



The Meridian

The newsletter of the
Quad Cities Astronomical Society

April 2009

<http://www.qcas.org>

March Meeting Minutes

Dale Hendricks

Members in attendance at the meeting:

| | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--|-------------|---------------|
| Steve VanHyfte | Craig Cox | Joyce Ericksen | Chris Hebel | Robert Custer |
| Dana Taylor | Karl Adlon | Jay Cunningham | John Waack | Cecil Ward |
| Gary Poliquin | Dale Hendricks | Alison McCrary* (family membership with Dale H.) | | |

Steve presented the Treasurer's report including the information that we now have to file with the IRS even though the club is a less than \$25K per year non-profit organization. This has not been necessary until this filing year. The filing process is complicated and requires more information than has been previously submitted but Steve said the submittal is complete. Due to the complexity of the filing process, Steve was jokingly asked to be Treasurer for Life. It is an honor-filled title but he wants to consider the opportunity before giving us his answer. Nice report, Steve, and thanks for the diligent work.

Steve also informed us that the clock drive for the Sherman Park scope was \$1800 and we now have \$1200 in our accounts. Voluntary donations are always welcomed to help with the business of the Society – several members expressed more than passing interest in helping with donations to defray expenses and fund necessary equipment.

Star Parties – next item on the agenda. Dana suggested checking past editions of the Meridian for dates. He provided an update on the Dewitt school interest for their disadvantaged students. At previous meetings when this topic was brought to the group, we discussed having a few members provide instruments for their viewing but Dana has been informed that the teacher responsible for the group has access to an acceptable scope through the Area Education Association. This led to a discussion about experiences with students at the Menke Observatory where students were less than disciplined and hanging on the scope, all over the ladder and in the observatory itself.

Following on this item, Dale presented information from Joe Bannon who met with students at Paul Norton School 9 March. There were 60 1st grade students and 25 5th grade students. He also provided information on two events in May. There is a potential presentation to the Bettendorf Middle School Science Club 1 May (Dale will cover this event) and on 2 May the Bettendorf Family Museum is sponsoring an Astronomy Day. Joe will be attending and helping to conduct this one (Dale may also assist) and Joe needs a solar filter (Karl to provide?).

Joe stated that he can manage but others are welcome to attend as well. Dale underscored Joe's statement that outreach from our group is important. He made a commitment to contact the Museum's event coordinator, Glenn Boyles, who is a big science and astronomy promoter. There may be more events at which we might participate and his help and interest would be of value.

Dale provided an update on the viewing at Sherman Park Saturday, the 14th. Gary Charnoski was there to provide training for those members in good standing who have been Society members more than a year. Joyce Ericksen and Dale took advantage of the indoctrination. Good job, Gary – much appreciated. Also in attendance to view were Craig Cox who had his mounted binoculars which provided excellent viewing. Ken Boquist brought two instruments and set them up on a pad. Chuck Jacobsen the ranger also participated and, most notably, made the bathroom in the basement of the house available to club members. He told us all we needed to do was let him know when people would be at the park and the door to the basement would be unlocked and available for our use. The sky was excellent and members present were treated to views of Venus in crescent, M-43, the Owl Cluster. Through the 20" scope it was a wonderful treat for those of us novices who had never had the pleasure of viewing it. We also had a brief view of the ISS it transited from west to east across half the sky to the south then disappeared into earth's shadow. We were not able to locate Comet Lulin. Thanks to all who made the night memorable and who took advantage of a great sky.

The next topic was a lengthy discussion of road trips to points of interest in the near vicinity. This included Yerkes, Fermi Lab, Pal(isades) Dow Observatory (CAA) and the SE Iowa Astronomy Society in Burlington. There was also discussion of the radio telescope array close to North Liberty. Joyce volunteered to be the coordinator for any trips that people are interested in making. This conversation was a continuation of the discussion from our last meeting – notes below.

