



East Valley Astronomy Club

January 2003

www.eastvalleyastronomy.org

Scottsdale, Arizona

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From the Editor

Because your Newsletter is now being edited by a new editor on a different computer platform, some usual features have not yet made the transition in this first issue. As these words are written, I'm not even sure what form the 'electronic' edition will take. I will make every effort to return the usual features as file compatability and time permit.

ed.

From the Desk of the President by Peter Argenziano 2003 EVAC President

Well, here we are beginning another new year! Each one seems to arrive a little quicker than the last. I hope that everyone had a safe and joyous Holiday season!

As we start the new year, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the East Valley Astronomy Club, Inc. Officers and Board of Directors for 2003.

Executive Officers;

President: Peter Argenziano, Vice President: Diana Jané, Secretary: Tom Polakis, Treasurer: Stanley Bronstein

Administrative Officers:

Properties Director: Gary Finnie, Events Coordinator: Howard Israel, Newsletter Editor: John Matthews, Newsletter Coordinator: Silvio Jaconelli, Webmaster: Marty Pieczonka, Web Developer: Dave Kelley, Club Photographer: Jason B. Nelson

Board of Directors:

Craig Dokken (Observing Programs Coordinator), Jim Gutman, Brian Rhodes, Dave Coshow, Mort Hanlon, Randy Peterson, Dave Hertel

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to last year's Officers and Board (some still hold offices this year) for their outstanding work. On behalf of EVAC, I would like to thank Martin Bonadio for his excellent leadership over the past two years, this is a tough act to follow!

Each year EVAC adds more members, we currently have about 230, making us one of the largest clubs in the state. In response to this 'Eastronomical' growth, we will be updating the club's Constitution and Bylaws this year. This is necessary, for a lot has changed since the club was formed in 1987 and incorporated in 1996. Once the Officers and Board have approved the final draft, the new document will be published on our website. At the next general meeting following publication of the new Constitution and Bylaws, the membership will vote on ratification. I expect this process to be completed by Percival Lowell's birthday (a date he shares with yours truly, March 13th).

If you've been online recently, no doubt you've seen our website undergoing some changes. Under the expert guidance of our new webmaster, Marty Pieczonka, we are adding more content. Some of the new or expanded areas include:

- * Expanded Observing Programs
- * Virtual Beginner's Lab
- * Expanded Equipment Review Section (which we plan to be the review site on the Internet)
- * Astronomy Software List
- * Plus much more!

If you have ideas for our website, contact the webmaster!

The single largest expense that EVAC has each year involves our monthly newsletter. While printing costs keep increasing, the major expense here is the mailing of newsletters. If at all possible, I ask you to change your method of newsletter delivery from a mailed hardcopy to electronic delivery. It is published in Adobe PDF (portable document format) for which the reader application is freely available, there's even a link to download it on our website. Please consider switching to electronic delivery.

contd. on p.2.

As we head into 2003 I would like to remind you that it is time to renew your EVAC membership, if you haven't done so already. You may use the renewal form contained in this issue of the newsletter or print one from our website. Please contact the Treasurer, Stanley Bronstein, for further details. Thank you!

EVAC operates a listserver, which is available to all members. Technically, it is not moderated so anyone who visits the website can subscribe (members and non-members alike). This list, which is similar in functionality to the thousands of lists that Yahoo offers, is intended to be a communication vehicle between club members. My only request is that postings on this list have something to do with astronomy. I encourage you to take advantage of this wonderful communication medium.

During 2002 a special committee was formed to investigate our options regarding the site of our monthly general meetings. The committee should finalize its report early in the second quarter this year. While a change in meeting location is not imminent, the Board thought it prudent to investigate the ramifications of such a change. For information purposes, EVAC does not pay Scottsdale Community College for the use of the facilities. In exchange for the use of room PS-172 on a monthly basis, we provide two star parties each year for SCC students.

I look forward to another great year for East Valley Astronomy Club, Inc.
Keep looking up!

