

Minutes of the University Lowbrow Astronomers for the Year 2003

Contents

- General Membership Meeting, May 16, 2003.
- Officer's Meeting, June 18, 2003.
- General Membership Meeting, June 20, 2003.
- General Membership Meeting, July 18, 2003.
- Officer's Meeting, August 7, 2003.
- Notes for August 2003.
- Officer's Meeting, October 3, 2003.
- General Membership Meeting, October 18, 2003.
- General Membership Meeting, November 21, 2003.
- General Membership Meeting, December 19, 2003.
- Officer's Meeting, December 19, 2003.

Note: It is possible that additional minutes were printed in one of the newsletters, look at the month in question and the next few months. Minutes are most likely to be found the month after. So the December 2003 minutes would most likely be in the January 2004 newsletter, but could be in the December 2003 or February 2004 newsletters.

University Lowbrow Astronomers--Club Meeting Minutes for May 16, 2003.

--President Charlie Nielsen called the meeting to order and introduced the evening's speaker, Mark Deprest.

--Mark Deprest's talk "Observing Comets," was interesting, informative and wonderfully infused with Mark's enthusiasm for astronomy. Those of us planning to attend this summer's Black Forest Star Party are looking forward to Mark's enhanced reprise as he is a featured speaker at this year's BFP.

--Mark Rotenberg from Ryder's Hobby Shop introduced us to Orion's new eyepieces which promise more bang for the buck than previous offerings and are much easier on our wallets than Tele-Vue.

--The club elected two more vice-presidents to beef up the executive committee. They are: Jim Wadsworth, serving in elected office for the first time, and Doug Warshow, returning to add needed experience to a mostly rookie group of officers.

--Observatory Committee Report--

-The Observatory building is in need of maintenance. The welds of the I-beam bracing the frame the observatory roof rolls onto have almost all failed and need to be repaired. Water rolling of the southeast corner of the roof has damaged the building's masonry. The masonry needs to be repaired, along with a gutter for the roof and some minor excavating to facilitate water run-off.

Treasurer's Report--

-Treasurer Mike Garrahan reported \$2527 in our bank account and 105 members of the club.

--Website report--

-Webmaster Dave Snyder reported 81,888 hit on our site in April, a fine accomplishment. There is an email committee of Dave Snyder, Kurt Hillig and Tom Stoner looking into recent club email problems.

--Newsletter Report--

-Editor John Ryan via Tom Ryan--!!SEND ARTICLES!!

--Other Business--

-Jim Forrester is working with the UM Hospital's Transplant Center for a "Night on Peach Mountain" to be auctioned off at the Center's black tie benefit in September.

-Volunteers are needed on a continuing basis for parking lot monitoring at open houses.

--Finally a brief discussion took place around the question of taking on more public events. The Leslie Science center would like to see more of us but club burn-out is always a problem.

--Meeting then adjourned to the Brown Jug for infomal discussion of just about anything.

--Submitted respectfully, Jim Forrester

Here are the unofficial minutes of the Officer's Meeting on June 18, 2003 as taken by Douglas Warshow.

1. Communications Committee.

The question arose as to whether the club would have too many people at certain advertised events. The officers decided not to completely get rid of the advertisements, but the handing out of club pamphlets (in lieu of some of the club's announcements) at the open houses would help curtail the crowd down to those people who have a genuine interest in astronomy. The pamphlets would be distributed by a "welcoming committee" of club volunteers who would help direct parking traffic at the open houses. The pamphlets would contain the basic information about the Lowbrows, a schedule of planned open houses, a website address and/or telephone number for updates and a list of observatory etiquette. Doug Warshow volunteered to be chairman of the Communications Committee. Since Paul Walkowski and Jack Brisbin had previously provided plenty of input for the committee, it was agreed that Doug W. ask them if they wanted to partake in the running of said committee. (Addendum: Paul W. has agreed to join; Jack B. said he wanted to think about it for a few days.)

2. Reserving rooms in Dennison.

Bernard Freiberg volunteered to make arrangements with the astronomy department for reserving a room for our meetings.

