



May, 2001

At the May 4 meeting...

Dr. Van Helden
from Rice University
How Bad Were
Galileo's Telescopes?

Houston Astronomical Society
GuideStar

Starline - 281-568-9340

Houston Astronomical Society presents *Starline* -- a recorded message of Society events and astronomical happenings. This service is updated regularly, so call often to keep up-to-date on Society functions, new comets and more.

HAS Web Page: <http://www.astronomyhouston.org>

Schedule Changes & Up-To-Date Information

See the GuideStar's Monthly Calendar of Events to confirm dates and times of all events for the month, and call Starline for any last minute changes.

Observatory Site Telephone: 979-732-8861

★★★★★ *The Houston Astronomical Society* ★★★★★★

The Houston Astronomical Society is a non-profit corporation organized under section 501 (C) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Society was formed for education and scientific purposes. All contributions and gifts are deductible for federal income tax purposes. General membership meetings are open to the public and attendance is encouraged.

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Telescope Darin Palmer 713-223-3123
Welcoming Marg Nunez 713-529-2549

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Logo Mds Sales Judy Dye 281-498-1703
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Parliamentarian Kirk Kendrick 281-391-3834

Publ. Star Party Marg Nunez 713-529-2549
Rice U. Coord. Matt Delevoryas 713-795-0808
Schedule Obs'v'ty Steve Goldberg 713-721-5077
Texas Star Pty Steve Goldberg 713-721-5077

★★★★★ Special Interest Groups & Help Committees ★★★★★★

These are now listed on the inside of *GuideStar* (not every month). See the Table of Contents

★★★★★ Advisors ★★★★★★

Dr. Reginald DuFour, Rice Univ.

Dr. Lawrence Pinsky, U. of H.

★★★★★ Dues and Membership Information ★★★★★★

Annual Dues: Regular \$33.00
Associate \$5.00
Sustaining . \$50.00

Student \$5.00
Honorary None

All members have the right to participate in Society functions and to use the Observatory Site. Regular and Student Members receive a subscription to *The Reflector*. Regular, Student, and Honorary Members receive *The GuideStar*. Associate Members, immediate family members of a Regular Member, have all membership rights, but do not receive publications. Sustaining members have the same rights as regular members with the additional dues treated as a donation to the Society. *Sky & Telescope* mag \$29.95/year, *Astronomy* mag \$29/year -- see club treasurer.

Membership Application: Send funds to address shown on outside cover of *Guidestar*. Attention - Treasurer, along with the following information: Name, Address, Phone Number, Special Interests in Astronomy, Do you own a Telescope? (If so, what kind?), and where you first heard of H.A.S.

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Call the Starline, 281-568-9340 for updates and changes

Welcome to New Members!

The Houston Astronomical Society encourages you to join our group of active amateur astronomers and take advantage of the benefits of membership. As a member you'll have access to the club observing site near Columbus, Texas. (You're required to participate in a site orientation meeting before you get the gate lock combination.) The site has concrete pads for setting up your telescope, restroom and bunkhouse facilities, and areas set aside for camping. No new members this month. You'll get monthly issues of the *GuideStar* newsletter, you'll get to vote and to serve the organization as an officer, and you will be supporting the local amateur astronomy community.

Special Interest Group Listing

Any member who wants specific information on a SIG listed below may call the listed individual. Also, see the "Ad Hoc Committee Chairpersons" on the inside front cover and the "Special Help Volunteers" listing (not in every issue).

Advanced	Bill Flanagan	713-699-8819
Comets	Kenneth Drake	936-890-3735
Lunar & Planetary	John Blubaugh	713-921-4275
Occultations & Grazes ...	Wayne Hutchison	713-827-0828
Advanced	Bill Leach	713-863-8459

President's Message

May 2001



by Kirk Kendrick

All I can say is that this has been an “interesting” spring. First hot, then wet, then cold, then hot, then wet, then wet, then wet...



And, I missed the aurora that was visible in Katy. I went out at 10:30pm...totally overcast...and decided to call it a night. Then at the April meeting I see some AWESOME photographs that show a red glow reaching across the sky at midnight-thirty in Katy. Ugh.

For TSP, I am TRULY committed to restarting my Messiers. With all of you as my witnesses to this commitment, I plan to start a fresh log, and change my method: In addition to what, when, and where...I plan to record what I think and who I see. My former logs focused on the objects and neglected what was going on around me. Maybe focusing on the total experience will make this time more memorable!

As I mentioned last month, I plan to use naked eye, 10x70 binoculars, a 3” refractor, and a C8. I will probably image through the C8 and use the refractor as my primary visual instrument (more in line with Messier’s approach!). And, I will commit to putting items on the web site when I return (say...by the July meeting).

