

P.O. Box 162
Upland, CA 91785
Address correction requested
Return postage guaranteed



nightwatch

Newsletter of the Pomona Valley Amateur Astronomers

Amateur
astronomers
just get better
looking . . .

Volume 22 Number 12

nightwatch

December 2002

President's Message

This is the season for family get-togethers and festivities. For several years now our PVAA family has enjoyed an "end of the old year, bring in the new" dinner party in December. This gathering affords a chance to socialize with other sky watchers and their loved-ones and even to talk about something other than astronomy.

This year, as for the last few, our club dinner will be held at Jounie's on Central Ave. in Upland. The price is a modest \$16.00 per person. More information is available elsewhere in this edition of *Nightwatch*.

Apart from the gaiety of feasts and celebrations, reunions of family and friends and gift giving, this is a time of reflections on the past and of plans for the future. Over the last year our membership has grown and we find ourselves on a firmer financial footing. We enjoyed a tour in the dome of the 200-inch "Hale Telescope" at the Palomar Observatory and numerous star parties and guest speakers. It has been a year, which we PVAA members can look back on with some sense of satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment.

Plans for 2003 include a joint star party with the Riverside Astronomical Society at their site in Landers on January 3rd, 4th, and 5th. In March we have scheduled another planetarium show at Pomona College. This will be a second

chance to see demonstrated the college's wonderful new Goto projector, for those who missed the first opportunity last summer. We will do our best to continue to find interesting and entertaining speakers for the general meetings and to offer observing opportunities to our members and the general public. I wish everyone a joyous holiday season and a happy New Year.

Ron Hoekwater

Club Announcements

We had two new visitors to our Club meeting in November who found us through our Web site. Thanks to Patrick Nicholson, our Club Webmaster, for helping more like-minded folks find our Club.

The PVAA will be planning a 4th trip to the historic 60-inch telescope at Mt Wilson. Please let Board Member Lee Collins know if you are interested in

PVAA Events Calendar

Month	Star Party	General Meeting	Board Meeting
December	7	13	5
January	4	17	9
February	1	14	6
March	1	14	6

going. We will try for a date next year in either spring or fall at a time when there is little interference from the moon. The price per person will be \$60 for members and \$75 for non-members.

By the time you read this, our December Holiday Party will be days away, on Friday, December 13th. I hope to see many of you there.

Our current membership year runs from September 1st, 2002 to August 31st, 2003. Dues are \$27, and a few members have yet to renew. We hope you will join us for another year of what you enjoy from the Club – whether it is Star Parties, special events like trips to Mt Wilson and solar eclipse parties, interesting lectures, our monthly newsletter, or all of the above!

We have one Astronomy Calendar 2003 available for \$8. If we get advance orders for at least 5 books, we will order the Royal Canadian Astronomical Society Observer's Handbook for 2003 at \$18 each. Contact Ludd to add your name to the list.

Please welcome Larry Pall as a new PVAA Board member. Larry was nominated and elected during our meeting to serve a two-year term. We thank him in advance for his time and input into making our Club a fun and interesting one for all its members.

What's Up

Lee Collins' What's Up this month featured the area of the sky around Pegasus. Messier was busy in this area of the sky and many of the fuzzy objects he named are in this area. They range from globular clusters to several galaxies, including the Andromeda Galaxy – a "mere" 2.5 million light-years away and the object farthest away from us visible to the naked eye in a clear dark sky.

November Speaker

Our speaker for the evening was Alex McConahay, Star Party Director for the Riverside Astronomical Society. Through the Club web site, Alex gave us

a virtual tour of his club's activities, history, and resources. The Web site is www.rivastro.org. It contains not only links to RAS' newsletter and details of Club activities, it has links to many other Astronomy resources such as weather, time, and charts of visible objects. Links to RAS member's Web pages reveal descriptions of home built observatories and stunning astro-photography of both items within and around our solar system.

DIRECTIONS TO THE PVAA PARTY

Jouni's Cafe is located at 922 N. Central Avenue, Upland. About a tenth of a mile south of Foothill Blvd, on the East side of the street. It is at the East side of the mini-mall. A small parking lot is on the premises

..PVAA 24 HR. Hotline.

