



RVAS

Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society



News About Amateur Astronomy
In Southwestern Virginia
<http://www.roavas.org>

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July 2006

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

By Mike Overacker - RVAS President

Hello RVAS members. I am Mike Overacker and I have been elected to take over the reins of the RVAS from Katherine Hix. First of all, I would like to thank Katherine for doing such a great job as RVAS President. She handled the job extremely well, even taking into account the amount of support she received during her tenure. She expended a huge amount of her time and energy on this club. More than most people will know, and more than most members of this club would be willing to do for the RVAS. Thank you, Katherine, for all the time, energy, and pure willpower that you gave to the RVAS. You have taught me a lot about the club, and I will try to make you proud as your successor.

Second, I would like the membership to know a little more about me, so you all might have a better idea of who I am, and why I do what I do. I was a member of the Roanoke Astronomy Club (RAC) back around 1974 and 1975. I was talked into joining by my friends Bill Knapp, Gilmer Wilhelm, and Pat Hammond. Back then, there were only 20 members, and we met in the downtown Roanoke Public Library. I have always had a love for astronomy, but I came from a large, working class family. I

never had the money for a good telescope, so I made do with my Sears 60MM refractor on an EQ mount. Soon, work pulled me away from the club, but I rejoined in the summer of 2003, and the rest, most of you know about.

I am also President of the Roanoke Frisbee Disc Association (RFDA), a club that I formed back in 1977. I have been president of the RFDA since the club was formed. The RFDA has been involved in raising money for charities in the area, as well as promoting Frisbee Disc and disc sports. The RFDA is responsible for the Fishburn Park Disc Golf Course in Fishburn Park on Brambleton Ave.. I, and several other RFDA members, designed that course, then proceeded to raise private funds to buy the equipment. RFDA members then installed the equipment. The whole original project did not cost the city one cent. The RFDA did it all. I spent a short time on tour with the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA), as well as being involved with the international organization of the Ultimate Players Association (UPA). I have been a Certified Rules Official for the PDGA for many years. I attained World Class Master level of freestyle Frisbee, and spent many Labor Days on the mall in Washington DC as a Frisbee Instructor for the International Frisbee Association

(IFA) and Wham-O.

I was recently Secretary/Treasurer of the Star City Area Rocketry Enthusiasts (SCARE), but have since given up that position upon taking on the Vice President position of the RVAS. I have been an avid rocketry enthusiast since the late 1960's.

I have been a professional photographer since 1975. I formed my company, Decent Exposure Photographics in 1979, and it is still in operation today. I was a professional firefighter for the Roanoke Fire Department from 1982 to 2006. I retired from the fire department on July 1, 2006. My many interests include building and playing guitars. I also play keyboards, bass, and drums. I write and record my own music in a 32-track digital recording studio that I own and operate. I am a network and computer consultant for several major companies, and I run and maintain many websites for local companies, individuals, and organizations. I do more than this, but I think I have made my point.

I am a doer. I am not very comfortable with the "status quo". I like to see things moving in some sort of direction. It may be my direction, it may be someone else's direction, but I like to see movement. I am very much a
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MYSTERY OBJECT

This deep sky object might easily slip on a finger.

Send your best guess to Dave Thomas, our Mystery Object Columnist, at

thomasde-ka8inl@worldnet.att.net

*** IMPORTANT - DUES AND SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE ***

It's renewal time for RVAS memberships, most of which expire on June 30, 2005. If your membership expires at another time, you'll receive a special notice. If you want to know now when your membership expires, call **Jeff Suhr at 563-0079**. Membership categories are:

INDIVIDUAL (\$20.00 per year) - RVAS and Astronomical League membership for you.

FAMILY (\$25.00 per year) - RVAS and Astronomical League membership for you and your family.

STUDENT (\$10.00 per year) -RVAS and Astronomical League membership for a full-time student.

Make checks payable to "RVAS," and forward to: **Jeff Suhr, RVAS Treasurer, 5827 Santa Anita Terrace, Roanoke, VA 24012.**

MAGAZINES: Members may subscribe to *Astronomy* (\$34.00) and/or *Sky & Telescope* (\$32.95) at the indicated substantial club discount rates. Subscriptions are sent to the publishers each April 15th, August 15th and December 15th. Renewal payments should be submitted by whichever of these dates is at least 4 months prior to the expiration of your magazine(s). Orders may be added to dues payments, or submitted separately.

