

Astro-Smart Shopping

Barry Peckham

Advice on starware products is one of the things our club members are asked to give to those entering the hobby. Quite often the collector of advice finds contradictions and discrepancies in the pool of information, so it becomes the task of the smart shopper to fact-check the opinions he or she receives. Hundreds of times each year I make pronouncements about the value (cost/usefulness) of astronomy products, and my remarks are swept into the information stream that includes magazine articles, ads, internet postings, software, books and television offerings. If it was easy to sort wheat from chaff, we wouldn't see the vast majority of budding stargazers show up at star parties with high cost gear of lim-

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Upcoming Star Parties

Public Party	Apr 1	Dillingham
Public Party	Apr 8	Kahala/Waikele
Club Party	Apr 22	Dillingham
Public Party	Apr 29	Dillingham
Public Party	May 6	Kahala/Waikele
Club Party	May 20	Dillingham
Public Party	May 27	Dillingham



Upcoming Events:

- The next meeting is at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 4th at the Bishop Museum.
- **NOTE: The subscription rate for Sky & Telescope is now \$34.00 per year.**

President's Message

When I arrived in Houston for the Lunar and Planetary Science Conference, I contacted Joe Dellinger. We arranged to meet at Crawdaddy's Bar, where the Hawaii students at the conference were throwing a party after the Tuesday night poster session. When Joe arrived I presented him with certificates of appreciation from HAS for him and for Bill Dillon, who co-discovered the asteroid they named Huikilolani. I also gave Joe two HAS T-shirts. Joe had come wearing a SOEST (School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology – a unit of the University of Hawaii) shirt that was quite old but still in good condition, so I'm sure that he will appreciate his shirt for a long time to come.

Joe said that he has personally been involved in the discovery of about 250 asteroids out of the 400 or so that his Fort Bend Astronomy Club has found. Of the total, only 28 have been observed long enough to get a number and become eligible for naming, and fewer than half of those have gotten a name. Joe says that this is the first time anyone has given him a certificate of appreciation or anything similar in recognition of his work, so he was quite pleased. We had dated the certificates March 10th because that was the day I left for Houston, and I didn't know when I would meet up with Joe. It turns out that March 10th is Joe's birthday, so that added special meaning for him. (That was also, coincidentally, that day that the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter successfully entered orbit around Mars.)

Joe told me that his club has almost reached its limit for discovering asteroids. The bright ones have all been found, and they use tricks like looking in places that others avoid, such as near bright stars and

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The Astronomer is the monthly newsletter of the Hawaiian Astronomical Society. Some of the contents may be copyrighted. We request that authors and artists be given credit for their work. Contributions are welcome. Send them to the Editor via e-mail. The deadline is the 15th of each month. We are not responsible for unsolicited artwork.

Planets Close To the Moon

Times are Hawaii Standard Time









- Apr 3, 09h, M 3.5° N of Mars
(70° from sun in evening sky)
- Apr 6, 15h, M 3.8° NNE of Saturn
(107° from sun in evening sky)
- Apr 15, 02h, M 4.8° SSW of Jupiter
(159° from sun in morning sky)
- Apr 22, 02h, M 3.5° SSE of Neptune
(72° from sun in morning sky)
- Apr 23, 17h, M 1.1° SSE of Uranus
(50° from sun in morning sky)
- Apr 24, 04h, M 0.47° ESE of Venus
(44° from sun in morning sky)
- Apr 25, 19h, M 3.5° NNW of Mercury
(22° from sun in morning sky)

Other Events of Interest

Times are Hawaii Standard Time

- Apr 8, 09h, Mercury at greatest elongation
(27.8° West of the sun in morning sky.)
- Apr 13, 06:41h, Moon Full
- Apr 17, 23h, Venus 0.30° NNW of Uranus
(45° from sun in morning sky)
- Apr 22, Lyrid meteor shower
- Apr 27, 09:45h, Moon New

Planets in April

<p> Mercury visible low in the east in the morning dawn for most of the month.</p>	<p> Venus shines very brightly in the morning sky at magnitude -4.2.</p>	<p> Mars in the west at dusk and is and dims to about +1.5 magnitude in April.</p>
<p> Jupiter rises about 9:00 pm and is high enough to view well by midnight.</p>	<p> Saturn shines brightly in the southwest at a magnitude of about 0.2 for the entire month.</p>	<p> Uranus still pretty close to the sun but will be very close to Venus on the morning of April 18.</p>
<p> Neptune visible in the morning sky above Venus.</p>		<p> Pluto rises before midnight and can be observed in the early morning hours.</p>

The March 7, 2006 general membership meeting of Hawaiian Astronomical Society was called to order by Chris Peterson at 7:42 p.m. There were twenty-six members and six visitors in attendance.

Of Recent Interest – President Chris Peterson announced this month's Hawaii Space Lecture Series The March lecturer will be Dr. David Jewitt, who will speak on "The New Outer Solar System." This month's lecture will take place on Tuesday, March 21, 2006 at 7:30 pm, in room 504 of the P.O.S.T. building, at UH. President Peterson spoke briefly about the new theory regarding the production of methane in atmosphere of Saturn's moon, Titan.

