



R. A. C. NEWS

September - 2002

www.rocklandastronomy.com
Message Line (201) 768-3295



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Membership Services, Treasurer, Special Events, PIP Liaison
Don Urban, 201-768-3295, 73 Haring St, Closter, NJ 07624
DUrban@RocklandAstronomy.com

Newsletter Editor
Lisa Canino-Dymbort, 908-835-8995, 1 Edgemere Terrace,
Washington, NJ 07882. Lcanino@juno.com

Webmaster
Dan Roman, 201-385-7675, N2mfc@verizon.net

Assistant Webmasters
Peter Aurelio, 914-235-2207, paurelio@iscnet.net
Keith Murdock, 845-753-5625, Keith_Murdock@hotmail.com

NEAF (Northeast Astronomy Forum & Telescope Show) Chairman
Alan Traino, 973-423-3017, Alan3203@sprynet.com

SSP (Summer Star Party) Organizer
Don Urban, 201-768-3295, 73 Haring St, Closter, NJ 07624
DUrban@RocklandAstronomy.com

Publicity
Keith Murdock, 845-753-5625, Keith_Murdock@hotmail.com
Frank Bifulco, 845-354-3965, frankbif@optonline.net

Astrophotography
Bill Thys, 973-881-8372, billthys@aol.com
Dominick Morelli, 845-623-5633, morelli1@worldnet.att.net

CCD Imaging
Jim Burnell, 845-986-3332, Burnell@Frontiernet.net
Ed Siemenni, 845-783-3442, edsiemenn@hotmail.com

Telescope Making
Jim Burnell, 845-986-3332, Burnell@Frontiernet.net
Mike Pass, 845-496-6320, ironhors@frontiernet.net

Observing Coordinator
NY -- Frank Bifulco, 845-354-3965, frankbif@optonline.net

Education & Children's Programs
Ed Siemenn, 845-783-3442, edsiemenn@hotmail.com
Lisa Canino-Dymbort, 908-835-8995, Lcanino@juno.com
Audrey Salvatore, 845-928-6697, nebula@frontiernet.net

Model Rocketry
Mark Hettinger, 201-768-5720, mlmkshett@aol.com

Equipment Manager
Ed Siemenn, 845-783-3442, edsiemenn@hotmail.com

Advisors
Al Nagler, 845-354-2552
Dr. Jack Rosen, Deepsky3@juno.com

Observing and Meeting Locations

North Rockland High School Planetarium
Thiells, NY

Rockland Community College
Iron Horse Farm, Mike Pass, 914-496-6320
*Anthony Wayne Recreation Area Exit 17, Palisades Interstate
Pkwy

*Silvermine Ski Area Exit 18, Palisades Interstate
Pkwy

*Wawayanda State Park, 973-853-4462 Highland Lakes,
NJ

Tahgkanic State Park Taconic State Parkway, Ancram, NY

- *Special permits required*

SEPTEMBER OBSERVING

Wawayanda: Friday, 9/6; Saturday, 9/7
Lake Taghkanic: "Up All Night" Saturday, 9/7
Anthony Wayne: "Joy of the Universe" Saturday, 9/14

MEETINGS

Tuesday, 9/10: Advisory Committee Meeting at Challenger
Center
Friday, 9/27: Annual Astro Photo Program at North Rockland
High School Planetarium: featuring images taken at SSP and
others.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Dave Braham 257 Morsemere Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703
(914) 969-5643

Kenneth & Gloria Friedberg 85 Friend Terr., Harrington
Park, NJ 07640

Tom Hauer 283 Rea Ave., Hawthorne, NJ 07506 (973)
427-1351

Daisy Healy 12 Ramsey Ave., Ramsey, NJ 07446 (201)
327-5923

Paul E. Suchanyc 82 Cclove Ave., Haverstraw, NY 10927
(845) 942-5684



Satellites to the Rescue!

