



October, 2001

At the **October 5** meeting...

Venus in Transit

Eli Maor

of

Author and Professor at Loyola University

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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Education Richard Nugent 713-910-5945
Field Tr./Obsg. Steve Grubbs 713-455-5701
Novice Warren Wundt 713-697-2960
Observatory Michael Dye 281-498-1703

Program Scott Mitchell 713-461-3020
Publicity Brian Cudnik 713-460-1093
Telescope Darin Palmer 713-223-3123
Welcoming Marg Nunez 713-529-2549

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Schedule Obs'v't'y 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. 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	Don Pearce	713-432-0734
Lunar & Planetary	John Blubaugh	713-921-4275
Occultations & Grazes ...	Wayne Hutchison	713-827-0828
Advanced	Bill Leach	713-863-8459

Observations... of the editor

by **Bill Pellerin, GuideStar Editor**

Tuesday, September 11, 2001 was very dark... all day. And, we may have more dark days to come. I am reminded of something that Timothy Ferris said in his outstanding book ***Coming of Age in the Milky Way***.

"Our lives are suspended like our planet in a gimbals of duality, half sunlight and half shadow. ... Ninety-nine percent of all the species that have lived on Earth have died away, and no stars will wink out in tribute if we in our folly soon join them."

Scientific inquiry embraces uncertainty and skepticism. Religious dogma thrives on certainty, and it is that certainty that leads us, as a species, to adopt ideas from which we will tolerate no dissent. We need look no further than some of our fellow citizens to see this happen. If the relationship between science and religion is of interest to you, I recommend the book ***Skeptics and True Believers*** by Chet Raymo.

Our last meeting was a very good one. Brian Cudnik's presentation on the Solar Astronomy work being done at Prairie View was well done, and well received.

I'm looking forward to the October meeting. I've ordered a copy of Eli Maor's book from Amazon, and I plan to bring it to the meeting so he can sign it for me. Folks who teach for a living are practiced at giving presentations, since that's what they do for a living.



Brian Cudnik

Continued on page 18...

Houston Astronomical Society

***Meeting Notice
For Friday, October 5, 2001***

Venus in Transit

Eli Maor

**Professor of Mathematics
Loyola University**

Author

June 8, 2004 - Venus in Transit

Get ready for this event (the first Venus transit since 1884) by coming to the October meeting to hear about this and previous Venus transits. (The transit occurs during the night from Houston.)

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.**

September / October Calendar:



Photo by Scott Mitchell

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

2	8:48 a.m.	Full Moon
5		HAS Club Meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H
	8:00 p.m.	General Membership Meeting U of H
9	11:20 p.m.	Last Quarter Moon
13		Prime Night-Columbus
16	2:23 p.m.	New Moon
	7:30 p.m.	Advanced SIG Mtg. Rice Univ., contact Matt Delevoryas, 713-795-0808
20		Members Observatory Night-Columbus
23	9:58 a.m.	First Quarter Moon
28	3:00 a.m.	Daylight Saving Time ends and Standard Time begins. Set clocks back 1 hour.
31	11:41 p.m.	Full Moon

November 2001

2		HAS Club Meeting
	7:00 p.m.	Novice Presentation - U of H
	8:00 p.m.	General membership meeting U of H. 2001 elections.
8	6:21 a.m.	Last Quarter Moon
10		Members Observatory Night-Columbus
13	7:30 p.m.	Advanced SIG Mtg. Rice Univ., contact Matt Delevoryas, 713-795-0808
15	12:40 a.m.	New Moon
17		Prime Night-Columbus
18	2:00 a.m.	Leonid meteor shower should have peaked by this time. Begin looking for activity starting the night of Nov. 16 th .
22	5:20 p.m.	First Quarter Moon
30	2:49 p.m.	Full Moon

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

Astronomy Day 2001!

