



STAR FIELDS

Newsletter of the
Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston
Including the Bond Astronomical Club
Established in 1934
In the Interest of Telescope Making & Using

Vol. 17, No. 8 September 2005

This Month's Meeting...

Thursday, September 8th, 2005 at 8:00 PM

**Phillips Auditorium
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics**

Parking at Cfa is allowed for duration of meeting

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER will be Eric Buehrens who's talk is titled "Planning and Building an Amateur Roll-Off Roof Observatory." Eric has been an amateur astronomer since he was a teenager and is now - a few decades later - finally building the observatory that he's always wanted. He's got a dark-sky site in the Hudson Valley and his intention is to build something that he can use now for visual observing but will allow for future growth in his observing program, including imaging and eventually remote operation. He'll talk about how he made design decisions, how to build something like this when you've never built much of anything, and share a few suggestions about mistakes you might like to avoid if you're contemplating a similar project.

When he's not building or observing, Eric works as an administrator for Harvard. He's just left his position as Executive Dean for Administration for Harvard Medical School to assume a new position as Deputy Provost for Administration, in which he will be involved in planning new science ventures for Harvard's campus developments in Allston.

Please join our speaker for a pre-meeting dinner at 5:45 PM (seating at 6:00 PM) at the Changsho Restaurant located at 1712 Mass Ave. in our fair city, Cambridge.

President's Message...

I hope that you had a pleasant summer and didn't suffer too badly in the hot and humid weather. We've got a great line-up of speakers for September and the next several months:

October: Aaron Price (President of the AAVSO) on podcasting
November: Scot Milligan on the 32" telescope project
December: Bob Simcoe on the Harvard Plate Stack scanning project

For the January or February meeting, the topic will be Total Solar Eclipses to help those planning to see the March 29th eclipse. It is also for those not going, to learn more about what makes many of us chase Total Solar Eclipses. This will be an opportunity for members to present things they either plan to do or have done at past eclipses. And, we'll devote part of the April meeting for reporting results.

Please get in touch with me if you have suggestions for future speakers or would like to be a speaker at an upcoming meeting. I'd like to encourage our members to present -- you folks are doing some amazing things and you should share them!

On Thursday November 3rd, the club will host an afternoon picnic and observing session at the clubhouse for our friends at Haystack and WOA. We could have as many as 50 visitors and will need your assistance for this event. This is also an optimum time to view Mars (closest approach is Oct 30, opposition is Nov 7). Thanks to Bruce Berger for initiating this event! Please get in touch with Bruce or myself if you're willing to participate.

The clubhouse committee and volunteers continue to do a fantastic job. Much of the summer activity has been in the basement; for example, replacing and rerouting wiring and conduit (spearheaded by Bruce Gerhard) and pouring 3 new footings and adding support columns. Thanks to the Thursday night mirror grinding crew for cutting the lawn! And, Art Swedlow and Sai Vallabha have been cooking lunches! Thanks to all those that have helped out this summer!

The next work-party will be September 17th and the main task will be to clean and re-stain the porch floor.

The new roof for the clubhouse is scheduled for mid September, thanks to Shawn Bryan of Newton Roofing.

We'll hold an Executive Board Meeting the week of September 12th; the date and location will be announced at the September meeting. If anyone has any issues for the board, please let me or any other board member know.

See you at the meeting! ~ *Bernie Volz* ~

July Meeting Minutes. . .

