



Astronomy Club of Tulsa

# OBSERVER

August 2006

<http://www.AstroTulsa.com>

ACT, Inc. has been meeting continuously since 1937 and was incorporated in 1986. It is a nonprofit, tax deductible organization dedicated to promoting, to the public, the art of viewing and the scientific aspect of astronomy.



## What

The Astronomy Club of Tulsa Star Party

## When

25 August 2006

## Where

RMCC Observatory



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## President's Message

**Tim Davis**

Please join us at our next star party on Friday, August 25 at 8:00 PM at the RMCC Observatory. The Milky Way is still on display across the southern sky and offers many wonderful objects to observe. The observatory is now equipped with a brand new telescope with which to enjoy those objects.

As we sweat out the August heat, I hope everyone has had a chance to get out and do some observing and stay cool while you're out there, of course. Last month, our new observatory telescope was installed in time for a dedication ceremony on July 21st. The telescope was dedicated to the memory of Nick Pottorf, a long time club member and officer who passed away early this year. A crowd of around 25 showed up on a partly cloudy and windy night to see the dedication. In attendance were one of Nick's children, his son Fred and his wife and son. A plaque was made to honor Nick and was presented to his son during the ceremony. The plaque is now mounted on the west wall of the observatory classroom. After the ceremony outside, we all headed up to the dome to unveil the new telescope. The Meade 14" RCX400 was introduced to everyone and soon we were all enjoying some very nice views through it.

There are many people to thank who helped in getting the telescope and the observatory to where it is today. In no particular order, these people all had a part in this project; Dan Lamoreaux, Craig Davis, Rod Gallagher, Steve Chapman, Tony White, Sheldon Padawer and John Land. My thanks to them and to anyone else I may have overlooked that made a contribution. This is a project that will have long term benefits to the club and offer our members a state of the art telescope to use in the observatory.

However, before anyone will be allowed to use it, they will need to go through one of the training

classes we will be holding. The first one will be on Saturday, August 26th, 8:00 PM at the observatory. This class will cover not only how to use the telescope, but also how to open, close and operate the dome. Watch your email for more info on this class and how to reserve a spot. There will be other classes in the future, so if you can't make this one, look for another one in the coming months.

The day after the dedication ceremony, Saturday, July 22nd was a night to remember. With the weather on Friday night not great for observing, we invited everyone to come back on Saturday. A crowd of 40 to 45 turned out for a very fun night at the observatory. Great skies, nice weather, good people, and a new scope in the dome made for an enjoyable summer star party. It was good to see a crowded observing field again. The weather just hasn't seemed to help us much with our recent star parties, but it turned out to be a beautiful night.

If you are a new member, or a guest at our next star party, we will be holding a short meeting at 8:45 to meet you and introduce you to the club and welcome you. We will go over some of the basics and show you the observatory and answer any questions you might have.

## Club Logo Merchandise



[www.cafepress.com/astrotulsa](http://www.cafepress.com/astrotulsa)

The Astronomical League has many resources for new and experienced observers.



Amateur astronomers from across the country benefit from perusing the many pages of the Astronomical League's website, [www.astroleague.org](http://www.astroleague.org). Naturally, this is the place to go if you're looking for information about upcoming events and League news. But there is so much more...

Want to learn all about one of the great League observing programs? Go to [www.astroleague.org/observing.html](http://www.astroleague.org/observing.html). Summer time is a great time to start earning an observing certificate. These programs will give you many hours of enjoyment and challenge to learn the sky well.

Do you know of a worthy candidate for one of the many League awards? Look at <http://www.astroleague.org/al/awards/awards.html>. Are you interested in buying a particular book about our fascinating hobby? Then go to [www.astroleague.org/al/bookserv/bookserv.html](http://www.astroleague.org/al/bookserv/bookserv.html).

There is even something to help your club function better. Try [www.astroleague.org/al/socaid/socaidid.html](http://www.astroleague.org/al/socaid/socaidid.html)

Make the most of your Astronomical League membership! To find out more about what the Astronomical League offers you, why not log on to [www.astroleague.org](http://www.astroleague.org) today?

Getting ready for Summer Star parties.

