



**FOCUS**



DELAWARE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2006**

**Beyond Relativity to Cosmic Theory: A Philosophical Perspective - Dr. Henry H. Lindner**  
**What's Up – Canis Major -- Greg Lee; Extrasolar Planets -- Glenn Bentley**  
**Mt. Cuba Astronomical Observatory at 8:00 P.M.**

**BOARD MEETING AT 7:15 P.M. ALL DAS MEMBERS INVITED**

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**FROM THE EDITOR** – Lee Kaser

Thanks to all of you who have been at our meetings the past few months. We seem to be in an near-“SRO” mode, which means we need more space, but it’s a nice problem to have. Our speakers have been excellent, and it shows in our repeat attendance.

Arrangements for the annual Awards Dinner meeting May 16 are moving along well. We have Bob Naeye, a senior editor and an accomplished astronomer from *Sky and Telescope* magazine, as our main speaker, and the Board has reviewed and approved an attractive menu at the Terrace at Greenhill. The new management there has worked well with Hank Bouchelle, who is in charge of planning. Be sure to put it on your calendar. The awards committee is choosing our honorees, but new nominations are still welcomed.

Kudos to our outreach people. You’ll see in this issue discussion of Astronomy Day on April 29 at the Brandywine YMCA Camp in Arden. Our program is being arranged by Costas Krikelis as a way to reach many people with the message of amateur astronomy. Lynn King also has a program that day at Brandywine Creek State Park. Jerry Truitt is helping a young student learn about astronomy after the student’s grandfather contacted James Morgan, who’s always out there working with public groups at libraries and open fields at night. Through the year, we

have many other members involved, and that is important in keeping people interested in science, not just astronomy, though that’s our primary focus. We invite you to help. The Board especially appreciates the efforts of all the members who work in these programs.

James Morgan has passed along the news that more than a dozen Delaware librarians are being sent to NASA’s Goddard Space Center for education on lunar exploration programs. It’s nice to see that the state is willing to help train its librarians on astronomy.

We’re all aware there are a huge number of web sites for almost any subject you can name. Astronomy is no exception, and there are a lot of good ones most of us never know about. At the end of this Focus, following the Membership Application form, I’m going to list a few of those which have been reviewed and recommended by various members, and invite you to try them. Or look on your own and let me know what you find that’s worth recommending. Either way, the Web can teach and inspire.

If you want to try something really new to most of us, consider trying the Messier Marathon on March 25. President Billie Westergard and Don Surles of the Delmarva Stargazers are planning the event, which involves looking for as many Messier objects as you can in one night, using binoculars, telescopes, or just the naked eye. With a bunch of skilled observers, you’re sure to see

at least some of them and learn about a lot more. It should be worth losing a night's sleep.

Finally, if you are interested in taking a leadership position in DAS, let any member of the Board know, and you can be on the ballot in April for an office of your choosing. We always need new people for the future health of this Society. None of us are geniuses—we just contribute our efforts the best we know how, and so far it has worked! Let's go for the next 50 years. Talk to us about your interest.

Remember – I need your items of interest, pictures, and even ads for astronomical equipment. Thanks for your help.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FOR FEBRUARY

-- Billie Westergard

The February meeting will feature a talk by Dr. Henry Lindner titled, 'Beyond Relativity to Cosmic Theory: A Philosophical Perspective'. Dr. Lindner is a gifted speaker who will open your mind to a new understanding of Relativity beyond the paradoxes of light, inertia, the twins, the photonic, and even the measurement of Schrodinger's Cat to 'Cosmic Theory'. Henry is a down to earth guy who will make you feel comfortable with the subject matter. I think his talk will be captivating to all DAS members. I have had the privilege of attending two other talks given by Dr. Lindner, which were great!

Greg Lee will start off our meeting with 'What's Up in Canis Major'. Greg was not able to present last month's 'What's Up' due to an emergency just prior to the meeting. I really look forward to What's Up every month. Glenn Bentley will present our Mini talk about all those Extrasolar Planets. We do indeed live in an exciting time of discovery.

Our January meeting was well attended. I would like to thank Don Surles and Bob Mentzer for the very fine talks that were presented.

We are scheduled to hold a Messier Marathon on March 25<sup>th</sup>, which will be three days past third quarter moon. This will be an all night observing event but it will not be a race to the finish. I would like to keep the marathon fun and educational. Perhaps each observer should set a realistic goal of accomplishment or even consider working with another person at the telescope. The DAS will present a certificate to each observer and a little something special for the person who logs the most Messier objects.

