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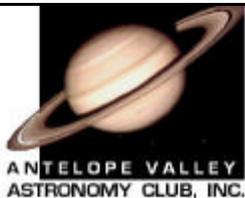
# Desert Sky Observer

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Volume 21 Issue 2

February 2001

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NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTELOPE VALLEY ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC  
P.O. BOX 4595, LANCASTER, CALIFORNIA 93539-4595

*The Antelope Valley Astronomy Club Is A California Non Profit Corporation  
Visit The Antelope Valley Astronomy Club Web Site At [www.avac.ac.org](http://www.avac.ac.org)  
The A.V.A.C. Is A Sustaining Member Of The Astronomical League*



## Up-Coming Events

**February 01:** First Quarter Moon.

**February 08:** Full Moon, (biggest of 2001).

**February 09:** Monthly meeting, held at the S.A.G.E. Planetarium at the Cactus School in Palmdale. The meeting location is at the northeast corner of Avenue R and 20<sup>th</sup> Street East. Meeting starts at 7 p.m. Please note that food and drink are not allowed in the planetarium. We will be treated to a presentation by Z. Nagin Cox of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory -JPL.

**February 15:** Last Quarter Moon.

**February 17:** Club Star Party at Terry's dad's house.

**February 22:** Venus is at greatest brilliancy, magnitude is -4.6.

**February 23:** New Moon.

**February 24:** Club Dark Sky Star Party will be held at Red Rock Canyon State Park.

**March 09:** Monthly Club meeting.

**Anytime:** Observe.

## President's Report

*Doug Drake*

Congratulations to all you new members to the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club (AVAC). This year of 2001 is the best year for you to join - you have just joined a club with people that have the same interest, curiosity, and wonder in the science of astronomy.

Astronomy is a vast universe of exploration and has moments of awe and excitement! I can't count the times I've overheard someone say, "WOW Look at that!" or one of the youths say, "Mommy come here you got 'a see this!" or "Dad did you see what I did?" Yes, I have even heard myself say O' man look at that! Well now, those words aren't just

empty space, but sincere expressions. As a club member you now have telescopes, binoculars, equipment, astronomy guide book, star parties throughout every month, free club picnic in the summer, free Christmas party in the winter, a planetarium to have meetings in, a planetarium director who likes adults and kids, monthly meeting with a speaker that gives presentations on science and astronomy, education, fun, and a chance to make a difference in our community by helping with our new programs for youths (we had a slow start last year, but we got our feet wet and now going swimming,) and it is a fact - you'll meet some of the best people you've ever met; I know, I've met them.(:D) By-the-way; your board is also making an astronomy video and a planetarium floppy for you to have, soon!

Be sure to look at the last pages in this newsletter and see who your new board members are. And, look to see who the committee chairman are, you may want to call a chairman of the committee your interested in.

Just a reminder; for all members renewing membership, from last year, be sure to renew before 28 February. This is because the grace period for renewal is two months (1 January through to 28 February) and you are considered an AVAC member (with full benefits) during this grace period. After 28 February loss of membership occurs without renewing, please note this is very important if you are a committee member.

## Vice-President's Report

*Terry Pedroza*

I would like to welcome all the new members to the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club. You have joined an exciting and outgoing group of amateur Astronomers. Our last Star party was a huge Success with a rather large number making it. Our Observing groups are going full speed ahead with enrollment increasing by leaps and bounds. The year 2001 promises to be a great year for our club.

The club's inventory of books, videos and other items is ever expanding with more and more members taking advantage of this resource. If you are interested in borrowing any of the club items, please see me or my wife Debora at the meeting or star parties.

We are getting a wealth of new speakers for our meeting for all to enjoy. February we have Z. Nagin Cox and in March we have John Dobson.

Hope to see everyone at the meetings and star parties.

Below is the tentative list of events for the AVAC up to and including the month of June.

### January

- 12: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium with a presentation by AVAC's own Fred Ley.
- 13: Club Starparty at Terry's Dad's house.
- 20: Universe Sampler & Messier Group Starparty at Saddle Back Butte State Park. Everyone is welcome.

### February

- 09: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium with a presentation by JPL's Z. Nagin Cox.
- 17: Club Starparty at Terry's Dad's house.
- 24: Club Dark Sky Starparty at Red Rock Canyon State Park.

## **Desert Sky Observer**

### March

- 09: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium with a presentation by noted astronomer John Dobson.
- 17: Club Starparty at Terry's Dad's house.
- 24: Messier Marathon at Saddle Back Butte State Park. Everyone is welcome.

### April

- 13: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium. Speaker TBA.
- 14: Club Starparty at Terry's Dad's house
- 21: Club Dark Sky Starparty at Red Rock Canyon.
- 28: National Astronomy Day.

