

# STARLITE

SPRING, 2010

*(Electronic version)*

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## **DIRECTORS:**

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***Editor's Note:*** Please send Starlite news items to [Starlighteditor@gmail.com](mailto:Starlighteditor@gmail.com) or [ls\\_hay@yahoo.com](mailto:ls_hay@yahoo.com) the first two weeks of the following months for 2010: May, August and November. This will enable me to organize news and get the Starlite printed before the following month. (ls\_hay@yahoo.com)

## Welcome New Members:

Lauren Robins - Peoria  
Zak Lee Richerson - Peoria  
Nick Johnson - East Peoria  
Andrew & Leslie Grabenstetter - East Peoria  
Thomas & Mary Grabenstetter - Metamora  
Tim & Cathy Speely - Bartonville

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

Please notify Scott Swords at [sswords3@comcast.net](mailto:sswords3@comcast.net) if you will be getting a new mailing address and/or phone number. It is important that he has your personal information correct so you will continue to receive the Starlite and the Reflector. He would also like to receive any changes to your e-mail address as this is part of his database.

If you would like to join the Peoria Astro e-group or if you have changed your e-mail address, please notify Mike Frasca at [mfrasca@att.net](mailto:mfrasca@att.net) with your e-mail address. He does not need your mailing address or phone number. If you are not a member of the e-group, you may want to consider joining. A great deal of club activity information is sent via the e-group. And by the way, it is free to join!!!

From Mike Hay ...Saying Goodbye ... to Les Bodell

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Les Bodell.. Les was a long-time member and a Northmoor key holder. I hosted with Les many times. Les had many interests and was a member of the geology and Audubon sections of the Peoria Academy of Science. Les had been a member of Merchant Marines and on several occasions slung a bosun's chair from the top of the old dome to paint the outside. He will be missed.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

By John Barra

As I pondered the topic for this issue's message, I thought a great deal about what direction the club should take in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Having read through many old issues of the Starlite the last 12 or 13 years to write the Starlite article on past issues, I came to the conclusion that amateur astronomy has come full circle over the past 55 years. I believe that the club's focus should take that path into consideration.

When the club was formed in the mid-fifties, no satellite had yet been launched. Personal computers weren't even thought of. Cameras were still fairly primitive. Few people had their own telescopes. The activity of astronomy clubs was viewing the night skies. It was fairly simple. People got together to observe. Watching naked-eye meteors. Looking at the sky with personal binoculars. And getting together in groups to look through the few telescopes available and marvel at the objects that could be seen. Our astronomy club was so fortunate to inherit the famous nine-incher at Northmoor.

Then came Sputnik and the space race culminating with the landing on the moon. Astronomy clubs, of course, followed those developments closely and the public looked towards those clubs for additional information to add to that which was covered by pre-cable news television. Amateur astronomy began being involved in the educational phase.

Then educating became even more prominent with Voyager and other probes of the time period. Equipment became more sophisticated. Telescopes became more mechanized. And cameras became more user-friendly. Amateur astronomers suddenly became more involved in astro-photography.

As technology expanded exponentially, go-to telescopes became the rage followed by rapid expansion of personal computers. And you have literally hundreds of cable channels on television to watch. Suddenly, amateur astronomy seems to face a crisis.

If someone in the public has an astronomy question, just "google" it; there is no need to ask your local club. Why bother with astro-guiding necessary for astrophotography. If interested in getting a good photograph of an object in the sky, go online. Get the most recent pic from Hubble.

Besides there are just too many activities available to people. It is difficult to get too many people interested in astronomy, at least until the next Hale-Bopp comes along. So what should the focus of an astronomy club be 2010?

Certainly, individual members will continue with any special interest they have, such as astrophotography or variable star monitoring. And we don't want to completely abandon our educational factor--public observing at Northmoor will continue. But maybe our main focus should go back to what it was in the mid-fifties: simply observing. Let's make that our main priority before it is too late. (Over the years, I have viewed our log books at Northmoor and Jubilee and find that, other than public viewing nights at Northmoor and ICC star parties at Jubilee, the numbers of members signing in at either place have drastically dropped.)