Saturday October 27, 2001

3:00 – 10:00 PM

George Observatory

Brazos Bend State Park

Space Shuttle Simulations

Daytime Solar Observations

36-inch Telescope Viewing

Deck Telescope Night Viewing

Houston Astronomy Organizations

Astronomy Specialty Displays

Interactive Presentations

Novice Program

Solar System Display

Door Prizes

Sponsors:

Fort Bend Astronomy Club

Houston Astronomical Society

Houston Museum of Natural Science

Johnson Space Center Astronomical Society

Kingwood College

North Houston Astronomy Club

Contact: astrobil@flash.net

or call 281-312-1650

Stephen O'Meara

of

Sky & Telescope Magazine

**Special City-Wide
4-Clubs**

**Astronomy Meeting
Open to the Public**

Friday

October 26, 2001 at 8:00 PM

Hosted by Kingwood College

Science Building – Teaching Theatre

**www.astronomyclub.org
for directions**

Stephen O' Meara ***on National Geographic***

Contributed by Barbara Wilson

Preceding Stephen O'Meara's appearance here in Houston (see previous page), A *National Geographic Explorer* program will air on October 21, 2001 8:00 PM EST on MSNBC.

In 2001 The National Geographic Expedition's council awarded the O'Mearas with a research grant to pursue their studies of volcanic eruptions. The television special was filmed at Stromboli Volcano in Italy.

For 22 years O'Meara has researched, studied, photographed, videotaped and lectured on active volcanoes all over the planet, in addition to his books on astronomy and his articles in *Sky and Telescope* magazine.

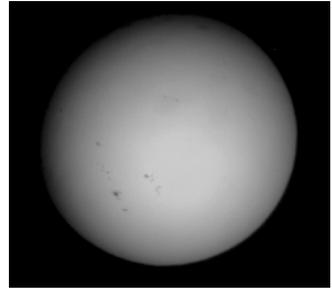
In 1994 he and his wife Donna founded Volcano Watch International, which is based appropriately in Volcano Hawaii. Volcano Watch International is dedicated to the study of volcanoes and helping to find ways to predict eruptions and help people in harm's way. The O'Mearas were one of three research teams selected by the Smithsonian Institution to represent them on their 150th anniversary prime time special "Incredible Journey!"

O' Meara is a dynamic, sought after international lecturer on both astronomy and volcano topics. He has lectured in France, United States, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, Turkey, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Japan.

Photos from California

by Kent Francis

My wife and I were attending my brother's son wedding in San Diego on September 8th and I took my travel scope, a TV Pronto, with Telepod and my Olympus digital camera D360L as we planned to spend a few extra days viewing after the wedding when the Twin Towers disaster struck. We were stuck in San Diego (nice place to be stuck) until yesterday, Sunday, September 16 and so we made lemonade out of lemons by getting to do some heavy duty observing.



Sunspots

My brother, Tom, just got a new 11 inch Celestron GPS Nexstar and we got to see many object I



Tom and Kent
Francis

had never seen with my 8 inch LX 200— Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, just to mention a few. I had a lot of fun with my Televue Pronto and I took a number of afocal shots, some of which I wanted to share with you.

Tom is a member of the San Diego Astronomy Group and we drove out to their dark site about 60 miles east of San Diego at Terra Del Sol (land of the sun), which is in the desert and at 4000 feet elevation and also went up the mountain to Mt. Laguna at 7000 feet elevation—the viewing was pristine.

I'm sorry I missed the last meeting and our picnic, but I have had some clear skies, which we haven't had here in Houson for some time.

Thanks,
Kent Francis

Observatory Corner



By Michael B. Dye Observatory Chairman



The 2001 Annual Picnic at the Observatory Site on September the 8th was a success. I can say this because (1.) it didn't rain while we were waiting to eat (2.) it didn't rain while we were eating and (3.) it didn't rain during the Observing secession that evening. Weather conditions that had marred previous picnics. In fact the sky was more or less clear or partially cloudy during most of the day. The weather was mostly pleasant. We didn't actually get any rain until early the next morning (more about that later). The skies cleared out about evening and stayed clear until about midnight. Ed Szczepanski did the cooking of the hot dogs and hamburgers. The Oak Ridge Ranch people donated a small (about 25 pounds) 'wild' pig. When Bob and I picked it up, it had just been killed and cleaned. All we had to do was cook it, which Ed was able to cook also with assistance from Peggy Gilchrist and Judy Dye who supplied seasoning and some vegetables. Reliably informed sources confirm my opinion that the pig was very good. About thirty members and guests attended the picnic and I didn't hear of any complaints about the food. Of course it was mostly free.