The more I plan, the more room I need. So ... my wife and I decided to get a bigger travel trailer for this trip! The trailer is for ALL trips not just Astronomy...but I now have a large enough storage area to put my scope and equipment in an easily accessible compartment for quicker setup. But now I need to worry about storage containers...

Scott Mitchell has arranged for Dr. van Helden from Rice University to speak at our May meeting. The last talk I heard from Dr. van Helden was in a survey course in the History of Astronomy that I took back in 1978!

Continued on page 6...

Houston Astronomical Society

***Meeting Notice
For Friday, May 4, 2001***

Dr. Van Helden

from

Rice University

How Bad Were Galileo's Telescopes?

You often read that Galileo's telescopes were primitive, and provided generally poor images. What do we know about his instruments and what he was able to observe in the early 1600's? Find out at the May meeting!

Schedule of meeting activities:

All meetings are at the University of Houston Science and Research building. See the inside back cover for a map to the location.

Novice meeting: 7:00 p.m.
Across from Room 117

Site orientation meeting: 7:00 p.m.
Classroom

General meeting: 8:00 p.m.
Room 117

**See the inside back cover for a map
and more information.**

President's Message... from page 4

Mars is rapidly approaching opposition when it will be the best view since 1988. That is DEFINITELY something for all of us to get out and watch through the course of the summer! Start early and watch the size change...it's pretty dramatic to go from "okay..." to "OKAY!!!" in only a few short months. And, observing Mars from your backyard is definitely doable from anywhere in the Houston area. (our humidity makes for steady skies!) GO FOR IT!

Back to the packing and planning....I'll see you all at our Meeting on May 4th!

Clear skies!

...Kirk

Other Meetings...

Brazosport Astronomy Society meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the Planetarium of the fine Arts Center at Brazosport College. Call Steve Lamb for program details (409) 297-3984

Fort Bend Astronomy Club meets the third Friday of the month at 8:00 p.m. at the First Colony conference Center. Novice meeting begins at 7:00, regular meeting begins at 8:00. Web site: <http://rampages.onramp.net/~binder/>

Johnson Space Center Astronomical Society meets in the the Lunar and Planetary Institute on the 2nd Friday of each month. Web site: <http://www.ghgcorp.com/cbr/jscas.html>

North Houston Astronomy Club meets at 7:30 p.m. on the 4th Friday of each month in the Teaching Theatre of the Student Center at Kingwood College. Call 281-312-1650 or E-mail bill.leach@nhmccd.edu. Web site: www.astronomyclub.org

May / June Calendar:



Photo by Scott Mitchell

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>
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May 2001

4		HAS Club Meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H
	8:00 p.m.	General Membership Meeting U of H
	4:49 a.m.	First Quarter Moon
7		Full Moon
	7:53 a.m.	Full Moon
12		Members Observatory Night-Columbus
13		Texas Star Party begins in Ft. Davis
15		Last Quarter Moon
	4:11 a.m.	Last Quarter Moon
	7:30 p.m.	Advanced SIG Mtg. Rice Univ., contact Matt Delevoryas, 713-795-0808
19		Prime Night-Columbus
20		Texas Star Party ends in Ft. Davis
22		New Moon
	8:46 p.m.	New Moon
29		First Quarter Moon
	4:09 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
		Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower Peaks

June 2001

1		HAS Club Meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H
	8:00 p.m.	General Membership Meeting U of H
5		Full Moon
	7:39 p.m.	Full Moon
9		Members Observatory Night-Columbus
12		Advanced SIG Mtg. Rice Univ., contact Matt Delevoryas, 713-795-0808
	7:30 p.m.	Advanced SIG Mtg. Rice Univ., contact Matt Delevoryas, 713-795-0808
13		Last Quarter Moon
	9:28 p.m.	Last Quarter Moon
16		Prime Night-Columbus
	1:38 a.m.	Prime Night-Columbus
21		Summer solstice - summer begins
	5:58 a.m.	Summer solstice - summer begins
		New Moon
27		First Quarter Moon
	9:20 p.m.	First Quarter Moon

Send calendar events to JBlubaugh@aol.com
or call 713-921-4275.

The Dish

Movie Review

by Bill Pellerin, GuideStar Editor

Last Monday, while at work, about 3:10 p.m., a voice came on the loudspeaker saying that there was an emergency and that building power was going to be shut off in about 10 minutes. The consensus of my co-workers was that there was nothing to do but go home. Actually, instead of going home, my wife, Lori, and I went to see The Dish at the Angelica Theater downtown.

