

## Short Talk, Dan Taylor: "OBSERVING VARIABLE STARS"

Dan has been an enthusiastic observer of variable stars and member of the AAVSO (American Association of Variable Star Observers) for fifteen years. Last Month Juliana Grigorescu gave us a presentation on star formation. We learned there are all manner of star types as they pass through their incredible lives. Dan explained it is easy to observe some stars change during their life cycle by observing variations in brightness. The basic comparison technique was explained and a map of the Cassiopeia area provided. Members can try to make their own observations comparing marked variables with nearby steady stars.

**Director of Observing, Steve Pellarin:** Steve reviewed a whole series of interesting astronomical happenings and objects to look for in the coming month. The five naked eye planets are a prime feature of the early evening sky. Venus is especially high, nearing Pleiades. Jupiter is oriented to offer moon shadow passages of which three will be visible on the planet's surface March 28th. NGC 2903 is an interesting easy to find spiral galaxy in Cancer. If at a dark enough site Zodiacal light is visible in March. Several comets are telescope visible and a Lyrid Meteor shower will add to night sky events.

The big news is the discovery of Sedna. It is a small planet-like object far out in the Oort cloud, orbiting the sun on a very large elongated path well out of the plane of the ecliptic. Hubble and other images were projected to show Sedna and other objects.

**Coffee Break:** The winning 50/50 draw ticket was held by Peter Bondy. He passed the \$7 prize back to the club.

**New Members:** Steve welcomed new members Ryan Murray and Mel Richardson.

## Main Presentation, Steve Mastellotto: "KITTE PEAK"

On a recent business trip to Arizona Steve was able to extend his stay, visit the Tucson area and drive to the top of Kitt Peak. With digital camera in hand he took a walking tour, visiting all 23 Kitt Peak observatories. The variety of types and sizes was as amazing as was the variety of operators. Many had "visitor viewing windows" allowing casual visitors to see their inner workings without need to enter buildings. Finding large telescopes (by amateur standards) available free or for modest rentals in visitor centers was an additional pleasant surprise.

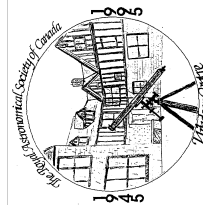
The scenic photos of the mountain and surrounding area were enhanced by rolling masses of clouds. Steve caught a nice rainbow arching over a small valley. His trip coincided with three days of cool, cloudy weather with periodic rain and many apologies from local residents.

Tucson amateurs have a nice open site with facilities to make nights out under the sky comfortable and convenient.

Meeting adjourned by Steve Mastellotto at 10:15 p.m.



# AURORA



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## Flyer

### Next Meeting

Tuesday, June 15, 2004

8:00 p.m.

at

Ojibway Park Nature Centre  
5200 Matchette Road

Speaker: Rev. Harry Brydon

Topic: "Life in the Universe"

### Upcoming Events

**Venus Transit:** Come out to the Hallam Observatory on Tuesday, June 8, 2004 to witness the spectacular transit of Venus across the disk of the Sun. This event will be well underway at sunrise (5:56 EDT) and ends an hour and a half later (7:25 EDT) so get there by sunrise.

**Council Meeting:** The next council meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 8, 2004. The meeting will be at Steve Mastellotto's house and will begin at 7:30 p.m..

**Summer Picnic:** Our annual picnic will be held on Saturday June 12th at Hallam Observatory. Setup between 6:00 - 6:30 p.m. and dinner between 7:00 - 7:30 p.m..

**General Assembly:** July 1 - 4, St. John's Newfoundland and Labrador.

## General Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2004

**Recording Secretary:** David J. Pantou

**Chaired by President Steve Mastellotto:** The last blast of winter brought a snowy night with a reduced turnout for another exceptional meeting. Members read the minutes from the February meeting. No errors were found. A motion for acceptance was made by Randy Groundwater, seconded by Tom Sobocan and carried.

