

# The Prairie Astronomer

March, 2009

Volume 50, Issue #3

The Official Newsletter of the Prairie Astronomy Club

## PAC Program

We will watch the "400 Years of the Telescope" documentary from PBS.  
Info is at <http://www.400years.org>

## In This Issue

Focus on Observing, Clay Anderson, Observing Awards., Earl Moser nominated for honorary membership.

## Featured Photo

Astronaut Clay Anderson with Hyde Observatory Volunteers. Jack Dunn, Steve Lloyd, Erik Hubl, Robert Manthey, Lee Taylor, Clay Anderson, Cassie Etmund, Jason DeVore, Josh Machacek, Dave Knisely.

Please send your astrophotos to Mark Dahmke to be added to the PAC website and the newsletter.



Saturn image courtesy NASA.

## Club Business

President Brian Sivill called the meeting to order. 22 members, 10 guests.

### Announcements:

The next PAC meeting will be Tuesday March 31, 7:30PM at Hyde.

April 2-5, 2009 will be the \*100 HOURS OF ASTRONOMY\*, a key event for the International Year of Astronomy. On April 3, Mueller Planetarium will be showing the PBS special: 400 YEARS OF THE TELESCOPE and host a star party.

Nebraska astronaut, Clayton Anderson will be visiting Lincoln and Omaha on March 14-15 with appearances at Mueller Planetarium and Hyde Observatory on the 14th.

The next PAC star parties will be on February 27 and March 20 & 27 at \*the farm\*

The 2009 Mid-States' Regional Convention of the Astronomical League will be held on March 7-8 in Columbia Missouri. PAC has a significant delegation attending.

On March 16 and 17, PAC outreach coordinator, Dave Churilla and Observing Chair, Jim Kvasnicka will host a beginning astronomy class at Hyde.

### Observing Report:

Jim presented several club members with the Astronomical League's Outreach Award for service in providing the public opportunities for observing at special events. Jim also presented a review of recent and upcoming club events and observing opportunities.

### CLUB BUSINESS:

Treasurer's report: The audit has been completed and financial reports for the past year have been published in the February Newsletter. Several issues regarding the International Year of Astronomy (IYA) and PAC were discussed.

### Galileoscope:

The Galileoscope, a modified and updated version of Galileo's original telescope, has been produced. They are being marketed and sold online. They are available for \$15 plus shipping. Jack Dunn mentioned that Hyde will be purchasing several to present to the public at various events.

Brian expressed a desire for PAC to purchase a number of these for PAC events. There are price breaks on shipping with volume orders. We discussed options such as making orders with other groups such as OAS, NSP, and the Nebraska Space Grant to make a larger order. Dave Churilla made a motion and Steve Lloyd seconded that PAC approve the purchase of 30 Galileoscopes to give away at various events throughout the year. Motion passed on voice vote.

Next, Brian noted the club's unusually fortunate condition. We have been saving the proceeds from the sale of the atlas observing site for an opportunity to purchase another, more suitable site for our star parties. With the generosity of Jim Kvasnicka's family, we have had an excellent observing site for some time now. Brian again mentioned that the current board would like to use some of what we have to pursue another objective: increasing membership. The idea is that if the club provided the public with opportunities to get good, quality telescopes and other observing instruments, we could generate favorable publicity and interest in the club. Brian asked for a proposal for the club to approve the idea of using club funds to purchase some equipment for giving away at meetings and events. Jack mentioned that while the PAC executive board could approve these things without membership approval, it is common practice and courtesy to allow the membership to approve such a large expenditure. The idea was well received, with some discussion about the number and type of telescopes to purchase and price limits.

Dave Churilla made a motion to authorize the board to purchase 3 telescopes with a price not to exceed \$700.00 per instrument, for the purposes of giving them away at club functions. Jim Kvasnicka seconded. The motion

carried on a voice vote. Kevin Dowd dissented, noting that while he was not opposed to the idea Brian presented, he would have preferred more time for discussion on the matter. The PAC executive board will consider proposals for which telescopes will serve the stated purposes. If any members have ideas on this matter, they should feel free to mention them to the officers or discuss them on the PAC-list or the email broadcast on the PAC website. The board will present their decision at a later meeting.

IYA events:

Jack Dunn discussed several IYA events coming up this spring, Including:

Clay Anderson's visit to Nebraska in March

100 hours of astronomy, April 2-5

Astronomy Day on May 2.