Bernie Volz opened the 772nd meeting of the Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston with a warm welcome to all. There were six member presentations given tonight. First up was Scott Milligan speaking about the development of Mario Motta's 32" mirror for his new telescope. Scott let us in on some of the trials and tribulations encountered so far but showed us all that one can get through it even when things look really bad. (The mirror stuck to the polishing lap three times!!) All is going well now. Bruce Berger followed with a summary of the network he setup and configured up at the clubhouse including high-speed internet access, printer sharing and up to date, licensed software. Paul Valleli followed Bruce with a short remembrance of Dr James Baker who died recently. Paul then talked about his trip to Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY where he toured the old observatory where Maria Mitchell got here start. Mike Hill was up next and presented a summary of the reorganization and cataloging of the glass room up at the clubhouse. There are many interesting pieces of optics that would work quite well for small optical projects for anyone, young or old, who is interested in building optical instruments. Next up was Joseph Rothchild who presented a demonstration of the method he had devised to easily balance a small Newtonian reflector mounted on a camera tripod. Joseph's method was simple and effective and used commonly available materials. Lastly, Virginia Renehan spoke about the Night Sky Network that ATMob is a member of. This network, which is part of NASA's public outreach program, provides educational materials and Virginia demonstrated some products and ideas used to convey the idea of astronomical distance to students using familiar local distances to build up a conceptual model. All the talks were very informative and well received by the membership. The business meeting followed with standard reports by committee members. Paul Cicchetti let us know that the work on the roof and basement is going forward and will continue at the next work party. He also reiterated the fact that all clubhouse related donations must be approved by himself or John Reed. Please don't just bring things up and drop them off without prior consent. Eileen Myers presented a brief summary of the club picnic. Charlie McDonald spoke about collaborating with the U.S. Post Office in October when they release a constellation based stamp series. Bernie announced that Mario Motta will be receiving the Walter Scott Houston award this year up at Stellafane. Mario announced that there is a slot for the 2006 Egypt eclipse trip available. Lastly Bernie announced the availability of the 2006 astronomy calendars for \$8.00 dollars. ~ *Michael Hill* ~

Membership Report...

New members are;
MICHAEL ADAMS from Somerville,
CAROLYN LUMENELLO from Westford
WILLIAM MANNING from Lowell
JOHN MINKLE from Malden.

I want to acknowledge the help from club members John Sheff and especially John Minkle for their help in assisting me with the membership database.

I want to remind members that the month of September is the deadline for membership renewal.

~ *Dan Winchell* - Membership Secretary ~

Clubhouse Saturday Schedule

September 3	Steve Herzberg	Dave Siegrist
September 10	Bruce Gerhard	Gary Jacobson
September 17	John Panaswich	Dave Prowten
September 24	Eric Johansson	Art Swedlow
October 1	Steve Mock	??

Oak Ridge Observatory Closure

Oak Ridge Observatory located in Harvard, MA. has been in operation for many years but due to limited funds the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and Harvard University who both had active observing programs there have decided to close it down. Smithsonian astrophysical Observatory personnel have completed their move out of Oak Ridge. The only Harvard work remaining on the site are Dr. Paul Horowitz's Optical SETI program and the seismographic station. All other instruments (including the 61" Wyeth Telescope) are not presently in use. An ad-hoc committee of the ATMob has been actively pursuing options for some sort of involvement with the existing facilities through discussions with Harvard's faculty and administration. This includes primarily the possibility of reopening at least the Wyeth telescope for ATMob member and public outreach use. It is a slow process requiring mostly waiting to see what Harvard College ultimately decides how they wish to pursue their interests in the facility.



Oak Ridge Observatory Complex (Part of it)



**Oak Ridge Observatory
61" Telescope Dome**



Oak Ridge – 61" Wyeth Telescope

My Experiences at the Amateur Astronomy Symposium in Turkey

I participated as an invited speaker to the amateur astronomy symposium held in Istanbul (my hometown), Turkey on June 25-26, 2005. It was organized by Istanbul Kultur University (website in Turkish, with pictures: <http://fen-edebiyat.iku.edu.tr/aas2005/>), Faculty of Arts and Sciences, partly funded by TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) and supported by the AAVSO. The meeting was dedicated to the memory of Janet Akyuz Mattei, the late long-time director of the AAVSO.

There were about 60 in-person and poster presentations and nearly 300 participants, making the meeting quite a large-scale one. Attendees were from a wide range of backgrounds including professional and amateur astronomers. David Levy and his wife Wendee Wallach-Levy were two of the other invited speakers. Their participation attracted much attention from amateurs and professionals alike.

