



Astronomy Club of Tulsa

OBSERVER

April 2006

<http://www.AstroTulsa.com>

ACT, Inc. has been meeting continuously since 1937 and was incorporated in 1986. It is a nonprofit, tax deductible organization dedicated to promoting, to the public, the art of viewing and the scientific aspect of astronomy.



What

The Astronomy Club of Tulsa Meeting

When

14 April 2006 at 7:30 P.M.

Where

Room M1 inside Keplinger Hall, the Science & Engineering Building at TU. Enter the parking lot on the East Side of Keplinger Hall from Harvard and 5th Street. This will take you directly toward the staircase to enter the building. Room M1 is the first room on the left.



President's Message

Tim Davis

Please join us at our next meeting on April 14th, 7:30 PM at Keplinger Hall on the TU campus. Our speaker will be Professor James P. Shaffer, from The University of Oklahoma. The title of his talk is: Cold Atoms and Inertial Navigation.

April is now upon us, and it has started off with a bang, for sure! Thunderstorms and exploding weather balloons made for an unusual Messier marathon. About 20 or so turned out to give the marathon a try, even though the event was officially cancelled. We still wanted to get together and socialize and, who knows, maybe the skies would clear up after all. But, that was not the case. While there were a few holes in the clouds to start with, and we could see a few things, it soon clouded over completely because of the storms forming west of Oklahoma City. David Stine managed to find 10 M objects, for the most that night. But, the most interesting thing about the evening was the balloon. Just before sunset, we noticed a very bright object in the east a ways below the Moon. We were all puzzled trying to figure out if it was a star, no one could remember that bright of an object in that part of the sky. So I turned my scope on it, and saw a big round shiny balloon, gleaming in the sunshine, one of the high altitude type balloons. We followed it for a while, and everyone had a look, and some others were looking at it in their scopes, when someone shouted, "it blew up!" And sure enough, we looked again, and it had exploded into hundreds of little pieces scattered around, and several large pieces. It was quite a

sight, to see the sun glinting off of all those little pieces, and the bigger pieces fluttering down. Of course, that sight was pretty good competition for seeing the Moon moving in front of the Pleiades.

Our March star party turned out to be a hidden gem. While the afternoon of the 31st saw plenty of clouds, and likely kept some people away, it cleared off nearly completely after sunset. So, for those that did come out, they were treated to a good evening of observing. Had around 20 club members, a handful of first timers, and 7 or 8 college students show up. Sometimes, you just have to take a chance by going on out and waiting to see if it clears up. Some days it does, and some days it doesn't. But, you won't know unless you try.

We are going to have a work day at the observatory later this month. The exact date will be announced soon. This will be a day for all club members to lend a hand and help get the observatory and the grounds in good shape for the upcoming summer months. Watch for an email announcement for the date.

A member of the Oklahoma City club has been working in Tulsa during the week and is looking for either a place to observe or to go along with someone if they go out to the observatory during the week, (Monday through Thursday). His name is Mark Imes. If you are going to the observatory or would like to invite him to your place to observe during the week, you can contact him at mimes@hagarrs.com, or at his Tulsa work number, 664-4665.

April's Astronomical highlights:

Galaxies galore! With Leo and Virgo start-

ing to appear in the evening skies during springtime, that means there will be numerous galaxies to hunt down and observe.

Mercury will be a morning planet most of the month, but will be a difficult target for northern hemisphere observers.

Venus is still a bright morning planet in the southeast up before sunrise all month.

Mars has become a tiny sight now, but is still visible in the evening sky as it moves from Taurus into Gemini.

Jupiter rises at around 10:30 at the first of the month, and around 8:10 at month's end and will be a glorious addition to the evening skies as it approaches opposition in early May.

Saturn is still a fine sight in the evening sky; it stops its retrograde motion on the 5th, and begins to move back eastward toward M44, Beehive Cluster.