3. University of Michigan Transplant Center.

Jim Forrester brought up the topic of an auction given by the University of Michigan Transplant Center in which one of the items would be a combination meal/observing session at Peach Mountain. Also Jim F. guessed that there might be a dozen or so people in the winning group. The officers agreed that the meal aspect would have to be cleared with George Lattimer first and that the observing night should be on a Friday. It was concluded that Jim F. would have to find out the date of the auction before setting an exact date.

4. Letter from the Jackson Astronomy Club.

The Jackson Astronomy Club asked if the Lowbrows wish to make a \$100.00 donation for a plaque to be erected at Lake Hudson proclaiming the later to be an official dark-sky preserve. The officers agreed that the cause was a good one and would ask the membership at the next meeting if the Lowbrows should make the donation. (Addendum: the membership passed the motion to do so.)

5. Master Calendar.

The question of whether to provide a master calendar listing all of the future planned Lowbrow events (time period not specified). Jim Wadsworth pointed out that there were bound to be some changes in the calendar every so often, so there should be a way of alerting the public of any updated information. The officers decided to include the calendar with the aforementioned pamphlet (which would include a way to check for updates).

6. Rain Location For July Talk.

The July meeting speaker would be John Kirchhoff of Riders Hobby/Livonia. Since he will be presenting an array of new astronomy gadgets at Peach Mountain (instead of at Dennison), the question arose as where to have the meeting if the weather became inclement. Bernard

Forebear suggested the classroom on the other side of Peach Mountain. He volunteered to see if it would be available. (Addendum: the Lowbrows may use the classroom.)

7. New Speakers

August: Bernard Friberg would get in contact with Roger Tanner to see if he would give a presentation when he was in town. Charlie Nielsen and Dave Snyder would give Bernard Roger's new e-mail address to help in this matter. September: the officers will ask the membership if they would be interested in hearing a report on the Black Forest Star Party, and if those attending would like to give it. (Addendum: the membership voted yes.) October: the officers will ask the membership if they would be interested in hearing a Mars show-and-tell presentation. (Addendum: the membership voted yes.)

8. Observatory Report.

A green light was given for using the "bolting method" for securing the observatory crossbeams and also to add a nominal amount of fill dirt by the stairs. Bernard Forebear said that the price for the drill bits required start at \$10.00. He also said that Kurt Hillig has a tripod for the drill. Other tasks to be performed on the observatory include cleaning the beams, fix the erosion by the stairs (by adding gravel and clay), painting the roof dark blue, painting the walls with the color off the sample chip, and cleaning the cracks and filling them with putty. Jim Forrester said that he would figure out how much to trim the tree that is due south of the observatory. (The tree cannot be removed completely since it blocks the beams from oncoming headlights.) The officers approved expenditures for drill bits, bolts, washers and hydraulic cement. Charlie Nielsen will contact Clay Kessler to help figure out specifically what other items will be needed for the repairs.

9. Miscellaneous.

Bernard Forebear will take care of procuring the projector for the Friday lecture. The officers will ask the membership whether they wish to hear the minutes at each meeting. The unofficial minutes will be posted on the website. The membership will finalize and approve/disapprove said minutes at the following meeting. It will be the newsletter editor's discretion as to whether the minutes are published in the newsletter. Dave Snyder said that no software would be required to transfer the newsletter to the website.

University Lowbrow Astronomers--Club Meeting Minutes for June 20, 2003

President Charlie Nielsen called the meeting to order and introduced the evening's speaker, Patrick Koehn.

--Patrick Koehn's talk described NASA's Messenger-FIPS mission to Mercury. Launch is set for March 2004 but the probe will not arrive until April 2009! The craft has to orbit the sun several times to pick up gravitational "slingshot" assistance in order to make the trip with a minimum of fuel. The only non-space agency instrument aboard is the University's device to map particles and fields around the innermost planet. The description of the instrument and its' workings was the heart of the talk. Many thanks to Patrick Koehn for a fine presentation.

--Lake Hudson Monument

-The club voted \$100 toward the erection at Lake Hudson of a concrete pillar and brass plaque to commemorate the park's status as a dark sky preserve.

