

FOCUS

DELAWARE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 19, 2008
8:00 pm, Mt. Cuba Astronomical Observatory
Costas Krikelis on Ancient Greek Astronomy,
Dave Groski on A Schupmann Medial Refractor and Stellafane
Rene Van Caneghem, and others

Vol. 53 No. 2

FROM THE PRESIDENT -- Hank Bouchelle

Many thanks to Judy Provencal for her wonderful talk on astronomical programs at the Mt. Cuba Astronomical Observatory! She always provides an interesting and informative evening and this was no exception. The quality and number of questions at the end revealed how engaged were the members in what she had to say. And, of course, many thanks to Greg Lee for his elucidation of "What's Up" in our evening skies.

I am also personally looking forward to this month's Mini-talk Night, where our members share information and items of interest. It should be quite a show! If you have ideas for a short talk (or a whole evening's presentation!) please let me know. Our membership includes many gifted and talented amateur astronomers and speakers. Plans are in the works for a Mini-talk Night in June.

As most of you know by now, the DAS is gradually moving toward e-mail delivery of the FOCUS, and half of our members have already signed on to take advantage of the convenience and reduction of clutter this provides. A major item on this month's Board meeting agenda is a discussion of the progress of this effort so far. Please feel free to attend and make your views known. Bob Mentzer (robmentzer@comcast.net or 764-1926) has taken charge of compiling a list

of participating members, and you may contact him if you have questions.

Sarah Baird has accepted the appointment of Elections Chair, and she will be glad to accept nominations from any interested individual. You may reach her at 302-561-0810, or email her at sarahdaileybaird@hotmail.com.

Lee Kaser has very generously stepped forward to serve as interim Publications Chair, and thus take charge of the FOCUS. If you have items of interest for the FOCUS you may forward them to him (kaserlo@msn.com). However, we still need an individual who is willing to take on the job on a permanent basis. This is a Board position (and thus a wonderful addition to your resume!). As you may have noted from the above, new procedures will make this position much less time consuming than previously. It will also afford one the opportunity to work closely with the Board, a terrific group of people, and offer advice and suggestions to advance the good work of the club.

NOMINATIONS NEEDED -- Hank Bouchelle

This spring brings DAS officer elections for President, Vice-president, Treasurer, and Secretary. While all four current officers will be running as incumbents, we are always interested in competition, and to offer the chance for others to participate.



STS-22
en route to
ISS on Feb. 7.
It is still in
space as of
this writing.
(NASA)

DAS Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, February 19, 2008
7:00 pm, Mt. Cuba Astronomical Observatory
Members are invited to attend

Agenda (More than we can accomplish in one
meeting, but important items, all)

- Review of January's minutes
- Treasurer's Report – Bob Mentzer
- Standing committee reports
- FOCUS/Publications** – Lee Kaser?
- Library- Glenn Bentley
- Education Programs- Bob Karcha
- Sawin Observatory Tom Sidowski
- Observing – Greg Lee
- Astronomy Course & Lunar eclipse
- FOCUS** distribution
- May dinner – Bob Mentzer
- Recap
- Speaker discussion
- June meeting program---Hank Bouchelle
- Mini-talk night with Tom, Ron, and Bob?
- Family night? Telescopes for kids?
- Nitrogen ice cream?
- Gifts – Hank Bouchelle
- Publications Chair vacancy
- Chartered Awards Committee
- Other Business?

DAS Meeting Topic Schedule, 2007-2008

March 18 -- Long-term Survival of Life Forms in
Space -- Dr. Russell Vreeland, West Chester
State University (tentative)

April 15 -- The Gamma-ray Large Area Space
Telescope -- Robert Naeye, NASA

May 20 -- Annual Dinner Meeting
Speaker and location to be announced

June 17 -- Family Night - Mini-Talks
(tentative)

ON-LINE PUBLICATION OF THE FOCUS

-- Dr. William D. Hanagan, Jr. -- Board Member
Having read this far, and from last month's **FOCUS**, you know of plans to change from monthly mailing of the **FOCUS** to on-line distribution of this document, which is very important to the organization. We do not wish to diminish its value in any way, but urgently need to make a change. Over the years, the cost of printing and mailing the **FOCUS** to DAS members has swollen to the point that it consumes over 50% of members' dues annually, \$1500 per year. The key component of the cost increase has been the more than 10 fold increase in postage costs since 1956 (41 cents per ounce now as compared to 3 cents in 1956). Printing costs have also increased dramatically. The Board has kept dues increases to a minimum, and the DAS programs are suffering as a result.