Adjourn to the program: \*The Sky is Falling\* by Mike Sibbersen, Outreach Coordinator for the NASA Nebraska Space Grant

Respectfully submitted by,

Lee Taylor

## Club Events

PAC Club Meeting

Tuesday, March 31, 2009 7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

Next newsletter submission deadline: April 20.

PAC Club Meeting

Tuesday, April 28, 2009 7:30pm @ Hyde Obsv.

Astronomy Day at Morrill Hall

Saturday, May 02, 2009 Morrill Hall 9:30 am to 4:30

### 2009 Star Party Dates

#### March 27th

April 17th and April 24th

May 15th and May 22nd

June 12th and June 19th

July 17th and July 24th

August 14th and August 21st

September 18th and September 25th

October 16th and October 23rd

November 13th and November 20th

December 11th and December 18th

The date that is **bold and underlined** is the date closest to the New Moon.

Nebraska Star Party: July 19-24, Merritt Reservoir, Valentine, NE.

## ON THE NET

**PAC:**

[www.prairieastronomyclub.org](http://www.prairieastronomyclub.org)

**PAC E-Mail:**

[info@prairieastronomyclub.org](mailto:info@prairieastronomyclub.org)

**NSP:**

[www.nebraskastarparty.org](http://www.nebraskastarparty.org)

**NSP E-Mail:**

[info@nebraskastarparty.org](mailto:info@nebraskastarparty.org)

**OAS**

[www.OmahaAstro.com](http://www.OmahaAstro.com)

**Hyde Observatory**

[www.hydeobservatory.info](http://www.hydeobservatory.info)

**Panhandle Astronomy Club**

[Panhandleastronomyclub.com](http://Panhandleastronomyclub.com)

**PAC-LIST:** You may subscribe to the PAC listserv by sending an e-mail message to:

[imailsrv@prairieastronomyclub.org](mailto:imailsrv@prairieastronomyclub.org). In the body of the message, write "Subscribe PAC-List your-email-address@your-domain.com"

For example:

Subscribe pac-list  
me@myISP.com

To post messages to the list, send to the address

[pac-list@prairieastronomyclub.org](mailto:pac-list@prairieastronomyclub.org)

PAC can also be found on Twitter and Facebook.

Buy club apparel through the club website. Shirts, hats, mugs, mouse pads and more.



## Astronaut Clay Anderson at Morrill Hall and Hyde Observatory

About 360 people came to Morrill Hall on Saturday, March 14th, to see Nebraska astronaut Clay Anderson. Elephant Hall was packed. He signed autographs for two hours from 12:30 to about 2:20. Cassie Etmund worked the table for us, handing out lithos and also we had plenty of Hyde Observatory brochures.

--Jack Dunn



Clay at Hyde Observatory. Photo by Jack Dunn



Cassie Etmund, at the PAC table at Morrill Hall. Photos above and below by Jim Atkins.



Clay with Ernest Richardson, conductor of the Omaha Symphony after the concert. Photos by Jack Dunn.



Clay with Linda Brokofsky

## Observing Awards--Jim Kvasnicka

At the February PAC meeting 16 members received Outreach Awards from the Astronomical League. The Outreach awards are divided into three levels.

**Outreach Award:** Must do a minimum of five – 2 hour outreach events.

**Stellar Outreach Award:** An additional 50 hours in outreach.

**Master Outreach Award:** An additional 100 hours in outreach.

The following PAC members received Outreach awards.

### Outreach Awards

Joey Churilla, Cassie Etmund, Dan Kincheloe, John Lammers, Steve Lloyd, Ron Veys, Josh Machacek, Lee Taylor, Bill Lohrberg

### Stellar Outreach Awards

Dan Delzell, Bob Kacvinsky, Dave Knisely, Bob Leavitt, Brian Sivill, Dave Churilla, Jim Kvasnicka

Congratulations to all for receiving their Outreach awards. This is an accomplishment the club can be very proud of.

### Messier Observing Club - Bob Leavitt

Congratulations to Bob for observing all 110 Messier objects and receiving his honorary Messier certificate and pin.

## Earl Moser Nominated for Honorary Membership

Earl Moser has been nominated for honorary membership in the Prairie Astronomy Club. According to the bylaws of the Prairie Astronomy Club, honorary membership can be given to anyone who has shown exemplary support of astronomy. Any member may submit a nomination for honorary membership to the board of Directors. Upon unanimous approval by the board, the nomination shall be published in the Prairie Astronomer. Recently, the board received such a nomination.