--Observatory Report--

-Observatory Director Mike Radwick reported on the successful bolting of the I-beam back onto the observatory roof support and the refurbishing of the clutches on the 24 inch telescope.

--Our next meeting will take place at Peach Mountain, July 18.

--Porta Johns--

-Past president D.C. Moons reported we could rent a unit for \$50 per month and have it serviced for \$20-\$35 per month. We could also purchase a unit for \$200-\$500. During discussion it was noted we may attract more female members if we provided a lavatory.

--Website report--

-Several versions of a club weblink icon were presented but due to the small format (16x16 pixels) most of us had trouble deciding what they were. A back to the drawing board suggestion was for a block "L" for Lowbrows.

--Treasurer's Report--

-The current balance in the club account is \$2621.69

--Doug Warshow suggested the club meeting minutes be published in the newsletter, which the club decided to do, and also to post them on the website, which was left to further discussion. Doug had suggestions for future club meetings: Sept.-A Black Forest Star Party report. Oct.-Mars show and tell.

--Newsletter Report--

-Tom Ryan went beyond the usual plea for articles to suggest we all write a piece on "Why I Joined the Lowbrows," or "Why I Love Astronomy." Tom noted not all articles had to be technical to be of interest and that people should commit to articles several months in advance.

--The meeting then adjourned with several members heading for Peach Mountain.

--Submitted respectfully, Jim Forrester

Minutes of the July 18, 2003 meeting of the University Lowbrow Astronomers as submitted by Dave Snyder.

1. The meeting was held at Peach Mountain (partly to avoid Art Fair, and partly as a venue for John Kirchhoff to give his "goodies show)."
2. President Charlie Nielsen

Charlie brought the meeting to order.

There was a proposal to donate \$52 to the clear sky clock. Many club members use this service to get predictions of cloud cover and atmospheric conditions. If the club gave \$52, the Peach Mountain entry would be updated earlier, which could benefit club members. This proposal passed.

Before the meeting John Kirchhoff had mentioned the GLAAC meeting (GLAAC is in the process of planning the annual "Astronomy at the Beach" event at Kensington Metropark). GLAAC had arranged for the astronaut Jerry Ross to speak at Kensington. Since John was temporarily absent (he would return later), Charlie explained this to the club.

Jerry had been on 7 space flights (a record). However to bring Jerry here, GLAAC needs to reimburse NASA for the cost, and GLAAC wanted to have the four big astronomy clubs as well as Rider's Hobby Shop to each contribute money for this purpose. They suggested the Lowbrows contribute \$250. Charlie asked if the club would approve this expense.

D. C. Moons asked if we had any plan on how money would be spent over the next few years, as we would need to have money to recoat the mirror eventually.

3. Treasurer Mike Garrahan

To answer this concern, Mike Garrahan said that after removing the \$52, there was \$2541 in the treasury.

Also *Sky and Telescope* had raised their subscription rates. It will now cost \$32.95 for Lowbrows to get a *Sky and Telescope* subscription through the club.

4. Continue discussion of \$250

After some more discussion, the proposal to give \$250 to GLAAC passed.

5. Webmaster Dave Snyder

At the last meeting the club was asked to select a 16x16 pixel logo to be used on the club web site. The club decided to go with a yellow L on a blue background. Dave Snyder mentioned that we are now using a logo made from the Mike Garrahan's version (a reduced version of the blue and yellow club logo) with a yellow "L" added.

Minutes of club meetings are now stored in the private section of the club web site.

6. Vice President Bernard Friberg

Bernard proposed that the next club meeting be a collage. In the past some club meetings have been collages. Typically a group of club members (perhaps five or so) would each talk on a subject for a short period of time (say 10-20 minutes or so). Sometimes the subjects would all be different aspects of the same topic, other times the talks would be on unrelated topics.

Club members that want to give a talk should contact Bernard.

7. Observatory Directory Mike Radwick

Mike Radwick mentioned there were a number of upcoming events: The July 26 open house at Peach Mountain, the Perseid Meteor shower August 13, the Black Forest Star Party, Kensington "Astronomy at the Beach" (September 5-6), Island Lake Star Party (October 4). There was some discussion if the club should do anything for the Perseid Meteor shower.

