



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

April 2002

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

April Meeting

Our speaker for this month's meeting will be Eric Torbet, who is doing post-doctoral research in the UCSB physics department. He will speak about the history of the universe and how his research in Antarctica, using an offset Gregorian telescope to measure the cosmic background radiation, was supplying data supporting the theory of a flat universe. He also has slides and anecdotes about life in the Antarctic, having visited twice (1.5 month and 3.5 month visits).

Astronomy Day

Saturday, April 20, is **Astronomy Day**. We're going to try to hold the event this year at the Camino Real Marketplace (Big Box) in Goleta. We'll set up telescopes and displays all day long to try to hook unsuspecting passers-by on the joys of amateur astronomy. No word from Steve at press time whether we were successful in getting permission to set up there. If we can't get that venue, we'll set up at Chase Palm Park again.

This is a big undertaking, so we'll need some **volunteers** to help even out the workload. We need people to help with setup and teardown of tables and exhibits, people to make up and man exhibits, and telescopes for solar and evening observations. **If you're willing to pitch in for an hour (or all day), please contact Chuck at 964-8201 or email MACPUZL@west.net**

Thanks, Volunteers!

Since the last newsletter, AU volunteers Gretchen & Greg Brinser, Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Art Harris, June Kelley, Pat McPartlin, Edgar Ocampo, and

Helen Osenga showed the night sky to **282** customers.

The outreach schedules are subject to change, so to get the latest information, visit the web page and check the "Events" link, or contact Edgar or Chuck. Try to let one of us know ahead of time if you are planning to show up at an outreach event. It's always a lot of fun sharing the stars and planets.

We would really love to see some **new faces** at the outreach events. **If you're interested in astronomy, that's all the training you need to be of help.** You can answer questions and talk to people waiting to view through telescopes. We can even arrange to get a telescope for you for the evening, and show you how to use it, if that's what you want to try.

AU Events for April

Friday, April 5, 7:30 PM – Monthly meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH.

Saturday, April 13, 6 PM – Planning meeting in the Education Classroom outside Steve's office at SBMNH.

Saturday, April 13, 8:30 PM – Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH.

Saturday, April 13, all night – Dark Sky. Contact Paul Winn or Joe Doyle for information on when and where.

Friday, April 19, 7:30 PM – Monthly public observation at Westmont College.

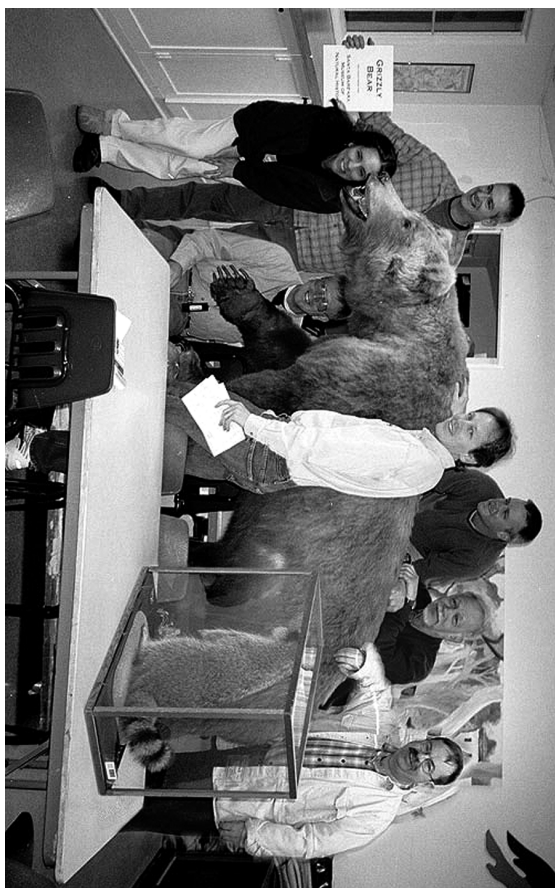
Saturday, April 20, all day long – Astronomy Day 2002 at either the new Goleta Camino Real Marketplace, or at Chase Palm Park.

Thursday, April 25, setup 5:30 PM – Hope School Science Night, 6 PM to 8 PM. It will be bright for most of this time, so we'll probably need to do solar viewing.

Friday, April 26, setup 7:30 PM – SB Christian School Science Night.

