



General Meeting of the Omaha Astronomical Society
Friday, May 4th at 7:30 PM
Durham Science Center, Room 169, UNO Campus
Program: See Page 3

Mid-States Regional Convention Focuses on Outreach

The question is raised: "Where will tomorrow's astronomers come from?"

The answer is: "Where they've always come from."

The discoverers, the analysts, the dreamers of tomorrow will be found in rural as well as urban locations, in neighborhoods both poor and privileged. And like many who have gone before, their choice of a path leading to life in astronomy and its related fields will be precipitated by some chance experience at the eyepiece of an amateur telescope. It might just be yours.

With the bling-bling of new media and high profile technology omnipresent in the foreground, hard sciences like astronomy have a tough time competing for the attention of the best and brightest young minds. But seeing Saturn's ring system for the first time or tracking the dance of Jupiter's moons might be all it takes to stir the imagination and launch the career of the next Halley, or Herschel, or Hale.

"Outreach: The Future of Astronomy" will be the theme of the 2007 Convention of the Mid-States Region of the Astronomical League. OAS will host the convention here in Omaha on the week-

end of June 8th and 9th. As the host organization, it behooves us to turn out as many from our own club as are able to attend. Friday evening, the 8th, will revolve around early registration and orientation for out-of-town attendees, along with an informal Meet & Greet in the cocktail lounge of the Regency Lodge on 107th north of Pacific Street. Saturday, the 9th, we'll host the MSRAL Annual Business Meeting beginning at 9am. Lunch will be provided at noon, and speaker sessions will continue through the afternoon.

Registration costs for the convention are just \$35, which includes coffee and snacks in the morning as well as the luncheon buffet. Registration forms and schedules will be available at the OAS meeting on May 4th, or you may download the PDF form from the club website at www.omahaastro.com/msral2007. You're urged to help support the club with your attendance as we take time to consider how outreach will build the future of astronomy.

By Clete Baker

Metro Science Fair Winner

Well this year we had a winner at the Metro Science Fair, he was a gentleman from the junior division. He should be coming to our meeting in May to receive his prizes from the club.

**May Club Star Party,
May 12th, 2007
OAS Club Site, Weeping Water**

Omaha Astronomical Society is a member of the NASA Night Sky Network

Events and Stuff Section

May Meeting Presentation

The Gas Giants "Jupiter & Saturn"

Eric Balcom

New Members

None

Good May Observing Dates to Observe at the Club Site or other good dark sky location

Friday 11 May 07, last quarter moon
Saturday 12 May 07, last quarter moon
Friday 18 May 07, new moon
Saturday 19 May 07, new moon

Mahoney Public Star Parties

All Friday evenings from Twilight On the Golf Driving Range of the Mahoney State Park Ashland, NE

Friday May 18, 2007
Friday June 15, 2007
Friday July 13, 2007
Friday August 10, 2007
Friday September 14, 2007

Recent Observing Awards

None

May Sky Calendar

02nd	Full Moon
10th	Last Quarter Moon
16th	New Moon
23th	First Quarter Moon
31st	Full Moon

OAS Meeting Minutes

April 6th, 2007

The **meeting** came to order at 7:34. No rooftop observing tonight. **March minutes** were read and Al Dorn motioned to accept, Ed Sikorsky seconded and the minutes were accepted. John Macy gave a short **Treasurer's report**, with income in March of \$353.85, expenses of \$160.21, balance of \$5455.88. We had 1 guest, and 35 people total.

Old Business

Outreach-

*April, 7:30 NSP Planning Meeting; if you would like to see what goes on in the planning of Nebraska Star Party you are welcome to attend. POC Eric Balcom (491-3502)

*April 29th, Sun., UNL Baylen Open House
*April 21st, Sat., Earth Day + Astronomy Day, 12-6 PM
*April 26th, Thur., Arlington Middle School, Gretna 4-H, 7:30
*April 29th, Sun., Friedel Academy Elem. Chalco Hills, 7:30
*April 14th, Sat., Club Star Party, Weeping Water
*April 21st, Sat., Lincoln, NE Astronomy Day

Club Telescopes

6" Dobsonian, Ann Donovan
6" Newtonian, Bob Van Meteren
8" SCT, Larry Wilkes
13 " Dobsonian, Chris Jewell
Binoculars, 11x80, Bill Bond

Observing and Awards—no awards due at this time.

Astropark use=2.

Astronomy Day—Jeff Houston reminded us that anyone can help. Event is at Elmwood Park, south of pool. Solar equipped telescopes are especially helpful. We will have brochures, handouts, telescopes, lots of fun!

MidStates Regional Conference—at May meeting we will be recruiting helpers to work at Conference. Received bill for Community Center. Have 6 door prizes donated.

New Business

Heflin Observatory—property offered to OAS. Lots of discussion concerning possible purchase of part of the land with telescope, observatory and small trailer home on it. First estimate not in our price range, but then a swap was offered. The Weeping Water land for the Heflin observatory property in Iowa (about 2-1/2 acres).