A ship on the ocean is swamped by a giant wave. A small airplane loses power and crash lands on a mountain field. A snowmobiler in Alaska breaks a tread and is lost far from civilization. How do the brave people who rescue folks in peril find out where they are?

Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking, called SARSAT for short, uses two types of satellites to help people (and their pets!). Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites, nicknamed "GOES," fly in place. They never stray from their spots above Earth. Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellites, called "POES," are in constant motion. They orbit Earth several times a day. The main job of these spacecraft is to track environmental conditions around the world. But GOES and POES also hear special distress signals from ships, planes, and individuals. The satellites send the information to a control center in Suitland, Maryland. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Government, operates the center. They learn who's in danger and where the emergency is. Then they send the Coast Guard or the Air Force to save the day.

Ships, airplanes and people use different kinds of equipment to transmit emergency signals. All these devices broadcast distress messages to GOES and POES. Personal Locator Beacons for individuals are available only in Alaska, but soon may be sold in the rest of the United States. Backpackers and others who travel to remote areas could carry these devices in case they get into trouble.

NASA provided the satellites used for SARSAT and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration operates them. SARSAT has helped to locate and rescue more than 12,800 people worldwide and 4,300 people in the United States. The Air Force and Coast Guard also rescued dogs and other pets that were traveling with their families when disaster struck!

Find out more about SARSAT at <http://www.sarsat.noaa.gov>. Also check out The Space Place Web site at <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/goes/orbits.htm> to learn how these satellites orbit Earth and how GOES can hang over one spot all the time.

This article was written by Eric Elkins and provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space

Administration.

OPEN LETTER TO RAC

Dear RAC Members and Friends,

Jane and I would like to publicly thank the club and Don Urban. After moving to Florida in mid-June we finally got a chance to read the June bulletin on July 18th. Don had placed an article in that issue wishing us well and giving a little history of our friendship over the years. That friendship continues and we trust will not dwindle due to mileage. About three years after I had joined Rockland Astronomy Club in 1985, Don appeared on the scene after rekindling his interest in astronomy. Our former club leader, the late Alan Green, had moved to New Mexico and Don took the reigns of the club under his wing. I admired this attribute and felt if I could help in some way I would, albeit lacking the desire to jump in with both feet in the administration of the club.

When I think of the amount of sheer hobby pleasure the club has brought us it really surprises me. I have attended 10 Summer Star Parties, 11 Northeast Astronomy Forums, countless dinners and meetings, talks, seminars, Stellafane, Winter Star Parties etc., with Don and many of our other dear friends. The club has really been good to us and we feel a real debt of gratitude for its existence and for the planning that goes into all these events. We had the good fortune to participate in countless public events, promoting astronomy to the young and uninformed. We will continue to do this here in Florida.

Our move to Florida was not a good bye but just another opportunity to broaden our horizons. We are located in a great vacation area on the inter-coastal waterway about ¼ mile from the Gulf of Mexico. So when you are in the area or need a place to hang your hat, give us a call. We have a great pool for a lazy afternoon swim or a dunk in the warm waters of the Gulf.

See you all at SSP and NEAF . . . Clear Skies . . . Thanks again Don.

Sincerely,
Tom and Jane
255 Dolphin Point #308
Clearwater, FL 33767
Telephone 727 461 5560
Email k2tmk2tm@aol.com

RECIPE FOR A GREAT STAR PARTY

Combine the following ingredients – in no particular order – and you will have participated in one of the best star parties you ever attended.

