dobson's talk.

In lieu of Jeremy Amarant's 10-minute "Star Talk," attendees were treated to a look through Matt Leone's telescope.

Close of Meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm.

Minutes written and respectively submitted to the Executive Board, March 11, 2001.

Sincerely,

Brian Peterson
Secretary

Messier Marathon - 3-16-02

Our Shortest Messier Marathon

Tom Koonce

We gathered at Crystallaire Country Club for a very well set up and planned event. (Thank you Matt Leone and Terry and Debora Pedroza!) The signs were easy to follow into the site and everything was primed for a GREAT event...except the weather! The sky was 70% clouded over with dark rain-looking clouds as I left the house, but I thought that I'd give it a shot anyway. Did I mention that the wind was steady at 20 mph with gusts that brought the wind chill into the 30's?

Terry and Matt had formed a wind break with their two RV's which we all very much appreciated during dinner and again later when we set up our scopes in the same spot. As the sun set, we managed to catch some spectacular views of the comet Ikeya-Zhang C/2002 C1 just to the north of a thin crescent new moon darting between the clouds.

We were able to get brief good views of Jupiter and Saturn, and the Great Orion Nebula and a few of the 15 people there also managed M78, a diffuse nebula in Orion. OK... everyone got M45, the Pleiades, too. But other than these and maybe a couple of other Messier objects, the clouds kept them out of our logbooks. Even Sirius and Jupiter couldn't be seen through the strange clouds that were forming and dissipating over our heads in the span of a few minutes.

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By 9:30 we all called it quits and went home to get warm. We'll try to see how many we can get in April just for fun.



Club members stare at the barbecue and dream of being warm.



Under the layers of clothing is Club president Terry Pedroza.

Astronomy Links on the Web

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/archivepix.html>

(Astronomy Picture of the Day)

<http://planetescapes.com/>

(visit other worlds)

<http://www.projectsandhobbies.com/howtolearnastronomy.htm>

(Getting started in Astronomy...)

http://encke.jpl.nasa.gov/whats_visible.html (visible comets)

<http://www.skypub.com/>

(a great magazine and resource)

<http://www.avac.av.org/>

(Hey, that's us! So go there!)



John Dobson speaks to the Club at our March meeting. (photo by Nick Bennett)

Did you know? ?

Halley's Comet will not return to our neck of the woods until 2061.

? ? ?

Executive Board Minutes Summary for March...

- Treasurer Mary Andrus reported that the Club now has 63 members;
- Director of Community Development Debora Pedroza is requesting assistance and input for the “midway push,” the media day for the Youth Exploring Astronomy Essay Contest; the “midway push” is March 21st, and the Poppy Festival April 20th and 21st;
- The Club calendar was set through July (see above reports);
- President Terry Pedroza will soon build a tri-fold “wall” that will accompany the Club at public events; The wall will include the listing of sponsors who attain a certain level of sponsorship;
- Matt is going to dress up as Galileo at the Poppy Festival (the astronomer, not the spacecraft).

* * For Sale * *

Meade Series 4000 Super Plossl 40 mm 2" eyepiece. Super Wide Angle 67° field of view; Paid retail of \$324.70, asking \$200.00; New in original box. **Call Al Shoomliansky, 945-8900.**

'Sirius' brand 17mm, fully coated super plossl, 1 1/4" eyepiece, Sold as is, but hardly ever used, gorgeous optics. Good eye relief, tack sharp. If you're looking to expand your eyepiece collection, you won't be disappointed with this excellent addition. \$20 with dust case. Selling to fund a bigger scope. **Call Tom Koonce, 943-8200.**

Got something you want to see in the *Desert Sky Observer*? Whether it's a website, a type of story (i.e. stories about the Mars *Odyssey* mission), or astronomy jokes (please, no Uranus jokes), then send an e-mail to Brian Peterson at cybrpete@sbcglobal.net and he'll be happy to consider your request.

A.V.A.C. Membership Information

Membership in the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is open to any individual. The Club has three categories of membership.

- Family membership at \$30.00 per year.
- Individual membership at \$25.00 per year.
- Junior membership at \$15.00 per year.

Membership entitles you to...

- Desert Sky Observer—monthly newsletter.
- The Reflector—the quarterly publication of the Astronomical League.
- The A.V.A.C. Membership Manual.
- To borrow club telescopes, binoculars, camera, books, videos and other items.

The Desert Sky Observer is available as a separate publication to individuals at a cost of \$10.00 per year. Subscription to the Desert Sky Observer does not entitle the subscriber to membership in the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club and its associated privileges.

A.V.A.C. Board Members

President: Terry Pedroza (661) 949-6975 - mres0hqoz@verizon.net

Vice-President: Matt Leone (661) 948-1521 - als@hughes.net

Secretary: Brian Peterson (661) 273-1693 - cybrpete@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer: Mary Andrus (661) 946-0372 - mfandrus@aol.com

Director of Community Development: Debora Pedroza (661) 949-6975 - res0hqoz@verizon.net

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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Steve Trotta (661) 269-5428 - sstrott@prodigy.net

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Terry Pedroza (661) 949-6975 - res0hqoz@verizon.net

ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE

Tom Koonce (661) 943-8200 - takoonce@aol.com

WEBMASTER of CLUB SITE

Steve Trotta (661) 269-5428 - sstrott@prodigy.net

Our Sponsors

Al's Vacuum and Sewing: 904 West Lancaster Blvd. (661) 948-1521. Stop by and say “hey” to Matthew and Suzanne.

Darkrooms Plus: 20th St. W. near Pep Boys in Lancaster. (661) 945-1444. They offer all club members a 10% discount on all purchases. Stop by and say “hey” to Dean or Hank.

King Photo: 749 W. Lancaster Blvd. (661) 948-8441. As a telescope dealer, they always support the AVAC. Stop by and say “hey” to Stokely or Paul.

QNET: 1529 E. Palmdale Blvd., Suite 200. (661) 538-2028. As an Internet provider, they are kind enough to provide us with a free website.

Vista Golf: 43517 N. 13th Street West, Lancaster. (661) 945-7003.

Thanks for your generous support!

May Calendar:

May 2: Space Day at the Palmdale Boys and Girls Club;

May 10: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium;

May 11: Air and Space Exploratorium;

May 18: Dark Sky Party, Crystallaire Country Club;

May 24- May 27: RTMC

June Calendar:

June 8: Dark Sky Party, Mt. Pinos (Forest Adventure Pass required);

June 14: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium;

June 15: Dark Sky Party, Poppy Reserve;

Don't forget to take one more look at the first page of the DSO for our busy April schedule. Make plans to attend at least one of the events. And remember, with your help, we can have an impact in our community for the advancement of astronomy and the sciences.