All DAS members and others who wish to present a Main Talk or a Mini Talk at a future DAS meeting, which requires the use of POWER POINT, are requested to contact Max Peterson a few days prior to the meeting. You may contact Max at 302-369-6982. This is to resolve any questions about how to set up power point. Please arrive early enough to insure proper function of the equipment prior to 8:00 PM. Slides and overheads should also be checked out and ready to go prior to the meeting start time.

The format for meetings this year will be as follows:

Board of Directors Meeting 7:15 P.M.

Program Meeting 8:00 P.M.

Fun and comradery after the meeting.

If you would like a tour of MCAO after the meeting, just ask me.

### UPCOMING PROGRAMS FOR 2006

March 21 - Green Bank Radio Astronomy -- Randall Detra; What's Up –Ursa Major - Greg Lee; Mini talk – Coming Attractions & Astronomical Events for 2006 -- Sarah Baird.

March 25 - The Messier Marathon—Don Surles of the Delmarva Stargazers is working with our Board to develop this intriguing opportunity.

April 18, 2006 - Galileo's Satellites -- Hank Bouchelle at Calvin R. McCullough Planetarium; What's Up– Bootes - Greg Lee; Mini talk – The Twin Quasar -- Billie Westergard.

May 16 - Dinner Meeting with Keynote Speaker Senior Editor Bob Naeye, *Sky & Telescope* Magazine; The Luther Porter Award; The Amateur Astronomer Of The Year Award; The Terrace at Greenhill. June 20 - The No Spin Space Shuttle -- Mike Borgia; What's Up Draco - Greg Lee; Mini talk - Degenerate Matter.

June 24 - Picnic at MCAO with a cookout and other activities.

A New Member Tour of MCAO is available after Each Meeting.

STAR PARTIES AT MT. CUBA – Tom Sidowski

The planets Saturn and Jupiter, a possible bright comet and the usual sights of the starry sky will be prime targets at DAS star parties at Mt Cuba this spring. The schedule for upcoming star parties is listed below:

March 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Friday	7:30pm
April 1st	Saturday	7:30pm
April 28 <sup>th</sup>	Friday	8:00pm
May 26th	Friday	8:00pm

#### DAS 50TH ANNIVERSARY --Emil Volcheck

Next fall, the DAS will mark its 50th year of operation. It seems appropriate to have a suitably grand celebration for our being able to hang in there for that long, without being reduced to a small group of old men meeting for lunch, or booze, at a local watering hole occasionally!

To pull together such a celebration, I still need help from some of you. So, this message is an appeal for folks to volunteer to partake in the committee. We need to develop and bring a proposed program back to the board and members for approval.

I expect that there will then be follow up by folks (including some members beyond the original group) who would take on the various elements of the proposal and make them happen. Please give me a call (610-793-5156) or email me (emilv@ccil.org) to let me know that you are interested and willing to be part of the planning group for the celebration.

#### OBSERVING CLUBS – Dave Swartout

As a member of the DAS, you are also a member of the Astronomical League. One of the benefits of this membership is that you are able to participate in any of their 27 Observing Clubs. These clubs are designed to further develop and award your observing skills through the use of instruments, or just your naked eye. The observations you make are an individual effort that uses the honor system.

Some clubs have different levels of accomplishments and there is no time limit to complete. Upon finishing the required number of observations, the Astronomical League will review your logs, document your name along with our astronomical society, and will then issue you a certificate and pin to be awarded at our next monthly meeting. If you are interested and would like to participate, just log into <http://www.astroleague.org/> and click

on the button Observing Clubs. Follow the rules and regulations and you will be on your way. In the following list you will find that there is something for everyone. There are even clubs tailored to children to spark a budding interest in the night sky. The list of offered clubs includes:

- Earth Orbiting Satellite Observing Club
- Galaxy Groups & Clusters Club
- Globular Cluster Club
- Herschel 400 Club
- Herschel II Club
- Lunar Club
- Lunar II Club
- Arp Peculiar Galaxy Club
- Asteroid Observing Club
- Binocular Messier Club
- Caldwell Club
- Comet Observers Club
- Constellation Hunter Club
- Deep Sky Binocular Club
- Double Star Club
- Master Observer Club
- Messier Club
- Meteor Club
- Open Cluster Club
- Planetary Nebula Club
- Planetary Observers Club
- Sky Puppy Club
- Southern Skies Binocular Club
- Southern Sky Telescopic Club
- Sunspotters Club
- Universe Sampler Club
- Urban Observing Club

STARDUST PROGRAM (NASA) -- Tom DeMott  
The University of California at Berkeley has created a website to invite people to work with the recent "Stardust" project. By logging on to <http://Stardustathome.ssl.berkeley.edu>, you can use a "virtual microscope" to examine an image of the actual Stardust collector panel for interstellar space particles. The website contains a great deal of background information on the Stardust Program, as well as information on how to participate in this scientifically important program, which is aimed at obtaining information about the early formation of the universe.

