

April 2012



Charlotte Amateur Astronomers Club

www.charlotteastronomers.org

Next Meeting: Friday April 20, 2012

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Myers Park Baptist Church

Address: 1900 Queens Road

From Vermont to Virginia to Florida: 1500 Miles of Star Parties

Star Parties are a delightful part of amateur astronomy. Not only are they enjoyable social events, they also offer excellent sources of information and inspiration. Because of darker skies or changing latitudes, objects can be observed that often cannot be seen from Charlotte.

Each star party has its own character. CAAC's own Southern Star Astronomical Convention is considered by many to be the Cadillac of star parties. Stellafane offers perhaps the oldest and most historic event. The Winter Star Party involves the Florida Keys in February...pretty much a no brainer.

Jim Pressley, our presenter, will take us on a photographic tour, highlighting star party similarities and differences with a focus on Stellafane - and introduce a brand new event, the Staunton River Star Party in southern Virginia, easily reachable from Charlotte later in 2012.



Stellafane is special! Telescope builders and mirror makers are almost obliged to make at least one pilgrimage to the Granddaddy of all star parties and the origin of amateur mirror making in America. This past summer, for the first time, Jim made that journey. Stellafane features great dark skies, unusual telescope designs and competitions in mechanical design and optical excellence. Door prices can exceed \$2500 in value. At this year's event, an entire set of Ethos eyepieces from Televue was given away. A trip to Stellafane includes the opportunity to see the famous Porter Turret Telescope (1930) and the Hartness Turret Refractor (1911). Both are unique and fascinating historical instruments.

Join us and learn about the old and the new. Then get ready to travel!

Our Presenter: Jim Pressley

A long time mirror maker, telescope builder and visual observer, Jim prefers objects bright enough to be seen well in moderate size telescopes. He especially enjoys star parties and has participated in gatherings from Stellafane (43 degrees north latitude) to the Winter Star Party (24 degrees north latitude). His current project involves comparing the qualities of vintage and modern eyepieces to learn first hand which are best suited to a variety of targets and conditions. Along with Raleigh Astronomy Club members Gary Held and Phyllis Lang, Jim taught



classes in astronomical mirror making and telescope building for more than 20 years, assisting in the production of over 200 telescopes. Jim served as Director of the NC State University Crafts Center and as an arts administrator at NC State for almost 40 years.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Two Accomplishments and One Election

Accomplishment 1.

At the March CAAC meeting, Observatory Director Ken Steiner announced that the new building (representing Phases I & II of our construction project at the Gayle H. Riggsbee Observatory) was complete. WOW!! Double WOW!! It doesn't seem that long since the initial "barn raising" day on a cold Saturday in November, 2010. It is truly a wonderful facility that will serve the club well into the future. There are a few small things being finished for program and outreach, but the actual building is complete! Be on the look-out for information on a special celebration ceremony at the observatory on Saturday, June 6th. You won't want to miss it!! Any time after visiting the observatory complex, PLEASE be sure ALL the doors are locked when you leave.

Accomplishment 2.

The scholarship auction at the March meeting brought out a great collection of auction items including several telescopes (TWO 8-inch telescopes), eyepieces, finders, many really nice astronomy books, a stay at Jim Lamm's home in Arizona Astronomy Village, among many others. An enthusiastic group of members (and a few visitors) obviously recognized great opportunities. A total of \$2,467 was raised for our program that awards a scholarship check to a deserving physics/astronomy student. This continues the program for the next two years. Our deepest thanks to Tom Blevins and Bob Cantu who planned coordinated, collected donations and ran the auction AND to ALL the donors of the auction items AND to all those who bid – making this event a tremendous success!

One Election

Our club constitution calls for election of officers for the next club year (June – May) at the April meeting. With key assistance from Vice-president Phil Foust, the officer team presents the proposed slate of candidates:

President – Mark Hoecker
Vice-President – Rob Carl
Secretary – Steve Rogish
Treasurer – Jim Gaiser
Observatory Director – Ken Steiner

There will also be an opportunity for any nominations from the “floor” (assuming the nominee is willing to serve). A BIG THANKS to out-going officers Phil Foust (Vice-president) and Skip Copp (Secretary) for doing a great job in serving the club this past year.

