

First Light Lite

June, 2020 Edition

Jim Lynch – Editor

Message From the CCAS President

This last month has not been an easy one for this country, from either a medical or a societal viewpoint. So, it can almost seem trivial to be talking about our club business when so many weighty events are happening around us. But in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., “Only in darkness can we see the stars.” Looking at our universe is a hopeful pursuit, and so I will follow his sage advice, and pursue our usual agenda of (literally) seeing the stars.

Dome Repair and Automation Project

There has been some progress this month, as Pappas Company repaired the weather stripping on WSO on May 12th. It is now tight and seamless. Thanks go to Charlie Burke for opening up the facility on the 12th, and to Sandy Cashen for arranging the contractor. WSO will also be open to certain CCAS members to upgrade the calibration of the new scope, which seemingly has moved slightly from its original installation settings. As to the automation of the dome, the pandemic delays those plans, but certainly doesn't cancel them. We will just have to see when things are open enough to begin “phase one” of the dome automation.

STEM - How can we help out?

As mentioned last month, aiding our local schools with STEM efforts during the pandemic is one of the areas we'd like to focus on. We discussed this during our last virtual meeting and will be discussing it further during our next meeting on Thursday.

Virtual Meeting Invitations

I would ask our friends and members to forgive me if the invitations list and email invitations have been coming along a bit more slowly than I had hoped. May

was the month that my main society/occupation these days (Publications editor-in-chief for the Acoustical Society of America) had its spring committee meetings, which spread over a couple of weeks. I'm just coming up for air, and hope to get this list task and all of our other CCAS initiatives back on schedule again soon!

The invitation list will be expanded this week, and more email invitations than last time (92) will be sent out. I will also be polling all the remaining names on our FLL distribution list as to whether or not they wish to join in the virtual meetings. Our GoToMeeting link has room for 250 people, so we are not space limited. But I do want to make sure that our final invitation list is a secure one, as some of the Zoom bombing incidents that I have heard of were rather nasty.

CCAS Officer Elections

As usual, CCAS officer elections will be held in July, and we are organizing a slate of nominees in June. If anyone is interested in being put on the slate, or nominating someone else, please forward the name to Jim Lynch at jlynch@whoi.edu. The positions are: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The current officers have already relayed their willingness to be on the slate, but more names are welcome.

Upcoming Speakers (Via Internet for duration of C-19 pandemic)

June 4th, 2020

Topics: DYHS Projects plus SIDs talk

Speakers: DYHS Mentors (Lynch, Mitchell, Silvis)

This year, the DYHS honors projects consisted of two projects on globular clusters, one on solar rotation, three on astrophotography, and one on the Galilean moons of Jupiter. This month, Jim Lynch will finish the globular cluster presentations, Jim Mitchell will cover his student's solar rotation project, and George Silvis will cover his student's Jovian moons project. George Silvis will then briefly discuss Sudden Ionosphere Disturbances, or SIDs. To quote George, "On the first of each month I go through the month's data, looking for events to report. Haven't been many, as we are in the quiet phase of the Sun, but the process

might be of interest. Some student might want to fire up Bernie Young's antenna and start their own project."

July 2nd, 2020

Speaker: Brother Guy Consolmagno, Director Vatican Observatory

Topic: "Astronomical Ideas That Were Almost Correct" (an update of his 2014 Sagan Medal talk)

I suspect many people are familiar with Brother Consolmagno's book "Turn Left at Orion," which he co-authored with Dan Davis. In addition to his prolific public writings, Brother Consolmagno is well known for his research into asteroids and meteorites. Brother Consolmagno is Director of the Vatican Observatory, and his friend and CCAS member Marinna Martini has supplied this link to his CV:

<http://www.vaticanobservatory.va/content/specolavaticana/en/who-are-we-/staff/guy-j--consolmagno--s-j---1-.html>

Speaker: Dr. Antony Stark, Senior Astronomer HSCfA

Topic: TBA

One of our favorite speakers over the past few years is Dr. Tony Stark, who has given great talks on topics such as "Imaging Black Holes", "The Cosmic Background", and "Star Formation in the Milky Way and Beyond." While Tony is lamenting not being able to stop down at the Cape for a summer vacation for the first time in 25 years, he is still agreeable to giving a remote talk, and we look forward to hearing of his latest adventures.

Last Month's Speakers

. Last month, Jim Lynch and Hank Ricci will gave online presentations on their student's projects on globular clusters and astrophotography. The globular cluster project focused on what one could discern from photos of a globular cluster (e.g. size, density distribution) and the astrophotography projects concentrated on image processing techniques.

May Business Meeting

Virtual Meeting

The 5/7/20 meeting of CCAS was the first ever “virtual meeting” to be held by the Society, and I believe it was fairly successful, though certainly open to some improvements. Let me talk about that first.

