

# S.C.R.A.P.S.

Society's ChRonological Astronomical PaperS



## From the President by Bob Arr

November 2003 has become a very important month in our year. It is our last regular meeting before January, the month we nominate next year's candidates for our offices. In preparation for that event, each of our current elected officers will give a brief summary of their duties during the meeting. No, this is not a thinly disguised effort to impress you with our dedication, but we do want you to know what's involved. These are working positions, and the accomplishments of the club depend on them.

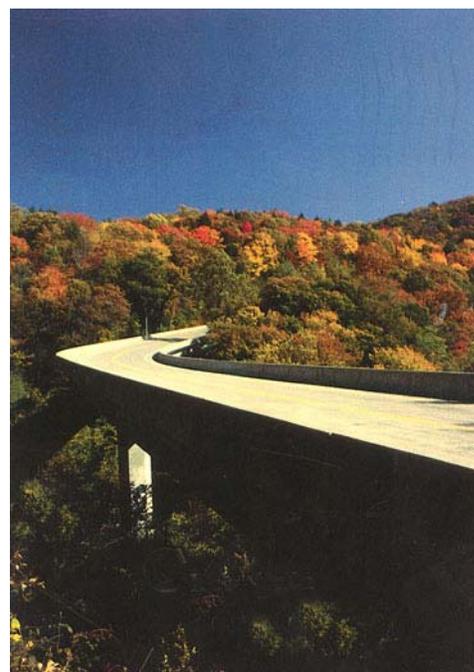
This is a fine and active club, and those accomplishments are a source of interest, fun and enjoyment for our members. And they provide a very special satisfaction to the officers whose commitment brings them about. Our forthcoming election should bring out the involvement and support of all our members.

November is also our last regular meeting before John Dobson's visit (please see article). And the last meeting before the Leonid meteor shower, Nov 18, or should we call it the lunar meteor shower? (What's he talking about?) And the last meeting before the Christmas party at Naples Italian Restaurant, Dec 6<sup>th</sup>. 2003 is winding down, but for SMAS activities are just getting underway.

## The Changing Season



The warm nights of dark and pristine skies along the Cherohala Skyway have yielded to the changing season. But as if to toast the good times of this past year, the mountains dressed themselves in fall splendor for our viewing on October 24. Michael McCulloch took this photo (left) from South View, as the setting sun bathed Sassafras Ridge in its golden rays.



One more Unicoi Crest Star Party is left on this year's schedule (Nov 22), but we all know it dangles by a whim of the north wind. April begins the next season, an equally iffy proposition: in April 1999 we observed from Hoopers Bald, lined with 6" of snow.

SMAS's private, 100 million-dollar observation road was 31 years in the making. It opened officially in 1995. The lovely Charles Hall Bridge (right) spans one of the deep gorges at 3500' elevation.

## A Review of *Galaxies and the Cosmic Frontier* by Michael Littleton

The star clouds of Sagittarius, prominent in the summer sky from a dark location, mark the heart of our galaxy, the Milky Way. To the eye, the heart of the Milky is forever invisible. It is obscured by dust. What does the galaxy in which we reside look like, how did it come to be, and what is its place in the universe? This is an exciting time in astronomy. We have the HST allowing resolution unheard of from earth-based telescopes. We can penetrate the Milky Way's dust with infrared and gamma ray telescopes. We can map our galaxy's clouds of neutral hydrogen with radio telescopes. The rate of the acquisition of information is staggering, but many exciting questions remain! Where is most of the mass of the universe and what is causing the universe to expand at an ever-increasing rate?

Often when I read popular astronomy periodical articles, I hunger for more of the detail than just the condensed version. When I read papers from scientific journals, I get bogged down in the equations, graphs and arcane text. This is not so with the recent book, *Galaxies and the Cosmic Frontier* \* by William Waller and Paul Hodge. Quoting the front cover:

“Orienting us with an insider’s tour of our cosmic home, the Milky Way, William Waller and Paul Hodge then take us on a spectacular journey inviting us to probe the exquisite structures and motions of giant spiral and elliptical galaxies, to witness the transformation dramas of colliding and erupting galaxies, and to pay our respect to the most powerful galaxies of all-the quasars.”

This book has helped me to see more than pretty open clusters and stars as I look at the star clouds in Sagittarius. I see a super-massive black hole consuming matter. I see a giant barred spiral galaxy, one of the two “big boys” in the Local Group that got that way by accreting smaller galaxies. This is a jewel of a book! It is well written with clear and concise prose. The center of the book contains beautiful color plates to better understand the text. Figures are clear and enhance the text. I highly recommend it to read during those rainy cold nights of winter.

\*ISBN 0-674-01079, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 2003, (~ \$21).

### The Wiz

Dear Wiz,

How come when I go to a star party some guys just wander around talking and others stay glued to their telescopes? How do they find interesting stuff to see?  
Andy

Dear Mr. Blabbers,

They have help. They have books listing stuff to see. They have computer programs that display stuff to see. They have GOTOs that automatically point their scopes to stuff to see. They get monthly magazines that talk about and diagram stuff to see. Their astronomy clubs give them presentations on stuff to see. They join Yahoo groups on which hundreds of other amateurs describe stuff they've seen. Many of them keep logs to earn AL awards for seeing stuff. And many of them just write down stuff they see, so they can find and see it again next year or next decade. It's like fall colors. In a sense, they're always the same, but every year they're always wonderful. Hope this helps.