ASTRO-QUIZ

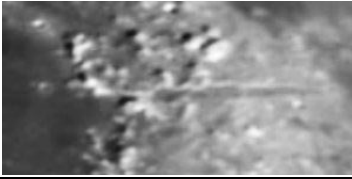
Where would you look in the Solar System in order to find Fear and Panic??

Answer to Last Month's Astro-Quiz: Last month we asked what constellations the Sun and Moon will be found in at Full Moon in July. Astronomical references indicate that full Moon occurs at 23:03 EDT on July 10th, which is also 3:03 Universal Time (UT) on the 11th, the time at the Prime Meridian at Greenwich, England. At full Moon, the Moon and Sun are opposite each other in the sky. We are located at nearly 80 degrees west longitude, so opposite us on the earth is 100 degrees east longitude. This is 7 hours later on the 11th than the time at Greenwich, or 10:03 UT on the 11th. Inputting these times, dates and longitudes into appropriate astronomy software will show that the Sun is in Gemini and the Moon is in Sagittarius.

The Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society is a membership organization of amateur astronomers dedicated to the pursuit of observational and photographic activities. Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. the third Monday of each month at Center in the Square in downtown Roanoke, Virginia. Meetings are open to the public. Observing sessions are held one or two weekends a month at a dark-sky site. Yearly individual dues are \$20.00. Family membership is \$25.00; student membership is \$10.00. For information, call the RVAS Message Line at 540-774-5651. Articles, quotes, etc. published in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the RVAS, its editor, officers, or individual members.

RVAS web page: <http://www.roavas.org>

Officers/Executive Committee: **Mike Overacker**, President / Newsletter Editor (776-3092); **Steve Manuel**, Vice President (890-3883); **Mark Hodges**, Secretary (774-5039); **Jeff Suhr**, Treasurer / Membership Coordinator (563-0079); **Bruce Jones**, Executive Committee Member-At-Large (774-3844); **Katherine Hix**, Immediate Past President (334-2443); **Paul Caffrey**, Past President (345-2847); **Dave Godman**, New Member Coordinator (774-3337); **John Goss** and **Genevieve Goss**, Outreach Coordinators (966-4606); **Frank Baratta**, Public Viewing Coordinator (774-5651); **Roger Pommerenke**, Webmaster (774-5823)



LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY OBJECT

Vallis Alpes, Latin for Alpine Valley, was the mystery object for the month of June. This lunar valley runs through the center of the Alpine Mountain Range southeast of the crater Plato.

The valley is about 130 KM long and 20 KM wide. The walls of the valley are 2000 meters deep. The floor is covered with lava and a small rille runs down the center of the valley.

Like most other points on the lunar surface it is best viewed at the partial phases and in this case during the first quarter and gibbous phases.

THE LOCAL GROUP

By Genevieve Goss

Congratulations to the newly-elected RVAS team! The Local Group looks forward to exciting events from this new "crop" of officers.

The summer solstice is not long past and the Roanoke Valley's weather has dished up some humid summer days already. Perhaps you are ready to kick back and relax in AC, but you'd still like to keep tuned to the latest in amateur astronomy. One way might be to catch a webcast or podcast. Here are some links to connect you with some very popular ones (some more scientific than others!):

<http://www.gb.nrao.edu/epo/podcasts.shtml>

<http://astronomy.libsyn.com/>

<http://www.podcast.net/tag/astronomy>

<http://slackerastronomy.org/wordpress/index.php>

Although a few members of the Local Group prefer to believe otherwise, a number are approaching an age when averted vision may be helpful (and not just when looking in a mirror!). By looking to one side of an object while observing, your eye uses the most efficient portion of the retina. You may experience a gain of several magnitudes over your direct vision! This works because there are more rods slightly off the optical axis of our eyes. The effect of this is not insignificant. It might mean the difference between detecting (or not) many stars and most details in deep sky objects. In amateur astronomy, averted vision can become a skill. Experiment with it these warm summer nights and it will become easy. Still want to fool your vision? Try the optical effects of viewing a Spanish castle at: http://www.johnsadowski.com/big_spanish_castle.html

The Local Group was represented at the Green Bank WV Star Quest by VP-elect Steve Manuel (with wife Barbara) and John Goss the weekend of June 24 which also offered the annual meeting of MERAL (the Mid-East Region of the Astronomical League). If you hurry, you can still catch AIcon Expo in Arlington, TX, on August 4-5. †

JUNE RVAS MEETING NOTES

By Mark Hodges - RVAS Secretary

There were 26 members present in the Planetarium.