Some entertainment was provided by the Piñata activity. We only had about three or four 'children' and they were in there early to late teens. After the 'children' worked over Piñata without any success we were able to coerce some of the adults (me included) to take a few swipes at the large 'mouse' Piñata that Judy got. The Piñata eventually broke and much candy and some prizes were distributed to any that wanted some.

About 12 to 15 groups formed up at the observing pads and observed until about midnight or when the clouds started rolling in which was about the same time. Rusty Fletcher and Bob Rogers with Allen Gilchrist supervising ran the open house. We did have one family from the Oak Ridge Ranch Estates attend as my guests and they had a very good time in the Observatory looking through the C-14 and the F-5 until about 10 or 10:30 when they went home.

I would like to thank Ed Szczepanski for mowing the grass around the pad area, the picnic area, for cleaning the bathrooms, donating the charcoal for the Bar-

Continued...

Observatory Corner... from previous page

B-Q and cooking the meat. This time it didn't rain on him. I would like to thank my wife, Judy Dye for getting the Piñata, the candy and prizes. I would like to also thank Marilyn Burke for arranging for the donation of the cleaned pig.

Judy and I decided to stay the night in our RV and turned in about 1 AM. At about 6:20 our RV was filled with this very bright light that seemed to shine from everywhere (we had skylights). Along with this light came a very loud boom. Lightning, thunder and rain. Lots of rain. We woke up. After some time we were able to go back to sleep until the sun came up and we could see outside.

Judy and I were able to get our act together and left about 8:45 that morning and proceeded to leave using the normal 'short cut' route. This turned out to be a bad idea. The concrete low water crossing had about 9 inches (there is a measuring device marked off in one foot increments embedded in the concrete) of water flowing over the crossing at a very high rate of flow. I didn't think it rained that much but it did. We sat there and watched the water flow. We did this for about 15 minutes and did not observe much change in the flow rate. I decided that I was not about to test the ability of my van to drive through said water flow and decided to use the other way out. Have you ever tried to back up a slippery non-horizontal dirt road in the rain? Not fun. About 100 feet or so from the low water crossing is a turn off into some farmer's pasture. I was able to back into this 'wide' spot in the road and execute a multi point three-point turn. We carefully proceeded back out the long way, which does not have a low water crossing over the road. We did have some discussion when we got to the wooden bridge, but it looked firm so we chanced it. As you can guess, the bridge held. Must be stronger than it looks.

As we were leaving, we kept trying to call Bob Rogers, who was still back at the Observatory Site and inform him about the low water crossing. Our problem was that our cheap cell phone company does not seem to have a cell tower out that far. We were not able to get a cell connection until we were almost to I-10. At this point we didn't get Bob, but his cell answering service. We left numerous messages in this system informing him not to take the 'short cut' route out. He called us when we were almost back in Houston and told us that he got our message in time. The mistake he made was to take Hatterman Lane route out instead of FM 2434 (Glidden exit). Bob reported that just before he got to I-10 on Hatterman Lane, he came upon an 18 wheeler who was trying to get through what Bob described as a low water crossing between the burned out house and the I-10 access road. The 18-wheeler was not making it, so Bob decided that discretion was the better part of valor and decided to use the route we used to get back to I-10. He made it home without any other problems.

Continued...

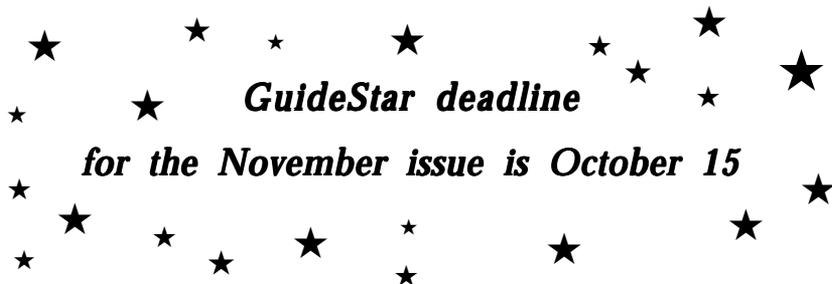
Observatory Corner... from previous page