As president, my focus will be a getting more members to observe, whether that be in having more star parties or getting a few members together to view more often. After all, that is what we do best.

50 Years Ago  
Spring Starlite 1960

“ELECTION OF OFFICERS: As we all know, there are some groups of stars that we can always depend on to show as direction, no matter what the season....As you may surmise, the Celestial Cartographers (the Nominating Committee) headed by Les Bodell, had no difficulty finding their navigational stars for 1960....”

Sadly, Les Bodell passed away in January of this year, 50 years later. In addition of his active participation in the Peoria Astronomical Society, Les was involved in several other sections of the Peoria Academy of Science.

“Since the last Newsletter of September 1959, reporting progress on housing our new telescope was poured one bitterly cold and wind Saturday for the floor and pier and worked smooth under the experienced hands of Bill McCowan and Dick Johnson.”

I still don't know how anyone can get anything to work outside during the cold season. I know that Rich Tennis has worked hard on trying to get us to learn how to view the magnificent sky in the winter time. But I am not sure he will ever be successful in doing so. We still keep trying.

25 Years Ago  
Spring Starlite 1985

“We offer you the universe. No other organization can make such a promise. The Peoria Astronomical Society can provide its members with some of the most exciting and challenging programs; however, there are limitations. Membership apathy is the prime cause....So far, I see 15% ...actively involved.”

That percentage is about the same today. For my ideas on a solution and on the direction the club should take, please read the President's Message in this issue.

“According to George Mauer of the LeHigh Valley Amateur Society, the first measurement of Halley's Comet from Kitt Peak has found it with a 6' arc-second diameter (about 26,000 km.).”

Has it really been 25 years since the last return of Halley? Has it really been almost 13 years since Hale-Bopp? When can we expect the next bright one? Soon?

### ***Future Programs***

March 3        Messier Marathon: New Routes to Southernmost objects--John Barra  
April 7        Lunar Observing and the AI Club requirements  
May 5         Hawaiian Nights: DVD from Mauna Kea

Summer--no meetings on the first Wednesday of each month. Special Saturday star parties listed below.

#### Special Star Parties:

June 19        Public Star Party at Northmoor Observatory  
July 10        Private Star Party at Jubilee Observatory  
Aug. 7         Public Star Party at Jubilee State Park picnic area  
Sept. 11       Public Star Party at Northmoor Observatory

Sept. 25       Banquet (place to be announced later) Dr. Pamela Gay, Southern Illinois University, as speaker.

#### ***Other Upcoming Events:***

March 13 (raindate Mar. 12) Messier Marathon/Polar Bear Star Party at Star House  
MAY 15 Possible visit to Yerkes and view through the 40-inch refractor  
(Details on the e-group)

From Rich Tennis:  
Vesta found!

I don't know how many of you have really located and observed an asteroid, but I finally did. February 16<sup>th</sup> was the evening that I located asteroid Vesta, the brightest, and followed for two more nights. Sky and Telescope had an article on Vesta and it was on that night that I happened to be at my Star House and looking around, when I remembered the article and opened it up to note that it was very close to Gamma Leonis (The shoulder of Leo).

I found Gamma Leonis and 40 Leonis and one other bright "star", in an almost straight N-S alignment. My sky charts only had the two stars, but not a third. The S&T web site, [www.skyandtelescope.com](http://www.skyandtelescope.com), had their commentary that on that very night Vesta would thread between the two stars. I knew I had really observed an asteroid! I quickly called a couple of PAS members, Dan Son and Tim McGrath, and e-mailed to the PAS e-mail group to observe this unusual alignment. My luck was short-lived, as the sky had clouded over in that short time I was inside. It was, for me, as exciting as the 2004 transit of Venus.