Today, over 97% of DAS members have Internet access and email. Thanks to the Internet, It has become possible for the DAS to distribute the **FOCUS** to club members at a cost of ZERO. For more than a year, the **FOCUS** has been published both by the traditional printing and mailing of the newsletter and on the club's Internet web site at <http://www.delastro.org>.

The mechanism is now in place for publishing the **FOCUS** exclusively on-line, and DAS members are ready, with very few exceptions, to read it that way. So, in November of 2007, the DAS Board of Directors voted to move *publication* of the **FOCUS** primarily on-line and to stop printing and mailing the **FOCUS** to every DAS member.

The first and primary benefit of moving the **FOCUS** on-line and stopping its mass mailing is that the club will save nearly \$1500 per year in printing and postage expenses. The money is greatly needed in other areas, particularly updating and expanding the club's astronomical equipment and observatory.

A second benefit of moving the **FOCUS** on-line is that it eliminates the need for the editor to get hundreds of pages printed and stapled, folded and stuffed into envelopes, addressed, and taken to the post office -- every month. Eliminating all of this grunt work will make the editor's job a lot easier.

Third, reading the **FOCUS** on-line will give DAS members the ability to see photographs and illustrations in color, with higher contrast, and in greater detail than is possible in the printed version of the **FOCUS**.

Fourth, in-depth articles such as tutorials and technical discussions can appear in the on-

line **FOCUS** that could not go into the printed **FOCUS** because of the extra cost of mailing more pages. Remember, though, the DAS is an astronomy club; articles, ads, etc. which you submit for publication in the on-line **FOCUS** should still have a strong connection to astronomy.

For the more than 97% of DAS members who have Internet access, there are two things that can help you to read the **FOCUS** on-line every month. First, you can enter the web site address (<http://www.delastro.org>) once and record it as a "bookmark" or a "favorite" in pretty much every Internet browser program ever created. Second, you'll want to mark your calendar on the second Tuesday of each month, except for July and August, to remind you to read the **FOCUS**. While you're at it, you might also want to enter a note on the third Tuesday of the same months reminding you to come to the DAS meeting!

If you don't use a calendar, you can get an email reminder to read the **FOCUS** from Bob Mentzer (robmentzer at comcast.net). Send Bob an email asking him for this reminder and Bob will send you an email message with a link to the DAS web site every time the **FOCUS** comes out, at least until the end of 2008.

You will receive a notice by email when your membership expiration date approaches.

For anyone who doesn't have Internet service at home, you can use the Internet at public libraries in New Castle County and at the library of the University of Delaware in Newark. Most libraries have several computers that are powered up and permanently connected to the Internet with a browser window already open, just waiting for you. Best of all, using the Internet at a library is free! You don't need a library card or even permission.

Finally, for any DAS member whose circumstances prevent them from using the Internet, Greg Lee has offered to print and mail a black & white copy of the **FOCUS** to you at his own expense, which is about \$10 per year. Contact Greg at 302-762-5358 if you need to receive the **FOCUS** by U.S. Mail.

LUNAR ECLIPSE ALERT!! – Greg Lee

Keep your fingers crossed for clear skies on February 20. North America will be treated to a total lunar eclipse which is being touted as "ideal" and "the best in years". Mark your calendars! Last year we had two lunar eclipses, one low in the east during evening twilight and the other low in the west at dawn. This time you

won't need to seek out a clear horizon. It will happen high in the sky so everyone can enjoy the show right from their own yards--and during prime time to boot! As a further bonus the moon will be flanked by Saturn and Regulus within 4° to its east and west. What a grand view it will be. We won't get another opportunity in Delaware until 2010: a partial eclipse on June 26 and a total eclipse on December 20.

