

AstroNews

The Newsletter Of The Astronomical Unit

January 2001

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Election Results

The AU election results are in, and we didn't even need to appeal to the Supreme Court! Here are our new officers for the new millennium: President – Tony Galván, Vice President – Greg Brinser, Secretary – Wayne Rothermich, and Treasurer – Gretchen Brinser. In appointed positions we have: Webmaster – Kathryn MacCurry, Outreach Coordinator – Edgar Ocampo, Refreshments Coordinator – Warren Bitters, and Newsletter – Chuck McPartlin. Thanks to everyone who served in club positions in 2000 for a job well done.

Members' Night

After the elections, several members gave short presentations on astronomy themes. First, Bob Brown demonstrated his vintage Rolleiflex and Yashica cameras, and the high resolutions they are capable of. Next, Wayne Rothermich showed us slides from the Riverside Telescope Makers Conference in May, featuring some of the AU members who attended. Bob Michael had slides of the “psychotic rocks” of the Wheeler Geological Area in Southwest Colorado. Dr. Jiri Polivka presented information about the recent Leonid Meteor impacts observed on the Moon using video cameras. Joe Doyle showed what you can do to turn a commercial Dobsonian scope into a customized hot rod, and the many astronomical uses of the 35mm film can. Finally, we went “On the Road Again” with Brother Laurence Harms as he visited astronomical sites in Arizona, and attended AstroCamp with Marymount School 5th graders in Idyllwild, California.

January AU Meeting

At the January meeting, we will hear about "WOW! The Most Incredible Thing You'll Ever See," Dave Balch's account of experiencing a total solar eclipse.

Volunteers

Thanks to Greg & Gretchen Brinser, June Kelley, Pat McPartlin, Edgar Ocampo, and Helen Osenga for volunteering at the public and outreach events since the last newsletter. Cloudy weather limited us to reaching only 183 people since the last installment of the AU AstroNews.

AU Events for January

Monday, January 1, 7:00 PM – Outreach Observation for Camp Ramah Elderhostel in Ojai. Contact Edgar at eocampo26@earthlink.net or 964-0914 to help out.

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

Wednesday, January 10, 6:15 PM – Harding School Outreach Observation.

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

Friday, January 19, 7:00 PM – Monthly Westmont Public Observation.

Saturday, January 27, dusk – Monthly Dark Sky Observation at the Gun Club and Figueroa Mountain.

Wednesday, January 31, 7:00 PM – Hope School Outreach Observation for their Science Night.

AU Holiday Banquet

The Beachside Bar and Café in Goleta was the scene of the Holiday Banquet this year. We had a great turnout of 32 members and guests, plus one raccoon. Linda Vaitkus even drove down from San Jose to join us. AU Star awards were presented to the members who worked hard for the club in the last year. Good food was followed by a delicious “Guido’s Star” birthday cake, and then the wacky gift exchange. Visit the AU web page for all the fun photos. Here are the AU 2000 All-Stars:



Next Month’s Speaker

At the February meeting, Dr. Paul Fieseler of JPL will tell us about the ongoing Galileo mission to Jupiter – the probe itself, its accomplishments, and what lies in its future. Galileo has just started some Jovian observations in concert with the Cassini Probe (on its way to rendezvous with Saturn in 2004) and the Hubble Telescope. And speaking of Saturn ...

Saturn’s Suburban Sprawl

In the last three months, ten new moons have been discovered orbiting Saturn, bringing its total of known moons to 28. A couple of more small ice balls are being tracked to see whether they also orbit Saturn, so don’t be surprised if more moons are announced in the coming months. Jupiter also got a new moon, bringing it to 17. Uranus is still stuck at 21 moons, so it’s got some catch-up to do.

ALH 84001 Again

The famous Mars meteorite with the nanofossils that caused a big stir a while ago is back in the news. Close scrutiny of the magnetite granules in the rock has strengthened the Mars microbe interpretation. It turns out that it is next to impossible (as far as we know) to make grains with the observed levels of purity and regularity of crystal structure by other than biological means. Expect a riposte by skeptics soon, but this will be a tough one.

They Want You

The Hands On Universe educational program is looking for a few good amateur astronomers. Here’s an excerpt from a recent email release: “HOU is seeking the help of skilled amateur astronomers nationwide who would be willing to work with our teachers. Over the past seven years HOU has been training teachers in basic astronomy research skills. We would be asking that individual amateurs or groups work with these classroom teachers to provide CCD images, observing tips, and other astronomical resources. In return, Hands-On Universe will make its image processing software available, and provide access to our large image archive and other web resources.”

“Please pass this letter on to those in your organization who would be interested in becoming part of the Hands-On Universe Amateur Astronomer – Education Outreach Network. Participating amateurs or professionals will be listed at our website, and contacted by teachers in their region for

assistance.” Interested amateurs should sign up on the Hands On Universe website at <http://hou.lbl.gov/research/amateur.html>.

“In addition, if you know of any teachers in your region who may be interested in HOU training, please direct them to our web site at <http://hou.lbl.gov/howtojoin> for our professional development opportunity funded by National Science Foundation.”

“Thank you so much for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact Dr. Carl Pennypacker at (510) 486-7429 or send e-mail to pennypacker@lbl.gov. We look forward to having you as part of our astronomy education team.”

SETI@HOME Gear

SETI@home has extended the products in their online store. There are great new sweatshirts, mugs, T-shirts, jackets, desk clocks, lapel pins, patches, and even a heat-sensitive mouse pad. Want more? How about your very own, very elegant, blown-glass globe? Or a stylus, red and black pens, and mechanical pencil packed into one very cool gravity-fed tool. You'll find them all online at <http://www.exploratoriumstore.com/setihome.html>.

The profits from each sale help fund the SETI@home project.

Christmas Eclipse

If you watched the partial solar eclipse on Christmas morning, send in your observing reports and any photos for the AU AstroNews. Heck, if you observe anything interesting on any day, share it with your fellow clubmembers.

Astronomy Calendars

The AU still has plenty of Astronomy Calendars for sale to help you plan your next millennium's observations. Just ask any club officer at the next meeting.

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AU AstroNews is the monthly publication of the **Astronomical Unit (AU)**, mailed to the general membership. Contact Chuck before the 20th day of the preceding month to contribute to the newsletter.

Current annual membership rates are:

Single	\$15	Family	\$25
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On the Web: www.sbau.org

January 2001

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
First Night SB Obs	1 Elder- hostel Obs	2 [•]	3	4 Perihelion	5 AU Monthly Meeting	6
7	8	9 [◦]	10 Harding School Obs	11	12	13 SBMNH Star Party
14	15	16 [•]	17	18 Catch Jupiter at 6 PM for a neat Galilean moons group.	19 Westmont Public Obs	20
21	22	23	24 [•]	25	26	27 Dark Sky Obs
28	29	30	31 Hope School Obs			

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