Earl Moser has been a member of the Prairie Astronomy Club since very early on, supporting the club by serving as president, providing public outreach, and fostering a love of astronomy in each generation that has passed through our doors. Some time ago, Earl received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Earl was a longtime observer and astrophotographer. His farm provided the observing site for many star parties in the early years of PAC. Earl went to a number of eclipses and has been well known for his photography of comets.

Rick Johnson remembers Earl joined possibly at the Gateway Moon show, one of the very first outreach events in PAC. It was 1963 to the best of his memory, certainly no later than 65. He is responsible for getting us into the Astronomical league and for rearranging the divisions so we were in Midstates which was very active at the time. The club was rather directionless before Earl, he gave us some goals to shoot for. He pushed the Messier program back when it was the COMET program before the AL took it over as their first major program. Earl had a lot to do with that move. He started our informal picnics at Wagon Train Lake with clubs from Missouri, Kansas and the Omaha club. He found and helped finance the club's 12.5" scope which was used a lot in those years.

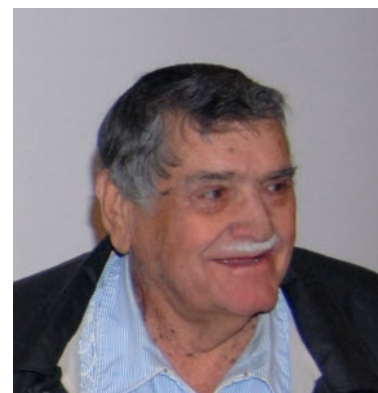
## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

**REGULAR MEMBER - \$30.00 per year. Includes club newsletter, and 1 vote at club meetings, plus all other standard club privileges.**

**FAMILY MEMBER - \$35.00 per year. Same as regular member except gets 2 votes at club meetings.**

**If you renew your membership prior to your annual renewal date, you will receive a 10% discount.**

**Club members are also eligible for special subscription discounts on Sky & Telescope Magazine.**



Earl Moser

## April Observing: What to View--Jim Kvasnicka

This is a partial list of objects visible for the upcoming month.

### Planets

**Venus:** Very low at dawn. Reaches magnitude -4.7 at the end of the month.

**Mars:** Below and to the right of much brighter Venus.

**Jupiter:** Rises 3 hours before the Sun by the end of April but it is still rather low in the southeast.

**Neptune:** At the start of April Neptune is  $6\frac{1}{2}^\circ$  east of Jupiter and by the end of the month it is down to  $2\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ .

**Uranus:** Very low in the morning and difficult to see.

**Mercury:** Visible at dusk around mid April. Look  $10^\circ$  above the WNW horizon.

**Saturn:** The only visible planet at night. Look in Leo's hind foot.

### Meteor Showers

**Lyrids:** Peaks on April 22<sup>nd</sup> between 1-4 am. Usually this shower is weak but it does surprise us some years.

### April Messier List

**M40:** Pair of stars in Ursa Major.

**M65/M66:** Galaxies in Leo – part of the Leo Triplet Group.

**M95/M96:** Galaxy pair in Leo.

**M97:** The Owl Nebula in Ursa Major.

**M105:** Galaxy in Leo close to M95 and M96.

**M106:** Galaxy in Canes Venatici.

**M108/M109:** Galaxies in Ursa Major.

**Last Month:** M41, M44, M46, M47, M48, M50, M67, M81, M82, M93

**Next Month:** M49, M51, M61, M63, M64, M85, M94, M101, M102, M104

### NGC and Other Deep Sky Objects

**NGC 4013:** Galaxy in Ursa Major.

**NGC 4236:** Galaxy in Draco.

**NGC 4762:** Galaxy in Virgo.

**Hickson 61:** Galaxy group in Coma Berenices.

**Abell 35:** Planetary nebula in Hydra.

### Double Star List

**Alpha Leonis:** White and yellow stars.

**Gamma Leonis:** Yellow pair.

**54 Leonis:** Yellow primary with a greenish secondary.

**Alpha Canum Venaticorum:** Blue-white and greenish-yellow pair.

**Zeta Ursa Majoris:** White pair.

**Gamma Virginis:** Close pair of yellow stars.

**24 Comae Berenices:** Yellow primary with a pale blue secondary.

**Delta Corvi:** White primary with a rose colored secondary.

### Challenge Object

**Abell 1656:** Coma Berenices galaxy cluster; very rich; 400 million light years away. Brightest member is NGC 4889

**FOR SALE: 8" Meade LX200 GPS f/10 with accessories** - see <http://www.mark.dahmke.com/misc/lx200/>  
Asking \$2,000 for the entire set, or will sell scope and accessories separately. The scope is lightly used and in excellent condition. Tripod, electric focuser, 26mm lens, 1.25" diagonal, f/6.3 reducer, wedge, counterweights, flip mirror, etc. Call 402-475-3150 or email [mark@dahmke.com](mailto:mark@dahmke.com).