EVAC CHRISTMAS PARTY EVENING **By Silvio Jaconelli**

Saturday December 14, 2002 turned out to be a night to remember. It all started at the EVAC Christmas Party kindly hosted by Chuck Crawford at his apartment complex clubhouse. The food there was excellent, and I must say at this point that our new Treasurer Stanley Bronstein is an excellent cook - those pork ribs and BBQ sauce were just excellent! Between the food, watching snippets of Chuck's astronomy videos, and the excellent conversation, I could not have asked for more. A highlight of the evening was Bill Dillenges' Televue 85 refractor - a fine 85 mm f/7 apochromatic telescope which Bill had on display; it was mounted on a Bogen tripod - another top quality piece of equipment. Bill had this on display and it attracted a lot of attention, and eventually we ended up with it set out by the pool and we observed Saturn and the Moon. The views were very sharp - a tribute to the quality of Televue optics. However, we were forced to observe through some thick cirrus cloud, which did impact the views. Chris Schur brought along a photograph album with some of his excellent astronomy photographs, and Jason Nelson was there taking photographs of the evening's proceedings. There were very interesting conversations with Tom Polakis on solar observing, Randy Peterson on Asteroid observing, and Don Wrigley/Jim Gutman on binocular viewers. A real fun time !!

I left to go home around 10pm, and being unable to get the Televue 85 out of my mind. I looked up at the sky and it seemed that the cirrus cloud cover was thinning out so I decided to set up my 6" Apochromat in my backyard to see to try to get those refractor images washed out of my system !! Refractors tend to cool down quicker than other types of telescopes due to their smaller aperture and the bending of the light path away from the tube as soon as the light rays pass through the objective, so I was ready to observe about 30 minutes later. During this 30 minutes I logged on to Jim Gutman's Yahoo Binocular Discussion Group - a web site that has excellent discussions on binocular viewers and that has earned Jim world recognition in the area of this equipment.

My first target for the evening was Saturn, which was now almost at zenith. Wow !!! The seeing was very steady and I was getting incredible views. I was using a Baader Zeiss binocular viewer - binocular viewers give the illusion that your magnification is at least 50% more than is really being used.

This has the advantage of you getting the advantage of sharper images at the lower magnification combined with the illusion of higher magnification - the best of both worlds.

I was at 270 power, and the views were rock solid. The three major rings (A, B & Crepe) were easily resolved, and the 5 major moons were very obvious; another advantage of refractors is their ability to deliver pin-point star images and this really helps to resolve very faint point objects (such as stars) since their light is not de-focussed (and therefore dimmed) over a large area. Picking up these moons so easily in the Gilbert skyglow with an 11 day Moon was really cool! The view at 430 power was good to fair, and for a moment or so on several occasions I may have glimpsed the oh-so-elusive Encke Gap in the A ring. But 270 power was where I enjoyed the views the most.

Then it was time to look at the Moon before it got too far into the west. The best views here were at 170 power - marvelous panoramic views that seemed to be at magnifications far higher than 170 power, due to that optical illusion effect mentioned earlier. The views at 270 power were rock solid, but I preferred the panoramic views at 170 power. I just soaked up the crisp views of the mountain ranges, the terraced walls of the larger craters, and the lava ridges in the lunar mare. Also Clavius was stunning, with the curved hook of 'craters within the crater' looking very sharp.

At this point I decided to try to split Sirius, which was about 60 degrees high at this point and around 2 hours away from the central meridian. As I expected, my attempt was a miserable failure - the star was not high enough and the seeing, although good, was not excellent. Despite the separation of 5 arc seconds, the overwhelming glare from Sirius was too much to allow for the resolution of the faint companion. So I tried an easier target - Castor. This was easily resolved at 170 power, and at 270 power there was enough dark space to drive a bus between them! Let me add that I was using an hexagonal mask for the double stars; an hexagonal mask is a regular aperture mask except that the mask is hexagonal rather than circular. better chance of escaping from the glare of the primary. While this aperture mask did not work on Sirius, it worked great on Castor - the spike rays from the pair of stars

reduced to two moderately large circles that emphasized their separation, resulting in a real easy split. I once tried to get Bill Dillenges interested in this technique, but he ended up accusing me of voodoo and black magic!!