I am still collecting information on the RV question. I have only received about five E-mail responses at this point, and I know there are more people in the club with an opinion. I would like to here from more members. Don't be shy, the only way we can do this and come up with an answer that the majority agree with is for members to inform me which option they dislike the least. Currently we have room for about seven (7) RV's to be in use at the Observatory Site at any one time. We (the Observatory Committee and the Board of Directors) have not yet worked out a comprehensive policy about use of RV's at the Observatory Site. To help move our decision along, I am asking for feed back from members. Our Policy options work out to roughly the following:

- 1.) RV's may be used at the Observatory Site but not stored for any length of time. (like more than 2 weeks)
- 2.) RV's may not be used at the Observatory Site.
- 3.) RV's may be used and a limited number may be stored at the Observatory Site.

Your opinion counts. Please E-mail your response to one the three options above or even an option I didn't consider to 'mbdye@rice.edu' or 'mbdye@aol.com'. If you don't have E-mail or feel you want to talk about your answer (opinion), feel free to call me in the evenings from 7 PM to 10 PM almost any weekday evening.

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.


GuideStar deadline
for the November issue is October 15

Marg's Star Parties

by Marg Nunez

Here is a schedule of upcoming star parties in your neighborhood. Please be generous with your time. It won't be a star party without you!! Please contact Marg. at 713-529-2549 or Marg10@flash.net to help.

- October 9, 8pm Askew Elementary Beltway 8 and Westhiemer
- October 19, 730 pm, Clifton Middle School 600 Golden Forest 77092 (290 and Pinemont)
- November 16 7:30 pm Johnson Middle School (Chimney Rock and Willobend area)

Please contact Marg Nunez to volunteer. 713-529-2549

Other Meetings...

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

Special "Help" Volunteers

Any member who wants specific information on a subject listed below may call the individual listed. If you have a moderate knowledge of a special subject and would be happy to have others ask you about that subject, let the editor know and your subject, name and phone will be listed in *GuideStar* in the future. Note that we have listed a few possible areas where you might volunteer, but, of course, you are not limited to these. You can also have a specialty which is a sub-group of another. Note that the number of names for any subject is not limited to only one person. Also see the "Ad Hoc Committee Chairpersons" on the inside front cover and the "Special Interest Groups Listing article.

Subject	Name	Phone
Asteroids	Barbara Wilson	281-933-1289
Astrometry	Richard Nugent	713-910-5945
Astrophotography	Steve Goldberg	713-721-5077
Beginning in Astronomy	Peggy Gilchrist	281-558-1190
	Amelia Goldberg	713-721-5077
Comets	Kenneth Drake	281-367-1592
	Don Pearce	713-432-0734
Computers	Matt Delevoryas	713-795-0808
	Leland Dolan	713-529-0403
	Ricardo Palmeira	713-669-1409
Cosmology	Ricardo Palmeira	713-669-1409
Deep Sky	Larry Mitchell	281-448-8700
	Barbara Wilson	281-933-1289
Double Stars	John Blubaugh	713-921-4275
Drawing (Sketching).....	Scott Mitchell	713-461-3020
Herschel Objects	Larry Mitchell	281-448-8700
History, Astro'y - General	Leland Dolan	713-529-0403
	Ricardo Palmeira	713-669-1409
History, Astro'y - Amateurs	Tom Williams	713-526-2868
Mathematics, Astronomical	Richard Nugent	713-910-5945
Messier Objects	Novice Committee (see inside front cover)	
Photometry	Open	
Radio Telescopes	John Hiatt	713-464-4010
Satellites, Artificial	<open>	
Solar Observing	Larry Mitchell	281-448-8700
Spectroscopy	Open	
Thin Crescent Moons	Don Pearce	713-432-0734
Variable Stars	Barbara Wilson	281-933-1289
	Tom Williams	713-526-2868
Video	Larry Mitchell	281-448-8700

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.

