

# BULLETIN

volume 83, issue 8 *August 2009*

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OUR 82nd YEAR OF  
ASTRONOMY IN LOS ANGELES  
Los Angeles Astronomical Society  
Griffith Observatory  
2800 East Observatory Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

**Change of Address, Membership:**

Stephen Dashiell, LAAS Secretary

**LAAS Officers:**

President..... David Sovereign  
(626) 794-0646  
Vice President ..... David Nakamoto  
david.nakamoto@verizon.net  
Treasurer ..... Herbert Kraus  
Treasurer@laas.org  
Secretary..... Stephen Dashiell  
Secretary@laas.org  
Recording Secretary .... Richard Roosman

**Volunteers:**

Library ..... Mary Brown  
nwwrgz@yahoo.com  
Outreach..... Don DeGregori  
& Herbert Kraus  
Outreach@laas.org  
Loaner Telescopes ..... Dave Sovereign  
(626) 794-0646  
Messier Program ..... Norman Vargas  
(626) 288-4397  
New Members..... Andee Sherwood  
Coordinator@laas.org  
Speakers Bureau ..... Tim Thompson  
timthompson3@verizon.net  
Youth Liaison ..... (None Currently)  
Youth@laas.org  
Bulletin Editor..... David Nakamoto  
BulletinEditor@laas.org  
Bulletin Printer ..... Richard Roosman  
Web Site Manager ..... Steve Dashiell  
admin@laas.org  
Contributing Authors..... Tim Thompson  
Don DeGregori  
David Sovereign

*Editor's Corner*

**W**e still have reservations available on all three Mt Wilson nights. We need to know if we have enough people to go ahead with those nights. **PLEASE, DON'T DELAY** getting your name on the list and pay for your night if you're thinking of going.

The Recycled Telescope made it to its first Griffith public star party in June. I had an interesting experience manning it, and getting it off and on the pickup truck ! I've also been experimenting with using an equatorial tracking platform on my 10—inch Dob so I can see what a low-light sensitive web camera can do. I'll report on the results in a future article.

This month, we have more than the usual number of articles and announcements of interest. Read on !

My many thanks to all who have contributed to the success of the bulletin. Please consider writing or submit images. Articles need to be 1,500 words or less. Submit only a few images at one time, each with its own caption. The deadline for submitting bulletin material is the 10th of each month. If possible, please submit electronically to:

BulletinEditor@laas.org

Material may be sent to the LAAS address listed at the top of the column at left, but timely reception and publication cannot be guaranteed. ✧

# Mt Wilson 60" Nights



LAAS has arranged for two half-nights and one full-night at the Mount Wilson 60-inch telescope this year. All three are New Moon nights. Half-nights are until 1:00 am.

Aug 21st Fri (half night)  
Sept 18th Fri (half night)  
Oct 16th , Friday (full night)

Only LAAS members are allowed to sign up. If there is still room two (2) weeks prior to the date, paying guests will be permitted. Everyone who shows up, whether family member, friend, or guest, will have to pay in order to be allowed in the 60-inch telescope observatory. The cost is \$80 per person for the full night (no half night reservations on a full-night outing), and \$45 per person for the half night. We are allowed to accommodate only a limited number of participants at each session, and your reservations are being accepted on a first come, first serve, basis.

***To secure your reservation, send in your request AND A CHECK payable to LAAS to our Treasurer at:***

P.O. Box 56084  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

Any LAAS member who has not been to a 60-inch night at Mount Wilson should consider it as an opportunity to visit astronomy history. To see the location and equipment used by giants such as Shapley and Hubble will add to your appreciation of their contributions. And you'll never get a better visual view !

The scope will belong to LAAS for the time indicated. We mutually agree upon which objects to view. Often, a member is the operator, so it is a very comfortable environment. (Do bring a coat, however). The viewing is without a doubt the best you are likely to see in your lifetime.

If you need any further information about attending these nights on Mount Wilson, contact our Treasurer at [treasurer@laas.org](mailto:treasurer@laas.org) or by mail at P.O. Box 56084, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413. ✧

# *Venus Occultation April 22*

*By Robert Contreras*

On the morning of April 22, a rare and very awe inspiring event took place involving the Moon and Venus. The event started around 5:07 PST and ended at 5:58. It wasn't great viewing because the Moon was a few degrees above the horizon, but was still a very beautiful spectacle in the sky. Venus first made contact going behind the Moon near the southern visible horn then ended by reappearing in the western equatorial side opposite of where it first appeared. This event then ended at 6:03 when Venus finally came out completely. This was the perfect chance to get pictures of Venus and the Moon side by side. This rare astronomical event was spectacular and was worth getting up early to see it! ✧



Venus gets occulted by the Moon. All images for this article supplied by the author.



