



VBAS Highlights for December

Public Programs for December

Because we traditionally don't have a member's meeting in December, our next member's meeting will be held on Friday, January 18th at 7 p.m. VBAS Member Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of each month (except December) at 7 p.m.; they're open to the public and are free.

Regular planetarium programs start at 7:30 PM. This December, we will be presenting our ever-popular Christmas Star show on three Saturdays, December 1st, 8th, and 15th. What exactly was the object that the wise men saw? Was it a star that stood in the sky two-thousand years ago and marked a single location in Bethlehem? Each year at this special time, we turn back the hands of time to look into the sky of long ago and to search for this mysterious object. As we ponder the skies of Bethlehem, we'll explore several possibilities, including comets, meteors, novae and other phenomena. Admission to planetarium shows is free for VBAS Members, \$5.00 for Adults, \$3.00 for Students, and free for children under 6. Observation of the night sky through various telescopes normally follows each planetarium program, weather permitting.

VBAS Program Committee Meeting Report

On page 4, John Young reports on the committee's very productive inaugural meeting.

Planetarium Help Wanted

Melissa requests two sorts of people on page 4: volunteers to help with the Saturday night planetarium shows in supporting roles, and paid school show planetarium presenters.

Planetary Conjunctions in 2008

Doug Horacek reports on upcoming planetary conjunctions on page 5.

A Natural Habitat for Nocturnal Wildlife (i.e., Astronomers)

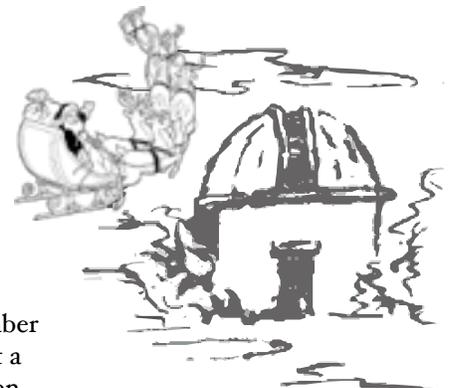
Richard Norman discovered Deerlick Astronomy Village, a housing development aimed at astronomers, being built east of Atlanta, and promoting Dark-sky ordinances in the surrounding county. See page 5 for details.

Wilhelm Angele Mementos Donated

Steve Sloan was recently given a very generous gift by Stephenie Holtkamp -- several of founding VBAS member Wilhelm Angele's papers, including many fascinating pieces from the early history of RCAA/VBAS! Pictures and a complete list of items are on page 6.

Steve Sloan
Via Stellaris Editor
steve@sloan3d.com

Deadline for January 2008 Via Stellaris submissions is Monday, December 24.



In This Issue:

- VBAS Highlights for December..... 1
- Calendar of Events..... 2
- The Night Sky for December..... 3
- VBAS Program Committee Meeting Report..... 4
- Volunteer Positions at VBAS..... 4
- Part-Time Position: Planetarium Presenter..... 4
- Planetary Conjunctions in 2008..... 5
- Natural Habitat for Astronomers..... 5
- Wilhelm Angele Mementos... 6



VBAS Calendar of Events, December through January

Saturday, December 1st, 8th, and 15th, 2007

7:30 PM

Christmas Star Show

What exactly was the object that the wise men saw? Was it a star that stood in the sky two-thousand years ago and marked a single location in Bethlehem? Each year at this special time, we turn back the hands of time to look into the sky of long ago and to search for this mysterious object. As we ponder the skies of Bethlehem, we'll explore several possibilities, including comets, meteors, novae and other phenomena.

Saturday, January 5th, 12th, 26th, 2007 (tentative)

7:30 PM

Planetarium Show: **Mercury**

*Presented by **Melissa Snider***

This family-friendly program on Mercury, the closest planet to the sun, will be the first in a monthly series on the planets and bodies in our Solar System.



Reprocessed Mariner 10 data was used to produce this image of Mercury. The smooth band is an area of which no images were taken. Source: <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap011124.html>

Friday, January 18, 2007

7:00 PM

Regular Monthly Meeting

After a short pizza social and marketplace swap meet we'll discuss pertinent society business. The program has not been announced as of yet. Visitors are welcome.

Saturday, January 19th, 2007 (tentative)

7:30 PM

Planetarium Show: **The Constellation Program**

*Presented by **Roy Young***

January's technical show focuses on NASA's Constellation Program to build replacements for the Space Shuttle. It will include the Ares I and Ares V launch vehicles, and the Orion spacecraft. Much of the work on the program is happening right here at Marshall!



...And as always, for the most up-to-date information about VBAS events, be sure to check the web site at vbas.org.

The Night Sky for December, 2007

Here is the view at 9 PM in mid December, 2007, at 34° N Latitude, 86° W Longitude. Mars, the spear-and-shield symbol, will be easily visible to the east, in Gemini.