My next target was the Orion nebula - the nebula itself was a little washed out by the Moon, but the trapezium at 170 power looked huge! And again, the stars were pin points through the refractor.

By this time, Jupiter was about 45 degrees above the horizon - really too low for any decent observing, but what the heck - I was having fun! As expected, the views were mushy, but wait - what was that big black dot on the surface? I was fortunate to have stumbled on Callisto casting it's shadow onto Jupiter's disk as it passed between the Sun and Jupiter - neat!! By this time the cirrus clouds were getting thicker - the forecast was for overcast skies, so I decided to stop right there. One last look at Jupiter and I would call it a night - then I suddenly noticed a dimple of light on the limb of Jupiter - what the heck was that? I waited a few minutes, and the dimple seemed to be getting bigger - it turns out that I was witnessing the end of Jupiter's occultation of Ganymede as the moon re-appeared from the back side of Jupiter - again how fortuitous!!

I glanced at my watch - GULP - it was 1:15am - how could it be this late?? Well, time flies when you are having fun!!

Yes, like I said at the start of this article, Saturday December 14, 2002 turned out to be a night to remembe

For sale:

Adlerblick 7x50 binoculars (field 6 degrees, 23mm eye relief) mint condition. \$200. One owner, used about 3 times for a few minutes. Have upgraded from these fine mid range binos to a high end pair. You will pay \$256 incl shipping to order from Adlerblick new. See my review and photo at the club web site.

Bill Dellenges
480 983 6651
welovestars@earthlink.net

For sale:

TeleVue 20mm 1 1/4" eyepiece, \$80. Brand new in box, never used. Retail for \$95, you save \$15 plus shipping or state tax.

Bill Dellenges
480 983 6651
welovestars@earthlink.net

EVAC Events Calendar by Howard Israel

Events Calendar for January 2003

Thu. 01/02 - New Moon, Sat. 01/04 - Star Party (Deep Sky Site), Wed. 01/08 - EVAC meeting, Fri. 10/10 - Public Star Party (Gilbert Library), Fri. 01/24 - Beginner's Lab (location below), Sat. 01/25 - Star Party (F.J. Site)

Events Calendar for February 2003

Sat. 02/01 - New Moon, Sat. 02/01 - Star Party (Deep Sky Site), Fri. 02/07 - Star Party (Highland HS), Wed. 02/12 - EVAC meeting, Fri. 02/14 - Public Star Party (Gilbert Library), Sat. 02/22 - Star Party (F.J. Site)

Events Calendar for March 2003

Sat. 03/01 - Star Party (Deep Sky Site), Sun. 03/02 - New Moon, Wed. 03/06 - EVAC meeting, Fri. 03/14 - EVAC meeting, Fri. 03/14 - Public Star Party (Gilbert Library), Sat. 03/22 - Star Party (F.J. Site)

Notes: Local and Deep Sky Star Parties are for members' only and invited guests. Please observe star party etiquette. Star party Hotline: 480 893 0013 for further information.

The General Public is welcome to attend public star parties held at the Gilbert Library at Greenfield/ Guadalupe on the second Friday of each month, weather permitting. Observing begins at dusk. EVAC volunteers and telescopes always welcome.

Beginners Lab will be held on Friday, January 24, 2003 at the home of Dave Coshow. 2113 E. Yale Drive, Tempe, AZ. Setup and observing begins at 7:00 PM. E. Yale Drive is located 1/2 mile south of the intersection of Baseline Road and Price Road, west of the Loop 101. For further information, call Dave Coshow at: 480 730 1132. Non-members are invited but they must call for a reservation since space is very limited.

EVAC Star Party for Highland High School Physics Club Friday, Feb. 7, 2003. 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM. Volunteers are needed to provide telescopes. Call Dave Coshow at: 480 730 1132 if you wish to volunteer. The School is located at 4301 East Guadalupe Rd. About 50 students are planning to attend, so we should have a minimum of 8 telescopes. Thanks to those who have already volunteered.