This is a very enjoyable film about the events surrounding the use of the receiving antenna that was used in 1969 to receive the images of Neil Armstrong as he walked on the moon. The antenna is in a sheep pasture in Australia and was normally used for radio astronomy. NASA needed an antenna on that side of the world, and the Aussies signed up with a one-line agreement agreeing to support the NASA Apollo program.

The antenna was not supposed to be the receiving antenna for the first steps on the moon, but a change in schedule made the Australian dish the receiving point for the first images and words from the lunar surface. The events leading up to the reception of the signal as depicted in the movie are based on the real events and the characters (and they were characters) added to the enjoyment of the story.

There were some minor issues with the film.. the phase of the moon shown in the film did not match the actual phase during the landing. And, a full moon was shown to be in the sky during the day, and we all know that can't happen.

Everything else with the movie is great fun. There are various sub-issues, such as the mayor using the event for political self-promotion, the relationships among the workers at the site, and the relationships between the workers and the townspeople. Go see this movie before it disappears; you'll enjoy it.

Observations... of the editor

by **Bill Pellerin, GuideStar Editor**

Observing opportunities have been few and far between these days. All that about April showers bringing May flowers may be well and good for the gardeners out there, but it isn't a benefit to those of us who want to see the sky.

I did manage a few observations in the last several weeks, and I wish that I'd done more! Anyway, thanks to CCD imaging, I'm able to share a few observations with you. Although I don't consider myself a telescope imaging enthusiast, I was enticed to get a SBIG STV camera and do some 'playing around' with picture taking. Here's what I have to show for my trouble.

The camera was attached to my 70mm refractor on an equatorial mount for these images. It's a fun gadget to play with, but, so far, my successful experience is limited to imaging bright objects. The moon image to the right was quite easy. The optical configuration yielded a 1/2 degree by 1/4 degree (approximately) view of the sky, which was just large enough to fit this image of the moon. This was taken on 3/31/01 and is quite nice (if you don't try to blow it up too much). I did some minor processing with Photoshop Elements (a cheaper version of Photoshop).



Moon



R Leo

In addition, I took this photo of R Leo (the bright star in the center of the frame), a variable star in the western side of the constellation Leo (check www.aavso.org for a chart). R Leo is bright right now, and really stands out in this image. It's has a nice rosy-red color and stands out in sharp contrast to other, bluer, stars in the area. I took this with a light reduction filter in place to reduce the red sensitivity of the system. CCDs are typically red sensitive, so that red stars like R Leo will show up as

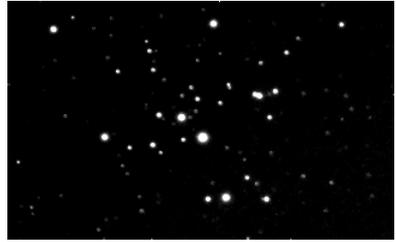
brighter in the image than is justified. This is a good variable star to look at right now since it's at its peak. Watch it as the weeks go forward, and you'll see it dim

Continued...

Observations... from previous page

considerably. Its range is 5.9 to 10.1 according to the AAVSO charts.

Here's a picture of an open cluster, M41, This Messier object in Canis Major and won't be in the sky too much longer this season.



M41

The skies around here have been just awful for the last several weeks. Clouds have been keeping us from doing the observing that we would like to do and that's disappointing. I am still looking forward to doing Sissy Haas' double star list from the *April Sky & Telescope*.

I was out early this morning (4/19/01) before sunrise and got my first glimpse of Mars near Sagittarius. It was quite bright and had its characteristically red color. Although I've never been a serious observer of the planet, as it nears opposition, I'm going to give it another look.

Meanwhile, this morning, the thin waning moon was in the eastern sky with Venus to the north. This is the first sighting, for me, of Venus in the morning sky, and it was all quite a nice arrangement of objects. I am close to downtown, so to say that I don't have dark skies would be something of an understatement.

Although I won't be making the Texas Star Party this year, I hope all of you that go have a great time under the wonderful dark, west Texas skies. Please send me any observations, images, comments, for-sale items or anything else you'd like to share with the membership of the Houston Astronomical society. See the inside back cover for information on how to get your materials to me.

..Bill

Observatory Corner



By Michael B. Dye Observatory Chairman

This month marks the start of the 2001 Observatory Committee Fundraiser. This year we are raising money to shore up the Observatory Site Maintenance Fund and to start saving money to get a new computer controlled mount for the C-14. At the Annual Committee Meeting last January, the Observatory Committee as a group, discussed the idea of getting a new mount for the C-14 and then using the old C-14 mount on the F7 telescope. We felt that the current mount for the F7, while rebuilt, does not do an adequate job of keeping the F7 stable for viewing. Subsequent to this discussion I have had other suggestions indicating that instead of getting a new mount for the C-14, we should get one of the new Meade 16" LX200 telescopes. We would then replace either the C-14 or F7 and sell the replaced telescope to help finance the purchase of the Meade scope. I personally think getting a new mount for the C-14 is a better idea, however, I am still open to other suggestions.



