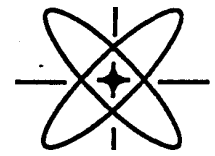


# METEOR WRITE



NEWSLETTER OF THE MEMPHIS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY  
A NON-PROFIT, PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATION PROMOTING INTEREST  
AND EDUCATION IN ASTRONOMY AND RELATED SCIENCES. FOUNDED IN 1953.

February, 2009

VOL.43 NO.2

## FEBRUARY MEETING

The Memphis Astronomical Society will hold its regular monthly meeting at 8:00 P.M. on Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup> 2009, in the Science Auditorium on the campus of Christian Brothers University at Parkway and Central. Members are urged to attend and to bring guests; the public is welcome.

### PROGRAM

**WELCOME** \* \* President Moore will greet the members and guests and outline the evening's program.

**BUSINESS** \* \* The Treasurer's Report will be given by Treasurer Bill Wilson and the Minutes of the January Board of Directors Meeting will be read by Secretary Carrie Armus.

**THE SOLAR SYSTEM AMBASSADOR PROJECT** \* \* by Janet Howard.

In conjunction with our activities for the International Year of Astronomy, Janet will describe this program in which volunteers can publicize and advocate the work of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and NASA for the enlightenment of the general public.

**THE MESSAGE OF STARLIGHT (Part I)** \* \* by William J. Busler.

Without spectroscopy, astronomers would know very little about the Universe. Bill will trace the history of astronomical spectroscopy and will attempt to elucidate the principles upon which it is based.

**BREAK** \* \* While refreshing and mixing and mingling, observe actual spectral lines from incandescent gases and other sources, using diffraction gratings.

**THE MESSAGE OF STARLIGHT (Part II)** \* \* by William J. Busler.

Bill will outline the many important discoveries which were made possible through spectroscopy, and will connect these discoveries to our present understanding of the Universe.

**MAS E-MAIL ADDRESS:** [info @ MemphisAstro.Org](mailto:info@MemphisAstro.Org)

**MAS WEB SITE URL:** <http://www.MEMPHISASTRO.ORG>

**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER** \* \* The M.A.S. welcomes its newest member: Leiland Duke; 2316 Dogwood Meadows Cove; Germantown, Tennessee 38139; 754-0020; [lmduke@bellsouth.net](mailto:lmduke@bellsouth.net).

Please help welcome Leiland to the Society.

**CORDOVA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OBSERVING SESSION** \* \*Tom Emens is organizing a monthly observing session at Cordova Elementary School on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month. This is a good opportunity to help young people with an interest in astronomy. Please contact Tom Emens at 362-6019 if you can help. He will place you on the monthly list to be notified whether it is open or not.

**FEBRUARY OBSERVING SESSION** \* \* The February Observing Session will be held on Saturday, February 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:30 P.M. at our observing site near Lagrange, Tennessee. Maps and directions will be readily available at the General Meeting.

**THE PLANETS FOR FEBRUARY, 2009** \* \* by Richard Moore.

Venus	02/01	23	54	01	15	-5.4	09	03 AM	09	12 PM
	02/05	00	05	03	04	-5.5	08	53	09	12
	02/10	00	17	05	15	-5.5	08	40	09	11
	0215	00	28	07	16	-5.5	08	25	09	08
	02/20	00	36	09	06	-5.5	08	09	09	02
	02/25	00	42	10	40	-5.5	07	50	08	53
	02/28	00	45	11	27	-5.4	07	38	08	40
	02/01	11	29	05	38	0.65	08	28 PM	08	58 AM
Saturn	02/05	11	29	05	44	0.6	08	11	08	42
	02/10	11	27	05	53	0.6	07	50	08	21
	0215	11	26	06	01	0.6	07	29	08	01
	02/20	11	25	06	11	0.6	07	08	07	40
	02/25	11	24	07	20	0.6	06	46	07	20
	02/28	11	23	06	26	0.6	08	33	07	08

**THE GALLOPING AMATUER** \* \* by Richard Moore.

...Zero... There are actually two uses for zero: one, as an empty place indicator in our place-value number system; and, two, as a number itself in the form we use it as 0.