Map courtesy of John Walker and YourSky (<http://www.fourmilab.to/yoursky/>).



VBAS Program Committee Meeting Report

by *John Young*

The VBAS Program Committee held its inaugural meeting on Friday, November 2nd. The meeting lasted nearly two hours and was filled with productive communication and great ideas. The best idea of all was of course to ask you, the members of VBAS, what you want to learn, share, and do at our meetings. I'm sure I speak for all of the officers when I say that our floor, phones, and email accounts are always open.

I thought I'd share some key points of discussion in summary format:

- Query and promote member-led presentations. Many of you are advanced or experts in direct or related topics of interest.
- Generate a list of possible topics of interest and simply hold a vote of what the coming months presentations will be.
- Vary meeting locations to see places of interest and share our hobby or profession with host facility.
- Develop backup plans, i.e. presenters (member or guest) that can speak on short notice if needed.

- Hold simple through advanced Q&A sessions or current astronomy news to increase the knowledge base of members.
- Promote member involvement in observing clubs (telescopic and binocular), imaging, sketching, et cetera.
- Hold a members meeting in which our eldest members share their stories and nostalgic insight into our unique society.
- Webinars or teleconferences with geographically distant speakers.
- Advertising our meetings to friends, colleagues, neighbors and of course one another.
- Quarterly or monthly swap meets.
- Get members involved in the program committee.

Our next quarterly meeting is tentatively set for Friday, February 8th at 6:30 p.m. at the West End Grill in Madison. Our guest speakers for the coming months include presentations from Wes Colley on gravitational lensing and Jonathan Campbell on planetary defense. Have a safe and joyous Holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

Volunteer Positions at VBAS

by *Melissa Snider*

We are looking for volunteers to support our new public show schedule every Saturday night. Volunteers assist with easy, fun tasks like parking cars, giving short facility tours, and pointing out the constellations outdoors. A typical shift would be 6-9 PM on a given Satur-

day. Some daytime slots may also be available for school shows.

We held a training session in December and plan the next session for mid-January.

Please contact Melissa Snider, Education and Programs Director, 684-9036 or melissas@spacecamp.com.

Part-Time Position: Planetarium Presenter

by *Melissa Snider*

VBAS needs presenters for school shows (weekdays) and public shows (Saturday nights). A modest stipend will be provided (\$20-\$40 per show) after training is complete. Presenters should be enthusiastic, articulate, and comfortable speaking in front of large groups (up to 80 people).

A typical presenter shift is about 4 hours on a Tuesday or Thursday (mostly mornings, some afternoons), or 4 hours on a Saturday night (5:30 - 9:30 PM).

Training will take place on 4 Saturdays in January and February. A weekday or evening training is a possibility.

Please contact Melissa Snider, Education and Programs Director, 684-9036 or melissas@spacecamp.com.

Planetary Conjunctions in 2008

by Doug Horacek

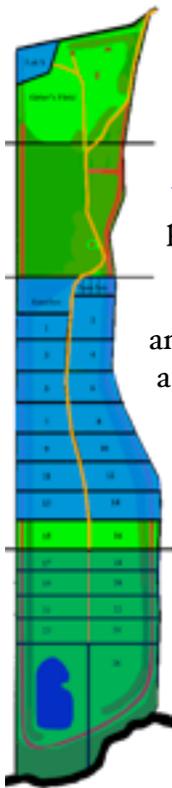
The first planetary conjunction in the western horizon occurs on Thursday, 10 July 2008, when Mars and Saturn are 0.7 degrees apart. The next event is 13 August 2008, when Saturn and Venus are 0.5 degrees apart on Wednesday evening. At dusk on our meeting night, Friday, 15 August 2008, Saturn and Mercury are 0.8 degrees apart. On Wednesday evening, 20 August, Mercury is 0.9 degrees from Venus at dusk. And the most glorious of all, on 11 September 2008, Thursday evening at dusk, Mars is 0.3 degrees apart from Venus. Since I have a view for all of these events, I will welcome

people to bring telescopes and observe at these twilight hours. One evening is a meeting night, so maybe the club can come over and observe that evening, and have a little star party at my condo. That would be Saturn and Mercury on Friday, 15 August 2008. This would be an opportunity for smaller scopes and low-power and wide-angle fields of view.

Douglas V. Horacek
Observer
Von Braun Astronomical Society

A Natural Habitat for Nocturnal Wildlife (i.e., Astronomers)

by Richard Norman



Deerlick Astronomy Village is an astronomer-friendly development East of Atlanta. DAV has about 96 acres. The layout can be seen on their web site: www.deerlickgroup.com. One portion is for member observing and star parties. Another portion is set aside for a park, and the remaining is being sold as lots for astronomers. Phase I

has sold out, but there are five lots that are left unreserved for phase II. Unfortunately, currently there is no plan for further expansion. Timber companies own a lot of the land in the surrounding areas, and therefore there is currently no development planned around the DAV property. DAV is working with the county government to establish light ordinances modeled after those created by the International Dark-sky Association (www.darksky.org).



