



Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association

March, 2015

Website: www.midhudsonastro.org

Yahoo Group: MHAstro

President : Willie Yee
Secretary: Jim Rockrohr
Newsletter Editor: Rick Versace
Publicity: Paul Chauvet
Parks Liaison:

Vice President: Candace Wall
Treasurer: Ken Bailey
Membership Coordinator: Caryn Sobel
Webmaster: Paul Chauvet
College Liaison: Dr. Amy Forestell

Directors: Karl Loatman, Steve Carey, Joe McCagne, and Dave Lindemann

Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Mid Hudson Astronomical Association, February 17, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM by Vice President Candace Wall in the Coykendall Auditorium at SUNY, New Paltz, NY. (President Willie Yee is at the Winter Star Party in Florida.)

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the last meeting as published in the newsletter be approved. The motion passed.

Officer's Reports:

Membership: Caryn Sobel was not present.

Treasurer: Ken Bailey not present. See his report in the newsletter. He reports that there are no large changes since last month. Ken will post a list of available Tee shirts on the Yahoo website.

Treasurer's Report for the month of February, 2015

Date: 11 March, 2015

Bank Balance:	\$2068.36
Outstanding Checks:	\$ 634.84
Outstanding Deposits:	\$ 48.97
Ending Bank Balance:	\$1482.49
Checkbook Balance:	\$1482.49
Balance with Bank:	Yes

Ending balance total: \$1482.49

Notes: Outstanding checks is a speaker's honorarium, insurance and reimbursement.
Outstanding deposits are from payments for memberships.

Respectfully submitted: Ken Bailey
Treasurer

Outreach: Candace Wall reported on upcoming events:

- **Rhinebeck Relay for Life (American Cancer Society):** May 30-31 at Dutchess County Fairgrounds. Candace is coordinating and has a team set up for MHAA if you would like to attend. There is no cost. We can go on 5/29 to reconnoiter the area. Eric Myers will set up the Solar System Model.

Publicity: Paul Chauvet is looking for new ways to advertise our events. There was a discussion about posting and distribution on Facebook.

Webmaster: Paul Chauvet present. All OK.

Upcoming programs: Candace Wall present.

Old Business:

- Club telescopes and resources:
 - o 13 inch dob mirror to be recoated. Jack Chastain still working on arranging it.
 - o 100 mm Celestron AP is available; see Willie.
 - o Full asset list is posted on the website.

New Business:

- Any volunteers for the new jobs Willie described in the January Newsletter? (No volunteers at this meeting.)

Visitors/New Members:

2 visitors introduced themselves. There was a total of about 21 people present for the meeting.

Observing Reports:

- **Chatham School** – Solar observing with Joe Macagne and Willie Yee. Good weather and good time had by all.
- **Annual Dinner** – 13 people attended. Good food and company.
- **Awards** were given. See the last newsletter.
- **The February star party** has been moved one week due to weather.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM. Next meeting is on March 17th.

The program that followed was “Can we see the Flag on the Moon?” by Steve Bellavia.

Submitted by James Rockrohr, March 10, 2015.

After the February meeting minutes mentioning that Steve Bellavia conducted an observing session in the College Diner parking lot after the meeting.

Views of Comet Lovejoy were enjoyed by those present. (submitted by Paul Granich)

March Speaker

Chad Orzel is a professor, blogger, and author of popular-audience books about physics. He has a BA in Physics from Williams College and a Ph.D. in Chemical Physics from the University of Maryland, College Park, where he did his thesis research in the laboratory of William D. Phillips (1997 Nobel laureate in Physics) at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, studying collisions between laser-cooled xenon atoms less than a millionth of a degree above absolute zero. He then spent two years as a post-doc at Yale University in the group of Mark Kasevich, studying quantum effects in a Bose-Einstein Condensate. In 2001 he joined the faculty of Union College in Schenectady, NY, where he is now an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Since 2002 he has run the physics weblog *Uncertain Principles* (<http://scienceblogs.com/principles/>), now part of the ScienceBlogs network. He is the author of two books explaining modern physics through imaginary conversations with his German shepherd, Emmy, *_How to Teach Physics to Your Dog_* (Scribner, 2009) and *_How to Teach Relativity to Your Dog_* (Basic, 2012); these have been translated into over a dozen languages. His latest book, *_Eureka: Discovering Your Inner Scientist_* (Basic, 2014) describes the way that everyday activities make use of the same process used for great scientific discoveries.

