

NOVA



Official Newsletter of the Salt Lake Astronomical Society

Volume 40 Number 4 July - August 2010

Please Welcome The Newest SLAS Members!

Campbell, Forrest - Salt Lake City, UT
Cope, David - Salt Lake City, UT
Cox, Aleta - West Valley City, UT
Fisher, George - Salt Lake City, UT
Huffman, James - Salt Lake City, UT
Kirk, Brittney - Provo, UT
Lacy, David - Salt Lake City, UT

Matro, John & Nancy - Park City, UT
Mechling, Robert - Sandy, UT
Ricketts, Paul - Salt Lake City, UT
Schmidt, Meic - Salt Lake City, UT
Short, Justin & Shelly - Riverton, UT
Vepachedu, Nishanth - Taylorsville, UT
Warner, Matthew - Syracuse, UT

Fanning the Spark Into a Flame

by Steve Fisher

It should come as no surprise to those who know me where my love for astronomy has led. Like most men my age I grew up fascinated by the race to put men into space. It was hard during the 1960's not to get swept up in the excitement to explore space and put a man on the moon. From my family's home we had pristine skies and sleeping out in the back yard was a very common occurrence. I remember at one time owning the dreaded 60 millimeter store bought refractor but unlike many of my friends, while I loved the night sky I was never really a budding amateur astronomer.

In 2000 my love of the night sky finally met up with my discretionary income. I bought my first 8" Dobson mounted Newtonian scope. Quickly I found the need for bigger and better. I purchased and sold equipment like a madman. Up, and up the aperture went. Some computerized some not. Then back to star hopping and smaller higher quality scopes. Then it happened, the post on the clubs website. "Needed telescopes and operators for a school star party. We expect 600 children will attend". You have got to be kidding me! I am a 50+ year old man who has no children at home. Why in the world would I volunteer for something like this insanity? Well, I couldn't tell you for sure why but I packed up my scope and went. Maybe it was fate?

Now all these years later my equipment suits me well for my type of private observing but more than that it delivers a lot of bang for the buck with the public. They seem to love long white optical tubes pointing skyward. Yes, for several years now I have enjoyed hearing "Oh Wow" from youngsters looking through a telescope for the first time. I enjoy hearing from fifty, sixty and seventy year olds "holy cow, I'm 70 years old and this is the first time I have actually seen Saturn".

On the night of May 22, 2010 at 5:00 PM a message from the clubs observatory, the Stansbury Park Observing Complex said. "Come on out the clouds are not a problem and we are expecting

clear skies and fair seeing for our scheduled public star party". I gathered up a substantial amount of equipment and headed west to SPOC, our clubs observing site in Tooele County, Utah. When I arrived at 6:30 the cloud cover was near 100%. There was snow on the nearby mountain caps and it was chilly. I decided right then and there I would not be setting up my equipment for the night and thought I would soon be on my way to "advanced training". That is a coffee gathering with friends for those who don't know.

Our observatory director had our sign in his hand that says "No star party tonight due to inclement weather". As we were preparing to leave the first group of public star party attendees started down the walk. As they got closer we saw the clouds start to clear. The more people who showed up the clearer it got. Soon roofs began to roll off the observatories and club members started entertaining the public.

That is when my night really began. I saw a young boy (8) standing with his mother off to the side of one of the observatories. I struck up a conversation with them. It only took seconds to find out that the boy who I will call Albert (because that was his name) had been to the planetarium with his family looking at telescopes. The planetarium to their credit had suggested a public star party as an excellent starting point. Most of us who are into public astronomy look forward to igniting that first spark but this boy had already been introduced to space and the basic concepts of astronomy. This was his first night of observing and he had just seen Saturn for the first time in a telescope. It seemed his parents were very supportive of his new venture. Albert looked into one of the store rooms at the observatory and saw an 8" Orion XT scope that our club is going to give away at our next meeting. He told me this is what they had been looking at and what they came to see and compare to other scopes.

I got permission from a few of the directors of the observatory and in minutes we had the scope set up on the apron in front of one of the observatories. I got the finder working and then aligned the finder with the scope. I showed Albert where to grab the scope to move it and how to use the finder and then check the eyepiece and then I stood back.

