

The Meteor

of the South Shore Astronomical Society

1958 - Celebrating our fortieth year - 1998

August 1998

Minutes from the August Meeting

The meeting started late on August 5th as we were enjoying the weather outside the Norwell Council on Aging Center and no one seemed anxious to go inside. Nevertheless, the meeting was called to order (indoors) at 7:40 p.m. by Tenney Doble. There were twelve members and two guests present.

The first order of business was the many requests for presentations we have received. The South Shore Natural Science Center asked us to put on a Perseid presentation on the evening of August 7th. That was the date of the full moon and no one volunteered for the presentation so we declined their invitation. The Massachusetts Audubon Society has requested a presentation on Duxbury Beach on August 20th from 8-10 p.m. Fred Balboni, Louis Gentile, John Flores, and Kathy DeVasto-Piemonte volunteered to go and Fred is bringing his nifty binocular stand. I believe Kathy will be giving her constellation presentation but that may just be a nasty rumor :^). The Blue Hill Observatory in East Milton has asked us for an afternoon and evening program on September 19th. Tenney volunteered to do a slide presentation and Gerald is bringing his scope with a solar filter. If anyone else can come or has a scope with solar filter please let Gerald or Tenney know. The trustees of the Turkey Hill Reservation in Hingham have asked for a slide show and viewing for 20 adults on September 26th (rain date October 3rd). We need scopes and bodies for this presentation. A nice side benefit of this presentation is that we might get invited back to use Turkey Hill as a viewing site! Finally we have been asked by a couple of Scout leaders for a program in the Fall. We need volunteers for a slide show and viewing. Whew! That's a lot of presentations!

Next we decided it was time to relax and have some fun so we planned a campout/star party at Myles Standish State Park for October 16-18. Those who are interested will sleep over on the 16th and 17th. We will have a

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A big
welcome to
our two
newest
members:
David
Berkin and
Michele
Kendrick

Special fx

The fx system of astrophotography, as presented by Tenney Doble at our meeting, is interesting and useful but slightly complicated. In a nutshell, the fx system allows an astrophotographer to determine the correct exposure time for an object using the object's magnitude, the fx formula ($fx = 4/3 \text{object's magnitude} + 9$), the aperture of the instrument (relative or actual depending on the object), the film speed, and an fx chart found in Barry Gordon's book, *The fx System*. For example, a mag. 6 star would have an fx value of 17 utilizing the formula above. Shooting it through a 8" f10 SCT using 400 speed film, we find on the fx chart that it will take a 2 second exposure to record the star. It is a fairly simple process once you understand it. There is not enough space in this newsletter to adequately describe the fx system (Barry Gordon wrote an entire book on the subject after all) but Tenney has distilled a wonderful summary of the system and he can elaborate at length to all who are interested.

Blue Hill Observatory's Hurricane Tracking Chart

A big thanks to Rolf Egon for forwarding the following information! The Blue Hill Observatory (BHO), a non-profit organization founded in 1885, is once again distributing free 11x17 Hurricane Tracking Charts. All you have to do is send a business size SASE with 55 cents return postage to:

Hurricane Tracking Chart

Box 101

East Milton, MA 02186-0101

Even though the chart is free, it is the major fund raiser for BHO due to an advertisement enclosure. BHO is currently undergoing a \$950,000 complete restoration that will allow the observatory to be open to the public for the first time and run student and teacher enhancement programs. If you are interested in the weather and/or hurricanes, send for a chart and support the work of BHO!

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cookout on the evening of the 17th. The rain dates are October 23-25 with the cookout on the 24th. More information will be forthcoming so stay tuned!

Our next order of business was our monthly discussion of our incorporated status. The conversation ranged over a number of topics such as the costs and benefits of unincorporating, the cost of our liability insurance and how to fund that cost, and the reason we exist as an astronomy club. The result of all the discussion is that we are asking *all* SSAS members to attend the next meeting (September 2nd) when we will discuss an increase in our membership dues and revision of our by-laws. We need *everyone's* input!

Our final order of business was setting the dates of our viewing nights. Our Deep Sky Night will be held on August 22nd at dusk at Joe Marques' house in Plymouth. An added attraction to our viewing on the 22nd is that there will be a double shadow transit across Jupiter (Io and Callisto) at 10:20 that evening. Joe won't be there until 11:00 p.m. but he asked that everyone feel free to set up on his back porch for the evening's viewing before then. To get to Joe's house, take Rte. 3 South to exit 3 - Clark Rd. At the exit, bear right toward Long Pond Rd. Take a left on Long Pond Rd. and drive 1.6 miles to Halfway Pond Rd. Take a right on Halfway Pond Rd. and then your first left onto Graystone Dr. Go to your right at the circle and take the first driveway. The address is 19 Graystone Dr. and it is a single level, light gray ranch with a shed to the right of the garage. Get there whenever you can but definitely before 10:20! Our Lunar/Planetary Night will be held on August 29th at dusk at Centennial Park in Norwell.

With the meeting's business completed we moved on to the evening's presentation by Tenney Doble on the fx system of astrophotography. Tenney drew his presentation from Barry Gordon's book, *The fx System* (available from William-Bell). You can read about the presentation in more detail on page 1 ("Special fx").

The meeting adjourned (but the socializing continued) at 9:10 p.m. Our next meeting will be September 2nd. Don't miss it because we will be discussing our dues and by-laws! Clear skies!

Dates to remember:
 * Deep Sky Night is August 22.
 * Lunar/Planetary Night is August 29.

Stellafane Summation

It was with bleary, yet expectant, eyes that Kathy DeVasto-Piemonte, Bob Holton, Gerald Kimber White, and Joe Marques met at Kathy's "Cookery" at 3:30 a.m. on Friday, July 24th looking forward to a day at Stellafane. Once we arrived at Stellafane, the morning was taken up with talking to other Stellafane attendees and Joe's hawking his 12.5" NGT and CCD camera (for which he ended up finding a buyer before the end of the day). Lunch was courteously provided by Kathy out of her catering left-overs and it was delicious.

By the afternoon, the telescopes were really going up around the convention grounds and the viewing had begun. We had a couple of chances to look through H-alpha and other solar filters and enjoyed numerous views of sunspots and prominences. Nagler was there with a couple of telescopes and his eyepieces. Tuthill was also there but we didn't get to look through any of his filters. The biggest telescope we saw was a 39" Dobsonian that had taken three years to make (I think Chuck McCarthy's mirror is also going to take that long, too! :^)). The most creative telescope we saw was a Newtonian whose assembly was crafted from discarded materials. The tube was made of pickle barrels and the mount was made of, among other things, a cast iron skillet, a bowling ball (coated with a little cooking oil), and a dumbbell weight. The most elegant design we saw was an 8" Newtonian that had a base constructed of two perpendicular, rounded sheets of wood so that it was an equatorial Dobsonian! We also toured the pink clubhouse and Porter Turret Telescope, a permanent telescope of unique design on the Stellafane site.

Some of us attended a hands-on mirror grinding demonstration put on by the Springfield Telescope Makers that was quite good. They had poster boards describing the various phases of mirror grinding and they actually took you through the process using several stations to depict the various phases. It convinced me to try my hand at mirror grinding the next time the club decides to give it a go.

Unfortunately, the swap tables and main talks took place on Saturday so we weren't able to take part in them (we'll plan that better next year). We will have pictures to show of some of the telescopes of Stellafane and the rest of the Convention if I ever finish the roll of film they're on. It was a great trip and I think we all left Stellafane looking forward to next year.

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Visit us on the web at: www.gerberelec.com/ssas/ssas.html

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