### May

- 05: Air & Space Exploratorium.
- 11: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium. Speaker TBA.
- 12: Club Starparty at Terry's Dad's house
- 25-27: RTMC at Big Bear Lake.

### June

- 08: Club Meeting at Sage Planetarium with a presentation by AVAC's own Doug Drake.
- 09: Club Starparty at Terry's Dad's house
- 23: Club Dark Sky Starparty at Mount Pinos.

## Secretary's Report

*Tom Koonce*

What a great observing year is coming up! Already this year we've had some spectacular nights here in the AV. I've had some evenings of observing from my backyard that were better than some of the dark sky sites I visited when I lived in Texas. If you love the stars, you are very fortunate to live in the high desert!

We have a lot of events and Star Parties planned. A real 'Star Party PARTY' will be held St. Patrick's Day at Terry Pedroza's father's place. Details will be announced at the March Meeting. Green Neptune rises around 4:00 am...

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#### Club Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2001

- Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 pm, Doug Drake, President.
- Membership dues for 2001 were due. Steve Trotta, our new Treasurer, was busy collecting dues and was not available to give the Treasurer's report.
- The Secretary's Report was not given either, since Tom Koonce was helping Steve with the paperwork.
- Doug Drake spoke about the Club's upcoming year of activities, Star Parties and goal of doing even more for the AVAC members.
- Jeremy Amarant will be giving a presentation every month on the current night sky.
- Tom Koonce announced the four recipients of the Astronomical League's Messier Certificate (Terry Pedroza, Matt Leone, Matt Leone, Jr., Tom Koonce).
- Guest Speaker: Frederick N. Ley, "Introduction To Astronomy".
- Meeting Adjourned 9:00 pm.
- Revised Constitution and By-Laws handed out at the door.

#### Astronomical League Report

Tom Koonce

This month, I am very pleased to announce some significant events with our Messier Observing Group. The Astronomical League has a formalized observing program called the "Messier Observers." All 109 deep sky objects cataloged by Charles Messier must be found by an observer, without help from a computerized telescope, witnessed and documented. In the pursuit of the Messier Pin that is awarded upon the completion of observing all 109 objects, there is an intermediate Messier Certificate that is awarded after 70 objects have been located.

Four AVAC members have reached and surpassed the requirement for the Certificate. Terry Pedroza, who is also the Messier Observing Group Chairman, leads the group with 80 objects! Matt Leone has 79 objects observed with his 16" Dobson Ian telescope! Matthew Leone, Jr. has 72 objects

### **Desert Sky Observer**

and has his Dad on the run! I make up the fourth member, and also have 72 objects.

I encourage all AVAC members to spend some time with the Messier Observing Group. Deep Sky Fever is "catchy" and a heck of a lot of fun!

The Planetary Observing Group (led by Doug Drake) and the Universe Sampler Group (beginner's group led by me) both started January 20<sup>th</sup> at the Saddleback Butte State Park Star Party. If you missed it, please come to the next public Star Party night and jump in! Is there interest in starting a Lunar Observing group? The AL offers a Certificate for completing an observing program of the Moon too. Let me know if you're interested. Clear Skies!

#### **Member-At-Large Report**

*Errol Van Horne*

#### **Community Development**

As the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club has grown, so have requests from our communities to showcase Astronomy at public gatherings. Generally oriented for our young people, these gatherings provide a unique opportunity to serve the Antelope Valley with meaningful educational opportunities, promoting science as an educational endeavor as well as a personally satisfying amateur pursuit. Our commitment to expanding scientific educational opportunities beyond the scope of the normal school day, gives us a tremendous opportunity to serve valley educators by enhancing their teaching options. This very special aspect of club activities allows us to go beyond the personal enjoyment of observing the night sky. It allows us to share that experience with our neighbors while embracing a mission to serve the Antelope Valley as demonstrated in the following statement of our community purpose:

## **ANTELOPE VALLEY ASTRONOMY CLUB**

### ***Mission Statement***

*The desire of human kind to understand the universe and touch the stars, long ago paved the way for space flight and exploration. The Antelope Valley has served as the birthplace for so very much of this rich and marvelous history, fostering a legacy that has become a significant part of our community and our American heritage.*

*To this end we believe astronomy is a natural first and memorable experience that serves to fire the imagination and can lay the foundation for future exploration into all of the natural and life sciences. The Pursuit of mathematics, physics, geology, cosmology, chemistry, biology, archeology, and anthropology, all find their inspiration in the natural environment around us, and especially in the wonders of the sky above that have fascinated and shaped our cultures.*

*The mission of the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is to further this legacy by ensuring educational opportunities for our communities in the field of observational astronomy and its associated studies of: planetary and deep space observation, astro-photography, electronic imaging, space science computer applications, optical design and telescope making.*

*In this way we might add to the richness of the Antelope Valley, support educational opportunities and provide meaningful activities for our young people. We might also assist our educators and other community leaders in their efforts to prepare our youth for productive and meaningful futures.*

Programs the Community Development Committee is currently working on are the annual Air and Space Exploratorium at the Antelope Valley Mall and Super Science Saturday at Joe Walker Middle School, which includes acquisition of a telescope for the school. Committee member Debora Pedroza is also developing an idea she had to hold a community wide essay contest for young

## **Desert Sky Observer**

people with the top five essays winning a trip to the Palomar Observatory. We are looking for additional committee members to help with coordinating community-based programs and offering their telescopes and expertise at public events. If you are interested in helping our club serve the Antelope Valley, give me a call at 943 8454.

