

The OBSERVER

The Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc.

September 2006 Volume 31, Number 9



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MINUTES OF THE TCAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING September 13, 2006

The Board meeting was called to order at 6:41 p.m. by President Dan Miller at Lewis, Yockey & Brown, Inc. in Bloomington. In attendance were Treasurer Duane Yockey, Secretary Carl Wenning, and member Lee Green. Absent were Board members William Carney, Brian Barling, and Neale Lehmkuhl. Dan distributed an agenda and the following points were addressed:

- No minutes were generated from the July Board meeting as the secretary was not present. Carl will attempt to reconstruct the minutes on the basis of the agenda and the recollections of Board members.

- Duane provided the August treasurer's report; it was approved without question.

- Carl put the Board on notice that he has twice communicated via e-mail to the NCRAL leadership the TCAA's commitment to host the 2010 meeting without receiving any form of acknowledgement.

- Mike Rogers has updated the TCAA's web site to make it much more visually appealing. Dan will generate membership cards consistent with the web site once it is completed.

- Carl has been working on updating the TCAA history, and has recently completed work surrounding the 1998-

2002 development of the Sugar Grove Observatory. Carl acknowledged the assistance of Sandy McNamara, Jean Memken, William Carney, and a few others who were able to provide recollections about specific details. He will soon begin working on the 1995-1998 and 2002-to-date time periods.

- The following individuals will host the remaining 2006 MOOS and POS, and Mike Rogers will disseminate promotional information to the media for the POS events:

MOOS:

September 23, Lee Green
October 21, Duane Yockey
November 18, Carl Wenning
December 16, Dan Miller

POS:

September 30, Carl W. and Dan M.
(Uranus and Neptune)
October 28, Duane Y. and Dan M.
(M31 – The Andromeda Galaxy)

- Rebecca Wenning will be stepping down as editor of *The Observer* with completion of the November issue. There are currently two volunteers to continue the work. Carl is willing to assemble the newsletter, but doesn't want to deal with printing or distribution. Duane's friend, Erin

TCAA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- September 23, Members-Only Observing Session at SGO, dusk-dawn
Coordinator: Lee Green
- September 24, Family Science Day (sponsored by Challenger Learning Center) at Illinois State University, Bone Student Center, 2:00 - 8:00 p.m.
- September 30, Public Observing Session at SGO, 7:15-9:15 p.m.
Coordinators: Carl Wenning and Dan Miller, "Uranus and Neptune"
- October 21
Autumn Celebration at SGNC, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Members-Only Observing Session at SGO, dusk-dawn
Coordinator: Duane Yockey

The Observer

Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

The Observer is a monthly publication of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization of amateur astronomers interested in studying astronomy and sharing their hobby with the public.

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21 Grandview Dr. must be
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309-454-4164 the end of
rwennin@ilstu.edu each month.

Membership Dues

Individual Adult/Family \$40
Full-time Student/Senior \$25

To join the TCAA, send your name, contact info, and dues payment to:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761

Estabrook, might be willing to help. Duane will pursue this.

•ISU Science Day, managed by the Challenger Learning Center, is Sunday, September 24th and the TCAA is committed to four displays that must run from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Bone Student Center on the ISU campus. Dan and Duane will complete the required paper work and fax the forms to the CLC. Dan will gather volunteers to host the TCAA components of this event which last year drew more than 1,000 visitors over the course of only three hours. The four displays with coordinators are:

- o Telescopes set up inside to explain how they work (Carl Wenning with material support from Dan Miller)
- o Outdoor viewing, weather permitting (Dan Miller)
- o Computer with astronomy software (Mike Rogers and Lee Green)
- o Display of astronomical materials (Dan and William Carney)

•It was agreed that the TCAA will, by popular demand, host a 3-night adult education program during January at Sugar Grove Nature Center. Last January's program was very successful, but deemed "too long" by Carl and Duane who presented it. Carl will focus only on the solar system, deep space, and telescopes in this new series. Carl will work out details about this non-profit course with Angela Smith at SGNC.

•It was agreed that the TCAA would participate in the Autumn Celebration at SGNC on Saturday, October 21st, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We will have an open house at SGO, and a display table to provide information and get people to visit the observatory. Last year's event had an attendance of some 3,000, with about 10% visiting the SGO. Carl will inform Angela Smith and pursue the possibility of the TCAA putting up a concession stand to sell "Swedish Pretzels" with the profits split between the TCAA and the SGNC.

•Attention was then turned to the possibility of purchasing a "telecompressor" for the 12-inch LX200 Meade telescope. This lens can compress the focal ratio from f/10 to f/7.5 or f/5.0 or f/3.3 depending upon the unit purchased. Carl will develop a recommendation based on recent eyepiece purchases and get back to the Board at the next meeting.

