

HCAS

HARFORD COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
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"The most
incomprehensible
thing about the
world is that it
is comprehensible."

Albert Einstein

APRIL, 1970 #1

SPERLING PROPOSES THE FOURTEEN POINTS

Mr. Norman Sperling, planetarium Director at Edgewood Junior High School, gave the following 14 types of activities for an astronomical society at the first meeting of HCAS on February 5, 1970.

1. The first point, talks, would generally consist of lectures from invited speakers, colleges, government, and the general community. The talks would

be publicized through all local and metropolitan media, and by club publication.

2. Organized exploration of the heavens by members with telescopes, occasionally scheduled well in advance but usually to be organized under sudden good observing conditions.

3. Movies are available from many sources.

4. Discussion can mean shop talk or formally organized panels that tackle club-chosen questions. This can be especially interesting as astronomy is one of the fields of science open to wide theoretical discussion.

5. Star parties are basically public-relations activities. They consist of scope owners who focus their instruments on different objects and are willing to explain the objects to passers by.

6. Publications, such as this newsletter, will be instrumental in publishing area news.

7. Conventions, usually for members only, present the problem of joining the Astro League and participating in conventions of regional and national magnitude. Papers, slideshows, and exhibits are but a few of the activities of these conventions. These are also a source of problem solving, since other clubs present have found solutions to the problems facing HCAS.

8. For those who do not own scopes ATM (Amateur telescope making) is popular with supervision from experienced members. Even more interest can be stimulated, by competition and the awarding of prizes for superior telescopes.

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THE FOURTEEN POINTS:

1. Talks
2. Observing
3. Movies
4. Discussions
5. Star parties
6. Publications
7. Conventions
8. ATM
9. Research
10. Trips
11. Observatory
12. HJC
13. Scouts & Science fairs
14. Advanced Study

PROFILES

Readers of this newsletter may be interested in learning something about those who were the initial organizers of HCAS. The man responsible for primary initiative was Mr. Norman Sperling, Planetarium director at EJHS.

New to Harford County this year, Mr. Sperling is a graduate of Michigan State University and has been an avid amateur for the last 12 years. It is basically through his efforts that Edgewood has organized a party to the March 7 solar eclipse. Mr. Sperling teaches two non-credit courses at Harford Junior College, and hopes to teach a credit course next fall.

The other main organizer is Lewis Berman, a freshman at Edgewood Senior High. Lewis lived in Huntsville, Alabama, where he was involved in the space program.

Currently a member of the Baltimore Astronomical Society, Lewis was elected temporary coordinator of HCAS at the first meeting.

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profile
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Webber.

FOURTEEN POINTS

9. Even amateurs can do useful research. Areas such as occultations, variable stars, asteroid and comet hunting, etc. are fields where amateurs can turn out needed information.
10. The general area surrounding Harford County provides opportunities for trips and activities. Within easy reach is Washington D.C., with the Naval Observatory, Goddard Space Flight Center, Smithsonian, etc., Philadelphia area, local universities, and planetariums.
11. While it may be out of reach for a society of novices, building an observatory may not present an overbearing problem to a well-structured organization. Although expensive and requiring a great many man hours, the eventual construction of an observatory has been accomplished by other societies and can provide the facilities for research and more technical work.
12. Harford Junior College can be a useful companion in community relations and can cooperate in courses of popular astronomy and the construction of a possible observatory.
13. Hcas can aid scouts in obtaining merit badges and may, in the process, gain members. Also, a good astronomical society should be able to provide interest in science fairs.
14. Advanced study groups could provide outlets for research talent for members already conscious of more than a working knowledge of astronomy. Intermediate and advanced descriptive astronomy would be offered, and for those with the ability, astrophysics.

SYNOPSIS OF PAST MEETINGS

FIRST MEETING: The first meeting of HCAS was held in EJHS planetarium on February 5, 1970 at 7:30 P.M. The general purpose of the meeting was to acquaint members with each other and give an overall idea of what the club could do (see 14 points).

SECOND MEETING: A film relating to time and astronomy was shown at the second meeting, Feb. 10.

Publicity problems were discussed; certain publicity offices were assigned. Attendance: 39. Attendance at the first meeting was 61.