Bonus Deep Sky Party on Saturday, March 1 will be a Members Only Eyepiece Shootout. Bring lots of eyepieces and we'll compare them all - under Dark Sky conditions-- to determine who's got the best bang for the buck. Details to follow.

The Events committee is working on a visit to University Of Arizona Stewart Mirror Lab sometime in March. Details to follow.

If it's clear...
by Fulton Wright, Jr.
Prescott Astronomy Club
for January 2003

Shamelessly stolen information from Sky & Telescope magazine, Astronomy magazine, and anywhere else I can find data. When gauging distances, remember that the Moon is 1/2 a degree or 30 arcminutes in diameter.

On Tuesday, December 31, at 11:03 PM (it's January 1 Universal Time so it's OK to have this in the January newsletter) you can see a moon bounce off Jupiter. (What?!) With a small (3 inch) or larger telescope look 35 degrees above the east horizon for Jupiter. At the same moment that Callisto, which has been approaching upward, moves in front of the planet, Io emerges from behind the planet, at the same spot, moving downward.

On Saturday, January 4, after 7:00 PM you probably won't be able to see Saturn cross in front of the Crab Nebula. Saturn will be there all right, but it is so bright that the glare will obscure the nebula which is much fainter. With a medium (6 inch) telescope look 35 degrees above the east horizon for the planet (mag -0.5). It might be fun to check on the days before or after to see how far away Saturn must be to see the nebula.

On Tuesday, January 7, you can really have some fun observing Jupiter's moons. With a medium (6 inch) telescope look 50 degrees above the east horizon for Jupiter.

Here is the schedule of events:

12:11 AM Europa's shadow falls on Jupiter (1 shadow)
12:39 AM Io moves partly behind Europa
(the two satellites seem to merge)
12:41 AM Io's shadow falls on Jupiter (2 shadows)
1:18 AM Io moves in front of Jupiter
1:27 AM Europa moves in front of Jupiter
2:14 AM Europa's shadow falls on Io!
(the two shadows on Jupiter merge)
(Io, still in front of Jupiter, appears as a dark spot)
(the event takes almost half an hour to complete)
2:58 AM Io's shadow leaves Jupiter (1 shadow left)
3:06 AM Europa's shadow leaves Jupiter (0 shadows left)
3:34 AM Io moves from in front of Jupiter
4:21 AM Europa moves from in front of Jupiter

On Wednesday, January 8, you can see some events involving all 4 of Jupiter's bright moons.

Here is the schedule:

7:41 PM Jupiter rises with Ganymede's and Io's shadows on it (2 shadows)
7:44 PM Io moves in front of Jupiter
8:22 PM Io's shadow passes Ganymede's on Jupiter
8:46 PM Ganymede moves in front of Jupiter

9:26 PM Io's shadow leaves Jupiter (1 shadow)
10:01 PM Io moves from in front of Jupiter
10:03 PM Ganymede's shadow leaves Jupiter (0 shadows)
10:53 PM Europa appears from behind Jupiter
11:44 PM Callisto disappears in Jupiter's shadow
12:23 AM Ganymede moves from in front of Jupiter
4:36 AM Callisto reappears from Jupiter's shadow
5:13 AM Callisto disappears behind Jupiter

On Monday, January 13, you can see some events with Jupiter's moons.

Here is the schedule:

10:50 PM Io and Europa barely touch
(this is a long, slow kiss)
1:41 AM Europa's shadow falls on Io
2:34 AM Io's shadow falls on Jupiter (1 shadow)
2:48 AM Europa's shadow falls on Jupiter (2 shadows)
3:02 AM Io moves in front of Jupiter
3:34 AM Io partly covers Europa's shadow on Jupiter
3:44 AM Europa moves in front of Jupiter
4:52 AM Io's shadow leaves Jupiter (1 shadow)
5:19 AM Io moves from in front of Jupiter
5:42 AM Europa's shadow leaves Jupiter (0 shadows)
6:38 AM Europa moves from in front of Jupiter

On Wednesday, January 15, you can see some events with Jupiter's moons.