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, this is what public outreach astronomy is all about. For the next two hours Albert worked that scope. He showed others how to use the scope. He entertained old guys like me and their wives as well as kids nearer his age. In no time at all he was swinging the scope around from one target to another like a seasoned pro. I told him about Mizar / Alcor and told him it was the center star in the Big Dippers handle and he had bagged his first double star within minutes.

I saw a spark in some kindling in an eight year old boy, by spending some time with him and his family I was able to fan that spark in to a flame. Not just a little flame but a raging fire. I was sure he would have his parents join the club which it turns out they did. This is one time where I think my efforts may have touched the life of a young man in a positive way. I may never know for sure.

Driving home from the nights events I was so happy. I was actually light hearted for the first time in a long time. I kept thinking about Albert and his family. I was almost home before I realized what had happened to me this night. Yes, I have been doing public star parties since that first group of 600 kids but my excitement level had diminished. My very own fire within had nearly extinguished itself. I did not have much more than a spark left. A very sharp eight year old boy who came to see us with his family fanned the embers that I had left. He might as well have been using a bellows as he recreated a blazing fire in me. I can't wait to get back out to my next event where the public can attend. Thanks to Albert there will be thousands more people look through my telescopes that might not have had the chance if things had remained on the path they were on.

If you are reading this and have ever wondered why people do public astronomy I hope you will remember my story of this night.

Albert touched my life.

Minutes of the Salt Lake Astronomical Society

Board Meeting, 11 May 2010

SLAS President Dave Bernson called the meeting to order in the Denny's restaurant located at 250 West 500 South in SLC at 7:29 p.m. Others in attendance were Vice-President Rodger Fry, Secretary/Treasurer Joe Bauman & Board Members at Large Nate Goodman & Mike Wilson and members, Bruce Grim, Roger Butz, Patrick Wiggins, John Houser, Kurt Fisher, Kevin Hays and former member Ray Druian.

Dave said that since the last Harmons and SPOC star parties were clouded out the telescopes and binoculars that were to have been given away then will be given away at the next Harmons star party and this year's Stansbury Day star party at SPOC.

There will be open houses at SPOC this coming Friday and Saturday evenings.

Patrick said our order of 1,000 planispheres had arrived. The board agreed to split their cost between General and ZAP funds. The money for the giveaway telescopes and binoculars were to come from Harmons and ZAP funds.

Bruce listed a few things needed to upgrade SPOC's Ealing telescope. Funds for the purchase will come out of the SPOC fund so no board action was required.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

General Meeting, 18 May 2010

SLAS President Dave Bernson called the meeting to order in room 105 of the University of Utah's Engineering/Mines building at 7:32 p.m. Approximately 43 people attended the meeting.

After the usual introduction of board members and new members Dave introduced the evening's guest speaker, Dr. Kyle Dawson with the U's Department of Physics and Astronomy. Dr. Dawson spoke about the Sloan Digital Sky Survey and the U's association with it.

Dave reminded everyone that SLAS would be giving away telescopes at the next Harmons star party that is not clouded out. Scopes will also be given at SPOC on Stansbury Day later this year.

Dinosaur National Monument is looking for volunteers for star parties. Check their web site for details.

Don Colton presented an update on this year's Bryce Canyon Astronomy Festival.

Secretary/Treasurer Joe Bauman displayed the treasurer's report. It showed:

General Fund	\$ 4,200.33
Postage & Printing	178.12
Entertainment	353.88
Astronomical League	760.00
Insurance	497.50
Outreach	1,012.00
SPOC	3,306.62
H-Alpha	0.00
ZAP Grant	723.94
Kalmbach Publishing	60.00
Total	\$11,092.39

The meeting was adjourned to "Advanced Training" at Village Inn on 900 East 400 South at 9:14 p.m.

Board Meeting, 08 June 2010

SLAS President Dave Bernson called the meeting to order in the Denny's restaurant located at 250 West 500 South in SLC at 7:04 p.m. Others in attendance were Vice-President Rodger Fry, & Board Members at Large Nate Goodman & Mike Wilson and members, Bruce Grim, Patrick Wiggins, Erik Hansen, Siegfried Jachmann and former member Ray Druian.