- 10 days and 9 nights away from the hassle of city life, door bells and ringing telephones.
- 260 enthusiastic amateur astronomers and their family members.
- 6 nights of dark, clear skies with a heavy dose of the Milky Way sprinkled in.
- 7 free meals.
- A campground with water and electricity at each large campsite.
- A great group of kids of all ages who somehow managed to stay out of their parents' way and got along marvelously with each other.
- A large, green, grassy observing field from which to observe.
- A location easily reached from all big cities in the Northeast.
- A Milky Way visible from horizon to horizon.
- A refreshing 35' x 70' swimming pool.
- Clean rest rooms and hot showers.
- Free hot coffee at night and cold soft drinks during the warm afternoons.
- Friendly astronomers sharing their experiences and equipment.
- Minimal light pollution and low horizons in all directions.
- Numerous family attractions within a 45-minute ride from your home base.
- Reasonable registration fees.
- Rocket building and launching sessions for all the kids.
- Supermarkets and shopping malls and restaurants within a 20 minute ride.

All of the above – and lots more – was enjoyed by everyone who attended the annual Summer Star Party & Family Camping Vacation from August 2 thru 11 at Shady Pines Campground in the small town of Savoy, MA. After two years of less than ideal astronomical weather conditions, we were finally presented with six great days out of nine, with daytime temperatures in the mid 70's to low 80's, thanks to a massive Canadian cold front that cleared out all the haze and humidity that had plagued the Northeast during the entire month of July. The cool nighttime temperatures kept mosquitoes away and people were actually seen wearing sweaters and jackets while observing at their telescopes. So, how cold did it get? No one actually looked at a thermometer, but on two successive nights, a third 42-cup pot of coffee had to be brewed. (The record in previous years was two 30-cup pots.)

Among the most impressive setups were those of Kirk Rogers and George Whitney, both of whom were determined to photograph what seemed to be the entire night sky. Each of their massive tripods and mounts supported no fewer than 4 telescopes and cameras. You can see the results of Kirk's all-nighters at www.kiroastro.com.

Also worth noting was the CCD Imaging "Lab" in which Ed Siemenn, Jim Burnell and Neil McMickle spent entire evenings – and parts of days. The "Lab" is actually a portable 12-foot observatory owned by Ed, in which is set up a 5-inch Astrophysics refractor piggybacked to a 12-inch Meade LX200, along with computers (I counted 3) used to acquire, guide and process images. This entire setup would make some college observatories look like a ghetto!

In summing up, everyone had a fantastic week and some attendees have already marked their calendars for 2003 when SSP will be held from July 25 to August 3. If you've not yet attended SSP but would like to, I'm waiting to hear from you. But be forewarned – campsites are limited and if you wait until the last minute, you will definitely not get a campsite that is near all the action.

Don Urban

MY FIRST NEAF EXPERIENCE

This is being written in the middle of July, so if the facts aren't exactly accurate, I apologize beforehand.

Let me provide a little personal background first. I am very new to astronomy; I was given a "department store" brand telescope for Christmas 2000, but I really didn't start getting serious about astronomy and telescopes until August, 2001 at the ripe old age of 39.

I think I joined RAC around November of the same year and learned through various web searches and club emails that RAC cosponsors NEAF with *Sky & Telescope*. I immediately volunteered as I thought this would be a great experience. Little did I know that 6 months down the road it would be a memory to be savored for a long, long time.

I had met Don Urban and Alan Traino previously at the Parrisades Center when RAC had a public display there. I was driving towards the RCC field house on the Friday before the show and ran into Don; followed him to the parking lot and lo and behold, what did I see?? Smokers! Through my various readings and searches, I surmised that astronomers who smoked were considered devil spawn (note: play evil music at this point) I quickly lit up and joined them and breathed a sigh of relief (although it was a smoky one).

Here's where my memory fails me. If they made intravenous Ginkgo, life would be good. Alan Traino was there and I do remember meeting "Barlow Bob" and Mike Pass, but the other names escape me. Please accept my apologies as I really enjoyed meeting and working with each and every one of you!

Alan gave me my ID badge and we were off and running as vendors starting rolling into the parking lot. During the frequent trips from the show floor to the loading dock, I was catching Tom Massey assembling something I couldn't quite make out. To this point, other than Alan's C14, the only telescopes I've had the pleasure of seeing in the flesh are my 60mm Bushnell scope and the Orion ST90 I purchased the previous October. As time passed, I did recognize the scope as a truss Dob. Seeing one that large reminded me of the gantry towers used for the Saturn V rockets used in the Apollo program. Either that, or some medieval torture device favored by the Marques de Sade.

