



SVAS OBSERVER

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SACRAMENTO VALLEY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDED IN 1945

President's Perspective

Hi, everybody! I'm Liam McDaid, the new president of the SVAS. This is my first message here, because now that it's summer I'm close to being caught-up before the end of the century. I will come back to this shortly, but let me tell you about what's going on now.

StarBQ is likely over by the time you read this, it was July 18 & 19. So far, Bob Lea has done a major solid in helping to organize it and pat him on the back the next time you see him. Our (probable) major speaker of the year was Geoff Marcy who spoke at Mariposa Hall, Rm 1000 at CSUS at 8pm. We had almost three hundred people show up for a solar viewing event on the weekend of June 27. In spite of record breaking temperatures, many folks who came to the Discovery Museum got to see the Sun. Unfortunately, it was quiet but look at the bright side – a quiet Sun gives us a cooler Earth which can't be bad with Global Warming kicking into high gear. We also had a First Light event on 6/27. We plan a collimation workshop for sometime in August so keep looking out for info at SVAS.ORG.

Many of you may not have access to this information. I've received many (more than ten) complaints about the website and Margaret Minnick has graciously agreed to help with the transition until we find a new webmaster. I agree that our website was not user friendly and had many more gadgets than needed. We will try to fix that.

A bigger issue is the lack of energy from all of us (myself included). I know the economy is scaring the crap out of everyone and an astronomy club/society isn't a priority in such times. When I started being asked questions about what could be done

with the SVAS, I got depressingly similar questions from too many people. There is an assumption that many have that if something needs to be done, the president will do it, or the Board will do it.

But that's not how it works.

We are a volunteer organization, and that includes the Board and myself. No one gets paid to serve here. There are many things that need to be done, theoretically I could do many of them but I shan't for two reasons: 1). Like you, I have a life and my time is limited. If I end up doing (most) everything myself, it gets very old very quickly. Any of you who have run an event know what I mean. It also leads to burnout as many of our former Board members (or former members) can attest. 2). There's a more important reason for me (or the Board) not to do everything. I run an observatory as part of my job. In spite of my best efforts, I sometimes think of it as "my" observatory. I sometimes catch myself before it gets out of my mouth, but the thought is there. But it really isn't "my" observatory, I just run it. This is a natural human feeling, but I don't want to start thinking of the SVAS as "my" organization. This only leads to trouble, as those with long memories know.

The SVAS is not "mine". It is yours. Truly, and it will be whatever all of you want it to be.

Enough pontificating. What are we planning? We may need a new home for the general meetings soon, but we may have one. More on that as the Board figures out what our next step is. There has been massive positive feedback on the idea of field trips. I'd like to have one going by September at the latest, perhaps to Lick Observatory. A number of folks at one meeting (fourteen) were interested in imaging, so perhaps we will set up projects to support that (if any imaging folks would like to step up?) Many of you would like to see Astr 101 make a comeback and I'll try

lining that up for the fall as well. I didn't say I didn't do anything, I'm just saying I'm not doing *everything*.

I'd like to give a shout out to Chuck Real who is our new Secretary, Kirk Alexander who is our treasurer (among other things) and Margaret Minnick who is our school star party coordinator. Thanks for stepping up and helping things to move along. Thanks also goes to Forrest Lockhart and Perry Porter for helping out in the role of secretary.

Do you want to participate? Can/will you help run an event? Do you have ideas for improving the SVAS? I find that it's better to make a suggestion to improve something beforehand rather than complain after anyone can do anything about it. Contact me at mcdaidl@scs.losrios.edu. Remember, if you don't help out, you can't complain when nothing happens.

Liam McDaid

SVAS Website
Our current website address
is www.svas.org

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Past President's Perspective

The following is the statement I included on my SVAS donation letter issued to those who had a need or desire to support the SVAS. With this letter, they could count the donation on the income tax return and reap more benefit from their donation. I also wanted all of you to understand how we originated and why. So, enjoy the history and remember we are here to serve the general public.

Astronomy, the oldest science, is concerned primarily with the observation and study of the universe beyond the Earth's atmosphere. Professional astronomers toil in large mountain top observatories while their counterparts pursue astronomy through relatively modest telescopes in backyards, out of the sheer spare time love and enjoyment of the subject, hence their designation, "amateur" astronomers. Professionals and amateurs alike can only marvel at the beauty and mystery of the magnificent starry realm above, which has intrigued mankind since the beginning.

It was over 64 years ago, March 5, 1945, a small band of amateur astronomers met in Room 205 at the Sacramento College (now Sacramento City College) to form a society of amateur astronomers. The founders of the new organization elected their first president. These men were accompanied by a number of other individuals who were instrumental in establishing this organization, which was named the Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society. About fifty persons who became charter members attended the initial meeting. A constitution was adopted and all resolutions were unanimously approved. Membership dues were originally one dollar per person per year. The newly founded Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society was destined for growth and longevity while serving to introduce many to astronomy and providing an interesting, stimulating and profitable context in which to share astronomy experiences.

The Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society (also called "S.V.A.S.") is an incorporated non-profit 501(c)(3) organization which functions as a community service oriented body with all active members solicited through and approved by its elected officers and board members. Its purpose is to promote astronomy in general

and society activities in particular while advancing the public's interest and education for K - 12 in Astronomy. Monthly "Star Parties" are held at the society's own lofty site high in the Sierra Nevada Mountains east of Sacramento. There, one can truly appreciate the night sky to the fullest via first hand observations of celestial objects through a variety of home made and commercially manufactured telescopes furnished by S.V.A.S. members.

In addition, many schools in the Sacramento Valley request the Society's assistance with their science - orientated events. Members with the purpose of displaying the night sky to the students, parents and their guests bring telescopes to the school. Many of the membership participate in Project ASTRO (Astronomers and Teachers as Partners in the Classroom), programs to pair fourth-grade through ninth-grade teachers with local amateur and professional astronomers. The astronomers visit classrooms, lead hands-on astronomical activities, assist with student projects, and organize evening "star parties" and other events. With the additional support of California State University Sacramento and their program SCATS (Schools and Colleges for Advancing the Teaching of Science), our mission is being realized every day. The mission is to reach the children of today who hold tomorrow's future in their hands and give them the tools to solve new scientific problems.

Beginning January 1, 1994, deductions will be allowed under section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code for any charitable donations valued at \$250 or more only with written substantiation provided by the charity. To help you comply with the new law we encourage you to keep this letter and receipt to verify your donation. Valuation of the property or donation is your (the donor's) responsibility. Please note that our records of donations are filed by date, so if you require further substantiation of your contribution, you must provide us with a specific date. We also recommend you attach an itemized list of your donations to this tax receipt.

There you have it. A little history and the reason we do what we do. Remember, although we are most made up of amateur astronomers, we are still considered the experts at any star party.

Walt Heiges

From the Editor:

Please contribute to the newsletter. Send your observations, memories and stories (along with any photos) to Chris Hulbe at chulbe@comcast.net. Use "SVAS newsletter article" as the subject line. Microsoft Word format is preferred.

Professor Scopé

Do you remember when I stated there are three important factors when purchasing real estate? We all know when choosing that new home or business site, you one to consider those three things – LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION! Well, when considering that new telescope purchase, you must also consider three very important factors that make that telescope all it can be – EYEPIECE! EYEPIECE! EYEPIECE! I am going to expand on this statement by saying – More money usually means better!

I have had or presently own several types of eyepieces and the amount they cost generally relates directly to their quality. I have purchased some for as little \$49.95 and I know a few folks who have spent over \$650.00 for a Nagler Ethos, which is a phenomenal eyepiece. Your budget will determine the types of eyepieces you can afford. I do not have the critical eye some people possess, so those subtler differences in quality sometimes escape my ability to discern small differences. I do notice those eyepieces offering wider fields do give you the sense that you are actually IN space. You have this feeling of being surrounded by that view. Older amateur astronomy handbooks (particularly those written by British authors) regale the reader with references to exotic eyepiece variations. Some, such as Hastings, Steineil and Tolles, are praised by planetary observers but are so rare that few amateurs will even encounter them.

As I mentioned before, there are a few to avoid. Huygenian and Ramsden are both cheap two-element designs of little value. By today's standards, they are junk, with fuzzy tunnel-vision views and little eye relief. They are usually supplied accessories for poor-quality telescopes. In general, avoid variable focal length eyepieces – while they sound good on paper, they are a compromise design. There is also war-surplus Erfles invented during World War II. The Erfle is a five-element, wide-angle design with a 60-degree apparent field. Ghost images from internal reflections make most models unsuitable for planetary observing, while astigmatism greatly distorts stars at the edge of the field. Older war-surplus models (often filling swap tables at star parties) and the new low-cost

Erfles have been surpassed in all respects by new modern wide-field designs.

Most amateurs possess a variety of eyepieces and the specific one that is selected for any given object depends on the seeing and the apparent size of the object. If you are starting out, a minimum of three eyepieces is recommended – the professor recommends a low power, medium power, and a high power eyepiece to start. As your interest in the hobby grows, you will probably want “gap filler” eyepieces. The actual power you obtain from an eyepiece is found by dividing the focal length of your telescope by the focal length of the eyepiece.

Objects like the double cluster or the Veil Nebula are example where the widest possible field is generally the most desirable attribute of an eyepiece. (Of course it needs to be sharp across the field.) For objects like these, you will want an eyepiece of about 40-50 mm and a large apparent field of view (the Nagler Ethos series has an incredible 100° apparent field of view). Plossals are also excellent wide field eyepieces and can deliver excellent views for much less money.

