



# AU AstroNews

## The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

February 2007

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

### OUTREACH SUMMARY

January was a very quiet month for outreach, but AU volunteers Andy Allen, David Anfenson, Warren Bitters, Bill Clausen, Krissie Cook, Jason & Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Carolyn & Ed Edwards, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, Chuck McPartlin, Ron Nixon, Edgar Ocampo, Helen Osenga, and Tim Wittenburg still managed to show the sky to **125** happy customers.

### FEBRUARY EVENTS

February also looks like a sedate month for outreach, so let's root for a little rain on the free days. To get the latest information on schedules, or directions, just contact Chuck at 964-8201 or [macpuzl@west.net](mailto:macpuzl@west.net). Here's what's scheduled so far:

#### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 7 PM

Groundhog Day - Winter is half over. Catch a quick planetarium show by Krissie, then sit back and enjoy as Tom Whittemore and Tim Crawford tell us about mirror grinding, polishing, and testing. Will they see their shadows?

#### WEDNESDAY, FEB 7, 8 PM

Our balloonist friend *Julian Nott* will be giving a lecture at the Kavli Institute of Theoretical Physics at UCSB entitled "Intellectual Courage and Scientific Ballooning." It's free, but with limited seating. *Call 893-4111 for reservations*. He'll mention plans to fly a balloon system on Saturn's moon Titan.

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, SETUP 6:30 PM

Telescopes for the kids of Harding Elementary School.

#### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 5 PM

AU planning meeting in the classroom next to Krissie's office. Anyone is welcome to attend and help plan your club's activities.

#### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 7 PM

Monthly Public Star Party, next to Palmer Observatory at SBMNH. Saturn is back!

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 6:30 PM

Telescopes for St. Andrews Preschool, on Arroyo Road near Auhay Drive in Noleta. The official address is 4575 Auhay Drive, but the entrance is off Arroyo.

#### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 7 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont College, just outside Carroll Observatory. It seems that the obnoxious floodlight shining across the front of the observatory from a nearby tree suffered some damage in January, so conditions are better.

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, SETUP 5 PM

Telescopes for Science Night at Ellwood Elementary School.



*"Is that Admiral Byrd at Figueroa Mountain with his 18" Dob? No, it's Joe Doyle, but that is real snow on the ground behind him! Joe, Andy Allen, and Bob Piatek braved the cold at Figueroa on Saturday, January 20, to observe under the very dark sky there."*

## NEW DIRECTORY

"Alert! A new Santa Barbara Astronomical Unit Members Directory will be printed soon! It will contain the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of AU members. It will only be given to AU members. If you do NOT want to be listed in the directory, please notify Andy Allen, AU Secretary, as soon as possible! His email address is [andrewstuartallen@gmail.com](mailto:andrewstuartallen@gmail.com), or you can phone him at (805) 451-6981."

## WHAT'S UP WITH THE PLANETS?



The best planetary events for February are **Saturn's** opposition and a wonderful evening appearance of **Mercury**. At a magnitude of -4, **Venus** climbs still higher in the Southwestern sky this month, and finds itself setting nearly two and a half hours after the Sun by month's end. Not to be outdone, however, Mercury vaults toward Venus, and on February 4 shines just over  $6^0$  to the lower right of its much brighter sister. Mercury's greatest elongation occurs on the 7<sup>th</sup> when it reaches  $18^0$  from the Sun. On that night Mercury glows at magnitude -0.5 and reveals a half-lit disk 7" wide. Be prepared, though. By February 12<sup>th</sup>, the planet is still  $10^0$  high a half-hour after sunset, a magnitude dimmer and only 25% lit. In a few days our swiftly moving messenger will fade from view. Saturn reaches opposition on the 10<sup>th</sup>, so during February it will rise at sundown shining at magnitude zero. Since the tilt of Saturn's rings from edge-on is  $15^0$  during this opposition, take advantage of this alignment. Saturn will not shine this brightly at its opposition for a number of years. Also, since Saturn lies in the constellation of Leo the Lion, it will follow a very high path across the sky during the night and be beautifully placed for steady telescopic viewing. If you watch this gas giant very

carefully this month, you will notice its movement with respect to the heart of the Lion, Regulus. At month's beginning Saturn lies  $7.5^0$  from Regulus, but by month's end it will find itself  $9.5^0$  from the heart of the Lion. **Jupiter** rises a few hours after midnight, near the heart of the Scorpion, Antares. Watch for Jupiter's subtle movement about this star. During this month, the separation between Jupiter and Antares will increase by  $3^0$ . Shining at a magnitude of -2.0, Jupiter puts on quite a show in the early morning sky! **Mars** twinkles in the morning sky but with a far dimmer magnitude of +1.4 and rises about an hour and a half before the Sun. Watch Mars as it slowly moves away from the stinger stars of the Scorpion, Lesath and Shaula, and toward our "other centaur" in the sky, Sagittarius.