Executive Committee looked into swap and recommended against it, saying risks of investment and cost of outfitting new property were not the best way to fulfill the Club's mission. Not unanimous decision and lots of discussion of possible actions. It was brought up that some clubs have an observatory for public viewing, but our club style, so far, has been to bring the telescopes to the people. Portability being an asset.

Darkness of the skies at the Iowa site? = A little better than Weeping Water. Iowa site easy to get to; just minutes off the interstate. Observatory includes a 16 inch reflector telescope. Good site for observing but is it significantly better than current site at Weeping Water? Some mentioned that it was a shame to let this opportunity pass to own this land and observatory. Could be a significant draw for members and public.

Lots of possibilities/variables. Keep the trailer home or get rid of it? Keep or stop phone service to site? Fence property and how much? Mow site? Port-a-potty? Keep or stop service of electricity and/or propane for heat? How to pay to maintain/repair the building? Estimated cost at around \$4000 to \$5000 to do swap with lawyer fees, survey, fencing, repairs, etc. Can we get federal 501 (c) 3 status (non profit charitable organization) so that all contributions to OAS are tax deductible? (Making it easier to raise money for a project like this one.) We already have local (state) non-profit educational status.

Motion to accept the board's recommendation was made by Gary Grimes, seconded by Jim Macica and passed with 28 for, 5 opposed, and one abstention.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by John Macy, seconded by Mike Gallagher and passed.

Next meeting will be some location, **May 4th**, 2007, 7:30.

Tonight's program: **Refurbishing an 8" Reflector**, by Stafford Pelish

Minutes by OAS Secretary
Kim Moss-Allen

Astronomy Quiz May, 2007

1. 'It's just like the old maxim that says where there's smoke there's fire,' says Jeff Cuzzi from NASA's Ames Research Center. 'At Saturn, where there's a new ring, there's bound to be a _____.'
2. Crux (the Southern Cross) is surrounded on 3 sides by what other constellation?
3. This month, as the sun sets you see a nice pair of roughly matched stars appear in the southwest at about 45 degrees elevation; their names mean the 'boxer' and the 'horseman'. What are their names and what is their constellation?
4. Which is closest to Earth: Sirius, Barnard's star, or Wolf 359?
5. Observations of cosmic microwave radiation have given us a good estimate on the age of the universe. It's about _____ years old.
6. What is ephemeris?
7. Comet McNaught passed closest to the sun on January 12, 2007; what was its brightest magnitude?
8. In May we can watch bits of which comet as they burn up entering earth's atmosphere? And what's the name of this phenomenon?
9. Why is Warren De La Rue important to astronomy?
10. If you are observing two spiral galaxies and one is described as 'edge-on' and the other as 'face-on' how are they going to appear different to you and why?
11. A Kerr black hole and a Schwarzschild black hole differ how?
12. The (now dwarf-) planet Pluto was discovered in 1930 near this star called Wasat, meaning 'middle'. Which constellation is Wasat in and what is its Bayer designation?



OAS Club Officers

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April Astronomy Answers

1. NGC 7009 in Aquarius, the Saturn Nebula.
2. On the Moon, near Mare Tranquillitatis, the Sea of Tranquility.
3. It's Corvus, the Crow.
4. It was renamed Bob Gent (past president of the Astronomical League) by the IAU (International Astronomical Union) in honor of Mr. Gent's "outstanding volunteer service protecting the nighttime environment and preserving the heritage of our night skies."
5. The synodic month is longer at 29.53 days than the sidereal month of 27.32 days.
6. $a=d$, $b=c$
7. It is under Mars' southern polar region and was found using radar.
8. F Normally the minor planets *are* too small and too unreflective to be seen unaided, but not always. For instance, on May 30th the minor planet Vesta reaches perihelion (its closest approach to the sun), and also its closest approach to Earth reaching a magnitude of 5.4. Dark skies would still be very helpful!
9. Selenodesy is the study of the shape, size and gravitational field of the Moon.
10. Hydra is the largest constellation with an area of 1303 square degrees, while Hydrus is pretty small at 243. Hydrus is a modern constellation with no mythology associated with it while Hydra is ancient and has many stories. Also, Hydrus is a Southern sky constellation near the South celestial pole, while Hydra is Northern and stretches from Cancer to Libra.
11. About 5 degrees.
12. Globular Cluster M13 in Hercules.

References: Reflector, March, 07; Planetary Radio, 29 March 07; Astronomy Magazine, May 07

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Please send related correspondence to: STELLA, c/o
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Send your check to:
The OAS
c/o John Macy
P.O. 6257
Omaha, NE 68106

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- ◆ Members receive the STELLA, our monthly newsletter.
- ◆ Each member is automatically a member of the Astronomical League, the only nation-wide organization for amateur astronomers.
- ◆ Use of the observing site at Weeping Water, NE
- ◆ The opportunity to borrow one of several club-owned telescopes.
- ◆ Organized trips to local observatories, planetariums and museums.
- ◆ Significant savings on subscriptions to **Sky & Telescope** and **Astronomy** magazines.
- ◆ Savings on astronomy books and printed materials.

Visit the club web site at:
www.OmahaAstro.com

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