Here is the schedule:

9:03 PM Io's shadow falls on Jupiter (1 shadow)
9:25 PM Europa disappears in Jupiter's shadow
9:28 PM Io moves in front of Jupiter
10:25 PM Ganymede's shadow falls on Jupiter (2 shadows)
11:20 PM Io's shadow leaves Jupiter (1 shadow)
11:45 PM Io moves from in front of Jupiter
12:05 AM Ganymede moves in front of Jupiter
1:07 AM Europa appears from behind Jupiter
2:01 AM Ganymede's shadow leaves Jupiter (0 shadows)
3:42 AM Ganymede moves from in front of Jupiter

On Monday, January 27, about 6:30 AM, you can see the Moon between Mars and the globular cluster M80. With binoculars look 30 degrees above the southeast horizon for the crescent Moon. Mars is one degree up and to the left, M80 one degree down and to the right.

A Year of Sky Events
by Joe Orman
Photo Pages:
<http://pages.prodigy.net/pam.orman/JoeHome.html>

Mark your calendar for these interesting alignments, conjunctions, occultations, eclipses & meteor showers in the year 2003. Times are calculated for Phoenix, Arizona; other locations may differ. Most will be easy to see with the unaided eye, some very challenging -- take a look! Constructive comments and corrections welcome. This list may be copied and distributed for non-commercial use, but it must be credited to Joe Orman.

January 4-5 (night): Saturn passes directly in front of Crab Nebula (M1).

January 15 (evening): Gibbous Moon 5 degrees to lower right of Saturn, in E after sunset.

January 27 (morning): Crescent Moon 1 degree to lower right of Mars, in SE before sunrise (occultation in South Pacific, South America).

January 28 (morning): Crescent Moon 5 degrees to lower right of Venus, in SE before sunrise.

January 31 (morning): Mercury (magnitude 0.1) only 3 arc-minutes to right of 3rd-magnitude star Albaldah (pi Sagittarii), very low in ESE before sunrise.

March 18 (evening): Full Moon rises straight east in twilight (sunset 6:38pm, moonrise 7:15pm).

March 20: Spring equinox (6:00 pm MST). Sunrise straight east (6:32am, azimuth 89.6 degrees), sunset straight west (6:40pm, azimuth 270.6 degrees). Always use proper eye protection when viewing the sun.

March 25 (morning): Mars rises 5 degrees to left of last quarter Moon, in ESE 4 hours before sunrise.

April 2 (evening): Mercury 4 degrees to right of thin crescent Moon, very low in W after sunset.

April 11 (morning): Jupiter 4 degrees to lower left of gibbous Moon, both set in WNW 3 hours before sunrise.

April 28 (morning): Venus 4 degrees to lower right of thin crescent Moon, very low in E before sunrise.

May 4 (evening): Saturn 4 degrees to upper left of crescent Moon, in W after sunset.

May 9 (night): First quarter Moon occults 3.5-magnitude star eta Leonis, high in W (disappears behind dark limb 10:04pm MST, reappears from bright limb 11:05pm).

May 14 (morning): Neptune 2 degrees above Mars, in SE before

sunrise.

May 15 (evening): Total Lunar Eclipse (partial at moonrise at 7:13pm MST), low in SE. Totality from 8:16 pm to 9:04pm.

May 26 (morning): Mercury 2 degrees to lower right of Venus, very low in ENE before sunrise.

May 29 (morning): Very thin crescent moon 4 degrees to lower left of Venus (Occultation in Africa and Asia), Mercury 3 degrees to lower right of Venus, very low in ENE before sunrise.

June 19 (morning): Mars 3 degrees to upper right of gibbous Moon, high in S before sunrise.

June 21 (morning): Mercury 1/2 degree below Venus, very low in ENE before sunrise (Mercury and Venus close together May 24 thru June 24).

June 22 (morning): Uranus 3 degrees above Mars, high in S before sunrise.

June 28 (morning): Venus 2 degrees to lower right of thin crescent moon, very low in ENE before sunrise.