## ASTRONOMICAL ARTS CORNER

### **AWE – STRONOMY**

*by Jürgen Hilmer*

So immense our Universe  
So small our telescopes to see it with  
So little our knowledge of how  
It all works and why  
So look at our Universe in awe  
Forever for only it will know  
The answer why

### **WHEN DAY IS DONE**

*by Nancy Rohrer*

Brightest light in the sky  
beams down on all, and many  
leaves reflect the shining light.  
Soon the leaves look dull.  
Long shadows stretch across the land.  
The sky turns many bright colors  
as the Sun sinks behind Earth's edge.  
All across the land darkness falls  
Soon a light shines from above  
Then many lights cover the sky.  
Some are brighter than others.  
They can be made into patterns  
and a story made up about them.  
This has been going on as long  
as there are stars in the sky and  
people to look up at them.  
What can be more wonderful  
than watching the sky  
when day is done?

**BEIM SCHLAFENGEHEN  
(GOING TO SLEEP)**

*by Hermann Hesse*

Now made tired by the day,  
so my ardent desire shall  
warmly greet the starry night  
like a tired child.

Hands, cease your doing,  
brow, forget all thought;  
all my senses now  
would sink into slumber.

And my soul, unguarded,  
would soar free in flight,  
to live life deep a thousand-fold  
in night's magic circle.

**IM ABENDROT  
(AT SUNSET)**

*by Hermann Hesse*

Through sorrow and joy  
we have walked hand in hand;  
now we are at rest from our journey  
above the silent land.

The valleys descend all about us,  
the sky grows dark;  
only two larks yet soar  
dreaming in the haze.

Draw close and let them flutter;  
soon it will be time to sleep;  
let us not lose our way  
in this solitude!

O boundless, silent peace,  
so deep in the sunset!  
How weary we are of our journeying-  
can this be death?

**AU Information Box**

<b>President:</b>	Tim Wittenburg	969-6945
	<a href="mailto:black10@aol.com">black10@aol.com</a>	
<b>Vice President:</b>	Laurence Harms	962-9855
	<a href="mailto:lauroh@aol.com">lauroh@aol.com</a>	
<b>Secretary:</b>	Bridget & Andy Allen	451-6981
	<a href="mailto:andrewstuartallen@gmail.com">andrewstuartallen@gmail.com</a>	
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Ruben Gutierrez	682-0405
	<a href="mailto:rubenalvag@aol.com">rubenalvag@aol.com</a>	
<b>Outreach:</b>	Chuck McPartlin	964-8201
	<a href="mailto:macpuzl@west.net">macpuzl@west.net</a>	
<b>Webmaster:</b>	Paul Winn	685-5646
	<a href="mailto:strg8zn@cox.net">strg8zn@cox.net</a>	
<b>Refreshments:</b>	Nancy Buck	969-0070
	<a href="mailto:NMTBuck@aol.com">NMTBuck@aol.com</a>	
<b>Newsletter:</b>	Tom Whittemore	687-2025
	<a href="mailto:kometes@aol.com">kometes@aol.com</a>	

**AU Astronomy Information Pager**

(Leave a short message) 564-9002

**SBMNH Astronomy Program Coordinator**

Krissie Cook 682-4711x173  
[kcook@sbnature2.org](mailto:kcook@sbnature2.org)

**SBMNH Astronomy Program Tape**

Updated monthly 682-4711x405

**AU AstroNews**, the monthly publication of the **Astronomical Unit (AU)**, is mailed to the AU membership. For publishing consideration for the next month, submit astronomical items by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the current month!

**AU annual membership rates:**

**Single = \$15                      Family = \$25**

**AU mailing address:**

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

**On the Web:** <http://www.sbau.org>

**February 2007**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2 Monthly Meeting 7PM	3
4	5	6	7 Julian Nott lecture at UCSB	8 Harding Elementary 6:30 PM	9	10 Planning Meeting 5PM SBMNH Star Party 7PM
11	12	13	14	15 St. Andrews Preschool 6:30 PM	16 Westmont 7 PM	17
18	19	20	21	22 Ellwood Elementary 5 PM	23	24
25	26	27	28			

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