## John Dobson

**JOHN DOBSON'S VISIT IS OFFICIAL.** He will spend 7 days in east Tennessee, arriving on January 13, departing on January 19. His Tennessee visit will precede his Florida visit. We plan for him to give two presentations for general audiences (one at Pellissippi and one at Roane State.) A third presentation will be devoted to cosmology, and the venue will depend on the number of people interested (it could turn into a pizza party!)

John will be available for other activities as well. Weather permitting, he will participate in an observing session, and talk about Sidewalk Astronomy. Small, informal gatherings are possible, subject only to folks finding a convenient time. We have already received several good suggestions for using his time, but the door has not closed. If you'd like to suggest an idea for a presentation by him, or an activity that you think would interest him, do it! Just email, snail mail or phone Owen Hoffman, David Fields or Bob Arr.



Want another take on John? Here is a Sidewalk Astronomer Yahoo group posting from Sandra Milfeld:

### *If You Know John Dobson, You Know*

- "If you find something out for yourself, it don't make no never-mind who figured it out before you, it's yours."
- The true meaning of "Cow feces".
- If you say something that Mr. Dobson agrees with or make a point that supports a Dobsonian truth, Mr. Dobson will say, "THANK YOU!"
- If it takes you too long to get it, but you do finally get it, you'll hear, "you silly goose".
- If you get the answer wrong, you get yelled at.
- If you get the answer right, you get yelled at.
- Who the exterior decorator is.
- When they look at the moon and say "Cool!" they mean the shady side.
- That Jupiter is "way the hell out there".
- That Jupiter being a little bit closer to earth is not news.
- That if you had a really nice Mercedes and you drove all day and all night at 60 mph, in 600 years you would see Jupiter with your bare eyes as you are seeing it now through a telescope.
- That very few restrict what they say to what they know.
- That the less people know, the surer they are of it.
- That on Jupiter it isn't cold, it's frigid.
- If you attend a star party and ask Mr. Dobson how the scopes work, he'll say, "They work okay."
- That if you ask him if he eats meat he'll ask you what the hell else he's supposed to do with it?
- That "it takes a long time to make a Mercedes and it only gets you to the Grand Canyon. It takes a week to make a telescope and it gets you all the way to the moon."
- That he's not responsible for the weather.
- The magnificence of 100,000 battleships in a 1-pint jar. (If you want to understand that, you'll have to do a little reading on his website--Ed.)

## October Meeting by Angela Quick

The SMAS Meeting was held on Friday, October 10, 2003 at the Main Campus of Pellissippi State Technical Community College. There were 8 veteran members and 3 new members. Mary Watson, David Fields, and D. R. Fudge attended the meeting. Welcome to SMAS, members of Orion. The meeting began at 7:20. We passed the time waiting for a quorum by viewing an interactive CD about the universe. It was a cool CD! Bob began the formal meeting with announcements. First, the \$25 room fee for meeting at Pellissippi State has been waived. Not only will our meeting space be free, but we will be able to store our library books and name badges in the cupboards at the back of the meeting room. In return, Pellissippi State asks that we provide volunteers with telescopes for viewing events on request.

Steve Rothschild, SMAS Librarian, asked that those who have had books checked out for 3 months or longer please return the books and leave them for a month before taking them out again. This is so others have a chance to use them. Steve also presented the month's *Night Sky*, highlighting the constellations Andromeda and Cassiopeia. Objects in the constellations ranged from the very familiar Andromeda Galaxy and the Perseus Double Cluster, to less well-known clusters, nebulae, and galaxies. We had a good time comparing observing experiences and favorite objects in this part of the sky. Steve did a great job lecturing from starcharts projected through the document camera, even though he was disappointed that the PowerPoint photo slides of the objects didn't make it to the meeting. Nice work, Steve!

