



# The Meridian

The newsletter of the  
Quad Cities Astronomical Society

December 2008

<http://www.qcas.org>

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## November Meeting Minutes

Dale Hendricks

The meeting started out with a discussion of possible presentations for future meetings. Ideas for the presentations were a demonstration of Meade My Sky, which Gary won at Astrofest. Steve said he could possibly talk about how to use the Digital Setting Circles on the 20 inch telescope. Other topics include the constellation of the month report and a possible presentation on Black Holes.

The 2008-2009 Quad Cities Dining Tour book is available for sale. The cost is \$35, with \$10 going to the club and \$25 to company that provides them. Jim Rutenbeck is the contact person if you would like to buy or sell the books and it was noted that with the absence of a raffle at this year's EISP, any sales will help the club.

Dale shared with the group that he would look for a computer projector for the society to use for showing our excellent photos. We could put one to good use.

Wayne brought a combination 90 degree diagonal and eyepiece holder that used to be used on the large Augie Went refractor that is currently stored in the observatory at Sherman Park.

Dana explained that the title of the newsletter, the Meridian, is actually an acronym for May Every Ready Individual Delve Into Astronomy Now.

Steve made a Treasurer's report and shared that the bank was charging fees based on what they understood the Society to be a business account so every transaction was charged a fee. The account balance at the time of the meeting was \$1,258.26. The account with First Midwest is closed and the new account with Deer Harvester Credit Union is now open.

Dale reviewed the presentation he and Joe made to a local Boy Scout troop on 19 November. Approximately 15 scouts and adults were on hand, including the Assistant Executive Scout for the Illowa Council, who later sent Joe a note of thanks for the presentation. The Asst. Executive Scout also noted that they are one few troops that has a planetarium and theirs is located at Camp Loud Thunder.

Some discussion followed about the CD that Mike Valdez made that contained the history of the QCAS and previous Meridians. Steve said he'd bring copies to the next meeting.

The fix on the 20" scope works – photos are better and the drive has superior accuracy. The telescope's polar alignment can now be adjusted and the scope is fully isolated from the floor – no wobble as people climb the steps or stomp around it. Thanks and a good job to those who were part of the fix!

The last star party is December 27.

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# Presidential Ramblings

Dana Taylor

Well, it's that time of year again. In addition to it being Christmas, Chanukah and other great holidays, this is also the time of year when, what I believe are, the best constellations are reaching their peak viewing positions. The Pleiades, Orion and Taurus are all well up in the sky early enough that one can get in some decent observing and still make that 0600 (0500 for me) wakeup call without losing too much sleep. This also makes for some of the hardest observing conditions that exist for the entire year.

Excuse me while I reminisce a bit.

I remember being out with Ron Pearson at 0400 in a parking lot at Loud Thunder looking for Halley's Comet. The temperature was a balmy  $-20^{\circ}$  (that's minus twenty!). That's the coldest I've ever had my scope out. I was wearing long johns, jeans, shirt, snow suit, down parka, moon boots (what else!), titanium-lined inner gloves, foam-lined mittens and a fur cap inside my parka hood. All that to observe the comet for about twenty minutes before the dawn wiped it out. I'd do it all over again, though.

I remember a Messier Marathon party at Eden Valley in Johnson County, west of Maquoketa, IA. The ground was completely covered with snow which caused so much ambient light that no one needed to use a flashlight all night. The weird thing, though, was that the sky was very dark and we were still able to observe all the Messier Objects as well as a lot of much fainter ones. More later...

"Clear Skies!"

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## Observations

Karl Adlon

In the summer, after we have shown the public all of the easy objects, I have looked for and noticed the Double Cluster maybe 30 degrees up in the north-east. I know this is a pretty object that is naked eye and looks attractive with any optical aid.

Late this evening, the Double Cluster will be a little north of overhead. In darker sky locations, it's visible as a fuzzy area east of the eastern arm of the "W" in Cassiopeia. Take a look in whatever optical aid is available and you are in for a Holiday treat.

A Google search on "the double cluster" will find loads of information on this object. The December 7, 2007, Astronomy Picture of the Day (APOD) and [www.Astrophoto.net/double\\_cluster.html](http://www.Astrophoto.net/double_cluster.html) are among those websites that have good images. Many months ago, possibly longer than that, I noticed an image in Sky and Telescope of the Double Cluster.

After a few seconds thinking how pretty the picture was, I noticed that a handful of the stars were quite reddish compared to the majority and said to myself, "I have to see if I can see that through the eyepiece." I also noted that one of the red stars was positioned along the line between the cluster centers and was by itself.

The next time I was looking through the telescope at the Double Cluster, I remembered this and looked for the central red star. A couple of "nopes" and *there it was*. Looking at it and comparing it to the other stars, it was rather apparent that this one was red. Then I looked for more red ones and found *them*. In pointing this out to other telescope users, I have had some see them and others not.

Hopefully, before the next meeting, you can see if you can see what I'm talking about. Then, let me know. Did you "see red" or not? Regardless, isn't the DC pretty?

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## Upcoming Celestial and Club Events

Dec. 10 – 11	Wed. – Trs.	The Moon occults the Pleiades (approx. 1:30-2:00 a.m.)
Dec. 12	Friday	Moon at perigee and largest full Moon since 1993
Dec. 13	Saturday	Saturn at quadrature in early morning
Dec. 13 – 14	Sat. – Sun.	Geminid meteor shower peaks but beware of the day-old full Moon
Dec. 18 – 19	Trs. – Fri.	Asteriod 487 Venetia occults a star in Gemini for 6 seconds
Dec. 20 – 21	Sat. – Sun.	Longest night of the year; solstice at 7:04 a.m. on the 21st
Dec. 27	Saturday	New Moon; Neptune is 1.5 <sup>0</sup> NNW of Venus; Star Party
Dec. 28	Sunday	Asteroid 267 Tirza occults a star near the Circlet of Pisces for 2 seconds
Dec. 28 – 29	Sun. – Mon.	Mercury is 2 <sup>0</sup> -3 <sup>0</sup> below Jupiter in West after sunset; crescent Moon nearby
Dec. 30 – 31	Tue. – Wed.	Mercury and Jupiter less than 1.5 <sup>0</sup> apart in SW after sunset

Jens-Wendt Observatory – Quad Cities Astronomical Society – Located at Sherman Park in Dixon, Iowa

Monsignor Menke Observatory – St. Ambrose University – Located at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center in Dixon, Iowa

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## Member Astrophotos



Gary and John spent a chilly night in late November taking photos. In John's words, they decided to try for a few obscure objects like the Flaming Star Nebula (IC405, left) and a smaller face-on galaxy (NGC2403, right). Other photos are available at [http://www.johncbaker.com/Astrophotography/2008\\_11\\_26b/index.html](http://www.johncbaker.com/Astrophotography/2008_11_26b/index.html).

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This just in from Karl:

I did get this shot. I don't think it's TOO bad, considering: I shot it through the window; I had to quick grab my camera; and the lens doesn't match the camera, so I had to hold the lens to the camera body, while focusing; before the clouds really covered everything.

Maybe someone did better

Karl



## QCAS Contacts

Elected Officers			Volunteers and Committees		
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All other contacts can be sent to [qcas@mchsi.com](mailto:qcas@mchsi.com) or mailed to the club at P.O. Box 3706, Davenport, IA, 52808.

Members are also reminded that anyone can submit articles for *The Meridian*. Submit articles to Joe Bannon at [jbannon@midamerican.com](mailto:jbannon@midamerican.com) and [mzbannon@aol.com](mailto:mzbannon@aol.com).