July 8 (morning): Saturn less than 1 degree to lower right of Venus, very low in ENE before sunrise.

July 8-9 (night): Gibbous Moon occults 2.8-magnitude star alpha1 Librae, low in SW (disappears behind dark limb 11:15pm MST, reappears from bright limb 12:25am; 5.3-magnitude companion star alpha2 Librae disappears 11:08pm, reappears 12:18am).

July 17 (morning): Mars 2 degrees to lower right of gibbous Moon, in SSW before sunrise (occultation for Caribbean region).

July 25 (night): Waning crescent Moon occults 6th-magnitude open star cluster NGC 1746; reappears from dark edge of moon just after moonrise at 2:09am MST (visible E & N North America).

July 25 (evening): Mercury 1/2 degree to upper right of Jupiter, very low in WNW after sunset.

July 30 (evening): Jupiter makes triangle 6 degrees apart from Mercury and thin crescent Moon, very low in W after sunset.

August 12-13 (night): Perseids meteor shower. Full Moon will interfere. Shower radiates from constellation Perseus, which rises in NE about 10pm. Best time to look between midnight and dawn. Typical rate 50 to 100 meteors per hour.

August 26-27 (night): Mars is nearest Earth, appears 25.1 arc-

A Year of Sky Events by Joe Orman continued

seconds in diameter --closest in last 73,000 years! At opposition night of August 27-28.

September 9 (morning): Mars 1/2 degree to upper left of crescent Moon; both set in WSW about 5am (Occultation for Asia).

September 19-20 (night): Saturn 5 degrees to right of last quarter Moon; both rise in ENE about midnight.

September 23: Fall equinox (3:47am MST). Sunrise straight east (6:17am, azimuth 89.5 degrees), sunset straight west (6:24pm, azimuth 270.3 degrees). Always use proper eye protection when viewing the sun.

September 24 (morning): Jupiter, Mercury and thin crescent Moon make triangle within 7 degrees, low in E before sunrise.

October 7 (evening): Uranus 3 1/2 degrees above Mars, in SE after sunset.

October 9 (evening): Full Moon rises straight east in twilight (sunset 6:02pm MST, moonrise 6:03pm, Moon 4 degrees above horizon straight east 6:26pm).

October 26 (daytime): Venus 1/3 degree to upper left of Moon, in SE at 11:30am MST (occultation in Hawaii & South America).

at 5:27pm MST), low in ENE. Totality from 6:09 pm to 6:29pm.

November 16-17 (night): Last quarter Moon comes within 1 arc-minute of 3.5-magnitude star eta Leonis at 2:19am MST, in E (grazing occultation for northern Arizona).

November 17-18 (night): Leonids meteor shower. Last quarter Moon rising about midnight will interfere. Shower radiates from constellation Leo, which rises in E about midnight. Best time to look between midnight and dawn. Typical rate 20 meteors per hour, some years much higher.

November 25 (evening): Venus 4 degrees to right of crescent Moon, low in SW after sunset.

December 10 (evening): Saturn 5 degrees to right of gibbous Moon; both rise in ENE about 7pm.

December 13-14 (night): Geminids meteor shower. Gibbous moon rising about 9pm will interfere. Shower radiates from Castor in constellation Gemini, which rises in NE around 7pm and is near zenith in early morning hours. Best time to look between 7pm and dawn. Typical rate 60 meteors per hour.

December 24 (evening): Venus 5 degrees to right of crescent Moon, low in SW after sunset.

For sale :

Bogen 3029 Pan Tilt Head (3 way). \$35.
Weight 2.2 lbs. Capacity 13.2 lbs. New 11/02,
used once.
Bill Dellinges 480-983-6651.

