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# Desert Sky Observer

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Volume 21 Issue 5

May 2001

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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 Web Site At [www.avac.ac.org](http://www.avac.ac.org)  
The A.V.A.C. Is A Sustaining Member Of The Astronomical League*



## Up-Coming Events

**May 05:** Air and Space Exploratorium.

**May 07:** Full Moon at 13h 53m UT.

**May 11:** Monthly meeting, held at the S.A.G.E. Planetarium at the Cactus School in Palmdale. The meeting location is at the northeast corner of Avenue R and 20<sup>th</sup> Street East. Meeting starts at 7 p.m. Please note that food and drink are not allowed in the planetarium.

**May 15:** Last Quarter Moon at 10h 11m UT.

**May 23:** New Moon at 2h 46m UT.

**May 25-28:** RTMC Astronomy Expo.

**May 29:** First Quarter Moon at 22h 09m UT.

**June 8:** Monthly Club meeting.

**Anytime:** Observe.

## Vice-President's Report

*Terry Pedroza*

As you all know the Messier Marathon has come and gone and we've had another terrific turnout! We had better than thirty people at the marathon most of the night and the number of different types of scopes was unreal. We had everything from refractors to reflectors to cats to eight-inch binoculars. This group is going places my friends.

I want to thank everyone for your generous donations to the club in the form of books, equipment and most of all, time. We have a great group of people here and I'm so very proud of what we have done and where we are going. Keep up the good work everyone!

Until next time my friends, keep observing and clear skies.

## Secretary's Report

Tom Koonce

### Club Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2001

- Meeting Called to Order at 7:06 pm, Doug Drake, President
- Doug welcomed all of our new members after our highly successful appearance at the Poppy Festival. The winners of the Meade 90ETX-EC that we had an "Opportunity Drawing" for were present.
- Errol Van Horne, Member-at-Large and the Community Development Committee Chairman, gave a report about hard work put in by all of the volunteers at the Poppy Festival. Even though Saturday was totally rained out, Sunday was beautiful and had a large crowd. Several Telescopes were set up, Matt Leone's 16" being a major draw.
- Tom Koonce, Secretary and the Astronomical League Coordinator, presented the Club's first four "Messier Certificates" from the Astronomical League to Matthew Leone, Matthew Leone, Jr., Terry Pedroza, and Tom Koonce. The League presents these awards after a member logs 70 confirmed Messier Objects. An honorary pin is awarded after all 109 objects are logged.
- Terry Pedroza, Vice President and Messier Chairman and Librarian and... went over the upcoming schedule, including the Air and Space

Exploratorium, scheduled for Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup>. Terry also awarded an eyepiece to the top two winners of the Messier Marathon: Matt Leone with 105 (!) and Steve Trotta with 103(!)

- Doug Drake presented Norman and Gretchen Howell with the Meade ETX-90EC telescope that we raffled off at the Poppy Festival. Stokely at King Photo generously sold us the telescope at cost so that we could use it as a money making project.
- Our Guest Speaker, Dave Allen, presented “Astrophotography Tales of Trial & Error”. Dave humorously led us through the trials and pitfalls of the hobby through the experienced eye of a hard-core enthusiast. He entertained several questions from the audience.
- Meeting Adjourned 9:10 pm

### **Member-At-Large Report**

*Errol Van Horne*

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Poppy Festival was a huge success despite being rained out on Saturday (many thanks to those hail and hardy individuals who manned the booth, refusing to allow rain nor sleet nor hail nor really cold weather to keep them away. Sunday more than made up for it though by being perfect “walking around weather” The Astronomy Booth was a popular feature at the festival and we plan on doing it again at the Antelope Valley Fair. The scope displays were packed with folks wanting to observe sunspots (those spots cooperated nicely) the photography displays provided by Mr. John Eakin were very popular as was the Meade ETX Drawing. Fred Ley made his meteorite collection available and Terry Pedroza was able to get large lettering prepared virtually overnight to give the booth a “professional” appearance. Matt Leone also got our hats in time for the event with names (for the most part) spelled correctly.

### **Desert Sky Observer**

Our “Youth Exploring Astronomy” Essay Contest is proceeding wonderfully due to the tireless efforts of both the club and numerous community members. We are receiving tremendous support from Senator Pete Knight who kicked off our contest at the SAGE Planetarium on Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup> (hope you saw the great pictures in the Valley Press). Senator Knight was joined by Katrina Mumaw (the young lady who broke the sound barrier when she was only 11 years old), Mr. Gary Grigg, Community Relations Manager for Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company, Mr. Bob Redman who is known to many of our children as “Capt.” Bob from his science presentations and who is the coordinator for the Air and Space Exploratorium, Mr. Jeremy Amarant our SAGE Planetarium Director and of course club President Doug Drake.