From the President:

WINTER STAR PARTY 2015

This was my fourth Winter Star Party in five years (I skipped last year in favor of the trip to Chile). For those of you who are not familiar with it, the Winter Star Party is a week-long event in the Florida keys, sponsored by the Southern Cross Astronomical Society. This was their 31st year.

I was a bit uncertain about going this year at the time the tickets went up for sale (you have to decide quickly, because in past years they have sold out). Mainly, would the long drive be worth it? The lousy viewing conditions over the past few months tipped the balance in favor of going, and the three successive snowstorms left no doubt- I WANTED OUTTA HERE!

I spent my first night on the way down with Dave and Pamela Rosseter. They have a home with a back yard that adjoins a beautiful forested valley and pond, complete with a bald eagle nest. I go to see a live bald eagle for the first time through their spotting scope. The skies are dark enough that Dave is planning on building an observatory to permanently house Fritz, the 25” Obsession.

I spent the next night in Atlanta with some old friends. The cold weather was following me south, and it really did not get warm until the next day when I entered south Georgia. I met Dave Cotterell from Toronto in Homestead. He was so eager to



get out of the north that he got the days mixed up and arrived a day early!

Monday the 16 of February, we entered the Girl Scout Camp on Scout Key (next to Big Pine Key; you will not usually find it labelled on the map) and set up. I was staying in a Chickee, which is a screen sided cabin with a thatched roof, and roll-up tarps to cover the screens. Monday night was partly cloudy, but some observing was possible between the clouds until about midnight. The usual suspects of M42 and Jupiter were observed, along with comet C2014/Q2 (Lovejoy) in which a faint trace of tail could be seen. The seeing was rock steady, something the WSP is famous for. I could have gone way beyond the 250X I was using on Jupiter. I then turned my attention to objects on the Astronomical League's Sketching Program. <https://www.astroleague.org/programs/sketching-observing-award> My goal for this trip was to get a good start on this program. I got 7 objects before giving in to the clouds about midnight.

Tuesday night threatened to be not so good. We were able to observe the emersion of Io from behind Jupiter, and I was able to clearly see six stars in the Trapezium of M42. It got cloudy early so we battened down for the night. That night a hughmongous thunderstorm came through with close lightning strikes, wind, and driving rain that went through the thatched and patched roof of the chickee. The next morning there was about an inch of water in the rocker box of my dob, but no damage.

Wednesday featured 20mph+ gusty winds that persisted all day, all night and all the next day. I was able to do some observing and sketching, in spite of having pages blown out of the notebook and pencils blown off the table. It was a wearying effort, and I gave up about midnight.



Thursday was the best night of the week. It was still somewhat windy early in the evening. I took a nap between 21:00 and 23:00. When I woke up the wind had died down. I went out to the beach to get a view of the Southern Cross through binoculars, then came back to my site to do more sketches. I got a good view of Omega Centauri through my Teeter dob. It appeared somewhat different in that aperture, with a flocculated appearance, what seemed like large voids within the cluster, something I did not see in Chile, nor have I seen in any photographs. Continued observing and sketching until well after 3 AM.

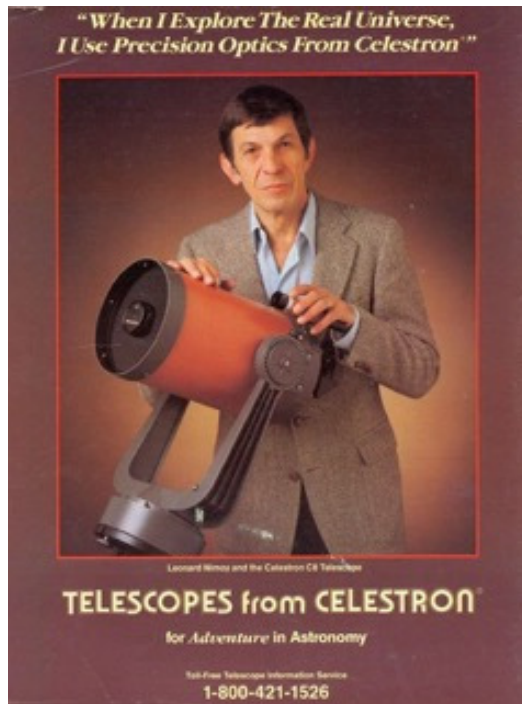
Friday was the drawing, and as usual I did not win anything. The weather forecast was not looking good for Friday night and possibly Saturday, and many folks were leaving as it was. Rather than hand around being bored for most likely no viewing (and it turn out I was right), I decided to head out, and spend a day at Cape Kennedy.