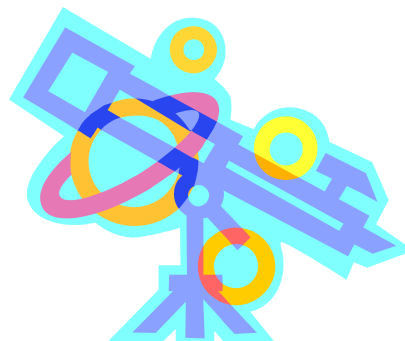
Apr 5, First Quarter Moon

Apr 13, Full Moon

Apr 20, Last quarter Moon

Apr 27, New Moon

Apr 16-25, Lyrid meteor shower, peaks on the 22nd





using mirrors to reflect the sun's rays from the viewer's eye. He shared his knowledge of telescope making and astronomy with club members, as well as many science classes throughout area schools. In the early 1990's, Nick was instrumental in helping to build the Ronald McDonald Observatory of the Astronomy Club of Tulsa in Mounds, OK, which is a teaching facility for area youth and others interested in astronomy.

POTTORF -- Newell "Nick", 93, died on Wednesday, March 8, 2006. Born July 25, 1912 in Salem, OH, and grew up on a farm tending apples, potatoes, and dairy cows, and riding 12 miles to high school on horseback each day. He was class Valedictorian, earning a full scholarship to Oberlin College. There he met Mary Harvey whom he married in 1935. He earned his BA in Physics from Oberlin College in 1934 and his MA in Physics at California Institute of Technology in 1936. After three years on a seismic crew for Western Geophysical, he and Mary moved to Tulsa in 1940. While working days for BP Amoco (then Standard Oil of Indiana), he attended the University of Tulsa Law School at nights for four years earning his LLB, and was admitted to the Oklahoma Bar in June, 1946. Nick worked as a Patent Attorney at BP Amoco for 40 years, retiring in 1977. He had many other interests, the primary one being the Astronomy Club of Tulsa, in which he was an active member and officer for more than 40 years. During this time, he built several telescopes utilizing surplus optics from World War II, as well as hand-ground lenses and mirrors. Nick was particularly proud of the one he built to view sun spots,

Nick was also a faithful supporter of Chamber Music Tulsa for many years, and a member of All Souls Unitarian Church. Nick was a man of steady habits and varied interests. From his days on the farm and his own inventive spirit, he gained the experience to build and fix most anything, a knowledge he shared with many. He loved both his immediate and extended family, and shared himself through photography, family travel, and the appreciation of good music. Nick was preceded in death by Mary in 2000. He is survived by: his sister, Rita Hovis and her husband, Jack of Salem, OH; his son, Fred and his wife, Lynn Rivers of Tulsa; his daughter, Elinor Cleaver and her husband, Merritt of Madison, CT; his daughter, Jean Curtis and her husband, David of Frankfort, IL; 6 grandchildren; and 6 great-grandchildren. Graveside service will be held at 12:30 p.m., on Thursday, March 16, 2006, at Memorial Park Cemetery, 51st & Memorial, Tulsa. In lieu of flowers memorials are requested to the Astronomy Club of Tulsa, 25209 E. 62nd St., Broken Arrow, OK 74014 to aid in the renovation of the observatory. The Fitzgerald Ivy Chapel, 585-1151. Published in the Tulsa World on 3/12/2006.

DAVIDS ASTRO CORNER

By David Stine

The cancelled Messier Marathon had one of the largest attendance in several years as over 20 people tried their best to see an M-Object through the thickening clouds. Everyone seemed to have a great time and we did locate as many as ten objects before the clouds completely covered us. The dinner was excellent. Ann and Toms dish was fabulous. Move over KC, we have some new cooks in the club. However we did miss you cookies. We all did get to see a beautiful occult of the Pleiades by the moon. It was interesting watching the stars pop in and out from behind the moon. What was probably the highlight of the evening was watching a weather balloon in Tim's scope and then as Tom was checking it out it exploded and everyone got to see the shinny pieces float slowly down in the scope. Ron has actually found a couple of weather balloons on his site, but this was the first one to see explode. A very interesting sight. I believe I found the most M-objects at 10, but I can't consider that as really being qualified to be the winner. Several others found as many as 9, Tony White, and it went down from there. It was amazing what Rod Gallagher's imaging equipment could pick up through the clouds. We were looking at M67 on his screen and the stars in the cluster were pin point as if you looked up to where the cluster was it was nothing but clouds. We also got to see some of Gerald Millers and Rods latest images which were very nice. We kept getting reports that bad weather was moving in so we had to call it a night. Driving home through the storm was interesting also. Nice lightning show and wind and hail and lots of rain. Thought I saw a tornado in the north but it was hard to tell through the rain. It's a year away, but mark your calendars for next years Messier Mara-