AWARDS -- Gus 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. The awards are presented at the annual dinner meeting held in May. Nominations can be submitted to any of the committee members; Bob Karcha, Greg Lee, and myself.

STAR PARTIES AT MT. CUBA – Tom Sidowski

Star parties are usually held on the grounds of the Mt. Cuba Astronomical Observatory. You can bring your own scope or just come to observe through others. Telescopes in use may include the club's 12.5" Newtonian reflector, 17" Coulter Odyssey 2, or 6" Orion SkyQuest XT6 Dobsonian (when not on loan). Star parties are always weather permitting.

Here is the complete list scheduled now:
Saturday, 03/08/08, @ 8:00pm (cont'd)
Friday, 04/11/08, @ 8:00pm
Friday, 05/09/08 @ 8:00pm

OBSERVER'S HANDBOOK -- Bob Mentzer

I still have ONE COPY of the 2008 Observer's handbook. The price has been reduced to \$15 from \$17 (a 9% reduction) and I will mail it to you with NO shipping or handling charges. The New York Times book review called this edition of the handbook "the best they had seen in 40 years" and " this edition is the best predictor of celestial events since Nostradamus" Don't delay! Order now at robmentzer@comcast.net

MT. CUBA TREE PROJECT -- Bob Mentzer

In the last month 6 pickup loads of wood have been removed from the grounds. There is still plenty left. You will need a chain saw. Contact Bob Mentzer for details.

LOANER TELESCOPES -- Tom Sidowski

One of the best advantages of being a member of the Delaware Astronomical Society is that all members have the privilege of being trained to use and then borrow equipment owned by the club for personal use. Currently, we have two scopes available for loan: a Celestron 8" Schmidt-Cassegrain, and a 6" Orion SkyQuest XT6 Dobsonian reflector. The loan is for at least a month. If you're interested in checking out either of these scopes, contact Tom Sidowski at 239-1844.

MCAO PUBLIC NIGHTS -- Emil Volcheck

The Mt. Cuba Observatory Public Nights continue year round! In addition to learning about many aspects of the heavens, you'll have a chance to visit and view our all-digital full-dome planetarium! 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>.

DAS ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP -- Bill Hanagan

The DAS astrophotography special interest group (DAS AP SIG) meets on Friday nights at 7:30 P.M. 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 with just your current camera mounted on a tripod or a motorized telescope by taking wide field photographs of meteor showers, conjunctions, constellations, and star trails. As you move to progressively fainter and smaller subjects, you'll need better equipment. Joining the AP SIG is a great way to learn what equipment you need and what works well before you spend your money.

If you are interested in joining the AP SIG, just email your name, address, and phone number to me at hanaganw@comcast.net (using "@" and "." in place of □ and □).

SAWIN OBSERVATORY REMINDER

-- Tom Sidowski

The DAS maintains a club observatory on the grounds of the Mt. Cuba Astronomical Observatory. The Sawin Observatory houses the club's permanently mounted 12.5" reflecting telescope and a 17.5" Coulter Odyssey 2 Dobsonian telescope. It is for the use by club members once they are trained and checked-out in a simple operating procedure. Members who are interested in becoming key holders of the Sawin Observatory should contact me at 239-1844 to arrange for training in the use of the facility

LIBRARY NEWS -- Glenn Bentley

I would like to take this opportunity to invite the membership to drop by the library at the February meeting to check out reading material. We have a good assortment. Remember, too, that if you have astronomy-related books you would like to donate for the benefit of other members, we would be glad to have them.

DAS AMATEUR TELESCOPE MAKING SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP -- Bill Hanagan

The DAS Amateur Telescope Making (ATM) Special Interest Group (SIG) 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 manner of telescope

making, mirror making, and the making of accessories for telescopes and observing.

Anyone interested in joining the ATM SIG should email their name, address, and phone number to me at hanaganw@comcast.net (using "@" and "." in place of □ and □). Meeting dates are announced primarily by email, so if you are interested in telescope making, be sure to let me know!