Sunset over Grier's Field, which is the area of Deerlick Astronomy Village reserved for observing.

Wilhelm Angele Mementos Donated

by Steve Sloan

I met Stephenie Holtkamp when she was playing in the same Celtic band as my girlfriend, Jennifer. Stephenie was friends with Wilhelm Angele when he was alive. She knew I was a member of VBAS, so she gave me a number of his papers. Here's the note she included with the papers:

Steve,

Since you're the only VBAS member I currently know, I thought you might enjoy having these.

The 1926 student notebook was one of dozens and is interesting for the meticulous work -- if nothing else -- Certainly a curiosity!

(You may do as you please with these papers. My children remember "Mr. A" as a surrogate grandfather who made great pretzels!)

Stephanie

- *Mr. Angele worked for Siemens and Agya on early experimentation with color film. Then gyros, then Berlin. He did not relocate to Peenemünde, but stayed in the Berlin labs. He invented flat-conductor-cable.*

Here is a complete list of the papers she gave me:

- Wilhelm Angele's 1926 student notebook, entitled Grundzüge der Elektrotechnik.



- A large, hand-drawn plot in German, somehow dealing with magnetism, and probably from the same class as the notebook.



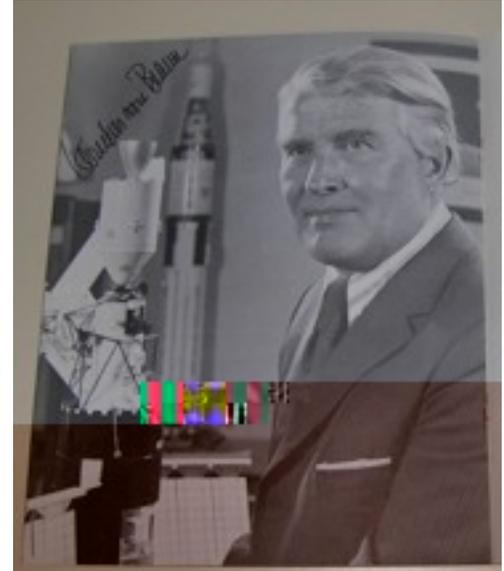
- A copy of *Space Journal* Volume 1, Number 1 from Summer 1957. Handwritten on the cover: "Article by Ernst Stuhlinger."
- A program for "A Tribute to Dr. Wernher von Braun" at the Bicentennial Chapel in Redstone Arsenal, held 24 June, 1977, shortly after von Braun's death.
- Invitation and flyer to the VBAS dedication of the Wilhelm Angele Observatory held on 15 November, 1985. "If the weather permits, the telescope will provide a view of Halley's Comet for the dedication."
- Two larger RCAA brochures, one with handwritten notes inside, identifying people in photographs.
- A smaller RCAA brochure, from roughly summer 1959. It lists the 30 charter members of RCAA. Handwritten notes put asterisks next to the 13 RCAA charter members who were also members of Project Paperclip. Project Paperclip was the code name the U.S. used for extracting scientists from Nazi Germany.
- An elevation diagram of the old mirror grinder, complete with white-out marks.
- A Von Braun Astronomical Association brochure, apparently an update to the above

RCAA brochures, with a lot of the same text and pictures. The page with von Braun's photo appears to have been signed by von Braun himself, assuming that wasn't just part of the printing.

- A St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church invitation to the dedication of the Wilhelm Angele Harpsichord on 24 April, 1988.
- Two small Olan Mills photo portrait prints of Mr. Angele, taken in 1991.
- A copy of a Wilhelm Angele obituary from the Seattle Times, 1 September, 1996.

I saw copies of some of these brochures when Gert brought his collection to a meeting a while back. As far as I know, the rest of these papers are unique.

I'm planning to bring the whole collection to show at the next VBAS member's meeting. I consider these to belong to VBAS. I just want to make sure they're enjoyed by all of our members who are interested. Some of these would be worth putting in the display cases in the planetarium.



Page 7 of the "Von Braun Astronomical Association" brochure, possibly signed by von Braun himself.



Left to right, then top to bottom: Student notebook, von Braun tribute program, Angele photos, Angele Harpsichord dedication program, Angele telescope dedication invitation.



Clockwise from upper left: Rocket City Astronomical Association brochure, Space Journal, Stephenie's note, mirror grinder diagram.

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Steve Sloan, Via Stellaris editor