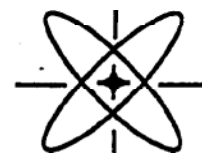


METEOR WRITE



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

MAY, 2009

VOL.43 NO.5

MAY MEETING

The Memphis Astronomical Society will hold its regular monthly meeting at 8:00 P.M. on Friday, May 1st, 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 March Board of Directors Meeting will be read by Secretary Carrie Armus.

SCIENCE FAIR PROJECT: "Does Humidity Affect My Ability to See the Stars?" * *
by Madeline Mahon.

Many factors affect "seeing" conditions when we go observing. Madeline, a student at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, studied the correlation between humidity and the number of visible stars for several weeks. She will explain her project and be awarded a Certificate of Achievement.

MARS IN CULTURE AND MYTHOLOGY * * by Ross Sackett.

Ross, a professor of Anthropology at the University of Memphis, will discuss pre-scientific views of the Red Planet and the popular mythology that developed in the wake of early telescopic discoveries by Huygens, Schiaparelli, and Lowell.

BREAK * * Time to refresh and mix and mingle.

KEPLER'S METHOD OF DETERMINING THE PLANE OF THE ORBIT OF MARS

* * by Brother Kevin Ryan.

Johannes Kepler found that the orbit of Mars was a fixed plane, inclined at about 2 degrees to the ecliptic. Using data from Tycho Brahe, he developed three methods to determine this fact. He corrected both Ptolemy and Copernicus in this regard. Brother Kevin, a member of the CBU Physics Department, will present this fascinating excerpt from the history of astronomy.

MAS E-MAIL ADDRESS: info @ MemphisAstro.Org

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

MAY OBSERVING SESSION * * The MAY Observing Session will be held on Saturday, May 23rd at 8:30 P.M. at our observing site near Lagrange, Tennessee. Maps and directions will be readily available at the General Meeting.

SEMI-ANNUAL TENN-ARK STAR PARTY a.k.a. VILLAGE CREEK PUBLIC OBSERVING SESSION * * The M.A.S. will hold another Public Observing Session at Village Creek State Park just west of Memphis in Arkansas on Saturday, May 16th, 2009. We will meet at the Park's Visitor Center at 7:30 P.M. to set up our telescopes. There will be presented a sky map and we will afterwards hold a public observing session. We will need plenty of telescopes; but we will also need just people to help direct the flow of human traffic and to help with the public. If you can come and bring a telescope or just help with the human traffic flow, please call Richard Moore at 737-3278 or e-mail him at wrhgmoore@aol.com ; or, just sign up at the April General Meeting. The alternate date in case of inclement weather is Saturday, May 30th.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS * * The M.A.S. welcomes its two newest members: Geoffrey D. Check; 7756 Widgeon Lake Cove; Cordova, Tn 38016; 751-8843; geoffcheck@comcast.net
Janet Howard; 3205 Falling Star Cove; Bartlett, Tn 38134; astro48@comcast.net

Please welcome Geoffrey and Janet to the MAS and add them to your membership listing.

THE GALLOPING AMATUER * * by Richard Moore.

...*May Day*... This holiday, which children do seem to enjoy, is a not a prominent one in America. It does, however, have a long and respected history as one of the world's principal festivals. The origin dates back to the days prior to the birth of Christ. And, like many ancient festivals, it too has roots in the pagan religions.

For the British Druids, May 1 was the second most important holiday of the year. This is when the festival of Beltane was held. It was thought that the day divides the year in half. The other was to be ended on the Samhain Day on November 1. In those days the May Day custom was the setting of new fire. It was one of those ancient New Year rites performed throughout the world. And the fire itself was thought to lend life to the burgeoning springtime sun. Cattle were even driven through the fire to purify them. Men, with their sweethearts, passed through the smoke for seeming good luck.

Then the Romans came to occupy the British Isles. The beginning of May was a popular feast time for the Romas - devoted primarily to the worship of Flora, the goddess of flowers. It was in her honour that a five-day celebration, called the Floralia, was held. The five-day festival would start from April 28 and end on May 2. The Romans brought in the rituals of the Floralia festival in the British Isles. And gradually the rituals of the Floralia were added to those of the Beltane. And many of today's customs on the May Day bear a stark similarity with those combined traditions.

May Day observance was discouraged by the Puritans. And though it was revived when they lost power, it never regained its popularity and prominence. Gradually it became known as a day of joy and merriment for the kids.

By the Middle Ages every English village had its Maypole. The bringing in of the Maypole from the woods was a great occasion and was accompanied by much rejoicing and merrymaking. The Maypoles were of all sizes. Villages would compete with one another to show who could produce the tallest Maypole. Maypoles were usually set up for the day in small towns, but in London and the larger towns they were erected permanently.

COSMIC CHUCKLES * by Richard Moore.
Clumsey Cartoon Character... Alley Oops.

WHAT'S UP ** by Richard Moore.

MAY, 2009

Visible Constellations

Coma Berenices	Leo	Ursa Major	Virgo	Hydra
Sextans		Corvus	Crater	

Good Objects to Observe

M100	spiral galaxy in Coma	Virgo	M68	globular cluster in Hydra
C60	spiral galaxy in Corvus		C45	spiral galaxy in Bootes

MINUTES OF THE APRIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

April's Board meeting was held at the home of Lee Cole on April 17, 2009. President Moore opened the meeting at 8:11 P.M. Present were Richard Moore, Bill Busler, Brenda Harris, Bill Wilson, Carrie Armus, Lee Cole, Freddy Diaz, and Mark Matthews. Tom Emens and Ric Honey were absent. March's minutes were read and approved with a correction to the website discussed. It should be galileoscopes.org.

The Treasurer's Report was given. The previous reported balance was \$1839.08. There were four deposits and one disbursement leaving a new balance of \$1942.38.

Meteor Write circulation will be 89.

In Old Business, reports were given on the success of the exhibit at the Main Library, feedback received from visitors to the exhibit, April 2nd's program for children and families at the Main Library, and the opening ceremony at Rhodes College. There was discussion on what will need to be done to prepare the exhibit for pickup at the end of April. President Moore thanked members for their efforts helping to put on these events.

Brenda Harris gave a sidewalk observing report. Bill Wilson reported on judging at the Memphis/Shelby County Science Fair and discussed the project approved by the board for the MAS Award. Bill Busler had the certificate ready and had spoken with the family of the winner, Madeline Mahon, to be sure they would be able to attend May's general meeting to receive the award.

In New Business, a new member application from Geoffrey Check was read and discussed. Bill Wilson moved to accept the application. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. A new member application from Janet Howard was read and discussed. Bill Wilson moved to accept the application. The motion was seconded and carried by majority vote.

Bill Wilson discussed the need for more ledger sheets for the treasurer's records. Bill Busler moved that the board approve the expense. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Bill Wilson requested reimbursement for the plaque awarded to Amit Kapadia. Carrie Armus moved to reimburse Bill for this expenditure. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Bill Wilson reported that the premium will be coming due for liability insurance very shortly. Bill Busler moved that the board approve the payment to CNA Insurance as soon as it comes in. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Bill Busler discussed revising the postage rates for the books listed on the website. This matter was tabled until rates can be re-calculated using the new postage rates coming out May 11, 2009.

The schedule for May's general meeting was set.

President Moore adjourned the meeting at 9:25 P.M.

~Respectfully Submitted, Carrie Armus, Secretary