I had been to the visitor's center about 30 years ago. It is now three times bigger than it was then, with several new buildings, the shuttle Atlantis, and TWO Imax theaters. The Saturn V rocket is housed in a separate building. I took a bus tour that visited the Vehicle Assembly Building, launch pad 39A, the giant crawler that transported the shuttles and other large rockets from the VAB to the launch pad, and got to view another bald eagle and an alligator. I finished up with a ride on the Shuttle Launch Simulator, in which you get to (sort of) experience the eight minutes of a shuttle launch. Highly recommended.



So, although the weather was uneven, I did achieve my goal of getting a good start on the AL Sketching program. I finished 27 sketches, plus the Venus-Mars-Moon conjunction which I caught on the way back. Returned home to another snowstorm and -9° F temps. Still trying to figure out why.

Dr. Willie Yee
MHAA President



2015 Star Party Schedule

Date	Time	Sunset	End Civil Twilight	Nearest New Moon
January 16th	7:30 PM	4:51 PM	5:22 PM	January 20th
February 13th	7:30 PM	5:26 PM	5:55 PM	February 18th
March 20th	8:00 PM	7:08 PM	7:36 PM	March 20th
April 17th	8:30 PM	7:39 PM	8:08 PM	April 18th
May 15th	8:30 PM	8:09 PM	8:41 PM	May 17th
June 19th	8:30 PM	8:34 PM	9:09 PM	June 16th
July 17th	8:30 PM	8:28 PM	9:01 PM	July 15th
August 14th	8:30 PM	7:58 PM	8:28 PM	August 14th
September 11th	8:00 PM	7:13 PM	7:41 PM	September 12th
October 9th	7:30 PM	6:25 PM	6:52 PM	October 12th
November 13th	7:30 PM	4:37 PM	5:07 PM	November 11th
December 11th	7:30 PM	4:25 PM	4:56 PM	December 11th

Directions To The Star Party Site—

[Lake Taghkanic State Park](#) is in the town Ancram, NY. The park entrance is on the Taconic Parkway 10 minutes north of the exit used for Wilcox park.

Star Parties at Lake Taghkanic are held in the West Parking lot, next to the beach. The skies are darker than in Wilcox, with less stray light to deal with. The horizon is also much lower, especially to the south and east, making many more targets possible.

IMPORTANT: all events at Lake Taghkanic State Park require an **RSVP** which includes license plate number of the car you are bringing (please do so via [Meetup](#)). The park is patrolled by state police, and all non registered cars will be ticketed and risk our use of the park.

General Information:

- ♦ For the foreseeable future, all indoor meetings will be held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month in Coykendall Science Bldg., SUNY New Paltz (directions above) at 7:30 PM. All indoor events are FREE! All are welcome. The presentations are generally geared towards teenagers and up. For more information, call the Club Hotline.
- ♦ Dates listed for star parties are the primary dates. The rain date is the following night unless otherwise noted. Only one session is held for a given weekend, usually on the primary date, Friday, unless postponed (usually due to inclement weather) to the backup date, Saturday. Exceptions to this are noted in the “Scheduled Events” section above.
- ♦ All outdoor events are FREE! All are welcome. If you bring small children, it is **your** responsibility to keep a close eye on them. Please do not bring white-light flashlights. Instead, bring a red astronomer’s flashlight or an ordinary flashlight covered with several layers of red cellophane. If in doubt about the weather, check the status of the event at www.midhudsonastro.org.