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Janis Seaton

nightwatch

Volume 18 Number 7

nightwatch

July 1998

President's Message

Those of you who chose not to drive north to Springville to enjoy a joint meeting with David Chandler's new club--well, you missed a lot of fun! Dave and Billie were gracious hosts, and the Springville folks went out of their way to make us feel at home. Besides, you'd never imagine what a beautiful home Dave and Billie have, without having seen it!

It is a function of the vagaries of the moon's orbit that our General Meetings occur very early in the month, right now. That means our July meeting is looming close upon us as I write this: July 10th! Please take note that our speaker will be Bob Branch, talking about "Observing the Sun." We are all aware that the Sun is "our star". But, how much do we really know about it? Come listen to Bob, and you'll know more!

It's nomination time, again. The Board will be presenting our proposed slate of officers at the July meeting. Let me urge you, once again! Those of you who wish to enjoy a leadership role in the club--or who are not satisfied with the way it's been managed lately--have the opportunity to participate. Do not be shy, or expect someone to guess your interest! Step forward and let us know. Competition in electoral office is what keeps the club dynamic! Once again, however, if you want to nominate someone, please clear it with them, first. Do it now! The August meeting will include elections.

Both the July and August Star Parties will be at Kennedy Meadows. Be aware, if you've never been there, that there are no facilities at the observing site. Nearest (pit) toilets are 1/4 mile away, right beside the Kern river. About 1/4 mile the other direction is the General Store, where you can take care of all those "I forgot" items--or pick up some of those munchies that we never seem to have enough of at a star party. In spite of the lack of luxury, those who have been there find

the gorgeous dark skies worth the drive and the "hardships"! You really haven't seen the Milky Way until you've seen it there! Every time I go there, I repeat again to myself that we owe a big "Thank you!" to Jack Gardner and Mike McFadden for finding it, for us!

As mentioned in the last *Nightwatch*, we will have a special event in September: a joint meeting with a motorhome camping group at Observatory Camp Ground, near Palomar. They expect to go down early and hold sites for us near the grassy central meadow where we can set up our scopes. All they ask is that we give them a guided tour of the sky--preferably a "fireside chat" around their campfire in the gathering dusk. Then, once it's fully dark, the fun and fellowship begins!

Patrick Nicholson

June Star Party

My plan was to be on my way early--maybe 9 a.m.--to enjoy a leisurely trip up through Bakersfield and old Highway 99 and Route 65 up to Porterville. But... Saturday's are like that! I finally pulled out just after 10 a.m., heading

PVAA Events Calendar

| Month | Star Party | General Meeting | Board Meeting |
|-----------|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| July | 25 | 10 | 3 |
| August | 22 | 14 | 7 |
| September | 19 | 11 | 4 |
| October | 24 | 9 | 2 |

west on the 210 Freeway. It's been years since I followed it to the end. What a pleasure the way it bypasses Los Angeles and Hollywood to dump you onto the 5 Freeway out in the boonies, far beyond L.A.! I got my Mozart and Haydn tapes going, relaxed, and listened to my 4-banger hum.

By the time I started down the Grapevine grade, however, my stomach was asking, "How about dinner?" Never mind that I had a snack just before I left! Well, dinner it was at the "Farmer's Table". These commercial farmers don't set a spread like the ones I remember from childhood, but it was adequate. After all, the only competition was Denny's! On my way, again, I discovered (or confirmed) that it was only a short distance to Bakersfield. As I rolled past all those eatery signs, I wished I'd waited! But, regrets get you nowhere.

Highway 65 branched off shortly beyond Bakersfield, a two-lane highway that could be frustrating, if you're trying to push for speed. I wasn't, so I just settled back to a sedate 55 and enjoyed the scenery--dry, yellow, rolling hills, interspersed with frequent plantations of irrigated fruit trees, all looking wonderfully green and healthy. What Southern California used to be! Porterville turns out to be a typical small agricultural town: several fruit packing houses, lots of car dealerships and fast food places, dusty empty lots, and a wide, virtually empty main street. Quite a few buildings that looked to date from the 20's and 30's, including a JC Penny's that looked like it dated from that time. Curiosity satisfied, I headed out Highway 190 for Springville.

Ray Magdziarz' map proved ideal, including a distance measurement from the 65/190 intersection to the Globe Drive turnoff to get to the Chandler house. Mid afternoon, I pulled into their spacious driveway to find Ray Magdziarz, Joe Moreno, Jan and John Seaton, Bob Marvos and Lee Collins already there. That house is a marvel! Situated on a hillside, it was designed to follow the contours of the hill, providing wonderful views in virtually all directions. A large pool and separate spa added to the enjoyment, as did the spacious deck and outdoor dining area. Dave and Anna Gardner arrived shortly, followed by the Springville folks (I think I got the names right): Amy Cook, Chandra Cook, Norma Cook, John Flaven, Joe Flaven Daron Flaven and Diana Arajo. Everybody enjoyed cold drinks, chips and dips all afternoon, while the Chandlers and some of their Springville guests frolicked in the pool.

The wonderful pot-luck dinner started fairly late (see what you missed??). There was so much and such variety that one could fill up just by tasting each dish. By the time dessert came along, I was way beyond eating any more--and way beyond my diet, as well! But, who diets when it's wonderful food and wonderful company?

Our arrival at the site was a la Chandler--that is, verging on full dark! All the PVAA folks lined up behind one of the locals and followed her out to the site. It's private property, marked by a big barn and several outbuildings. We set up on the looping drive, only about 200 yards from the

Tule river (every wonder where the Tule fog comes from?). We had a good southern horizon, but north was interrupted by trees and houses. Not perfect, but a good, dark sky! I came prepared to search out a whole slew of NGC globulars in Sagittarius and Scorpius, down to about Mag 10. Sure enough, all of them I found were clearly visible, although early on, one was on the edge, using peripheral vision.

Ron and Chris Hoekwater arrived, just as we got started, so I got Ron to verify some of my findings with his fine 22-inch Starsplitter. Dave was helping Springville beginners get started, using the binoculars to learn how to find their way around the sky. What a fine, natural teacher Dave is! We miss you, Dave!

NGC 6522 and 6528, just off the spout of the Teapot, were fascinating to the Seaton--and also to me. It's not that common to have two globulars within the field of view! But, with that wonderful dark sky--and an occasional word of advice from Dave--I managed to find all my targets in Sagittarius. Scorpius proved more difficult, due to a lack of obvious guide stars. Stand by for a challenge in that area for the next What's Up!

By 1 a.m., I was noticing moisture on my charts, as well as condensation on my Tel-Rad. Frequent wiping kept me going for a while, but by 2 a.m., I packed it in and went to bed. The voices faded out not long thereafter. There would be pre-dawn planets--but who bothered? We all started stirring about 6:30, and headed out to breakfast and the long ride home, tired, but happy! A good observing night, lots of good food and good friends! Who could ask for anything more!

Patrick Nicholson

PVAA Officers and Board

Officers

| | | |
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| Programs..... | Roy Schmidt..... | 909/980-1867 |

Internet address:

<http://www.cyberg8t.com/patrick/PVAA.htm>