8. Paul Walkowski

Paul Walkowski described the Kensington "Astronomy at the Beach" for the benefit of club members who hadn't been there.

9. John Kirchhoff

John Kirchhoff started his "goodies show." He showed us some assorted Celestron binoculars that ranged from 10x50's to a 25x100. There were assorted eyepieces (including a Televue 41mm Panoptic), a spanish language planisphere, some astronomy books, an observing plate for Meade telescopes, a focus kit for Meade telescopes, some filters. He also had three telescopes, a Meade LXD55 EMC (f/9 refractor), a Mead LX200 GPS (10 inch reflector) and a Orion Starblast Altazimuth Reflecting Tabletop Telescope (4 1/2", f/4).

With the exception of the telescopes, each item was passed around for club members to look at.

10. Michael Fisher

Michael Fisher (who was a customer of John Kirchhoff) brought his own personal Celestron C14 for the club to look at.

11. At this point the meeting ajourned, and club members proceeded to look at some of the toys John had brought.
12. A few club members had brought their own telescopes. As it got dark, people looked through the telescopes. It was quite clear and there was less sky glow in the south than was typical. Club members who stayed saw an Iridium flare and around 12:30 or so, Mars was just high enough to be seen above the tree line. (John had said he needed to leave at midnight, but was kind enough to stay around so the telescopes he brought could be used). A few telescopes were pointed at Mars allowing some comparisons between scopes.
13. (Photographs were taken at this meeting).

UNIVERSITY LOWBROW ASTRONOMERS

MINUTES-OFFICER'S MEETING AUG. 7, 2003

The Officer's meeting convened at Old Country Buffet in Ann Arbor at 7:30 PM. In attendance were Charles Nielsen, Dave Snyder, Jim Wadsworth, Bernard Friberg, Jim Forrester, Doug Warshow, Mike Garrahan, and Mike Radwick.

1. We considered the pressure situation coming up Aug. 29, 30 with events scheduled and a large part of our traditional open house crew leaving for Black Forest Star Party. We decided a bigger situation was eating, so we dispatched for the grub.
2. When we returned we decided that there was little we could do about the event schedule other than make a strong and repeated appeal to the membership to come out and bring scopes, and/or display items that we can use in the event of poor skies.
3. It was decided that the President (Charlie Nielsen) would contact John Kirchhoff regarding the Kensington Star Party to determine what we may need to do to prepare and/or help.
4. We discussed the idea again of re-deploying the donation box at open houses. The Observatory Director (Mike Radwick) said he knew of its location and would contact George Latimer to get his opinion/approval of its use.
5. We ate more food.
6. VP Jim Forrester reported that he learned the upcoming auction by the UofM Transplant Center would occur on Sept. 20, 2003. He had no further information at this time since our contact has not responded to him recently.
7. Treasurer Mike Garrahan said he could prepare his semi-annual report for presentation at a meeting in Sept. or October. We decided to run the audit on the books as required by our by-laws at an Officer's meeting around that same time.
8. Treasurer Mike Garrahan also presented some documentation verifying that the club was legally registered several years ago.
9. More Food (some participants moved on to desert).
10. We decided that we needed to keep in mind the upcoming schedule for 2004. Do we schedule some member only events and/or beginner's nights? We considered that we should only make the schedule out perhaps 3 months in advance so that we can have some flexibility.
11. After some discussion about the club's 17" Coulter DOB, we decided to expedite repairs and some means of easier transport. We would then see how much we actually use it before any further discussions. We have received a couple of offers to buy or trade for it.
12. We got bounced out of the restaurant because they were closing at about 9:15 PM.
13. Outside the doors we had a brief discussion of an idea for a meeting topic to bring in homemade projects. There was also some discussion of the possibility of forming a committee to try to write A State wide light ordinance. President Charlie Nielsen is awaiting a response to this idea from Senator Liz Brater.
14. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 PM.