### Reports

**Correspondence Secretary, Joady Ulrich:** Joady was unable to attend the meeting.

**Treasurer, Ken Garber:** Ken told us there was \$5,100 in the bank account and the statement for observatory insurance has arrived.

**Librarian, Milica Rakic:** Milica was not present this evening.

**Newsletter Editor (position open):** Past newsletter editor Steve Mastellotto is producing the monthly Flyer. Tom Sobocan will soon take on the position after receiving some briefing from Steve. E-mail addresses are kept up to date by Steve so members should contact him and provide new or changed addresses to ensure they receive meeting notices.

**Public Education, Randy Groundwater:** Next week a group of Cub Scouts will visit the observatory. Randy's learning in retirement teaching program will be completed next month.

**Public Relations, Robin Smallwood:** RASC Windsor will display at Earth Day in Ojibway Park on Sunday April 25th rain or shine. Members with telescopes are asked to bring them, fitted with solar filters for viewing the Sun. Volunteers are needed to help setup the display and others to man the booth during the Noon to 4:00 p.m. event.

Robin handed out a listing of the 110 Messier objects arranged in search sequence for the all night Messier Marathon planned at the observatory Saturday March 20th. Come out Friday should weather conditions favour it over Saturday. The prime strategy is to start early enough to catch the first objects before they set in the West as night falls. The rest can be found as night passes. The final objects rise in the East before morning twilight.

**Light Pollution, Dan Taylor:** MPP Bruce Crozier was visiting Comber regarding the huge truck stop project on highway 401 at highway 77. He visited our observatory with Dave Ainslie and Randy Groundwater. Bruce is familiar with

light pollution issues and full cutoff lighting. The truck stop project has been put on hold for at least a year.

Happy news has come from The Town of Lakeshore council's Cindy Prince. A lighting control by-law will require fully light shielded fixtures in all new developments. Dan reminded members every effort they make to reduce light pollution is helpful.

**Observatory, Peter Bondy:** Steve showed photographs of the latest improvements. The dome hatch is operable again via the replacement of a badly worn universal joint in the gear drive system. The heavy steel gate across the entrance door has been finished, installed and christened "Heavens Gate". Steve's photos showed it is an impressive deterrent. A security alarm system, video camera and security lighting should also help discourage intruders.

Steve Mastellotto reported there is now full insurance thus permitting reinstallation of the new telescope. It is in place, connected to the computer and initial alignment done. More iterations are needed to aim at more guide stars, make further mount adjustments and repeat the process until accuracy is perfect. Even at this early stage its performance is spectacular.

Steve suggested interested members come out early (6:30 p.m.) on Messier night for an introduction to the system and learn a bit about how to use it. An operating manual and log of observers using the equipment is in the works.

**National Council Representative, Susan Sawyer-Beaulieu:** Susan was unable to attend the first quarter meeting in Toronto in person however, Susan participated via teleconferencing. The prime concern was financial, involving revenue shortfall and a possible annual fee increase to \$50 from \$44. Members will soon receive a survey form National asking for help in determining which member benefits are most popular. Assistance is also asked in the form of cost saving ideas.

### Business

**April Meeting:** cancellation and substitution. Ivan Semeniuk, once a Windsor Centre member and now prominent in television science broadcasting. Starting with TV Ontario, Ivan went on to the Discovery Channel and is currently producing the "Heaven and Earth" show. Ivan will speak at The University of Windsor on Saturday April 24th in Erie Hall, room 1120 at 2:00 p.m. This event will replace the regular April meeting. A fee will be charged to all but Windsor Centre members, Physics Department staff and students.

**Detroit Science Center Visit:** Steve Pellarin reported that the trip is nicely on track for Saturday March 27th. Steve has set up a 1:00 p.m. private showing in the planetarium. Arrangements for rendezvous and other details were discussed but not finalized. Steve is the central contact at 734-6667.