•There was a short discussion about t-shirts for the 2010 NCRAL meeting, but no decisions were made.

•The Annual Meeting will be either February 10th or 17th. Dan mentioned that there is a new astronomer at Millikin University who might serve as invited guest speaker. He'll check on this, and also speak with Jean Memken about hosting the event in Turner Hall on the ISU campus as in years past.

•The next Board meeting will be held on November 8th starting at 6:30 p.m. at LYB, Inc. in Bloomington.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carl J. Wenning, Secretary

SEPTEMBER OBSERVING SESSIONS

The September members-only observing session (MOOS) and public observing sessions (POS) are as follows:

MOOS – September 23rd, sunset 5:51 p.m., end of evening twilight 7:23 p.m. There are no detailed "plans" for this observing session. Come out to view with your own telescope, or feel free to look through telescopes brought by others. There are several "goto" telescopes of larger aperture that will guarantee a good "show."

POS – September 30th, 7:15 – 9:15 p.m., with sunset at 6:40 p.m. Uranus and Neptune are the featured subject matter



of the initial talk, but we probably will include Pluto in the presentation phase with its recent demotion from planet status to “dwarf planet” on August 24th by the I.A.U. Followed by a laser-mediated sky lecture.

All of the club’s regularly scheduled observing sessions are held on Saturday evenings with no “rain date.” For these events to be held, the sky must be reasonably clear. If you are uncertain about whether or not an observing session will be held, for a determination you may call either of the following 309-area-code cell phone numbers: 830-4085 (Carl) or 825-6454 (Michael).

AUGUST OBSERVING SESSIONS

Several club members traveled to Weldon Springs SRA just southeast of Clinton, IL, on August 11th to observe Perseid meteors. With the presence of a full moon, the number of meteors was greatly diminished. Meghana & Sameer Deshpande, Kent Ferguson, Carl Wenning, and Sheri Rodgers along with her sons Brent and Blake were members of this expedition. There was a limited amount of telescope viewing with a C8 telescope, mostly images of moon and the ring nebula. We observed from 10 p.m. to midnight, had great conversations, and made S’mores over a campfire. A few very bright meteors were observed, one leaving a trail for a short time. A photograph and story about the session appeared in the local newspaper the Sunday after the event.

While the sky didn’t cooperate on Saturday, August 19th, a good time was had by all at the TCAA’s potluck picnic. Nineteen club members and guests were in attendance. Gathering between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m., the grills were lit and cooking began shortly thereafter. Entrees featured things ranging from steaks to fish to hotdogs. A wide variety of potluck dishes was also present, mostly salads, but including barbecued chicken, baked beans, and assorted bagged treats and cookies.

Following the meal, members listened to a tribute about G. Weldon Schuette (reprinted here), followed by a moment of silence for all deceased members of the TCAA. Weldon, one of the greatest members the TCAA has ever had, had died

20 years earlier to the day. The event for the evening was a talk by Carl Wenning dealing with the Milky Way. The title of the talk was “The Milky Way: A Guide for the Perplexed.”

Following this comical presentation, members stood around picnic tables with lively banter, playing frisbee, or sitting around a small campfire. In attendance were the Miller (4), Rogers/Memken (5), and Rodgers (3) families, Duane Yockey, Brian Barling, Lee Green, Kent Ferguson, Carl and Rebecca Wenning, and guest Chrystian Vieyra. Thanks and a tip of the hat to Duane for bringing the drinks, and to Carl for setting up the grill.

On Sunday, August 20th, Lee Green, Brian Barling, and Carl Wenning held an impromptu members-only observing session at SGNC. Lee and Carl arrived just before sunset to set up their “goto” telescopes. Lee brought his C14 and Carl his new C11 telescope. Brian showed up at around 9 p.m., and quickly put his C8 to work finding Herschel objects.

The evening would prove to be “first light” for Carl’s telescope. He received the telescope the previous Friday, and had not had a chance to observe until Monday. Much of the time that evening was spent comparing images between the C14 and the C11. The light-gathering ability of the C14 was clearly evident. After an evening of viewing Jupiter and a host of Messier objects, Carl declared his CPC telescope “superb.” It provides perfect images and precise pointing, and is incredibly easy to use. Alignment takes much less time than with the SGO 12-inch Meade.

The dew was heavy that evening, but using a dew shield on the C14 to prevent dewing, and periodically aiming the C11 to the ground to evaporate dew was very helpful. While Carl departed the observing session at 10:30 p.m., Lee continued observing until 11:30 p.m., and Brian until much later still.