PayPal has reduced the fees it charges for its services by a few cents. The board decided to put those extra pennies in the General Fund.

SLAS has received requests for help with star parties from Evanston, Wyoming and Wayne County, Utah. A SLAS blast will be sent to the membership asking those who want to volunteer to contact the events' organizers directly rather than go through SLAS.

There was a brief discussion about the schedule for 2011 and beyond SLAS public star parties. The current plan of 2 per month at SPOC and 1 each at a Harmons store and Wheeler Farm during the star party season is working fine and could be applied to future years.

SLAS member-only star parties at SPOC on new Moon Saturdays were also discussed. It was noted that such events (and all official SLAS events) have 1st priority when it comes to scheduling the SPOC telescopes with training events ranking 2nd and members' use 3rd.

Dave said he'd heard that the Astronomical League would like to see the club's insurance policy. There were no objections so Dave will contact the club's insurance agent and give him permission to speak with the League.

Rodger and Dave will work with Harmons to get the word out about SLAS public star parties. Patrick will get Rodger information to help him publicize star parties with Utah media.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

General Meeting, 15 June 2010

SLAS President Dave Bernson called the meeting to order in room 105 of the University of Utah's Engineering/Mines building at 7:32 p.m. About 56 people attended the meeting.

After introducing board and new members Dave introduced the evening's speaker, SLAS member Dale Hooper who presented "Tuning into the Cosmos: Radio Astronomy From Your Own Backyard".

Following a brief break Bryce Canyon National Park ranger presented an update on next year's ALCON at Bryce and this year's Bryce Canyon Astronomy Festival. He also gave out posters for the festival and asked members to post them where ever they can. He noted that the festival is the largest event of its kind in the national park system.

Astronomy author Steve Coe spoke about his books and about a few of his viewing experiences.

Secretary/Treasurer Joe Bauman displayed the treasurer's report. It showed:

General Fund	\$ 4,381.46
Postage & Printing	152.06
Entertainment	418.88
Astronomical League	890.00
Insurance	497.50
Outreach	1064.00
SPOC	3,081.62
H-Alpha	10.00
ZAP Grant	1,883.94
Kalmbach Publishing	60.00
Sky Publishing	32.95
Total	\$12,772.41

The meeting was adjourned to "Advanced Training" at Village Inn on 900 East 400 South at 10:10 p.m.

SLAS Meeting Parking

When parking at the University of Utah for SLAS meetings only those parking lots marked with a "U" are free after 6:00 p.m. Parking is also permitted in the "A" lot north of the Kennecott Building after 6:00 p.m. Map: <http://slas.us/location.htm>

2010 SLAS Member Information

The SLAS Member Information file is available at <http://slas.us/docs/NEWMEM.PDF>.

Loaner Telescopes For SLAS Members

SLAS has several scopes available for loan to current SLAS members. Contact Roger Butz at 435.830.4684 for details. Or look on the SLAS web site under "[Membership Benefits](#)".

2010 SLAS Board of Directors

President	David Bernson	801.263.9264	dustynebula@juno.com
Meetings			
Vice President	Rodger Fry	801.268.0851	rcfry@comcast.net
Publicity & Public Relations			
Secretary-Treasurer	Joe Bauman	801.583.7935	josephmbauman@yahoo.com
Membership Dues & Renewals			
Board Member at Large	Mike Wilson	801.966.4981	astro_outwest@yahoo.com
School & Special Star Parties			
Board Member at Large	Nate Goodman	801.964.6199	ngoodman@lgcy.com
Public Outreach Director, Web content			