## Focus On Observing Clubs--Jim Kvasnicka

### Galileo Club

This month we focus on the Galileo Club. The purpose of the Galileo Club is to experience the thrill that Galileo had when he was the first person to turn a telescope skyward. You will make observations like those that created such an uproar from all of Europe.

At the time of Galileo the Earth was believed to be the center of the Universe and everything revolved around us. Copernicus had proposed the idea that the planets all orbit around the Sun about 100 years earlier.

Imagine yourself as Galileo. It is the early 1600's and you are a scientist and mathematician. It's your role to help determine how the Universe works. You believe in experimentation and observation, and you have a new tool, a telescope. The telescope only has 3-power but it is followed quickly by one with 8-power and another with 20-power.

All observations for the Galileo Club must be done at a magnification between 10x and 20x. You can either use a telescope or binoculars that are mounted. You can use GO-TO equipment.

You must complete all the requirements except those labeled "optional". There are eleven requirements and two optional requirements. For each requirement you will be repeating Galileo's observations of the heavens. Requirements include the Moon, Jupiter's moons, Saturn, Neptune, the phases of Venus, sunspots and various star clusters. A list of all the requirements in detail can be found on the Astronomical League website.

[http://astroleague.org/al/obsclub/galileo\\_club/galileo\\_club.html](http://astroleague.org/al/obsclub/galileo_club/galileo_club.html).

Your observations should include the following information: your name; date & time; requirement number; equipment used and magnification; and the seeing conditions. To receive your Galileo Club certificate and pin you must complete all required activities. Once you have made the necessary observations and sketches you can submit them to me for review. I will forward your name to the Galileo Club chair for approval.

If you have any questions regarding the Galileo Club or getting started please ask and I will be glad to help you.

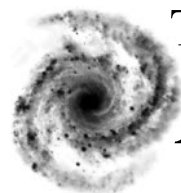
### **List of PAC Galileo Club awardees.**

No PAC member has completed the Galileo Club.

## Club Telescopes - Checkout Policy

To check out one of the club telescopes, contact Cassie Etmund at [cggymnast1@aol.com](mailto:cggymnast1@aol.com). If you keep a scope for more than a week, please check in with Cassie once a week, to verify the location of the telescope and how long you plan to use it. The checkout time limit will be two weeks, but can be extended if no one else has requested use of a club scope.





# THE *Prairie* *Astronomy* *Club*

Amateur Astronomy --  
A Hobby as Big as the Universe

The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc. Membership expiration date is listed on the mailing label. Membership dues are: **Regular \$30/yr, Family \$35/yr.** Address all new memberships and renewals to: **The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc., PO Box 5585, Lincoln, NE 68505-0585.** For other club information, please contact one of the club officers listed to the right. Newsletter comments and articles should be submitted to: **Mark Dahmke, PO Box 80266, Lincoln, NE 68501 or mark@dahmke.com,** no less than ten days prior to the club meeting. The Prairie Astronomy Club meets the last Tuesday of each month at Hyde Memorial Observatory in Lincoln, NE.

<b>PRESIDENT</b>	Brian Sivill (402) 325-0997 nanoamps@windstream.net
<b>VICE PRESIDENT</b>	Cassie Etmund
<b>2nd VICE PRESIDENT (Program Chair)</b>	Jack Dunn jdunn@spacelaser.com
<b>SECRETARY</b>	Oliver L. Taylor (402) 327-0804 otaylor89@hotmail.com
<b>TREASURER</b>	Dan Delzell Dand@fes.org (402) 483-4585
<b>Club Observing Chair</b>	Jim Kvasnicka (402) 423-7390 jim.kvasnicka@pfizer.com
<b>Outreach Coordinator:</b>	Dave Churilla, 467-1514 weber2@inebraska.com
<b>Newsletter and Website Editor:</b>	Mark Dahmke (402) 475-3150

The Prairie Astronomer  
c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.  
P.O. Box 5585  
Lincoln, NE 68505-0585

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**Next PAC Meeting**  
**TUESDAY**  
**March 31, 2009**  
**7:30 PM**  
**Hyde Observatory**