This event then ends with Venus reappearing.  
A video of its reappearance is at the link:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EP2XymtxZa8>

## *Mt Wilson Nights Remembered*

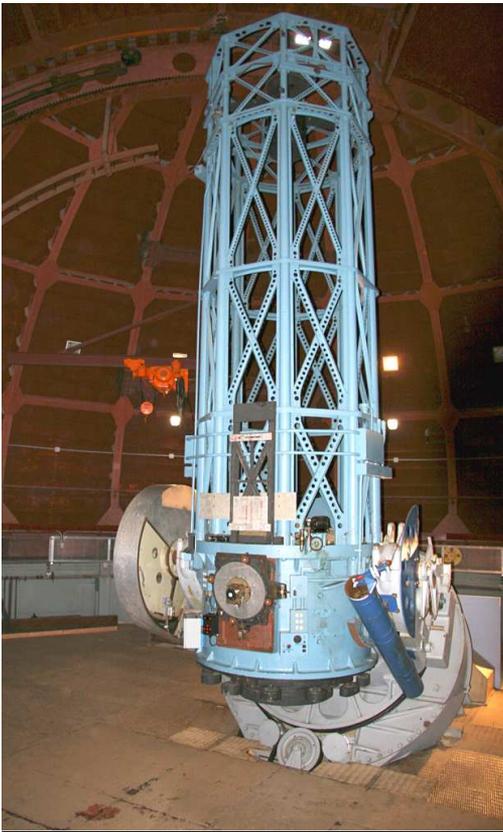
*By Jack Eastman*

David Nakamoto's latest article in the LAAS Bulletin brought back some fond memories of my own first encounter with the 60" and Mt. Wilson in general.

Rewind the Earth in it's orbit about 47-billion kilometers, I was in, or just out of high school, enjoying a wonderful night at Mt. Wilson's 6-inch refractor.

The Earth was about 6.6-billion km further back when my father and I were in the parking lot of the old Mt. Wilson hotel with my newly acquired 40mm Polarex (equivalent to the Unitron model 127) refractor. A gentleman came up

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A recent photo of the 60-inch Cassegrain telescope.

and wanted a look, and of course I tried to show him a few objects. He then asked if we would like to look through "one of ours". Wow, sure! So we went up to this little dome near the 60-foot solar tower and fired up a "really big" 6-inch refractor. The man's name was Joe Hickox, then the resident Solar Observer at Mt. Wilson. We looked at the Moon, Saturn and several star clusters and double stars. Joe asked me if I'd like to point the telescope at something, of course I said "YES!" Just as I loosened the clamps, it sounded like someone poured a bunch of ball bearing balls down a stove pipe. Panic! Yes, it got our attention. What happened was the weight on the driving clock had reached bottom and triggered the rewind motor. Whew!, no harm no foul, but it did wake my dad and me up! Getting to know Joe, and his sense of humor, I think he knew the rewind was about to kick in

just as I loosened the clamp, and scare hell out of us. It worked. And so it was, my introduction to Mt. Wilson, the 6-inch telescope. and a lifelong friendship with Joe Hickox. As time went on, we were able to visit Mt. Wilson often and have the use of that wonderful 6-inch, which brings me to that night, mentioned above. (A photo of that 6" refractor appears in "The Birth of Stars and Planets" by Bally and Reipurth, fig 2.1, p 17)

O.K., fast forward those  $6.6E9$  kilometers. Several of us from the Los Angeles Astronomical Society, our high school astronomy club and friends were using the 6-inch. It was getting late and we were thinking of hitting the sack, when there was a knock on the door. It was Tommy Cragg, another Mt. Wilson solar observer, LAAS member and ace variable star observer. He asked us if we would like to come over and look through the 60" reflector. Would we?! You betcha! So we hoofed it over to the 60" which was pointed at Saturn. Saturn was low in