The RAC assembly line worked extremely well. There was a constant flow of dollies and carts full of vendor product being pushed, pulled and otherwise tugged all over the place. Alan was deft with directing us to the booths where we were to drop the items we would be leering, gawking and ogling at for the next 2 days.

During all this, I would ask every so often, "Anyone know when Hands On Optics is getting here?" You see, I had lucked into purchasing a new Meade LXD55 AR-5 5" refractor on a CG-5 mount the Wednesday before the show. Gary Hand would be bringing it with him that day. It was like being an expectant father! (Note: I have no clue as to how an expectant father feels, but it sounds good.)

The vendors I met were extremely friendly and very appreciative of all the help that RAC was giving them. I had the opportunity to talk to a few of them during breaks in the action and was quite impressed with their candor, warmth and openness. I've since made a few purchases from those very people and received extraordinary service.

As the day wore on, more and more vendors showed and the RAC attack force responded with vigor. As it became later in the day, I found out that Alan and Don had to attend a cocktail party sponsored by Sky & Telescope and had to leave shortly. So, here I am, new to shows, astronomy and the like when I hear Alan shout across the gym, "Hey, Tom! You're in charge! Don and I have to get to the party!" DOH!

Needless to say, things didn't fall apart and the setup continued. Gary finally showed up and I took delivery of my first "real scope." Surprisingly, I was able to fit the 2 boxes in my Honda Civic. I didn't realize what the heck I bought until I passed Gary's booth and he had the exact setup on display. He looked at me and said, "Yep, this is what you got?" Eyes bugged out, tongue dropped, many vowels were pronounced. Yeah, it was HUGE! (For me, that is.)

I finally got out of there around 9 p.m. after Alan and Don returned. Alan told me to scram and he'll see me in the morning. So, not one to argue, I scrambled.

So, on to Saturday. Can you say, "Stop drooling, Tom?" I was like a kid in a golf store with carte blanche (Golf is my other passion.) But, I had to restrain myself, as there was work to be done. Basically, RAC helped the vendors with any last minute requests - mind booths when needed and keep an eye open for anything out of the ordinary. Did that for a few hours, and then it was time to see how much self-control I had

and actually take a look at what was available to my credit card and me.

I ran into Frank Bifulco and Keith Murdock who I had met during an unsuccessful comet Ikeya-Zhang hunt. I also had the pleasure of meeting Sol Robbins. Sol and I had dialoged on the Yahoo lists for a few months prior. It was also very nice to finally meet Andrew Warrington. For those who don't know Andrew, he now lives in England and flew over just for the show. It's nice to finally put a face to the words, so to speak. I met a few other RAC members at the club booth and was welcomed warmly by all. Thanks!

Much to my surprise, I walked out of NEAF with only 2 items. A Crist Miniature 18" truss Dob and a binocular tripod adapter from Universal Astronomics. I patted myself on the back, said good-bye to my new acquaintances and headed off to other commitments I had for the day.

The club members were friendly, the vendors great, and the whole experience was fantastic. I look forward to working with RAC again at other functions. I haven't been to the club dark sites or attended a "Joy of the Universe", but once I quit my job and sell my belongings, I'll be able to get out more. Thanks again for allowing me to be a part of something great.

Tom Duggan, "newbie" extraordinaire

A STAR PARTY TALE

While attending the Summer Star Party I encountered a problem with my LX200GPS scope - particularly the Autostar2 program. When I used the GUIDED TOUR program it seemed to work well until it froze and I was forced to power off/on the scope. A few RAC club members informed me that this tends to happen with the GUIDED TOUR program.