The Maintenance Fund has taken some sizeable hits in the last few years. We have had to replace one of the dehumidifiers in the Observatory, replace the heater thermostats in both the Observatory and the chartroom, replace the UPS used to protect the Access Control electronics in the Observatory and replace the Pushbutton Operators in the bathroom. While this might not seem like a lot of items, the whole collection of replacement items totals up to a bit over \$1,000.00. This is a problem because our maintenance budget is only \$700.00 a year and includes repairing anything on the Observatory Site including the bathroom, observatory and lawn mower and buying supplies like TP, paper towels, ant poison and Round Up (to keep the grass out of the roads). In 1999, we spent about \$1,000.00 on replacing the motorized Varastat used to control the Observatory Roof. We are starting to run a deficit in Observatory Site Maintenance fund.

For a few weeks in April we had reports of cows wandering around the open area of the Observatory Site. On April 21, we conducted an inspection and the only location that we could figure the source of the cows was from was the field to the west of the Observatory Site. I counted nine cows including a bull on their (the cow's) side of the fence. While I never actually witnessed this phenomenon of cows at the Observatory Site, I do have an ample number of eyewitness reports of same.

Continued...

Observatory Corner... from previous page

Also I found a rather fresh cow patty on our side of the fence. Kirk Kendrick and I walked the fence and while we did not find any breaks in the fence we did find a spot that looked like it had been recently repaired (as in early that day). Kirk Kendrick, Bob Rogers and I fixed a few other spots that looked like they needed help and then declared the problem resolved. If you spot any cows in the Observatory Site field, please call me. As a side note, we need to keep an eye out for cow patties and avoid stepping in them.

On a lighter side the Hubcap report is now up to five. If any of our members are missing a hubcap to their vehicle, please come check the supply we have at the Observatory Site Exit sign and take any that are yours.

Finally, the last of the good news we have has to do with the above-mentioned replacement of the Bathroom pushbuttons. All the materials finally came in and I was able to get them to the Observatory Site in a timely manner without losing any of them (the materials, that is). We had a busy Saturday afternoon checking fences, repairing fences and replacing Bathroom pushbuttons. Again Kirk Kendrick, Bob Rogers and I (along with a Mr. J. C. Meador who acted as an observer) replaced the interior Bathroom pushbuttons. I am happy to report that all the interior Bathroom pushbuttons now work as originally specified. I did not replace the two outside (door) buttons, because I figured we had enough spare parts from the replaced buttons.

For the last few months, I have been inserting a paragraph requesting membership feedback concerning installing computers in the Observatory. I have actually got a response. This gives me hope that members are actually reading my articles. This hope was shattered by a long time member who told me he never reads the *GuideStar*. If you have any ideas about the Observatory Site, including providing some sort of computers for controlling the Observatory Telescopes and maybe for CCD processing. Please contact me at mbdye@aol.com or 281-498-1703.

Please fill out the appropriate log form when you use the site.

Remember we use these forms as attendance records and to report Observatory Site problems such as broken toilets.

HAS Web Page

The Houston Astronomical Society Web page has information on the society, its resources, and meeting information.

The address is: <http://www.astronomyhouston.org>

Want your astronomy work and name on the Internet for the whole world to see? Have some neat equipment? Pictures in film, CCD, hand drawings or video format are all welcome on the page. Do you have an idea to improve the page? I'm listening. Send me Email at goldberg@sccsi.com. (You can click on my name on the HAS home page). Or, you can call Steve Goldberg (WebMaster), at 713-721-5077.

HAS Logo Sales

by Judy Ann Dye

If you are interested in any of the following items and would like to place an order, please contact me (Judy Dye) at 281-498-1703, or send a check for the items requested to 12352 Newbrook, Houston Texas, 77072-3910. Below is the current list of logo items for sale:

Grey Hooded Sweatshirt (M to XL)	\$25.00
22 Ounce Thermal Cup	\$5.00
Observe Messier	\$4.00
Observe Comets	\$7.00
2001 Observer's Handbooks	\$ 15.00