For sale:

Davis-Sanford Tripod, \$100. Served me well for 10 years supporting a Questar 3.5. Pictured in older Questar catalogs. Center post rises to 60". All metal-no plastic. Azimuth/altitude motions. Very large head mounting area (5 1/2" x 3 1/2")(mounting screw standard 1/4-20). Data plate reads "Floating Action, Model A". Been around awhile but sturdy, built like a tank, many years of life left.
Bill Dellinges 480-983-6651

IT'S RENEWAL TIME AGAIN

It is once again time for everyone to renew their EVAC membership. If you haven't already renewed for 2003, please complete the renewal form at:
<http://www.eastvalleyastronomy.org/EVAC/join.html>

Once completed, print out the form . You can either mail the completed form, with a \$20 check payable to EVAC TREASURER, at: EVAC Treasurer P. O. Box 2202 Mesa, AZ 85214-2202 or simply bring the completed form and your check or cash to the next meeting in January. You don't need to fill out all the blanks, unless you want changes in your existing membership info. For magazine subscriptions to Sky & Telescope or Astronomy magazine or to order a name badge, instructions are on the forms.

CLEAR SKIES !!!

Contact - Stanley F. Bronstein
Treasurer Email
sfb@yourpurposeinlife.com

Backyard Astronomer By Bill Dellinges (12/02)

Jack Newton's Arizona Sky Village
www.jacknewton.com <http://arizonaskyvillage.com>

During a stargazing session recently, club member Jim Gutman mentioned he'd heard about a project east of Tucson that would be of interest to those seeking a dark sky site. Noted astro-photographer Jack Newton has decided to set up camp here in Portal Arizona, leaving his Chiefland, Florida site where he had wintered from his native Canada for some years. You may recall a recent Sky & Telescope article about this dark sky community that developed nearby.

This all sounded exciting to me, so my wife Lora and I buzzed on down to check it out. Portal is at the end of the world. Careful, you might fall off. The drive was 250 miles from Apache Junction via Globe and Safford, east on I10, across the New Mexico border a few miles, then south a bit, and back into Arizona. Yes, you actually have to go into N.M. to get there! We stayed at the Portal Lodge (\$65/night). It has a small café and grocery store. There is a post office, a library-both vary rustic-and a few homes nearby. That is Portal. But the country is gorgeous! It is the gateway town to the eastern entrance of Chiricahua National Monument. And it is DARK.

The Newtons looked all over the state and felt this area was about as dark as it gets. So, it is here where they will establish "Arizona Sky Village", a community where astro-nuts seeking the ultimate dark sky experience may gather to build their homes, observatories, and mingle with fellow gazers. Jack, his wife Alice, and associate Eugene Turner discussed the plan with us: on about 400 acres, 2 miles northeast of town, 4 acre lots will be sold at the current price of \$30,000. \$1000 down, refundable, will secure your lot until this project is approved by the county. A hearing on this issue might come as soon as January, 2003. About 2/3 of the lots are spoken for even though it hasn't been advertised. No ground has been broken yet, but power and phone lines are in place to the project. One will need to add a septic tank and well, of course, due to its remoteness.

Speaking of remoteness, keep in mind, if you're thinking of living here full time, the nearest gas station is 7 miles away in Rodeo, New Mexico. The nearest large city for services will be Douglas, about 60 miles to the southwest. It goes without saying, there will be very strict light ordinances. The Newtons and Mr. Turner are currently living in a home, in the middle of the acreage, working on the details of the project.

They were kind enough to invite us out to their place not only to tell us about the plan, but also to view the sun that morning in Jack's observatory, a large dome affair he built himself. Inside is a LX200 16" with a Finger Lakes CCD camera (with a 1" square chip), and a Meade 5" and 7" refractor piggybacked on the main scope. The 5" had a 90mm Coronado H-Alpha sun filter that rendered a fine view of the sun, rich in surface detail and prominences. He then showed me Spica and Venus. The 5" has a Meade Pictor 1616 XTE CCD camera and SBIG STV Autoguider on it for solar work. He told me he had seen hundreds of stars through the scope at day (thanks to its GOTO feature), including cleanly splitting Lyra's "Double-Double", Epsilon Lyrae. He then pulled up a shot on the computer screen that he was especially proud of: a star cluster in M31, RESOLVED. Generously, I was invited back that night and I jumped on the offer, needless to say.