DAS FORUM/E-MAIL SITE ON YAHOO

--Don Shedrick

This is a restricted e-mail service for use by DAS members for DAS purposes. To use this site, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com>; search for Delaware astronomical society; and click on the link that comes up. To join, you must have a Yahoo ID and password; if you don't, you can register at this time by following Yahoo's instructions. You will then be allowed to "Join the group" upon clicking in that box. You must then register for the DAS group and add your profile by clicking on "add new profile" and completing the form. When adding or editing your profile, you will need to enter your actual name in the "Real Name" box so you can be identified as a DAS member so Don Shedrick can approve your application to join the DAS group, and everyone will know to whom they are communicating. Finally, specify your desired email address for delivery of messages. Note you may choose to not have your name and email address displayed to anyone other than DAS members who are members of the Yahoo DAS email group.

For more detailed instructions, go to the DAS web site under DAS Resource Links.

MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION NOTICES

if you receive the **FOCUS** by email, you will be notified by email. If you receive it in the mail and the mailing label on the envelope containing your **FOCUS** is marked with Red Marker, your membership is expiring or has expired. To continue to receive the **FOCUS**, Sky and Telescope or Astronomy, and Reflector, send the renewal form below with your check to:

DAS, c/o Robert Mentzer
605 River Road
Wilmington, DE 19809

DAS CONTACTS

Call any of us with your concerns!

Membership: Any of the following:

- President: Hank Bouchelle----- 302-429-4013
- Vice President: John Case ----- 302-836-4888
- Secretary: Lynn King ----- 302-764-8816
- Treasurer: Bob Mentzer----- 302-764-1926
- DAS/MCAO Advisor: Emil Volcheck----- 610-793-5156
- Education Chair: Bob Karcha----- 302-999-9509
- Messier Club: Lynn King ----- 302-764-8816
- Observing: Greg Lee ----- 302-762-5358
- Youth Coordinator: Sarah Baird ----- 302-561-0810
- Archivist: Rene Van Caneghem ----- 410-392-3718
- Board Members at-large:
- ATM and AP SIGs: Bill Hanagan ----- 302-239-0949
- Chairman, Observatory Committee and Monthly
- Star Parties: Tom Sidowski ----- 302-239-1844
- By-Laws: Henry Bouchelle ----- 302-983-7830
- Light Pollution Strategist; Greg Weaver 302-239-1338
- Library Chair: Glenn Bentley ----- 410-869-0706
- Ad Hoc Star Parties: Sheila Vincent - --- 302-322-4739
- Elections Comm. Chair – Sarah Baird 302-561-0810
- Awards Comm. Chair – David Swartout 302-836-4618
- MCAO Web Page: www.mountcuba.org
- DAS Web Page: www.delastro.org

FOCUS Editor: A Volunteer is needed to replace Lee Kaser, who is retiring for the second time and has a major time conflict. If you have email, can edit a bit and use a word processor, you can do this job. Formally described as Publications Chair, this is a Board position which puts you in the know about Club activities.

Contact Lee Kaser (kaserlo@msn.com or 302-995-6251) or Hank Bouchelle for more information.



WEBSITE OF THE MONTH – A LOT OF GOOD STUFF -- GIVE IT A LOOK

www.thefirmament.nl

Jan Timmermanns, the webmaster/observer at this Dutch observatory, would be glad to hear from you with any comments.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

If you have questions, call any of the member representatives listed above. Otherwise, just check the appropriate boxes and complete the form below. Print it or cut it off and send it with your check to Bob Mentzer at his address given above. The magazine prices are group rates to DAS members. Thanks, and welcome to the DAS if you're just joining us for the first time.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

New Member

Renewal

Senior/Family Membership \$20.00

Junior membership (16/under) \$10.00

Sky and Telescope Magazine \$33.00

Astronomy Magazine \$34.00

NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

Total Submitted -----

\$ _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ TELEPHONE _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS (optional) _____

Any Questions? Call us.