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ ★ *GuideStar deadline* ★ ★ ★
★ ★ *for the June issue is May 15* ★ ★ ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Observatory Duty Roster

by Michael B. Dye, Observatory Chairman

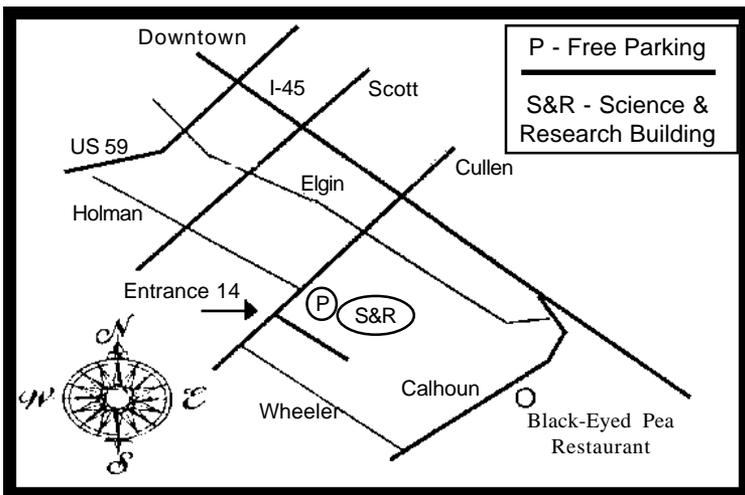
This is the duty list for May, June and July. Some names may have been moved from one month to another to accommodate some conflicts. If you are listed in this roster, please be sure to contact your supervisor for any information that you may need and the date and time to be at the site. You may change from site duty to open house or from open house to site duty by pre-arrangement with the Site Supervisor for that month. Changes between months require Observatory Chairman coordination.

May Supervisor Cooper Walls 713-461-9590
Arnie Kaestner Site
David Kahlich Site
Howard Leverenz Members Observatory Night 05-12-01
Jay Levy Site
Mary Lockwood Members Observatory Night 05-12-01
David Herlinger Site
Robert Menius Site
Larry Mitchell Members Observatory Night 05-12-01

June Supervisor Matt Delevoryas 713-795-0808
Jeff Moore Site
Mark Mulrooney Site
Ben Negy Jr. Members Observatory Night 06-09-01
John Norris Site
Richard Nugent Members Observatory Night 06-09-01
Ralph Overturf Site
Don Pearce Members Observatory Night 06-09-01
Sim Picheloup Site

July Supervisor Cooper Walls 713-461-9590
Debbie Moran Site
Marge Nunez Site
Glenn Ray Members Observatory Night 07-14-01
Mike Reynolds Site
Henry Schneider Site
Steve Simpson Members Observatory Night 07-14-01
Larry Wadle Site
Mark Watson Members Observatory Night 07-14-01

Please remember that Site work can be done anytime and does not have to be done just before Members Observatory Night. Contact your Site Supervisor for details. Names are selected for Site Duty using the current Alphabetical listing for Observatory Key Holders. If any member knows of a conflict please call me before your name is listed.



General Membership Meeting

The Houston Astronomical Society holds its regular monthly General Membership Meeting on the first Friday of each month, unless rescheduled due to a holiday. Meetings are in Room 117 of the Science and Research Building at the University of Houston. A Novice Presentation begins at 7:00 p.m.. The short business meeting and featured speaker are scheduled at 8:00 p.m. Also typically included are Committee Reports, Special Interest Group Reports, current activity announcements, hardware reviews, an astrophotography slide show by members and other items of interest.

Board of Directors Meeting

The Board of Directors Meeting is held on dates scheduled by the board at 7:00 p.m. in Room 106 of the Space Science Building at Rice University. Call StarLine for Board Meeting information. Information provided to GuideStar will be published. The meetings are open to all members of the Society in good standing. Attendance is encouraged.

GuideStar Information

The H.A.S. *GuideStar* is published monthly by the Houston Astronomical Society. All opinions expressed herein are those of the contributor and not necessarily of Houston Astronomical Society. The monthly Meeting Notice is included herein. *GuideStar* is sent via bulk rate mail to Regular, Student, and Honorary Members of H.A.S., selected individuals and recent visitors to the General Membership Meeting. Contributions to *GuideStar* by members are encouraged. Electronic submission is helpful. Submit the article in ASCII text, MS-Word (preferred), or WordPerfect format on an IBM format floppy or via AOL (BILLP10566). Mail copy to the address shown on the outside cover or to the editor at 256 East 5th Street, Houston, TX 77007. Copy must be received by the 15th of the month for inclusion in the issue to be mailed near the end of the same month. Or, bring copy to the General Membership Meeting and give it to the Editor, or phone to make special arrangements.

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AOL: BILLP10566; Internet: BILLP10566@AOL.COM

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