The sky was very dark. The Milky Way was prominent with dark lanes. I could make out, with my naked eye, M31 (Jack said he could see M33), the Coathangar, a glow I never noticed before in the southern part of Cepheus (where some deep sky stuff is located), and 5 stars in the Great Square of Pegasus (Jack counted 25! My eyes are only average, at best). I also noted that I could easily pick out those tough constellations like Aquarius, Cetus, Capricornus, Ursa Minor, and Piscis Austrinus. The Double Cluster in Perseus was VERY bright, as was the Perseus O-B Association near Mirfak. Jack runs his 16" with the SKY program seated at his computer in the dome. He slewed the scope to such objects as M2, 15, Stephens Quintet, NGC 7331, and 246. The CCD camera is set up with an eyepiece sticking out of it so you can both image the object or select to view it visually, a nice amenity! This paid off when NGC 246, a planetary in Cetus was a bit dim visually (though still pretty neat). Moments after a mouse click, bingo, there it was on the monitor looking like a photo from a book. A rising moon ended our gazing session.

I thanked Jack for his hospitality and drove off into the night thinking about the last time I saw him, in Victoria, Vancouver Island in 1988 at an ASP meeting. Long time no see. I wish the best to him and Alice in their new venture.

EVAC BEGINNERS LAB
by
Howard Israel
Events Coordinator

On the evening of January 24, 2003, the East Valley Astronomy Club is offering its very popular Beginners Lab. This quarterly event provides beginning astronomers and new telescope owners the opportunity to learn how to set up their scopes, and how to observe effectively to get the most enjoyment from their equipment and the night sky. It's also a great way to meet EVAC members who are amateur astronomers eager to share their experience and expertise. We can always use additional member participation.

If EVAC members don't own a telescope, we encourage participation in the Beginners Lab. Perhaps this will provide motivation to acquire binoculars or a telescope. The Beginners Lab schedule is designed to allow participants to use the knowledge gained the very next night at our Local Star Party in Florence Junction.

Beginning with this event, we are making our Beginners Lab available to the public on a limited, reservation only basis. Non members who are interested in attending the Beginners Lab must call Dave Coshow at 480 730 1132 to join us on a 'space available' basis. What better way to acquaint those interested in astronomy with the benefits of membership in EVAC. Dave Coshows' home is located at 2113 E. Yale Drive, Tempe. Setup begins at 7:00 PM and usually ends around 9:00 PM. Yale Drive is located 1/2 mile south of the Baseline Road/Price Road junction, on the west side of the Loop 101.

Month	New Moon	EVAC Meeting	Star Party (Local)	Star Party (Deep Sky)	Gilbert Lib. Public S/P	Other Events	Meeting Speaker
January	Thursday 01/02	Wednesday 01/08	Saturday 01/25	Saturday 01/04	Friday 01/10	Beginner's Lab. Friday 01/04	TBD
February	Saturday 02/01	Wednesday 02/12	Saturday 02/22	Saturday 02/01	Friday 02/14	Highland HS Star Party Friday 01/04	TBD
March	Sunday 03/02	Wednesday 03/12	Saturday 03/22	Saturday 03/01	Friday 03/14	Visit to UA Mirror Lab TBD	TBD

EVAC Meeting Minutes -- 12/11/02
by
Tom Polakis, Secretary

Events Coordinator Howard Israel began by announcing the star party schedule. He then brought up events such as EVAC field trips and equipment "shootouts" at the site. Most importantly, be sure to use Howard as your resource before you schedule events.

Joe Goss was given a prestigious deep-sky observing award for observing 500 objects that are not on existing EVAC lists.

After the break, Gary Neyenhuis showed a videotape of the spin casting operation at the Steward Mirror Lab. Randy Peterson followed by slides of the Leonid meteors. Chris Schur then showed CCD images taken with his new ST-8 camera. Subjects included NGC 1579, Baade 1, and the moon in daylight.

The main speaker was Bill Dellinges, who spoke about New Mexico astronomy. While he was there, he visited NM Skies, the VLA, and Roswell. On the way back, he stopped by Arizona Sky Village, located near the Chiricahua Mountains.