



Newsletter of the Pomona Valley Amateur Astronomers

Amateur  
astronomers  
just get better  
looking . . .



Pay club dues at the General Meeting,  
or by mail. \$30 individual, \$40 family.

Volume 26 Number 10

nightwatch

November 2006

### President's Address

We have several events still to come in the short time remaining in 2006. On Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> PVAA will be at Barnes and Noble in the Montclair Plaza for the transit of Mercury. This is a great chance to introduce the public to astronomy. The transit takes place from 11:00 until 4:00. If you have solar filter for your telescope and you can be there (even if it's only for part of the transit) I hope that you will plan to attend.

On November 18<sup>th</sup> we have our much-anticipated star party at the Dos Palmas Nature Preserve near Mecca Beach on the Salton Sea. Through an arrangement with the park rangers, we will be allowed into a part of the park closed to the general public. The area is behind gates so it will be necessary for all to meet at the gate at the same time. We will meet ranger Steve at the gate 2 hrs before sunset. This will give us plenty of time to set up. The area is miles away from any lights. We will have running water, bathrooms and picnic tables all to ourselves. **The gates will be locked after we enter** except for an emergency. (Frank Busutil will have keys). **Tent camping is not allowed there but sleeping in vehicles or sleeping bags on the ground is OK.** Access is on a 2 wheel drivable dirt road.

Our 10th annual Holiday Dinner will be at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at Jouni's Cafe on Central Ave. in Upland, just south of Foothill Blvd. This is a chance to meet the people that you might ordinarily see only dimly by starlight in a whole different setting. This year there will again be a raffle with prizes for everyone. You are welcome to bring a spouse, family

member, or guest. Be sure to fill out a form with your menu choice and get your check to Ludd at the next meeting or to the club PO box by November 24. I hope that many of you will be able to join in on the festivities.

Ron Hoekwater

### November Program

Mike Simmons will speak to the PVAA on Friday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>. He will speak to us about his (cont. p.2)

#### Star Party Sites

- (MBC) Mecca Beach Campground
- (CS) Cottonwood Springs campground, Joshua Tree Natl. Pk
- (CC) Cow Canyon Saddle, near Mount Baldy Village
- (MS) Mesquite Springs campground, Death Valley National Pk
- (CWP) Claremont Wilderness Park parking lot
- (KD) Kelso Dunes
- (WM) White Mountains ( Grandview )
- (CGT) Calico Ghost Town Campground

#### PVAA Events Calendar

Month	Star	Star	General	Board
November	11/18 (MBC)		11/3	11/30
December	12/16 (CWP)		12/8	12/28
January	1/13 (MBC)		1/5	12/28

## General Meeting

The Club Holiday dinner is coming up on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Let us know your meal choice and send the Club \$20 per person for your dinner to join us for a fun evening. A reminder – annual dues are collected in August and September please make sure you are paid up to enjoy another year of Night-watch, star parties, and interesting lectures by renewing your membership. Club members are eligible for discount subscriptions to Sky and Telescope magazine (\$32.95) and Astronomy Magazines (\$34.00). Ludd has a dozen 2007 Astronomy Calendars for sale to us at a reduced price. See him to start your holiday shopping early.

Club member David Kary will be hosting a Meet the Meteors night on November 19<sup>th</sup> at Chino Hills State Park. Check out their web site for details. The Club will be holding three public star parties to observe the upcoming transit of the sun by Mercury. We will have members and scopes at the Sycamore Elementary School in Upland, Condit Elementary School in Claremont, and the Barnes and Noble bookstore at the Montclair Plaza. Please contact Ron if you can help out with one of these events. The transit takes place on Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> from about 11am – 4pm.

Lee spoke to us about the newly named dwarf planet Eris (formerly known as Xena). It is currently located in the constellation of Cetus the whale but will be a bit difficult for us to see with our amateur scopes as it is a mere magnitude 18. Eris' yearly rotation around the sun takes 557 years and it is located 44 degrees off the ecliptic. It will be interesting to discover more about this object which stirred up so much controversy.

## October Speaker

Our main speaker for the evening was by Dr. Richard Olson and the title of his talk was "The Gould Controversy at the Dudley Observatory: conflicts between Popular and Professional Science." Popular science at the time consisted of public demonstrations of the power of electricity and public viewing through telescopes, which was a very popular activity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thomas Jefferson was a big fan of teaching practical science to the people – including the chemistry behind bread and butter making as well as brewing and wine manufacturing.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, moves were afoot to professionalize science. Studies became less about practical applications and more about making new discoveries.