Written Aug. 26, 2003 by Charlie Nielsen

Notes for August 2003

Starting at 4:10PM August 14, 2003 (a Thursday), there was a power failure that over the next 30 minutes affected parts of Ontario, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The next day was August 15. By this time power had been restored in some but not all areas. There was a club meeting that evening. Webmaster Dave Snyder and Treasurer Mike Garrahan talked over the phone. Neither of them could reach President Charlie Nielsen. They didn't know if the Dennison Building (where the meeting was scheduled to be held) had power. They also suspected many club members didn't have power. Dave and Mike decided to cancel the club meeting.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes--October 3,2003

Officers present--President Charlie Nielsen, Treasurer Mike Garrahan, Observatory Director Mike Radwick, Web Master Dave Snyder and Vice-Presidents Bernard Friberg, Jim Wadsworth and Jim Forrester.

O.D. Mike Radwick reported the coating on the 24 inch telescope is deteriorating. A touch with a q-tip picked off the coating. Bernard Friberg reports Clausing is more than willing to work with us to rectify the situation. They will ship us a piece of test glass with a new all aluminum coating with their own protective coating for us to place in the observatory to see how it holds up. The officers agreed it was a bad idea to remove the mirror with winter approaching, so taking a piece of test glass seemed a reasonable approach. The question for the members is: Do we want to continue to work with Clausing, given the major time and effort involved in removing/re-installing the mirror and transporting it back and forth to Chicago? Or; Do we want to abandon our investment with Clausing and approach another company?

Meeting Schedule:

- October--Assemble after the Cosmic Origins lecture in Angel Hall
- November--Back in Dennison--Presentation on August's trip to the Black Forest Star Party
- December--Mini-presentations on various astronomical software

McMath- Hulbert Observatory at Lake Angelus--John Causland's recent email about this facility near Pontiac, the original home of our 24 inch McMath Telescope, was very interesting. The officers feel a club outing may be of interest some Sunday, possibly yet this fall. Charlie Nielsen agreed to follow up on this idea.

Transplant Center--A night on Peach Mountain with the Lowbrows went at auction for \$650. Jim Forrester will contact the high bidder about scheduling the event.

Open House Parking--The Observatory Committee is responsible for recruiting/drafting members to direct parking and assisting guests in finding their way down the hill. Jim Wadsworth has agreed to assume this duty at October's open houses.

Communications Committee--Jim Wadsworth displayed a sample brochure the officers (with minor changes) agreed to produce. Also, a business card with contact information will be produced to distribute at open houses. These items are versions of items produced by the club in the past, so they should be recognizable to many of the members.

The October 18 Open House will entertain more Cub Scouts. They will be at the Hill an hour (maybe a little more) before the usual starting time. Members arriving early as well would be of welcome assistance.

October 12 is Great Space Adventures Day on North Campus, 12-5pm. There will be a Lowbrow table and help greeting the public is needed.

The Observatory Committee needs more members as health problems have led one member to resign. Please contact Mike Radwick to express your interest.

Mike Garrahan distributed a member phone/email list. Thank you Mike.

2004 Open House schedule--Jan 17 and 24. Feb. 21 and 28. March 13 and 20.

Many members have expressed interest in Members only nights so Feb. 14 will be for Lowbrows and guests only. The gate will be left open for members of the public who may straggle by as the 14th would, in the past, have been a public open house. This is an experiment the officers wish to see in action before scheduling the rest of the 2004 Peach Mountain events. If, as is often the case, February is too cloudy or too cold or too both, a schedule for the second quarter will be announced, rather than for the entire remainder of the year.