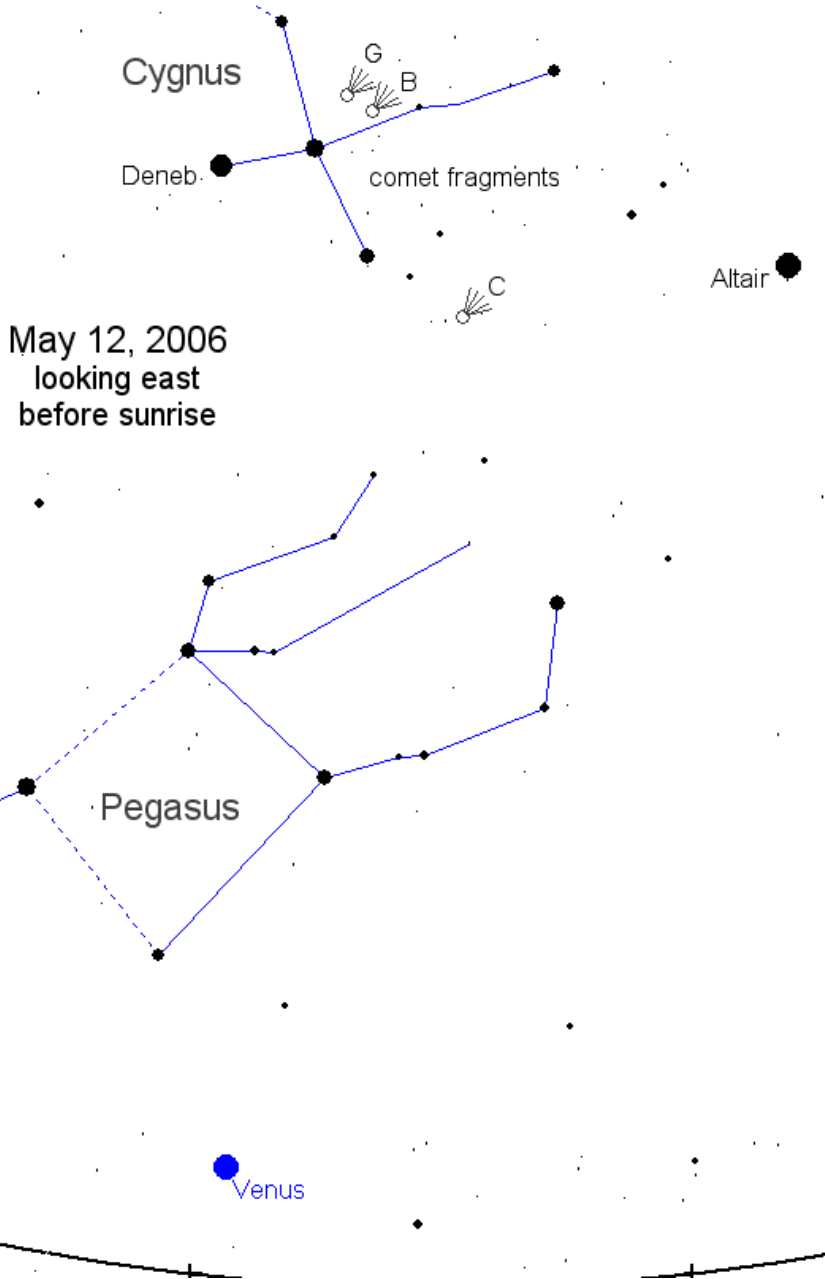
thon March 17, 2007. I promise clear skies and green shamrocks. Some pictures from the marathon are on the web at: <http://astrotulsa.com/Gallery/TUVA/MM2006/TUVAMM2006.htm>

