



STARE FIELDS

Newsletter of the Amateur Telescope Makers of
Boston
Including the Bonbon Astronomical Club
Established in 1934
For the Enjoyment of Fine Candy and to Abuse
Telescope Makers and Users

No. 5 April 2002

This Month's Meeting...

Monday, April 1st, 2002, at 8:00 PM
John Philip Sousa Auditorium,
Center for Astrophysics and Music

THIS MONTH's speakers will be Early Childhood Professors Charlie McDonald, Brewster LaMacchia, and Cathy Clemens. These three educators will discuss how to impart to young children an understanding of science principles as taught through song. Examples used will be such works as "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", "Fly Me To The Moon", "Ebb Tide", "High Hopes", and "Swinging On A Star".

Join our most excellent speakers for dinner at 5:45 PM at the Cheech and Chang Restaurant located at 1712 Mass Ave. in our fair city, Cambridge.

President's Message...

CLUB MEMBERS are overjoyed with the completion of the ATMoB Central Parking/Tunnel Project, the club's new tunnel and multi-level underground parking garage. Quick work was needed to accommodate the 2,468 new members who joined ATMoB since the airing of WCVB-TV's Chronicle program "Seeing Stars" on Friday, February 22nd.

The new tunnel runs up from Route 40, past the Vertical Assembly Building, and halfway up to the Haystack Observatory. Car headlights no longer flash across the observing field, and there is finally plenty of parking located where backup lights will not be a problem.

Thanks go to Boston residents JOHN BISHOP, STEVE HERZBERG and RUSSELL WERNER, who recommended the underground digging contractors they have become familiar with over the years: Big Dig design and construction managers Bechtel Corporation of San Francisco and Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc. of New York. Laborers who took time off from the Big Dig to work at the clubhouse in Westford

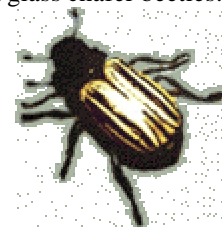
expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to once again experience the completion of a construction project.

-Bob Collara, President-

March's Minutes...

THE MEETING of the Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston, including the Bonbon Astronomical Club, was opened by President BOB COLLARA. Our guest speaker was club member and entomologist PAUL VALLELI, who spoke about the Egyptian Dung Beetle. Dung beetles are referred to as "Scarabs", and in ancient Egypt the scarab was the most important religious symbol. The Egyptians worshipped them, seeing a strong similarity between the Sun rolling across the sky each day and the dung beetle rolling little balls of dung across the ground. The Egyptians represented the Sun god, their most important god, as a scarab. They believed that projections on the head of the beetle were emblems of the rays of the sun. The Greeks also knew how important the dung beetle was. Aristophanes wrote a comedy called "The Peace". In this comedy, Trygaeus, the hero, gets to heaven on the back of a dung beetle.

Paul explained that some Scarabs, such as the Japanese beetle and the June bug, are harmful in that they feed on plants. Another such beetle, the glass chafer, has been found to have soft, specialized mouthparts that can filter out big particles. It can eat debris, algae, scum, and fog on dirty glass without harming the glass in any way! Paul's interest in learning more about this particular beetle had been piqued as a result of the on-going dialogue on atmob-discuss started by ERIC REINES and TED POULOS. They spent many days complaining about the Schmidt-Cassegrain Black Plague - black spots that grow with time on a Schmidt-Cassegrain corrector plate. Recognizing that since the early 1960's all NASA manned spacecraft have been equipped with Corning-made glass windows, Paul was curious as to what methods Corning recommended for keeping windows clean under damp Florida conditions. Paul astonished us by quoting a product engineer at Corning's Canton Plant who said, "Corning has been supplying NASA with glass chafers to keep the shuttle's HPFS fused silica glass windows clean." While performing a demonstration with a beetle at the meeting, Paul highly recommended periodic cleaning of corrector plates with glass chafer beetles.



Glass Chafer seen here eating "black spots" on Eric Reines corrector plate

Paul is now experimenting to see if heat generated by insects can work as a dew zapper. Paul mentioned that we may have to re-think using the club's Mosquito Magnet if it turns out that it can also attract and kill these insect-friends of astronomy.

After the meeting, MARSHA BOWMAN distributed homemade chocolate bonbons. *-Eileen Myers, Secretary-*

Membership Report...

AS A service to the club, *Stare Fields* proudly presents the following list of the 10 worst members. These are members who almost single-handedly destroyed the ATM organization. In the interest of not letting bygones be bygones and of refueling the fires of controversy, we keep alive the memory of these eminently forgettable amateurs.