We then took a 15 minute coffee break to explore our new meeting room and check the constitution and bylaws on what constitutes a quorum, (and hope for more members to show up). At 7:50 we got down to brass tacks discussing the proposed John Dobson visit. Bob reported that although there was not a final binding commitment in place, Dobson's agent, Donna, had priced a three-leg ticket from LA to Jacksonville, Florida to Knoxville, Tennessee and back to LA at approximately \$550 dollars. Split between two clubs, the airfare costs would be \$275 each. So, the tentative SMAS costs would be \$275 airfare + \$150 honorarium + \$15 per day equal to \$470 for a three day visit. This would be the most a visit would cost. Angela reported that \$485 had been pledged to support the visit. David Fields reported that he had spoken to John Dobson via telephone, and found him a lively, engaging speaker. While cosmology was a favorite topic, direct questions on telescope making or sidewalk astronomy received thoughtful, interesting answers as well. Bob, David, and Owen gave personal testimonials strongly supporting the proposed visit. The three of them volunteered to serve as the organizing committee. So, the requirements set at the September meeting were met, the pledged financial support covered the cost of the visit, and we had volunteers for coordinating the visit. Owen moved that SMAS officially sponsor a visit from John Dobson. & Wayne Thompson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. The rest of the meeting was spent discussing further details of the visit and of funding. Salient points: a visit should last a minimum of 3 days and a maximum of one week. Enough people have already volunteered to host, providing meals and lodging, to cover a weeklong visit. A few venues for the talk were suggested including Roane State or Pellissippi State auditoriums. The activities of the visit should include a night at Tamke Allen Observatory, a night spent talking to SMAS members, an open lecture, and perhaps a sidewalk astronomy event. Once the dates of the visit are firm, we will ask area astronomy groups again if they would like to participate in the visit. We may get a better response once the visit is a sure thing. There are two different ideas on what to do should additional donations exceed the final cost of the visit. The club first moved, seconded, and approved that all excess funds be used to finance club outreach activities like telescopes for kids or public observing events. Further discussion revealed, however, that some who had pledged large amounts would prefer that excess funds be re-distributed to make everyone contribution to the endeavor equal. This motion passed with a 9 to 1 vote, and so carried and superceded the original motion. The meeting ended at 9 PM.

## Join SMAS's Yahoo Group

### By Bob Arr

Not been asked to donate to the John Dobson Drive? Hmm, that means you haven't attended meetings lately, and aren't in our Yahoo group. Don't despair, we still need your donation, and it can be made in person at the next meeting, or mailed to Bob Arr, 201 Willard St, Maryville TN 37803.

Do you have Internet, but aren't in the Yahoo group? Better get in, the parade is passing you by! Our [smokymtnastro@yahoo.com](mailto:smokymtnastro@yahoo.com) group is **PRIVATE**. You can only get access to it by invitation from our Treasurer, Erik Iverson. No spammers can steal our addresses, no junk mail can be posted. Best of all, it's alive with SMAS activities. Members ask a question, tell a story, post a picture--and all the other members receive it as email instantly. (If you prefer, you can opt for No Email, and simply visit the group whenever you like and browse the accumulated messages.) You can access it from any computer with Internet anywhere in the world, and all the messages are archived and searchable, so you can go back and find old stuff. All you have to do is email [smas\\_moderator@yahoo.com](mailto:smas_moderator@yahoo.com) and say, "Hey Erik, send me the official invitation to join the Yahoo group."

## LIKE THIS NEWSLETTER?

If you do, share your astronomical experience with the rest of SMAS and everyone on the Internet by writing an article for SCRAPS. Contact Mike Littleton at (865) 671-1022 or email [mlittleton1022@charter.net](mailto:mlittleton1022@charter.net).



# November 2003

**President:**  
**Bob Arr**

**Vice President:**  
**Rob Feldhege**

**Secretary:**  
**Angela Quick**

**Treasurer/ALCOR:**  
**Erik Iverson**

**SCRAPS Editor:**  
**Mike Littleton**

**Webmaster:**  
**Mike Fleenor**

**Observe Chair:**  
**Ron Dinkins**

| SUN                    | MON   | TUE                | WED   | THU   | FRI             | SAT                       |
|------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------|-----------------|---------------------------|
|                        |       |                    |       |       |                 | 1<br>TAO                  |
| 2                      | 3     | 4                  | 5     | 6     | 7<br>UTK        | 8<br>Full Moon<br>Eclipse |
| 9                      | 10    | 11                 | 12    | 13    | 14<br>SMAS Mtg. | 15<br>TAO                 |
| 16<br>Last Qt.<br>Moon | 17    | 18<br>Leonids Peak | 19    | 20    | 21<br>UTK       | 22<br>Unicoi Crest        |
| 23<br>New Moon         | 24    | 25                 | 26    | 27    | 28              | 29<br>Look Pebble         |
| 30<br>1st Qt. Moon     | Dec 1 | Dec 2              | Dec 3 | Dec 4 | Dec 5           | Dec 6<br>Xmas Party       |

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**SMAS Website:**  
<http://www.smokymtnastro.org/>

- 11/1/03 and 11/15/03** Public observing at Tamke Allen Observatory
- 11/7/03 and 11/21/03** Public observing from the roof of the Physics Building at UTK
- 11/8/03** Lunar eclipse-totality 8:06 PM EDT
- 11/14/03** SMAS Meeting 7 PM at the Main Campus
- 11/15/03** Venus sets at 6:46 PM; Mars sets at 1:40 AM; Jupiter rises at 1:44 AM; Saturn rises at 8:40 PM
- 11/22/03** SMAS starparty at Unicoi Crest, NC
- 11/29/03** SMAS starparty off Foothills Parkway at "Look Pebble"
- 12/6/03** 6:30 PM SMAS Christmas Party at Naples Italian Restaurant off Kingston Pike near Bearden
- 11/29/03** SMAS starparty off Foothills Parkway at "Look Pebble"

of Pellissippi State Community College in Room 223 Of the Alexander Building on Pellissippi Parkway