FINALLY, these actions I’ve described exemplify the interest, commitment, and generosity of our club membership. To all of you who have contributed to our success in all the things we do as the Charlotte Amateur Astronomers Club --- THANK YOU.

...Mark Hoecker

FROM THE OBSERVATORY DIRECTOR

There will be an Observatory Operator training session on Sunday, April 22 at 5:00 pm at the Gayle H. Riggsbee Observatory (GHRO). This is for members that have paid their \$10.00 Observatory Operator fee. Contact Ken Steiner (704-953-3902 or ken@steiner4.com) to confirm your participation or if you need a map to the GHRO.

CAAC Upcoming Monthly Star Parties:

Saturday April 21, 2012
Saturday May 20, 2012

Star parties are held at the club’s **Gayle H. Riggsbee Observatory** in Taxahaw, SC, weather permitting. Contact the Observatory Director, Ken Steiner, for directions to the observatory. All members and their guests are welcome.

CAAC Yahoo Group

Consider signing on to the Charlotte Astronomers Yahoo Group site:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/charlotteastronomers>

The Yahoo website is used to share information about local astronomical events, star parties, informal gatherings, and general information related to club activities among members. The group is open to all CAAC members.

FROM THE SECRETARY

New Members

James Watts, Larry & Lynda Nester

Visitors at the March Meeting

Autumn Carey, Joe Cartner, Gary & Andrew Murphy, James Watts, Justin & Turquoise White

Newsletter questions or announcements? Please contact Skip Copp via email at gcopp@carolina.rr.com or at (704) 568-3732 about newsletter-related matters. Also, if your email address changes, please notify Skip.

FROM THE TREASURER

As of April 13, 2012

Strategic Plan Balance	\$ 13,884.00
Operating Fund Balance	\$ 42,374.98
Total Balance	\$ 56,258.98

CAAC Annual Dues and Fees

\$35.00 - Family or Individual membership. Dues are pro-rated for new members joining in the middle of the year. Membership renewals are due each year on October 1st.

Note that starting January 1st dues are prorated for new members for the balance of the year, which ends September 30th. So if you are interested in joining, please see me for the proper amount to pay.

\$6.00 - Students up to 18 years of age.

\$10.00 - Observatory Fee. Payment of this fee allows the member unlimited access to and use of the club's observatory facilities and equipment after being checked out by the Observatory Director.

\$25.00 - Observatory Pad Fee. This fee is assessed to members that have a private observing pad or observatory on the club's property. Any member wanting to build a private pad or observatory should contact the Observatory Director.

Sky & Telescope and Astronomy Magazine Subscriptions

Discounted magazine subscriptions can be obtained through the club for the following price:

Sky & Telescope:	\$32.95 per year
Astronomy:	\$34.00 per year or \$60.00 for two years

Please make checks payable to CAAC and give them to Jim Gaiser, Treasurer, at a monthly meeting or mail to:

Jim Gaiser
8624 Lenten Rose Court #203
Charlotte, NC 28277

Club members are now able to renew their own subscriptions to S&T magazine via mail or phone. Members may mail in the renewal notices with payment or renew via phone using a credit card. Indicate on the renewal notice that you are a member of the Charlotte Amateur Astronomers Club. This is only for renewals! The club treasurer must still process new subscriptions and must annually validate a subscriber's membership in the CAAC. This revised process only applies to S&T magazine. The club rate for S&T subscriptions is still \$32.95 per year. Subscriptions to Astronomy Magazine, both new and renewal, must still go through the club treasurer to obtain the discounted club rate.

[FOR SALE ITEMS](#)

Bring your items for sale to regular club meetings and display them if you wish. To include sale items in the newsletter, please contact Skip Copp at gcopp@carolina.rr.com or call (704) 568-3732 no later than the second Friday of each month. Ads will run for three months or until the item(s) is sold and may be renewed as desired.

[CLUB CONTACTS](#)

President:	Mark Hoecker	mhoecker@bellsouth.net
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