23rd Annual Okie-Tex Star Party Sept 16 to Sept 24th This premier week of star gazing is held on the high plains at the tip of the Oklahoma panhandle. Many of our members enjoy visiting with fellow astronomy enthusiast while enjoying some of the darkest skies anywhere. Details at <http://www.okie-tex.com/>

<http://www.AstroTulsa.com>

## Dauids Astro Corner

David Stine

The Perseid Meteor Shower this year turned out to be a very nice event. The meteor activity was not quite as good as the last two years, however there were many bright meteors to impress all that came out to the observatory. On the way to the observatory, it didn't look like we were going to see anything, as we actually drove through some light rain and there were huge thunderheads building all around us. By the time Steve Chapman, his daughter Susan and her companion and myself arrived at the observatory the clouds were starting to slowly disappear. The temperature of over 100 degrees that day had already dropped into the 80's and by 10p.m. it was actually very cool and people were looking for more layers of clothes. The east end of the observatory grounds looked like a boot camp with several tents set up. A group of boy scouts were trying to earn their astronomy badges and Teresa was teaching them. There were several club members there, Tim, Tamara and Owen, later Craig, Sheldon, Denny, Tom, KC, Richard, Jerry and others were getting ready for what we all hoped would be a good showing of Perseids this year. By 10:00p.m. the clouds had pretty much disappeared and we all were waiting for the show. It didn't take long for our first meteor and it was a beauty. I would consider it an Earth Grazer, coming from the NE horizon traveling through Cygnus and continuing on south. Not bad to start with. The activity varied off and on throughout the early evening, but it was enough to keep most people occupied and KC's cookies was an added bonus. Many people left before the real action started but us true meteor chasers hung in there. There were two periods of high activity between 1a.m. and 2a.m. and 4a.m.-5a.m. The best Perseid came around 4:22a.m. when a minus 6Mg. blazer shot out of the radiant and traveled to the SW. The meteor was a gold'ish color and had an awesome train of 40 degrees that actually remained in the sky for 12 seconds. Many who didn't actually see the meteor had enough time to turn around and watch the smokey train slowly disappear. It was worth the all night session. There were also a couple of Kappa Cygs that had everyone ooh'ing

and ah'ing. We probably saw somewhere between 80-130 meteors that night. As Tom McDonough said although there weren't as many meteors as in the past, the ones that we did see seemed to be much brighter this year. It was great talking about the meteor experiences we all have had at one time or another. The Meteor Chasers chase to Amarillo for the Leonid storm always comes up and this year's Perseids was kind of a reunion for us real meteor chasers. The original chasers Steve, Susan, Teresa, myself were all there. Only our driver, Ken Black, wasn't there Saturday night. The clouds stayed away until around 5:30a.m. and then it became impossible to see any more Perseids. We did however get to see a nice pass of the International Space Station and a -4Mg. Iridium Flare before the clouds took completely over. To end the night of Perseids, we viewed Venus and Mercury in the observatory scope just before dawn. If the moon hadn't of been up all night and morning it would have been a perfect night and we can only hope our August Star Party , August 25th without the moon will have the same kind of sky and temperatures that we encountered for most of the night.

The Sun may have started Solar Cycle 24 and according to researchers from Colorado this cycle will be the most intense in 50 years. On July 31st a tiny sunspot developed on the surface and then disappeared in a few hours. This happens quite often. So what's the big deal? This sunspot was backward. A backward sunspot is a sign that the next solar cycle is beginning. A backward sunspot is a sunspot that is magnetically backward. In other words North is where south is and south is where north is. Solar activity rises and falls in 11 year cycles and we're at the end of Solar Cycle 23, a relatively quiet time on the Sun. Satellite operators and NASA mission planners have been doing their homework on this next cycle as it will determine their plans and operations. Sunspots and solar flares will become great in numbers and produce bright auroras on Earth and dangerous proton storms in space. If

this tiny sunspot has alerted that the cycle has started there won't be any huge storms at first. Cycle 23 and 24 will share the Sun for a few years before 24 will take over and then as they say "Katy bar the doors down" here comes the fireworks.

ON August 24th the Solar System as we have known it may completely change. Instead of our normal 9 planets we may grow to 12 planets and as many as 24 within a few years. Talk about re-writing our school textbooks! It's true; if a resolution passes at the International Astronomical Union meeting we will automatically grow to 12 planets. In order, those planets would be Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, CERES, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, CHARON, and 2003 UB313. To see how they would line up in the new scheme go to <http://www.iau2006.org/mirror/www.iau.org/iau0601/screen/iau0601a.jpg>

The new definition of a planet that is being proposed is: "A planet is a celestial body that has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium shape and is in an orbit around a star, and is neither a star nor a satellite of a planet." For the layman, "if its round and it orbits the Sun, then it's a planet." This will open up a whole new solar system, as other candidates include 2003El61, 2005 FY9, Sedna, Orcus, Quaoar, 2002 TX300, 2002 AW197, Varuna, Ixion, Vesta, Pallas and Hygiea. To see these candidates go to <http://www.iau2006.org/mirror/www.iau.org/iau0601/screen/iau0601c.jpg>

So if this controversial proposal passes August 25th we will have a new and completely different solar system.