Planning Meeting

All AU members are welcome to come to the planning meeting at 6 PM on Saturday, April 13, in the classroom adjacent to Steve's office at SBMNH. Put in your two bits on club activities and suggest things you'd like to do. This is **your** club, and it's more fun if you contribute! At February's planning meeting, we got up close and personal with Ursa Major (photo courtesy of Jim Williams):



Messier Marathon 2002

This year's Messier Marathon was an improvement over last year's. Seeing conditions were much better this year – the clouds were forming a good 300 feet higher this time. The wind was howling, and the temperature out of the wind was a balmy 36 degrees. Paul Winn and Mark Holbrook bailed early to go to a movie. You **know** it's bad when they leave. Nonmembers Rick and Sean left in search of a more sheltered viewing spot. Warren Bitters put in a short appearance as he wandered between Figueroa Mountain and Carpinteria in search of clear skies. That just left Joe Doyle (and friend Bill), Ron Pembleton (who actually set up his new 8" Dob to look at Comet Ikeya-Zhang, visiting again after 321 years), Edgar Ocampo, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Art Harris, Greg Brinser, Justin Magness, and Jim Billig to brave the cold and scudding clouds. Greg got the most Messier objects with his binoculars, scoring about a dozen including M45, M44, M42, M35, M36, M37, M38, M31, M81, M82, and M41 in addition to fine views of the comet. After about an hour of numb noses, we adjourned to Pat & Chuck's place for hot chocolate, assorted sugar-rich viewing enhancement foods, and astronomical conversation.

ITP Lecture

On Wednesday, April 3, at 8 PM, the UCSB Institute for Theoretical Physics will be presenting a public lecture in the ITP Main Seminar Room by **Dr. Frank Wilczek**, the Herman Feshbach Professor of Physics at MIT. He will speak about "**The World's Numerical Recipe**"; how to cook up all of astrophysics using only six numerical parameters. Admission is free, but seating is limited, so call 893-4111 for your reservations.

Receipts and Reimbursement

Our Treasurer Gretchen Brinser wants to remind everyone that they should get approval from a club officer before making any expenditures for which they expect to be reimbursed from the club treasury! Don't forget to keep all your receipts, too.

May's Speaker

The speaker at our May meeting will be Dr. Omer Blaes of UCSB, who will present a talk about Black Holes, always a crowd-pleaser.

SB Library Display

AU member Dale Lowdermilk has arranged for the AU to have the use of the display case in the Santa Barbara Public Library for the month of June. We need ideas from members on what to put in the display, and help setting it up and taking it down. Contact a club officer if you can help. An AU display in the Goleta Library orchestrated by Bob Brown a few years ago brought in several new members.

Telescope for Sale

Mike Bryant has a 10" Meade LX3 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope for sale. Contact him by phone at 962-1362 for details.

New Product Announcement

Ocular Industries of Santa Barbara is proud to announce the April 1 availability of their newest astronomical accessory – the **GPS Ambulatory Tripod**. The GAT is a heavy-duty anodized aluminum field tripod, available with or without a deluxe wedge, that incorporates its own built-in GPS receiver and microprocessor control system. A rechargeable hydrogen fuel cell powers the computer and nine compact but powerful digital stepper motors attached to the sturdy articulated tripod legs. The tripod is compatible with all commercially available catadioptric, Newtonian, and refractor telescopes. Just attach your scope, and enter the latitude and longitude of your desired observing site. The GAT will then walk your telescope to those coordinates by the most direct route, avoiding obstacles with its Ultra WideBand low-power radar, and polar align itself. Add a CCD camera and the Bluetooth RF networking card option, and the GAT will even transmit images back to your home computer! True remote observing is finally here.

AU Information Box

President:	Greg Brinser	569-9743
	88eight8@cox.net	
Vice President:	Pat McPartlin	964-8201
	sbau_vp@yahoo.com	
Secretary:	Craig Prater	683-5784
	craig@di.com	
Treasurer:	Gretchen Brinser	569-9743
	88eight8@cox.net	
Outreach:	Edgar Ocampo	964-0914
	eocampo26@earthlink.net	
Webmaster:	Paul Winn	685-5646
	strg8zn@cox.net	
Refreshments:	Barbara Spinrad	685-4666
	uselessiii@webtv.net	
Newsletter:	Chuck McPartlin	964-8201
	macpuzl@west.net	

AU Astronomy Information Pager

(leave a short message) 564-9002

SBMNH Astronomy Program Coordinator

Steve Schmidt 682-4711x316

SBMNH Astronomy Program Tape

(updated monthly) 682-4711x405

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Current annual membership rates are:

Single \$15 Family \$25

Our address is:

**Astronomical Unit
C/O Santa Barbara Museum
of Natural History
2559 Puesta Del Sol Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998**

On the Web: www.sbau.org

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The Astronomical Unit
c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
2559 Puesta Del Sol Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998