The invitation process was by email, and for this initial meeting the invitation went out to 92 of our “well known” members and friends. That list will be expanded soon, but given that I only had a small amount of time to put together a list, it was the best I could do. So, upgrading the list is an “action item” for our future virtual meetings.

The other problem I noted is response to email. Out of 92 invitations, we had 21 users online. The people who came on were engaged members, but I thought we would get a few more. Why didn't we have more? Timing. I need to send email notices out sooner. I delayed the first time to make sure of security, but I think the security issue can be dealt with and still have notices go out earlier.

The logon and password didn't seem to be a problem for anyone, so we're covered there. The GoToMeeting software worked well, and there was little difficulty in giving presentations and having multiple presenters. This is a nice little package for ~\$200 per year!

Star Parties

A good part of the Thursday meeting's business meeting centered around what we can do to restore the "star party" component of CCAS's activities. There were many good ideas put forth, and it seems plausible that we can implement some of them. The ideas centered around two scenarios: 1) what we could do when WSO is finally open to club members (which it is now, though on a limited basis), and 2) what we could do independent of WSO being open. With WSO open to members, we can have a video feed from the screen in the "warm room" below the dome, and this can be put on our "GoToMeeting" link to show the live acquisition of astro-photos. We could also have a second video camera showing a club member speaking to a general audience, and narrating the star party. These should be doable, with only some inexpensive video gear needed. Independent of WSO being open, the same can be done with our private telescopes, and George Silvis said that he would be happy to try this at his own observatory. So, with a little bit of playing around to make things work, we can obtain the ability to do some "semi-remote" star parties. Efforts to do this are getting under way, and such a remote capability can be likely useful even after the pandemic subsides, for both the students and the general public.

Werner Schmidt

Charlie Burke said that he would check on Werner Schmidt's health status with Sandy Cashen, and the latest news is that he is doing well.

Star Parties (Cancelled in-person until large public gatherings are again allowed. Remote star parties are presently being considered.)

After August until mid-June, we will (generally) have two regularly scheduled Star Parties each month taking place at 7:30 -10:30pm on the *Saturday* closest to the date of First Quarter Moon (about 7 days old). This is an increase from our old schedule of one per month in the fall, winter, and spring.

From June through August, we have three regularly scheduled Star Parties each month taking place on *Thursdays* at 8:30-10:30pm.

When the moon is near its First Quarter, the terminator (the line dividing light from dark) is favorable for viewing sunlight or shadow on the sides of craters. This time

is also favorable for observing the dark side of the moon occult (visually cover) stars in the sky as the moon moves in its orbit. Depending upon the calendar, we may also be able to observe planets and other celestial objects.

Here is the schedule for “Star Parties” from May, 2020.

May 2020 - ?? (Cancelled until large public gatherings at WSO are allowed. See note above on “virtual” star parties.)

POSSIBLE CANCELLATIONS for Star Parties (Under Normal Operation Conditions). Cancellations will be very rare since we have lots to do "inside" as well as outside. Even if the forecast is "iffy"; the Staff Leader for the night may elect not to cancel in case of possible clouds. If clouds arrive after staff and guests have convened, a virtual Star Party will usually take place indoors to include overviews of the sky for that night using computer simulations with our big screen TV, videos of interesting sky events recorded previously, demonstrations and/or training on the use of scopes and other equipment, and consultation/discussions on things astronomical, etc.

However, sometimes a solid forecast for overcast or rain or a storm will result in cancellation of a given Star Party. **IF IN DOUBT ABOUT THE WEATHER AND THE STATUS OF A STAR PARTY, CALL THE OBSERVATORY AT 508-398-4765 AFTER 7:45 pm.** No answer means the event has been cancelled.

Directions to Dennis Yarmouth HS and Schmidt Observatory

For information on the location of our Dome behind Dennis-Yarmouth High School, click on the purple button "Old Website" and once there, click on "Meeting Location" viewing the two maps that are there: external for the Dome, and internal to locate the high school library where meetings are held.

For meetings, drive in the south entrance road and go around behind the main building. Park in the lot about halfway down the building and go in the back door and turn down the hall to your left to find the library.

For Star Parties at the Dome, drive in the north entrance road all the way past the north side of the main high school building, through a gate, and on to park near our Dome.

H&K directions (Will resume when things are open again)

Please be reminded that Gus Romano or his delegate host a dinner gathering for members and friends each CCAS meeting night (before the meeting) at the South Yarmouth Hearth & Kettle restaurant at 5:45pm; (the meetings begin at 7:30 at D-Y.) The speaker for each meeting is always invited. Please join the group to dine and talk about all things interesting, including astronomy, each month before our meeting. The H&K is at 1196 Rt 28, South Yarmouth, about a half mile west of the Station Avenue/Main Street intersection with Rt 28 (stop light).