



WASP

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Astro Chatter

by [Larry Kalinowski](#)

The 2001 Awards Banquet was another hit this year.

About 50 to 60, attended, both old and new members, with their guests. All had a grand time until about 11 pm during our usual third Thursday get together of the month. Stephenson Haus, in Hazel Park, was our meeting place again this year. Our guest speaker was Dr. Eli Maor. Doctor Maor spoke about the upcoming transit of Venus in 2004 and gave a grand history of Venusian transits with detailed descriptions of trials and tribulations of past observers, traveling great distances, to watch those events. Problems observing such an event were discussed, along with why time measurements were so important to the world at that time. A special award went to Marty Kunz for taking over the club, after the resignation of most of our club officers during the year. Marty is our president elect for 2002. Other awards for outstanding activity went to Brian Klaus, Louis Namee, Doug Bock, Paul Strong, Jamie Judd, Steve Greene, Jim Rinehart and Ken Bertin. "Amateur astronomer of the year" awards went to Ken Mullin and Jim Wynn. The top raffle prize, an 8.8mm, super wide angle (82 deg.) eyepiece, donated by Meade Instruments, went to Bill Whitney, a longtime member and refractor enthusiast. The second best award, an aluminum accessory carrying case went to Glenna Harrington. The third best award (in my opinion), three sets of Astro Cards, went to Alan Rothenberg. Thirty-two items were raffled away, including seven interesting center pieces, constructed by Bill Beers, with major planets suspended above red Pointsettias.

Meade and Celestron are involved in a lawsuit that could cost Celestron forty-five million dollars. Meade claims Celestron "copied" the GO-TO technology it developed and is asking the court to keep the Celestron-Tasco organization from further selling its GO-TO products. Celestron's senior vice president says he will fight the suit aggressively. Since these types of lawsuits take years to resolve, the public will see continued selling of both companies telescopes for quite a while but the cost of the battle will no doubt keep prices rising faster than normal.

If you're a cold weather observer, you'll get another chance to capture an occultation of Saturn on Wednesday, February 20. The planet will begin to disappear behind the darkened portion of the Moon about 7:12pm. Reappearance occurs around 8:24pm, Detroit time. The Moon will be just past first quarter, so it will be well placed in the southern sky.

Looks like the predictions for the Leonid shower were right on in November. Much of lower Michigan was under a low cloud cover (fog) when the main portion of the shower began. Those lucky enough to find high ground above the fog were treated to a spectacular display. Even in Michigan the meteor counts were well above one thousand per hour during the early hours starting around five o'clock. There has been talk, in the amateur astronomy publications, about another shower next year. So, there's still another chance to see another really positive display, even if the Moon doesn't help matters any, next year.

Thanks to Peter Rynshoven and his wife Roxann, members of the WAS mirror making group were treated to a fine dinner at The Barbeque Pit on Gratiot Avenue on Tuesday, December 11th. Pete was so enthused about finishing his eight inch mirror that he felt the dinner was the best way to express his thanks. The members wives were also invited to the dinner. A total of ten people were wine and dined. What can I say but, when are you going to start your next mirror Pete?

After nearly three years of grinding, polishing and figuring, the mirror making

group has been officially disbanded. Seven mirrors were completed, ranging from six to 13 inches in diameter. That's why you may have seen that small group getting their picture taken at the banquet, after dinner. We are still available to give any information you may require if you're starting your own mirror, but any help you may need to get over any rough spots in mirror making will have to be done at your own residence. Our heartfelt thanks go to Blaine and Marylou McCullaugh for making their residence available over the last three years.

Check out Jupiter's moons Io, Europa and Callisto on January 21st around 8:17pm. Those three will be quite close together on one side of the planet. The red spot should also be visible.

Brrrrrr...it's cold out there. Can't spend any more time crouched over the telescope without freezing my you-know-what-off. Those young guys can sure take that cold, not me. There's nothing I enjoy better than watching the frost form on my telescope while I'm gazing at the sky....through my window, from inside the house, with a steaming cup of coffee. That winter sky sure looks beautiful. Orion and Sirius are quite a show. Armchair astronomer is exactly what I am, during the cold winter months.

Due to low attendance, the computer meetings have been temporarily cancelled. After consulting with Gary Gathen, our computer chair and host, we've decided to temporarily stop those meetings until further notice. Software will still be available at the meetings, with a fifty percent discount for members. That discount applies to the latest CD titles also. You can check with me, via telephone or e-mail, if you have any questions about what programs are available. 586-776-9720 or larrykalinowski@yahoo.com.