Get the latest news on the star party, club meetings, special events and astronomy happenings.call **909/596-7274**

Visit or website at

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

PVAA Officers and Board

Officers

President.....Ron Hoekwater.909/391-1943
 Vice President..Joe Hillberg.....909/985-5617
 Secretary.....Claire Stover....909/988-9747
 Treasurer.....Ludd Trozpek...909/624-3679
 VP Facilities.....Bob Akers.....909/946-0228

Board

Lee Collins..... 626/852-9442
 Ray Magdziarz.....909/626-8303
 Alberto Barba.....
 Larry Pall.....

Directors

Nightwatch.....Ray Magdziarz....909/626-8303
 Membership...Ludd Trozpek 909/624-3679
 Publicity.....Dorene Hopkins..909/983-5584
 Programs.....Roy Schmidt.....909/980-1867

Alex told us of the saga of the purchase and ongoing development of their very own observing locations in Landers, California. The first site, now called the Landers Lane Site, could not be developed as they wished due to legal issues, which can often get in the way of progress these days. Their second Landers location goes by the very impressive moniker of the Goat Mountain Astronomical Research Center (or GMARS). Their final plan for GMARS includes paved areas for parking both cars and RVs, a large telescope field and a camping area, along with electricity for running the telescopes.

The exciting news is that Alex extended an invitation from their Club to ours for a joint January star party at their GMARS location from Friday, January 3rd through Sunday the 5th – or whatever part of those dates works for you. I hope many of you will be able to attend this event. We will get in some great observing time under the dark skies of Landers, but more importantly, will meet the friendly folks at the RAS and share our

hobby, our telescopes, and our expertise with that of our neighboring club. Thank you for your presentation and your invitation, Alex. Many of us hope to join you in January, to start the New Year of 2003 right - under the starry sky.

Claire Stover

My Leonid observing Experience

Like many of you, I have eagerly anticipated this year's Leonid meteor shower. In 2001 the Leonids put on a spectacular display and although some of our members have seen better meteor showers, it was the best one I have ever seen.

This year (although some were predicting 10,000-25,000 meteors per hour at the peak) the forecasts were very iffy. But, unfortunately with all of the uncertainty about the time and intensity of the shower one thing was beyond doubt. The moon would be up all night and nearly full for the period of highest Leonid activity. Because of this and the

Continued on page 4,, column 2

I apologize for having printed the wrong cost for the PVAA Holiday dinner. The cost is **\$16.00** per person. **Editor**

6th ANNUAL PVAA HOLIDAY DINNER PARTY

The 6th Annual PVAA Holiday Dinner Party will be held on **December 13, 2002**, at 7:00 P.M. The location is **Jouni's Cafe**, 922 N. Central Avenue, Upland.

Again, this year our financial situation will not permit us to subsidize the dinner cost of \$16.00.

The deadline for payment, along with your choice of dinner, **MUST** arrive at the PVAA mailbox by November 30, 2002, or be given to Ludd Trozpek before that date.

Please fill out your name on the reverse side of this page with your choice of dinner and mail it or give it to Ludd Trozpek with your payment of \$16:00 per person.

Mount Wilson 60-inch Telescope Trip

Among of the most thrilling experiences of my PVAA life (or of my life in general for that matter) have been our group trips up to Mount Wilson to spend a night observing through 60-inch telescope. I was afforded views of the planets Jupiter and Saturn that rivaled images from the Hubble space telescope. Revealing 17th magnitude stars with ease and intricate detail, invisible in a lesser instrument, planetary nebulae such as the Ring and the Cat's Eye were nothing short of spectacular. A night with what was once the largest telescope in the world is a unique and unforgettable adventure for any amateur astronomer.

At this time, another PVAA observing run on Mount Wilson is under consideration. We will try to get a date sometime next spring or if that proves impossible then next autumn. The cost would be \$60 for members and \$75 for nonmembers. (We must pay a fee to the Mount Wilson Institute.) Board member, Lee Collins, has agreed to act as the coordinator of this club event. If you are interested in attending or have any suggestions regarding this exciting and educational club activity let Lee know at the general meeting .
Ron Hoekwater

December Star Party

The December star party will be at Joshua Tree National Park, Cottonwood Springs Campground. Near the center of loop "B". About twenty five miles past Indio, turn North for 7 miles at Cottonwood Springs road off Interstate 10

From Page 3, column 2

fact I had to work in the morning, I ruled out any long drives to potential dark sky sites for the 2002 Leonids. I would have gone to Cow Canyon Saddle (above Baldy Village) but my understanding is that access has been closed because of the fires.