*(Continued on page 7)*

the South which made for interesting gymnastics getting to the Cassegrain focus. We climbed onto the observer's platform, then onto the telescope itself, straddling the lower tube casting like it was a seriously overweight horse. Once we were in place, with a free hand we were handed a huge eyepiece, with rods sticking out of it so it couldn't be dropped through the opening onto the mirror. (Considered really bad form!) Leaning forward, we found the image and moved about in an attempt to get better focus. What I saw was a huge elliptical blob of light, looking much like an illuminated football in a dark swimming pool. Maybe a couple of darkish spots (between the ring and the ball) but really a disappointing view. Well, it was the Cassegrain focus, and at this early stage in my existence, the few Cassegrain telescopes I'd seen weren't much good. Well, the problem was (as you might have guessed by now) the seeing. It seems Dr. Dinsmore Alter (then Director of the Griffith Observatory) had the telescope for his research looking for evidence of Lunar outgassing and temporary local atmospheric phenomena. This required near perfect seeing, as his method was to take the highest resolution photographs possible in infrared and violet light, looking for possible differences in detail between the two wavelengths. Well, the seeing that night was so awful that after one look, he gave up and went back to bed. The telescope was set up and running and Tom remembered us over at the 6-inch, hence the invite. The seeing didn't seem to be all that bad at the 6", and it looked O.K. in the 4" finder on the 60. There's a lesson here. Larger telescopes are much more affected by seeing than small ones, a lesson often taught out here at Chamberlin where small 'scopes out on the lawn seem to outperform the 20" Clark.

Since that wonderful experience I've looked through the 60" many more times before my escape to Colorado. The telescope is good, the seeing that night was clearly the culprit. In the following years I have had the privilege of looking through and playing with larger telescopes than that venerable 60. I've beaten Mt. Wilson, Twice, by a single, solitary inch. I had had several close encounters with the 61-inch Lunar and Planetary telescope at Mt. Lemmon in Arizona, and finally a couple of us had the 'scope for an entire night. R.B. Minton had the telescope, mainly for photographic work on Jupiter and confirmation of his discovery of the reddish polar caps of Io. When he was done with his photographic run, we stuffed in an eyepiece and hunted down all the objects we could think of. David Nakamoto's observation that all the show objects we know and love are, indeed, too big for the field of such a large 'scope is definitely true, but looking into the cores of globular clusters like M-13 M-92 and the like were pretty spectacular. The Mt. Lemmon was set up as a Cassegrain at F/13.5, their 75mm eyepiece giving 275X with a field of view of only 0.12 degrees. Still, it was great fun to play with such a large (to us) telescope. 61-inch #2 was the Astrometric Reflector of the U.S. Naval

*(Continued on page 8)*

Observatory at Flagstaff, Arizona. This one, designed for accurate positional measurements, is long focus (F/10) mirror, folded in half with a large flat secondary. The operator set it on M-57, the ring nebula. I was amazed that the central star wasn't visible, as it had been at Mt. Lemmon. The operator said to punch the guide motion, and lo, the star flashed into view from behind the crosshair in the eyepiece. The telescope settings were so accurate that the star was hidden by those crosshairs!

It was quite a thrill to actually look through these instruments, at the time some of the largest around. This certainly helped cement my lifelong love for astronomy, and science in general. I can only hope some youngster might have a similar experience and be guided into a career in the sciences. ✧

## *LAAS' First Children's Classroom/ Star Party Event*

*By Mary Brown and Andee Sherwood*

The first LAAS Children's Classroom/Star Party will be held at Garvey Park in the City of Monterey Park on Aug. 1, 2009. This event is for all children and grandchildren of all ages of LAAS members and their friends. At least one parent or guardian must attend with their child or group of children. This event has been Board-Approved.

### **Schedule Of Events**

Arrival Time: 3:45-4:00 PM - Sign-in at the Garvey Park Observatory

4:00 PM-4:30 PM - A tour of the Observatory, including the dome, library and workshop/clubhouse and a short lesson on how telescopes are made and how they function.

4:30 PM-5:30 PM - Various activities including making a Moon Wheel and learning about the Moon

5:30 PM-6:00 PM - Dinner on the lawn

6:00 PM-6:45 PM - Paul Wicker, as "Galileo," speaks about the Solar System. ([www.thegalileoguy.org](http://www.thegalileoguy.org))

6:00 PM-7:00 PM - A "Walk Through The Solar System"

*(Continued on page 9)*

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM - Star Party for those who can stay longer and enjoy viewing the sky through telescopes on the lawn. Feel free to bring your telescopes.

As we don't know how many children are coming or their ages, know that we will adjust all activities and make them age-appropriate. We ask that everyone who plans on attending RSVP via email or phone as soon as possible.

It is important for you to let us know how many children will be attending and their ages. We also need to know how many adults are planning to come as either Guests or Volunteers.

RSVP to:

Email: [Ldy12@aol.com](mailto:Ldy12@aol.com) (Please type "LAAS" in the Subject title.)



You can never start off too young, although you might need help to use the telescope, and those close to these young astronomers should lend a hand or two. But when the scope's this big (the LAAS' new 26-inch Newtonian) a little boost isn't too much to ask for.