Ormsby McKnight Mitchel (1809 – 1862) answered an advertisement for West Point, applied, and was accepted into the school, during a time when they were a little more desperate for students. Ormsby taught math and navigation while in the Army. His next career was as a civil engineer and his projects included some of the canals built during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the transcontinental railroad. (cont. p.3)

recent trip to Kurdistan in northern Iraq. His plans included a visit to the Iraq National Observatory, a world-class facility when it was nearing completion in the early 1980s. It was hit with missiles by Iran and then the US after Saddam's invasion of Iran and Kuwait. Mike was in touch with the astronomer – now living in London – who founded the observatory and hopes to get it going again. This presentation will be Mike's first about his trip, which he plans to write about for Scientific American's news pages and the New York Times Science section.

Mike was the founding president of the Mount Wilson Observatory Association and remains active in that organization and at the observatory. He is familiar with all of the observatory's facilities and has used many of them. With a particular interest in the history of the observatory, Mike has written several articles on various historical topics and often lectures on the observatory's early days. A long-time amateur astronomer, Mike is also a past president of the Los Angeles Astronomical Society.

## PVAA e-mail and hotline

Those interested in getting information which was not received in time for the newsletter, please send your e-mail address to Ron Hoekwater at

[astro.ron@juno.com](mailto:astro.ron@juno.com)

To get the latest news on star parties, club meetings, special events and astronomy happenings call

909/596-7274 or

visit our website at [www.pvaa.us](http://www.pvaa.us)

## PVAA Officers and Board

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President.....	Ron Hoekwater	909/391-1943
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Speaker.....	Walter Brown.....	909/989-6535

His next move was to Cincinnati where he briefly tried his hand at law, without success. His next effort is in teaching, and he was a professor of math, engineering, mechanics, and machinery. In addition, he gave lectures on Astronomy – and his students loved this new subject. In 1841, Mitchell was invited to speak to the Cincinnati Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge on Astronomy, which was also well received. Some of his lectures attracted over 3000 attendees.

Ormsby convinced the city to build the first observatory in the United States (Harvard University built the second one a year later) and approached the public for funds. The \$7500 he needed was raised through the sale of 300 shares of stock at \$25 per share. He then trained in England with the Astronomer Royal to learn telescope making so he could turn his dreams into reality. The telescope went into operation in 1845.

Though the public loved the observatory and science was done there, Mitchell served in his position without pay. The Cincinnati Observatory was the location where a companion star to Antares was discovered, the first astronomical publication in the US was published, and the first working chronograph was developed for automatically recording the beats of a clock – necessary for accurate astronomical observing.

Mitchell left the Observatory for awhile; hitting the lecture circuit to make money then went on to found the Dudley Observatory in Albany, New York. It was named for the largest contributor, Blandina Bleecker Dudley in honor of her late husband, Senator Charles Dudley. This telescope also relied on donations from local citizens and went into operation in 1856. Mitchell became the paid director of the Dudley in 1859.

Benjamin Apthorp Gould became the next director of the Dudley. He had trained in Germany as a student of Karl Friedrich Gauss. Both Gould and the Scientific Council, which was created in 1856 to plan the work to be done by the new telescope, were soon at odds with the trustees of the observatory. Gould and the Council were on the same page with Mitchell that the public had a right to observe at the telescope and that their purpose was to carry out both science and practical studies – such as furthering the practice of map making. The trustees, on the other hand, had plans to make the Dudley a premier institution, devoted to scientific research and only used by professional scientists. While the trustees prevailed in the end all parties came out losers. Gould never worked as a professional scientist again and the Dudley Observatory produced no significant research for more than 20 years.

These conflicts persist to this day as governments and the public discuss whether public money will be spent for practical science – for the military or for commercial uses – or to simply expand our knowledge of our world as we seek to understand the origins of the universe, locate extra-solar planets, or probe to the core of the Earth.

Thank you so much for an interesting talk, Dr. Olson.  
Claire Stover

## H.O.T.S. Conference

This past weekend, Oct. 6-8, I had the pleasure of participating in the H.O.T.S. (Hands on the Sun) conference sponsored by Meade Instruments. I joined the Meade 4M community, (for no cost), to get my discount for the conference which ran me \$99.00 for the weekend. There were some thirty participants plus guest lecturers including David Levy, Greg Piepol, and Gary Palmer (who spoke to our club last year about solar imaging.) The group made a trip to Mt. Wilson on Friday and David Levy lectured in the 100" dome. We also toured the 150" solar telescope but it was cloudy and viewing was impossible. Participants came from as far away as North Dakota and Chicago. The keynote speaker was an optometrist from Canada who gave an informative talk called "These Old Eyes; They Ain't What They Used To Be." David Levy focused on the poetic side of astronomy. His talks were titled "Discovery is Poetry" and "Shoemaker-Levy 9 and Jupiter: The Great Comet Crash." Levy pointed out that he was all prepared a couple of weeks ago to speak about how amateur comet discovery has come to an end with the advent of new and powerful robotic observing programs, when he discovered a new comet just 1' from Jupiter on the last Monday morning of this September; so much for giving up on comet hunting. Irvine Valley College provided the venue for our conference and had a solar observing festival on Sunday afternoon after our conference wound up. The college was very generous with their facilities and did a bang up job in cooperation with Meade setting up Coronado telescopes and exhibits for the public to enjoy.