Papers were presented mainly in Turkish, while David and Wendee and Dr. Magda Stavinschi's (Romania) presentations were given in English (<http://fenedebiyat.iku.edu.tr/aas2005/Program.asp>). Paper topics ranged from how to make a telescope to an advance study about the neutron star closest to Earth.

My talk was about the scientific contributions of amateur astronomers. I cited some examples of the recent findings (such as detecting transiting exoplanets, novae and supernovae discoveries and comet hunting - a nice fit with one of the prolific discoverers on site!). Then I suggested some areas where Turkish amateurs can make contributions of their own within their instrumentation capabilities; namely monitoring bright variable stars, observing meteor showers and checking for SOHO comets.

Presentations were organized into sessions where papers with similar topics (such as observational techniques) were covered in the same session that made the topics easier to follow, especially by the general public. The meeting caught the attention of the Turkish media. Local newspapers and TV stations covered the symposium, interviewed David and published/ broadcasted about it in the news.

Each attendee received a certificate of participation which I believe was very well thought. At the end of the meeting, 10 amateur astronomers and astronomy students were presented with a commemorative plaque to recognize their contributions to astronomy, including David, Wendee, myself and my wife Gamze, who represented the AAVSO. It was such an honor to be one of the recipients of this

plaque. Needless to say, being a Turkish-American amateur meant a lot to me.

There were two major outcomes following the meeting, in addition to witnessing how much amateur astronomy has evolved in Turkey since my early years in the hobby.

First, at the end of the symposium, a town meeting kind of discussion took place on the future of amateur astronomy in Turkey. This brainstorming session widely interested all participants. David and I were very active during these discussions. David came up with some valuable suggestions and also offered his help at every step. Based on my past experiences, I shared my ideas of how to organize amateurs and what should and can be done to better serve the purpose of bringing people together under one roof.

Second, it turned out that there is a whole group of Turkish amateurs who are very interested in amateur telescope making and very serious about observing the night sky. However, due to their limited budgets and -at least- doubled telescope prices as compared to the US (because of high customs duties for imports), many of them own either small binoculars and refractors or have nothing else but their eyes alone to observe. In meeting the needs of the Turkish ATM folks, I am glad to say that ATMoB Executive Board has donated several mirror blanks and other ATM materials. I commend them for this honorable and generous donation! As for the rest of the Turkish amateurs, I would like you to consider donating any unused old scopes, any types or sizes are welcome. Any questions? Please contact me at himenali@aol.com.

~ Haldun I. Menali, ATMoB Member ~



Haldun sitting in at the symposium with David and Wendee Levy

Star Party Announcement

Plaistow NH, Pollard Elementary School Star Party

The 4th annual Pollard School star party will be held on Friday Oct 14 with a rain date of Monday Oct 17. This event has always drawn between 150 and 350 people. 8 to 12 people with telescopes and 1 to 2 without (to help with demonstrations) are needed for this fun event.

Contact Peter Bealo at PBEALO@COMCAST.NET <mailto:PBEALO@COMCAST.NET> for more information.

Deep Space Mysteries 2006 Calendars

I will have Kalmbach Publishing's Deep Space Mysteries 2006 Calendars for sale at the September meeting. They retail for \$12.99. However, they're for sale for \$8.00 each (a bit more than \$2.00 of this goes to the club). First come, first served. Please have exact change or a check payable to the Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston. ~ *Bernie Volz* ~