A new model of solar activity indicates that there will be 30% to 50% more intense solar activity in the next few years of this eleven-year cycle.

Guides for the Night Sky Sought- President Chris Peterson announced that the Waimea Valley Audubon Center is seeking one or two individuals with scopes, to show their paying guests the night sky. The event is scheduled for April 21, 2006 from about 7:00 until 8:30 pm in exchange a cash payment or free camping at the park. If you are interested, see Chris Peterson for more details.

Upcoming Speaker- Author Michael Chauvin would like to preview his new book, *Before Mauna Kea – Ancient Hawaiian Astronomy*. The vote was unanimous in favor of inviting Mr. Chauvin to speak either in April or May.

We were happy to host five visitors—Mr. Yvon Choquette, from Montreal, Canada, who is in town visiting his

daughter and former HAS President Stephanie Choquette and family. Mr. Choquette was happy to be here in Honolulu, despite the rather wet conditions. He indicated that rain was preferable to ice and snow. We also were happy to meet a mom and her two sons who have recently moved to Hawaii from Spokane, Washington. We also greeted Kelly Asato, a leader with the Girl Scouts and a gentleman named Steven.

Forrest Luke reminded us of our previous suggestion to create a slide show presentation for use at school in the event of cloudy skies. He felt that the club should look into daytime visitations to schools by club members, as another form of outreach to the community. Forrest, urged the club to contact the Tacoma Astronomical Society and inquire what other forms of outreach they employ.

Tee Shirt Designs Accepted – Jim MacDonald introduced the new design for a summer HAS tee shirt. This shirt will be a lighter shade and the new design, similar to the former one produced for the club, sports the constellation of Scorpius, rather than Orion. A unanimous vote by the members authorized funds for the creation of the silk-screened design for the production of a new shirt.

Shields Replaced – The light shields that were damaged at Kahala Park have been replaced by new wooden shields. The use permit has also been renewed.

Of Interest – VP Barry Peckham announced the sighting of a new storm on Jupiter, "Red Junior," a smaller spot north of the "Big Red Spot."

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April may have more sporadic fireballs than usual. April's main event is a mostly moonless Lyrid return.

Saturday the 22nd, **the Lyrids**. Radiant 18h04m +34 deg. The maximum is about 6:30 AM local time which is not the best for Hawaii. Meteor rates run from a few to near 50 an hour. Expect about 12 to 14 an hour as the maximum will be in a brightening sky. The Moon will be last quarter on the 21st. Lyrids are swift and occasionally spectacularly bright, with about 20 to 25% leaving trains.

If you are interested in observing meteors contact Tom Giguere on Oahu at 672-6677 or write to: Mike Morrow, P.O. Box 6692, Ocean View, Hawaii 96737

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Comet Pojmanski is visible in the morning sky, just to the north of Venus. Paul Lawler, who has trained his binoculars on the comet, indicates that it is about mag. 7 object when clouds permit viewing.

The Globe Project – At-Large Member, Steve Huffman, reported on the project that hopes to draw world attention to the loss of night viewing to light pollution. The project asks individuals to view and report on what stars, constellations, etc. you can see during the evenings of March 22nd through March 27, 2006. The Globe Projects seeks the help of all sky watchers to log their sighting on their website. Click the links and participate in a worthwhile project. Thanks from Bishop Museum – Joanne Bogan, Bishop Museum Planetarium Guide and long time member thanked Jim MacDonald, Barry Peckham and their helpers for again making needed repairs to the Bishop Museum telescope. Slacker Astronomy – Member Jim Bedient spoke briefly about a useful and interesting website, www.slackerastronomy.org

President's Report *(Continued from page 2)*

low in the sky. The Pan-STARRS project will quickly and repeatedly image large sections of the night sky searching for any moving objects and will increase the number of known asteroids from the current 100,000 or so to over one million, so the days of amateur discovery of asteroids is just about over. So if you want to find one, get to it!

Chris

New Attraction in the Planetarium Lobby - Carolyn Kaichi, Bishop Museum Planetarium Director, invited members to view the new refurbished Planetarium Lobby. The main attraction is a huge sphere that displays the features a various objects in our own solar system. It is quite a sight.

IFA Open House - We will be participating in the IFA Open House again this year on April 30th.

Nite-Sky Network – John Gallagher spoke briefly regarding the next NASA sponsored teleconference to take place March 28th at 4:00 pm. Dr.