Comet 73P/Schwassmann-Wachmann has really become an interesting object on this Earthly approach. As of today 25 fragments have been found meaning there are 17 mini comets heading our way. Remember Comet Shoemaker Levy that broke into 9 fragments and bombarded the planet and left dark holes in its clouds that could be seen from earth in backyard telescopes? No we don't have to worry about that happening here because the fragments will not come that close to earth, but they will make an interesting sight as they come closer. Already you can see at least three of the fragment, B,C, and G moving along side Bootes after 10p.m. in the East. They are up all night, but the moon is starting to interfere. There is an excellent chart of C and B showing the path at <http://www.skyhound.com/sh/comets/73P.gif> through April and another chart for all three when they are at their brightest May 12-14 at http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2006/images/73p/skymap_north_12may06.gif At the brightest it will be traveling through Cygnus and should make for a great wide angle photo. C is a little bit dimmer than expected at this time so it has been downgraded from a possible Mg. 2 to Mg. 4 which still will make for a nice comet. While C is slower than expected B has had an outburst of a full magnitude. What this means is that it could become brighter than the 5th Mg. that was earlier expected. Of course it is hard to tell at this time depending on how long the outburst will continue. As I said the moon is going to

interfere the first part of April but by the middle of April the comet and its fragments will be something to watch. On April 21st the comet passes close to Alpha Corona Borealis. On May 1st it passes by the corner star in Hercules called Zeta, a wide angle shot will get the comet and M13 in the view. Then around 10p.m. on the 7th the comet will pass just a few arc minutes from the famous Ring Nebula M-57, now that will be some photo. By this time the comet may have a nice dust tail also. This comet will be zooming across the sky at 13 arc minutes per hour. On May 11th the comet will only be 2 degrees SE of the open star cluster NGC 6940. This cluster is 6.3 Mg. so you can compare size and brightness. By May 13th under a Full Moon the comet passes 10 degrees due north of the globular cluster M15 in Pegasus. This is also its closest approach 0.08AU which is the closest approach of any comet since IRAS-Araki-Alcock in May 1983. It is also the 12th closest approach of any comet in history. It is interesting to note that the comet stays within 0.15AU to Earth for 30 days from April 28th to May 27th. If you remember the bright comet Hyakatake in 1996, it only stayed that close to Earth for 7 days. Everyone should get out and start observing this fragmented comet from now

through May. This could be a public comet that you will start getting questions about in the next few weeks. Both May issues of Astronomy and Sky and Telescope have more information and charts on the comet. Don't miss a night of Comet 73p Schwassmann-Wachmann 3.

That's it from my corner this month. Keep your eyes to the sky. I will update you on



Getting ready for Summer Star parties.

June 16-18, 2006 MidStates regional convention will be in St. Louis.

Featured guest will be **John Dobson**, sidewalk astronomer - inventor of the famed Dobsonian telescope design.

Keynote speaker - **Ray Arvidson**, Head of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Washington University - Report on Mars Rover accomplishments.

Details at www.MSRAL.org and <http://www.slasonline.org/msral2006.htm>

*** NEW - June 22-25 Heart of America Star Party -

The Kansas City club is starting a new regional star party on a 40 acre dark sky area south of KC. Camping sites and meal packages are available. This is a newly acquire

tract in a national wildlife area. Information & Registration Brochure at <http://www.askconline.org/brochure.pdf>

July 23 to 28th 13th Annual Nebraska Star party This star party is held at a Nebraska State Park and features boating, fishing and other activities during the day. Plenty of things for the family to enjoy while the astronomers sleep in and prepare for the next nights observing. Details at <http://www.nebraskastarparty.org/>

ALCON 2006 - August 4-5, 2006 in Arlington, Texas

National Astronomical league convention will be hosted by the Texas Astronomical Society of Dallas will host the national convention this year. Details developing at <http://www.astroleague.org/al/alcons/alcon06/alcon06.htm>

Lands Tidbits

By John Land

Welcome Recent New Members: Belen Mancilla, Lynne Kline, Josh Hawkins, Ryan Hamilton, Bill Steen, Harold Wascher

DON'T LET YOUR MEMBERSHIP or Subscriptions LAPSE !! Check your MAILING LABEL for membership expiration date. Those receiving Email should get a reminder when your membership is up for renewal or you may contact John Land. You may also renew magazine subscriptions through the club for substantial discounts.