I called MEADE at their California plant and spoke with a customer service rep. He suggested going to MEADE online and updating the program to version 1.2B. To do this I needed an Internet cable attached from the P/C to the scope port. Then I downloaded the current update/program (free of charge from MEADE LOL). This is just an F.Y.I. to all the LX200GPS owners who have encountered similar problems.

Other than that, the scope performed excellently, and I had an awesome night of viewing that first Saturday night at the RAC SSP. I also had a great time camping at Shady Pine, and I am definitely planning on attending next year and urge all club members to consider attending. You will have a good time!

Mike Heuler



ROCKLAND ASTRONOMY CLUB - (201)768-3295

September 2002

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Sunrise 06:23 Set 19:28 Moonset 00:06 Set 15:44	2 Sunrise 06:24 Set 19:26 Moonset 00:54 Set 16:42 Labor Day	3 Sunrise 06:24 Set 19:25 Moonset 01:52 Set 17:35	4 Sunrise 06:25 Set 19:24 Moonset 02:59 Set 18:21	5 Sunrise 06:26 Set 19:22 Moonset 04:13 Set 19:01	6 Sunrise 06:27 Set 19:20 Moonset 05:30 Set 19:35 ● NEW MOON	7 Sunrise 06:28 Set 19:19 Moonset 06:48 Set 20:06 "UP ALL NIGHT" OBSERVING AT LAKE TAGHKANTIC Rosh Hasharrah
PRIME OBSERVING WINDOW						
8 Sunrise 06:29 Set 19:17 Moonset 08:06 Set 20:35	9 Sunrise 06:30 Set 19:15 Moonset 09:22 Set 21:04	10 Sunrise 06:31 Set 19:14 Moonset 10:39 Set 21:34 7:30pm ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING AT CHALLENGER CENTER	11 Sunrise 06:32 Set 19:12 Moonset 11:54 Set 22:08	12 Sunrise 06:33 Set 19:10 Moonset 13:07 Set 22:47	13 Sunrise 06:34 Set 19:09 Moonset 14:17 Set 23:32 ● 1ST QTR	14 Sunrise 06:35 Set 19:07 Moonset 15:20 Set --- JOY OF THE UNIVERSE AT ANTHONY WAYNE
PRIME OBSERVING WINDOW						
15 Sunrise 06:36 Set 19:05 Moonset 00:24 Rise 16:15	16 Sunrise 06:37 Set 19:03 Moonset 01:22 Rise 17:01 Yom Kippur	17 Sunrise 06:38 Set 19:02 Moonset 02:29 Rise 17:39	18 Sunrise 06:39 Set 19:00 Moonset 03:27 Rise 18:11	19 Sunrise 06:40 Set 18:58 Moonset 04:29 Rise 18:58	20 Sunrise 06:41 Set 18:57 Moonset 05:31 Rise 19:02	21 Sunrise 06:42 Set 18:55 Moonset 06:31 Rise 19:24 ○ FULL MOON
22 Sunrise 06:43 Set 18:53 Moonset 07:30 Rise 19:45 AT P.H.A. AURIGIDS Fall Begins	23 Sunrise 06:44 Set 18:52 Moonset 08:29 Rise 20:07	24 Sunrise 06:45 Set 18:50 Moonset 09:28 Rise 20:30	25 Sunrise 06:46 Set 18:48 Moonset 10:28 Rise 20:56	26 Sunrise 06:47 Set 18:47 Moonset 11:29 Rise 21:26	27 Sunrise 06:48 Set 18:45 Moonset 12:31 Rise 22:01 8:00pm ANNUAL ASTRO PHOTO PROGRAM AT NORTH ROCKLAND HS	28 Sunrise 06:49 Set 18:43 Moonset 13:33 Rise 22:45
29 Sunrise 06:50 Set 18:41 Moonset 14:32 Rise 23:37 ○ 3RD QTR	30 Sunrise 06:51 Set 18:40 Moonset 15:26 Rise --- PRIME OBSERVING WINDOW					