And so I ended up in my backyard reclining on a lawn chair. At about 2:05 on Tuesday morning, November 19th, I was in position. The chair was situated such that my shed blocked the glare of the floodlights from the truck yard to the north, my house blocked the street lights out in front and to the south, and a very large and dense shrub immediately at my back blocked the moon high in the western sky. I was staring directly up at what is commonly referred to as the "head" or the "sickle" of Leo, although I usually think of it as a backwards question mark. With the city lights and the moon working together to reduce the limiting magnitude, not all of the stars in Leo were visible. I would say that anything much fainter than about 4th magnitude was all but invisible.

Almost as soon as I got myself established I started to see some faint meteors. At least it wasn't going to be a complete washout. At about 2:30 AM the frequency of sightings appeared to pickup a

Dinner Menu

The choices are:

	Member	Guest
1) New York Pepper Steak topped with Mushrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) Broiled Chicken Breast with Lemon & Mushroom Herbs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Baked Salmon with Dill Hollandaise Sauce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The dinners will be served with salad, bread and butter, with cheesecake for desert. The table will have Vegetables with dip and Sauteed Mushrooms.

Member name _____

little. This trend seemed to continue for about 30 minutes and then tapered off again. At about 2:30 a distinctly blue “star” rapidly brightened and then faded from sight right inside the sickle of Leo. This, I interpret as a head-on meteor. It had no trail because it was moving directly towards me. When I talked to my brother Chris (he lives about 2-3 miles away) the next day, he reported seeing a similar event at about the same time. I believe we observed the meteor. During the period from 2:49 until 2:59 I counted 14 Leonids meteors. (This, with my view of a large portion of the sky blocked and light pollution obscuring the faintest meteors.) One Leonid that didn’t get away was about magnitude –2 and left behind an ion trail that persisted for several seconds. In a dark, clear sky it would have made an even more breath-taking sight.

At 3:10 AM I went back inside and to the comfort of a warm bed. Based on the very limited observing that I did this year, my impression is that this Leonid shower wasn’t nearly as active as the 2001 shower was. But (if not for the unfavorable position of the moon) it was somewhat comparable to the very good 1998 shower, which I observed from Cow Canyon Saddle. The 1998 display featured many bright meteors, many with persistent ion trails, a few with smoke trains lasting 30 minute or more, and rates of about 100 per hour. I judge the 2002 Leonids to have been worth sacrificing a couple of hours of sleep to see. At our next meeting or star party tell me about your Leonid observing experiences. Or write an article about it and submit it to Ray Magdziarz at *Nightwatch*.

Ron Hoekwater

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING LOCATION

The general meeting for January will be held in room B126, Beckman Auditorium. As you enter the foyer of Galileo Hall, turn left, go through the door, turn right and go all the way to the end of hall.

Leonids from Ontario

How many of you saw the Leonid meteor shower on the night of the 18th? My show was observed from the city of Ontario, I sat in a lawn chair facing east – in the moon shadow from our house. With my view of about ¼ of the sky in the direction of Leo, I was able to see 36 meteors in about one hour, from 2:15 – 3:15am. The peak I saw was from 2:30 – 2:50am, just as the predictors had anticipated. I can only imagine how many were visible to an observer under darker skies. I was lucky enough to see the Leonids last year from Cottonwood Springs in Joshua Trees, but then the shower conveniently peaked on a Saturday night instead of on a workday evening so I just had to make do this year!

Claire Stover

Leonids from Claremont

At about 1:15 AM, my wife Irene, my daughter, Sue and I drove to the large parking lot at the intersection of Mills and Mt. Baldy Road in Claremont. We were the only car in the lot. The camping cots were set up and we lay back looking up and to the East, North and South. West was out of the question because the moon was so bright.

The sky was very clear and the weather was cold. Sue counted 71 meteors while we were there. There were at least 3 very bright meteors, and one left a trail that lasted a few seconds. We left at about 2:45 AM, because the shower was diminishing and we were cold. When we left, there were over a half dozen cars in the lot.

There were many cars going East on Mt. Baldy road, in fact at one time it was like a caravan of at least 20 cars at a little past 2. I just wonder if they were going to Cow Canyon Saddle, since at previous meteor showers, the saddle parking lot was quite full.

Ray Magdziarz