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School Star Parties

Contact Forrest Luke to assist

- **April 7, 2006 Lanakila Elementary School in Nu'uano**
- **April 21, 2006 Kamehameha Schools 4th Grade at Ko Olina**

Astro Shopping (Continued from page 1)
ited usefulness. For many, astronomy is an expensive hobby to which little time is devoted. I remind the reader that the opposite can also be true. Late one night in soggy mid-March I channel-surf into the middle of a movie made for teens. Spotting a few quirky features in the presentation, I pause a moment to assess the philosophical bent. It looks like “The Waltons meet 90210.” The next thing I know, Mandy Moore in a granny dress is walking alone into a graveyard at night, and of course some slick guy is following her. My finger is half way down on the surf button as the guy asks Mandy, “What are you doing alone in a graveyard at night?” Suddenly, Mandy is standing beside a really interesting telescope, and my finger freezes. She’s posing with a classic homemade 6" dobsonian, right there in the graveyard, and offering views through the eyepiece to her potential suitor. She says she built it herself when she was 12, but we all know that it was loaned to the movie set by one of the crew. Of course, I am enraptured by the scope design, a combination of crudeness and craftsmanship, with ideas culled from several schools of thought, both clunky and clever. Anyway, the guy from 90210 sees no point in looking up and Mandy is okay with that. So I surf on to another channel, where Wagnerian opera wells up each time a mood-lit scientist says the words “Black

Hole!” Yes friends, astronomy education comes in many forms. A more useful form is Astromart (www.astromart.com). Its sophisticated format is designed to maximize truth and honesty among buyers and sellers, but it also works as a valuable price comparison network. How much is a great 10" mirror worth? Check Astromart. What about a 5-year old Nagler eyepiece, or Fujinon binoculars, “like new, in box?” Be warned however: hours of shopping on Astromart will make the few bargains seem irresistible and you might actually buy something.

Telrads are the most recommended accessory for anyone with a telescope. So where do you buy one? I google-searched my way to Scope Tronix and bought 5 at \$39 each, plus Priority Mail shipping (batteries not included). A telrad from Orion could cost you \$15 more.

And when it comes to telescope shopping, there is no more educational place to go than to a star party. It is wise to read the reviews in astronomy magazines, but standardized criteria is hard to come by, and what matters most is what YOU like. The skies over our islands will eventually clear and we will find ourselves once again looking out into our celestial neighborhood. While the rain falls and the clouds persist, it is a perfect time to shop!

Barry

HAS Financial Report as of March 15, 2006

Initial Balance:.....	\$4,527.38
Receipts:	
Astronomy Payment.....	34.00
Donations.....	10.00
Dues Received.....	166.00
S&T Payments.....	32.95
Total Income:.....	\$242.95
Expenses:	
Astronews.....	149.50
Magazine Subscriptions.....	390.79
Refreshments.....	6.25
Postage.....	3.27
Total Expenses:.....	\$549.81
Ending Balance:.....	\$4,220.52

This month we welcome ten new members. They are **Freddy and Florence Willems, Kevin and Derek Suehiro, Rosemary, Lesley, Jeffrey and Cody Spraker and Kelly and Kelly Chee**. A special thanks to *Steven Petranik* for his donation. Many thanks also to those renewing their membership this month. Clear skies to all!

Minutes (Continued from page 5)

Ryan Mendez of the Stardust Mission will speak. Printed materials associated with the teleconference were displayed for members.

Video Presentation – Steve Huffman presented a portion of a NiteSky Network DVD video presentation, “Search for Orion.”

Celestial Sampler – Paul Lawler, reviewed a new book from Sky&Tel Press. The book, ***Celestial Sampler: 60 Small-Scope Tours for Starlit Nights***, is a compilation of articles by **Sue French**, from her regular column in Sky & Tel. Paul said that they make great star hopping exercises. Available on-line at Amazon for \$16.47. March Madness - Despite the weather, we will attempt a Messier

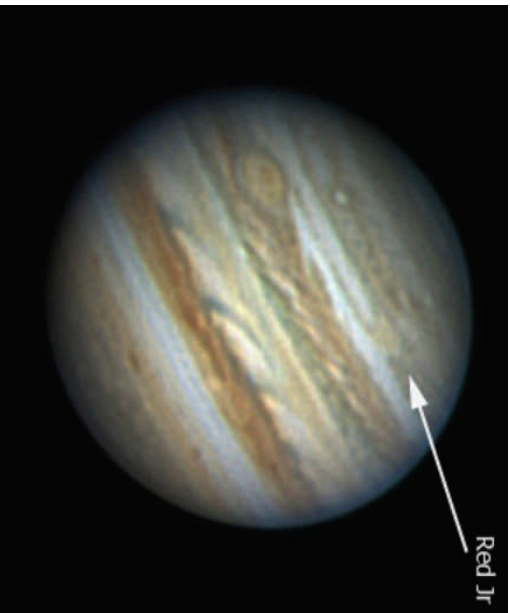
Marathon during the March 25th club star party, VP Barry Peckham reports. He also reminded members that Saturday, May 6th is this year’s Astronomy Day. Our celebration will take place at the Kahala Mall. We will again be on the upper deck, in the parking area outside of Barnes & Noble bookstore.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m. and refreshments were served. A few members congregated at the Planetarium to admire that new display in the Planetarium and to get an overview of the night sky from Joanne Bogan in the Planetarium.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen West, HAS Secretary

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Red Junior, a new storm on Jupiter joins the more well known,
Great Red Spot. **Photo credit & copyright:** [Mike Salway](#)