One of the activities I most enjoyed was a tour of Meade's factory on Sunday morning. I was surprised how large it is. I was impressed with the focus on precision and the enthusiasm with which the employees spoke of their facility. It made me prouder than ever to be an owner of a couple Meade telescopes and a Coronado PST. Meade provided ample opportunities to try out their Coronado product line during the daytime hours and we had a star party on Saturday night in their parking lot. While the viewing was bad, Meade users still were able to be tutored on Meade imaging and observing programs which several participants found very useful. I went up to the dome on top of the Meade factory and enjoyed viewing objects from a 14-inch telescope they had mounted there.

I heartily enjoyed my weekend. It was neat to get to rub elbows with some who's who in astronomical/solar observing and I learned quite a bit about how to maximize my PST's potential. I am now looking forward purchasing a video capturing device so I can transfer my video images of the sun to my pc for printing. If you are interested in solar observing, I recommend attending H.O.T.S. next year. It has been held in Arizona in the past but since Meade acquired Coronado, the conference will probably continue to be held nearby.

Laura Jaoui

### Nightfall

For three days, starting October 20th, Riverside Astronomical Society hosted their annual Nightfall star party at the Palm Canyon Resort in Borrego Springs. I decided to check it out, with the idea of observing and then retiring to a nice hotel bed. I could only attend for Friday and Saturday nights while the activities started on Thursday afternoon. The event seemed well attended. There was an astrophotography workshop lead by Mike Unsold. I did not attend this but I did enjoy the Saturday evening potluck, magic show, and star talk.

Dennis Mammana who will be speaking to the PVAA in February on the Aurora Borealis gave the talk. At Nighfall he gave a tour of the night sky. It was informative for both experienced and novice observers. Best of all, he was an engaging speaker and I look forward to his talk in February.

Several of us set up our solar observing equipment for a Saturday afternoon observing session that was pretty well attended. I got to show off my new Coronado PST for the first time with the public. I'll be using it with my electronic eyepiece to observe Mercury's transit on November 8th.

I spent my "free time" checking out the local town, population 3,000, and hiking in the nearby campground. There is a nature center near the campground and plenty of hiking trails. On the hike I saw a herd of big horn sheep. It was quite exciting to view these majestic animals close up.

The Palm Canyon Resort is not too luxurious but it is comfortable. While meals are served at the resort, better meals are available in town restaurants. The viewing was pretty good. The resort actually puts red bulbs in all their lighting fixtures during Nightfall. The resort's spirit of cooperation should be commended.

I tried to stay awake for the Orionid meteor shower but could not. Observers, however, were treated to some beautiful and bright meteors.

There was a nice sense of camaraderie at Nightfall. PVAA hosted a star party on the same weekend as Nightfall. It sounded like observers there had fun too. It was too bad that one could not attend both.

Members of RAS, PVAA, Orange County Astronomers, San Diego Astronomers, and members of the public all came to the dark skies of Anza Borrego for Nightfall. I hope to return another time and enjoy the night skies and the other natural surroundings in the Anza Borrego State Park area.

Laura Jaoui

## 10th ANNUAL PVAA HOLIDAY DINNER PARTY

The 10th Annual PVAA Holiday Dinner Party will be held on **Friday, December 8, 2006**, at 7:00 pm.

Party location is **Jouni's Cafe**, 922 N. Central Avenue, Upland. The dinner cost is \$20.00 per person, member or guest.

Payment, along with your choice of dinner, **MUST** arrive at the PVAA mailbox by Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup> ( the day after Thanksgiving) or be given to Ludd Trozpek before that date.

Please fill out this form then return it with your payment, payable to PVAA, to Ludd Trozpek or mail to:

PVAA  
PO Box 162  
Upland , Ca 91785

### Dinner Menu

#### The Choices Are:

#### 1) French Shish Kabob (Bacon wrapped Filet)

Member   
Guest

#### 2) Chicken Breast with Lemon & Mushroom Herbs

Member   
Guest

#### 3) Stuffed Shrimp

Member   
Guest

Dinner will be served with salad, bread and butter, beverage soda, tea, or coffee, with cheesecake for desert. The table will have vegetables with dip and sautéed mushrooms.

Member Name

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