On Tuesday, August 22nd, Mike Miller hosted a welcome session for all students registered at Lincoln College in Normal. In addition to a cookout and music with a D.J., Lee Green and Carl Wenning entertained party goers with telescope viewing. Approximately 25 of the 75 to 100 students in attendance at the event took an abiding interest in our astronomical offerings. Unfortunately, due to the area lighting

and a bright sky, it was difficult to show much more than brighter celestial objects. Viewers were treated to sights of Jupiter, Neptune, and representative open and globular clusters, planetary nebulae, and binary stars. The observing session began at around 8:30 p.m. and continued to 10:00 p.m. Those participating in the observing session (including several LC faculty and staff) were greatly pleased by our offering, and have requested a return visit.

The August 26th POS featuring the Milky Way was clouded out and therefore cancelled.

G. WELDON SCHUETTE

Tribute to an Outstanding
Amateur Astronomer

Editor’s Note: The following tribute was first published in *The Observer* in 1986, shortly after the untimely and unexpected death of Weldon Schuette. It was written by Carl Wenning, a close personal friend and observing companion. It appears here in a slightly expanded format.

Weldon Schuette was born on January 17, 1917, on the family farm just northeast of Gibson City, Illinois. He was the second of two boys born to George and Ethel Scott Schuette. Weldon was named after his father George, but used his middle name throughout his adult life.

The interest in astronomy that Weldon had as a youth was piqued by his observations of a partial solar eclipse in 1932. He was then only fifteen years of age. Using exposed, fully developed black and white film, he observed the eclipse with fascination. Afterwards, he began studying star maps and constellations. His first star map was one he obtained in elementary school. On certain clear nights Weldon would lie in ditches along the road side to get a good view of the heavens and to avoid bothersome lights. From time to time he would startle passersby, emerging from the shadows of the ditch when they least expected it.

Purchase of a small mail order telescope was soon to follow. Weldon began to prepare star maps of his own for every hour of the night. He observed stars, planets and other items that he marked on his star maps. Undoubtedly, his interest in astronomy was only increased by reports of a grade school teacher who saw and talked glowingly about the 1910 appearance of Comet

Halley. Weldon longed to see spectacular objects in the sky and he was rewarded by the appearance of Nova Herculis in 1934.

A second nova entered Weldon's life while he was standing for reveille while in the Army on the morning of November 9, 1942. He observed a first-magnitude star in the constellation of Puppis just to the east of Canis Major. An observer in Argentina had observed the nova three hours earlier. Weldon was possibly the first person in the northern hemisphere, and the second person in the world, to recognize the nova for what it was. Weldon did not report the nova as he felt others certainly would have already noted it and, besides, it was hard to get word out from a military installation during the height of World War II.

Weldon was fond of reciting the story retold here in Sharon MacDonald's words, "I recall he was standing at attention during morning inspection, he couldn't react, say anything, or tell anyone, he just had to stand there and take it all in without exhibiting any emotion or response - those in charge likely would show little interest or understanding about what was happening, much less have a sense of humor about the struggles of an amateur astronomer in Weldon's position! I remember Weldon's smile and his laughing about the situation when he told us the story."

After completing his military tour in England, France, and Germany, and his hitch in the Army, Weldon returned home to the grassy prairies of Illinois. Taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, he went to the University of Illinois to study architecture. He graduated in 1950 with a degree in architectural engineering. During this time, according to Weldon's own words, he "lost interest in astronomy." This interest was to be rekindled in 1957 with the launch of Sputnik.

Weldon observed satellites because it was "something (he) could figure out. It was simple" for him. Upon coming across Sputnik predictions in the local papers from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, he noted that his own predictions were more accurate. He contacted the Smithsonian and provided better predictions. They asked him for his calculations and methodology.

His technique was simple. He developed an analog computer that consisted of a polar projection of the Earth and a clear, rotatable laminate upon which he drew

one orbital track of the satellite based upon a knowledge of the satellite's orbital inclination and period. The track had tick marks of time to indicate the location of the satellite in its orbit since its last south-to-north equator crossing. With a knowledge of the longitude of this crossing, he could rotate the laminate surface to indicate the ground track. With a knowledge of the time of the equator crossing, he could tell where the satellite would be at any point in time. When the satellite entered one of several "acquisition circles" for central Illinois, he knew the satellite would be visible and how high up and what direction in the sky to look for it. He used this process to predict the sightings of satellites for the next 30 years.

In 1960 the Twin City Amateur Astronomers formed under the able leadership of John and Bertha Kieviet. Weldon heard about the club through Pantagraph newspaper accounts while living in Gibson City, caring for his aging and sickly mother.

In 1961 Weldon joined the TCAA, regularly commuting from Gibson City for meetings and other club functions. This continued for three years until the death of his mother in 1964. At this time he moved to the Twin Cities after securing a job with Middleton and Associates as a draftsman where he was to remain for life.

That Weldon loved astronomy was evidenced by his numerous trips around the country to observe solar eclipses and to watch the space program develop. He traveled to Florida and the Gaspe Peninsula of eastern Canada to view total solar eclipses. He witnessed the one occurring in northern Florida, but it occurred under cover of clouds. Though he did not directly observe the eclipse, he was deeply impressed by the "sudden darkness" surrounding the event. Numerous trips were also made to Florida to see Apollo moon launches and shuttle launches.