For objects like the Whirlpool nebula, you can definitely use higher power, but too much power may cause part of the object to be outside the field of view. Here a medium power, such as an 18-22 mm eyepiece is a good choice (but the specific “best” focal length depends on your scope and seeing conditions).

Planet observations are an example of where a high power eyepiece is desired to bring out the planetary detail. In this case, the field of view is not as important as the resolution, contrast, and eye relief. Contrast is often better with some of the simpler eyepieces. You may find a quality Orthoscopic eyepiece of 8 to 10 mm will deliver excellent images of the planets for a reasonable price.

I have decided to open this forum to everyone. I would like to have your input on your favorite eyepiece design or manufacturer. Tell me about the one special eyepiece you always go back to as the old standby; I will relate your experience to my readers. I will also take all this information to construct a suggested list of eyepieces to buy for specific budgets. So, send your opinions to my e-mail at ProfScope@aol.com and become part of the story.

Professor Scopé

From the Editor:

Please contribute to the newsletter. Send your observations, memories and stories (along with any photos) to Chris Hulbe at chulbe@comcast.net. Use “SVAS newsletter article” as the subject line. Microsoft Word format is preferred.

SVAS Calendar of Events

July

- 17 **SVAS Board Meeting** (7 pm) CSUS Mariposa Hall, Rm 1000 (held just prior to the general meeting).
General Meeting (8 pm) CSUS Mariposa Hall, Rm 1000. Speaker, Geoff Marcy, the planet hunter, U.C. Berkeley.
- 18,19 **Star BQ**, HGO.
- 31 **Community Star Party**, West Sacramento 7:45 pm.

August

- 15 **Community Star Party**, Penryn 7:45 pm.
- 21 **SVAS Board Meeting** (7 pm) CSUS Mendocino Hall (held just prior to the general meeting).
General Meeting (8 pm) CSUS Mendocino Hall, Room 1003. Speaker Dr. Bryan Mendez, Center for Science Education, UC Berkeley.

September

- 18 **SVAS Board Meeting** (7 pm) location TBD (held just prior to the general meeting).
General Meeting (8 pm) location TBD. Speaker, TBD.

WHOM TO CALL

For more information: www.svas.org • (916) SVAS-111

2009 SVAS OFFICERS:

President
Liam McDaid (916-558-2005)

Vice President
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Secretary
Charles Real (916-988-8443)

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Kirk Alexander (530-753-4430)

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Newsletter

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 Dave Buchla (530-273-9783)

Outreach Director

Vacant

Observatory Director

Davin Enigl (916-989-8264)

WHERE TO MEET

General meetings are held on the third Friday of each month.
 Please see calendar for details.

Subscribe to the SVAS email list by going to the Yahoo group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/svas-members> and sending a request to join the group.

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Articles—Manuscripts and letters are welcome via email in Word or text format. Items may be e-mailed to [Chris Hulbe](mailto:Chris.Hulbe@comcast.net) at chulbe@comcast.net. **Deadline for the following month's newsletter is the Wednesday following the SVAS General Meeting.**

Advertising—Commercial non-personal advertising, business card through full page, is available. Contact Chris Hulbe at 967-3794 for information.

Classified advertising is free to members of SVAS. Submit ads to Chris Hulbe at 967-3794, chulbe@comcast.net.



Yes! Please renew my membership, or make me a new member of the Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society.

1-year Renewal 1-year New Membership

General, \$35 — Enjoy monthly meetings, informative bi-monthly newsletters, and awe inspiring views of the universe at monthly star parties.

Student, \$20

Supporting, \$75

Contributing, \$150

Observatory, an additional \$40 — Enjoy all the benefits of a general membership plus use of the Henry Grieb Observatory (HGO). You must be a general member for 6 months or longer, and must be approved by the Board of Directors.

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Please tell us where you obtained this form:

- A star party at
- A daytime event at _____
- From a member.
- Yes, I would like to be contacted about volunteering.
- Yes, I would like to have my contact information listed on the SVAS Members Only Web Page.
- No, I do not want the SVAS to contact me via email.
- I wish to read the SVAS Newsletter on the web, and I opt out of receiving the printed newsletter.

I agree to abide by the terms and conditions* governing the use of the SVAS Special Use Permit Property and the SVAS constitution and bylaws. I understand that failure to abide can result in revocation of use privileges and SVAS membership.

Signed _____ Date _____

*A copy of the SVAS Rules of Operation and Regulations will be provided upon request to all new members. The rules are also available at www.svas.org



Enclose payment and mail to:

**Sacramento Valley
 Astronomical Society**
 2305 Goldberry Lane
 Davis, CA 95616-2961