THIRD MEETING: HCAS (HARFORD COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY) was the name decided upon at the third meeting, Feb. 19. It was decided to let a committee draw up plans for a society constitution. Members were oriented with the planetarium.

Attendance: 53

FOURTH MEETING: It was voted to give the const. committee six weeks to produce a draft and submit it to the society. The Feb. 21 partial lunar eclipse was discussed. A lecture was given by Mr. Ted Manekin from the University of Maryland on "Yardsticks in the Universe." Mr. Manekin is president of the University astronomy club. The talk included topics such as the doppler shift, cepheid variables, and trigonometric parallax, and was followed by a question and answer period. Attendance was 42.

FIFTH MEETING: A talk was given by Lewis Berman on publications relating to astronomy, especially

Sky and Telescope. The meeting also included discussions on the March 7 eclipse, only four days away. Groups going to North Carolina, Virginia, and other places farther south told of their plans. Attendance was down to 37, mainly due to a shortage of publicity.

SIXTH, AND MOST RECENT, MEETING:

I. Eclipse. Members of H.C.A.S. who went to eclipse sites presented slides and movies of the event. Among them were a color movie of the entire eclipse, slides on infrared-color film, slides on regular color film, and black-and-white prints.

II. LECTURE. A lecture was given by Mr. Leo Heppner on the basics of telescopes. Topics covered were telescope optics, mountings, and alternate optical systems. The lecture was the first of two, the second to be given at the next meeting (see announcements on page three).

Attendance was 42.

NEXT MEETING

HCAS will hold a meeting Tuesday, April 7, at 7:30 P.M. in the planetarium of Edgewood Junior High School. As mentioned above, the speaker will be Mr. Leo Heppner. See announcements for further details.

NOTES FROM YOUR CLUB COORDINATOR- Lewis Berman

I mailed requests for program material to various firms in the Baltimore area, including such companies as RCA, Bendix, and Westinghouse, to mention a few. A reply has been received from Bendix, and they can not provide us with anything. However, my letter to IBM reached an associate systems engineer, who has an interest in astronomy. We arranged a lecture on computers and their use in astronomy, which will probably take place in May or June.

Constitution committee progress: Major business was completed Thursday, March 26. The document is being typed now.

BOB WEBBER/ "THE MAD ASTROLOGER"

JUPITER: AS A STAR

There is a controversy between a few of the former members of Edgewood Junior High School astronomy club and me over the classification of Jupiter. I procede to tell why Jupiter should be considered a star.

The present definition of a planet is "one of the nine (eight) nonluminous bodies revolving about the sun," and a star is a "self-luminous sphere of gas." (text by Abbell- Exploration of the Universe) The most obvious means of proof seems to be to determine whether Jupiter is self-luminous.

Jupiter is chiefly made up of hydrogen and helium (typical of stars) and is noted for extreme size and gravity. Jupiter gives off its own heat, produces radiation, and possibly gives off its own feeble light. In full, the perfect classification of a very feeble star.

How does it feel to live in a double star system?

The editors wish to thank all those whose time and efforts made this newsletter possible.

WE WILL ACCEPT ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWS* LETTER DEEMED RELEVANT TO ASTRONOMY.

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NOTE: THE EDITORS OF THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTENTS OF ANY SPECIFIC ARTICLE.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting of HCAS will be Tuesday, APRIL 7, 1970. Possibly one or two more eclipse pictures will be shown, including a rare photograph of the shadow-bands.

Thesday's program will be a lecture by Mr. Leo Hepner, the second in a series. His topic will be amateur mirror grinding for telescopes, and he will touch on some other aspects of amateur telescope making. At lecture's end, all present should have a good idea of what telescope making is all about.

The second April meeting will take place Thursday, April 16, at 7:30 P.M. The constitution committee, which has been working on a draft of the constitution, will present its document at this meeting to be voted upon and/or amended.

BOTH MEETINGS WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE EJHS PLANETARIUM, AND WILL BEGIN AT 7:30 P.M.

The famed science fiction and fact author, Arthur C. Clarke, will present a special film-lecture at the Lyric Theatre on May 1, 1970. Offered by the Maryland Academy of Sciences, the full color documentary on man in space will indicate Mr. Clarke's idea of life 31 years from now. It is entitled "Life in the Year 2001."