GUEST SIGN IN SECTION on the Website is already bringing the club new contacts for potential new members.

Changing EMAIL - When you change your email or mailing address be sure to send me the new information so I can update the club records. You can use the Join feature on the club web page to make changes.

ON LINE Club Memberships and Renewals:

Adults - \$ 35 per year includes Astronomical League Membership
Students \$ 15 without League membership.
Students \$ 20 with League membership.

* Student shall be defined as a person 25 or younger actively taking courses at a college or trade school or persons still in High school or below.

* Adult Students over 25 may join at the student rate for one year if enrolled in an Astronomy course in an area college.

We now have an automated on line registration form on the website for new AND renewal memberships plus magazine subscriptions. You simply type in your information and hit send to submit the information. <http://www.astrotulsa.com/Club/join.asp> You can then print a copy of the form and mail in your check.

Astronomy Club of Tulsa
25209 E 62nd St
Broken Arrow, OK 74014

Magazine Subscriptions: If your magazines are coming up for renewal, try to save the mailing label or renewal form you get in the mail. Do NOT mail renewals back to the magazine! To get the club discount you must go through the club group rate.

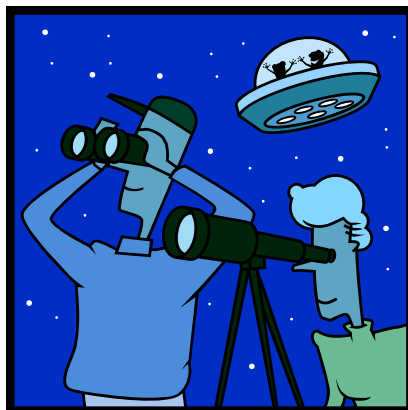
Astronomy is \$ 34 for 1 year or \$ 60 for 2 years. www.astronomy.com

Sky & Telescope is \$33 / yr www.skyandtelescope.com

Sky and Telescope also offers a 10% discount on their products.

NIGHT SKY is \$18 / yr A exciting new bi-monthly magazine for beginning or casual astronomers. <http://nightskymag.com/>

Address Corrections- Email changes - Questions: You may forward questions to the club call our message line at 918-688-MARS (6277) Or go to the club website and Fill out an



Astronomy Club of Tulsa membership (\$35/year) includes membership in the Astronomical League and subscription to ACT's "Observer" and AL's "Reflector". "Astronomy" (\$34/year) and "Sky and Telescope" (\$33/year) are also available through the club. For more information contact John Land at 918.357.1759. Permission is hereby granted to reprint from this publication provided credit is given to the original author and the Astronomy Club of Tulsa Observer is identified as the source.

OFFICERS

President:

Tim Davis
918.665.8134

Vice-President:

Jerry Mullennix
918.712.9776

Treasure:

John Land
918.357.1759

Secretary:

Teresa Kincannon
918.637.1477

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Steve Chapman
Craig Davis
Rod Gallagher
Tamara Green
Dan Lamoreaux
Jim Miller
Denny Mishler
Tony White

APPOINTED STAFF

RMCC Observatory Director:

Tim Davis—918.665.8134

RMCC Facility Manager:

Craig Davis—918.252.1781

Membership Chairman:

John Land—918.357.1759

Observing Chairman:

David Stine—918.834.1310

New Members:

Denny Mishler—918.274.4772

Newsletter Editor:

Richie Shroff—918.835.3565

Webmaster:

Tom McDonough—918.665.1853

Astronomy Club of Tulsa

918.688.MARS (6277)

<http://www.AstroTulsa.com>

ASTRONOMY CLUB OF TULSA
P.O. BOX 470611
TULSA OK 74147-0611