To help finance school oriented programs we have now established an Antelope Valley Astronomy Club, Youth In Astronomy Fund, which is separate from club operating funds. You can be sure I will be arm-twisting each of you for a donation to this extremely worthwhile effort.

### **Internet Site**

#### **European Southern Observatory**

The European Southern Observatory has a very nice web site, located at [www.eso.org](http://www.eso.org). I have been a subscriber to their web site for a couple of years and periodically receive news briefs from them. Their news briefs have never disappointed me. They always contain some fascinating bit of information accompanied with beautiful photographs of some celestial object.

On their main page and located under "Outreach Activities" is the "ESO Press Releases and Photos" category. If you go to that location, you will be able to leave your e-mail address and become a subscriber to the ESO news bulletin.

There is also information about the VLT, the Very Large Telescope, and an Astronomical Image Gallery that dates back to 1994. There are many wonderful images to look over. In addition, there is also a "Video News Reels and other Videos" location.

I highly recommend this site. It can soothe the disappointment of a cloudy night.

## Our Sponsors

**Al's Vacuum and Sewing:** 904 West Lancaster Blvd.. They can be reached at (661) 948-1521. Stop by and say hi to Matthew and Suzanne.

**Darkrooms Plus:** 20 St. W. near Pep Boys in Lancaster. They can be reached at (661) 945-1444. Darkrooms Plus offers all club members a 10% discount on all purchases. Stop by and say hi to Dean or Hank.

**King Photo:** 749 W. Lancaster Blvd. They can be reached at (661) 948-8441. As a telescope dealer, they always support the AVAC. Stop by and say hi to Stokely or Paul.

**ONET:** 1529 E. Palmdale Blvd., Suite 200. They can be reached at (661) 538-2028. As an Internet provider, they are kind enough to provide us with a free website.

**Vista Golf:** 43517 N. 13th Street West, Lancaster. They can be reached at (661) 945-7003. Thanks for your generous support.

## A.V.A.C. Membership Information

Membership in the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club is open to any individual.

The Club has three categories of membership.

- Family membership at \$25.00 per year.
- Individual membership at \$20.00 per year.
- Junior membership at \$15.00 per year.

Membership entitles you to our monthly newsletter, the Desert Sky Observer, and to borrow one of the Club's two telescopes. We currently have an 8-inch and 10-inch Dobsonian reflector for loan.

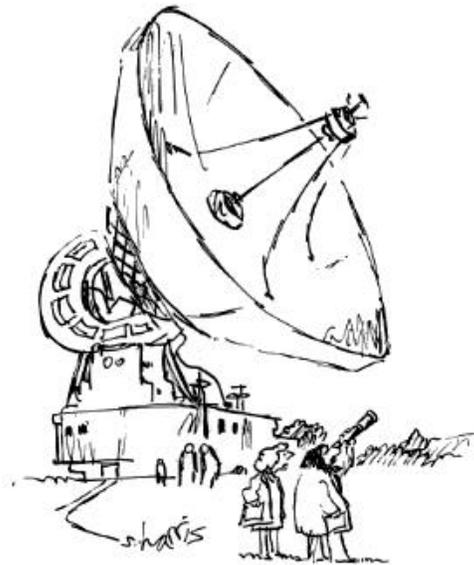
The Desert Sky Observer is available as a separate publication to individuals at a cost of \$10.00 per year. Subscription to the Desert Sky Observer does not entitle the subscriber to membership in the Antelope Valley Astronomy Club and its associated privileges.

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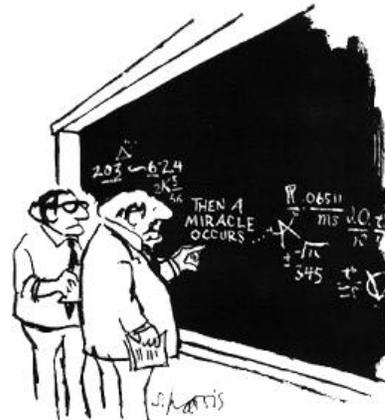
### Humor



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"Just checking."



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

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**Monthly Meeting: February 9.**