An early use of the zero was to denote an empty place is not an really an use of zero as a number at all; rather, merely the use of some type of punctuation mark so that the numbers have the correct interpretation. The ancient Greeks did not adopt a positional numbering system; rather, their mathematical achievements were based on geometry. So they did not need to name their numbers since they worked with numbers as lengths of lines - the exception was a mathematician who was involved in recording astronomical dates. So, here is the first use of the zero symbol as we know it today.

Ptolemy, in his *Almagest*, in about 1300 A.D. uses the Babylonian hexadecimal system together with the empty place holder 0, but this was really accepted until the arrival of Indian mathematics. The Indians, by about 650 A.D., had accepted the zero as a number. They also used a place-value system and the zero was used to denote an empty space.

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

January's Board meeting was held at the home of Richard Moore on January 16, 2009. President Moore opened the meeting at 8:06 P.M. Present were Richard Moore, Bill Busler, Brenda Harris, Bill Wilson, Carrie Armus, Freddy Diaz, Tom Emens, and Mark Matthews. Lee Cole and Ric Honey were absent. December's minutes were read and approved with corrections. Brenda Harris was also present at the December 2008 board meeting, and the date of January's board meeting should be the 16th.

The Treasurer's Report was given. The previous reported balance was \$1,783.53. There was one deposit of \$36.50 and one disbursement of \$40.00, leaving a current balance of \$1780.03. Meteor Write circulation will be 68.

In Old Business, Richard Moore reported that the December 29 observing at Southaven's Public Library went very well. Mark Matthews, Freddy Diaz, Brenda and Tommy Harris, and Richard Moore were present and had a turnout of about 30 children. Possible changes for next time were discussed, including starting an hour earlier and getting some of the lights turned off outside to make it better.

Bill Wilson reported that Mary Seratt from the Memphis library has requested a program for children and families in connection with 100 hours of astronomy. Further details will be forthcoming.

The FETTU conference call scheduled for January 8 was delayed until January 21. Bill Wilson has sent the dimensions of the Gallery at the Central Library to Amit Kapadia to send in for recommendations on the number of pictures to be displayed there in April. Rhodes College will host an unveiling event with Gordon Squires as guest speaker at the beginning of April.

In New Business, Brenda Harris distributed a tentative calendar to Bill Wilson and Richard Moore. The schedule for 2009's remaining board meetings was set.

Bill Busler requested discussion regarding progress on the 2009 initiatives presented in an earlier e-mail list. Items in the works or that need further progress include preparing presentations to have canned programs that can be presented at different venues, publicity committee contacts for advertising upcoming events, and naming a Planetarium Liason between the MAS and Sharpe and Craigmont's Planetariums. We need to get brochures printed both for the MAS and for the upcoming Short Course in Astronomy. Bill Wilson has updated the MAS brochure, Bill Busler will update the Short Course brochure, and Mark Matthews will take care of getting copies of each. Dates for the short course were discussed; it will begin in September 2009 and run a full year. People attending events or observing sessions prior to that should be encouraged to attend MAS general meetings and to purchase the Short Course brochure in advance. Programs for the year's general meetings prior to beginning the Short Course were discussed. Tom Emens moved to accept the Short Course dates and agenda as presented, and Bill Wilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Bill Busler will organize programs and presenters for the Short Course.

In New Business, committees were discussed. Bill Wilson will again be the Library Committee. Carrie Armus and Freddy Diaz volunteered to be on the Audit Committee. Materials for the annual audit will be passed to the committee for review at the next general meeting. The publicity committee will be made up of Bill Wilson, Chair; Ric Honey, Bill Busler, Carrie Armus. Brenda Harris will serve as the Planetarium Liason and Sidewalk Astronomers coordinator. Carrie Armus will contact Ric Honey to offer assistance with updating website should it be needed.

A membership application was received from Leiland M. Duke, Jr. After discussion, Brenda Harris moved to accept the application, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Welcome, Leiland!

Bill Busler turned in \$100.00 from the sale of books and brochures. VPP Bill Busler presented the agenda for February's general meeting. Tom Emens requested volunteers for a program and observing session for students and families at Cordova Elementary School on Tuesday, March 3, 2009 at 7:00 P.M.

President Moore adjourned the meeting at 9:42 P.M.

~Respectfully Submitted, Carrie Armus, Secretary