Image courtesy of Mark Briggs.

# *Julian Starfest Star Party and Astronomy Conference*

This event will be held from August 20-23, 2009. Located high in the Cuyamaca Mountains above San Diego, at a mountain winery near an historic gold rush town, it's just one hour east of the San Diego Wild Animal Park. Take I-15 or I-5 from the North and exit at Hwy 78 east. Or take I-8 from Arizona and exit at Hwy 79 north to Julian. Clear DARK skies, beautiful ocean beaches close by. Sea World and Legoland too -- bring the family ! You can access the official flyers and posters at:

**PDF Starfest Flyer -- (11x8.5) -- <http://tinyurl.com/luauzt>**

**PDF Starfest Poster -- (17x11) -- <http://tinyurl.com/levvho>**

**Starfest details are available at : <http://www.JulianStarfest.com>**

**You can register for the event at : <http://tinyurl.com/JSF2009>**

**The activities schedule is at: <http://tinyurl.com/lcrok2>**

**Map and Starfest location at : <http://tinyurl.com/mf3znp>**

**Email -- [Julianstars@expresswire.com](mailto:Julianstars@expresswire.com)**



David Pinsky took this image of the Milky Way during the June Lockwood Star Party with a Canon Rebel DSLR operating at f/7.1 and ISO 400 with an 11 min. exposure.



# *Griffith Observatory*

## *Public Star Party Procedure*

PJ Goldfinger handles our Griffith Observatory Public Star Party List. As patrons may drive up freely and reservations are no longer needed, we will continue to keep a sign up list for this event. Please note changes may occur in future PSP events and to read the policy below each month.

LAAS Members must still sign up on time - Deadline is no later than the Tuesday night prior to the Saturday GO Public Star Party each month. The list information required is:

- Your name, any LAAS Members and Non members in your car.
- Bring Telescope y/n.

**NOTE: Those attending without a telescope as a favor will be required to be of some assistance if asked, needed and able.**

It is primarily the main focus of any LAAS member who attends this event to be of Public Service with their telescopes in showing the patrons of Griffith Observatory the delights of the nighttime sky. New Members are not expected to adhere to this policy. Please feel free to come up and enjoy the event given you are signed up.

Parking will be on the east side of the Griffith Observatory Hill designated for GO employees. A guard will be stationed with the LAAS GO PSP list. It is always wise to have one's LAAS name badge and/or club ID on them just in case. Unloading telescope and equipment will remain the same procedure as well, with a drive up, drop off and park down hill routine.

The list currently has been updated to 30 spots for LAAS members. First come, first serve.

Please check the LAAS website and Yahoo list for changes and updates in any LAAS event, as there are many communication mediums and some are missed.

To sign up for the Griffith Observatory Star Party the email address is: laas.starparty@gmail.com. Attendance is only granted once a confirmation email has been received. Most important though is to have fun and enjoy! ✧

*PJ Goldfinger*

# Outreach Program

Come on out to the school and show all the enthusiastic kids, parents, and teachers the night sky. They always appreciate it. And if you get WOW's when they look through you scope, you'll feel good. If no scope, come out anyway and help up set up or answer questions from the kids. So, Outreach volunteers, let's pitch in. I'm sure the kids and adults will appreciate our effort.

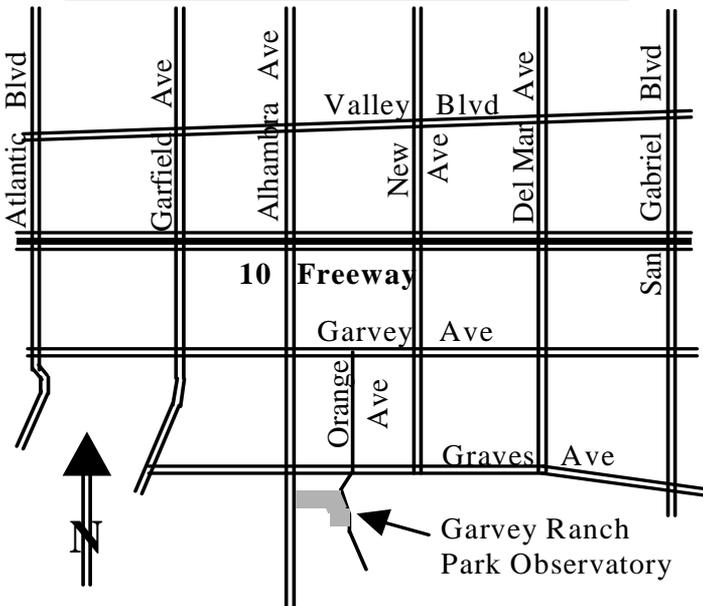
Thanks !      Outreach@laas.org      (818) 891-3087 ✧