Katherine opened the meeting. Lynn gave his last Treasurers report, he is retiring from the office of Treasurer after 16 years. After Lynn finished his report Katherine and several of the clubs past presidents awarded Lynn a mug and a gift certificate thanking him for his 16 years as club treasurer.

Observing reports,
Mike Good shared the sky

with for some of the kids in his neighborhood.

John Goss had an observing session with a group of scouts.

Mark Hodges reported on observing and imaging at Cahas Friday, June 16, 2006.

And Mike Overacker reported on observing at Cahas Sat. the 17th with Franks Parks and Rec. group. Mike Good reported that the Apple Ridge grant came through, more on that later.

With no objections the new club

officers were named since there were no opposing candidates.

Your new officers for 2006-2008 are,
Bruce Jones - Member at Large

Jeff Suhr - Treasurer

Mark Hodges - Secretary

Steve Manuel - Vice President

Mike Overacker - President

The evenings program was "movie night" with popcorn and drinks provided by the club (Thanks Mike and Katherine) and Mark presented the movie titled "Supermassive Black Holes" . †

WHO IS VISITING ROAVAS.ORG

By Roger Pommerenke - Webmaster

On May 30th someone in China sent an unsolicited email to our website that was automatically forwarded to me

(Roger Pommerenke, temp webmaster until this fall).

The email asks if our "esteemed company" (roavas.org) would like to purchase LEDs from a Chinese factory. OK, this has little to do with our astronomy hobby. But, hey. I think some of you may find this interesting.

A long time ago, Mike Good wrote an article about using LEDs as a car dome light that Mahesh Tailor published when he was webmaster. You can read the article at <http://www.roavas.org/tipsNthings/domelight.htm>

Now I would like to believe that

someone in China is reading our webpage. But it is more probable that a Chinese 'robot' crawled through zillions of webpages looking for references to LEDs.

This got me thinking. "Who visits

our web page?" Well, in May our web site got 9198 'hits' from users in the USA and 1 hit from China. Hopefully you will find the table reprinted below interesting (and readable). If so, I will publish more web-stats in the future.

Countries visiting roavas.org

Countries	Hits	Bandwidth
<i>United States</i>	9198	92.60 MB
<i>Germany</i>	72	547.62 KB
<i>Unknown</i>	60	637.09 KB
<i>Netherlands</i>	104	1.08 MB
<i>European Union</i>	3	48.27 KB
<i>Australia</i>	2	51.21 KB
<i>Great Britain</i>	3	36.27 KB
<i>Italy</i>	1	25.61 KB
<i>China</i>	1	2.65 KB
<i>Greece</i>	1	25.61 KB
<i>Spain</i>	1	25.61 KB
<i>Canada</i>	1	299.84 KB

THINGS RVAS MEMBERS MIGHT WANT TO DO THIS MONTH

1. Attend the RVAS July meeting on Monday, July 17, 2006. This will be a great learning opportunity for all club members. Isn't that why you joined the RVAS?
2. Let the club know what you would like to know more about involving Astronomy. Also, areas that you might have the sufficient knowledge to help others. Write an article for the Newsletter, something that every member of this club should do. More members involved means a better club. Send it to me at : mike@overacker.com
3. Do some observing. Preferably, do some observing with some other club members. The weather is getting warmer, so you need to shake off the winter blahs and get out under the stars. The majority of club members have never been seen at RVAS programs, or out observing with other club members. Why not start now?
4. Volunteer to help with club activities. A large part of the activity and outreach of the RVAS is being done by a few people. This is not fair to those few, or the club. It makes no difference how much, or how little, you know. What counts is that you are willing to be a part of the RVAS. Remember, the RVAS is here to promote astronomy, the club, and to have fun. You can't have fun if you don't show up.

LEGACY

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believer in club participation. Any club is better when more people are involved. It gives variety and purpose to the membership. I also do not believe that any one member is more important than anyone else. Longtime members should receive the respect due them for their commitment to the club, but they are no more important to the club than a new member. New members bring new outlooks, life, and ideas to the club. They are the legacy of the club. I am a huge supporter of outreach, and through outreach, the RVAS will entice new members to join and be involved. It will improve our standing in the community, and increase the visibility of the group and the public awareness of issues that threaten our passion, such as light pollution.