Donation of Glass to Turkish ATM's

In July I talked about the reorganization and general clean up that I did up at the clubhouse of our stock of old glass and mirror blanks that we have accumulated over the years. This included a detailed inventory and a plea for people to use this great resource for optical related projects. I was contacted shortly afterward by club member Haldun Menali with a desire to possibly have the club donate some of the glass blanks to his ATM friends in Bursa, Turkey. They have an avid interest in telescope making but not quite the ease of procuring supplies such as we have here in the U.S. I brought this up with John Reed and members of the board and there was no opposition to going forward with this. I didn't expect there would be. I met Haldun up at the clubhouse and we picked out six old six inch blanks, one 8" blank and some old rouge. In addition there was an old Foucault tester that I had rebuilt four years ago that was not getting much use so I let him have this as they needed one of these as well. Haldun will take care of shipping these items to Turkey as he has a means to do it cheaply. He immediately sent me a message to his friends in Turkey and they were ecstatic about this. They have been using such things as table top glass so the prospect of getting real blanks has them very excited indeed. Their initial reaction can be gauged in the letter sent back to his announcement. I think it is fair to say that this donation has gone a long way to helping those truly in need of some telescope making assistance for a group of people that have the desire but not quite the means to enjoy the pleasure of making their own mirrors and telescopes. I'm sure we'll be hearing of their results in the future. ~ *Michael Hill* ~

Dear Members of "Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston",

We very much appreciate your kind interest in our activities and feel much obliged to you for your kind assistance in our telescope making endeavor. We have been striving to make mirrors for more than 2 years, some members even since 2000. In addition, we have been translating Jean Texereau's well-known book to Turkish language to help ourselves and other interested amateurs. You can make sure that we will work very hard on ATM and eventually be successful in making our mirrors and telescopes. Then we will inform you about our results when we achieve our goals.

It will be our greatest pleasure if we can see you among us for an occasion of an astronomical activity in Turkey. As a matter of fact, we invite you all to watch the total solar eclipse in March 2006 that will be favorably visible from southern Turkey. Please don't hesitate to contact us for any further information about us and Turkey.

Best Wishes from All of Us,

Cilimboz Sky Observing Group - Bursa/Turkey
web: <http://www.cilimboz.org>
email: bursacg@yahoo.com

Opportunity for Public Outreach

WUML, UMass Lowell's public radio station, Sunrise program (at 6:35 AM) is planning an occasional series on astronomy, to discuss astronomy in general and what's currently visible or of particular interest, and looking for guests (either in-studio or by phone) to participate. If anyone is interested in this, please get in touch with ATMoB President - Bernie Volz.

**October Star Fields deadline
Saturday, October 1st**

**Email articles to Mike Hill
at noatak@aol.com**

POSTMASTER NOTE: First Class Postage Mailed September 2, 2005

Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston, Inc.
c/o Dan Winchell, Membership Secretary
20 Howard St.
Cambridge, MA 02139-3720

FIRST CLASS

EXECUTIVE BOARD 2005-2006

PRESIDENT: Bernie Volz (603) 968-3062
president@atmob.org

VICE PRES: Virginia Renehan (978) 283-0862
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CLUBHOUSE : Paul Cicchetti (978) 433-9215
John Reed (781) 861-8031
Steve Clougherty (781) 784-3024

HISTORIAN: Anna Hillier (781) 861-8338

OBSERVING: Virginia Renehan (978) 283-0862

How to Find Us...

Web Page www.atmob.org

MEETINGS: Held the second Thursday of each month (September to July) at 8:00PM in the Phillips Auditorium, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, 60 Garden St., Cambridge MA. For INCLEMENT WEATHER CANCELLATION listen to WBZ (1030 AM)

CLUBHOUSE: Latitude 42° 36.5' N Longitude 71° 29.8' W

The Tom Britton Clubhouse is open every Saturday from 7 p.m. to late evening. It is the white farmhouse on the grounds of MIT's Haystack Observatory in Westford, MA. Take Rt. 3 North from Rt. 128 or Rt. 495 to Exit 33 and proceed West on Rt. 40 for five miles. Turn right at the MIT Lincoln Lab, Haystack Observatory at the Groton town line. Proceed to the farmhouse on left side of the road. Clubhouse attendance varies with the weather. It is wise to call in advance: (978) 692-8708.

Heads Up For The Month . . .

To calculate Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) from Universal Time (UT) subtract 4 from UT.

September 3 New Moon
September 4 Mercury is 1.1° from Regulus
September 5 Venus is 1.8° from Spica
September 11 First quarter moon
September 17 Full Moon
September 22 First day of fall in Northern Hemisphere
September 25 Last Quarter Moon