The Essay Contest will be held in conjunction with the Antelope Valley Air And Space Exploratorium kicking off on May 5, 2001 at the Antelope Valley Mall. This will give each student an opportunity to visit with scientists, engineers, pilots, astronauts and educators as they gather material for their essays. Essay entries must be turned in to each student’s school by May 23. Judging will be completed by June 6 and winners will be announced at the June 8 club meeting at Sage Planetarium. The contest will be open to all 6, 7, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students throughout the Antelope Valley, with two from each age group selected as winners. Winning students will receive public recognition of their achievement with certificates signed by Senator Knight memorializing their achievement, a trip to Jet Propulsion Laboratory where they will meet with scientists who will discuss space projects with them and talk about careers in the scientific community. Following the visit at JPL, they will arrive a Griffith Observatory where they will tour the Museum Of Science, view a planetarium program and observe through the observatory’s Zeiss telescope. As a special treat, each winner will receive an Astronomy Club Jacket provided by Lockheed Martin who is co-sponsoring the event.

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The Air And Space Exploratorium will also provide us with an opportunity to showcase Astronomy to the general public through our displays in conjunction with the Sage Planetarium. We still need volunteers so check the schedules I e-mail everyone and see where you might like to help.

### In The News

#### Growing Planets in a Bad Neighborhood

It seems that the three most important factors in forming planetary systems in nebulae just may be: location, location, location. According to a study conducted by Henry Throop (Southwest Research Institute) and his colleagues, the environment surrounding a protoplanetary disk dramatically effects the type of system that will form.

Using the Hubble Space Telescope, Throop looked at various million-year-old disks within the Orion Nebula. In the disks, he found dust grains as large as 5 microns in size, about the one-tenth the width of a human hair. For comparison, normal interstellar dust grains are only 0.1 to 0.2 micron. The apparent grain growth implies that they are in the early stages of planetary growth.

However, the Orion Nebula is also home to more than two dozen O-type stars. These stellar giants cause an extreme ruckus in any neighboring disk within 0.3 light-year or so. The star's tremendous energy outflow blows away the gas in the system, and the giant star's intense ultraviolet radiation bakes away any ice.

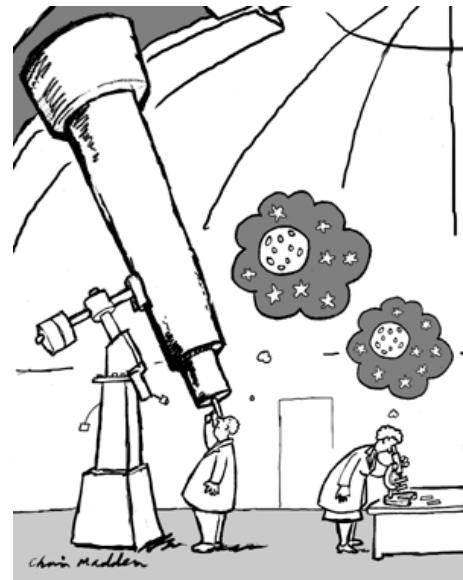
According to models calculated by Throop and others, the resulting system is quite strange: there is no gas to form Jupiter like gas giant planets, nor is there ice to form a Kuiper Belt or any comets. Instead, all that remains is a group of atmosphere-less rocky bodies, similar in many respects to Mercury.

But, if the disk is fortunate to reside in a "shady spot," says Throop, then gas giants and normal planetary formation can proceed. Because O-type stars have such short life spans (up to 100 million years), disks could easily form

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after the stars had wreaked their havoc. Details of the study appear in this week's Science. (Sky & Telescope)

### Humor



### 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 \$25.00 per year.
- Individual membership at \$20.00 per year.
- Junior membership at \$15.00 per year.

Membership entitles you to our monthly newsletter, the Desert Sky Observer, and to borrow one of the Club's telescopes. We currently have an 8-inch and 10-inch Dobsonian reflector for loan. We also have binoculars, many astronomy texts, and many eyepieces available.

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:** Doug Drake (661) 266-2202 -  
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## ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE

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## Our Sponsors

**AI's Vacuum and Sewing:** 904 West Lancaster Blvd. They can be reached at (661) 948-1521. Stop by and say hi to Matthew and Suzanne.

**Darkrooms Plus:** 20 St. W. near Pep Boys in Lancaster. They can be reached at (661) 945-1444. Darkrooms Plus offers all club members a 10% discount on all purchases. Stop by and say hi to Dean or Hank.

**King Photo:** 749 W. Lancaster Blvd. They can be reached at (661) 948-8441. As a telescope dealer, they always support the AVAC. Stop by and say hi to Stokely or Paul.

**QNET:** 1529 E. Palmdale Blvd., Suite 200. They can be reached at (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. They can be reached at (661) 945-7003. Thank you for your generous support!



# Antelope Valley Astronomy Club, Inc.

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**e-mail:** [info@avac.av.org](mailto:info@avac.av.org)

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**Monthly Meeting:** May 11, 7:00 pm

**Riverside Telescope Makers Conference:** May 25-28.

**Air & Space Exploratorium**  
**Saturday - May 5, 2001**  
**AV Mall**