John W. raised the idea of some spring or summer road trips and mentioned the Yerkes Observatory, Fermi Lab and the Adler Planetarium as possibilities. Cecil mentioned Torus, a telescope maker in Iowa City and others mentioned a 24" telescope in Peoria.

Gary Poliquin gave us an introduction to the LBT and we then watched a 15 minute video on the LBT located on Mt. Graham near Tuscon, AZ. The video provided details on the unique spin technology used to create the two large mirrors. Listed below is the web site address for this remarkable instrument:

http://lbtwww.arcetri.astro.it/firstbinocularlight_press_release.htm

Next meeting we will watch a longer video on the Vatican telescope and observatory. Thanks to Gary for a most enjoyable and educational session.

Observations

Karl Adlon

In a star, light elements are fused into heavier elements up to iron, releasing energy to feed the stellar process. In a supernova, elements heavier than iron, like gold, are created by taking energy from the supernova and fusing the elements formed during the star's life into heavier elements.

This article has nothing to do with this stellar nucleosynthesis. It has to do with my spouse's wish to convert the kitchen hardware from gold colored to pewter colored and the final work performed by the author to accomplish this transformation, the lesson of which may be useful in a number of applications, including amateur astronomy.

The story picks up following the replacement of gold handles, knobs and hooks with pewter items. The final replacement was the pantry doorknob with a pewter colored (brushed nickel was as close as could be found) handle-type unit obtained at Home Depot. Removal of the offending unit was easy. Then the plastic box containing the new unit was opened and the instructions found. Step 1 appeared to be how to put the necessary holes in the door, so that was skipped.

Next, the handle was trial fit in the door and the bolt assembly held against the door to check the fit. It appeared not to, as the strike would need to be inset about 1/4". Alternatively, a notch could be made in the door to provide an offset of the handle, allowing the strike to be positioned correctly. Since this entailed less effort and the notch would be under the unit cover, this would be the approach taken. But before that, another check of the instructions.

Step 1 (the skipped step) showed the measurements for the door versus door handle unit. Huh, there's two . . . wait, what's this? A pin can be pushed down out of a slot and the bolt assembly extended?! Push, pull, now everything fits. No door notching needed. Assemble, tighten and it's done.

The lesson (I'm starting to believe that as you get older you forget things you knew before and that the saying "He's forgotten more than you'll ever know" has some validity) is "Read the Instructions". Don't just skim them. Read them. Have them with you as you do the job. Save yourself some frustration.

And don't poke me, literally or figuratively, when I forget this lesson again.

Here's a tip: If you have access to a computer, you can scan your telescope instructions and you'll always know where a backup copy can be found. Ditto for any other important documents you can think of.

Upcoming Celestial and Club Events

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|-----------------|---|
| April 6 | Moon and Saturn within 5 ⁰ to 7 ⁰ at dusk. |
| April 11-26 | Zodiacal light visible in west 80 to 120 minutes after sunset. |
| April 13 | Moon and Antares very close at dawn. |
| April 16-24 | Mercury at magnitude 0 or better and approx. 10 ⁰ above western horizon at dusk. |
| April 19 | Crescent Moon 1 ⁰ to 3 ⁰ to the upper right of Jupiter. |
| April 22 | Lyrid meteor shower peaks between 1 and 4 a.m. Also, Moon occults Venus in the dawn sky |
| April 25 | Public Star Party – Jens Wendt Observatory |
| April 26 | 44 Capricorni (5 th mag.) visible between Jupiter and Ganymede at dawn. Also, the Pleiades visible between Mercury and the Moon at dusk. |
| April 28-May 1 | Mercury is less than 2 ⁰ from the center of the Pleiades; visible through binoculars in WNW 45-60 minutes 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

QCAS Contacts

| Elected Officers | | | Volunteers and Committees | | |
|------------------|----------------|--|---------------------------|---------------|--|
| President | Dana Taylor | dana@nelsontaylor.com | Facilities | Jim Rutenbeck | jim@qonline.com |
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All other contacts can be sent to 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 and mzbannon@aol.com.