(Editors Note: Be aware that often these requests come with very little advanced notice. Therefore, we won't post any events in the bulletin. The best way to get news of these events is to use the Internet and either join the LAAS Yahoo group or access the LAAS website. To join the LAAS Yahoo group, see page)

*Don DeGregori*

## Map to Monterey Park Observatory

(The place to build your telescope)



# LOANER CORNER



Summer star parties are here! Now is the time for new members and existing members that would like to try out something new to check out one of the LAAS loaner telescopes. At the present time there are several available. All are fully equipped with a set of eyepieces. A simple collimating tool is included with all reflectors and a star diagonal is included with refractors.

LAAS-1: 4.5" f/8 Celestron reflector on a Polaris mount.

LAAS-2: 4.5" f/8 Tasco reflector on an Edmund equatorial mount with a clock drive. This telescope has been upgraded with a 1.25" focuser and 6x30 finder.

LAAS-4: 6" f/5 Telescopic reflector on a Dobsonian mount.

LAAS-6: 10" f/4.5 Discovery reflector on a Dobsonian mount. This fast telescope is also equipped with a Tele View Paracorr to correct off axis coma common with fast paraboloids.

LAAS-7: 80mm f/15 Meade refractor on an Orion Sky View Deluxe equatorial mount. This is an excellent instrument for the Moon and planets.

LAAS-8: 80mm f/11.4 Selsi refractor on an equatorial mount.

LAAS-9: 80mm f/6.25 refractor with University Optics objective on an equatorial mount. This fine Rich Field Telescope is good for going through the Messier Catalog.

For more information call: David Sovereign at (626) 794—0646. ✧

*By David Sovereign*



LAAS-4



LAAS-2

# EVENTS CALENDAR

Date	Event	Location and Information
Aug 5th (Wed)	Board Meeting	Garvey Ranch Park Class Room. 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Aug 10th (Mon)	General Meeting	Griffith Observatory Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon Theater Speaker to be announced later 7:45 pm to 9:45 pm
Aug 22th (Sat)	Dark Sky Night	Lockwood Valley
Aug 29th (Sat)	Public Star Party	Griffith Observatory 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm See pg 12 for details on how to attend.
Sept 9th (Wed)	Board Meeting	Garvey Ranch Park Class Room. 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Sept 14th (Mon)	General Meeting	Griffith Observatory Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon Theater Speaker to be announced later 7:45 pm to 9:45 pm
Sept 19th (Sat)	Dark Sky Night	Lockwood Valley
Sept 26th (Sat)	Public Star Party	Griffith Observatory 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm See pg 12 for details on how to attend.



LAAS Home Page: <http://www.laas.org>  
 LAAS Bulletin Online: [http://www.laas.org/Resources\\_Newsletter.htm](http://www.laas.org/Resources_Newsletter.htm)

## LAAS Yahoo Group—how to join

The group is private, and therefore does not come up in a search. To join, send email to: LAAS-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Include your full name so the moderator can verify your LAAS membership. Your full name is necessary so we can check our records to see if you really are a LAAS member. If approved, you will receive further instructions via email. ✧

## Sky and Telescope Subscriptions

Sky and Telescope subscriptions renewals should be sent directly to Sky Publishing. To start a Sky and Telescope subscription, contact the LAAS Treasurer (see the contact information on page 2) directly to get the club rates, then thereafter send the renewal bills directly to Sky Publishing. ✧

## Astronomy Magazine Subscriptions

For those that subscribe to Astronomy Magazine through the LAAS, the rate has gone up to \$34 a year, \$60 for two years. ✧

### Membership Annual Dues:

Youth	\$ 20.00
Regular (18-65)	\$ 45.00
Senior Citizen (65 and up)	\$ 30.00
Senior Family	\$ 40.00
Family	\$ 60.00
Life	\$ 500.00

### Additional fees:

Charter Star member	\$ 30.00
Star member, with pad	\$ 70.00
Star member, no pad	\$ 60.00
Printed Bulletin	\$ 15.00

**(Membership due date is indicated on the mailing label)**

## HANDY PHONE LIST



LAAS Answering Machine .....	(213) 673-7355
Griffith Observatory	
Program.....	(213) 473-0800
Sky Report.....	unavailable for now
Lockwood Site .....	(661) 245-2106
	(not answered, arrange time with caller.
	Outgoing calls – collect or calling card)
Mt. Wilson Institute.....	(626) 793-3100