Submitted respectfully, Jim Forrester

University Lowbrow Astronomers -- Membership Meeting Minutes -- October 18, 2003

- President Charlie Nielsen called the meeting to order at 8:56PM. by welcoming new members and guests.
- The 2004 Open House schedule was briefly discussed with no objections raised to the suggestion of the officers for an experimental schedule for the first three months of 2004. [See Officers Meeting 10/3/2003.]
- Our next two meetings will be at Dennison with a presentation from members who trekked to the Black Forest Star Party at the Nov. meeting and a series of short demonstrations of various astronomy software programs in Dec.
- The McMath-Hulbert Observatory field trip is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, Nov.2. We will meet at noon at the Park-and-Ride lot near Green and Plymouth roads to caravan/carpool to Pontiac.
- The open house brochure was passed among the members for comment and Jim Wadsworth is preparing a formal draft.
- The condition of the 24" mirror was discussed. The question of going back to Clausing was debated with a final decision tabled until spring. Clausing will send us some test pieces for us to observe over the winter. John Causland has sent his 18" mirror back for coat number three, so hopefully his experience will help inform our decision.
- Treasurer Mike Garrahan reported a balance of \$2391 in the club account minus five months of newsletter expenses for which he has no receipts. Our new bylaws contain language penalizing members tardy in remitting receipts (you don't get paid). The Assistant Newsletter Editor promised speedy rectification of the matter (he wants to get paid). Mike also announced our membership has swelled to 112 Lowbrows! Charlie Nielsen believes this to be a record high.
- Web Master Dave Snyder reported continuing club email problems. Kurt Hillig reported this was likely part of the problem the overall University system was having with outside email and spam. Various experiments are being done to devise a fix for our difficulties, some of which may have already reached the members.
- The next open house is Oct.25 with some boy scouts expected early on. Feel free to come early and help out. We go to standard time Sun AM, so we can all observe an extra hour! Nov.8 is the next lunar eclipse. It's an early one. If the moon will be above the trees, the hill will be open to the public. Stay tuned. And finally we said phooey to the Leonids and no public event will be held this year.

Submitted respectfully, Jim Forrester

University Lowbrow Astronomers--Club Meeting Minutes for November 21, 2003.

Submitted by Douglas Warshow

After a fun talk about the Black Forest Star Party, Pres. Charlie informed the club about the rapid deterioration of the McMath mirror, and that the club should wait before taking any preventative action until we see what becomes of John Causland's newly-recoated mirror.

Charlie also reminded the club that there will be a new open house schedule starting in January (which will also include some "members-only" nights).

Additionally, Riders Hobby Shop in Livonia will be hosting a swap meet on January 25th from 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM. The question arose (as yet unanswered) as to whether the Lowbrows should run a table at the event. (Cost is \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door.)

Charlie advised people to visit the McMath-Hulbert telescope site. A second may be planned...

Jim Forrester had nothing new to report.

Dave Snyder reported that the website is running at 1 gigabyte/month.

Mike Garrahan said that the club treasury has \$2400 in it (though he still has to meet with the newsletter editors) and the current membership is 109 people. The 2004 calendars will be ordered soon.

Mark Deprest gave the club some recent information on some upcoming comets.

Doug Warshow mentioned that several potential speakers have been approached, but no definite dates have been set. He will also try contacting Fred Schebor and the astronomy graduate students.

Jim Wadsworth has completed the draft of the open-house rules of etiquette and they are now on the website. (Feedback from club members is desired.) The final brochure will be printed after the next officers' meeting.

Paul Walkowski said that GLAAC is trying to get Caroline Shoemaker to appear at the May event. The backup speaker is Jack Horkheimer.

Membership Meeting Report: (12/19/2003)

(Minutes taken by Doug Warshow)

Charlie Nielsen informed the membership that his political contact, State Senator Liz Brater, found a previously written statewide lighting ordinance proposal. It could be brought up to date and perhaps be resubmitted to Lansing.

Additionally, Riders Hobby Shop (Livonia) will be hosting a Swap Meet on Sunday January 25th from 8:00AM to 3:00 PM. We will rent a table for \$12.00 and charge each person who wants to sell something an extra \$1.00.

John Causland is going to contact Mark Deprest and pick up a laminated brochure/sign for the club.

There then followed two brief talks. First John Causland spoke about his new binocular telescope attachment. Next, Mike Radwick gave a demo of the Astroplanner program.

Officer's Meeting Report: (12/19/2003)

Attending: Charlie Nielson, Mike Radwick, Mike Garrahan, Doug Warshow.

(Minutes taken by Doug Warshow)

The officers present examined the Treasurer's ledger. All seems to be in order.

No further topics were discussed.