Membership Renewals...

Please check the mailing label on your copy of the *GuideStar*.

It'll tell you when your membership expires. If it expires soon, please send your renewal to the address on the outside cover of *GuideStar*. The dues information is on the inside front cover.

For a regular membership of \$33 you get the opportunity to support an active and growing organization, you get the monthly *GuideStar* newsletter, and you get access to the outstanding H.A.S. observing site near Columbus, Texas, and access to loaner telescopes. It's the best deal in town, we think. Please renew your membership when it expires.

Observatory Duty Roster

by Michael B. Dye, Observatory Chairman

This is the duty list for October, November and December. 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.

October Supervisor Matt Delevoryas 713-662-2939
Clifton Goldman Members Observatory Night 10-20-01
David Granadino Site
Chai S. Heng Members Observatory Night 10-20-01
Gary Hlivko Site
Wayne Hutchinson Members Observatory Night 10-20-01
Clayton Jeter Site
Stanley G. Jones Site
Keith A. Jurgens Site

November Supervisor Logan Rimes 713-681-5397
Arnie Kaestner Members Observatory Night 11-10-01
David Kahlich Site
Bill Krell Members Observatory Night 11-10-01
Howard Leverenz Site
Jay E. Levy Site
Mary Lockwood Members Observatory Night 11-10-01
David Herlinger Site
Robert C. Menius Site

December Supervisor Logan Rimes 713-681-5397
Christopher Mendell Site
Larry Mitchell Members Observatory Night 12-08-01
Jeff Moore Site
Debbie Moran Site
Mark K. Mulrooney Site
Ben Negy, Jr. Members Observatory Night 12-08-01
Johnny Norris Members Observatory Night 12-08-01
Richard Nugent Site

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.

Logo Sales

For H.A.S. Logo merchandise, call:
Judy Ann Dye - 281-498-1703

Hooded Sweatshirts

M	\$31.00
L	\$31.00
XL	\$31.00
XXL	\$33.00



Judy shows the logo on the back of the new hooded sweatshirts.

These are the prices for our new hooded sweatshirts. These are made from heavy sweatshirt material and were very popular at the September meeting. If you want one, come to the October meeting -- cash and checks accepted.

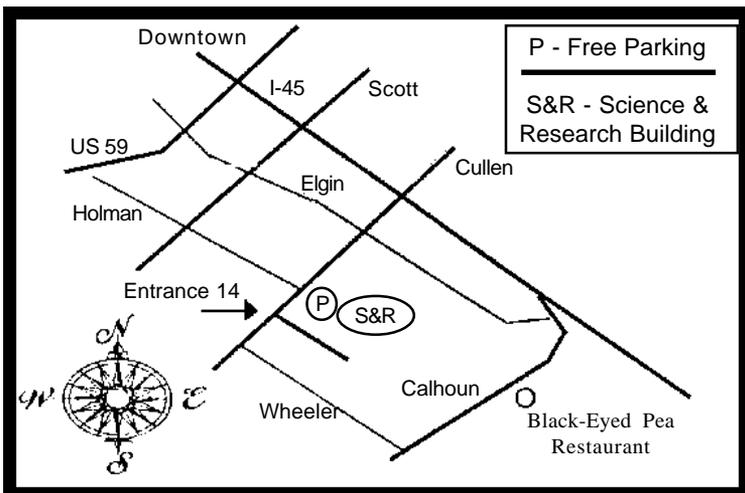
Watch for the T-shirts for Astronomy Day. I hope you like them as well as the hooded sweatshirts. If everything goes right, I should have them by our meeting in October.

Observations... from page 4

Now's the time to think about how you can help the H.A.S. fulfill its mission. Printing and mailing this publication (the *GuideStar*) is something that you can do. How about volunteering for an educational star party? See Marg's announcement.

Until next time... clear skies and new moons!

..Bill



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.

Editing & Production: Bill Pellerin, 713-880-8061; FAX: 713-880-8850;

AOL: BILLP10566; Internet: BILLP10566@AOL.COM

Reproduction: Mike & Judy Dye... Need help!! ... call the president to volunteer!!!

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