I am aware that there are members

of this club that do not want to be involved. That is their choice. Some people do not like the social aspects of a club, or simply prefer to observe by themselves, but want to financially support the club. I feel that it is their right to do so. However, it is important for all members to realize that the club will take a direction that is dictated by the active members of the club, and although the rights and voices of non-active members will be protected, the club must take direction from the active membership. I would love to see every member of the RVAS attend at least one meeting a year, not including the picnic and socials. I think every member of the RVAS has something to contribute to the club, and I would love to see that happen in the next two years. I also feel it is the responsibility of the membership to bring new members to the club. I do not know

if this issue has been addressed before, but the club must grow with new membership, including student members and women. Our club is, basically, an older group of men. It does not have to be this way. The RVAS would benefit greatly from younger and female membership. I would like to see this happen as well in the next two years.

I can see great things happening in the RVAS in the years to come. However, they will not happen without the help and support of the RVAS membership. This is YOUR club. I am only here to help keep things running smoothly and moving along. I need to hear your ideas and your suggestions. Please feel free to contact me about the RVAS and our ongoing quest to make the RVAS bigger, better, and more fun than it ever has been before. I know we can do it. I need your help to start us on the road to greatness. ✦

UPCOMING EVENTS

ALCON EXPO 2006 - ARLINGTON, TX - AUGUST 4-5, 2006



ALCON is the annual convention of the Astronomical League. This year it is in Arlington Texas, on the beautiful campus of the University of Texas at Arlington, near Dallas. It is easy to get flights to the convention, and lodging is reasonable as well. This is a good way to show your support for the AL.

Further information is available at <http://www.alconexpo.com>

ALMOST HEAVEN STAR PARTY - SPRUCE KNOB, WV - AUGUST 24-27, 2006

NOVAC is pleased to announce that we will be holding our second annual Star Party at Spruce Knob, West Virginia on August 24 - 27, 2006. The event will be held at The Mountain Institute in one of the darkest areas on the east coast at an elevation of about 4200 feet. Please check the web site for more information. We will be adding details over the next few weeks. <http://www.novac.com/AHSP/index.php>

Registration will open on February 15, 2006 and it can be done completely on-line. If you have questions, send an email to AHSP@NOVAC.COM.

VAAS 2006 - RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE - ASHLAND, VA - SEPTEMBER 30, 2006

RVAS is happy to announce that the Richmond Astronomical Society (RAS) is the host club for the Annual Convention of the Virginia Association of Astronomical Societies (VAAS). This years convention will be held at Randolph-Macon College on Saturday, September 30th, 2006. Speakers are being acquired at this time and will be listed in the RVAS newsletter as the details become available. The Richmond club had good attendance at our event in 2005, and I hope that the RVAS members will attend their event as well.

This is a "Must Attend" event for any astronomy enthusiast.

Society Events and Activities for July 2006

MONTHLY MEETING: Monday, July 17th, 7:30 p.m. fifth floor meeting room, Center in the Square, downtown Roanoke. The meeting program will be "Building Dobsonian Telescopes". RVAS President, Mike Overacker, will discuss Dobsonian telescopes and tricks to help you build your own.

"MEMBERS ONLY" WEEKEND OBSERVING SESSIONS: Unless otherwise noted, observing sessions are held at Cahas Mountain Overlook, milepost 139 on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Friday and Saturday, 21st and 22nd. Sunset is at 8:36 p.m. Astronomical twilight ends at 10:23 p.m. The Moon sets at 6:15 and 7:13 p.m., respectively.

Friday and Saturday, 28th and 29th. Sunset is at 8:31 p.m. Astronomical twilight ends at 10:14 p.m. The Moon sets at 10:30 and 10:50 p.m., respectively.

August Sessions: 18th and 19th; 25th and 26th.

FRANKLIN CO. PARKS DEPT./RVAS PUBLIC STARGAZE: Next session: August 26th, 8:30 p.m.

ROANOKE CITY PARKS DEPT./RVAS PUBLIC STARGAZE: Saturday, July 22nd, 9:15 p.m., Cahas Overlook, milepost 139, Blue Ridge Parkway. For City, County and other area residents; RVAS members welcome to participate. Call the RVAS Message Line, 540-774-5651, for information. (Next session: August 19th, 8:45 p.m., Cahas Overlook.)

RVAS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING: To be announced.

Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society
3578 Berry Hill Drive
Roanoke, VA 24018