2010 Appointed Positions

Astronomical League Contact	Erik Hansen	801.253.2201	zaurak@digis.net
Dark Sky Committee Chair	Scott Crosby	801.295.5798	scott.crosby@hill.af.mil
Equipment Manager	Roger Butz	435.830.4684	dutchbutz@yahoo.com
Historian	Ann Blanchard	801.485.6629	a.blanchard@ugs.utah.edu
Inreach Director	Rodger Fry	801.268.0851	rcfry@comcast.net
NASA Night Sky Ambassador	Ann House	801.671.8447	ann@annhouse.org
NASA Night Sky Ambassador	Troy Stratton	801.647.5142	tmstratton@comcast.net
New Member Director	Bob Moore	801.580.0466	bmoore@commercecrg.com
Nova Newsletter Editor	Patrick Wiggins	435.882.1209	paw@beehivewireless.com
Observatory Director	Bruce Grim	435.882.5237	bmargrim@msn.com
Observatory Training Director	Mark Bloomenthal	801.842.1242	markbloomenthal@yahoo.com
Private Star Party Coordinator	Don Colton	801.571.9757	dcoltonsp@earthlink.net
Solar Scope Manager	Rodger Fry	801.268.0851	rcfry@comcast.net
Webmasters	Ken & Kathleen Warner		webmaster@slas.us
ZAP Grant Committee Chair	Erik Hansen	801.253.2201	zaurak@digis.net

2010 SPOC Advisory Committee

Chair serves through JAN 2012	Ken Harris	801.572.3457	kharrismar@earthlink.net
Member serves while SLAS Pres.	Dave Bernson	801.263.9264	dustynebula@juno.com
Member serves through JAN 2011	Mark Bloomenthal	801.842.1242	markbloomenthal@yahoo.com
Member Harmons Representative	Kevin Bushnell		
Member serves through JAN 2013	Roger Butz	435.830.4684	dutchbutz@yahoo.com
Member SPOC Training Director	Mark Bloomenthal	801.842.1242	markbloomenthal@yahoo.com
Member Observatory Director	Bruce Grim	435.882.5237	bmargrim@msn.com
Member serves through JAN 2012	Bill Kennedy	801.964.6199	truss_tube@hotmail.com
Member serves through JAN 2012	Boyd McNeil	435.882.1901	bmcneil@wirelessbeehive.com
Member serves through JAN 2011	Patrick Wiggins	435.882.1209	paw@beehivewireless.com

NOVA is a publication of the [Salt Lake Astronomical Society](#), a non-profit organization. Nova contains minutes of meetings, Board member names & contact info, activities, reports, special club events. The editor of NOVA is appointed by the Board. Members are encouraged to contribute content. Current NOVA editor is Patrick Wiggins, paw@wirelessbeehive.com, 435.882.1209.

Events Calendar

July 2010

- 02 Public star party at Wheeler Farm, 6351 S 900 E in SLC.
- 03 Public star party at [SPOC](#).
- 07-11 [Bryce Canyon Astronomy Festival](#) at Bryce Canyon National Park
- 13 Board Meeting at Denny's restaurant, 250 W 500 S, SLC.
- 16 Public star party at Bangerter Crossing Harmons, 13800 S 100 E in SLC.
- 17 Public star party at [SPOC](#).
- 20 General Meeting at U of U Engineering/Mines Classroom Building, Room 105.
- 24 Public Sun party at Winchester Park, 6400 S 1100 W in Murray.
- 30 Public star party at Wheeler Farm, 6351 S 900 E in SLC.
- 31 Public star party at [SPOC](#).

August 2010

- 10 Board Meeting at Denny's restaurant, 250 W 500 S, SLC.
- 13 Public star party at Midvale Harmons, 7755 S 700 E in Sandy.
- 14 Public star party at [SPOC](#).
- 17 General Meeting at U of U Engineering/Mines Classroom Building, Room 105.
- 21 Public Sun party at Winchester Park, 6400 S 1100 W in Murray.
- 27 Public star party at Wheeler Farm, 6351 S 900 E in SLC.
- 28 Public star party at [SPOC](#).

September 2010

- 14 Board Meeting at Denny's restaurant, 250 W 500 S, SLC.
- 17 Public star party at Taylorsville Harmons, 5400 S Redwood Rd in SLC.
- 18 Public star party at [SPOC](#).
- 21 General Meeting at U of U Engineering/Mines Classroom Building, Room 105.
- 25 Public Sun party at Winchester Park, 6400 S 1100 W in Murray.

View a list of all 2010 public SLAS events at on the Events Calendar page on the SLAS [website](#).

Unless otherwise noted board meetings begin at 7:00 p.m, general meetings begin at 7:30 p.m., public star parties run from dusk until 11:00 p.m. and public Sun parties run from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Star and Sun parties are held weather permitting.

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