#### LIBRARY NEWS – Glenn Bentley

I would like to take this opportunity to invite the membership to drop by the lending library to check out potential reading material for coming snowy evenings.

### LOANER TELESCOPES -- Emil Volcheck

If you are new to the club and/or do not have a scope, you can get the loan of either:

- 1) a Celestron 8" Schmidt-Cassegrain
- 2) an Orion 6" Dobsonian reflector

The loan is for at least a month (depends on how long the waiting list is). To get on that list, promptly, contact Emil Volcheck, 610-793-5156.

### MCAO PUBLIC NIGHTS – Emil Volcheck

The Mt. Cuba Observatory Public Nights will continue right thru winter! You can pick up a schedule when you next come to a meeting - or get the latest updated version off the website at:

<http://mountcuba.org>.

### AWARDS -- Dave Swartout

The awards committee continues to invite nominations for both the Amateur Astronomer Award and the Luther Porter Award. The Amateur Astronomer Award is open to all DAS members. Individuals who have clearly been identified through their enthusiasm and participation with astronomy are ideal candidates. Have you recognized a good candidate during our monthly meetings or at the star parties? Please take the time to honor this person by submitting his or her name. Past recipient's names can be found on the award planks located in the curved hallway.

The Luther J. Porter Educator Award honors an individual who has made a substantial contribution to astronomy education and/or awareness, in either a professional capacity or as a dedicated amateur. Nominees do not need to be professional astronomers. Luther J. Porter was a long time member and devoted supporter of the Delaware Astronomical Society and served for many years as its Treasurer. A very nice article on Luther can be found in the February 2006 issue of Delaware Today magazine. The awards are presented at the annual dinner meeting held in May. Nominations can be submitted to me at [Microcad@ISP.com](mailto:Microcad@ISP.com) or to the other committee members Bob Karcha and James Morgan.

### DAS Astrophotography Special Interest Group (AP SIG) – Bill Hanagan

The DAS Astrophotography Special Interest Group meets on Friday nights at 7:30 PM every other month at Mt. Cuba regardless of weather.

The SIG also meets for photo shoots scheduled on 1-2 day notice to synchronize with the weather.

The monthly meetings are informal and typically include the presentation of astrophotos taken by the members along with an extended question and answer period. Objects commonly photographed include constellations, auroras, lunar eclipses, and planetary photos, as well as a wide variety of deep-sky objects such as nebulae, galaxies, star clusters, etc. The topics discussed cover the entire gamut of astrophotography, from how to get started with a minimum of equipment, to polar aligning your telescope, all of the way to the fine points of using auto-guiders and post-processing digital images.

You can get started in astrophotography by joining the AP SIG and making some wide-field photos of astronomical subjects such as meteor showers, conjunctions, constellations, and star trails using your current camera mounted on a tripod or a motorized telescope. If you're planning to buy some gear for astrophotography, joining the AP SIG is a great way to learn about what equipment will suit your needs and what won't. While we can't give you a detailed review of everything on the market, our members have used and considered a wide variety of gear and can help steer you away from products that look great in advertising but have serious hidden flaws that you won't discover until you take delivery.

If you are interested in joining the AP SIG, just email your name, address, and phone number to me at [hanaganw@comcast.net](mailto:hanaganw@comcast.net).

### SAWIN OBSERVATORY REMINDER

-- Tom Sidowski

DAS members who are interested in becoming users of the Sawin Observatory and/or the Big Red DOB, should contact me at 302-239-1844 to arrange for some hands-on training in using the facility.

### DAS AMATEUR TELESCOPE MAKING SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (ATM SIG)

-- Bill Hanagan

The DAS Amateur Telescope Making Special Interest Group meets on evenings and weekends according to the availability of the members and the particular projects that are underway. The general range of activities of the ATM SIG includes all manners of telescope making, mirror making, and the making of accessories for telescopes and observing. We



CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a telescope? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please describe briefly. \_\_\_\_\_

Call us with any questions. \_\_\_\_\_

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**VISIT THE FOCUS ON THE DAS WEB SITE, WHERE YOU WILL FIND LOTS OF OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST, TOO!**

**WEB SITES RECOMMENDED FOR YOUR PLEASURE AND EDUCATION!!**

**[www.seds.org/messier/xtra/marathon/](http://www.seds.org/messier/xtra/marathon/) - How others have done it, and you can, too.**

**<http://www.astroleague.org/al/astroday/astrofacts.html#When> - Info on Astronomy Day**

**<http://stardustathome.ssl.berkeley.edu> - info on the Stardust Program of NASA**

**[Messier45.com](http://Messier45.com) – Info on the Messier Objects and much more**