- 1) Bob Airy – former President who arranged the donation of a 25-ton f/0.5 spun-cast 8-meter mirror.
- 2) John Shapley – former Clubhouse Committee chairman who accepted the above donation.
- 3) Bernie Hershel – former Treasurer who invested all of the club's assets in shares of Lucent stock.
- 4) Eileen Payne-Gaposchkin – former Secretary who published a 2,435 page newsletter in August, 1957.
- 5) Steve Menzel – former observer who on “Red Light” night attacked the headlights of a Westford Police car with a hammer.
- 6) Richard Hale – former Observing Chairman who invited 11,235 people for a viewing of Comet Kohutek.
- 7) Paul Tombaugh – former Clubhouse Committee member who traded the club's 16” reflector at Stellafane for a 15mm Ramsden eyepiece.
- 8) Mario Porter – former President who invited a speaker to address the club on “Construction of Giant Advertising Balloons in Low Earth Orbit”.
- 9) Anna Jansky – former organizer who led a solar eclipse tour to Bangaledesh in monsoon season.
- 10) Bruce Yerkes – former observer who always played his 500-watt stereo at star parties. -Ed Lost-

Magnetic Field Tells Observers To Binge...

HAVING TO remain in an observing field in the middle of the night means an observer can't count on food for some 4-5 hours. So, how does a first-timer know when to take on extra fuel?

For “night owls” traveling from Messier object to Messier object, the cue for a life-saving eating binge may come from changes that he senses in the magnetic field, propose ED LOS and MIKE HILL, who are doing research for the Little Debbie Institute. Using Ed's magnetometer, Ed and Mike measured the strength and direction of the magnetic field along the route to the back door of the clubhouse. They were startled to note that soon after an observer turned his scope parallel to the direction of the magnetic field, the observer would be observed racing across the observing field back into the clubhouse to pack on fat for the rest of the evening. “Fattening up to 20 percent above lean body weight is typical for most migrating observers”, commented Mike, who used his VLF (Very Large Feed) radio receiver to calculate weight changes.

-The Clubhouse Directors-

Historian Honored...

THE AUSPICIOUS YEAR 2001 was a banner year for club Historian ANNA HILLIER. Not only did her article about being a historian get published by *Sky & Telescope* magazine in

March 2001, but Anna was honored with an award given at the Astronomical League National Convention in Frederick, Maryland. The event was photographed and documented, and will appear in *S&T* in the April 2002 issue. As always, Anna can be contacted at: historian@factorfiction.com -Submitted by members of the Anna Sudaric Hillier Fan Club-

The Astronomer's Marching Song...

An Ode to Steve Mock (with apologies to Tom Leherer)

Be prepared, it's the astronomer's marching song.

Be prepared: be prepared to move along.

Be prepared to look for skies both wide and clear

So that you can through your telescopes go and leer.

But beware the idiot who illuminates the sky,

who casts a shaft of light that brings ruination to the eye.

To the perpetrators of this greatest mortal sin

I feel I must forewarn you of the trouble that you're in.

For if you ever feel the need to cast a shaft of light,

That breaks upon the darkness of an astronomical night,

You'll bring upon yourself a raft of consequences dire:

You'll end up in the cross hairs of Steve Mock's most

murderous fire!

Dear patient reader, you've stayed with me so far,

I'd be pleased if you would help me put a cover on this jar...

-Art Anon-

Other News...

“ALL TELESCOPES need to be recalled immediately”, warned consumer advocate Ralf Nadir. It seems that people are going blind because they are trying to observe when light is too dim. Mr. Nadir is calling on Tommy Thompson, Secretary of Health and Human Services of the Bush Administration, to retrofit all telescopes with lights. It is believed that an act of Congress may be required.

ATMOB MEMBER and Physics Professor DR. ARTHUR SWEATLOW has published his research on why there are no planetoids in globular clusters. Prof. Sweatlow explains that due to the extreme pressures of gravity within a globular cluster, planetoids broke up into very small pieces, termed altoids. There is such an abundance of these altoids found on Earth that they are now sold in small metal boxes at CVS.

THE AAVSO (American Association of Variable Star Observers) is now selling its variable stars. Included in the price is a beautifully framed Certificate of Authenticity stating that the star is indeed variable. Over 30,000 stars are being sold. There is a variable price scale. Prices for pulsating variables will swell and shrink, while eclipsing binaries will cost double. Cataclysmic variables are the most expensive due to their exciting and explosive behavior.

ATTENTION

Next year's *Stare Fields* deadline is March 1, 2003

Mad, absurd stories only.

Email Eileen Myers at starleen@charter.net