The most beloved part of sky watching for Weldon was that of satellite observation. He saw the Sputnik I rocket, Sputnik II and III and their rockets, Echo I (which he sighted over 1,000 times), Echo II, Pageos, Skylab, Salyuts 6 and 7, space shuttles, and the MIR space station. According to Weldon's own estimate, he observed satellites over 2,500 times since his first sighting of Sputnik in 1957.

The club and its members were the object of love for Weldon. This we know because he spent so much time working on its behalf and participating in its activities. Only two times between 1970 and 1986 did he miss club meetings – the reason being trips to see space shots in Florida.

Weldon was an integral member of the family known as the Twin City Amateur Astronomers. He held every major elected office and was an officer without break from 1971 to his death in 1986. He served as Treasurer for many years. He re-instituted the club newsletter, *The Observer*, in 1975 and was editor until his untimely death. He never missed an issue, nor had one ever come out late.

For ten years he single handedly kept up the grounds of the club's Fissel Farm Observatory. After club co-founder John Kieviet passed away, Weldon always drove Bertha to meetings because she couldn't drive at night. That was Weldon, serving the TCAA and others in many ways, large and small, some of which I am sure we will never know. His dedicated work on behalf of the club was without comparison.

In February 1984 Weldon was granted lifelong honorary membership in the TCAA – a title that he truly deserved and relished. He was the first of the club to recover Comet Halley and the last to bid it farewell. Only in June 1986 did he complete an odyssey of many years by finishing his observations of all 110 Messier objects. He was to receive his Messier citation in September 1986 but, unfortunately, death intervened. Weldon suddenly and unexpectedly passed away on August 19, 1986 while at home, probably suffering either a stroke or a heart attack. Weldon was laid to rest on August 22nd in the Drummer Township Cemetery in Gibson City, Illinois. He was 69 years of age. Surviving him was a nephew, Stephen Schuette, of Clemson, S.C., and a niece, Judy Sharp, of Houston, Texas.

He was dearly loved and highly revered by his fellow club members. Honors were paid to him – honors that he justly deserved. The club saw fit to institute a special society – the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers – to honor one of their own in a way that the membership felt best exemplified the hard work and dedication, the prowess and knowledge of Weldon Schuette.

TCAA Treasurer's Report – August 2006

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2006 - \$ 1,564.56

Income

James Wall (Sen. Dues Renewal) -	\$ 25.00
Chris Franklin (Dues Renewal) -	\$ 40.00
Mike McAvoy (Dues Renewal) -	\$ 40.00
Prakash Muduli (Dues Renewal) -	\$ 40.00
Sheri Rodgers (Dues Renewal) -	\$ 40.00

Expenses

Rebecca Wenning (August Observer) -	\$ 26.30
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OPERATING FUND BALANCE – August 31, 2006 - \$ 1,723.26

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2006 - \$ 1,022.55

Income

None -	\$ 0.00
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Expenses

None -	\$ 0.00
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OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – August 31, 2006 - \$ 1,022.55

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – August 31, 2006 - \$ 2,745.81

Respectfully submitted,
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

Sugar Grove Observatory

Listing of Official Keyholders (Paid \$10 deposit/\$5 renewal)

Duane Yockey (April 2001, renewed through 2006)
Michael Rogers (August 2001, renewed through 2006)
William Carney (March 2002, renewed through 2006)
Carl Wenning (January 2004, renewed through 2006)
Brian Barling (February 2004, renewed through 2006)
Lenore Trainor (December 2004, renewed through 2005)
Kevin Brown (May 2005, renewed through 2006)
Sothilingam family (June 2005)
Christopher Franklin (July 2005, renewed through 2006)
Kal Kumar (renewed August 2005)





CHALLENGER LEARNING CENTER

at Prairie Aviation Museum • Bloomington, Illinois

presents:

Family Science Day
September 24, 2006
2:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Illionois State University
Bone Student Center

\$5/person at door, \$3/person in advance

Children 4 and under free



Dozens of interactive science exhibits!

2:30 pm - ISU Planetarium Show

3:30 pm - Good Movies/Bad Science

4:30 pm - SPEAKER ASTRONAUT
RICK HIEB

5:30 pm - Good Movies/Bad Science

6:00 pm - NASA's New Space Suit!

7:00 pm - ISU Planetarium Show

The OBSERVER

Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

Rebecca Wenning, Editor
21 Grandview Drive
Normal, IL 61761-4071

Are Your Dues Due?

The Dues Blues?

If you see a check in the box above, it means your dues are due. To retain membership, please send your dues renewal to our esteemed Treasurer:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761