On Friday August 18th, meteor specialist, Peter Jenniskens reported to the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union in Prague that according to his calculations that the Aurigid Meteor Shower in 2007 could be at storm proportions exceeding 1000 meteors per hour. The potential display date is September 1, 2007. On that date Earth is expected to pass very close to

the center of a dust trail which astronomers Esko Lyytinen of Finland and Peter Jenniskens of NASA's SETI Institute in California claim should result in a spectacularly rich shower of bright meteors. The peak of the shower is predicted to occur at 11:37 UT or 06:37A.M. CST. A few hours on one side could push the peak right into Tulsa viewing area and even prior to the peak may be something to look forward to next year. Western California is favored, but all bets are off as the peak could come later or even earlier. OK Meteor Chasers time to plan a trip to California next year. Again the moon will be a problem as it will only be four days past full but Lytinnen says these meteors or expected to be very bright on the same line as the Leonids in 2001-2002. Jenniskens reported that practically all of the meteors will be very bright and able to beat the bright moonlight. The prediction of high rates is based on the modeling of the trajectories of dust particles ejected from Comet Kiess which in turn fits the last three outbursts of the Aurigids in 1935, 1986, and 1994. Those years the Earth just glanced the dust trails, this time we go to the very center of the dust cloud. The comet last visited the Earth in 1911 and will not be back for 2,500 years, but the dense dust and debris left by the comet, passes near or through the Earth in September each year, producing meteors that appear to come from the Auriga constellation, thus called the Aurigids. Some years the activity is low then others like next year are very high in activity. This will be one to look forward to in 2007.

That's it from my corner this month. Hope to see everyone Friday night August 25th at the observatory.



## Lands Tidbits

John Land Aug 25, 2006

**Welcome Recent New Members:** Jacquie Young, Norman Bechtold, Shawn Hermann, Dennis Karcher

**DON'T LET YOUR MEMBERSHIP or Subscriptions LAPSE !!** Check your MAILING LABEL for membership expiration date. Those receiving Email should get a reminder when your membership is up for renewal or you may contact John Land. You may also renew magazine subscriptions through the club for substantial discounts.

**GUEST SIGN IN SECTION** on the Website is already bringing the club new contacts for potential new members.

**Changing EMAIL** - When you change your email or mailing address be sure to send me the new information so I can update the club records. You can use the Join feature on the club web page to make changes.

### **ON LINE Club Memberships and Renewals:**

Adults - \$ 35 per year includes Astronomical League Membership

Students \$ 15 without League membership.

Students \$ 20 with League membership.

\* Student shall be defined as a person 25 or younger actively taking courses at a college or trade school or persons still in High school or below.

\* Adult Students over 25 may join at the student rate for one year if enrolled in an Astronomy course in an area college.

We now have an automated on line registration form on the website for new AND renewal memberships plus magazine subscriptions. You simply type in your information and hit send to submit the information. <http://www.astrotulsa.com/Club/join.asp> You can then print a copy of the form and mail in your check.

**Astronomy Club of Tulsa - 25209 E 62nd St - Broken Arrow, OK 74014**

**Magazine Subscriptions:** If your magazines are coming up for renewal, try to save the mailing label or renewal form you get in the mail. Do NOT mail renewals back to the magazine! To get the club discount you must go through the club group rate.

**Astronomy** is \$ 34 for 1 year or \$ 60 for 2 years. [www.astronomy.com](http://www.astronomy.com)

**Sky & Telescope** is \$33 / yr [www.skyandtelescope.com](http://www.skyandtelescope.com) Sky and Telescope also offers a 10% discount on their products.

**NIGHT SKY** is \$18 / yr A exciting new bi-monthly magazine for beginning or casual astronomers. <http://nightskymag.com/>

**Address Corrections- Email changes - Questions:** You may forward questions to the club call our message line at 918-688-MARS ( 6277 ) Or go to the club website and Fill out an online form or just click on John Land and send an email. Please leave a clear subject line and message with your name, phone number, your question - along with address or email

## Club Logo Merchandise



[www.cafepress.com/astrotulsa](http://www.cafepress.com/astrotulsa)

Astronomy Club of Tulsa membership (\$35/year) includes membership in the Astronomical League and subscription to ACT's "Observer" and AL's "Reflector". "Astronomy" (\$34/year) and "Sky and Telescope" (\$33/year) are also available through the club. For more information contact John Land at 918.357.1759. Permission is hereby granted to reprint from this publication provided credit is given to the original author and the Astronomy Club of Tulsa Observer is identified as the source.

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